

It could be fairly convincingly argued, I feel, that my being out of work, and the launching of Apollo XV, and a myriad other momentous and trivial things, can be traced back to John Campbell. It

could also be fairly convincingly argued that everything can be traced back to God, but I've served my time at that kind of argument, that kind of tracing, and when I got back as far as I could go I didn't find anything you could put the name "God" to. Campbell is easier, if only by a small margin, because you can at least finish up with a man: a man, and his ideas, and his work, and his influence.

He influenced me, whether he or I liked it or not, by doing what he did for science fiction. What he did (and someone else can tell you about that), someone else might conceivably have done, but he did it, and science fiction flourished. Australians read science fiction and wrote it, and one of them, Lee Harding, got me reading science fiction, too. Not only reading it, but talking about it and writing about it and, eventually, publishing a magazine about it.

The writing and the publishing started releasing something in me that most people who have known me have vaguely felt or suspected or known was there, and is there. It's something unique and universal, and what exactly it is I don't know. It scares me a bit, sometimes it scares me a lot, but I want more and more to get it out, and so do a lot of people, good friends, who know as I know that I am thirty-two and lazy and this thing inside me waiting to get out.

How lazy? In more ways than I care to mention, but here's one example: I publish a magazine about science fiction, but I don't know the field, have not read five percent of the standard works known to most sf readers, and am doing nothing about it. I love science fiction, but I do not love it the way most sf readers do, certainly not the way John Campbell loved it.

(Digression, which might or might not be helpful in attempting to understand that last sentence: Over the past few weeks I have read very little. I'm up to page 59 of a book I started about the middle of June - Malcolm Muggeridge's THE THIRTIES. On page 14 of this book, Muggeridge writes:

"I mention this temperamental incapacity to accept the pretensions, or even the reality, of power in any of its manifestations (which, incidentally, has made me a hopeless failure as an executive, and unsatisfactory in all roles which require ardour and decision, like citizen and lover), because it obviously affects one's views of what is going on in the world and of the people who are conducting the world's affairs. If, as I often think, power is to the collectivity what sex is to the individual, then journalists like myself are, as it were, power-voyeurs, whose judgements will necessarily reflect our own quirks and peculiarities."

I am scared that when - if - I get to know myself as this man does, I might find myself a voyeur like him.)

Anyway, yesterday I rang up about a job as a clerk at the meat market, and I went for an interview at 11, and at 3.30 rang again and I had the job. Hours 4 am to 1 pm, don't wear good clothes, and someone will find you a dustcoat when you come in.

Somehow I didn't feel the excitement, the relief, I had expected to feel when I got a job at last. I had a drink with Carolyn and Sandy: officially a celebration, but we talked of other things. Then I slept for an hour or so before setting off for another kind of celebration. My birthday was three months ago; Diane had rung during the day to tell me the birthday present she had ordered months and months ago had finally arrived and would I like to come around for dinner?

(Further digression, of an informative kind, for confused readers:

Carolyn and Sandra live upstairs, and are good friends. Diane is my wife; she left me, physically, about fourteen months ago, after I had left her, emotionally intellectually &c, some time previously.) ~~The unnamed lady I have written about in my last two editorials is not any of these ladies, and in case you are wondering what became of her, so am I.~~)

Dinner was excellent, as usual. The present was Prokofiev's "Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution", composed in 1937 and not performed until 1966. I had not heard it before. The very pretty record sleeve depicts the Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations in Red Square, and this is rather tactful since it is a Russian recording and there's a face that used to be familiar to us missing from the banners. (The face of a man who flunked out of theological college, as I did, who plays a large part in Muggeridge's book, and so much for "the pretensions, or even the reality, of power" of Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili.)

We watched an episode of "The Persuaders". (Diane doesn't have a record-player.) Roger Moore, Tony Curtis, Stalin and Diane didn't make it into my dream (remember the dream? - that's what this is mostly about) so I think I've digressed a bit there, too.

I came home and tried to sleep, and I failed.

After an hour or so tossing about, I turned the light on, lit up my fiftieth or sixtieth cigarette for the day (I lose count), and wondered what to do next. In five hours I was due to start work at the meat market. I started thinking about John Campbell, and what I could say about him ^{with} in this issue. I decided that no-one could say anything about John Campbell that could be of interest at all who had

*** One in Scythrop 22, one not yet published.

not even read the man's most famous work, "Who Goes There?"

What had George Turner said? "In this story he reached his personal perfection... one of the most dramatically effective stories in science fiction." Something like that.

