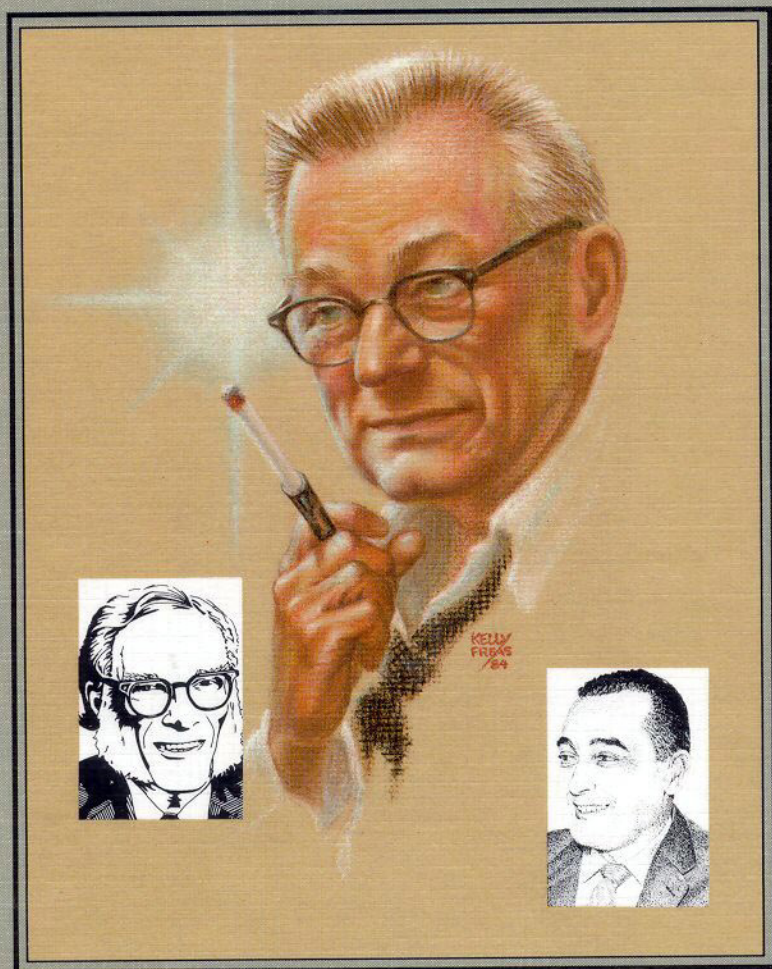


**The
John W. Campbell
Letters
with
Isaac Asimov & A.E. van Vogt
Volume II**



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Library of Congress Cataloging Number 84-71553

ISBN 0-931150-19-1

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Sample 72 pages to follow from 675 pages

Preface

Criteria for Selection

Unlike the more complex inclusion criteria of Volume I of *The John W. Campbell Letters*, the only criterion for selection in Volume II has been whether or not Isaac Asimov and/or A.E. van Vogt and/or their stories have been mentioned in John W. Campbell's letters. This single criterion has made my task vastly easier.

Volume I was very well received by almost all factions of fandom and academia. I believe that this second volume will be accepted equally well. I must, however, mention that the main criticism of the first volume was the absence of letters from authors to Campbell. There are very good reasons for the omission which include: (1) The enormous time required to search out authors and/or their estates to seek their legal permission to publish; (2) The large costs in so doing.

I leave that -- shudder -- academic task to others!

This Volume II does have some letters from Isaac Asimov and A.E. van Vogt to John W. Campbell -- with their permission.

Unfortunately, there are not enough letters from the authors to John W. Campbell, and apparently copies do not exist either in Campbell's meticulously preserved files, or in the authors'. I wanted to ask Isaac Asimov to rely on his eidetic memory and so reproduce all of his communications to Campbell for us -- but on second thought decided to leave that suggestion for others, also.

I won't go into remaining criticisms of the first volume (and possible criticisms of this volume), but answer all of them as I would imagine Isaac doing: "I did it the way I did it because that's the way I did it!"

The John W. Campbell Letters was conceived as a series of perhaps ten or twelve volumes. There's certainly enough letters in our files to do this, although not without some duplications, especially when the letters are classified in several different ways (as Volume I and Volume II represent). The overall concept of a series of volumes, then, was also meant to satisfy two populations: (1) those who wish to write Science Fiction (specialized wordsmiths); and, (2) those who read Science Fiction (fandom) - - all this while maintaining academician accuracy for future generations.

AC Projects, Inc. is a very tiny publisher without the huge bucks required to generate sales sufficiently rapidly to quickly fulfill the dream of multiple volumes. All profits from the first volume have been saved to generate this second volume, and that has taken five years.

Not that the first volume is(was) not popular with diverse populations, but that advertising and distribution is(was) simply not available.

If you wish to order the first Volume of *The John W. Campbell Let-*

ters, we still have available both the paperback edition (\$5.95) and the limited, numbered hardcover copy (\$35.00). This Volume II is available only in the hardcover copy (\$45.00).

AC Projects, Inc. also offers a hardcover copy of *The Battle of Forever* by A.E. van Vogt, limited numbered, signed edition (\$14.95) and the trade edition, hardcover, (\$9.95). This edition is beautifully illustrated by Bob Maurus.

There is also available *The Laughing Terran* and *Spork of the Ayor* both hardcover (Robert Hale) by Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr. (\$5.95).

All books may be ordered through distributors or direct from AC Projects, Inc.

Acknowledgement

Again I wish to thank Leslyn Campbell Randazzo and Philinda Campbell Hammond for their continuing support and encouragement; and also Forrest E. Ackerman, Isaac Asimov, L. Ron Hubbard and A.E. van Vogt.

James Tollett (Chattanooga, TN) and Tom Gervais (Franklin, TN) helped with MS typing. As my fingers are no longer capable of sustained repetitive movements, I am quite grateful.

Appropriate forewords have been provided by Forrest E. Ackerman, Michael G. Adkisson, James Gunn, Ph.D., George Hay and Igor Toloconicov for which special acknowledgement is due.

The cover painting of John W. Campbell, Jr. was furnished by Kelly Freas, as well as additional, excellent advice.

Based on photographs either from John W. Campbell's files, or from Isaac Asimov and A.E. van Vogt all interior illustrations were drawn by France Watts.

My son Tony helped with editing and in other ways.

Volume I was typeset via expensive photographic paper, and with great flexibility for typesetting. This Volume II is typeset via Laserjet and the Pagemaker computer program, with inexpensive paper and low typesetting flexibility. I have left "orphans" and "widows" alone. I, alone, am responsible for this decision.

And finally, to all who've sent me their good comments about the first Volume, who've asked for the second Volume, and those who've given continuous encouragement and support for this gigantic project -- thanks, thanks, many thanks!

Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.

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I, Asimov

by

James Gunn, Ph.D.

James Gunn is a most generous and talented writer. He has very kindly permitted use of "I, Asimov", in Volume II of The John W. Campbell Letters. I doubt that any lengthy search for material on Isaac Asimov, and his relationship to John W. Campbell, could have uncovered a gem so accurately cut and mounted. [Perry A. Chapdelaine: Ed.]

(From *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction* Copyright 1982 by Oxford University Press, Reprinted by Permission of James Gunn, Ph.D.)

Writing about the life of Isaac Asimov is like pouring water into the ocean. Asimov has written more about himself than any living author, and generally with frankness and insight. His autobiographical output began in 1962 with the first of his anthologies, *The Hugo Winners*, in which he inserted references to his own life in the introductions. Like many of the events in his life, this happened by accident. In his autobiography, Asimov mentions that he had never edited an anthology, thought it would be fun to try, but was not sure of his judgment in choosing the stories. The stories in *The Hugo Winners* already were chosen (they were the less-than-novel-length stories awarded Hugos by the World Science Fiction Conventions, beginning in 1955), and even the order was evident. All Asimov had to do was to write introductions. Since there was no question about the reason for the stories' inclusion, he decided to deal with the authors, and in a humorous way. The general introduction would be funny too and would deal with the fact that the editor had never won a Hugo. *The Hugo Winners*, indeed, became a highly personal book, as much about Asimov as about the Hugos or their winners. Since then, Asimov has gone on to edit more than a dozen anthologies and added comfortably to his more than two hundred volumes.

The Hugo Winners was breakthrough for Asimov in another area as well. Up to that point, Asimov says, his attempts at humor had been well received in person but poorly in print. Many readers of *The Hugo Winners* wrote to tell him that the introductions were the best part of the book. After that, collections of his own stories began appearing with introductions, at first (*The Rest of the Robots*, 1964) with notes about the stories salted with a few personal comments and later with

full-blown autobiographical detail. This technique reached its grandest expressions in *Opus 100* (1969), the story of how Asimov came to write one hundred books, with excerpts by category; *The Early Asimov* (1972), a kind of autobiography with illustrations from his early writing; and *Before the Golden Age* (1974), which carried Asimov back to his earliest memories and brought his life story up to *The Early Asimov*, illustrated with his favorite science-fiction stories read between 1931 and 1938. All of these works were limbering-up exercises for the massive autobiography in two volumes, the first of which came out in 1979 as his 200th book (along with *Opus 200*, which he put together in fairness to Houghton Mifflin, which had published *Opus 100*). The autobiography offers 1560 pages of Asimov's life story, complete with photographs, a list of his two hundred books, and indexes (which, he informs us, he does not trust anyone else to do).

There have been a great many words about the life of a man who admits he has "never done anything." They have largely progressed from "and then I read" to "and then I wrote" because Asimov's life has been woven from the warp and woof of reading and writing. The triumph of his writing skill is that he makes it all so readable.

This kind of obsession with self might be insufferable in a person who was not at the same time openly amazed at the good fortune, success, plaudits, renown, and wealth that have come his way. Asimov has been greatly honored and richly rewarded for remarkable achievements. Even so, to interpret everything in terms of one's own reaction to it, including World War II, may seem excessively egotistical. But Asimov's attitude of "cheerful self-appreciation," which sometimes breaks over into "charming Asimovian immodesties" (a phrase coined by a Doubleday editor in response to a *Time* magazine article quoting some of Asimov's self-praise), is balanced by disarming Asimovian self-denigration.

In his autobiographical writings and comments, Asimov continually invites the reader to share his triumphs, to laugh at his blunders and lack of sophistication, and to wonder, with him, at the rise to prominence of a bright Jewish boy brought to this country from Russia at the age of three and raised in a succession of Brooklyn candy stores. Asimov is aided too by the fact that his readers are predisposed to enjoy his success with him. Some are admirers of his science popularizations and other non-fiction books and are curious about his earlier life; others are science-fiction readers and fans, and the science-fiction community still retains much of the solidarity and lack of envy of its early ghetto days.

The problem remains: what more can a critic say about Asimov's

life and work that Asimov himself hasn't said already in nearly a million well-chosen words? Asimov's autobiographical writings are both an asset and an intimidation, revealing priceless information about the circumstances of creation and publication but also rendering redundant the critic's job of digging out little-known facts about life and work. Asimov's life is an open book — in fact, two hundred more open books.

Well, the critic can tell the Asimov story more selectively and send the still curious on to fuller accounts elsewhere, bring the details of the life into focus in illuminating the work, and explain the work in terms of a thesis that may be too close to Asimov for him to perceive. The critic also has an opportunity to comment on the state of criticism as well as the work and the author at hand. One reason for undertaking this study was the conviction that much criticism of science fiction has been misguided and particularly that critics of Asimov's work have headed up false trails, trying to bring to the analysis of Asimov's fiction traditional methods and traditional criteria that are unproductive when applied to Asimov and to much other science fiction. What I found myself doing as I began writing, then, was blending biographical, sociological, publishing, and critical considerations into what I later perceived (perhaps without sufficient perspective) was something a bit unusual in criticism, perhaps unnatural in normal circumstances, that I eventually thought of calling "criticism in context."

Within the following chapters, for instance, the reader will find a number of plot summaries. These are desirable for several reasons: first, because the reader may be familiar with many Asimov's works but certainly not all; second, because the reader may remember the general outlines of stories and novels but not the revealing details; and third (and most important), because what happens is the most important aspect of Asimov's fiction (and most other science fiction) and what happens is revealed in plot.

Other matters that I found important as I got into my consideration of Asimov's work were the conditions under which the fiction was written and the way in which it was published. Asimov himself keeps referring to these matters in his autobiographical writings; he thinks they were important to what he wrote and didn't write, and so do I. In one footnote in his autobiography, he writes:

"In this book I am going to pay considerable attention to the details of the money I received for stories and other things. Perhaps I should be noble enough to rise above such sordid things as money, but the fact is I couldn't and didn't. The money I earned — or didn't earn — has influenced my path-

way through life, and I must go into the financial details if the pathway is to make sense."

In the course of the chapters that follow, the reader will find frequent mention of why the fiction was written and how it got into print. The goal of the science-fiction writer was to get published, and the writing done was shaped by what was read in the magazines, what was said by an editor, what was paid for a story, and sometimes how readers responded. More traditional critics may feel that such concerns disqualify the writing from serious literary study. They are wrong: scholars have been trying for centuries to ferret out the same kind of information about Shakespeare's plays.

Asimov's early ambition, for instance, was to sell stories to *Astounding Science Fiction*. Two of his stories were published in *Amazing Stories* before one appeared in *Astounding*; only the *Astounding* story really mattered to him. The relationship between Asimov and John W. Campbell, editor of *Astounding* beginning in 1937, was influential in Asimov's development. Asimov gives Campbell most of the credit for his early science fiction and even his later writing career.

In the analysis of Asimov's fiction that makes up most of this book, then, the reader will find mixed in with the critical comments many details of Asimov's life as they relate to his writing. This is more of his life than one might think: as Asimov himself recognizes, his life was his writing, and his other relationships were either detractions from or contributions to it.

Asimov provides a couple of illustrative anecdotes. When he received copies of his forty-first book from Houghton Mifflin, he mentioned to his wife the possibility of reaching a hundred books before he died. She shook her head and said, "What good will it be if you then regret having spent your life writing books while all the essence of life passes you by?" And Asimov replied, "But for me the essence of life *is* writing. In fact, if I do manage to publish a hundred books, and if I then die, my last words are likely to be, 'Only a hundred!'"

His daughter Robyn asked him to suppose he had to choose between her and — writing. Asimov recalls he said, "Why, I would choose you, dear." And adds, "*But I hesitated* — and she noticed that, too."

Asimov was born January 2, 1920 (as nearly as his parents could calculate; it may have been as early as October 4, 1919) in Petrovichi, U.S.S.R. Petrovichi is a small town about fifty-five miles south of Smolensk and about two hundred fifty miles southwest of Moscow. When Asimov was three, his parents emigrated with him to the United States, at the invitation and sponsorship of his mother's older half-

brother. They settled in Brooklyn, where Asimov's father, handicapped by his lack of English and of job experience, bought a candy store in 1926. The candy store, and its successors, became a major part of Asimov's existence. "It was open seven days a week and eighteen hours a day," he reports in his autobiography, "so my father and mother had to take turns running it, and I had to pitch in, too."

The other important fact of Asimov's youth was his precocity. He had an unusual ability to learn and, as he later discovered, an unusually retentive memory. They were to be major assets in his life and career. He taught himself to read at the age of five, entered the first grade before he was six (his mother lied about his age), and became the brightest student in his class early and continuously, even though he skipped half a year of kindergarten, half a year of first grade, and half a year of third grade and changed schools a couple of times.

Asimov's schoolboy practice was to read all his schoolbooks the first couple of days after he got them and then not refer to them again. He acquired a reputation as a child prodigy and a sense of his own superiority that he didn't mind letting other people see. They did not add to his popularity — he was considered a smart-alecky kid — but he did not have much association with others anyway. His work in the candy store kept him busy after school, and the seven-day week meant that he and his parents never visited anyone or had anyone visit them.

Asimov recalls that he was orphaned by the candy store (since he was deprived of his parents' companionship) as well as protected by it (since he knew where his parents were at all times). The candy store constricted and shaped his life until he left home. It also meant that he grew up largely in the company of adults when he was in the store, or in the company of books when he was not. Both no doubt contributed to his precocity.

Asimov completed junior high school in two years instead of three and entered Boys High School of Brooklyn, which at the time was a selective high school that had an excellent reputation for mathematics. He was twelve and a half upon entering, two and a half years younger than the normal age of fifteen. He continued to be sheltered: he had almost no contact with girls, as he might have had at a co-educational school. But in the world encapsulated in his autobiography almost everything happened for the best — how could it not have happened for the best when he rose so far from such humble beginnings? — and he reasons that though being segregated from girls may have kept him naive far into his adolescence, it also may have protected him from more severe symptoms of rejection, for he was so much younger than his female classmates. Moreover, he had a bad case of acne from twelve

to twenty.

High school, however, was the beginning of a series of disillusionments. Asimov discovered limits to his intellectual ability. He was not as good a mathematician as some of the other boys, who may not have been as intelligent but had a special feeling for math. He never made the math team. He discovered as well that other students could study harder and accomplish more; Asimov stuck by his “understanding-at-once-and-remembering-forever” pattern. He had to abandon his illusion of universal brilliance when he discovered, for instance, that he disliked and could never understand economics. And even his attempts at creative writing were ridiculed in a high-school writing class. This bothered him more than anything else because his ambition to write fiction had been growing since the age of eleven, when he had begun writing a series book for boys called *The Greenville Chums at College*, copying it out in longhand in nickel copy-books. When Asimov was fifteen his father had found \$10 to buy him his son a much-longed-for typewriter, an office-size model.

