

Introduction to Science Fiction

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

September 28, 2023. Asimov (2).

review

- ▶ psychohistory, fate, manipulation
 - ▶ impersonal prediction vs. tricking people into doing what you want
 - ▶ the author's plan vs. the reader's awareness
 - ▶ scholarly knowledge (Pirenne) vs. in-the-moment know-how (Hardin)
 - ▶ science vs. engineering (!)
 - ▶ truth vs. pragmatic success
 - ▶ the “religion of science...works,” but not because it's true!
 - ▶ nuclear magic
- ▶ scale and technique
 - ▶ Seldon's plan vs. any actually interesting story
 - ▶ *Encyclopedia* epigraphs
 - ▶ “Seldon crisis” as a narrative device
 - ▶ “interplanetary novel” (1951) vs. fix-up (1942, 1944, 1951...)

draft and revise

- ▶ Read the opening of “Foundation,” *Astounding Science-Fiction* 29, no. 3 (May, 1942). Identify some differences from *Foundation*, and discuss what difference they make.
- ▶ *Bonus*: what is different about the last page of the story?

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“Obvious as all hell!” (53; *Foundation*, 96)

good reads!

The appeal of these suffocating deterministic fictions is surely that they place reader-identification with the elite engineers of imperial history, who transcend the pettiness of everyday existence with uncanny scientific predictive power. (Luckhurst, 72)

1. What would be the strongest evidence *for* Luckhurst's judgment?
2. How does *Foundation* make you feel?

back to the *mardana* with you

- ▶ Where are the women?

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The Commdora kept still. (237)

[Mallow:] “The small household appliances go first. After a half a year of this stalement that you abhor, a woman’s nuclear knife won’t work any more. Her stove begins failing. Her washer doesn’t od a good job. The temperature-humidity control in her house dies on a hot summer day. What happens?” (290)

astounding!

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Use Campbell's statement on "Power."

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Dear Mr. Campbell, Time has rolled on, and lo and behold, it is time for my monthly letter.

Isaac Asimov, letter to the editor, *Astounding* 21, no. 6 (August 1938): 161.

capitalism!

- ▶ What is the significance of the Foundation's transition from priests to merchant princes?

next

- ▶ Bradbury, “And There Will Come Soft Rains” (*Wesleyan*)
- ▶ Rieder (on Canvas)—a long, difficult, and important reading
- ▶ paper 1 exercise due Friday