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Shifting Understandings of Imperialism: A Collision of Cultures in Starship Troopers and Ender's Game

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Shifting Understandings of Imperialism:
A Collision of Cultures in *Starship Troopers* and *Ender's Game*

A Thesis

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Abstract

In this paper, I consider how Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) and Orson Scott Card's

Ender's Game (1985) allegorically treat U.S. Cold War fears of invasion by the Soviet Union.

Given the texts' historical relationship to the Vietnam War and their use of very similar science

fiction tropes (namely, invasion by communistic, insect-like aliens), I argue that Orson Scott

Card reimagines the binary Cold War conflict, softening the rhetoric of *Starship Troopers* and

allowing for a more qualified understanding of the relationship between the U.S.S.R. and the

U.S. Through this analysis, I also consider how science fiction is a useful tool of cultural

criticism in that it posits future worlds so as to reflect contemporary social concerns.

Militarism in science fiction, the Vietnam War, cultural studies, *Starship Troopers*, *Ender's*

Game, representations of the Cold War in science fiction

Science fiction is not just aliens and robots, mad scientists and vivisected monsters: as a genre of popular fiction, it acts as a qualified barometer of cultural debate and development. Not merely the past's conception of the future, those works of literature which fall under this genre's broad umbrella all attempt, as science fiction scholar Carl Freedman asserts, "to refuse the status quo in favor of a social alternative which is not ours but which, for better or worse, could, at least in principle, become ours" (188). In this way, the genre projects current cultural concerns onto seemingly inevitable future landscapes. With this in mind, Rick Worland asserts that "science fiction's allegorical bent assures that contemporary anxieties, whatever form they may assume, are likely subjects for treatment" (103). The mirroring and extrapolation of these anxieties thus create within any given work of science fiction the potential to act as a cultural litmus test, indicating the salient inclinations associated with cultural change during a given historical period.

Examples abound: tales such as Charles Sheffield's *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986), Andrew Niccol's film *Gattaca* (1997), and the Vincenzo Natali film *Splice* (2009) emerge within a greater discourse about the ethics of genetic engineering (which developed as a field in the late 20th century). Each of these stories operates as a cautionary tale, mirroring contemporary fears concerning the potential both for enforced eugenics and for the creation (through genetic recombination) of new, and potentially dangerous, organisms. On a much broader spectrum, these stories likewise engage in the centuries-old and ongoing discourses concerning science versus antiscience and technological utopianism versus primitivism. At any level, however, these works are established inextricably within the framework of the social conditions in which they are produced. Likewise, H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), a "scientific romance" (an early name for science fiction), emerged from the social discourses surrounding the industrial

revolution, all of which concerned a shift from the agrarian to the industrial, the demand for labor rights, and a question of the ultimate utility of capitalism. Much later, once the Western World shifted to a (mostly) post-industrial society, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) rooted itself firmly in rising computer culture, reflecting both a societal fear of technology as a tool for evil, as well as a hope for its active use in the advancement of mankind.

Given this relationship, it is no surprise that the science fiction of the latter half of the 20th century thoroughly represents Cold War issues: competing economic models, the Red Scare, McCarthyism, imperialism, (neo)colonialism, and nationalism. As the geographic empires of Western Europe were collapsing, with much of Africa and Asia gaining purported independence from old colonial masters, a new conflict over who might dictate the future of these nascent nations developed: this was the intersection of anti-colonialism and the Cold War. In these conflicts, both the United States and the Soviet Union competed for supremacy in an almost corporate fashion (and alongside corporate interests). Each nation, as CEO of its respective international organization (NATO and the Warsaw Pact), sought the acquisition of former colonies, attempting to organize them as subsidiary nations – vassals in the competing economic systems that the US and USSR embraced. Fought in Command Centers, on battlefields, in boardrooms, and through ideological narratives, this competition was an attempt, ultimately, to corner the political market, allowing the eventual winner to emerge as the world's only economic "superpower." While absolute dominion did not materialize (with organizations like the European Union and China emerging to fill the power vacuum left by the Soviet Union's collapse), this conflict between competing economic and social modes is at the forefront of science fiction during the Cold War era, and much of the popular science fiction that was written between the 1950s and the early 80s manifested these cultural concerns.

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Texts and authors representing this idea are myriad, from Heinlein to Asimov to Dick to

Le Guin, and, not surprisingly, these works are all heavily informed by the Vietnam War (1955-

1975) – arguably, the Cold War's prototypical conflict (as it was set in a former French colony

and fought between both U.S.- and Soviet-supported forces). Indeed, as Bruce Franklin asserts,

this war "cannot be dissociated from American SF, which shaped and was reshaped by the

nation's encounter with Vietnam" (341). As such a monumental event in the history of the

United States, dividing the nation more thoroughly than at any time since the Civil War,

"America's war in Indochina," as Franklin names it, marks a point in U.S. history of enormous

cultural change regarding the appropriate uses of the military, the United States' role in policing

the world, and its sense of supremacy on an international stage.

Writing during much of the 20th century (including the entire duration of the Vietnam

War), Robert Heinlein has, in particular, long been considered a representative of mainstream

American culture. The oft-quoted Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin have even called Heinlein

(in *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision)* "the most typically American writer in all the ranks

of science fiction" (56). Similarly, Rafeeq McGiveron (in "'Starry-Eyed Internationalists' versus

the Social Darwinists: Heinlein's Transnational Governments") has gone so far as to say that

Heinlein has, in his work, shown "the fundamental dichotomies of the twentieth-century

American consciousness," with which "his very popular works perhaps shape America as much

as they reflect it" (53). As a representative of "American consciousness," Heinlein occupies a

particular historical space – one which allows his works to be understood as reflecting

contemporary issues in society. Thus, a text like *Sixth Column*, first published serially in 1941,

is imbued with the rising racism within the U.S. against people of East Asian descent. The story

details a group of U.S. scientists who create a weapon that kills the occupying Japanese because

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of some defect in their East Asian physiology. Similarly, a later novel like *Farnham's Freehold* (1965) tackles issues of racial inequality, as the arguably racist story details a white family being thrown into a future in which African-Americans are at the top of the social hierarchy, while those of European descent are servants and slaves (and occasionally dinner). Essentially, the thematic elements of his novels are inextricably tied to larger, contemporary cultural issues, representing, as McGiveron calls it, those "fundamental dichotomies" that inhabit U.S. worldviews.

