

SCIENCE FICTION *News*

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JOHN WOOD CAMPBELL Jr.

1910 — 1971

John W. Campbell died on July 11. A unique personality in science fiction, one of the strongest forces in its formation, his contribution for good and -- in recent years -- for ill was incomparable. Few men in any field serve as editor of the same magazine for over 33 years, and his editorship was for much of that period dynamic, inventive and controversial. And successful: among the many records to be credited to him was most of the magazine's 38 years without missing an issue, something unusual enough in popular publishing and in science fiction not even approached half way by any other.

But before then Campbell had firmly made his mark as a writer. His first few stories in *Amazing* of 1930 caused little stir beyond mild interest as the work of a critic of E. E. Smith's concepts in *Discussions*, but the series beginning with *Piracy Preferred* (with an outrageous suggestion still to the point, a pirate inviting the public to take shares in his enterprise) soon gained him a solid following. Before long his name and Smith's were familiarly linked as the great exponents of the tradition they created. Both built up successively more unbeatable powers calling for less and less credible tasks and opponents until readers should have had enough, but their stories held more than action and ingenuity. Campbell wrote more and

C U R R E N T
S C I E N C E
F I C T I O N
B O O K S

SCIENCE FICTION SPECIAL, 4. Sidgwick. 190, 191, 192 p. HC £1.50. Reissue in one volume of The Winged Man, by A. E. van Vogt and E. Mayne Hull; The Rose, by Charles L. Harness; and The Man in the Maze, by Robert Silverberg.

The WINGED MAN. 1st in Astounding (US) May-June 1944 signed E. Mayne Hull. Doubleday 1966; Sidgwick 1967; Sphere PB 1970.

The ROSE. 1st in Authentic SF no. 29. Compact 1966; Sidgwick 1968; Panther PB 1969. Book includes two short stories, The Chess Players and The New Reality. Reviews: Mag of F&SF Jly 1966 p. 32; If Oct 1969 p. 145

The MAN IN THE MAZE. 1st in If Apr-May 1968. Sidgwick 1969; Tandem PB 1971

These omnibus volumes are good value. The books juxtaposed do not always harmonise well, but it probably doesn't matter to many readers.

ANDERSON, Poul [William] 1926-

PLANET OF NO RETURN. Tandem. 128 p. PB 25 np. (1st as Question and Answer in Astounding US June-July 1954, Br. Nov-Dec 1954. Ace Double D199 b/w Star Guard, by Andre Norton)

Review: Astounding (US) Aug 1957, Br. Dec 1957

ASIMOV, Isaac, 1920-

NIGHTFALL ONE. Panther. 176 p. PB 30 np. Five stories from the larger collection, Doubleday 1969, Rapp 1970: Nightfall; Green Patches; Hostess; Breeds there a Man...?; C-Chute.

CHAMBERS, Aidan and Nancy eds.

WORLD ZERO MINUS: an SF anthology. Macmillan. 124 p. PB 20 np. Silly titles aren't getting any scarcer.

CHANDLER, A[rthur] Bertram, 1912-

ALTERNATE ORBITS b/w The DARK DIMENSIONS. Ace (13783). 5-136, 5-117 p. PB 75c. Alternate Orbits incorporates The Kinsolving's Planet Irregulars from Galaxy July 1969.

DELANY, Samuel R[ay] 1942-

The JEWELS OF AETOR. Sphere. 159 p. PB 25 np. (1st Ace 1962 b/w Second Ending by James White; slightly revised, Ace 1968; Gollancz 1968)

HEINLEIN, Robert A[nson] 1907-

STAR BEAST. New English Library. 173 p. PB 30np. (1st as Star Lumox, Mag of F&SF May-July 1954, Aust. ed. 4-6. Scribner 1954. Ace 1970) Only nominally a juvenile. Reviews: Astounding US Apr 1955; Galaxy US Mich 1955; SF Quarterly May 1955; N.Y. Times 14.11.54

HOYLE, Fred and Geoffrey

ROCKETS IN URSA MAJOR; a novel based on a play of that title by Fred Hoyle. Mayflower. 124 p. PB 25 np. (1st Heinemann 1969)

Current Books

LAUMER, Keith, 1925-

The MONITORS. Mayflower. 160 p. PB 25 np. (1st Berkley 1966; Dobson 1968)

MACKELWORTH, Ronald W alter 1930-

TILTANGLE. Hale. 190 p. HC £1.50 (1st Ballantine 1970) New Ice Age with complications.

POHL, Frederik. 1919-

The 2nd IF READER OF SCIENCE FICTION. Sphere. 256 p. PB 35 np. (1st Ace 1968; Rapp 1969)
Review: Galaxy Apr 1969 p. 118

-- ed.

NIGHTMARE AGE. Ballantine (02044). 312 p. PB 95c. 13 stories by Kornbluth, Heinlein, Simak etc. Review: Analog Jly 1971 p. 166

SHAW, Bob, 1931-

1 MILLION TOMORROWS. Gollancz. 159 p. HC £1.50. (1st Ace 1971) Review: Analog Jly 1971 p. 168

SILVERBERG, Robert ed.

The SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME: the greatest science fiction stories of all time, chosen by the members of the Science Fiction Writers of America, v. 1. Gollancz. xiii, 558 p. HC £2.25. (1st Doubleday 1970) 26 stories found in various other collections. Reviews: Galaxy Dec 1970 p. 93; If Sep/Oct 1970 p. 63

-- ed.

TO THE STARS: eight stories of science fiction. Hawthorn. xii, 255 p. HC \$5.95. Blish, Knight, Anderson etc.

perhaps exercised a steadier influence: he didn't write only epics on a grand scale.

He was not a great stylist. Any piece of dialog from a Campbell story is the same two fellows talking; and often it is woolly expression that keeps the reader guessing rather than any real mystery. But there was a solid scientific background there and some solid thinking. Uncertainty has some original ideas, the main philosophical concept of successive orders of objective uncertainty in physics that is the core of the story being worth more thought than it was given (though a few stories by others clearly derive from it), and at the same time there is an early case of a lightly sketched but sound portrayal of an extraterrestrial race at a time when most SF vacillated between monsters and transplanted humans.

The stories under the name Don A Stuart, not as much different from the Campbell standard as was once thought, did have greater depth: they were essentially Campbell in a calmer, more reflective mood. Twilight and Night had a tremendous impact on a generation few of whom read Stapledon, with their long views of the future. The Machine series reactivated the extraterrestrial invasion idea, among others. Forgetfulness was a story with a moral that then seemed original, later to be mercilessly worked over again and again by many others, the story about the apparent primitives or decadents who were too advanced for their technologically oriented visitors to comprehend. It is a pity that his writing virtually ended by 1939, before he was able to develop as he might have done. Who Goes There? was far the best story he ever wrote, and suggests what might have been.

But instead he quietly replaced F. Orlin Tremaine as editor of *Astounding Stories* at the beginning of 1938, and devoted his considerable talents to continuing the steady development and maturation of the magazine. Tremaine had already in a little over four years left his competitors well behind, but what Campbell was able to do went further. He was undoubtedly the right man at the right time to ride the crest of a wave, for science fiction, after barely surviving through the 30's, was ready to burst into frantic growth as it caught the imagination of just enough readers to lift it out of the rut it was well on the way to creating for itself. It was the first boom, and lasted until war conditions damped it down.

The period from 1938 to 1942 was crucial. As the unquestioned leader of the field *Astounding* represented the best of science fiction of the day, and it was a time of constant change and advance. Analysis in detail would be tedious, but a few features may be mentioned. The title quietly changed to *Astounding Science Fiction*; the overall appearance, typography, artwork, changed little by little to something a generation newer; the standard of fiction firmed, with more science and less pseudo-science; the non-fiction articles became more regular and more authoritative; *Brass Tacks* reflected a more discriminating readership. Comparison of issues even a few months apart in this period reveals real differences. The framework became apparent, and it was obvious that the magazine was following a plan.

Campbell's main group of writers developed in this period, strong personalities all but in harmony with his concept of science fiction: Isaac Asimov; L. Ron Hubbard; A. E. van Vogt; Clifford D.

Simak; Robert A. Heinlein; Malcolm Jameson; Theodore Sturgeon; Henry Kuttner. L. Sprague de Camp; Lester Del Rey; Nat Schachner...they may not have first appeared in Astounding then, but they wrote a new kind of science fiction for it.

There were many experiments that didn't work: usually they were quietly dropped, like the "Mutant" and "Nova" designation of stories claimed to be something special. The most spectacular and baneful was the magazine Unknown, which lasted 39 issues without achieving a definite place or a name for its contents, which ranged from acceptable science fiction to funny and unfunny ghost and devil stories to mild satire on mythological stories and fixed the link of science fiction with fantasy in tradition.

Campbell exercised an all-pervading influence from the start, knowing what he wanted and giving directives in editorials and odd places as well as privately to writers. How many stories have been written around a Campbell plot suggestion is beyond computation, but must form a significant body of work. He sharply debunked and dismissed such time-honored conventions as the ray gun, and he taught writers to look at current scientific advances for ideas.

War conditions slowed him and the magazine down a little, and change was less spectacular thereafter. A few writers wrote a disproportionate amount of many issues in the mid-40's, but at the same time a new group of writers came in operating from the start on a higher level: Hal Clement; Raymond F. Jones; George O. Smith; Hal Clement; Fritz Leiber; Fredric Brown...a list that could be extended indefinitely for the postwar years. But Astounding's leading position was still further consolidated by the war, because it not only survived but went on developing while the rest of the field degenerated into

puerility and triviality. It emerged with a reputation for prophecy based on the record of atomic energy and gave the field for the first time some prestige. The other magazines battled hard for the most part to catch up, without ever giving much competition, for the latter half of the 40's. It was not until Gold started Galaxy, taking a new direction altogether, and Boucher and McComas started F&SF with an emphasis on quality of writing, that Campbell had to give any thought to what other editors were doing.

