

SCIENCE FICTION NEWS

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1957 WORLD CONVENTION SITE: LONDON

London was voted more than three to one over Berkeley, California, as the site for the 1957 World Science Fiction Convention, finally justifying the title. The annual event has hitherto been held always in America, except for once (1948) in Toronto.

The First Convention was held in New York in 1939, following several years of New York and Philadelphia meetings also called conventions, as the first national meeting. In the absence of a national organisation, a special temporary sponsoring body was formed, a practice continued for the subsequent years. Chicago was the sight for 1940; Denver for 1941 (there was a suggestion of an East Coast meeting in opposition, soon dropped—first and last such attempt).

Los Angeles was selected for 1942, with the idea of regularly moving to different parts of the country, but this later broke down. The 1942 Convention was abandoned due to the war and revived for 1946. There followed Philadelphia 1947, Toronto 1948, Cincinnati 1949, Portland 1950, New Orleans 1951, Chicago again 1952, Philadelphia again

1953, San Francisco 1954, Cleveland 1955, and New York again 1956. For several years there has been a considerable sentiment in favour of recognising a London Convention as a World Convention; the site for the following year has always been selected by popular vote of those attending, which has doubtless helped delay it.

Since 1952 a permanent body to run the Conventions has been in process of formation, and it is now in action. Called the World Science Fiction Society, its first Board of Directors comprises Forrest J. Ackerman, E. E. Evans, David A. Kyle, James V. Taurasi, Nicholas Falasca and Roger Sims, all Americans. But London has official recognition and support for 1957.

In England a committee, headed by John Wyndham and John Carnell, has already been formed to promote a British Convention, and the date has been announced as the first week-end in September, the usual date of the previous American meetings.

Graham Stone, at this address, has been appointed Australian representative for the Convention.



New Worlds, No. 53, November, 1956 (cover above) contains two factual articles, "The Clue of the Coelacanth", by Kenneth Johns, and "The New Jupiter", by John Newman. Cover story is part 2 of the serial, "Tourist Planet", by James White. Other stories in

the issue are "We're Only Human", by John Kippax; "The Neutral", by Alan Barclay; "Birthright", by Arthur Sellings; "We Call It Home", by Sydney J. Bounds; and "Tree Dweller", by F. G. Rayer.

Science-Fantasy, No. 20, features "A Time to Rend", by John Brunner, and eight shorts: "Cut and Come Again", by John Kippax; "Prima Belladonna", by J. G. Ballard; "Mistaken Identity", by D. W. R. Hill; "With Esmond in Mind", by Brian W. Aldiss; "Random Power", by S. J. Bounds; "Friend of the Family", by Richard Wilson; "Rain, Rain, Go Away", by Harlan Ellison; and "Herma", by John Boland.

Australia's *Science Fiction Monthly*, No. 16 (December), contains "The Flight of the Eagle", by Sol. Galaxan; "Miss Tweedham's Elogarsn", by Robert Moore Williams; "The Un-Reconstructed Woman", by Hayden Howard; "Preview of Peril", by Alfred Coppel; "Death Star", by James McKinney;

and "Where Sex Met Space", by J. W. Graves. There is effective use of both red and blue interiors this time, with art work by Freas, Eberle and Wood. The regular department, "The Science Fiction Scene", includes reviews of "The Green Hills of Earth" and "Men, Martians and Machines", as well as controversial articles by Dr. Thomas S. Gardner and E. Loring Ware.

In No. 17 (January) McKimney and Howard are present again with "Last Run on Venus" and "The Luminous Blonde" respectively. Stanley Mullen, Raymond Z. Gallun and Phillip K. Dick are back with "Cosmic Castaway", "Give Back a World" and "The Infinites". Bryan Berry appears for the first time with "Marx is Home". "The Science Fiction Scene" features articles on Fletcher Pratt and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

U.S.A.

Super-Science Fiction is a new title, not connected with the former *Super-Science Stories*. Published by Headline Publications, a front for Crestwood Publishing Co. of New York (who once issued two paperbacks listed as numbers ten and eleven of

a "Prize Science Fiction Novels" series) and edited by W. W. Scott, digest size, bi-monthly. First issue is dated December, 1958, and includes stories by R. R. Winterbotham, Milton Lesser and Harlan Ellison, and a "What's New in Science" department by Robert Silverberg. Art work by Freas, Emsh and Orban.