In order to consider science fiction's power to represent and shape cultural values, I will consider the relationship between two science fiction novels – *Starship Troopers* by Robert A. Heinlein, winner of the 1960 Hugo Award (high honors in the sci-fi community), and *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card, winner of the 1985 Hugo Award. Essentially, these two novels act as historical bookends of the Vietnam War era – the former written in 1959 (four years after the war's inception) and the latter first written as a short story in 1977 but later expanded in 1985 (ten years after the war's end). Given this historical context, it will be possible to consider how these books, in conjunction with one another, represent changing cultural mores in the U.S. during this time period. I will argue that *Ender's Game* is not only a retelling of *Starship Troopers* (recycling the basic, overall premise) but also a reconceptualizing of U.S. cultural values regarding the military and societal structure found within the former work. Essentially, I will argue that by using the same militaristic framework as its predecessor, *Ender's Game* alters the relationship between the humans and the insectoid alien menace in that earlier novel. The relationship built on the inscrutability of the foreigner – analogous to U.S. policies regarding Soviet-style communism – is reconfigured as a mutual understanding between opposing cultures. Humanity and the buggers might be read as allegorical stand-ins for the United States and the

Soviet Union. Ultimately, as Tim Blackmore argues, "the text shows that Card engages in a critique of the late twentieth-century military paradigm" (124), eschewing Heinlein's earlier model in favor of a more qualified approach to international relations. Eventually, I will argue that Card achieves this re-envisioning by taking Heinlein's portrayal of foreign diplomacy in *Starship Troopers* to its logical conclusion. While *Starship Troopers* ends with the protagonist, Juan Rico, rejoining his comrades for humankind's continuing defense against the bugs' onslaught, *Ender's Game* ends with its protagonist, Ender Wiggin (who is treated as a sort of messianic figure, come to ultimately liberate humanity from the spectre of death), actually annihilating the bugger menace. In both books, the protagonists are ostensibly willing tools being used in the active defense of his species and planet; however, too late does Ender realize that he has, in actuality, been entirely tricked into this position, ultimately fighting a war that he does not believe in, against an enemy that he does not actually hate.

In the case of both books, a process of ideological self-awareness is undertaken by the main characters, which is important for understanding each book's historical context, with *Starship Troopers* rooted in the beginning of the Cold War and *Ender's Game* at its end. Essentially, the extent to which they consider their relationship to the military power structure around them has a direct allegorical relationship to conceptions of the military by U.S. citizenry during their publications, and I will explore this topic by considering how Rico acts as a willing tool, whereas Ender exists as an unwitting one. Regarding this realization of their utility as military tools (with both positive and negative connotations), in both cases "it can be seen that these works are also *Bildungsromane* of the young warrior in which the experiences of military training and combat serve as a kind of apprenticeship in the art of life and of death" (Hall 154). Essentially, as Hall asserts, each novel traces in a young character "the transition from

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inexperience and immaturity," growing and learning from personal experience, "until finally he gains enough insight to achieve a personal transformation that allows him to adapt to the demands of his times and environment" (Hall 153). It is true that both texts tell the story of a young person (in *Ender's Game*, an actual child) as he shifts from inexperienced, directionless youth to seasoned veteran, transitioning from an unformed or inconsistent personal ideology to a (theoretically) solid intellectual and moral framework. However, it will also be important to remember that Ender will eventually take his understanding of his role as a military tool one step further than Rico. Indeed, while Rico's awakening is patriarchal and militaristic, Ender shifts to a sort of non-normative, messianic figure, in which he comes to identify with the buggers and their Queen, two words with obvious homosexual undertones. Through this process, he eventually reimagines the former character's willing self-sacrifice for a government that is portrayed as being entirely righteous and good, shifting the paradigm of defending humanity from some actual menace to a model in which the military does not necessarily act strictly for the benefit of humankind.

As a *Bildungsroman*, *Starship Troopers* traces the path of Juan Rico as he develops from "an undisciplined, unreflective civilian into not merely a battle-tested leader of men, but a war-lover" (Showalter 114), fighting all across the galaxy to uphold honor and to protect his planet and its state. Importantly, he exists in a society that exalts the nobility of self-sacrifice and enforces a rigid social order, in which universal suffrage is nonexistent, and only military veterans are allowed to vote, hold office, be policemen, or teach history in school. However, while militarism runs rampant through the novel, it is important in its historical context that humanity did not start the war against the Arachnids (the technical name for the alien menace). Rather, the bugs are portrayed in every case as the aggressors, bombing Earth, and wiping out

Buenos Aires, the hometown of Juan Rico, as well as conquering numerous other territories long possessed by humanity. Thus, while the military world government, or "Terran Federation," exerts vast powers over its civilians (the nonvoting masses), it does so ultimately to protect that population from annihilation. In the context of the novel, the government is simply asking its peoples to make a hard choice, broadcasting "a call to arms to those who would remain free" (McGiveron 54). Heinlein represents the necessity of allowing yourself to become a tool of a higher power, especially if it means protecting one's way of life or family (or species). It is exactly this call that Juan Rico answers, sacrificing the rights to his own will and even his very life in order to righteously defend Earth and humanity's right to exist in the face of a hostile, foreign (and communistic) enemy.

As Hall observes in *Starship Troopers*, "Johnnie Rico develops into a good soldier committed to the eradication of the bugs; he also becomes perhaps the ideal citizen … because he accepts completely the pseudo-Darwinian rationale behind the Terran Federation's expansionist doctrines" (Hall 155). Johnny has evolved from thoughtless student, whose principal personal occupations involved chasing skirts and playing scientist in his friend Carl's lab (Heinlein 22), to a defender of the homeland and willing tool of the military in defense of his species. This issue of the soldier as a tool of his government becomes vital to understanding these books in their historical context later on, but for now it is important simply to remember that, through his hardships in military service and his firsthand experience with the bugs, including their destruction of his hometown and the murder of his mother, Rico comes to understand that his government's view on the alien menace is the only possibly true one. In recognizing the hard, but ultimately correct, decisions that his government must make, Rico

satisfies the criteria of the *Bildungsroman* that Heinlein sets up for him: he becomes willingly

indoctrinated in the ways of colonialism and imperialism.

This setup is rooted thoroughly in the mindsets of late 1950s America and beyond. The

United States was still energized over its victories in Europe and East Asia in the Second World

War, and though the military was a conscripted force (unlike that in *Starship Troopers,* which is

all volunteer), there was still an effusive sense of pride in the military. The armed forces at this

time, made up of all young men like Rico and the other Roughnecks, knew that their position

was one of trust. For members of the U.S. armed forces, while fighting in a "just war," there was

the easy sense that the military existed to protect the weak, overthrow the brutal, and enforce

democracy and peace. Like Rico and the other troopers, they knew that they would not have

been committed to war, would not have been asked to make "the ultimate sacrifice," as it is so

tritely called, were it not for the most important reason imaginable – the very survival of their

way of life. The U.S.'s involvement in Vietnam, then, changed this perception of the military as

an instrument of justice, and created a violent cultural backlash to the perceived misuse of

America's youth, fighting a war of imperialism in Indochina.[1] Created at the War's end, Ender

comes to represent this change, and his eventual realization of his true role in the military power

structure is vital to his character's transition from a child unencumbered by worldly concerns to

an adult capable of rational, intelligent thought.