More disappointments awaited him. His father wanted his elder son (there were two other children, a girl, Marcia, and a boy, Stanley) to become a physician, and the fifteen-year-old Asimov had come to share this ambition. But getting into medical school was not easy; medical schools had quotas (negative, not positive) on the number of Jewish applicants they would accept. For a variety of reasons, Asimov was never to be admitted to the study of medicine. By then his goals had changed, however. After high school, he applied to Columbia College, but was rejected — possibly, he speculates, because he did not make a good showing in interviews. He was asked to change his application to a Brooklyn branch of Columbia University called Seth Low Junior College, where enrollment was heavily Jewish.

Asimov also applied to City College of New York, which had no tuition and accepted him because his grades were excellent. He actually spent three days there before receiving a letter from Seth Low asking why he had not showed up. When his father explained to Seth Low authorities that the family could not afford the tuition, Seth Low came up with a hundred-dollar scholarship and a National Youth Administration job for \$15 a month. Asimov switched colleges. His second year, after a summer spent in manual labor to earn enough money, was at the Morningside Heights campus because Seth Low had closed at the end of its tenth year. He was enrolled in Columbia University, not its more prestigious undergraduate college. Asimov was a second-class citizen throughout his undergraduate education, and he never forgot it. When he was graduated, he received a bachelor of science degree in

chemistry instead of the bachelor of arts degree, for which University undergraduates were not eligible, he says.

In his second year of college, Asimov's distaste for zoology (he killed a cat and dissected it but never forgave himself) and embryology (he was not good at picking out details through a microscope and even worse at drawing them) led him to drop the biological sciences and switch to chemistry as a major. He liked chemistry and did well at it. After graduation from Columbia he applied (somewhat halfheartedly because of his distaste for biological courses) to a number of medical schools and was rejected by all of them. He went on with the study of chemistry in Columbia's graduate school, but only after some difficulty because he had not taken physical chemistry. He had to spend a troublesome year on probation. As usual, his problem had not been his grades or test scores but his "wise-guy personality."

Asimov obtained his M.A. in 1941 and was working toward his doctorate when the United States entered World War II. A few months later he suspended his studies in order to work as a chemist at the U.S. Navy Yard in Philadelphia, where for the first time he was free of his duties at the candy store and where the steady income gave him the opportunity to marry the woman with whom he had fallen in love, Gertrude Blugerman.

Asimov's autobiography suggests that he was good at the theory of chemistry but not at the practice. He refers to his poor laboratory technique and his difficulties getting the correct results. His talents were probably not those of a research chemist, nor those of a practicing scientist of any kind. But at the end of the war he returned to his doctoral program at Columbia, earned his degree in 1948, did a year of post-doctoral research at Columbia, and finally was offered a position as instructor in biochemistry at the Boston University School of Medicine.

Asimov's discovery of science fiction and his attempts to write it were more important to his final career than his studies. He had come upon *Amazing Stories* in 1928, its second year of publication, when he was eight years old. His father's candy store carried magazines, but the young Asimov was not allowed to read them because his father considered them a waste of time and a corrupting influence. They would turn him into "a bum," his father said. The boy had been reading library books of all kinds, but he longed for the brightly colored pulp magazines with their cover paintings of futuristic machines and planets and alien menaces. Finally, Hugo Gernsback lost control of *Amazing* and brought out a competitor, *Science Wonder Stories*, the then nine-year-old boy brought the magazine to his father, pointed out the word "Science" in the title, and won his battle. Possibly his father

just did not have the spirit to fight because his mother was about to give birth to Asimov's younger brother, Stanley.

The science-fiction magazines filled Asimov's imagination with ideas and dreams. They did not consume all his reading time because there weren't enough of them (only two a month at first, and only three a month in 1930). He kept up his omnivorous reading of other books, mostly library borrowings, but science fiction became what he lived for. Oddly enough, Asimov's early writing efforts did not focus on science fiction. "I had the most exalted notion of the intense skills and vast scientific knowledge required of authors in the field, and I dared not aspire to such things," he remembers.

On his new typewriter, however, he ventured into fantasy and then into science fiction. Like almost every aspiring author, Asimov started many stories and finished none, and what he wrote was derived mostly from what he liked to read. His derivative writing was to persist through several years of his career as a published writer until he finally rid himself of what he called his "pulpishness." He got his inspiration, his plots, even his vocabulary from other science-fiction writers. From them came the blasters and needle guns and force beams that litter his stories and early novels, and even, by an analogous process of invention, such concepts as neuronics whips and psycho-probes, hyperspace and Jumps. When he turned to more unique concepts such as psychohistory and the Foundations, the logical development of robots, a radioactive Earth and the lost origin of man, and particularly human reactions to overcrowded cities, his fiction began to glow with its own fire.

Not long after he got his typewriter, Asimov wrote a letter to *Astounding Stories* that was published in 1935. Two years later, when Campbell had become editor of the magazine and had changed its name to *Astounding Science Fiction*, Asimov began writing letters again, "commenting on the stories, rating them, and, in general, taking on the airs of a critic." Such letters became a monthly event; usually Campbell published them in a letter-to-the-editor section called then, as now, "Brass Tacks."

One Tuesday in May, when the new *Astounding* was scheduled to arrive in his father's package of new magazines, it did not show up. The eighteen-year-old Asimov was terrified that it had ceased publication. He called the publisher, Street & Smith, and was assured that the magazine still was being published. But when the new issue had not arrived by the following Tuesday, he ventured off on the subway to the Street & Smith offices in Manhattan, where an executive told him that the publication date had been changed from the second Wednesday to the

third Friday of the month. Two days later the magazine arrived.

His panic at the thought that *Astounding* might vanish sent Asimov to the typewriter to finish a story he had been working at for some months titled "Cosmic Corkscrew." He completed the story on June 19, 1938, and took it personally to the editor. Campbell was familiar with Asimov's name from his frequent letters and talked for more than an hour with the aspiring author, read the story overnight, and mailed it back two days later with a polite letter of rejection. That sent Asimov back to his typewriter to work on a story titled "Stowaway." He finished it in eighteen days and took this in person to Campbell. That story came back with a rejection in four days.

A pattern had been established. A rejection would come from Campbell but phrased in ways that would encourage Asimov to turn immediately to a new story. "It didn't matter that he rejected you," Asimov recalled. "There was an enthusiasm about him and an all-encompassing friendliness that was contagious. I always left him eager to write further." "Stowaway," however, did not end up lost for all time with "Cosmic Corkscrew." It eventually found its way into print, in the April 1940 *Astonishing Stories* edited by Frederick Pohl (as youthful an editor as Asimov was a writer), as "The Callistan Menace," though Asimov's third story, "Marooned Off Vesta," had appeared first, in the March 1939 *Amazing Stories*.

Meanwhile, Asimov had discovered other science-fiction readers, and not just readers but fans, fanatics like himself. This led progressively to fanzines, club meetings, and the organizing of the Futurians, a fan group that included many of the later writers and shapers of science fiction, including Pohl, Donald A. Wollheim, Cyril Kornbluth, Robert W. Lowndes, Richard Wilson, and later Damon Knight and James Blish. Asimov attended monthly meetings, became involved in the debates and schisms to which fandom is so susceptible, began meeting other authors, and talked about his writing ambition and finally getting published. All culminated in the first World Science Fiction Convention held in Manhattan on July 2, 1939. Every Futurian but Asimov were excluded by the organizer, Sam Moskowitz, as disruptive influences. Asimov went as an author and has felt guilty about it ever since. But as he became more and more an author, he became less and less a fan.

By the time of the World Convention Asimov was a bonafide author in his own eyes because *Astounding* had published his tenth story, "Trends," in its issue of July 1939. Almost two years later it published the second of his robot stories (the first, "Robbie," was published in the September 1940 *Super Science Stories* as "Strange Playfellow") and

within the next fourteen months two more robot stories, plus “Nightfall,” and “Foundation” and its sequel. Though Asimov didn’t know it at the time, “Nightfall” alone made him, in his own words, “a major figure in the field.” The stories did not earn that much money, but what they brought in was put to good use, paying for his tuition or accumulating in a bank account. He had three stories published in 1939, seven in 1940, eight in 1941, ten in 1942, only one in 1943, three in 1944, four in 1945, one in 1946, one in 1947, two in 1948, three in 1949, six in 1950.

It was not a remarkable record of productivity or success; it brought Asimov a total of \$7,821.75, which amounted to little more than \$710 a year. It was not enough to encourage him to consider a career as a full-time writer, but it did provide a growing feeling of economic security. Finally, Doubleday published his first novel, *Pebble in the Sky*, in 1950. A specialty house called Gnome Press began publishing his robot stories and then his Foundation stories as books. His income from writing slowly began to equal and then to exceed his income from teaching at Boston University School of Medicine, and, after a disagreement with his superior, he turned to the career that had seemed impossible for all those years.

The impression even the casual reader may obtain from Asimov’s autobiography is that he has been shaped by his childhood. He refers continually to the way in which the candy store controlled his early life and the way the habits of those years have carried over into his later life. His industry — he still writes seven days a week and ten hours a day, turning out six to ten thousand words on an average day — he traces to the long hours at the candy store, for instance, and to his father’s accusations that he was lazy when found in a corner reading.

In a similar way, Asimov traces his ability to eat anything to his mother’s hearty, indigestible cuisine, and his habit of eating swiftly to the fact that he and his mother and sister had to eat in a hurry so that his father could be relieved of his duties in the candy store and eat his supper in a more leisurely fashion. He reads while he eats because he loved to read, his father wasn’t present, his mother was busy cooking and serving, and in any case reading was a sign of studiousness.

His uneasiness with strangers Asimov traces to the fact that during his childhood his family visited no one and no one visited them. The fact that he reads newspapers and magazines so carefully that no one can tell they have been read started, he believes, when he had to return magazines to his father’s rack looking unopened. As a boy he had to awaken at 6 a.m. to deliver newspapers before school. If he wasn’t down on time, his father would yell at his window from the street below, and

later lecture him about the “deadly spiritual dangers of being a *fullyack* [sluggard].” To this day, Asimov reports, he awakens, without an alarm clock, at 6 a.m.

He describes his infatuation with baseball when he was in junior high school: he became a Giants fan, which was odd because Brooklyn had the Dodgers. “By the time I found out there was a Brooklyn team, it was too late; I was imprinted.” He describes being “imprinted” in other ways as well. He blames his fear of flying on his mother’s oversolicitude about his health. “My parents . . . trembled over my well-being so extremely, especially after my babyhood experience with pneumonia, that I couldn’t help but absorb the fact and gain an exaggerated caution for myself. (THAT MAY BE WHY I won’t fly, for instance, and why I do very little else that would involve my knowingly putting myself into peril.)”

His mother’s insistence that he keep her informed of his whereabouts meant that when he was out he had to report in at frequent intervals by telephone. “I’ve kept that habit all my life,” he reports. “It is a bad habit. It ties me to the phone, and if forgetfulness or circumstances get in the way, everyone is sure something terrible has happened.” He traces his avoidance of books on how to write and of college-level courses on writing to “the ever-present memory of that horrible course in creative writing in the sixth term of high school.”

It may not be surprising that someone who can find so many habits of the man in the experience of the boy would imagine a science of predicting human behavior, called “psychohistory,” in his Foundation stories. On the other hand, Asimov can relate anecdotes that seem to demonstrate just the opposite principle of behavior. He recalls his father struggling to balance the books of the candy store every evening, being a dollar over or a dollar under and staying until he had straightened it out. Later in his life, when money was easier, Asimov recalls handing his father five dollars to make up the difference, and his father commenting, “If you gave me a million dollars, that dollar would still have to be found. The books must balance.” Asimov never could understand why the books had to balance. Rather than carrying that trait into his own life, he says, “In later life, when I had occasion to balance accounts, I never bothered over trifling discrepancies. I just made arbitrary corrections and let it go. My father did enough searching for both of us in his lifetime.”

At the same time, Asimov is capable of seeing his explanations for behavior as “probably simple rationalizations designed to resign me to things as they are.” After all, what is an autobiography? It is not so much the finding of the truths in one’s existence as a ratio-

nalization of how one got from one place to another when there were so many different places at which one could have arrived. Asimov has much to explain, and his autobiography is a search for explanations.

Asimov also is a supreme rationalist, a searcher for explanations in his fiction as well as in his life. The reason for his faith in rationalism and his distrust of emotions may be no easier to come by, however, than any other speculation about his life. Asimov does not rely totally on environment to rationalize his life; some traits are implicit, or genetic, and Asimov simply does not mention them. His intelligence, for instance, and his ability to learn and remember must have been inherited. His habit of counting objects (light bulbs, repeated decorations, holes in soundproofed ceilings) whenever he is bored in public places he traces to his counting automobiles as they passed on Van Sicten Avenue when he was three. He finds no reason for his idiosyncratic fondness for enclosed places. He liked the candy store on Decatur Street because it had a kitchen in the back that had no windows. "Why it should be, I don't know, and psychiatrists may make what they like of it (for I will not ask them, and I will not listen if they try to tell me), but I have always liked enclosed places." He remembers that he thought display rooms in department stores looked better than real rooms and finally realized that it was because they had no windows. He envied the people who ran newsstands in subway stations, "for I imagined that they could board it up whenever they wanted to, put the light on, lie on a cot at the bottom, and read magazines. I used to fantasize doing so, with the warm rumble of the subway trains intermittently passing." Asimov's claustrophilia and agoraphobia will return to the discussion when we examine *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*.

A psychiatrist (one of that group to whom Asimov will not listen) might suggest that Asimov's distrust of emotions and faith in rationalism are his responses to "being orphaned" by the candy store at the age of six. Being deprived of his parents' companionship ("never again, after I was six, could I be with him [his father] on a Sunday morning, while he told me stories") came at a difficult time: he was in the middle of second grade. Moreover, his father had admired his son's abilities from an early age. When Asimov taught himself to read at the age of five, his father asked him how he had done it, and Asimov replied that he just figured it out. "That gave my father the idea that there was something strange and remarkable about me; something he clung to for the rest of his life." But the high regard in which Asimov's father held his son's abilities meant that when the schoolboy brought home less than perfect marks from school, he could expect his father's disapproval for not living up to his potential. In his autobiography Asimov recalls

many instances of his father's disapproval, few of his approval.

His mother also spent much of her time in the candy store with customers, or with her two younger children. She had a terrible temper, Asimov recalls, and unlike his father "raised her hand to me any time she felt she needed a little exercise. . . ." He also recalls, seemingly without rancor, being beaten with a rope his mother kept in her closet. When he mentioned it to his mother in later life, she did not remember it. His parents, though a devoted couple, were not demonstrative. There were few if any expressions of affection between them, and Asimov presents the births of three children as the only proof that there was. Certainly Asimov had reason to distrust emotion and to seek rational explanations for why he was deprived of parental closeness, perhaps even love.

Asimov, nevertheless, always knew that he was his parents' favorite, and his brother knew it as well, apparently without resentment. Asimov speaks bitterly about the series of candy stores but remembers his father and mother with great fondness. The family was always in close touch until the death first of his father (in 1973, at the age of 72) and then of his mother (in 1973, at the age of nearly 78), even though Asimov did not go to see his parents after they moved to Florida a year before his father's death because of his fear of flying.

In his typical rational way, he looks back upon his childhood as a generally happy period: "I know perfectly well it was a deprived one in many ways, but the thing was, you see, I never knew it at the time. No one is deprived unless and until he thinks he is."

A more general mystery than the origin of Asimov's traits and neuroses is why certain young people turn to reading, and sometimes writing, science fiction. Asimov is a case study. When he began reading science fiction, the number of readers was small — Damon Knight has called science fiction the mass medium for the few — but intensely involved. Most had turned to science fiction out of some kind of youthful frustration with their lives. A profile of new readers would reveal them to be mostly boys; mostly brighter than their schoolmates; mostly social misfits because of personality, appearance, lack of social graces, or inability to find intellectual companionship; unsophisticated about girls (the study of women readers and writers still is in its infancy) and ill at ease in their company. Science fiction was a kind of literature of the outcast that praised the intellectual aspects of life that its readers enjoyed and in which they excelled and offered more hope for the future than the present. When those kind of persons discover others like themselves, fan clubs spring up, sometimes fanzines are published, conventions are organized, and writing science fiction be-

comes a virtually universal ambition. When those kind of persons begin to write, they write science fiction.

Asimov was like that. The Futurians were like that. Damon Knight says that “all we science-fiction writers began as toads.” When Robert Silverberg read the first volume of Asimov’s autobiography, he wrote for the galley proofs of the second volume because he couldn’t wait: there was so much in Asimov’s life that paralleled his own that it gave him a sense of *deja vu*. There are certain curious resemblances between the characters and careers of Asimov and H.G. Wells, who is often called the father of modern science fiction. Both spent their early lives in unsuccessful shops, were precocious students, quick to learn with good memories, and began by writing science fiction but turned to popularizations (Well’s biggest success was his *Outline of History*). Both were selective in what they liked, Wells with biology and evolution, Asimov with chemistry, and both were fond of history. Both became known as pundits, experts in almost everything, and both were attentive to the ladies. . . . The analogy can be carried too far. Wells, for instance, became a serious novelist of contemporary life; Asimov varied his science fiction and non-fiction with detective stories and novels.

