

history. I found this intriguing; it is almost as if Robinson's view of the future has evolved as he becomes older and the range and depth of his thought deepens, and our relationship with our own home planet is widely recognized as a relationship in profound crisis. Just like that, in fact.

I am not sure this is his finest work. For me that will probably always be his Mars trilogy. This future, because it is on a sort of parallel track, doesn't seem to refute that one, as much as suggest an alternative that makes, perhaps, more sense in 2015, with a different feeling about our future than we had back then. Which one is more realistic? I don't know, but I have my suspicions, and you may, too.

***The Stainless Steel Rat* by Harry Harrison**

I have just started to read something lighter, Harry Harrison's original 1961 novel *The Stainless Steel Rat*. I have been curious about this book for a while, especially after reading and enjoying *Bill, the Galactic Hero* (and, unfortunately, failing to enjoy the sequels). I have only read the first few pages, but it is entertaining so far.

I always find older science fiction interesting — it is often a bizarre combination of new technology that predicts the future, and old technology that the author somehow imagined would still be around. The result is often bizarre in retrospect. So, for example, we have the protagonist who pulls off a heist and gets on a spaceship to throw the authorities off his tail, but is carrying with him a suitcase full of cash, because money hundreds of years in the future looks very much like money in 1961. He can exceed the speed of light, but he gets his news from printed newspapers, delivered by pneumatic tube. But, perhaps this is not so unrealistic. After all, we were told to expect flying cars, but even the world of *Blade Runner* never included wi-fi, GPS, or cell phones — instead, Deckard calls Rachael on a video pay phone. Harry Harrison is not one to take himself too seriously, though, so it's quite possible, if not likely, that these anachronisms were entirely intentional.

I'll have an update after the end of the month. Until then, happy reading!

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August 24, 2015

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