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[1] Guttmann, Allen. "Protest Against the Vietnam War." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 382 (1969): 56-63. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Mar. 2011.

Fisher, Christopher T. "Nation Building and the Vietnam War: A Historiography." *Pacific Historical Review* 74.3 (2005): 441-456. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Mar. 2011.

Interestingly, Ender's eventual understanding of the true relationship between humanity and the buggers (compared to Rico's blank acceptance of the social view that the Arachnids are the absolute enemy) is the final step in his personal evolution. It is not until this is in place that the novel "fully reflects the principal elements of the *Bildungsroman*" (Hall 157). Much like the military-ruled government of *Starship Troopers*, the International Fleet, which is, in principle, tempered by the civilian U.S. Office of the Hegemon and the Warsaw Pact's Polemarch, has the ability to requisition anything it needs, especially if it is in some way useful to mankind in its struggle against the buggers. Again, mankind is fighting an insect enemy from outer space, battling, or so they have convinced themselves, for its very right to exist. In this environment, Ender Wiggin undergoes a transformation that is identical to Rico's, shifting from intelligent but innocent youth to an individual who carries the burdens of having to make tough, life-altering decisions, knowing that he must make "a choice between his own grisly death and an even worse murder" (Card 65). Like Rico, he is convinced early on that the role he will play in the armed forces is a just one. The members of the military who oversee his education, both in the classroom and on the battlefield, have assured him over and over again that if mankind fails to eliminate the buggers as a threat, then it will only be a matter of time before the aliens come to Earth and destroy them. In this understanding, he partially satisfies the requirements for the *Bildungsroman*, as he transitions from unknowing youth to a (presumably) well-informed and capable leader, filling the optimal social position laid out for him – that of military commander. However, while Rico's evolution of thought ends here, glorifying the state and its defense of humanity, as Heinlein must have intended, Card has Ender take things one step further: Ender Wiggin begins to think for himself. He starts to question the military establishment and its party-line propaganda concerning mankind's enemies. Thus, while Heinlein's work is deeply rooted in

the Cold War rhetoric that would see Soviet-style Communism and the Soviet Union as some

eternal and irredeemable enemy, Card reimagines this relationship: Ender realizes in a climactic

moment that, rather than protecting mankind from the bugger menace, he himself has actually

been leading mankind's fleets in its own war of aggression, unwittingly conquering planet after

planet from the buggers, capturing the territory to allow humanity to spread to the ends of the

Universe in the buggers' place. In this way, Ender takes his intellectual evolution one step

further than Rico: he understands (albeit, too late to change anything) that his force was not

necessarily a force for good, battling the buggers, the ultimate force of evil. Rather, he comes to

understand that each side possesses a qualified morality, and that both have committed terrible

atrocities in the name of their species, but that both are capable of finding middle ground.

As stated, both Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* and Orson Scott Card's *Ender's

Game* are organized around interstellar wars, fought against insectoid aliens who have struck

Earth without reason and caused untold devastation. Of course, given common Cold War

rhetoric and the nature of insect social organization, the bugs/buggers are an easy stand-in for

any socialist or communist political organization, such as that of the Soviets. Historically, while

Soviet communism would have been (by the very definition of the Russian word "soviet")

organized around representative councils, more imprecise notions of the nature of communism

simply consider the purported ideal that all people should be completely equal within society –

equal in civil rights, housing, pay, etc. This (perhaps mis-)conception of communism is

extremely prevalent in many forms of popular media – especially in science fiction, with

seemingly every dystopia, from "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut to George Orwell's

1984, offering some derivation of this idea. *Starship Troopers* and *Ender's Game* are no

exception. Of course, though this may merely be an oversimplification of a complex umbrella of

social theories, based on this singule criterion, all eusocial insects (meaning those with a highly-stratified social organization, including a reproductive queen and sterile soldiers and workers, such as ants, bees, and, by extension, the bugs and buggers of both novels) represent the perfect communist society, with every member living and dying for each other, sharing everything in perfect equality, and always acting "in perfect unity" (Card 188). These organisms do not act independently, but rather have their entire lives coordinated by their "brain bugs" (in *Starship Troopers*) or "Hive Queens" (in *Ender's Game*). Mazer Rackham, one of Ender's mentors and the only person to ever defeat the buggers in open combat, explains this idea:

> "Every ship acts like part of a single organism. It responds the way your body responds during combat, different parts automatically, thoughtlessly doing everything they're supposed to do. They aren't having a mental conversation between people with different thought processes. All their thoughts are present, together, at once."
>
> "A single person, and each bugger is like a hand or a foot?"
>
> "Yes." (Card 267-8)

In this way, the buggers stand opposed to the purported essence of U.S. identity: namely, individualism and the rugged ability to survive on one's own, without the help of any other. This component of U.S. identity, of course, has its origins in the stories told and retold about every element of U.S. history, from the transcendental philosophies of Emerson and Thoreau to the application of Manifest Destiny in the conquest of the American West, through to the California Gold Rush, and arguably all the way up to the Moon landings and Martian robotic explorations. Even today, components of everyday life in the United States reflect this ideal: economic institutions and practices like the stock market and housing speculation are often represented as

frontier spaces, regulated only by concepts like supply and demand. These are still rugged

places where a person might set out with nothing but his wits and a little seed money and become

a new Warren Buffett (or Carlos Slim). This is nothing like the "planned economy" of the

buggers. Mostly importantly, however, is that not only does this adherence to individualism

make humanity different from the buggers: it makes them superior. Mazer Rackham explains

this to Ender, as well, when they are discussing how to defeat the buggers:

> Every single one of our ships contains an intelligent human being who's thinking on his
>
> own. Every one of us is capable of coming up with a brilliant solution to a problem. They
>
> can only come up with one brilliant solution at a time. The buggers think fast, but they
>
> aren't smart all over (Card 271).

By establishing conflicts between a collection of individuals who combine their individual

talents against an aggressive, ultra-collectivist society, both Heinlein and Card equate the

concept of individualism with humanity: essentially, to be human is to be an individual, and to be

an individual is to be an American. Living collectively, as people might that under a communist

or socialist system, is inherently inhuman. In the contexts of both novels, as "sentient beings

with an independent genetic future" (Card 270), every individual must achieve or fail on her

own. Of course, the Cold War rhetoric of reliance on individualism allowed the United States to

remain intransigently opposed to the other superpower of the world – essentially their main

competitor for international hegemony. This rhetoric, thus, is reflected by *Starship Troopers* and

much of *Ender's Game*, with both books detailing at length the necessity of humanity's

diametric opposition to the bugs and buggers, who are collectively linked so thoroughly that they

even "dream each other's dreams" (Card 321).