Asimov, in spite of his success at other kinds of writing and public speaking, has never thought of himself as anything but a science-fiction writer who sometimes writes other, often easier, things. He introduces himself as a science-fiction writer. Some writers of science fiction have gone on to other kinds of writing and some, like Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., have denied that they ever wrote science fiction. Not Asimov, who always has remained true to his boyhood love. In his autobiography he describes a fancy *World Book* sales meeting at which the board members were introduced with orchestral motifs: to his chagrin, Asimov was introduced as a science writer by “How deep is the ocean?/How high is the sky?” “No matter how various the subject matter I write on,” he adds, “I was a science-fiction writer first and it is as a science-fiction writer that I want to be identified.”

In an interview in 1979, I said to him that his autobiography revealed a great deal of loyalty to what he was, to the boy he was, and to what science fiction had meant to him when he discovered it. Asimov replied that he had deliberately not abandoned his origins. He had made up his mind when he was quite young, and said it in print, that no matter what happened to him or where he went he would never deny his origins as a science-fiction writer and never break his connection to science fiction, and he never has.

He considers loyalty a prime virtue. In 1976 when he started *Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine*, he told publisher Joel Davis

that he wouldn't give up his *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* science articles.

"I probably bore everybody with my endless repetition of how much I owe to John Campbell, because I figure I would rather bore them than be disloyal in my own mind. It is the easiest thing in the world to forget the ladder you climb or to be embarrassed at the thought that there was a time when somebody had to help you. The tendency is to minimize this, minimize that, and I'm normal enough and human enough to do the same thing if it were left to itself, but this is a matter of having once made a vow and sticking to it."

He pointed out that it was inconvenient to always have to tell people that Campbell made up the Three Laws of Robotics, and the more important the Three Laws became the more he wanted to be the originator and take the credit, but he couldn't. "Why this is so I never really thought about. I guess I like to think about it only as a matter of virtue. I don't consider myself a particularly virtuous person, but I like to think I have some virtues, of which loyalty is one."

Possibly, however, his insistence on being considered a science-fiction writer is like his relationship to his racial origins. He says he is not a good Jew. Asimov attends no Jewish religious functions, follows no Jewish rituals, obeys no Jewish dietary laws, and yet he never, under any circumstances, leaves any doubt that he is Jewish.

"I really dislike Judaism. . . . It's a form of particularly pernicious nationalism. I don't want humanity divided into these little groups that are firmly convinced, each one, that it is better than the others. Judaism is the prototype of the "I'm better than you" group — we are the ones who invented this business of the only God. It's not that we have our God and you have your God, but we have the only God. I feel a deep and abiding historic guilt about that. And every once in a while, when I'm not careful, I think that the reason Jews have been persecuted as much as they have has been to punish them for having invented this pernicious doctrine."

Asimov suggests that because he feels that in some ways he has been a traitor to Judaism ("which I try to make up for by making sure that everyone knows I'm a Jew, so while I'm deprived of the benefits of being part of a group, I make sure that I don't lose any of the disadvantages, because no one should think that I'm denying my Judaism in order to gain certain advantages"), he made up his mind that he was not going to be disloyal in any other way. "I'm not saying I believe this," he concluded, "but this is the sort of thing that people do work up for

reasons, and, after all, I'm imaginative enough to think up such reasons, too. . . . I don't guarantee it's correct."

The characteristic that began to appear in Asimov's science fiction, that gave his writing its unique quality and made it so typically Campbellian as well as Asimovian, was its rationality. Asimov agrees with Randall Garrett's assessment that the relationship between Asimov and Campbell was symbiotic. In the interview Asimov commented that he must have been the perfect foil for Campbell.

"On the one hand, I was close to him. I lived right in town and I could see him every week. And, for another, I could endure him. I imagine that a great many other writers found him too rich for their blood — at least to sit there and listen to him hour after hour. But I was fortunate in the sense that he was in some ways a lot like my father. I had grown up listening to my father pontificate in much the same way that John did, and so I was quite at home. I suppose if you took all the time that I sat there listening to John and put it all together, it was easily a week's worth — of just listening to him talk. Day and night, 168 hours. And I remember everything he said and how he thought and I did my best — because I desperately wanted to sell stories to him — to incorporate his method of thinking into my stories, which, of course, also had my method of thinking, with the result that somehow I caught the Campbell flavor."

The Campbell flavor was the solution of problems. Much of Asimov's early writing did not quite capture that quality of problem-solving that became characteristic of his later work; those stories were less successful, neither identifiably Asimovian nor distinguished science fiction. His first published story had it, "Marooned Off Vesta," and later it would find its best expression in the robot stories and the Foundation stories, among his early science-fiction successes, and, of course, in the science-fiction mystery novels that came so naturally just before he switched to writing non-fiction, *The Caves of Steel* and *The Naked Sun*.

I made these suggestions to Asimov, and he agreed that they seemed right. "Certainly the stories that really satisfied me and made me feel good about my writing were my robot stories, and the robot stories, of course, virtually every one of them, had a situation in which robots — which couldn't go wrong — did go wrong. And we had to find out what had gone wrong, and how to correct it, within the absolute limits of the three laws. This was just the sort of thing I loved to do."

At its most typical, in "Nightfall" for example, Asimov's science

fiction demonstrates the triumph of reason, or the struggle of reason to triumph, over various kinds of circumstances, including irrational or emotional responses to situations. If reason is going to prove superior as an approach to life, the mystery is the natural form in which that superiority will be demonstrated.

Asimov has said that his villains generally are as rational as his heroes. "In other words, it's not even a triumph of rationality over irrationality or over emotion, at least not in my favorite stories. It's generally a conflict between rationalities and the superior winning. If it were a western, where everything depends upon the draw of the gun, it would be very unsatisfactory if the hero shot down a person who didn't know how to shoot."

Growing up as he did, excelling at intellectual pursuits but uneasy in personal relationships in which he found himself ignorant of the proper thing to do or uncertain how the other person would respond, Asimov found himself coping in a variety of ways. One way, which he adopted when he was young, was to distance himself from the rest of the world with wit: he still delights in puns and wordplay, which find their most typical expression in personal banter with his friends but also enliven his limericks and verse parodies and display themselves in the titles of and occasional lines in articles and stories. Another way to cope was to demonstrate his greater knowledge or superior mind. His adoption of these two characteristics gave him a reputation as a smart-aleck and a know-it-all with a mission to enlighten everyone around him.

Asimov gives as an example of his behavior the assignment of Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem" in his high-school English class. Anticipating the teacher's question about the last line ("And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest"), his hand shot up, and he answered the inevitable question, "Why did Ben Adhem's name lead all the rest?" with "Alphabetical order, sir?" He was sent to the principal, but he didn't care.

Asimov finally gave up his mission to educate the masses. He traces his decision to a time when he was in the Army in Hawaii, waiting for the H-bomb tests at Bikini. A couple soldiers in the barracks were listening to a third explain, inaccurately, how the atom bomb worked.

"Wearily, I put down my book and began to get to my feet so I could go over and assume "the smart man's burden" and educate them.

"Halfway to my feet, I thought: Who appointed you their educator? Is it going to hurt them to be wrong about the atom bomb?"

"And I returned, contentedly, to my book.

"This does not mean I turned with knife-edge suddenness and became another man. It's just that I was a generally disliked know-it-all earlier in my life, and I am a generally liked person (I believe) who is genial and a nonpusher later in my life. . . .

"Why? I'm not sure I know. Perhaps it was my surrender of the child-prodigy status. Perhaps it was my feeling that I had grown up. I had proved myself, and I no longer had to give everyone a headache convincing them that I was, too, smart."

One other way in which Asimov learned to cope socially was his adoption of a flirtatious attitude toward women — all women — what he calls his "all-embracing suavity," by which he means that he is willing to embrace any female within range and usually does. From a gauche, inexperienced, tentative young man he turned into a good-natured, public Casanova with a "penchant for making gallant suggestions to the ladies." Yet Asimov speculates about his behavior as an adult that "you don't really change much as you get older." The uncertain young man may still be there inside the "all-embracing" older one.

Asimov has denied being anything other than direct and clear in his writing, and that may apply to his personal life as well. Certainly he is open about his life, even on those matters that most people are most closed about: money and sex — and, more important to Asimov, his writing. I asked him in our interview if his disclaimer of knowledge about the craft of writing wasn't a pose. Clearly, he had thought about it, I pointed out. He had criticized other people's stories in his teen-age letters-to-the-editor days; he had noticed Clifford Simak's way of leaving space to indicate a break between scenes and, after having had it explained, had adopted it himself; he had even attended the Bread Loaf Writers's Conference, a couple of times as a member of the faculty. Asimov responded that he does not deliberately set up a pose. He really thinks he does not know much about writing, but, as he points out in an afterward to the collection of essays about his work edited by Martin Greenberg and Joseph Olander titled *Asimov*, "without very much in the way of conscious thinking I manage to learn from what I read and what I hear."

As the young Asimov became the older Asimov (still in his late youth, as he would say), what he was became what he is, either conditioned by his early experience or in reaction to it. Asimov recognizes both processes. In one sense he is a rational man in an irrational world, puzzled at humanity's responses to change, unable to understand humanity's inability to see the clear necessity, if it is to survive, to control population and pollution and eliminate war, still assuming "the

smart man's burden" to educate the bewilderingly uneducable, even taken aback at times when the people he deals with behave irrationally.

Joseph Patrouch in his *The Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov* (1974) comments that Asimov has not written in his fiction on the subjects about which he is most concerned, the subjects he writes on in his non-fiction and speaks about in his public talks: pollution, overpopulation, and so forth. I asked Asimov about this, saying that in his talks and articles and books he seemed to exhibit a kind of alarm about our world situation that was not in his fiction — a kind of public despair that contrasts with his fictional optimism. In his science writing he tries to persuade by showing the terrible consequences of what will happen if people do not act, and in his science fiction he tries to persuade by showing how the problems can be solved. Asimov agreed.

"In my public statements I have to deal with the world as it is — which is the world in which irrationality is predominant; whereas in my fiction I create a world and in my world, my created worlds, things are rational. Even the villains, the supposed villains, are villainous for rational reasons. . . .

"You can see for yourself in my autobiography that I had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the world when I was young. To a large extent the world was an enemy world. . . . Science fiction in its very nature is intended to appeal a) to people who value reason and b) to people who form a small minority in a world that doesn't value reason. . . . I *am* trying to lead a life of reason in an emotional world."

Asimov, no doubt, still is trying to please his stern father with industry and productivity. Asimov would be the first to admit it. He also would say that it doesn't matter how the past has shaped him. He is satisfied to be what he is: a claustrophile, an acrophobe, a compulsive writer. When he was a teenager, people complained about his eccentricities: his walking home from the library with three books, reading one and holding one under each arm; his love of cemeteries; his constant whistling. Their complaints didn't bother him (though he did, when asked, stop whistling in the cemetery). "I had gathered the notion somewhere that my eccentricities belonged to me and to nobody else and that I had every right to keep them." He added, "And I lived long enough to see these eccentricities and others that I have not mentioned come to be described as 'colorful' facets of my personality."

He has rationalized everything that has happened to him; he is a rational man who knows that the past cannot be changed, it can only be understood. Moreover, the things that he is have been rewarded by the world. He has had his many triumphs. Scientists have applauded

his science books: Professor George G. Simpson of Harvard called him “one of our natural wonders and national resources.” He has been guest of honor and toastmaster at World Science Fiction Conventions. He has won Hugos and Nebulas, and, perhaps best of all, John Campbell has told him, “You are one of the greatest science-fiction writers in the world.”

As a rational man, Asimov knows that the present must be accepted, and as a rational man, he knows that what he is is an excellent thing to be. So the world has said, and so he agrees. That life of reason found its expression in his fiction as well as his non-fiction. How it developed and how it expressed itself can be found in the following pages. [And so begins “The Foundations of Science Fiction” by James Gunn, Ph.D.: Ed.]

A Report on Probability B

by

Igor A. Toloconnicov

USRR

Volgograd - 66

CPO, Poste restante

Igor Toloconnicov first corresponded with me to ask for a copy of The John W. Campbell Letters, Volume I. As his country was still dominated by centralized planning, and the ruble was not convertible to American dollars, Igor asked for a free copy, which was sent.

During follow-on correspondence I learned of his desperate need and desire for any kind of science fiction and fantasy materials. One of our local science fiction clubs, as well as I, began sending him boxes of books, sometimes new, but mostly used.

I hope that others will follow suit. Those wishing to correspond with Igor may do so at the address given above.

Of course, it is always interesting to learn how our favorite authors are viewed by "foreigners," but even more, of course, Igor's "A Report on Probability B" is suitable because Isaac Asimov emigrated from Russia at an early age. Probably coincidentally, Isaac is revered, and van Vogt is hardly known by virtue of past authoritarian decree. [Perry A. Chapdelaine: Ed.]

Isaac Asimov is a darling of translators. Young ones come to me and say: Gee! It's so clearcut and, please, have I something for them to translate. I disappoint them by pointing out that most of his 400 works are non-fiction (even though only a dozen were translated during two peaks of interest in 60's and 80's whatever this signifies; and this year his SF mystery collection has appeared in print.)

Mr. Asimov has had the bad luck to become canonized in my country. The science fiction field was too independent for the ruling party, and the ghetto walls were enforced through random regulation of 50 titles total annually (including reprints). So it is easy to see how an imposed canon becomes a dogma. There are few of Asimov's SF works published -- *Steel Caves, Naked Sun, I, Robot and the Rest of the Robots, The End of Eternity* (which was filmed recently), *Gods Themselves* -- but the sheer number of copies in millions' count take care of the impact generated. That's due both to the genuine enchantment Isaac Asimov effects, and scholastic approach to fiction in general. When an idea takes root among bureaucracy establishments that such-and-such an author is to be consid-

ered a classic then automatically a process is initiated, and through tame critics' ravings and sheer weight of copies published a popular awareness is smothered without a chance to hear a dissenting voice. The same was done to Ray Bradbury, to Kurt Vonnegut (Arthur Clarke had kept his vitality but this is another tale); and to Howard Fast and Theodore Dreiser. According to this church rule-book, Isaac had become a holy man of SF parish, and writings by Saint Asimov -- may Isaac forgive a putting on, just forcing the point home -- must grace any new anthology of foreign SF. Practically every one such includes his story. Some are reprinted fifteen and more times, often under different titles. By this treatment a great injustice is done in reducing his whole presence to a mere pipsqueek. One hopes that by publishing the Foundation series, Nemesis, Azazel, the engaging personality of Isaac Asimov, would be restored again.

Just as Asimov is kept in the limelight, Mr. van Vogt remained in shadow (and many, many others like H.P. Lovecraft, Frank Herbert, Keith Laumer, Philip Jose' Farmer, Harlan Ellison). But for a couple of short stories van Vogt has made no appearance at all. Reasons: There is no tangible evidence to pin. (What reasons were there for an abridged child's version of *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkein to see publication only by mid-eighties?) I hazard a guess that [van Vogt's] association with Dianetics™ is the reason enough. There were plenty devastating diatribes directed at [Dianetics]; the last one at the turn of eighties. Mind you, in past times the mass media was rigidly enforcing opinions of government clerks; and once the machinery is set into motion it is hard to reverse gears though attitudes have changed towards it. Even UFO and psi-phenomena became commonplace on nationwide newspaper pages.

Newly sprung co-op publishing enterprises break down taboos. This year *Null A* was published in Krasnodar on money put up by translator. Even though the price is outrageous for soft book -- four times that of hardcover -- the fact is that it was sold out in two months. Grassroot samizdat [underground press] popularity has seen to it. For there exist SF fans in Soviet Union, too, who had sought ways to counter arbitrary straightjacket of official propaganda. As far as it's possible to judge there are something like five thousands samizdat SF titles in existence (including van Vogt's non-Aristotelian series and Wizard Lynn series, *Slan*, etc.) giving a limited access to Western SF field. This is also the figure of unfulfilled demand.

In a sense Isaac Asimov and van Vogt represent two parts of an iceberg; and when the iceberg emerges at last it would be an indication that Soviet science fiction stands on its feet once again.

The Visionary

by

Michael G. Adkisson

Michael G. Adkisson, editor and publisher of New Pathways, has long been determined to establish a revolutionary new kind of science-fiction publication, one that promotes the good of the old and the new.

In case you're unfamiliar with New Pathways -- it has been said to be the "cutting edge" of science (speculative) fiction.

One can hardly comprehend the determination and hardships endured by Adkisson in pioneering a totally new magazine -- without fundamental capitalization and sans any reasonable distribution.

Adkisson, many years ago, wrote "The Visionary" for the second volume of The John W. Campbell Letters. This article represents his initial and his late considered response to John W. Campbell.

The significance of Michael Adkisson lies not just with his admiration for John W. Campbell, and agreement with Campbell's rightful place in modern literature, but also in the fact that Adkisson is a later generation of science fiction readership -- one that was only indirectly under Campbell's influence -- but nonetheless an inheritor of the powerful Campbellian legacy.

Speaking of establishing his New Pathways, Adkisson proudly says, "Our struggling, awkward and formative stage is far behind us now and the magazine is firmly established. (This does not mean that it is producing a profit; it means that it has gone from a bankrupt-producing folly to an expensive hobby)."

We are equally proud to present an entrepreneur immersed in traditional American values.

May we also respectfully refer you to his magazine New Pathways, at MGA Services, PO Box 863994, Plano, TX 75086-3994? [Perry A. Chapdelaine: Ed.]

John W. Campbell offended some people.

But do you remember when you were young, watching your elders in their stuffy shirts become agitated when someone in the room said something off-color, inappropriate, or — something that they had never heard before? There is a certain mischievous, primeval joy in the heart of a youngster watching his elders become offended at something new and untried.