(George slaved over that article all last Sunday, denying himself alcohol - the ultimate dedication? - to say exactly what he wanted to say. I told him, that night, "This is the most beautiful thing you have ever written for me". He said, "That's what it was meant to be". Then he demolished a large can of Foster's and two and a half bottles of Victoria Bitter: such was the virtue that had gone out of him.)

So I padded out into the living-room, found the Healy & McComas anthology in the dark, and brought it back to read "Who Goes There?"

Now I've looked again at what George said about it (and find I've misquoted him), and I agree with him: it's harsh, much too soulful, brash, and one of the most dramatically effective novellas in the genre (that I've read, anyway). I didn't find it very frightening as a story: there have been lots and lots of alien beasts in books and on the screen since that story was written. But, although the (let's face it) melodrama of Campbell's "three mad, hate-filled eyes" blazing up "with a living fire, bright as fresh-spilled blood, from a face ringed with a writhing, loathsome nest of worms, blue, mobile worms that crawled where hair should grow" falls somewhat to convey now the intended horror, something else gets through.

I can't believe in the bronze McReady and the steel Norris, and can't imagine rooms stiffening abruptly, and detest writing exemplified by: "Are you sure that thing from hell is dead?" Dr Copper asked softly. "Yes, thank Heaven," the little biologist gasped.

And yet... And yet, something gets through.

Particularly to me, at this moment.

You will recall that for the first half of the story all of those metallic gentlemen debated ceaselessly three alternatives: Do we let this Thing stay entombed in its block of ice? Do we destroy it absolutely? Or do we thaw it out and see what happens? (And a fantastic debate it is, too. This is real science fiction, and even if the characters fail to convince, the ideas are tremendously exciting.)

Okay, you probably read the story ages ago, and I only read it last night. You possibly know something about symbolism in literature; I know little. But the way this story got through to me last night - the

level on which it got through to me, if you like - was frightening, and ironic.

Frightening, because it brought into focus some of my private fears and hopes. Ironic, because it was written by a man who professed to despise what he called "litterateurs", who championed the straightforward old-fashioned "story", and yet - as far as I am concerned - wrote this masterpiece of symbolism.

Make of that what you will. We haven't got to the meat market yet.

The place stank. No, I expected it to, but it didn't. After finishing the story and thinking about it a bit, I typed a few pages of Scythrop 23, drank a lot of coffee, and at 4.02 am walked into the meat market - not in old clothes, but in my normal clothes which are a bit dirty at the moment anyway.

The place - the Metropolitan Meat Market in North Melbourne - looks, inside, like one of those marvels of Victorian engineering you see in books about marvels of Victorian engineering and hardly anywhere else these days. There is an immensely high ceiling, supported by flying buttresses, and the columns are decorated with cast-iron heads of cows and things. There are poky little offices, dingy little staircases leading god knows where, and miles and miles of carcasses. Dead animals on hooks. I'm sorry, but that's how I saw them, and that's how I kept on seeing them, and it revolted me.

There's a network of overhead gantries (I think that's what they would be called), with switching devices at the junctions. Each carcass is slung on a kind of upside-down T-bar (weight 1.3 lbs) which hooks onto the gantry, and the workmen push the carcasses along the gantry-thing to the section where they are weighed. Lambs, sheep, calves - ten at a time, usually. Pigs, one or two at a time (they're very heavy). Then there are special hooks for the odd bits and pieces - hindquarters, sides and parts I couldn't identify.

The man I met first was doing everything - weighing, recording weights and brands and purchasers and prices, and, most expertly, cutting bits and pieces to order. (The weighing and recording part of the of the job was apparently where I was to fit in, eventually. Then, later in the morning, transfer all the records to books and statistical charts and invoices and so on in the office.) I think his name was John. Everyone seemed to be named John, or Jack.

I had never seen a pig cut in half before. I don't think I ever want to see it again. Not through the middle, you understand, but right down the centre, from tail to snout. John did it quickly, energetically, efficiently. The two halves weighed almost exactly the same when he weighed them a moment later.

For the next couple of hours he performed many operations like this, but I didn't watch. The pigs, I think, upset me most, because they were complete, heads, tails and all. And the large box of calves' heads about four feet away from where I was standing.

The second person I met was Jim, a young man who looked after the offal. I watched him doing his job for about forty seconds.

Then a second John turned up, and took over the weighing and recording from John. This John was a young Greek, Australian-born from the sound of him, with long, unruly hair and bushy sideburns, and stitches in his forehead. By this time, about 4.30, the place was full of movement. Trucks backing in every few minutes, drivers in greasy, bloody, blue and grey boiler suits with little floppy caps to match, loading, unloading, pushing things up and down, back and forth; animal corpses flying past on the gantries, stopping for a few seconds to be weighed and recorded, then on again, and seconds later more flying back from the other direction. Three men staggering out of the nearest truck (I should be more accurate: not trucks, but refrigerated vans) with great, heavy, bleeding chunks of something, and, with a strength and finesse I could only admire, flinging them over their heads, impaling the things on overhead spikes. I realized why they wore caps then. The blood I only became aware of after a few minutes when the impaled things started dripping slowly on the concrete floor.