This diametric opposition, coupled with the fact that the bugs and buggers struck first in both novels, allows for a consideration of the just war theory and its application to wars of the "real world" – namely, Vietnam and the Cold War. Essentially, proponents of the just war theory hold that war should only be fought with good reason, such as against genocide or extreme oppression or murderous insectoid space aliens from beyond the moon: essentially, war should only be used either when all other diplomatic exercises have failed or as a defensive mechanism following external aggression. "Just war theorists give a qualified moral permission to war by seeing it as one of the instruments of justice between communities or nation-states" (Ilesanmi 140), one that should not be undertaken lightly, but rather should be used only in the most dire situations. World War II, as an example, is almost universally considered a just war (Walzer 3). With the accompanying rise of fascism, widespread genocides and ethnic cleansings, and attacks by foreign powers on U.S. interests, the justification for the United States to commit troops and resources to fighting was, presumably, clear. [2]

Everett Carl Dolman underscores this concept of the military as a force for potential good in his article "Military, Democracy, and the State in Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*." In

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[2] Although, as with everything, this in itself is a complicated matter, since the main allies of the U.S. were the United Kingdom, a parliamentary monarchy, and the U.S.S.R., a Stalinist regime under the man himself. The United States only opposed the Nazis because Germany was at war with the United Kingdom, and England is a traditional U.S. ally. For example, the Weimar Republic, which preceded the Nazi takeover of Germany, was never entirely supported by the US, and one of its major failings was due to a complex series of debts being funneled from the Republic to U.S. banks. That, combined with the fact that the deportation of individuals to concentration camps started eight years before the U.S. even entered the conflict, makes the application of just war theory in describing U.S. involvement in WWII somewhat incomplete. One could argue, however, that World War II is still a sufficient example of the application of the Just War theory because it did, as a by-product, eventually end the Holocaust and reestablish Western-style, nation-state-based democracy to lands held under dictatorships. In this way, the military (rather than merely a tool of imperialism or special interest groups) did actively foster peace and democracy in hostile lands.

defending the novel from accusations of militarism, Dolman asserts it is not necessarily true that "the occurrence of democratic and military values in a single state is the embodiment of paradox" (197), and that instead, the government of *Starship Troopers*, though run exclusively by veterans, is still "a liberal, representative democracy" (197). Citing Otto Hintze, "a liberal Prusso-German constitutional historian" (200), Dolman asserts that "The military can be thought to have two primary roles: defense of the state from external threat and defense of the government from internal threat" (203). He easily writes off the latter condition (since people are either too happy or too weak to revolt in *Starship Troopers*), and claims that Heinlein has essentially perfected the former: *Starship Troopers*' society and government is maintained by the military, but this force is used only in the protection of mankind. While this is problematic (considering there are 31 criminal offenses for which one might receive the death penalty), the military in *Starship Troopers* is universally portrayed positively. This potential for punishment is necessary in the context of the novel to maintain a status quo that the people, if not totally in favor of, are at least happily indifferent towards. Presumably, punishment might even act as a potential crime deterrent. In the binary world of *Starship Troopers*, where good and evil, right and wrong, are distinct, we can assume that these punishments would only be meted out for crimes that absolutely warranted them – crimes that threatened the smooth functioning of society. Interestingly, in this way, any potential dissidence can be linked to the bugs, as the war that humanity fights in *Starship Troopers* (like the potential war between the U.S. and communist Russia) is one fought against a foe that seeks to aggressively enforce an alien mode of social organization on the individualists of humanity – a social organization that would undoubtedly disrupt Heinlein's military utopia.

Rafeeq McGiveron corroborates Dolman's defense of *Starship Troopers*' potential

militarism, suggesting that all of Heinlein's novels, and in particular *Starship Troopers*, advocate

"a justifiable defense rather than a rapacious offense" (54). He asserts that the international

governments of Heinlein's early works, such as *Starship Troopers*, are "driven less by simple

national self-interest than by self-sacrificing idealism and notions of collective security" (55),

and that the "central government goes beyond mere restrained peacekeeping to the protection of

human lives and rights" (58).

In *Ender's Game*, the military establishment works within the same paradigm: their war

is not being fought against the buggers for no reason. Rather, it is supposedly as a last resort

against an enemy that has nearly wiped humankind from the Universe. As a near-messianic

figure, Ender is being raised to fight and win the war in the very defense of human civilization

(or so he is told). To the military establishment, the buggers *must* be wiped out because they

exist as a threat to the continuation of humanity: "They decided that when they attacked us. It

wasn't your [Ender's] fault. It's what had to happen" (Card 297). This war, this act of genocide

against an alien race, is therefore justifiable: "we didn't go to them first, they came to us. If they

were going to leave us alone, they could have done it a hundred years ago, before the First

Invasion" (Card 253). To summarize in classic wartime rhetoric, "We didn't start this war, but

we'll damned well finish it." The military infrastructure of *Ender's Game*, like that of *Starship

Troopers*, has been established with the purported purpose of waging a just war in the defense of

a weaker species (namely, themselves).

This *jus ad bellum* in both novels is tied to the domino theory. Like the United States and

the Soviet Union, the empires of *Starship Troopers* understand that, with their irreconcilable

differences and their ambition to spread to worlds beyond, they must eventually come into

conflict for resources they both want and need. For this reason, like the United States' Truman

Doctrine (which promised to defend countries from falling to Soviet-style communism), both

humanity and the bugs know that they must conquer their potential future enemy now, before

they have spread to other worlds with more resources. This is the domino theory: in real world

terms, Cold War politicians in the U.S. feared that if one country in a region (such as Vietnam or

Cambodia) fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, it would weaken its neighbors, creating a

chain reaction that might topple other, nearby U.S.-friendly states until all the world was under

Soviet sway. For this reason, the United States justified participation in the Vietnam and Korean

Wars, Operation Condor, the assassinations of Salvador Allende and Che Guevara, and countless

other actions. From their perspective, the only possible countermeasure against a Stalinist

revolutionary wave was containment.

This same policy of containment can be seen in *Starship Troopers*, as both the bugs and

humanity try to limit the influence and territorial possession of the other. A member of the

military succinctly explains this: "Either we spread and wipe out the bugs, or they spread and

wipe us out" (Heinlein 185-6). Coexistence is impossible, and the only way to ensure

humanity's continued existence is to make hard decisions about an enemy who poses the threat

of annihilation. Indeed, the bugs have already seen fit to wipe out Buenos Aires and San

Francisco, not to mention numerous other outposts of humanity. A friend of Rico's father tells

him to look up her civilian friends when he gets to Faraway, a colony world. He replies, "I told

her, as gently as I could, that it seemed unlikely, since the Arachnids had occupied Faraway"

(Heinlein 171). He strongly implies that the bugs are taking colonized human planets, cleansing

them of their inhabitants, and claiming the lands as their own. Little indication is given on how

the war started, but in almost every instance, the bugs are the aggressors – leap-frogging from

colony to colony, killing everyone in their path. This fear of annihilation is likewise highlighted

when Rico explains the nature of Sanctuary, another colony planet. He asserts that he has never

learned the planet's coordinates, because "with the possibility that Luna Base might be taken and

Terra herself occupied, the federation kept as much of its beef as possible at Sanctuary"

(Heinlein 155). If Earth proper fell, with all of its billions of people, humanity could carry on the

fight, defending itself and its right to exist to the last man.