Of course, some "old" people are even younger at heart than the "young" people. To these unique individuals, life remains an adventure.

Why is this so? When does life cease to be an adventure and become merely a duty and responsibility instead?

Some of us may think that our basic knowledge is “complete.” We are qualified to teach others, to be a respectful pillar in the establishment. But in doing so we give up having that young perspective of the world around us.

John W. Campbell never gave up that kind of attitude.

Campbell Wrote: *I'm still looking for the stories that get in and really twist things in the reader. . . you can shock him out of a life-time pattern, and change him for the rest of his natural existence, if you can find and break one of his false cultural orientations. . . Things can get in, because the barrier isn't real.*

Yeah — I know this isn't as popular a type of story . . . yet. But give us some time! We're developing an art-form that hasn't been more than started — as a conscious effort.

I suspect it'll never be really a mass-audience type, either. You can kill people with a really good story of that type — and I am not kidding. It's a fine exercise for strong minds — and our readers wouldn't be the speculative philosophical people they are if they didn't have tough, resilient minds — but it's not good for the weak ones.

Among the other cultural-orientation sabotage plants we've run recently. . .!

Do you recognize a bit of that almost mischievous joy of the youngster who likes to say things that knocks old granny off her rocker?

Of course, we must contemplate, theorize and draw conclusions. But when those conclusions become as hard as the solid earth that we walk upon, we're liable to miss the rest of life as it passes us by. The “youngster” that challenges our views and mannerisms is really doing us a favor. We shouldn't be so settled in our ways.

Some critics have analyzed the methodology of Campbell's thinking process as “mind games.” If it was mind games, it was mind games with a purpose — to search for the untried, the unproven, and the unknown. What better purpose can a man commit himself to in such a vast universe?

To those who travel in mental eddies, never venturing beyond their prescribed ideological framework, it must indeed be a “mind game” to have sat and explored possibilities with Campbell. But out of such discussions came forth science fiction classics such as Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series.

The reason some critics expend so much time and energy putting down Campbell's methodology — and others like him, is that the chal-

lenging spirit of Campbell is a constant threat to them. “No, that ideology isn’t good enough. Your philosophy is unsound.” Of course, some of these people are paid to be “experts” in their field — and an admission of ignorance, or the apparent “weakness” displayed in a blatant change of philosophy, is anathema. Most of us, after all, seem to be motivated by pocketbook issues, while truth is secondary.

Are men like Campbell an anomaly in human history?

What is it about certain men and women that make them special? If we really knew the answer, we might not like it -- because often the same qualities that drive those men and women to new heights are also the things that disturb us.

And yet, is it wise to treasure the golden egg and not also nourish the proverbial goose?

While pouring over the letters of John W. Campbell, one cannot but help but be impressed with the energy and candor of those same letters — indeed, the evangelical fervor unleashed in those letters might be more appropriate in a university hall, or even a pulpit. It is the voice of a man with a message. And today that message speaks to us, though the man whom that voice belonged to is gone.

“Grant me not the fish; instead, teach me how to fish.”

The fish that Campbell caught were the fish of new ideas. Is creative thinking something we’re born with or is it something that can be learned and passed on to others? Campbell insisted that creative thinking was intermixed with the ability to experience a total reorientation of thought patterns, and to assimilate new data, allowing our minds to grow and evolve.

John W. Campbell wrote: *To change a man’s basic life-evaluation patterns, to induce basic insights of that depth, you have to induce him to give up a vast amount of specialization. Any time you can get a man to do that, incidentally, you’ll have one of the most powerful human beings who ever lived; he will have learned to be Protean, to be anything he chooses. He will, incidentally, scare the living bejazyus out of anyone who tries to work with him closely, because we aren’t accustomed to human beings who can change their basic belief-patterns at will!*

Actually, that sort of basic orientation isn’t necessary for ordinary individuals in the Society. You have some of it; it’s needed in the leaders of the society, but they musn’t discomfit the ordinary members of the society by displaying the characteristic too widely.²

It is exactly this characteristic that Campbell often displayed. The reactions from those around him ranged from outrage to distant admiration. Campbell must have been a difficult gent to argue with —

not because of the intensity of his views, but because his ideas came from so many different angles. It was almost as though all the others were too familiar with this “human life” thing, as though they had been reincarnated, but Campbell was doing the “human life” thing for the very first time. To him everything was fascinating — and the cruelest thing to him was to have one’s thoughts inhibited by environment, culture, or surroundings.

In short, one of the men who helped spawn an age of science fiction could do so only because his mind roamed free. It was not opinions that Campbell argued — but rather the inability to consider new ideas.

He wrote: *I don’t give a damn what your opinion is; you can have it, for all of me. And I don’t give a damn what my opinion is. I want to know what the Universe’s opinion is. But your opinion is useful to me, because, since it inevitably differs from mine, it gives me a chance to get a different angle of view on the Universe. From one angle only, a disc does appear a metal bar. If that were my only angle of view, I couldn’t possibly learn what the reality was.*

*Now some items to consider: try defining “human being” some time. You may find it ain’t quite so simple as it looks. For one thing: it’s a remarkable thing that we, who are so brilliant in our wisdom, are the direct descendants of such a collection of stupid fools, silly, superstitious nit-wits, and maundering idiots as we are repeatedly assured inhabited this planet a few centuries ago. Truly remarkable that, descended from such as they, we could be so much more brilliant and wise and sensible, isn’t it?*²

For many of us, we are born into a world of ideas and culture. We adopt those ideas and culture without question. Now it may be that we could arrive at those ideas and culture on our own — and then again, maybe not.

What might have been the saddest day of my life was the day of my college graduation. Here was an event which signified the completion of learning, even though many of the learned academicians advised that real learning was only now beginning. The joy was in discovering and learning — and if there ever comes a day when that learning stops, if we ever feel it is time to “cash in” on that learning to grasp at the straws of human respect, integrity, and status — ultimately that will become the saddest day of our lives.

Do we feel threatened? Should we look upon Campbell’s preoccupation with Scientology as excess baggage, when it grew from the very core of what made Campbell who he was?

Consider how the ancient Jewish Pharisees reacted when there

arose an unordained Teacher who could speak the words they taught as though He Himself had written them. They hated the Man for the simple reason that this Man might possibly put them out of jobs.

In the wake of the seeker's discoveries usually come an establishment of principles and guidelines, whether it be religion, science — or even the field of science fiction itself. The sad history of human civilization is that intellectual and spiritual light comes all too infrequently -- and when it does, we build a shrine. When the light leaves us, we have nothing but an empty husk and a marketplace — a temple full of moneychangers. If we claim to walk in Campbell's footsteps, we may only be keeping the husk. We may not need Christianity or Scientology or Hinduism, but we certainly need the inward knowledge that the seeker obtains.

No one is born a great thinker. No one is born a "Campbell." While most great thinkers only communicated their attained knowledge and wisdom, Campbell attempted to communicate the process of obtaining that wisdom. Campbell taught men how to fish. And no effort can be greater than this.

Campbell wrote: *The greatest philosophical advances in Man's history have been based on the destruction of the in-group-out-group distinction. Christianity started (but didn't continue, sad to say) as a belief based on the proposition that every individual could appeal directly to God — that no special priest was necessary in any ordinary problem.*

*Galileo's great point was that every man could investigate Nature for himself; that no special Authority was necessary.*⁴

*And also: The amateur is far too little respected — despite the fact that amateurs have been responsible for most of the great advances of human understanding. Jesus wasn't a priest; Pasteur wasn't a doctor; Freud wasn't an MD or a psychologist. There's a nasty little trick the society plays on us; it says, 'Oh, him! He wasn't an amateur — he was a genius!'*⁵

Campbell's path down the road of Scientology was simply the path that so many others walked before him — a search for some answers. Those who criticize the man for this have never walked down that road before. In Campbell's mind there was the Absolute Truth, which no man can attain — and then there was relative truth, which we can strive for.

Why should Campbell be criticized for searching for relative truth by men who settle only for inheriting accepted truths and knowledge? All too often in modern society we confuse open-mindedness with an ambiguous noncommittal to any belief or value

system. We say, “You can’t judge that person for killing their neighbor. You are making a value judgment.” We say, “You can’t say for sure whether or not there is a God. We don’t know — we should keep our minds open.” But why do we insist that an open mind be devoid of beliefs?

This was the contradiction of Campbell’s life. He demonstrated strong opinions and beliefs — and yet apparently spent most of his life studying the human mind — and spoke of the ability to keep an open mind, forever changing, forever growing. He spoke of the logical and the non-logical methods of arriving at those beliefs.

An open mind has the ability to assimilate new ideas. But in our society, an open mind is equated with a vacant mind — uncommitted to any value or belief. But in reality, the open mind is forever changing, forever growing into new awareness. The belief-pattern is there, but it evolves.

A great truth that Campbell discovered was that human beings apparently do not have the ability to think in a totally objective manner. There are always hidden motivations. Campbell was an enigma to many people because he constantly spoke about the nature of the mind. He seldom dealt with specific points of argument; instead, he examined the process of thought that led to the conclusions.

The literature of science fiction was built by men such as Campbell, and if that literature is to continue as a serious art form, then it should be guided and directed by a similar mindset.

Campbell wrote: *Actually, all creative thinking appears to be non-logical, and only when we learn the laws of non-logical rationality will we be able to be creative thinkers at will, and without limit. When Newton worked up the law of gravity, he gave a logical demonstration of the validity of his idea after he had derived the postulate of the inverse square law attraction. But no one had ever given a logical process whereby he originally derived that postulate.*⁶

Few will deny that a great body of science fiction was crafted under the guiding influence of Campbell — but why do so many ignore the hidden source of that influence? Since Campbell’s preoccupation, pursuit, and investigation of the human thought processes also led him to embark on wild flights of imagination that burned new ideas into the budding writers of that time, writers such as Isaac Asimov, why can we not also venture down that same path and reap the same harvest?

We want the fish, but we don’t want to know how to fish.

In the last fifteen years we have seen technology and knowledge advance at an almost staggering pace. But most of it seems to be development and refinement of basic science already in existence. Newly

observed phenomena which do not fit our laws and principles constantly mystify us.

We forget that the pioneers who formed our basic structure of science today were simply making observations of the phenomena around them — and tabulated those observances as laws and principles in the physical universe. First observance, and then principle, not vice versa.

But today, as we observe new phenomena, we attempt to explain them using already-established laws and principles. Does man, who is merely a frog in a deep well, really understand all the basics — and only the details need to be filled in?

Campbell constantly pushed his “test pilots” to “the outer edge of the envelope” to find out the answer to that question, using speculation, intuitive and nonlogical imagination, and known scientific facts.

Today, however, many of us have fallen into a trap. In the midst of scientific advance and accomplishment, we may be prone to become drunken with success, resting upon our laurels. Some people imagine that a movie space travel, with computer terminals, is “science-fiction” and even use the term “extrapolation” to avoid having to really figure out what life might be like a hundred years from now.

Is science fiction today too complacent? Does it have the vitality that it did in Campbell’s day? Does today’s science fiction disturb us the way that it might have in Campbell’s day?

Campbell wrote: *Anytime the SSS (self-styled scientists) boys decide they know the ultimate absolute limits of what can be true — they’re claiming they’re omniscient. Anyone who claims omniscience thinks he’s God Almighty. Well, that God is not only dead, he never existed.*

My interest in psi stems from direct observation of phenomena that are real and reproducible by some talented individuals that are not explicable in terms of now-known data.

Where the SSS says ‘If my present data and logic can’t explain it, that proves it doesn’t exist,’ I hold, instead, that ‘If present knowledge and data can’t explain it — maybe there’s something new to learn here! Let’s investigate!’ A true scientist does keep that difference in mind.

It’s only the SSS type — the self-styled scientists — that are so arrogant as to deny their knowledge is not total.

Keep in mind that the great scientist Lord Kelvin proved, by the most advanced scientific knowledge of his time, that the Earth was not more than 25,000,000 years old. (Some of the earliest apes were having trouble with Nile crocodillians about then. The dinosaurs had been ex-

tinct for 100,000,000 years or so.)

And that the best scientific data and logic of 1966 was still firmly holding that dowsing was nonsense — although some Marines were beginning to use it because it saved their leathernecks.

It's the SSS boys who are the real voluntarists; they claim that their orthodoxy determines what's true in the Universe.⁷

The fact that sometimes people agree with one another is not very meaningful. What is more meaningful is when people are on the same wavelength. When they arrive at a certain conclusion using the same method, then they may grow and develop together.

But people seldom investigate the method — they are only interested in the conclusions, and whether or not those conclusions are in agreement with their own. Again, the actual truth is secondary.

There might not be such fighting and arguing at all if we but examined the process of thinking itself. Of those who discuss and argue, how many can honestly say they're purely motivated by the pursuit of truth, rather than the subjugation of other ideas to their own?

Campbell realized that the accepted methodology of thinking was inadequate. Rather, he suggested another process of thought: . . . *All the logic mankind has ever developed is a snare and a delusion, because it's inadequate. But when a human being, using more adequate methods, gets a usable answer, he's railed at for being illogical or irrational.*

Look, the experimental method is inherently illogical. That's why the Greeks wouldn't use it. It is not logical; it's pragmatic. Many times its results are contrary to logic; the Greeks resented this so deeply they refused to use it. (We know the answer is, in such cases, that the basic premise of the logic was false.)

But there is, equally, a non-logical method of reaching a conclusion, called 'intuition'. There is no logical method that can yield a conclusion applicable to an individual case. Statistical methods will yield generalizations applicable to general cases, but not applicable to individual cases. (The insurance company can use the conclusions; the individual policy-holder cannot.) There is no logical method of reaching a Natural Law type of generalization — it can be done only by a not-yet-describable process called "the intuitive method."⁸

The above words might sound like blasphemy to some scientists, but the true discoverer and explorer will recognize the truth of Campbell's statements. It is perhaps this process of thought that we need the most in today's world.

In a time when the economic structure is crumbling, and the fabric of society is ripping apart, we need such a visionary as John W.

Campbell to light the way before us. The cynical and complacent attitude so prevalent today is a sign of decay and decline.

Human civilization has a disturbing pattern: first accomplishment, then complacency, then regression. It is important that we not confuse the knowledge required in manufacturing a silicon chip with the sheer genius of creating the first wheel. There is a difference.

A common theme throughout science fiction is the apocalyptic disintegration of society, the intellectual decay and resultant barbarism, and the advent of the New Dark Age. In the shadow of this threat is the voice of John W. Campbell, who attempted to mold science fiction into a powerful force of change.

Today that potential is as strong as ever before.

But where is the visionary imagination of a John Wood Campbell?

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1. *The John W. Campbell Letters, Volume I*, AC Projects, Inc., 5106 Old Harding Road, Franklin, TN 37064, p. 267.
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3. *Ibid*, p. 296.
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5. *Ibid*, p. 220.
6. *Ibid*, p. 93.
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8. *Ibid*, p. 247.

Science, Scientism, and . . . ?

by
George Hay

I've known George Hay since the early fifties, when L. Ron Hubbard's Dianetics™ was first promulgated by John Campbell, Jr. in the pages of Astounding.

Aside from George's un-American spellings, an English propensity for circling the fox to distraction, and his Irish bulls ("the silence on these issues is deafening"), George always pulls through.

I've told folks for years that if one were riding in a tour bus through the most remote region of Africa, and the bus were passing through a small mud-hut village, and if someone were to shout out the window to ask the inhabitants if anyone knew George Hay, at least one of the natives would raise his/her hand.

He is a fine human and has long been a fine friend.

In "Science, Scientism, and . . . ?" George tackles a side of John W. Campbell, Jr. often questioned, but seldom confronted head on: Campbell's propensity for insisting on correct science in articles, his requirement to use believable and consistent logic in stories, and his wild-eyed propensity for needling professional scientists.

The Dean Drive was a veritable ideal case-history in point. John had pictures in Astounding's "Science" section showing a "working model" of the Dean Drive. It consisted of a quarter-inch drill mounted by various springs and brackets onto a standard bathroom scale. A photo of the "weight" of this whole assembly showed the scale reading of zero.

Since the drill, the brackets, nuts and bolts and assorted springs all weighed something, and the scale's index of weight was zero, there had to be a superior (outside established physics) explanation. Perhaps the inertialess drive so well touted in his and E.E. Smith's early stories?

Now mind you, John would not have accepted a strictly mathematical explanation, nor even the explanation that George's friends, below, have given. Zeno was able to explain away motion with ingenious mathematical logic of his time

But such was the effect as a prime cause of John's thinking on American society of his time that he caused a mighty ruckus with his Dean-drive article.

I remember during the sixties -- while working for the U.S. Air Force -- running across an article in which the US Air Force had

funded a mathematical analysis of all the components of the Dean Drive. It was a complex analytical/mechanical/mathematical description of what forces connected to what forces throughout the total contraction — and the end conclusions of these analyses were essentially the same as that given by George's friends below.

So, while John was prodding writers to use better science, he was — as in a point made in Volume I of these letters — also prodding scientists to rethink their models — and succeeding!

