

SPECULATIVE FICTION REVIEW by Stephanie Young

TITLE *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag*
AUTHOR Robert A. Heinlein
PUBLISHER Berkeley Medallion
COPYRIGHT 1959
PRINTING 1976

Précis This is a collection of Heinlein stories - 5 shorts and one novella as follows:

The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag - The novella is about a man, Jonathan Hoag, who has no idea what he does during the day. He hires a husband and wife team of private eyes to find out after a doctor refuses to tell him what the substance under his fingernails is (which happens to be the only clue he has). The story takes many strange twists and the couple find themselves in an odd sort of danger. In the end, the profession is revealed and you will be surprised.

The Man Who Traveled In Elephants - A touching story that is sort of a travelogue about a man who loved to travel who loses his wife and continues to travel but without the same vim and vigor as before. He meets an interesting person along the way and the ending is not a surprise but very good.

All You Zombies - A tale of time travel that pitches everything we have been told about time travel paradoxes right out the window. Add to it that the story has a bit of gender bending while keeping its secrets well hidden until the end. An interesting tale that is so Heinlein.

They - A story of a man who is institutionalized and eventually believes he is a being of greater power. It is a classic look at the human psyche and how the mind can believe anything. The end left me a bit confused but a fine story.

Our Fair City - This is also classic Heinlein as he takes a simple situation and shows how the public and the government can blow it up out of proportion and go completely over the edge. A newspaperman finds a street person who has befriended a whirlwind that appears to be alive. All is well until the whirlwind shows the reporter an old paper of historical value. That is when it gets ugly and the moral is clear.

"And He Built A Crooked House" - California architect Quintus Teal has come up with a fantastic new style of home for his friend Homer Bailey. The house is a tesseract and from the outside looks like nothing but inside has more space than you can imagine. At first the Bailey's are not impressed but after a closer inspection, start to warm up to it, until the tremor hit, this is Southern California after all. This cause a situation where they can't seem to leave the house but quick thinking solves the problem and the final status of the building at the end is unique.

What I liked - I liked every story in the book but my favorite was *All You Zombies*. This is pure Heinlein with each story in that unmistakable voice of his. After reading most everything he has written, I could tell without the cover this was a Heinlein book. The best thing is that stories never falter and even the novella is fast paced and intriguing.

What I didn't like - The ending to *They* left me a little confused but I suspect that was Heinlein's intent.

Rating 

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