This same concept is likewise addressed in *Ender's Game*: "When it comes down to it,

though, the real decision is inevitable: If one of us has to be destroyed, let's make damn sure

we're the ones alive at the end" (Card 253). That the buggers were moving aggressively onto

humanity's turf is apparent: they dug an "advance post in the First Invasion" (Card 269) into

Eros, a near-Earth asteroid just a stone's throw away. Likewise, "the Second Invasion was a

colony—the queen was coming to populate the Earth" (Card 271). This is the very definition of

a war of aggression, and thus begs the military sentiment that "if [humanity] can we'll kill every

last one of the buggers, and if they can they'll kill every last one of us" (Card 254). From the

perspective of the military, there is no other way.

The implication, then, is that the use of force is acceptable, not to lay claim to foreign

lands and resources, increasing the *lebensraum* of humanity, but rather to protect mankind from

the outside threat of subjugation and annihilation. As McGiveron asserts regarding *Starship

Troopers*, "Heinlein rarely says that might makes right; he is correct, however, in reminding us

that might may be necessary to *preserve* right" (67). Based on this, and clues from the text,

McGiveron embraces the classical argument for the "just war." Violence is ubiquitous, but its

importance is paramount: it is necessary that these young men and women fight, and often die,

not in vain, but for the very survival of their loved ones and their species.

Card complicates the application of the just war theory and Heinlein's easy binary of "us against them," however. While certainly there are factions within *Ender's Game* that adhere strongly to this notion (such as Graff and Rackham), there exists a deeper layer of intent and understanding that the military establishment ignores. An important difference between these two novels is this subtext: in *Starship Troopers*, the reason the bugs attack is because they want to destroy humanity and steal their planets. In *Ender's Game*, this same reason is *assumed* to be why the buggers advance against Earth. However, as it turns out and as Ender slowly realizes, this is not actually the case. Rather, it is an absolute inability to communicate with one another that is the root of their conflict: the buggers were not coming to wipe out what they considered an intelligent species that might one day threaten their superiority in the Universe. Instead, they were coming to colonize a planet devoid of their definition of intelligent life – namely, one that is completely linked through a central consciousness which is maintained telepathically. This mutual misunderstanding is key to recognizing the thematic differences between these two books. Because of their social organization and the fact that they communicate only through telepathy (and thus are physically incapable of conversing with humankind), the buggers do not see their actions in the same egregious light that the people of Earth do. As Mazer Rackham explains to Ender, to the buggers, killing a few marines is no big deal:

> "Why not? To them, losing a few crew members would be like clipping your nails. Nothing to get upset about. They probably thought they were routinely shutting down our communications by turning off the workers running the tug. Not murdering living, sentient beings with an independent genetic future. Murder's no big deal to them. Only queen killing, really, is murder, because only queen-killing closes off a genetic path." (Card 270)

Because of their differing interpretations of the same action (namely the buggers moving into Earth territory and attacking mankind), neither side can sense the true motivation of the opposing forces. It is not until Ender studies the buggers thoroughly enough to be able to defeat them that he begins to tease this knowledge apart.

Of course, his awakening to his own role in these proceedings comes far too late. He has already bought into the concept that ensnared Juan Rico in his own battle against an insectoid, alien menace – essentially that he must subsume his own rights, including the rights to his own life, in the selfless service of humankind. Interestingly, this model is centered on "an accepted paradox that the individual must be sacrificed in order to maintain the rights of other individuals" (Blackmore 125). Thus, while individualism is the reason that humankind is fighting so fiercely against their collectivist foe, occasionally society might require that "individuals…be bred to sacrifice themselves" (Card 253), as Graff asks Ender to do and as the military leaders of *Starship Troopers* likewise ask of Juan Rico. For this reason alone, the military takes it upon itself to teach "Ender in the art of war but deprive…him of his childhood" (Hall 157). Essentially, Ender needs no childhood. To give Ender a childhood, free from the stringent and exacting punishment that military training requires, might mean to rob every future generation's children of their childhood. In classic messianic form, Ender must ultimately be sacrificed so that future others may live.

Whether Ender deserves a childhood is irrelevant to the military, however, since the only reason that he is even alive is so that he may one day serve the state. Graff explains this to his parents during Ender's recruitment: "Of course we already have your consent, granted in writing at the time conception was confirmed, or he could not have been born. He has been ours since then, if he qualified" (Card 20). Ender Wiggin was not born: he was made. Thus, as a tool

specifically constructed for the task at hand – namely, defeating the buggers – Ender has no

choice but to fulfill the destiny given to him at his conception, doing as best he can, learning as

much as he can, so that one day he might be in a position to save humankind. As Blackmore

points out, "At the core of the military paradigm is a mechanistic view of humans, who are to be

shaped to the purposes of the machine" (125). Ender was created to fill a role. Indeed, this is

why he is named Ender: as one of his fellow soldiers in the Battle School says, it is "not a bad

name here. Ender. Finisher. Hey" (42). Fitting into a common trope of science fiction

(following in the footsteps of myriad others, such as recent examples like the Vault Dweller in

the video game *Fallout* or the Operative in the wildly popular film *Serenity)*, Ender is a tool

being used to chisel out a universe that is peaceful and safe for humanity, and thus one that will

have no place for a warrior and a murderer such as himself.