George Hay's following article from "Foundation Forum" (Number 41, Winter 1987, p.65.) is apropos. [Perry A. Chapdelaine: Ed]

*(From "Foundation Forum", The Science Fiction Foundation, Polytechnic of East London, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 2AS, United Kingdom.) : Under the heading "Foundation Forum" we normally publish items designed to provoke debate, to outrage, to intrigue. George Hay, whose name has now gone onto the Science Fiction Foundation's new notepaper as "Founder," has frequently done all three, and we suspect he will have done it again. He offers us a useful (and all too rare) reminder that *sf* is about science as well as literature, appropriate in a volume dedicated to Arthur C. Clarke. Pursuing his theme of "applied science fiction," on July 9th George gave the introduction at a half-day conference at Burgh House, Hampstead, organized jointly by the International Science Policy Foundation and the SFF, on "Science Fiction and its Applications;" Tom Kindberg, quoted below, was one of the speakers.*

*"It cannot, then, be true that science itself demands that scientists should treat all problems as scientific problems. If the narrow definition of science currently used is to be kept, a great many problems of real scientific importance fall outside science" (Mary Midgley, in *Evolution as a Religion*: Methuen 1985).*

In this article I shall endeavour to give some pointers as to what degree science fiction has reflected science, rather than scientism, and to consider to what degree changes in science theory have been reflected in novels and magazines. Also, I shall indicate some ways in which ideas put forward in the genre could be used in education generally. First, some general remarks:

"Wellsianity," as it has been called, the onward-and-upward linear view of progress, starting with Verne and carrying on through Campbell and his stable of writers, is based four-square on a vastly simplified view of science as the Victorians understood it. The best exponent of this today is Dr. Asimov, though in his case a caveat is needed: I

do not wish to be taken as saying that, because the Good Doctor has a truly remarkable gift for simplifying the issues involved, he himself either is simplistic or ignores wider issues. However, in the case of lesser writers of this school, we do seem to have a repetition of the view, current until quite recently, that Victorians such as T.H. Huxley and Darwin were inflexible dogmatists. A generation before this, they were, of course, seen as bold innovators, struggling heroically against obscurantism. Both views were false — see for example Mary Midgeley’s account of the actual facts of the famous Huxley/Wilberforce dispute (in the book quoted above). What has happened, of course, is that, as always, a simplified myth, put forward in the belief that readers were idiots, has supplanted the facts. And meanwhile, as a result of a slow but steady penetration of the implications of quantum theory, a counter-myth has sprung up and is taking hold. While Victorian confidence has taken us up past Verne, Wells, and Campbell, culminating today in the school of Pournelle and Niven, the counter-myth attacks this on the basis of theories adduced by “new science” writers such as Capra, Zukav and Bohm. The distinction is not as clear-cut as many would wish to think: Campbell, for example, had strong mystical tendencies, and his serial, “Uncertainty,” in *Amazing Stories* in 1936 was, I believe, the first fictional development of Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle. Still, by and large, the antithesis holds. Of course, readers will have their own stands on these issues, and in any event, I am not qualified scientifically to discuss the issues involved. However, I believe I am qualified to discuss the implications of the projects of these new (“new”?) theories on the chalk-face of science fiction, a genre highly interactive with life in our global village. Anyone wishing to check this out need only visit any of the larger sf bookstores, where one frequently has to queue for some time to get the cash-desk. And these are b-i-i-g shops. Specialised book fairs apart, I doubt whether other bookshops can boast similar business. And what is bought is read, and what is read is remembered, if only subliminally. Since the quantum theory view has it that perception governs reality, you will see that here we have an entire generation being conditioned into belief in hyperspace, parallel worlds and the rest of it, as actual existents. Whether belief does in some ultimate sense govern reality is not an issue I propose to go into here. Never mind “ultimately”: anyone who has had of late to deal with publishers or the media will have had it drummed into him quite brutally that to those here at the levers of power, this is not just another theory, but the bedrock of commercial existence. Productwise — to use the jargon — what publishers put out is governed by their view of their readers’ wish-fulfillment fantasies

— as distinct, that is, from anything that authors themselves might wish to say.

I shall return to this issue. For the moment, let me just draw your attention to the fate of the late unlamented Joseph Goebbels, who, starting his act as a very sophisticated character, and nobody's fool, ended as a firm believer in the view that existence was some kind of lowest-common-denominator of mass perception, and of the view that, if enough people say so, it must be true. Since it was this kind of thing that cost Germany the war, I have some sympathy for the opposing, the old-fashioned Johnsonian view that what is, is, and what isn't, isn't; that the universe is outside us, not inside, and that it consists of mostly unknown wonders whose nature it is up to us to discover.

Of course, this view also has a lowest-common-denominator. Let us consider E.E. "Doc" Smith, as an example of what scientism at its worst can produce. His "Skylark" novels are referred to on their paperback jackets as "classics," and correctly so, since a classic is by definition a book read and admired by successive generations. *The Skylark of Valeron* was copyrighted in 1934; I do not know its status in the United States, but over here [England] it sells and sells, which should tell us something, something rather nasty, when we come to inspect it close up:

Humanity *uber alles* — homo sapiens against all the vermin of the universe! Let's go. *Two* — do your stuff!

"As *Two* hurtled toward the unfortunate planet with every iota of her driving power, Seaton settled down to observe the strife and see what he could do. That which lay beneath his viewpoint had not been a city, in the strict sense of the word. It had been an immense system of concentric fortifications, of which the outer circles had long since gone down under the irresistible attack of the two huge structures of metal which hung above. Where those outer rings had been there was now an annular lake of boiling, seething lava. Lava from which arose gouts and slender pillars of smoke and fume: lava being volatilized by the terrific heat of the offensive beams and being hurled away in flaming cascades by the almost constant detonations of high-explosive shells; lava into which from time to time another portion of the immense fortress slugged down — put out of action, riddled and finally fused by the awful forces of the invader."

And so on and so forth. Ploughing through these novels, one is struck by the way in which the plots seem to exist merely as excuses to set set-pieces of such *superschrecklichkeit*. Hirschhima, anyone? While Smith is undoubtedly the master of these worshipful descriptions of raw force, it is instructive to note how often in space opera

this one-note piano is called into play. In a much more recent novel, *All Evil Shed Away*, Scots author Archie Roy refers to, “. . . the auxiliary equipment necessary to feed the ravening power to these monsters from the MDH fusion generator . . .” I must hasten to add that Mr. Roy is of quite a different class from Smith, with a very opposite ethic and a fine grasp of the true wellsprings of human behaviour. But this simply makes my point: if they do these things in the green wood, what will they do in the dry? What, indeed? Smith’s is a far from isolated example, if one wishes to consider the moral and technological effects of this kind of writing. Professor Clarke’s *Voices Prophesying War*, and our own editor’s articles in *Foundation* show clearly enough the predispositions that the genre can and has created in its public: predispositions with a positive feedback effect encouraging the use of the technologies, nuclear and otherwise, on which it loves to dwell. I have been personally informed by one involved that Wells’s *The World Set Free*, with its early but relatively accurate description of atomic warfare, was well-known reading among those involved with the Manhattan Project.

I now go over — with some relief — to science fact. The chief line of communication here has always been *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine, now *Analog*. Prior to John W. Campbell’s taking over the editorship, serious articles were few and far apart, but from 1939 onwards we find — for example — Willy Ley writing about “2,000-year-old electric batteries” and “Geography for Time-travelers,” while astronomer R.S. Richardson contributed several pieces about, for example, supernovae. In May/June of that year L. Sprague de Camp gives us “Design for Life,” an outline of the factors governing life-forms generally; about the same time Richard Tooker wrote “Toward a Superman,” in which — you will be glad to hear — he wrote “the methods most useful in plants cannot be used with man in the same whole-hearted manner.” Cheers! “Unseen Tools” by Leo Vernon, in June 1940, cites C.E. Shannon’s work on the use of symbolic algebra for studying switchboard and wiring diagrams. In February 1947 Campbell himself weighs in with some wildly optimistic predictions in “Atomic Power Plant.” “Atomic piles will be safe unless completely deserted for periods of several days at a time, a period preceded by long-continued mismanagement, neglect and general lack of maintenance. Any good automatic control system should be good for several months of unattended care . . . there will certainly be plenty of time for manual control operators to shut down the pile if necessary.”

Mind you, Campbell could be amusing and stimulating as well as inaccurate. Describing in 1952 the Brookhaven procedures for charging outside companies for irradiation tests, he adds, “I have a feel-

ing that accountants will have a certain vague discomfort at calculating costs on the basis of multiplying 2,000,000,000,000 X 30 and dividing by 400,000,000 to determine the cost in dollars. For one thing, I suspect standard bookkeeping machines are not designed to handle thirteen to fifteen digit numbers. Nuclear physics brings industry new problems!" You can say that again.

From this time onward, Campbell obviously had no difficulty in getting a good supply of science writers, many of them of high standing; this input was kept up after his death by editors Ben Bova and Stanley Schmidt, and the standard today continues high. The current (February 1987) issue, for example, carries a detailed and valuable article by G. Harry Stine on current American options in space following the "Challenger" disaster, with some pertinent comments on same. For the benefit of any reader here who thinks that this kind of article can be conjured up by anyone with access to trade journals and government reports, it is perhaps worth quoting Stine's own comments on his qualifications. "After a lot of training I became the lone individual who stood with my finger on the button when Navy rockets and guided missiles were launched at White Sands. I was Chairman of the Inter-Range Safety Group in 1956/57, and helped codify a standard set of safety criteria that would be used on all Department of Defense rocket and guided missile ranges." Science writers for *Analog* really do know what they are talking about, and readers who care about scientific advances, with their social and political implications, do, I strongly feel, have a responsibility for keeping up with this material, as well as studying the editorial and letter-column material. *Analog* is the only current sf magazine committed to publishing, alongside the sf, articles about the impact of science on the modern world.

Since most *Foundation* readers are subscribers, and presumably reasonably avid readers of sf, then, between their book purchases and our reviews, they will be up-to-date on the state of current science as portrayed in today's novels, and I do not propose to comment on these. Such readers will probably have long ago made up their minds on the contending issues I raised earlier, and about all I can usefully add here is that the debate between these issues does itself form an increasingly large content of new works of fiction. Despite my own opinions, I am mainly concerned here to present information: what follows will go accordingly.

Some may recall that in *Foundation 24* I expressed the view that the genre should express an ethos making use of real science but informed by sound philosophy. Feeling that I should put my efforts where my mouth is, I have for some while been concerned with what some will

feel is a chimera — Applied Science Fiction, by which I mean the use of sf ideas in real-life situations, of which the most important is education. In a society whose own ethos alternates violently between greed and apathy, this is uphill work, yet not without its compensations. Let me give you one or two cases. . . .

As far back as 1975 John Brunner was serving notice of the then-unconsidered potentials of the oncoming computer revolution. In *The Shock-Wave Rider* he put forward the idea of a “worm” program: one that, released into a large computer network, would self-replicate virus-like, with horrifying results — well, horrifying at least to the owners of the network. Since Mr. Brunner dramatized the idea, it has surfaced from time to time in various journalistic computer-do scenarios, but it is still largely seen as pure fiction, happily for the state of our bank-accounts and of sundry Ministries of Defence. However, ‘tame’ versions are now being produced. . . .

A worm is a program which “lives” in more than one computer, adapting and growing in its environment by replicating the segments which are its component program parts. John Shoch and Jon Hupp at Xerox’s Palo Alto Research Center saw worm programs as very useful for their network of about a hundred computer work-stations: a worm could be used to occupy idle work-stations by running its programs there until the work-station was needed by a human again. Software was designed whereby worms such as the Existential Worm could be run — a program to experiment with the work whose sole aim in life was to exist as a pre-defined number of segments. The worm would detect the loss of segments when workers logged-on to machines in which they were running, and create duplicates in other machines, in order to keep the population of segments constant.

At the Polytechnic of Central London, Yakup Paker, Tom Kindberg and Ali Vahit Sahiner have built an environment especially for creating and running worm programs. (Tom Kindberg has supplied me with all this information, which I am quoting and summarising.) Their network of computers they call the *earth*, and programmers produce *worm eggs* which, when run, grow into collections of communicating segment programs. Worms can be used for any application where a multiple computer earth can be of direct practical advantage, such as in parallel processing: a worm coordinates the activities of several computers to perform the necessary calculations, instead of having the whole process take longer on a single computer. They have even introduced the idea of worm DNA — that part of the worm which determines how a worm grows and adapts to its environment. Worms could monitor their own behaviour and adapt their own DNA in response to it;

thus worms could evolve. Introducing a random element into worm evolution is theoretically possible, although it would be necessary to ensure containment against the unpredictable growth of “monster” worms. To quote Kindberg directly: "In our earth several worms can run together at the same time. Worm society can thus be studied, a society in which the need to share computing resources is matched against individual growth strategies. This is all in direct opposition to conventional computing practice, wherein programs are tightly constrained by centralized administrative software called operating systems. We are only just beginning to experiment with worms with their new, organic self-determination; and it is uncertain what limits shall have to be put to their behaviour. In thoughts of the future one is inspired, however, by what Charles Darwin had to say about their living counterparts: 'It may be doubted whether there are any other animals which have played such an important part in the history of the world as these lowly organised creatures.'

Older readers of *Analog* — then *Astounding* — may remember the Great Dean Drive Debate. In October 1960 John Campbell jumped up and down excitedly about one Norman L. Dean, who had patented an allegedly workable inertial drive, a device Campbell believed would, if incorporated into a submarine, take the craft from earth to Mars in five days. Campbell's view was that the Space Administration, the Office of Naval Research, etc., had turned the thing down untested on the grounds that the principles involved did not accord with orthodox physics. His point, a favourite with him, was that it did not matter whether the theory was sound or not; that from an engineering point of view, it would work. What really interested him was the possibility of a totally new approach to physics thinking.

"Note that while the greater added kinetic energy appears with respect to the Mars frame of reference, *no momentum or energy* is being transferred between the ship and Mars at the time. The ship is reacting against its exhaust gases, not Mars. But, if that ship is going to land on Mars, that kinetic energy must be accounted for at that time. *Which* kinetic energy is conservative — the ship-earth value, or the ship-Mars value? Einstein's entire theoretical structure breaks down if simultaneity is imposed as a requirement, just as Newton's broke down under the requirements of more than one frame of reference."

Since 1960 there have been various follow-ups on this story, all of them tantalising but inconclusive. It struck me that some educational benefit might be had from a further investigation. There seemed three possibilities: Campbell was right, and a great scientific breakthrough was being suppressed; Campbell was wrong; or else, Campbell was

knowingly winding up his readers in the hopes of “getting them to think” (and, in the process, increasing the circulation of his magazine). Whatever the final answer, it seemed to me that something constructive might emerge from some kind of Popperian test.

It has been a long haul, and I count myself lucky in having received the untiring assistance of Douglas Letts, a mathematician with a remarkable knowledge, not only of physics, but of its historical underpinnings, of Alan Thompson, an inventor of a very practical disposition, and of Michael Williams, till lately a Research officer at the Science Museum and now Director of the new Children’s Gallery there. (It should be made quite clear here that Mr. Williams’s advice came in a purely personal capacity, and in no way expresses any “official” view from the Museum). Not surprisingly, the views of these gentlemen by no means entirely coincided. All of them have inspected Dean’s Patent No. 2,886,976, which I obtained — as could anyone else — from the patent Office, and which states “This invention relates to driving systems for producing unidirectional motion and [it] has for its primary object to provide a propulsion system in which a rotational movement produced by a prime mover is converted into a continuous or intermittent unidirectional movement of a load carrier which may or may not be the carrier of the rotational element of the system.”

What follows is from private correspondence with those named above. Mr. Letts Writes: “As for the ‘three body problem’, even Campbell gets around to the correct application of this difficulty: celestial mechanics, the motion of three bodies connected by gravitational forces alone.

“Dean’s apparatus is not held together by gravitational forces, but by screws, levers, slides, axles, pins, sockets, bearings and other mechanical paraphernalia. Besides, if all three body problems were insoluble, Doug Letts would not have been able to solve the ‘triple bob’, page 19 of *Vector Analysis by Computer*, 2nd Edition, where, by the way, the method of working is readily adaptable to masses of different sizes and considerably more than three of them, too. Campbell is completely up the creek when he writes: *Our mathematics . . . can not handle simultaneous multiple relationships.*

“The theme of *Vector Analysis by Computer* is simultaneous multiple relationships and how to make light work of them with a little help from a Sinclair ZX81. And you can be pretty sure that even without a computer the same simultaneous multiple relationships are the working substance, the grist for the mathematical mills of pen and paper mathematicians. The essence of Dean’s Patent (and here I add that it is a genuine Patent, a description of a workable device), the

essence is: the description of an apparatus capable of motion along a ‘tape, cord or cable’. It is not reactionless. It is not a sky hook. It is not a space drive. Whatever claims Dean may have made, mathematically, or with models, relating to reactionless drives, well, these form no part of the published Patent.

“In other words, in the critical Campbell sentence, *His device . . . patent No. 2,886,976 . . . thrust . . . without reaction*’, his device, without reaction, is not the subject of Patent No. 2,886,976. If there were other devices having the required properties, then details are not available, yet.

“There is nothing in the given Patent to establish a claim to reactionless drive. Accordingly, any such claim based upon a reference to the Patent cannot succeed. However, we may suppose that Dean was unable to obtain a Patent for his reactionless drive and did the next best thing: he patented the essential parts — or what he believed to be the essential parts — in the guise of a workable apparatus containing those parts.

“And what are these essential parts?

“Agreement between elements of the Patent and other published details points to ‘two counter-rotating masses, on shafts rotating in a light frame’ (p. 78). The myth follows (p. 79): ‘The centre of rotation has no mass; it’s a geometrical concept, not a material entity. Pushing it around doesn’t require force’.

