“CERTAINLY ‘THOU ART GOD’—BUT WHO ISN’T?”

BOOKS THAT SHAPED AMERICA

P. T. JACKSON • AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

1 APRIL 2014
“AND SHE BARE HIM A SON, AND HE CALLED HIS NAME GERSHOM: FOR HE SAID, I HAVE BEEN A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.”

EXODUS 2:22, KING JAMES VERSION
“GULF,” 1949

HEINLEIN HAD WON TWO HUGO AWARDS (DOUBLE STAR, 1956 AND STARSHIP TROOPERS, 1960)

GETTING AWAY FROM JUVENILE NOVELS

CUT 70,000 WORDS

HAS SOLD OVER 5 MILLION COPIES
ON SOCIAL ORDER

- SCI-FI AS NATURALIST
  THOUGHT-EXPERIMENT

- CONSTRUCTIVIST

- BASIC FEATURES:
  1. THE USE OF LANGUAGE
  2. CAPACITY FOR CONNECTION DESPITE INDIVIDUALITY
  3. SEXUAL DIMORPHISM

1984 PAPERBACK
"GROK"

"TO UNDERSTAND INTUITIVELY OR BY EMPATHY; TO ESTABLISH RAPPORT WITH...TO EMPATHIZE OR COMMUNICATE SYMPATHETICALLY (WITH); ALSO, TO EXPERIENCE ENJOYMENT." (O.E.D.)

"‘GROK’ IS DRINK." (V.M.S.)
THE MARTIAN LANGUAGE

- A different “map” of the universe (p. 264)
- “I just whistled to it in Martian” (p. 440)
- “I do grok...in Martian. But you know, dearest, that it doesn’t say the same thing in English... or any other human speech.” (p. 381)

1987 Paperback
CONNECTION

- A PRAGMATIC VIEW OF RELIGION -- EFFECTS, NOT REVELATION (P. 490)
- TELEPATHY, BUT ONLY IN MARTIAN (P. 343)
- WATER-SHARING
- GROUP MARRIAGE OF THE NEST

1991 PAPERBACK
MALE/FEMALE

- EVERYTHING DIVIDED
- HOMOSEXUALITY WOULD BE A "WRONGNESS" (P. 375)
- MEN LIKE HOW WOMEN LOOK; WOMEN LIKE HOW MEN ARE (P. 494)
- EVERYONE HAS SEX ALL THE TIME

1968 PAPERBACK
QUESTIONS

☐ The author is not a character in the novel.

☐ Jubal Harshaw comes closest to R.A.H.'s own voice.

☐ Mike does not succeed... or does he?

R.A.H.
“I WOULD NEVER UNDERTAKE TO BE A ‘PROPHET,’
HANDING OUT NEATLY PACKAGED ANSWERS TO
LAZY MINDS...I HOPE I HAVE CONVINCED YOU THAT
STRANGER IS DEAD SERIOUS...AS QUESTIONS.
SERIOUS, NONTRIVIAL QUESTIONS, ON WHICH A
MAN MIGHT SPEND A LIFETIME. (AND I ALMOST
HAVE.) BUT ANYONE WHO TAKES THAT BOOK AS
ANSWERS IS CHEATING HIMSELF.”

(R.A.H., LETTER TO A READER, 1972)