However, the military establishment's rightful use of Ender in this way, the same way

that Juan Rico is, in the context of the novel, justly and righteously used in *Starship Troopers*,

ultimately becomes suspect. While the government and military have control over people's

personal lives in both novels, composing every tier of the government in *Starship Troopers* (with

military vets making and enforcing all laws, including the 31 offenses that warrant the death

penalty) and composing a vital part of the government in *Ender's Game*, the latter book takes the

military's intrusion into the lives of everyday people – all in the name of the defense of

humankind – to a ludicrous degree. Though one must voluntarily serve in the military to prove

oneself worthy to belong to the decision-making apparatus of the government in *Starship

Troopers*, each individual in *Ender's Game* is measured for potential intelligence with an actual

brain stem implant known as a "monitor." This monitor keeps track of all the intricacies of a

subject's life – how he feels, what he sees, and possibly even what he thinks. On deciding to

take Ender up to the Battle School, the military personnel monitoring him claim: "I've watched

through his eyes, I've listened through his ears, and I tell you he's the one. Or at least as close as

we're going to get" (Card 1) to lead the military to victory over the buggers. This line opens the

novel, and immediately suggests that the military establishment's intrusion into the lives of

ordinary citizens knows no bounds. However, this is, as the military would argue, a necessary

intrusion into their lives because, though severely limiting the right to individualism that they are

purportedly defending in their war against the buggers, they also *must* be able to judge those

worthy of recruitment (quasi-voluntarily) into Earth's ranks of military leaders and decision

makers in order to find the perfect individual to save humankind. Essentially, though each novel

details a semi-fascistic, militaristic government, which limits personal liberty (such as voting in

Starship Troopers and reproductive rights in *Ender's Game*), Card extends this concept to the

breaking point in order to reconsider the relationship between citizens and the military and

specifically how the military manipulates popular sentiment to achieve esoteric and imperialistic

goals.

To do this, Card turns the military's screws a little more tightly, pushing deeper (as

compared to *Starship Troopers*) the role that the military establishment plays in everyday life:

for instance, they actively encourage eugenics in the purported free populations of the world,

deciding which people should have which sorts of children. They get away with this by saying

that it is all in the name of producing someone capable of saving Earth. This is, as it turns out,

Ender's origin: "Father came home and kept saying it was such a wonderful surprise, they had

such fantastic children that the government told them to have three, and now the government

didn't want any of them, so here they were with three" (15). The government *told* them to have

three children, and while Ender's parents were happy to oblige, to be the third child is to be

derided and ostracized, earning the epithetic appellation "Third." Interestingly, while the

government is encouraging the breeding of ultra-intelligent children, they are also denying others

who are incapable of having these brainy, bright children from reproducing at all. Ender's father

was the "seventh of nine children," which was by government mandate "unthinkable. Criminal."

In fact, Poland is still under sanctions for refusing to bow to government mandated population

control (Card 22). This fact points to the idea that the government is not controlling populations

simply through force, physically preventing people from having more children.[3] Instead, the

government also rules ideologically, having already convinced the peoples of the world that

having too many children is wrong because it is not in the interest of the Earth (unless that child

might turn out to be a brilliant space fleet commander, capable of destroying humanity's

enemies).

This, coupled with other oppressive tactics undertaken by the government, such as

censorship (Card 29) and warrantless searches (Card 135, 227), makes it painfully apparent that

the military-infused government has no qualms in stealing children away to make them into

military tools and assets, heartlessly tearing them from their families and lives and childhoods.

Like their policies regarding eugenics, the military establishment is able to take what it wants

simply by invoking the bugger menace: This is no more apparent than when Colonel Graff

finally convinces Ender Wiggin to attend the Battle School, that spinning space station orbiting

Earth. Though he tells Ender that he will likely not see his family again for many years, Ender

must be called upon to make a sacrifice: "Human beings are free except when humanity needs

them. Maybe humanity needs you. To do something. I think humanity needs me-to find out what

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[3] Interestingly, the question of abortions or higher taxes or some other penalty for population control lawbreakers is never addressed in the novel.

you're good for. We might both do despicable things, Ender, but if humankind survives, then we were good tools" (Card 35). As in *Starship Troopers*, the military infrastructure is asking the youth of society to make sacrifices and fight to defend humanity, and likewise just as in the earlier novel, this process is put in stark terms of survival against annihilation. After "the Scathing of China. The Battle of the Belt. Death and suffering and terror" (Card 25) everywhere, the disparate, individualist forces of humankind understand that they must band together in a militaristic New World Order if they are to have any hope of surviving. In their minds (like the rulers in *Starship Troopers)*, the threat of annihilation is real: early in the book, during Colonel Graff's recruitment of Ender, the older man explains just how serious the conflict is. He asserts: "They damn near wiped us out last time. They had us cold, outnumbered and outweaponed" (25). Thus, the nations of the world have come together to form a united world government in order to face that threat of annihilation, and Ender, as the individual with the most promising set of personality and intellectual traits, is thrust into a position of leadership in the hope that he might save humankind by wiping out its enemies.

However, what Ender does not understand, and what the military leadership either withholds from him or does not understand itself, is that the threat of the buggers is not real. Instead, it is being manufactured in order to maintain the status quo which maintains power in the hands of a few military leaders. Though Ender is one of the smartest people alive, it takes his fellow soldier and friend Dink (a Dutch cynic barely 13 years old) to explain it to him:

> "But that's what I came for," Ender said. "For them to make me into a tool. To
> save the world."
>
> "I can't believe you still believe it."
>
> "Believe what?"

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"The bugger menace. Save the world. Listen, Ender, if the buggers were coming back to get us, they'd *be here*. They aren't invading again. We beat them and they're gone…it's all fake. There *is* no war, and they're just screwing around with us."

"But why?"

"Because as long as people are afraid of the buggers, the [International Fleet] can stay in power, and as long as the I.F. is in power, certain countries can keep hegemony." (Card 110)

The military establishment of Ender's Game is made up of smart people. While no indication is given as to how old the Battle School is, the last war that humankind fought against the buggers was over eighty years before Ender's birth. This should indicate that those in positions of power have undergone training that was similar to Ender's, both physically and ideologically, having never fought the buggers themselves (with the exception of the exceptionally old Mazer Rackham), but having grown up with an ever-present spectre of war. Similarly, given the huge gap in time since humankind last saw the buggers, it should seem like humanity is in the clear. As Dink says, if the buggers wanted to finish mankind off, it would have already done so. In the perfect, imaginary world in which Ender would realize that he is indeed a tool, but not necessarily for the protection of mankind, he might have realized (as Dink has) that other, classic motivations for the war exist: the desire to stay in power and become fabulously wealthy, as Colonel Graff does simply by serving in a high-up position in the government (Card 306); the necessity for more land, so as to lift somewhat unpopular population control laws (308) and allow humankind to spread its seed through the universe; and the need simply to ensure humanity's dominance in that wide expanse of stars and nothingness. By setting the buggers up

as some ultimate enemy, ready at any moment to strike humankind down, the military

establishment creates a situation in which it "*appears* to be using force out of desperation, just as

Ender does when fighting Stilson and Bonzo, but it may simply prefer the role of aggressor.

Even if the latter is the correct motive, it is cloaked by the former" (Blackmore 129). In this

way, unlike the ruling military power structure of *Starship Troopers*, which fights against an

actual menace and threat of annihilation, the military of *Ender's Game* uses the threat of alien

invasion (like the threat of a Red invasion or the threat of terrorism) to maintain control. Thus,

"'the good of the whole' sanctions military atrocities" (Blackmore 126), and the great chain of

power remains unbroken, cycling through a hinted-at military-industrial complex, through which

"the I.F. was constantly casting off its old vehicles and purchasing the latest models" (Card 246).