“Double confusion follows.

“The conceptual mountain comes to Mahomet.

“The physical mountain stands immobile, so Mahomet gets up and walks. Effortlessly, I invert the concept of the Eiffel Tower, though allowing 12 hours rotation of the Earth to effect the same plan.

“Meanwhile, ‘His machine solves the problem perfectly — and the answer is rectified centrifugal force’ (p. 81).

“Crystal and cat’s whisker, silicon or germanium diode, mercury arc rectifier and thermionic diode are all analogues of differential friction. This way *hard*, that way *easy*.

“But as the electronic rectifier ceases to function when one end is disconnected from the circuit, so does the mechanical centrifugal force rectifier fail when detached from ‘a fixed member’, (often the Earth), or the ‘tape, cord or cable’ (connecting two points, usually on Earth).

“The problem with Mr. Dean’s invention is *not* that it denies established physics or Newtonian principles. The ‘emotional impact of the concept’ here, at this address, is confined to a now weary acceptance that contra-rotating masses do little else but conform.”

The following paper from Michael Williams covers the matter from a different angle, and describes what he nicknames the Bumble Drive: “The following idea is based on the Dean patent of 1959 but achieves the same result without using counter-rotating eccentric discs. It is therefore outside the patent. I believe that in effect it is the same idea: a vibration in one line only that can be made to move itself or a ribbon, one in relation to another. But I do not believe that the action of the Dean patent or this device will achieve the reaction free motion that is the desire of the originator. Further I believe that the changed mode of action I suggest gives a clear vision of why the Dean idea fails.

“When a tuning fork has its base rested on a sounding board the board vibrates as the energy is drained from the fork. The fork stem moves up and down. If the fork were placed within a ratchet system it could run itself up the ratchet as its energy was absorbed. This is the ‘differential friction’ effect that is often seen in models that are claimed to break Newton’s Third Law. The Laithwaite gyro was rested on a bed of ball bearings but I still could not see its action as other than a frictional one. How can we modify my device to make it the equivalent of a Dean Drive?

“The first thing to do is to make it vibrate under an external energy supply. This is achieved by fitting a single solenoid that is fed with an alternating current from a tuned circuit. The circuit would have to be linked to a sensor so that the fork itself kept the frequency at the correct figure. Optical sensing would give the least disturbance. The forces may be imagined to be applied perpendicular to the line of the blades, but the solenoid is fixed to the frame. We now have the energy source and it does not make the device spin in any way.

“At this point we have to add the gadgetry to grip a ribbon and also to return the fork to its central position in relation to the frame. This is best imagined by electronic control based on phase-shifted pulse circuits under the control of the master frequency set by the fork. One device would be set to grip the tape at precise times and for precise times during the cycle. This could be a solenoid device but at the high frequency envisaged there would be problems in circuitry and operation.

“But I cannot see any instant or short periods in the cycle at which the fork may be returned to its central position as if it had no inertia. That is the key point on which Dean fails, it is easier to see why in my version.

“Why bumble drive? Quote: *Life on Earth* by David Attenborough. . . . ‘. . . flies . . . They only use their forewings for flight. The hind wings are reduced to tiny knobs. All flies possess these little struc-

tures but they are particularly noticeable in crane flies, the daddy-long-legs, in which the knobs are placed at the end of stalks so that they look like the heads of drumsticks. When the fly is in the air, these organs which are jointed to the thorax in the same way as wings, oscillate up and down a hundred or more times a second. They act partly as stabilisers, like gyroscopes, and partly as sense organs presumably telling the fly of the attitude of its body in the air and in the direction in which it is moving’

“The action of fly drumsticks is the equivalent of the tuning forks that are used in short-range guided missiles for the same purpose — to sense the rate of turn and compensate for it. And as an amusing end-note may it not be that the flies have in fact installed in their flight-drive a form of the Dean-drive, under what is in effect a computer-brain control. If Dean-drive were possible then evolution would have given it to the flies.

“I am reminded of the Scottish hammer-thrower in childrens’ comics: he whirls the thing around his head and then gets carried away. As he flies through the air he is on Dean-drive, for that is the mechanism we have been discussing. And on the surface it seems possible”

I hope to have demonstrated here that original and possibly valuable work has resulted from my follow-up on the original Campbell editorial on the Inertial Drive. I say, ‘my’ follow-up; this in fact has consisted in the main of nagging letters to my collaborators, whose patience must at times have been sorely tried. At all events, they have my profound thanks.

I hope to have shown here that a) there are very unhealthy elements in the use (traduction?) of science in past and current science fiction, but that b) the healthy, accurate and constructive element still survives (consider for example, Rudy Rucker’s work in mathematics) and deserves far more active support from academic circles than it is getting. I believe, as did Campbell, that this stems from a basic disinterest — especially in the United States — in the philosophy of science and in the existential issues involved. Without such interest, there is no question but that science must decline, as it is declining, into increasingly sinister technological fixes. Let me ask the reader a question: in reading science fiction over the past decade, how many references has he or she come across to Simone Weil, Kuhn, Popper, Colin Wilson, or Ayn Rand? I pull these names out of the hat at random: I could pull more. With them, what counts is not that they were right or wrong, but that they confront fundamental issues linking science to the humanities — that is, to the fate of thee and me. The silence on these issues is deaf-

ening. I don't know what effect this silence has on others, but it frightens me to death.

Was John W. Campbell a Racially Prejudiced Bastard?

by

Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.

Volume I, *The John W. Campbell Letters* already more than adequately says — and demonstrates — my feelings about this man who was a giant among giants — and who shaped the modern world of science fiction to an extent not yet fully appreciated. So, I wasn't going to say more about Campbell in Volume II.

During preparation of this Second volume, however, I could not help but note the extensive dialogues that occurred between Isaac Asimov and John W. Campbell, Jr., regarding the nature of racial prejudism. It became clear that more must be said, especially from my vantage points, which included the following: (1) I taught simultaneously, full-time, at both an all-Negro university, and an all-White university. (2) I, a White person, experienced, without harm or threat of harm, the dreadful racial riots in and around our schools during the late sixties. (3) I confronted my Negro students head-on with John W. Campbell's thesis (to follow), and found my students during this tense period not one whit inclined to the "Campbell is a racially prejudiced bastard" thesis. (4) I had personally met some of the key players in propagating this false thesis during that sad period. My personal conviction, then and even today my present opinion, was/is that many were in the process of tearing a great man's reputation down as a means of pushing themselves upward.

This harsh statement did not apply to Isaac Asimov, however, as I felt (and still feel) that Isaac had personal, un verbalized, reasons for misunderstanding Campbell's argumentations, his reasons unrelated to the parry and thrust of those-who-would-be-great-by- dethroning-the-already-great. Isaac will have to speak to this point himself, if he has not already done so.

Then, during that period of almost social revolution — SNICK, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others — there were also the blind liberals in and out of fandom, in and out of SF writing. These unwittingly supported the efforts of those-who-would-be-great-at-the-expense-of-the-already-great.

It was, indeed, a trying time, almost isolating John W. Campbell, Jr. from properly earned awards and friendships within the fandom community during his physically declining years. According to Peg Campbell's statement to George Hay (*The John Campbell Letters*, Vol. I,

p. 10, 1985): “. . . she and John sometimes found themselves quite alone at conventions, when they would have welcomed company and conversation.”

Here was a man who, from my adolescence onward, had taught me to love and to associate with the most extreme form of life in every shape, hue and with every attitude, Extra-Terrestrial Aliens breathing every kind of atmosphere. I loved those Extra-Terrestrial Aliens!

In John W. Campbell's letter to Isaac Asimov, November 18, 1958, this volume, he says: "I dislike White, Yellow, and Red trash as thoroughly as I dislike Black-skinned trash.

"The one thing I'm interested in is the development of MEN. Supermen. And I don't give a damn what racial stock they start from -- just so they achieve."

Racially prejudiced?

Not hardly!

Volume I, *The John W. Campbell Letters*, quite clearly shows John Campbell's need to turn about every hypothesis, and to argue the other side of "Mother's are wonderful" truisms. That Volume, as well as the contents of this one, also clearly demonstrates John's need to argue "to learn" not so much "to win." That technique, his penchant for demanding an "engineering solution and his superb ability to analogize most everything, after all, were his teaching tools, his tools in trade for producing such wonderful authors as Isaac Asimov!

If we were to make a proper analysis of all the force vectors that brought about such gross misunderstanding of John's racial philosophies, we would need perhaps several books, but at least one major force vector should be mentioned: Fandom turns over rapidly, perhaps a new generation every three or four years. Fans come and fans go. But the nature of fandom seems ever-present, a ripe field for gossip and dissent, the creation and propagation of monstrous untruths that are not easily searched out and uprooted for what they are. Knowledge that such a bedrock exists makes it easier to understand what followed when a then well-known editor of a well-distributed SF Magazine, through publication and distribution, publicly berated John W. Campbell for being racially prejudiced.

An unthinking fandom -- in destructive packs -- followed the distortions, misunderstandings and half truths — and thus began the terrible isolation felt by Peg Campbell and John, as reported above.

How easy it was to isolate a godling . . . !

John W. Campbell answers best for himself, in the letter that follows:

Dear Perry,

The trouble with a mathematics training is that mathematics assumes a perfect Universe, following exact rules with absolute infallibility.

Now, the real universe is not that way; it contains noise — imperfections. Its rules are not exactly known. Rules we never heard of or imagined cut in and louse things up.

And one of the rules that Mathematics denies is never the less real, and applies to all Mathematicians. They all goof.

My father was an engineer (Chief Engineer for Plant Practices, A.T. & T. General) and he trained me to cross check any computation I made by running a crude analog computation on any digital math, and a rough digital check on my analog solution. Digital math can get n places correct — but it's just as apt to goof in the millions place as in the units place; analog always gets the first places right, but its hopeless beyond the first three or four. You know — the slide-rule computation of “ 2×2 is 3.98, oh hell, call it four.”

Any good textbook on astronomy — my latest happens to be *Exploration of the Universe*, by Abell — will do about equally well, provided you add a new training on top of your Math training. Do interpret the results in common-sense terms. What would that look like — feel like . . . ?

Because I've been doing that for years, I spotted the fact that there were errors — without knowing their magnitudes exactly — in one rapid reading of your story. A hotter sun covering more of the sky, and the temperatures on the planet are similar to Earth's? Oh, come on now — that doesn't fit at all!

It's worth using that cross-check to see whether your math has, somehow, slipped. For one thing, it's quick and easy.

The surface gravity of all the planets in the Solar system, save for Mercury, Mars and Jupiter, come out surprisingly close to 1 G. Saturn's huge, but the density is so low that the surface G is just about 1. The same applies to both Uranus and Neptune. Pluto's mass and diameter are unknown, so we can't say. But Venus is also close to 1G.

When you're aware of that, the importance — and effect — of planetary density and radius have more meaning to you.

In designing his weirdo planet, Meskelin, **Hal Clement** had to use extreme measures to get the extreme gravity he wanted. Primarily, this involved going to an immense core of collapsed matter, because density, rather than total mass, is what makes for high surface G. After

all, the Sun's mass is 1000 times that of Jupiter — enormously greater than Earth's — yet the surface gravity of Sol works out to only about 27G. Low density effect.

It may be an inversion of your math training — but it makes a damn good cross-check!

Your “Be Fruitful & Multiply” is a version of the approach we had in “The Right to Breed,” by Donald Kingsbury. He's a professor of Math at McGill University, and added a couple of frills. He assumed a technology that went to the absolute end of imaginable technology (answering the objection that improved technology will allow a larger population) by saying means for instantaneous travel to infinite distance is developed, and technology that can convert any mass to food is developed. Then all the stars, planets, gas, dust, and even radiation in space becomes available for human food. Assume the radius of the Universe is ten times what we now think it is. Assume the known density of matter in that space, how long would it take to convert all that total mass to human flesh? Answer: Approximately 7000 years.

The argument would certainly bear repeating.

In re pollution: So long as man depends on muscle-power for energy sources, the algae-plant production of O_2 is bound to balance the animal production of CO_2 . But when you bring in fossil fuels, we can consume O_2 and produce CO_2 faster than plants reverse the process.

Also — interesting point! — burning fossil fuels puts more radioactive waste into the air than a nuclear power plant does!

Reason: Nuclear radioactive wastes we carefully bury deep underground, where they can cool off before entering the biosphere again. But coal we dig from deep underground, where its content of uranium and thorium daughter elements, radium, actinium, polonium, etc., are taken out of storage and released into the biosphere! And actual quantity of those radioactives being released is greater than the leakage from a nuclear power plant.

Well-designed nuclear power plants are the only kind of power plants we can build that do not have to interfere with the biosphere. Remember that even a hydroelectric power plant interferes with the ecology of its region!

Re the attacks on me as a race bigot: As you know, the victim of such an attack cannot reply effectively, even when the statements are deliberate misquotations, or quotations out of context.

Since you're teaching in a largely-Negro school, you're in a good position to make remarks about bigotry and prejudice. You obviously wouldn't be where you are if you were biased.

What the attackers are reacting to is that I'm a pragmatist-engi-

neer, interested in solutions that can actually work. This makes me the enemy of the Idealists who think that only the End is important, and any objection to Means is mere nit-picking, or the result of bias, prejudice, back-lash, etc. “When I’m so pure-heartedly Idealistic, clearly anyone opposed to what I say must be a black-hearted bigot!”

The Prohibition people tried that, and got a constitutional amendment rammed through to cure forever the problem of alcoholism.

Those cock-eyed Idealists now are trying to ram through “love thy neighbor” by legal command — and maintaining, at the same time, that anyone who feels any law is unjust, should defy that law. The hopeless logical inconsistency of this never penetrates their rigidly idealistic minds. Reminds me of a high school girl in the neighborhood who wants to be a model, and decided to go on a rigid diet. Her father — who’s an M.D. — doesn’t want her to be a model, and knows better than to argue with her. So he’s watched with some amusement. It seems the diet called for lots of cottage cheese, but she found she didn’t like that, and so substituted cream cheese instead — which she eats by the brick. Her father did mention to her that cream cheese runs 60% butter-fat, but that didn’t have a chance of penetrating her teen-age certainty of her own wisdom.

After all, cottage and cream cheese look much alike, don’t they?

The facts I’m operating on are that it is not true that all men are born equal. That, in any gene-pool-race, some are bright and some are stupid. That wisdom and intelligence are two independent variables. That education can not make up for lack of potential, which is a genetic trait. (The ability to learn has to be genetic, for instance, since, by definition, you cannot teach an organism how to learn . . . if it can’t learn already! Thus you cannot teach a chimp how to speak; he lacks the genetically conferred potential required.)

Among the great gene-pool-race groups on Earth we can distinguish — solely by history, not skin-color! — the orientals, Polynesians, Amerinds, Indo-aryans, and Africans.

Oriental and middle-eastern gene-pool-races first achieved high-level civilization, with the oriental branch of the Indo-Aryans learning from them, a couple of millennia before **Christ**. The western Indo-Aryans learned a millennium later, and finally the north-western group, particularly the Scots, didn’t catch on until about 300 years ago.

The Polynesians developed high-level civilization and technology suited to their island-and-sea milieu at least 2500 years ago.

The native Africans, as of the time of **Christ**, had a very low population, due to the fact that they had no decent crop plants, and suffered from chronic acute protein starvation. Note that Biafra is a lush, tropical

land . . . yet Biafrans starved to death for lack of usable food. Africa doesn't produce a decent crop plant.

There was a population explosion among the Bantu natives of Africa about 200 years A.D., when explorers from Indonesia invaded east Africa, set up colonies, and introduced new, nourishing crop-plants. A second wave of invaders came some two hundred or so years later from India, introducing more crop plants.

These invaders employed Africans — largely as slaves — to build cities for them, such as the famous Zimbabwe. (Remember that Angkor Vat was built, and deserted, about that time in a Cambodian jungle; building cities in jungles was old stuff to the Indonesian architects!)

Point of interest: The Amerinds developed high cultures in America. The Orientals developed high cultures. The Indo-aryans developed high cultures and technology. The Polynesians did.

The Africans alone of the major gene-pool-races did not.

The above statements have nothing whatever to do with skin color; they're simple facts of history.

I'm not talking about what happened to Africans transplanted to America — I'm talking about Africans in Africa.

One of the characteristics of a strong, dynamic civilization is a high degree of organization — whether it's done by a bloody-handed tyrant or by representative democracy (as the Asmoans developed). Organization and efficient division of labor is the foundation of civilization, and until that is achieved, no major building is possible. And that's the characteristic that the Africans did not develop during the 6500 year period of written history, while all the other groups did.

That fact makes a major difference in integrating the group into the major cultural stream of the Earth. It is a system that "isn't natural" to them, simply because it isn't ancestral to them.

There are two types of "feeling membership in" groups that an individual can experience. One is the individual-to-individual type of belongingness — i.e., all first-rate mechanics feel a kinship with each other as individual peers. Or mathematicians, chemists, musicians, etc. And there's racial belongingness, as all Blacks are brothers — or all Scots, Frenchmen, or White Russians. (But Mongol "Russians" exclude that kind of belongingness.)

Currently, there's a tough problem in the schools; experience now shows that neither the Whites nor the Blacks want integrated schools. Actually, it's the old, old story; group A wants right of free entry into any group — but while they demand the right to enter group B's area, they want to exclude B's from their area. The Jews show exactly the same pattern — they want no bars to their free entry to hotels, theaters,

resorts, etc., — but they also seek to push any goyim out of their resorts, hotels, theaters, etc. And they try to make sure none of their daughters marry goyim, but cry “Anti-semitism” if somebody tries to keep a Christian girl from marrying a Jew. (Remember “Abie’s Irish Rose”?)

