

'Once upon a time there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith'

Posted by **Thomas Mitchell**

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Since it is going to be all election, all the time, all day and into the night, I thought I'd throw a change-up.

Did you grok Robert A. Heinlein? I did.

Like the description in the Cato Institute podcast below, I went to my local library and grazed through every book I could find there by Heinlein and Isaac Asimov and others of the genre. Heinlein wrote science fiction but wrote about things you did not find in other books written for the younger reader. I gobbled up "Rocket Ship Galileo," "Red Planet," "The Puppet Masters," "The Rolling Stones," "Farmer in the Sky," "The Door into Summer," "Starship Troopers," "Tunnel in the Sky," and so many more.

As Heinlein grew older his writing grew from juvenile books to books with very adult themes, concluding with "Stranger in a Strange Land," "Number of the Beast," "The Cat Who Walks Through Walls," "Time Enough for Love," "Farnham's Freehold," several of which had some rather sexual content.

Who can pass up the [aphorisms of Lazarus Long](#)?

"Be wary of strong drink. It can make you shoot at tax collectors and miss."

"A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."

"Being intelligent is not a felony, but most societies evaluate it as at least a misdemeanor."

I have in the past described him as starting as a testosterone-fueled teen, growing into a man curious about religion, society and relationships, and maturing finally into, well, a dirty old man.

I plan to check out Heinlein biographer William H. Patterson's "[Robert A. Heinlein: In Dialogue with His Century: Volume 1 \(1907-1948\): Learning Curve.](#)"

Listen to Patterson discuss Heinlein's works:



The headline is the opening line from "Stranger in a Strange Land."

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http://www.lvrj.com/blogs/mitchell/Once_upon_a_time_there_was_a_Martian_named_Valentine_Michael_Smith.html?ref=318

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