As I quoted Blackmore earlier, the military's "mechanistic" view of the world means that while

Ender will be a tool for humanity's conquest of the buggers, so too are those aliens tools –

essentially, since the military establishment did not cause the buggers to invade, they can use

their role as victim of external aggression to profit enormously from the war that they alone

continue to maintain.

Though Ender recognizes he is a tool, and begins to rebel against the idea of being an

unwitting accomplice to the military's shady activities (including attempted and actual murder,

such as that of Bonzo, who tries to kill Ender, only to be unintentionally killed himself), he still

adheres to the ideology he has been taught– namely, that the buggers might come back and kill

everyone he loves. The military sets up an inescapable choice for Ender that he must either kill

or be killed (Card 65), and through this understanding, he agrees reluctantly to go along with his

training. He decides, "I'll become exactly the tool you want me to be […] but at least I won't be

fooled into it. I'll do it because I choose to, not because you tricked me, you sly bastard" (252).

Little does Ender know, he has only a partial understanding of his role as a tool of the military. Full understanding arrives too late: he has already committed genocide against the buggers, exacting humankind's pound of flesh in revenge for the buggers' earlier menace. After it is done and Ender realizes the actual (and terrible) nature of his existence as a military tool, Mazer Rackham explains to him, "You had to be a weapon, Ender. Like a gun…functioning perfectly but not knowing what you were aimed at. *We* aimed you" (298). Of course, the fact that he is an unwitting tool does not absolve Ender for his role in the annihilation of a sentient species: he is all the more guilty for allowing himself to be used unquestioningly.

Important to note, however, is the difference between Juan Rico's role as a tool in *Starship Troopers* and Ender's same role in *Ender's Game*. Rico's role is the moral and just one, fighting an enemy that has already killed his mother and will surely destroy his species. Ender's role is not so clear-cut:

> The adults, who trained Ender to win their war, are not concerned with the morality of what they have done to him. In making him the unwitting tool of their desires they have not only taken away his childhood but also violated his humanity. The war has been won without regard to the personal price their tool must pay. (Hall 158)

This violation of humanity and serious lapse of moral judgment is important in the context of comparing *Ender's Game* and *Starship Troopers*. They basically reflect the social considerations regarding the military at the time: having recently abandoned the fight in Vietnam, a war fought ostensibly because of the Truman Doctrine and the necessity of containing communism, the people of the United States were reconsidering how its soldiers were being used internationally. Although they were tools, like a lever gripped by the hand of the military establishment, the fulcrum of public opinion would no longer sightlessly approve the

moving of mountains: as Ender illustrates (and in contrast to Juan Rico), it was no longer simply

enough for the government and military to say, "Go and fight this war in this foreign place.

They are your enemies, never mind how come." By exposing the potential for misinformation

given to a population by a military influenced by ulterior motives, *Ender's Game* reflects the

popular movement in the U.S. (brought on by the war in Vietnam, in which people were drafted

into the increasingly unpopular conflict) for individuals to have more of a say in their

relationship to the military, including whether or not they would even like to serve.[4] However,

the end of conscription by national lottery following Vietnam was the beginning of choice, at

least, for many citizens – the choice of whether or not to support or oppose the wars waged by

their country.

Ender reflects this shift in sentiment through his eventual rehabilitation of the buggers

and their status as Other. While he could not have possibly understood the buggers from the

rhetoric thrown around the media and in popular culture, he eventually comes to identify

personally with the buggers, sharing their status as someone who is misunderstood and does not

fit into the standard power hierarchies of accepted society. Through this personal identification,

Ender not only redeems the buggers but also humanity itself.

Ender's strong relationship to the buggers is at first not willful. His brother forces the

identity of bugger onto him: while ridiculing him for his status as third born, Peter demands that

Ender "play buggers and astronauts" with him (Card 10). The game essentially involves Ender

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[4] Of course, this is complicated by the fact that the U.S. government still requires male citizens, upon their 18th birthday, to register with Selective Service – a governmental body that keeps prepared a long list of able-bodied men capable of being drafted by order of Congress. Similarly, although ostensibly an all-volunteer force, the military today heavily recruits from poor and minority populations, many of whom consider the military the only way to escape poverty.

wearing a bugger mask while Peter physically abuses him (11); however, by literally wearing the

effigy of the bugger enemy, Ender is physically linked to the bugger. Because Peter's abuse

stems from the fact that Ender is a Third and thus does not fit into the social and cultural

hierarchy of society, his forced masking as a bugger allows him to share their status as Other and

symbolically *become* a bugger. As a Third, he has essentially committed a crime simply by

being born: Given the limited space on Earth and the population controls that are in effect, he is

literally taking up space that other, more legitimate entities (the first children of the world) could

possess. Thus, by merely continuing to exist, Ender is essentially perpetrating the same crime as

that of the buggers – occupying space that does not rightfully belong to him.

While passively committing this offense, Ender's relationship to the buggers is deepened

by the military's insistence that he perpetrate another crime of which the buggers are guilty –

namely, that of forceful invasion. Like his forced acquiescence to Peter's demand that he wear

the bugger mask, Ender again has no choice in the matter: he is being fashioned to carry out the

will of the military-led government. Interestingly, Ender becomes a character of hybridity: he

has become a bugger-like entity in order to defend humanity, submissively acting to aggressively

exterminate Earth's enemies. Given Ender's strong association with the buggers, and,

subsequently, the homosexual connotation of words like "bugger" and "queen," Ender's

submissiveness and his status as Other ultimately renders him a non-normative character, with

his crime of invasion essentially a penetrative action. However, it is only through this

"queering" and hybridity that Ender becomes a redeemer of both humanity and the buggers,

reconciling them to one another, and allowing them to forgive each other's murderous

transgressions:

Ender becomes, in a sense, a savior for both humankind and the buggers. His quiet pleas

for understanding of the race destroyed in the xenophobic hysteria of the war is meant to

prepare the way for the salvation of the buggers. The buggers have arranged for Ender

himself to become the custodian of a cocoon for a hive-queen of their race, letting him

hold their future in his hands until he knows that the two races can peacefully coexist.

(Hall 158)

By becoming a hybridized actor, Ender comes to realizes that the buggers are not the enemy of

humanity, but rather humankind's interstellar sister: indeed, "The buggers were organisms that

could conceivably have evolved on Earth, if things had gone a different way a billion years ago.

At the molecular level there were no surprises. Even the genetic material was the same" (Card

248). Like the peacenik cliché that even though our skins are different colors, we bleed the same

blood, Card establishes that, even more basic than blood, the very essence of what makes a

person a citizen of Earth – namely, the identical genetic building blocks that she shares with all

other organisms there – likewise unites her to the buggers.