The Blacks want to be free to enter any school they want to — but Black students are uniting to drive White students out of their schools, once they achieve a 50+% majority in a school.

Until individual-achievement-membership becomes more important to them than genetic-group-membership — there’ll be trouble.

Because, over the centuries, Africans didn’t develop organizational talents, their descendants today are still lousy organizers. Vide the mess the various African nations are making of themselves — Congo, Nigeria, you-name-it.

And American Negroes provide few competent business organizers. That’s why there are so very, very few Negro banks, insurance companies, supermarket chains, and even local stores.

By 1820 there were a lot of free Negroes in this country -- but no Negro banks. When the Irish came in, they were held to be lower than the Negro — but they promptly set up banks, insurance companies, organized clubs, built churches, set up parochial schools, and organized businesses.

What I am trying to point out is that you can’t solve problems if you won’t acknowledge the facts of that system. Acknowledge what the problem is, and you can design steps to correct the situation in a minimum of time, with a minimum of human agony, and a minimum of false hopes.

The current much-publicized approach reminds me of the cancer quack who keeps telling his sucker that “All you need is another \$1000 worth of treatment and we’ll get rid of that pain,” and sells him another series of caramel colored water laced with alcohol and laudanum.

The solution takes time, and must start with schools that teach selected Negroes how to organize effectively and constructively. Negro banks and insurance companies that Negroes can feel they can trust their money to. (And that does not mean that they can feel “Oh, well, the FDIC will take care my money isn’t lost,” or “Oh, I don’t have to worry — the State Insurance inspection people will see to it that my insurance gets paid somehow.” It means trusting the able, honest and responsible men who run the bank.)

It’s not an attractive approach — because it takes time, care, and responsible action. To any people a quick, spectacular action is much more soul-satisfying. “Burn, baby, burn!” is so much more satisfying than “Wait, baby, wait — we’re getting there!” to any human

people.

The trouble, of course, is that “Burn, baby, burn!” rouses “Step on them black bastards!” — which is worse than useless, but also a very human, response.

The trouble with being a pragmatist is that it makes enemies of both sides — both types of bigoted Idealists hate having facts slapped in their faces. It makes the problem seem almost as tough as it really is, instead of being something that could all be solved by one simple drastic maneuver.

Regards, John W. Campbell, Editor

A.E. "Slan" Vogt

by

Forrest J Ackerman

Forrest Ackerman -- inventor of the term "sci-fi", the first one during early fandom to develop and wear a futuristic costume during a science fiction convention, thereby setting an established program -- is a kind of "Slan" himself.

During most of A.E. van Vogt's writing years, Forrest was his literary agent and close friend, but additionally is or has been publisher, editor, writer, television and tv actor, founder of and acquisitioner for the gigantic and fantastic Ackerman science fiction and horror memorabilia collection located in Hollywood, personal friend of many movie greats, punster, and science fiction and horror fan -- and many, many more things.

I am proud to say that Forrest J Ackerman has long been a friend, supporter of this Campbell Letters project, and the most single authoritative figure I know on A.E. van Vogt, outside of van Vogt himself.

Forrest's wife, Wendayne, during their long tenure together, was almost equally active in Forrest's many enterprises, and a star in her own right.

Forrest has taken time from his extremely busy travels and schedules to reminisce about A.E. van Vogt.

Alfred Elton van Vogt was born to Aganetha (Buhr) van Vogt over seven decades ago south of Winnipeg, in Manitoba, Canada. His father, Henry van Vogt practiced law. Van (as his friends call him) lived successively in small Canadian towns until moving to Winnipeg, Manitoba.

He completed high school during the great depression era, wrote civil service exams, and at age 18 began working at census taking in Ottawa. While there he studied correspondence courses and, on returning to Winnipeg, wrote and sold a confession type short story, after which many others of similar type followed. He also became Western representative for the Maclean trade papers of Toronto, and wrote articles each month for eight different business magazines.

In 1936 he met Edna Mayne Hull at the Winnipeg Writer's Club meeting, and they were married May 9, 1939, until she passed away in the early seventies. During World War II years van worked in the Department of National Defense.

Van sold his first science fiction story to Astounding Science Fiction Magazine in 1938. His best known work, Slan, was written in the evenings during those months in Ottawa.

The van Vogt's migrated to Los Angeles, CA in 1947. He eventually received his BA degree in 1953 and became a UCLA alumnus in the early 1970's.

Van married Lydia, his present wife, when she was a Los Angeles court interpreter. She speaks five languages."

Known as one of the world's great and original science fantasy writers, he continues to live and think and work in a house overlooking Hollywood, just beneath the "Hollywood" sign. His novels and other writings represent some of the definitive, creative stories written in a manner of suspense totally different than any other writer.

I first met A.E. van Vogt on his invitation to lecture on Dianetics™ at the Los Angeles Hubbard Dianetic Foundation, Inc. van Vogt is a man of exceedingly high ethics and my friend.

AC Projects, Inc., (5106 Old Harding Road, Franklin, TN 37064) publishers of The John W. Campbell Letters, also published A.E. van Vogt's The Battle of Forever, still available in both signed, numbered edition as well as trade edition.

Where Isaac Asimov represents a brilliant writer who willingly learned everything possible from John W. Campbell, A.E. van Vogt is one of those rare writers of the time, who held steady with his own ideas and writing techniques, and, to some extent, was not capable of bending to Campbell's paradigms.

John Campbell embraced both men! [Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.: Ed.]

Haphazard Reminiscences at Deadline Time during a Very Hectic Time of My Life

IN THE 65 YEARS that I have been reading science fiction, from the pioneering era of Gernsback's "scientifiction" to the \$20 million TV channel recognition of "sci-fi" -- "Everybody" knows about the \$20 million cable channel called Sci-Fi Channel, starting in '91 -- Alfred Elton van Vogt has entertained me about as much as any sf author I can name. He has given me indelible memories of reading pleasure in the company of H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ray Bradbury, Henry Kuttner, Catherine Moore, Frederik Pohl, Robert Heinlein and several other sensawunda (sense-of-wonder) scribes who have enhanced my literary life.

I don't know where; and neither, I think, does Van; the notion got loose for awhile that his middle name was Egger but it's been a long time since that erroneous information cropped up in print.

One of my earliest memories of him as an in-the-flesh person was as Co-Guest of Honor of the first Pacifcon, the World SF Convention of

1946 in LA.

After World War II, when I timorously hung out my shingle as a science fiction agent, Van became one of my earliest clients and has been my most important one for 40 years. There was a brief hiatus of 2 years when he thought a younger, New York based agent could represent him more satisfactorily than an aging FJA but after a disillusioning period of non-publication under the aegis of a big name literary rep in NYC he has returned to the fold and I am happy to report that 1991 is the Year of Renaissance for "the idea man of science fiction", with his classic novels coming back into print, previously unpublished works scheduled for his bylined books, and Russia, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Taiwan and Hungary all hungry for his work.

I was very gratified when AE originally picked me as it was by a process of elimination. He was shopping his manuscripts around with 4 established agents of the time and I was an untried, unknown quantity . . . but he eventually settled on me! I've sold him to TV and placed an original movie script by him with Roger Corman: *Conflict 2100*.

I was the first person to receive a sample of Dianetic™ auditing from him in 1950 after he had read the first copy of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* rushed to LA; and shortly after my 50th birthday, when I was laid low by a series of heart attacks (only 2 hours energy a day for a year) he very generously donated his valuable time for a number of months to aid me in recovery with Dianetic assistance. He is a very generous person in many respects.

We have been together on television in Calgary, Canada, and in Rio de Janeiro in 1969 at the Brazilian International Science Fiction Film Festival for 12 days. (Like the rest of us -- Phil Farmer, Fred Pohl, George Pal, John Brunner, Bob Sheckley, Bob Bloch, Damon Knight, et al -- one lunch time on the strand, he too didn't have the nerve to sample the only 2 entrees on the menu: spit sandwiches and raddled out turkey cock. No, such native delicacies defeated even the gustatory imagination of the man destined to rule the sevagram!)

I was flattered that he chose me to give the graveside eulogy for his first wife, s.f. author E. Mayne Hull, although I was bedded with a temporary illness the day of the ceremony and could not oblige.

We collaborated on one story, "Laugh, Clone, Laugh", published in the pocketbook *Science Fiction Worlds of Forrest J Ackerman and Friends*.

He has immortalized my "Garage Mahal, Son of Taj" by stating publicly that "Forrest J Ackerman has not only the world's greatest collection of science fiction but the world's second greatest collection of science fiction" (referring to the duplicate material housed in my triplex garage).

I have never known a man so dedicated to self-improvement, particularly of his mental capacities. Although I think there was very little room for improvement in the first place.

Thanks for endless hours of entertainment, Van, and thanks for the privilege of being associated with you professionally for 8 illustrious lustrums.



The 1930's
with *Isaac Asimov*

Ave Robertus!

Uh! Things and stuff have been going on down here, and I'm up to my ears, and getting deeper every day. NOTE BENE! DON'T EVEN PUT THIS IN YOUR BOUND LETTERS DEPARTMENT FOR A WHILE. It's super-under-the-hat 'til January 25, when *Astounding* will burgeon forth with the news.

You'll be seeing presently in the fan mags that *Astounding's* taking a slant toward more fantasy. Lies, all lies. Base lies and deception. *Astounding* is going to carry even less fantasy than at present. But I'm frantically seeking first-rate fantasy story material. I've written **Norman L. Knight**, **C.A. Smith**, **C.L. Moore**, **Lester del Rey**, **Seabury Quinn**, **Ed. Hamilton**, everyone I could think of and a lot more I'd never begun to think of for new fantasy material — immediately. Telling 'em all that *Astounding's* taking an immediate slant toward fantasy, running more fantasy due to the recent success of **L. Ron Hubbard's** fantasy, and **Manly Wade Wellman's** fantasy.

That much is out to the fan magazines, whence the rumors soon to appear.

This much is out to a few of the closed-mouthed S&S editors who might recommend authors who could do fantasy to me: I'm starting a new companion magazine to *Astounding Science-Fiction*, a magazine of pure fantasy. The material is to be fantasy plus a little weird, supernatural and horror of the psychological type. NO sex, NO sadism, and NO elementals of a malignant nature with penchants for vivisection, no beauteous and necessarily nude maidens sacrificed to obscene gods. I'll try my damndest to make this the best fantasy magazine that ever has appeared — a dozen times better than *Weird* ever wanted to be and Street and Smith are backing me 100%. So I ought to get there.

And this is the particularly super-super-super under the hat. S&S President **Grammar**, Vice President **Ralston**, Promotion Manager **de Grouchey** and I being the present repositories of information. The magazine will be called STRANGE WORLDS with the subtitle FANTASY FICTION. I think that makes a damned good title.

And this mag is going to be 100% my own particular pet, thought up, started, and formed by me — wherefore I love it.

Astounding will continue to be the tops in science-fiction. It's range is going to be human adventure to weird as its range. The covers will be designed to express that range.

Incidentally, I've remarked, I think, that Art Director **Flynn** and I have had differences of opinion on art in *Astounding*? We finally had a

knock-down-drag-out fight on the Feb. cover, going to bat with Pres. **Grammar** as to who got what he wanted. Flynn wanted a cover showing a Martian looking out of a window at the U.S. capitol building. I didn't, because it was a monster cover. There was no reason for competition with *Wonder* and *Amazing*, when we didn't directly compete in material, and had no need to do so. Further, the mystery and curiosity arousing powers of monster-covers is a field that's been plowed over and over for 10 years.

I wanted a cover showing a rocket ship broken, split, fused in disastrous landing, nose buried in rust-red sand of an endless desert under a purple-black, unearthly sky. Two human figures stumbling off across the endless desert, one with a bandaged head, one with an arm in a sling. No equipment, stumbling tracks in the sand leading away from the wrecked ship and a cross-topped mound in the sand.

Flynn was dragged out. I get that cover — and it's going to be the finest scf. cover yet, I think. There'll be drama and mystery and genuine human appeal in that, I believe. The man that's doing it is **Rogers**, a new artist to scf., but a man who's been doing *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* covers for years. He's a real artist, and a genuine scf. fan into the bargain. He seems to appreciate and agree with me in my dictum of no reds just because they're red, no eye-searing gaudiness just because they're gaudy.

I talked hard, hot and fast for about 10 minutes with **Grammar**, putting up those reasons for the type of cover I wanted and I'm going to get it, thank God. Now we've got to see what kind of cover we can find for *Strange Worlds*. That will range more toward the weird monster than *Astounding* will, but again I'm going to do my damndest to avoid the old spectrum colors just because they're bright. I insist that those reds, blues, and greens and yellows aren't either necessary or sensible; everybody does it, and by not doing it we'll stand out more than by doing it. Further, the material I'm going to use is going to be of a type that will have genuine appeal to adult minds. I'm going to try to get that one supernatural fantasy that every good author unburdens himself of at some time during his career — the 10 cent a word slick author stuff.

In the meantime, for the first time in history, *Astounding* is going to get some real pushing and promotion. I'm trying to get myself on some radio programs on sustaining hours the broadcasting companies search frantically to fill. Lecturer on popular science, you know. I'm going to do my damndest to horn in somehow on "Hobby Lobby," with either **Willy Ley** or myself. **Ley** certainly ought to make it, with his fascination hobby, rockets.

I'm going to have *Astounding* piled with the *Popular Science*

magazines on the stands in hopes that some of the science-minded readers will look it over for a change. Our new cover lettering and new type covers should get hold of some.

We're going to start cross-ading in other S&S mags to a greater extent. We have been cross-ading with *Doc Savage* mag in the past, and that recent advertising survey we published — Sept. issue — showed a 40% cross-readership with them. 40% of *Astounding's* readers read *Doc Savage*. We've done the same to a lesser extent with the *Shadow*. We have 12% cross-over with them. We haven't done it with *Air Trails* and have only 1.5% cross with them, and should have at least a 25% cross.

Air Trails is going to run a picture of the interior of the control compartment of the new Atlantic Clipper, with its multitude of dials, controls, recording instruments, etc., and remark, "This might be the interior of a spaceship such as described in *Astounding Science Fiction*; it is, in fact, the interior of the Atlantic Clipper." I, in turn, will print in *Astounding* a little note that, for a good idea of what the control board of a rocket ship would look like, see page 47 of *Air Trails*. We'll work similar stunts on and off from now on.

Strange Worlds will be 20 cents, \$2 a year, 144 pages to start, 160 pages later, probably. Pulp size, trimmed, of course. Naturally, it will cross-ad with *Astounding* liberally.

The Saturn cover will come soon, no doubt. That will open the Hayden Planetarium promotion scheme for *Astounding*. Probably our March cover. I was thinking of using "Cloak of Aesir" on that but won't. The Sarn Mother would be a monster, and better suited for *Strange Worlds*. "Cloak of Aesir" will appear in March *Astounding* though, I think. 21,000 words. The Saturn cover will be done with the aid and advice of the Hayden Planetarium, and should be right.

Incidentally, your remark about the cover error being so easy to spot is -- evidently another illusion — as **Spiegel's** and **Chauvenet's** reaction showed. We played a game out at a party the other day in which a number of things like cheese graters, folding rules, fountain pens, rubber bands, poker chips etc. were hidden in plain sight. In a living room. About 15 people trying to find where they were. It took me 20 minutes to find the 6 red poker chips. They'd been stuck onto six drawer-pulls, right in front, and looked like part of the furniture. The cheese grater was thrust over the handle of a saber hung on the wall, and took me 10 minutes. A pair of teacups balanced over two wall-lamps took one fellow 20 minutes to find. And, in half an hour's hunt, only one man found the folding rule. It was folded and stuck upright in the book case so that it looked like part of a gate-leg table. In plain

sight, all of them, but they were too blamed plain. The fountain pen, which several people missed, was stuck in a piperack in with a dozen hard-rubber pipe mouthpieces so that it was completely concealed yet in plain sight.

Well, our error seems to be the same. I've been told the bands run the wrong way on Jupiter, that the satellites should be in a straight line parallel to the equator, and not staggered, that a dozen perfectly correct things are screwy -- and gotten only one letter spotting the error so far. Incidentally, they all say the cover's fine, and they've all said that November is an unusually good issue, better than Oct. by a long shot! I myself agreed with you that **Taen** is being accepted fairly well on the basis I offered it: a picture of Mars.

I'm very curious as to their reactions to the Dec. issue, which I honestly believe has two golds, and six blues. I think you'll allow me one gold, and at least four blues.

Read the stamp ad. Suppose you had \$5 worth of unused US stamps all of 50 cents denomination. What would you do with them? The post office won't exchange them, you know. You'd wait a hell of a while to get packages needing all 50 cent stamps. Or suppose, like myself, you'd acquired a heterogeneous collection of 6, 8, 12, 10, 15, 20, 30, and 50 cent stamps, and no use for them?

Incidentally, "Reunion on Ganymede" seems to be taking tops in the Nov. Issue! They like **Simak** better for this one than they did for "Hunger Death" — and they're all saying it's hard to pick tops in a swell issue! Frankly, I'm pleased, but slightly dazed. I thought it was acceptable, but showed signs of having been written to order.