During all this I spent most of my time stepping out of the way of men and their burdens, and out of the way of flying carcasses, trying not to catch sight as I did so of the heads in the box and what Jim was doing with the offal. During all this, also, Greek John talked to me about the job and about himself. Some time recently he had smashed a car and spent weeks in hospital. Not his car, and he didn't have a licence. He owed someone two thousand dollars as a result, and there was a court case coming up. He intended to plead insanity, and sounded quite cheerful at the prospect of being confined to a mental home, with free bed and board. He suspected I was there to replace him, that the boss intended to sack him, and he sounded just as cheerful telling me this. What annoyed him a little was that he was due to register for National Service and wondered what he would do about a job when he came out (he was sure he would be conscripted: I didn't think so, not after what he had told me, but didn't say anything). He smoked incessantly, despite the large NO SMOKING signs all over the building. So did others I saw. "You don't smoke when the inspector's here," he said. "There's a forty-dollar fine. Contaminates the meat." I was dying for a smoke, but thought maybe I wouldn't my first morning on the job. I wondered, though, about the contamination. Especially seeing the trucks, dozens of them, backing up

to the gantries to load and unload, belching exhaust fumes everywhere.

"How do you know when the inspector is here?" I asked. "You'll see him. Bloke in a dustcoat, with a torch. And when Mac spots him he starts singing, so we know." Shortly afterwards, Mac started singing, loudly, and John put his cigarette, still alight, in the drawer of the weighing-desk. The inspection took about five minutes.

Later, another council inspector did his rounds. Presumably he didn't count as much as the earlier inspector, since everyone went on smoking and doing whatever he was doing. This inspector went up and down the lines of carcasses, stamping everything in sight with a red rubber-stamp. He held the stamp-pad in his left hand, and the ink was running all over his hand, up his sleeve. He didn't seem to mind.

About six, Greek John said I could go out for coffee any time I wanted to. Coffee? At six in the morning? Sure, he said, several places open - one just over the road. So I went out for coffee.

I can't describe the place. I don't think I've ever been in such a bare, un-shop-looking shop in my life. Three or four truckies were there, in their dirty blue boiler suits and caps, having breakfast or lunch or dinner: no way of telling, really, since some of them drive through the night from places like Albury and Yarrowonga. One of those salt-of-the-earth-type middle-aged ladies with names like Florrie and Connie asked me gently, "What would you like, love?" and I ordered coffee. It was instant coffee, made with boiling water from a kettle on the gas stove in the corner, and it was delicious.

At this point I began to experience a weird sensation of unreality, of being in the middle of a dream. The shop was unreal. The customers were unreal: at least, they were real enough until they started talking, and then...

Well, on the counter there was a copy of the morning paper, with a shot of the Apollo XV launching, and these men started talking about it. "You know," said one man, "my old man used to read Jules Verne to me when I was a nipper, and he used to say, 'One day you'll see these things happening, son', and I never would of believed him, but..." "Yeah," said another man, "things are sure happening no-one would've believed even a few years ago." Then a third man said, "You know, years ago I used to read a magazine - Astounding, it was called, or something like that - and there was this bloke who used to write about all this sort of thing, and I used to think it was all a lot of bulldust - you know? - I mean, it was all right in stories, but he talked about things like they were going to happen - and, god, he was right, you know - it's all happening like he said."

I went back and stood around and watched and kept out of the way of men and things, for about an hour or so. An older man, named John, replaced Greek John on the weighing-desk. There was constant activity, if anything speeding up. I felt, still, nauseated. Almost literally. I could not see myself becoming accustomed to this place and this job. But, for Christ's sake: I had to have a job, any job. Seventy dollars a week is seventy dollars a week, and in this place there was free car parking, no traffic problems, very likely the chance of getting very good and very cheap meat. (Meat? Sure, I can keep meat and what I was seeing that morning separate in my mind.) But - oh hell! - the conflict went on, and I got more and more uptight about the whole thing, and finally I said to John, "I'm sorry. I can see I don't really fit in here. I'm going home." He understood, perfectly.

* * * *

What is all ^{this} ~~that~~ stuff doing in ^{book} ~~an issue of a magazine~~ devoted to the memory of John Campbell?