Interestingly, as Ender is learning the true nature of the buggers, so too are they coming

to understand Ender's kind. They have admitted the limitations of their brilliance (as Mazer

Rackham points out) and have accepted that they are a doomed species and that Ender is on his

way to finish them. In a desperate attempt to convey the knowledge they have regarding the

wars between their two species (knowledge about the fundamental nature of their conflict – an

inability to communicate), they begin to telepathically reach out to Ender in his dreams,

monitoring them, much as the military did at the outset of the novel, in the hope of some

breakthrough. On their planets, they begin to erect elaborate replicas of Ender's most

memorable dreams, all set at The End of the World, in the hopes of communicating some

message after they are gone – a message that says, "We are like you. We did not mean to murder, and when we understood, we never came again" (Card 320). Though it is too late to save the bulk of the bugger population, the buggers do leave an infant queen for him to find and, when the time comes that humanity and the buggers might be able to live in peace, to raise and restore the bugger species.

Regardless of Ender's attempts to rebrand the buggers in the minds of humanity, the novel still ends on a decidedly ambivalent note: after finding the last bugger left alive and vowing to reestablish her species, he anonymously publishes a book called *The Hive Queen* (told from the point of view of an alien queen), which gives the full, intricate history of her species. This book is meant to show humankind that the buggers were not some unknowable, evil force, but rather just another species with the same needs, wants, and feelings as humanity. Though the book is quite successful, and mankind slowly comes to understand the terrible wrong they have committed, no amount of effort on humanity's or Ender's part will ever return the buggers to their former glory as a species. The bugger Queen attains the status of critically endangered animal, whose only option for continued existence is acquiescence to the whims of the bugger's annihilator: Ender Wiggin. He whispers to the cocooned Queen, "I'll carry you…I'll go from world to world until I find a time and a place where you can come awake in safety'" (321). He promises this in an attempt to redeem himself, his species, and their terrible crimes, but he fails to consider that never will he be able to achieve this goal. He may have, through his book, gotten humanity to reconsider their relationship to the buggers in an intellectual sense, recognizing that their annihilation was perpetrated wrongly, but this is, of course, an easy conclusion to come to when the potential threat the buggers represented no longer exists. Indeed, humanity has already spread to all the formerly bugger worlds, so if Ender does one day

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reestablish the bugger Queen and her brood, there will be no place for her species to live and prosper.

However, this potential (or half-complete) rehabilitation of the buggers still reflects the cultural conception of foreign power during the texts' respective historical periods. Whereas Robert Heinlein reduces the enemies of the United States to mere insects, ready to be squashed by the boot of mighty U.S. militarism (and imperialism), Orson Scott Card fundamentally complicates that reduction (even if he does not take it quite far enough): at first, he maintains Heinlein's depiction of a foreign human power (Soviet communism) as insects. The buggers are treated as an absolutely unknowable force, completely foreign, and acting outside all rational, human thought, and impulse. They are not inhuman: they are *un*human. Like nightmares emerging from the black of sleep, the buggers, coming from the vast nothingness of space, enter humanity's realm, not as another thinking, feeling species, but as the dark monsters that mankind has always known to lurk just beyond the light of its campfires. With Ender's mutual understanding with the buggers, however, Card returns to them the potential for a kind of humanity – their rights to potential life, culture, peace, and self-determination. In the place of the buggers being the irredeemable monster of humanity's nightmares, human institutions instead fill that role, with the novel's military-led government existing as some lumbering ogre, stuffing children into its ever-hungry maw. Imperialistic, militaristic, even sadistic, the world government of *Ender's Game*, led by the International Fleet, commits atrocity after atrocity, both on a micro-scale and in epic proportions.

However, though highly critical of the military establishment and its relationship to the government, the novel is not necessarily just a simple critique of government. Indeed, Ender himself eventually becomes a civilian Governor of a colony world. Instead, the novel exists as a

criticism of the union of civilian and military institutions and their ascension to the top of the social hierarchy – a union and hierarchy trumpeted by Heinlein in *Starship Troopers*. In this way, Card reimagines the world of Starship Troopers (which he claims he has never read (Card Speech 15)) in order to complicate the Cold War underpinnings of earlier science fiction. Concurrent with the 1980s thaw between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., *Ender's Game,* by humanizing Earth's presumably eternal enemy and by contemplating the ramifications of destroying alien cultures to colonize their worlds, allegorically critiques and revises U.S. "red scare" conceptions, as well as the neocolonial process at the heart of the Cold War. In both texts, these aliens embody U.S. fears concerning the spread of the U.S.S.R.'s sphere of influence and the resultant potential for international isolation and subjugation as detailed by the domino theory. Arguably, like the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern Europe, the Caucasus Mountains, and the Central Asian Republics, the communistic bugs of both tales are spreading to new worlds (planets that are just as suitable for "human," or Western-capitalist, occupation), killing those that oppose them. However, the allegorical distinction lies in each race's motivation: while expansion is a push for *lebensraum* for the irredeemably evil empire of the bugs in *Starship Troopers*, Orson Scott Card complicates this notion by setting up a cultural mirror of sorts: while the buggers of *Ender's Game* are completely alien to mankind, *so is humanity to the insects.* Card makes the war not about some simple desire to spread to the ends of the universe but rather about the potential for misunderstanding when two cultures come into contact for the first time. By allegorically allowing Ender to partially redeem humanity's enemies, Card implies that the United States and the Soviet Union might not forever be locked in a struggle for ultimate supremacy – mutual understanding might, in fact, be possible.

Given this allegorical reading of both *Ender's Game* and *Starship Troopers*, the ability of science fiction to self-reflexively build on commonly-held social fears, changing and subverting them to represent the evolving cultural mores of society, becomes self-evident. Concerning the future-as-allegory-of-present tendencies of science fiction, the Marxist, structuralist scholar Fredric Jameson said that the genre has the ability to "detect and reveal…the outlines of some deeper and vaster narrative movement in which the groups of a given collectivity at a certain historical conjuncture anxiously interrogate their fate and explore it with hope or dread" (148). These "master-narratives of the political unconscious" (148), created collectively by interrelated texts addressing similar historical tropes and themes, inform the cultural, social, and economic underpinnings that make up the backbone of certain historical time periods. It is this notion precisely that underlies *Starship Troopers* and *Ender's Game*: from opposing historical vantage-points, the two texts examine the social phenomena surrounding the Cold War, allowing a "meta-narrative" to emerge. This meta-narrative reflects a change in the collective consciousness of the people of the United States over the course of the Cold War, and in doing so, shows how all works of science fiction, by reflecting contemporary cultural concerns through imaginations of the future, can be used as a tool of cultural criticism.

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