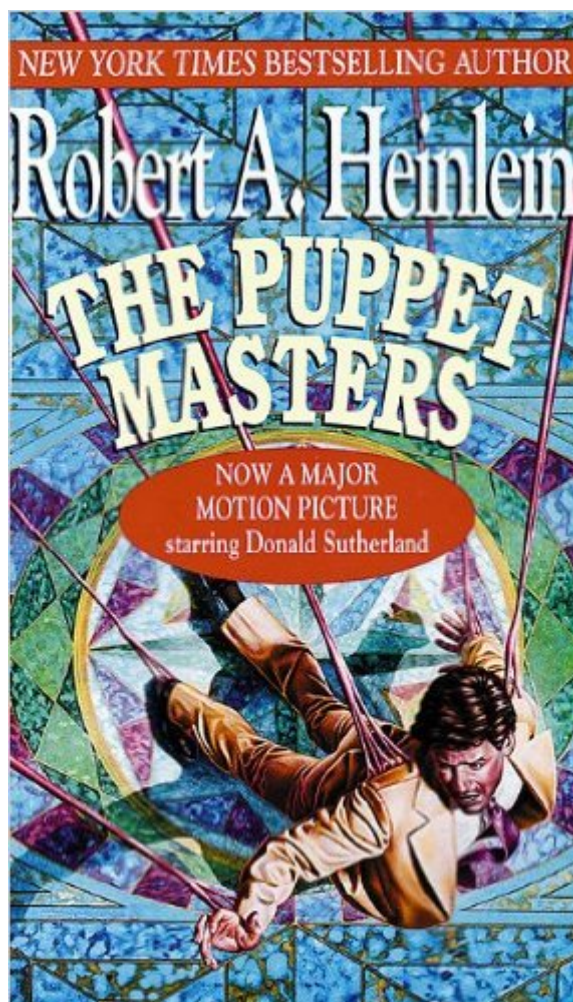


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The Puppet Masters



Synopsis

[MP3CD audiobook format in Vinyl case.] [Read by Lloyd James] First came the news that a flying saucer had landed in Iowa. Then came the announcement that the whole thing was a hoax. End of story. Case closed. Except that two agents of the most secret intelligence agency in the US government were on the scene and disappeared without reporting in, as did four other agents who were sent in. As a result, the head of the agency and his two top agents went in, and they managed to get out with their discovery: an invasion is underway by slug-like aliens who can touch a human and completely control his or her mind. What the humans know, they know. What the slugs want, no matter what, the human will do. And most of Iowa is already under their control. Sam Cavanaugh was one of the agents who discovered the truth. Unfortunately, that was just before he was taken over by one of the aliens and began working for the invaders, with no will of his own. And he has just learned that a high official in the Treasury Department is now under control of the aliens. Since the Treasury Department includes the Secret Service, which safeguards the President of the United States, control of the entire nation is near at hand. Can-do intelligence officer Cavanaugh is the only man who can stop the invaders.

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Science Fiction

Customer Reviews

The Puppet Masters is one of Heinlein's most entertaining novels. A fairly quick read, it provides a wealth of enjoyment for both young and old alike. The earth is being invaded by hostile alien forces, but few people recognize this fact or choose to believe it for this is no typical invasion. These

extraterrestrials are slugs who attach themselves to human hosts, thereby controlling them and giving the appearance of normalcy to those around them (and, more importantly, to typically slow-witted politicians). Our protagonists, mysterious agents of some murky, top-secret government agency in the early 21st century, enter the fray when a flying saucer supposedly lands in Iowa and is quickly proclaimed a hoax. They are soon able to figure out what is actually going on, though, and they manage to convince a reluctant President of the seriousness of the matter. Soon Schedule Bare Back is in force, requiring all citizens to wear nothing (or next to nothing in the case of women) above their waists--slug-invaded hosts bear a discernible hump on their backs where the aliens imbed themselves. These aliens are smart, though, and the government is typically naïve and slow to respond, so eventually the fate of the nation depends on the work of our three heroes. The protagonists are typically peculiar Heinlein characters. The hard to read Old Man runs the show, while "Sam" and "Mary" conduct much of the field and security work, Mary is a beautiful, mysterious female agent, and naturally Sam immediately falls head over heels in love with her. Together, they identify the means by which the slugs propagate, eventually developing first-hand knowledge of the slugs despite their best intentions and precautions.

Science fiction stories about aliens that form a symbiotic relationship with humans have been popular in the science fiction literature for a long time. One of the earliest short stories on this theme probably was Clark Ashton Smith's "The Vaults of Yok-Vombis" in 1932. The first full length novel based on this theme was Heinlein's "The Puppet Masters." It was also Heinlein's first full-length science fiction novel for adults. It first appeared as a serial in the Sept. 1951 issue of *Galaxy* magazine. A film based on this book was released in 1994. This story, written in a very "hard-boiled" style reminiscent of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, begins with a landing of a flying saucer in Iowa. At first it is thought to be a hoax (as in Wells' "War of the Worlds"). However, it is soon apparent that it is not. The aliens, believed to be from Titan, form a parasitic attachment to humans and are able to completely control the thoughts and movements of the human host. The problems facing the non-infected humans includes how to defeat the aliens without killing the host (a similar problem facing the hero in Card's "Xenocide" (1991)). They also have a problem at convincing Washington politicians that there is a crisis. Others have suggested that the novel is an allegory of the times in the late-1940s and early-1950s of the paranoia caused by the Cold War. (However, care should be exercised here. Some of the earlier reviewers have compared this book with the paranoia associated with the McCarthy hearings. Although Senator McCarthy was much in the news in 1950 and 1951, the actual hearings didn't begin until long after Heinlein's book was

published.) There is another interesting aspect. The novel is written in the first person.

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