If you do, I can only say: This is the John Campbell I know. A massive influence: affecting my life right now; reflected in the conversation of working men in a tea-shop opposite the meat market at six on a freezing morning in Melbourne; reflected on the front page of every newspaper this morning. An influence: massive, pervasive, incalculable. And it... he... will go on, and on, and on - way on into the future he loved so much, the future which men will one day perhaps realize he invented.

Stalin saw the future very clearly, too, and loved it, and shaped it. Dead, he will not disappear from man's memory as quickly as John Campbell will. He will live on in the future which he invented.

John Campbell and Josef Stalin in ideology should point to the same future.)

Almost as if, somewhere back along the line a bit, someone found a Thing in the ice, and thawed it out, and it got away.

[illegible]

But I'm very much inclined to think it doesn't belong in the Campbell one-shot.

The hell with it. There it is, and if someone thinks it should be circulated wider than Philosophical Gas's readers he can do something about it himself. I'll try to write something else for the one-shot.

Most of the time I don't get answers at all from the people I write to. My sweated-out letter of application just disappears into a vacuum. Either there are a lot of people out of work, all applying for the same jobs, and the firms can't face up to answering all the letters, or...

All for now. I've just been talking to LEdmonds and we've decided to make up a combined post-mailing. Sorry, Dennis: will try harder next time.



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7th August: Pardon the odd page: I'm a little short on duplicating paper. Since Leigh Edmonds and possibly Robin Johnson might be joining me in this post-mailing, and since there's hardly a blank sheet of duplicating paper in the place, their publications are likely to finish up on the backs of Lodbrog covers, odd sheets from Scythrop, god knows what. Unless they bring their own paper, of course, but that would seem a little unlikely in the light of previous experience.

:::: Don't worry too much about that note on page one about my imminent bankruptcy. The problems are not resolved yet, but we're working on them and there seems some hope all might not be lost. I have, in effect, gone into a kind of voluntary receivership. From here on until things straighten out, my sister, Mrs Joy Warren, will be managing all my financial affairs. (Her address is 22 Gilmore St, Burwood 3125; phone 288-6644. Bills and, less likely, cheques should be sent to her.)

:::: I spent most of yesterday (Friday) giving John Foyster mobile and a little manual assistance in his move from Mulgrave to South Yarra. A fun day, by golly. Sitting in the sun outside 6 Clowes Street, discussing fandom, educational philosophy, the works of A. J. Liebling, Elliot Paul and other renowned authors, and the possibility that the removal van might have overturned, caught fire or been repossessed by a finance company somewhere between there and here. As it happened, the van had just gone off for a short run to Black Rock "on the way". Black Rock (for the benefit of non-Melburnians) is about as on the way from Mulgrave to South Yarra as Broken Hill is on the way from Melbourne to Sydney, or Birmingham on the way from London to Bristol. John and Elizabeth's flat is very nice indeed, very large, and a minute's walk from the Botanic Gardens. In case you missed John's note about the new SF Discussion Group (first meeting 8.00 pm, Room 109, Victorian Railways Institute, Flinders Street - Friday,

20th August) John's new postal address is 6 Clowes Street, South Yarra, Victoria 3141. I won't confuse you by giving his residential address: you can find that out somewhere else.

:::: The job prospects seem to be looking up. I have a stack of things to apply for, and the new week starts with an interview at 9.30 on Monday for a position as journalist with the Department of Trade & Industry. I have an assignment this weekend (tomorrow, in other words) to write a booklet about Career Opportunities for Graduates. As an unemployed non-graduate, I can't imagine anyone more qualified to do this.

:::: Some hours later: Most of the Melbourne end of the Australia in 75 Committee has invaded my place with the idea of writing a booklet for distribution at Noreascon. A nice thought. All I have to do is edit it. Leigh has just gone home (down the lane and across the street); Robin, Bill, David and Carey are sort of spread around the flat, writing groovy stuff about Australia and Australian fandom. It's a hive of activity at 8 Bundalohn Court this day, I tell you.

Meantime (ie, before most of them arrived) I have had the honour of discussing the aphrodisiac properties of peanut butter, and other perhaps more momentous subjects, with Phillip Adams. There seems - keep your fingers crossed, folks! - I might have some small chance of entering the advertising business.

On that note I shall cease for the moment. Any further developments might be reported below when Leigh and Robin have their stuff ready.

17th August: I have a job - a low-paying one as sort of secretary/personal assistant to the director of a trade association. (Phone 69-6330 if absolutely necessary.) No sign of anything from those other blokes and I have a note to send to A75 Committee members and eleven of them belong to ANZAPA: ergo, I'll send this postmailing now.