
Subject: Comments on Luc Sante'
Posted by [FIRTH](#) on Thu, 03 Oct 1985 00:17:16 GMT
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[Moderator: herewith some comments on the excerpts from That Review.
As ever, please edit or condense at your discretion
]

Disclaimer: I haven't yet read Luc Sante's review in full.

Nor am I prepared to comment on his lengthy verbiage quoted in this forum, which seems encoded in a private jargon indecipherable without the full text.

But facts are facts, and lies are lies. Here are some of both:

QUOTE

"Campbell was a tyrant who encouraged tyrannical views. His guidance bore fruit in the works of such writers as Robert Heinlein and L. Ron Hubbard. Heinlein's grandiose technocratic vision approaches fascism in works like Starship Troopers (1959) and Stranger in a Strange Land (1961), the latter once the bible of psychedelic zealotry and a major influence on Charles Manson. Hubbard, after producing acres of wordage for Campbell, tired of writing science fiction, and decided to live it, a decision that resulted in his pseudoscience, Dianetics, which had considerable impact on science fiction before mutating into the pseudoreligion Scientology."

END QUOTE

(1) Campbell was not a tyrant. In fact, he encouraged many kinds of experimentation in Astounding. This is attested by Heinlein (Expanded Universe) Asimov (Opus 100, Before The Golden Age) and many others. There were a couple of problems with his

editorship: an unreasonable insistence on "human supremacy", which Asimov documents well, and an unreasonable urge to remove non-gratuitous sex, which seems to be attributable mostly to Kay Tarrant.

- (2) "Heinlein's grandiose technocratic vision" .. 'technocracy' means "the rule of the skilled", and I can't find that in most of Heinlein's major works. The issue of leadership (or, as an Englishman should say, kingship) is discussed in many of his novels, especially *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, and I don't think they support that conclusion. Indeed, in many places, especially the juvenile stories (*Space Family Stone*, *Have Space Suit, will Travel*) he indicates his sympathies are the exact opposite: EVERYBODY should be as autonomous as possible; even incompetents have rights and should be given the chance to learn (or die)

Of course, Mr Sante' may be using "technocratic" to mean "worshipping mechanisms and technology" - illiteracy among the literati knows no nadir.

- (3) "approaches fascism in *Starship Troopers*". Well that work is not a grandiose technocratic vision in any sense: the technology is the minimum necessary to sustain the plot, and the invisible rulers are neither technologists nor particularly efficient. Nor is it fascist: name one fascist state where military service was voluntary and where even volunteers could resign at almost any time (whenever not in actual combat) See Spider Robinson's article *Rah Rah RAH* in *Destinies* vol 2 no 3 for more.

And, incidentally, what does all this have to do with Campbell? Unless the limp, yellowing object in my hand is an hallucination, "*Starship Soldier*" was published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

[As for that common disease of the deracinated intellectual, whose main symptom is an habitual sneering at courage, valour, patriotism, and, above all, the profession of arms - Rudyard Kipling analysed it a century ago. It is still with us]

- (4) There is no technology in *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Even space travel is kept offstage.
- (5) "a major influence on Charles Manson". Well, bringing out the standard book on this subject (Vincent Bugeloski & Curt Gentry: *Helter Skelter*), I find no reference to Heinlein or any of his works. The main influences on Manson seem to have

been Beatles lyrics and some Scientology notions - though even the latter is dubious: Manson's claims to have become a "beta clear" are unsubstantiated, and that certainly isn't (as he also claimed) the highest stage in Scientology (op cit, Penguin Books edition, pp 578..580)

(6) [L Ron Hubbard] "tired of writing science fiction, and decided to live it". Even a cursory look at a Hubbard bibliography will refute that. Hubbard continued writing SF through his Dianetics period, and well into Scientology. Not to mention Battlefield Earth. Moreover, leaving aside some of the wilder claims of the OTO, most dispassionate observers conclude that Hubbard himself didn't try to "live" his cults. See, for instance, Stephen Annett (ed) The Many Ways of Being, Abacus, 1976.

(7) Finally, Scientology is

"a religious philosophy containing pastoral counselling procedures intended to assist an individual to attain Spiritual Freedom"

in fact, a pseudo-religion.

If a reviewer is so wrong about facts that can be checked, not in a reference library, but in a poorly-stocked home library, of what value are his opinions?

Robert Firth

PS: On re-reading the above, and scanning the archives, I feel I was wrong about the "non-gratuitous sex" stuff. For example, Poul Anderson's serials The Long Way Home and The Man Who Counts, both published in Astounding in the '50s, contain plot elements that involve "sex" in one way or another, and the latter especially makes a very tough point.