It is tempting to speculate that the change of front in 1950 beginning with the promotion of L. Ron Hubbard's Dianetics might have been in the first place a deliberate response to new challenges from the rest of science fiction: but it is not likely. But from then on Campbell began to indulge his own whims and fads and make his magazine a vehicle for them. Writers used to taking a lead from a Campbell hint became adept at working the current hobby-horse into the story whether relevant or not. But by the 60's it was the general impression that he wouldn't buy anything without a reference to telepathy, magic or whatever.

The magazine survived, because Campbell never became so engrossed in levitation or neo-fascism as to neglect straight science fiction altogether, and some worth while stories appear right up to 1971. A substantial readership keeps buying it from force of habit, and enough capable writers have stayed with it. But its survival after the change from the admittedly bad title Astounding to the semantic blank Analog must be rated as no less than a miracle.

What will become of it now? Presumably Kay Tarrent, who must have been doing most of the hard

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work for many years while Campbell rode off in all directions, will at least hold the fort. But who would care to step into those shoes?

An incredible career has come to an end. Let John Campbell be remembered for all he did to build up science fiction, not for the damage he did in later years.



REVIEWS

WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: 1971
ed. Donald A. Wollheim and Terry Carr

Ace PB (91358)
11-349 p. 95c

This annual selection is in its seventh volume already, and has reached the stage of the old standby, the mixture as before, the familiar seasonal sampling. This time there is nothing that really lifts it above the representative, but the state of the field is to blame for this, not the editors. They can only work with what the year offered, and with several regular competitors and droves of wild anthologists grabbing for anything usable the choice is limited.

Theodore Sturgeon is here with *Slow Sculpture*, his only story in several years and hardly in his own class, working over again something familiar

Reviews

from earlier Sturgeon philosophisings. Like a few other of his shorts this one is largely improvised on meditations on a word, this time "bonsai". But, if you don't mind my pointing it out, the main thing about bonsai is that the tree subjected to it is artificially dwarfed, a perfect miniature of the natural tree. Coaxing it into funny shapes is another line of endeavour although there's nothing to stop you doing it at the same time. For comparison you might look at Anne Morrow Lindbergh's popular success *Gift from the Sea* of a few years ago and read her bit on the oysters.

We have *The Thing in the Stone* by Clifford D. Simak, a classic Simak contribution: familiar stuff, but an unusual point. *Waterclap* by Isaac Asimov, worth reading for its examination of several issues for future generations. *Ishmael in Love*, one of the better stories inspired by the Dolphin question. *The Last Time Around* by Arthur Sellings, an unpalatable bit of speculation on the clock paradox problem in interstellar flight. These are all as good as current SF produces and worth picking up the book for. The rest are not particularly recommended, some not at all.

There is some heavy satire, to put it generously, in *Confessions* by Ron Goulart, *Dear Aunt Annie* by Gordon Eklund, *Greyspun's Gift* by Neal Barrett Jr. and *Nobody Lives on Burton Street* by Gregory Benford. *Continued on Next Rock* by R. A. Lafferty is an unabashed ghost story and doesn't belong here. *Invasion of Privacy* by Bob Shaw is an alien invasion storyreminiscent of many about aliens duplicating people. *The Shaker Revival* by Gerald Jonas is too much a response to the current social ills of the United States to have any interest elsewhere, or next year. *Gone are the Lupo* by H. B. Hickey is in

a fairly impenetrable dialect, which often camouflages other faults. It's a descendent of the transplanted Sanders of the River stories we used to have inflicted on us in the 30's, though with some rethinking which you may find saves it.

Right at the bottom, and well beyond the limits such a volume should set, we have Whatever Became of the McGowans? by Michael G. Coney (they turned into trees, forsooth), and Bird in the Hand by Larry Niven, which is really too absurd to go into.

The editors claim to think that the book represents "the continuing originality and youthful energy of science fiction". They're whistling in the dark. But as current SF goes, it's pretty good.

SPACE CADET
by Robert A. Heinlein

Ace PB (77730)
7-221 p. 95c

Most of Heinlein's juvenile novels are to be recommended to all but the squarrest adult. They make concessions to their main intended audience, or at least to conventional adult ideas about that audience, but they are basically good stories with sound scientific and inventive bases. But Space Cadet does not quite make it. It is too straightforward -- the young recruit's progress through the tough training school of the space service and his first phase in action -- too conventional, too smoothly told. Furthermore, it has had time since 1948 to date just a little in many of its assumptions, enough to miss the mark with young as well as old. This is one reviewer's regretful conclusion, at any rate. For historical interest, for admirers of Heinlein, otherwise not of great interest.

-- G. S.

S C I E N C E F I C T I O N N E W S

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