Incidentally, **Asimov**, the fan who's been trying to be a writer, was in the other day and told me that he'd made a sale to *Amazing*. Naturally bucked up. I'd rejected the yarn, but it was a sound, and pretty fair piece of work, just lacking humanity. But anyway, he'd gotten into communication with **C.D. Simak**, and wrote him about the sale, chortling about making his \$60 sale. **Simak** replied he was bucked up too. He'd just sold a serial to *Astounding* for \$560!

All works out for the best. **Asimov** naturally has the background feeling now that you're in the money when you're in *Astounding*, but *Amazing* etc. are just penny ante stuff.

Greek font hell, for those omegas. Why, pray tell? The Greek font is hand type. To use it in the stereotype process means its destruction. Further, it's hand work, as no Linotype font has both Greek and Roman type complete.

Letters were rare as hell that time, because everybody was writing to that damned advertising quiz instead of to me. Hence I was using let-

ters set up last month, and every interesting letter that did come in.

Re-indexing the imprinted mss. of mine. Some of those — notably the Duke Stetson opus — were admitted and recognized failures, partitioned and destroyed for use elsewhere in view of that. This is true of the Stetson story, which as you say, was the progenitor of the “Mightiest Machine.” Also of “The Space Beyond,” which was neither finished nor submitted, of course, and was re-used elsewhere. The green space cups, for instance, appear in “Infinite Atom.”

Why not separately catalog the unpublished opi, or if you do include them, include those that were regarded as satisfactory and submitted and worked with as such. It wouldn’t exactly count to index the beginning to “Night” as a mss. It was never submitted, as being unsatisfactory in connection with the story I wanted.

Startling Stories was dated somewhat aheadish because the latest *TWS* out was Dec. 1938, and the following mag would, naturally, be the Jan. 1939. I was interested in the robot steal myself — also the “more candy.” The robot, though, genuinely lost, I think, by being painted red instead of copper. Copper is real and recognizable. Red metal isn’t real or recognizable. Copper robot, therefore tied it in with actual experience and seemed realer, I believe.

Incidentally, **Wesso** was in to see me. He illustrated inside, you noticed. He said that robot was described in story as having square head, triangular body. They changed the story to fit **Brown’s** steal.

We’re starting to advertise fan mags in Dec. issue — Jan., I mean. I think **Mort’s** move at Philly convention was really bad.

Write comments on *Strange Worlds* plizzz!

Regards, John



The 1930's
with *A.E. van Vogt*

Dear Bob:

The reason you haven't heard from me before is the excellent one that I've had another one of those colds, and spent my evening sweating on the couch and reading scf and *UNK* manuscripts 'til I'm sick of the things.

Incidentally, please go ahead and review briefly all the years in the other mags, if you can and will, because I haven't got a prayer of reading 'em now. I've got another sweet little headache to make life more agreeable. There's a such-and-such called **A.J.B.** a well known hack writer, who can, however, usually be depended on to turn out a readable, if not good story, on comparatively short notice. I gave him a basic idea for an *UNK* novel of 40,000 words; he wrote 10,000 that seemed fairly good with enough editing, and I told him so, so he did 30,000 more of the gawdawflust tripe ever submitted by anyone claiming to be a pro writer. I needed a novel in a hurry. That was so frightful I saw there wasn't a chance of **B** making it usable, so I called in **Norvelle Page**, who did "Flame Winds" in four days. "Flame Winds," in the next *Unknown*, is a straight, plain snickersnee action yarn with overtones of magic. But it's done with a zest and interest that makes it one of the best of tis type -- not so darned far behind **Merritt's** snickersnee yarn, "Ship of Ishtar," in many respects. The man deserves real credit for doing such an excellent job of writing from a cold, standing start in four days. He developed the whole yarn, background, characters, plot and incident plus the style of presentation in four days, wrote 40,000 words first-rate action and deserves my heartiest thanks into the bargain for getting me out of a tight spot on coverdate. **De Grouchey**, our promotion manager, and **Miss Patchen**, one of the girls in the advertising department, have read the yarn -- because they wanted to, not because there was any necessity to -- and went out of their way to tell me how much they liked it.

In the meantime, **B** got his unmitigated mess back, with the remark that it was not satisfactory.

B sent a letter saying the yarn was ordered, and he'd sue for \$600.

We sent a letter saying we didn't buy anything that wasn't usable, and that as a pro author he ought to know damned well everything was sourer than all hell.

He still threatened suit. We told him to fix it up, rewrite it, and we'd consider it. **Ralston**, Vice-President of S&S in charge of legal matters, looked into the case, getting my reports and **B's** demands, and figured it'd cost too much in legal fees, plus the tendency of a jury to sock the big, hard-boiled corporation in favor of the poor little author, to make it worth

while.

It wound up with me having to take the damned tripe, with the understanding that I "revise" it for \$100. That means, in effect, that I've got to write a 40,000 word novel for \$100, while **B** gets \$600 for something I will throw out from title page to last paragraph.

The only satisfaction I have at all is that **B** won't sell S&S very much in the future, in all probability.

Incidentally, you might refrain from adding this letter to your file. There's no joy in having it as a matter of record, but I don't have a surprising desire to blow off steam on the job.

One thing I'm a little puzzled about, is whether I should print the revised yarn under **B's** name in hopes of having all the readers write in and say, "the best story **B's** ever written -- doesn't seem possible the oaf could have done anything so good."

However, t'ell with the dispute. Just that writing plus the reading I'm gifted with nowadays, keeps me and will keep me, fairly well occupied. The extra \$100 will mean, though, that we'll have cash for vacation, as well as car. **Dona's** been a bit worried because, when we get the car, we'll have used up about all the cash available. Saving \$100 a month means that we haven't gotten much observable benefit from the raise, naturally, while we have gotten an extremely observable increase in the amount of work to be handled. **Dona's** being unofficial assistant editor, reading mss. at home, and throwing out the hopeless cases at the beginning. Then I can read her notes and see whether it might be worth looking over for ideas. It saves me a lot of time, and is extremely helpful, naturally.

You wouldn't know it, of course, but New England is at war with Mexico -- having a terrific battle, largely naval, in fact. **John Clark & Fletcher Pratt** are working it with the aid of another group of naval bugs. **John Clark** is the Commander in Chief of the Navy of New England, and somebody else is C in C of Mexico. **Pratt** is the referee, and clearing house of information. It's all fought out on the map. So far, New England's lost two tankers, one submarine, and has another blockaded and trapped at Nassau. New England possesses 4 Dunquerque battle-cruisers, a cruiser fleet, a destroyer squadron, 1 tug, 3 freighters, 8 subs, 2 tankers, etc. The tankers were originally, unnamed, but **Clark** tacked some names on them that I thought were lovely. The four were "Sloth," "Avarice," "Greed," and "Gluttony." He's decided that the two remaining are "Sloth" and the "Gluttony." The freighters are a newer addition, and as yet unnamed. I imagine they'll have nice names too.

Mexico, unfortunately for New England, has one battleship -- The Colorado. The Colorado is, of course, the U.S.S. Colorado and it's unfortunate because the US battleships are designed rather differently than

those of other nations. The Colorado carries armor so heavy that Dunquerque (they're actually French, of course) can't puncture it. The Dunquerque's carry 15" guns, but the shells will simply bounce off of the terrific armor carried by the Colorado at any range the Dunquerque is likely to try. But the Colorado carries 16" guns, and can put shells clean through the Dunquerque at a distance so great the D. can't even hit the C.

That seems to be typical of the US battleships. They're all slow -- about 22 knots -- but so inordinately tough they don't have to run from anybody, and as long as we want them only for a defensive fleet anyway, they don't have to chase anybody.

The new 45,000 ton ships the US is building, the Washington class, will have 12-16" guns, 14" armor (proof against anything lighter than 16" guns, and extremely resistant even to them) and a speed of 33 knots. Since most US ships exceed their rated speed, **Clark, Pratt**, and the others who probably have a pretty good idea of what they're talking about, say they'll probably [be] good for 35 to 36 knots. An item that rather interested me is the fact that if all the cruisers in the combined German, Italian, and Japanese navies caught the USS Colorado out in the middle of the Atlantic all alone -- the Cruisers would high-tail it home. I didn't really realize how incredibly tough a battleship is. The cruisers couldn't even put a shell into the Colorado if they were allowed to come up to point-blank range. While one well-placed 16" shell from the Colorado would put a cruiser out of action, to be sliced up at leisure later on.

To the cell: Thanks a lot for the *Mellor* data I haven't gotten anything straightened out yet, however, because of the completely nutty reactions of the negative pole. I've re-rigged my switch panel, with a gang of no less than six double-pole-double-throw switches, plus two rheostats, one double-pole-double-throw, and four single-pole-single-throw switches so that I can, by flipping switches, convert the instruments into a sort of potentiometer-voltmeter. That gives me a voltage reading on zero load, or, if desired, a voltage reading when under very slight charge. The instruments will now perform tricks almost as cute as those of the blasted cell.

Results: I've tried as negative poles Cu, Zn, Co, Al, and Mg. With a Cu negative, the peak voltage of the full-charged cell, gassing off H at the negative pole, and 0 at the + pole, is 1.7 or thereabouts. This is obtainable only with gasses coming off-potentiometer hookup with a slight negative load. On zero load, it falls very rapidly to 1.25, hesitates a moment, and plunks down to 0.98 or so. It holds there, even when a load of .1 amps is applied, for about a minute, then falling slowly to zero, and finally reversing potential, with the Cu becoming + and the Co becoming negative. Only by that time, it isn't Cu, it's CuO. The Cu plate, incidentally, will react violently -- gives a shock discharge on short circuit strong enough to

kick my 10 amp meter off the scale. Which is a current density of around 10 amps per square inch. And -- when the Cu plate becomes + to the Co, the Co plate starts dissolving as that "blue compound presumably an alkali cobaltite" that *Mellor* mentions. That, on charge, plates back to the Co oxide.

But the really screwy thing is the action of those other types of plates. The full-charge voltage with the Zn plate is 1.9, and discharged voltage about 0.6 with the Al plate -- which, under any conditions-- the full charged voltage is 1.9, and the discharged voltage is about 0.6. Furthermore, on continued load in the discharged condition, the blasted plate -- the Co plate -- begins to gas off too! And I don't see how it can be anything but hydrogen.

The trouble with working with a Co- as well as a Co+ is that the Co- is not completely reduced back to metal by the charge, leaving a layer of a lower Co oxide on the surface which has its own unwelcome potential. Getting a piece of reasonable pure ordinary iron is an astonishingly, and unhappily difficult proposition. It's all galvanized, or steel, or tinned or something. Purer iron, the mild rolled steel of commerce, comes in boiler-plate sizes, and has to be worked with an oxyacetylene torch. I'm gonna try an iron electrode as soon as I get some satisfactory stuff.

The Mg electrode was a complete failure. I was astonished by the absolute and utter indifference of magnesium metal to that high-power alkali. There was one spurt that slapped the voltmeter upward and then it simply collapsed back to zero and stayed right there. It's lack of interest in alkali surroundings was astonishing. Further, if I use a faintly acid salt, the Mg reacts, but the Co plate dissolves off so rapidly its astonishing.

That electroplating bath for cobalt that you sent: do you know whether that's for bright plate or for thick, solid metal? Your reference here was *Koehler Electrochem* Vol II p 126, but the only place I might get that would be the NY Public Library, and I haven't a chance to get up there. Besides, as a matter of fact, it is now more a matter of curiosity than need, since I have the experimental Co plates I so badly wanted.

It makes [a] nice hobby to play with -- the Co cell and the instrument hookups. I had lots of fun trying to figure out how to make that potentiometer hookup I mentioned. I put a couple of dry cells across a potentiometer resistance, tapped by the variable arm for my voltmeter and cell. The voltmeter and the cell are both connected across the variable arm and to one end of the potentiometer resistance. The cell is in series, however, with a milliampmeter. Since I can read to 0.01 ma. on the instrument, and detect the movement in response to about .0002 ma., it makes a galvanometer whose sensitivity is not to be sneezed at. I have a series of fixed resistances in series with the galvanometer that can be cut out, and the

galvanometer reads zero, the voltage across the portion of the potentiometer resistance being tapped is equal to the voltage of the cell, and the voltmeter also connected across this gap, is reading the voltage of the cell -- but not drawing on it, but getting the current needed to operate it from the dry cells.

By increasing the tapped voltage above the balance point, I feed a slight current into the cell, the galvanometer reading the rate of charge in milliamperes, and the voltmeter giving the voltage within about .01 of true reading.

And the wiring of the switch panel was lovely! It looks like the inside of a radioset!

Really makes a nice hobby and relief from reading too many mss. Since I buy my chemicals at the grocery store (lye) and the hardware shop (Zn, Cu) and the instruments at the radio store, it's cheap. The only objections come from **Dona**, who says things about the mess in the corner of the bedroom.

The science fiction convention plans are progressing apparently. They've rented a hall somewhere in uptown New York -- at 59th street "just off Park Avenue," which sounds very nice. They've got a dance hall, it seems, that's used on Fridays and Saturdays, and therefore got a low rental. I'm loaning some cover-originals, and giving some black-and-white originals to be auctioned off. Also a boost for the boys in the "In Times To Come" department of *Astounding*.

They wanted me to referee that famous soft-ball game, but I turned 'em down with the remark that I might referee football or crew, but I never played baseball. They ought to get **Nelson S. Bond**, who's a sports writer as well as a scf. writer.

The cover for the July *Astounding* ought to be damned nice. it's an illustration for "Black Destroyer" by **A.E. van Vogt**, a new writer, and, I think, a real comer. He's got the goods.

Incidentally, I'm making remarks in "In Times To Come" about how many new first-rank writers we've introduced in the past 18 months. We have done fairly well, I think. **Kent Casey** is first-rank -- a regular who's taken first places with his yarns. **Lester del Rey**, **L.S. de Camp** really got going this year, **M. Schere**, **L. Ron Hubbard**, who was new to scf. if not writing, **H.L. Gold** was redeveloped.

Which reminds me that **Gold's** long novel, "None But Lucifer" turned out too long for the story. He's gone into collaboration with **Sprague de Camp**, and I think they'll get a damn good yarn out of it.

The scf. convention committee appealed to me the other day to help settle a problem. They wanted to hold a dinner in honor of somebody, but didn't know who to pick. They thought of having an author, and editor and

a fan, but were afraid of the howls of anguish from the other non-selected of each. The author was gonna be **Binder**, the editor me, and the fan **Ackerman**. I pointed out that the rest of the fans would then unite unanimously in stabbing **Ackerman** in the back, the other editors would tend to stab the convention committee and the authors would not love **Binder**.

Then they thought of honoring **Weinbaum** -- he was safe. I pointed out that most people were just a leeeeeetle tired of hearing about **Weinbaum**, and that they could get other authors to praise him with a "**Weinbaum** was a wonderful writer (Huh! That's what you think. He wouldn't show today.) and a great guy personally (The damn rat!) and they wouldn't love the convention committee either."

The last I heard they were gonna honor science-fiction, which was a nice, safe thing that everybody could agree on.

And that's about enough I guess. **Dona** wants to write **Franny**, so I'll turn it over to her.

Regards, John

[Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr]

May 23, 1983[sic]

Dear Perry:

Greetings!

I finished NULL-A-THREE; so now I can come up for air.

I was searching for something in answer to a letter I got while I was busy -- and ran across 2 pages of what was evidently a three page letter from **Campbell** -- small pages, with page one missing.

It has the look of being a very early letter; since "Black Destroyer" was the first story he ever published of mine -- though it was the second one I sent him.

This must be in 1939 -- before he put together the July 1939 issue with "Black Destroyer" in it. Perhaps he was asking my permission to print it first; but I really have no recollection on the matter.

Hope all is well with you.

Cordially, Van

P.S. The story originally titled "The Wonderful Man" was eventually published as, "The Changeling!"

A.E. van Vogt

Sometime in 1939

[sic: Ed.] stories that has ever been written -- and that's not ballyhoo. It is. **A. Merritt** at his peak never did any that were much superior to this one. It's got action and mystery and humanness.

The lead novel of the second issue will be **L. Ron Hubbard's** "Ultimate Adventure," a story that in mood, quality, and interest stands side by

side with some of **Washington Irving's** better Tales of the Alhambra.

The range of *Unknown* will be fantasy, but the one, lone qualification for the stories, the only rule laid on the authors, will be pure entertainment. "Trouble With Water," by **H.L. Gold**, will be humor fantasy. "Where Angels Fear -- " will be a very nice horror-ghost yarn. But it is NOT an old-fashioned, 19th century, English-type ghost story - one of those archaisms that begins, "Had I known what horror was to meet me that night, never would I have set forth on that fatal journey --."

It's to be a magazine of just the sort of fantasy you have done so exceedingly well on your past two efforts, save that there will be no mechanistics, no machines and such. Further, the thing I most desperately need at the moment is horror material. If this "Black Destroyer": had not been interplanetary, had not involved atomic power, mechanism, etc. it would have been grand for the new magazine.

I'm certain you can do exactly what I want, and in the new field -- non-science -- there's a wide-open market with a howling appetite for 90,000 words a month, wide open for stories of every length from 50,000 words down to 5,000. I am immediately, instantaneously in the market, and if you can do me a 15,000 to 30,000 word novelette in that time, I'd love it.

I'm expecting a flood of good, bad, and worse stuff as soon as the magazine hits the stands -- the herded rejects of a dozen years that now gather dust in a thousand closets -- so if you can get started before the deluge, I'd love it.

Let me know what you want to do about "Black Destroyer."

Sincerely, John W. Campbell, Jr.