
**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE FICTIONAL WORKS OF ISSAC
ASIMOV**

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Issac Asimov, the most widely known science fiction writer of modern times has won immense popularity due to his vast output embracing diverse fields – science fiction, detective fiction, religion, literary criticism, history, mythology, humour and limericks noted as much for his wit as for his versatility.

He began to write science and mystery stories and novels in 1972. In the introduction to his best mysteries he writes:

I am, you must understand, a science fiction writer primarily, and have been a prominent professional in the field since I was eighteen¹

The greatest contribution of Asimov to science fiction is in blending the detective and science fiction genres and in creating the scientific detective who combines vast scientific knowledge with the keen ratiocinative ability. Asimov has created two immortal scientist detectives - Elijah Baley who solves the complex murder mysteries in *The Caves of Steel and The Naked Sun*, and Dr. Wendell Urth who resolves the four murder mysteries in *Asimov's Mysteries*, a collection of thirteen short stories.

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The two novels, *The Naked Sun* and *The Caves Of Steel* are the murder mysteries solved by a team of detectives consisting of a human being, Elijah Baley, and a robot, R Danneel Olivaw, *The Naked Sun* is set in Solaria, a thinly populated planet where people are conditioned to live too far apart and communicate through trimensional images. The novel stresses the need for proper adjustment between men & machines. A murder has been committed on Solaria and the Solarians have requested help from the earth. The terrain detective, Elijah Baley resolves the mystery of Rikaine Delmarre's murder who is a foetologist. Baley also believes in principal of probability. Nobody thinks of the robot to be the murderer but Baley throws suspicion on him. He says.

There was also a disorganized robot, The robot at the scene of crime was the murder weapon, a murder weapon none of you could recognize².

That robot was capable of using any of a number of interchangeable limbs of various shapes for different kind of specialized tasks.

The Caves of Steel presents an over populated world, with citizens living in encapsulated cities where the environment is controlled, and the spacers of the outer world attempt to convince the city dwellers to the policy of colonization. In this novel a spaceman who is a specialist in robotics has been murdered. His name is Roj Sarton, a citizen of the planet Aurora, and he is a resident of space town, Elijah Baley is given the responsibility of solving this murder mystery. His partner R. Danneel is a humanoid robot. Baley first suspects him to be a man but when he minutely observes his actions he is confirmed that he really is a robot.

Strange! Now that Baley knew for a fact that R. Danneel was in truth a robot, all sorts of little items showed up clearly. For instance there was no movement in Adam's apple when R. Danneel swallowed³.

Finally Baley resolves the murder mystery in the space town.

The setting in Asimov's short stories and novels is either a colony on the moon or any remote planet. In the four Urth stories the setting is either the moon or some location in future. His settings are in harmony with the technique of science fiction and criminals are expert spacemen like Peyton, Straus, Edmund and great physicist professor James Priss.

In 'The Singing Bells', Louis Peyton, the notorious outlaw murders Albert Cornwell who knows about the precious cache of the singing bells on the moon. They land on Tycho Crater in the moon and make a thorough search of the craters GC-3, MT-10 and GC-5, They find the cache of

bells on GC-5. They quarrel over the possession of them and Peyton murders Cornwell and returns to the earth. The pilot of a patrol ship discovers a corpse and footprints. This is the first murder committed on the moon. Famous extraterrologist, Dr. Wendell Urth takes the responsibility to solve this murder mystery. With his scientific approach to the problem he solves it, He concludes:

His muscles are not yet readjusted to the pull of earthly gravity. In the last few days he has been away from the earth. He had either been in space or on some planetary object considerably smaller in size than the earth – as for example the moon⁴.

In the second story ‘The Talking Stone’, Dr. Wendell Urth’s relentless logic leads him to solve a mystery based upon a series of numerals placed on the hull of a spaceship. The captain of the spaceship Robert Q. stops at Station Five for repair of his spaceship. The spaceship is used for smuggling of uranium. Larry Vernadsky, Incharge of the Station Five, sees silicon on board the ship. During his conversation with the captain he comes to know many things about Silicon and smuggling of Uranium, He misrepairs the ship, consequently it crashes into pieces after a short flight and the three crew members die on board. Vernadsky reaches the place of mishap and takes the silicon out of the ship. Dr. Wendell Urth again solves this mystery with his scientific approach to the problem.

The story ‘The Dying Night’ revolves around the possible invention of mass transference. The three scientists murder Romano Villiers. They have come to read a paper on mass transference on the first big interplanetary convention in history. They want to steal Villiers’ Papers and then to introduce it as their own original contribution. Dr. Wendell Urth again with his scientific knowledge and approach concludes that someone acquainted with mercury has killed Villiers and Kaunas is the Mercurian scientist.

In the story ‘The Key’ Dr. Urth again solves a murder mystery on the moon. The story ‘Anniversary’ is the story of three scientists who are survivors of a spaceship crash. Dr. Horace Quentin, the world’s great scientist did not survive in the crash. His valuable papers on the details of a new discovery and his telescope are found in his cabin.

The above analysis of Issac Asimov’s novels and short stories clearly exhibits their inherent scientific and technological nature. The crime takes place on the moon or other planets. All the criminals and victims are either scientists or great technocrats. All the crime and murder

mysteries take place misusing science and technology. One of the greatest inventions of science and technology, robot, is very deftly used in the fictional works of Asimov. Asimov's science fiction is remarkable for minute scientific explanation. According to Jack D. Wages:

Asimov's science mysteries contain the minute scientific explanation. It is the hallmark of his scientific fiction⁵.

Asimov's greatest contribution lies in the masterly and ingenious amalgamation of science with detection. He himself was conscious of his remarkable contribution to the field of science fiction and said:

In the world of science I am a national monument⁶.

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