Science Fiction Adventures is likewise not a revival of the former magazine of the same title, but a new publication, edited by Larry Shaw, still editing *If*. The first issue includes "The Star Combers", by Edmond Hamilton; "Secret of the Green Invaders", by Robert Randall; "Battle for the Thousand Suns", by David Gordon and Calvin Knox. Art work by Emsh, Bowman and Giunta.

Venture Science Fiction is announced by Fantasy House, publishers of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Robert P. Mills (Managing Editor of *F.A.S.F.*) is the editor, with Anthony Boucher listed as Senior Advisory Editor. Mr. Mills says that "the slant will be towards good adventure stories, with special emphasis on story value. That is, stories with beginnings, middles and ends—stories with suspense and pace".

NEW BOOKS

"They Shall Have Stars", by James Blish. (Faber, 12/6.) A new novel vaguely connected with the later events of "Earthman, Come Home".

"The Sword of Rhiannon", by Leigh Brackett. (Bourdan, 9/6.) A typical piece of Brackett swashbuckling.

"The Death of Grass", by John Christopher. (Joseph, 10/6.) The title pretty well tells the story of this new novel. The disaster of a universal blight, experienced intimately by a folksy group who seem to have walked out of a B-class radio serial. Science fiction has often been criticised for too little attention to "human" problems, and perhaps rightly so in many cases. But there is another extreme, and this book helps to illustrate it. It may be good stuff to give someone to read as an insidious introduction to SF, but it's not in the same class as Christopher's "The Twenty-second Century". There's some very good disaster theme SF here, but you have to persevere to reach it.

"Extinction Bomber", by Stanley Bennet Hough. (Lane, 11/6.) Sooner or later, someone was bound to write a novel about the first military use of a fusion bomb, about a crew of ordinary enough individuals sent on a mission to commit an atrocity hardly foreshadowed even by those of both sides in World War II: the murder of millions of noncombatants at a stroke, and in all probability the launching of an exchange that may well end the human race. This is the theme of this book.

"No Man Friday", by Rex Gordon. (Helmsmann, 15/-.) Gordon is a pen-name of Stanley Bennett Hough.

"The Seeds of Time", by John Wyndham. (Joseph, 12/6.) Collection of shorts.

"Dawn in Andromeda", by E. C. Large. (Cape, 15/-.) The first chapter of this book is put there to make the bookstall browser think it's not science fiction, but some kind of religious novel, apparently with the idea of cashing in on every possibility. The effect must be pretty much the opposite, since browsers looking for SF will replace the book with a slight shudder; the religious will consider it blasphemous (it amazes me that it has remained on sale without protest locally) and practically anyone will find this piece of balderdash an affront to his intelligence.

A pity, a very great pity. Skip the first chapter, and simply assume some extra-terrestrial agency to be at work, and read on. The rest of the book (apart from a couple of minor references to the introduction which don't matter) is good, sound sociological science fiction, with a tremendously detailed technical background.

The plot, briefly, is that a group of modern humans is selected by an extra-terrestrial agency, and stranded on an Earth-like planet. They are all of one nationality and general cultural heritage, just for simplicity. Between them they have enough knowledge to reconstruct a technology equivalent to that they left, given unlimited opportunity. The conditions of the experiment require them to reach a fairly advanced level in one generation, from scratch.

The planet has all the resources available to primitive man, including exact duplicates of the flora and fauna of Europe. And the castaways' memories have been tampered with to remove all the dead weight of useless misconceptions and superstitions they had acquired . . . at least, that was the idea. Actually, they prove to remember far too much for their own good. They do manage to go from fire and flint to the iron age in a few years, and to carry out the main task required, but the new generation produces a priest and a politician, symbolising all that is worst in human life.

Read this, for two things: a compressed view of technological history, showing just how much could be done under good conditions by people cut off from civilisation's resources; and Large's diagnosis of the inherent flaws in our society.

"The Twenty-seventh Day", by John Mantley. (Joseph, 12/6.) This is a version of the "give a loaded revolver to an idiot" idea. Aliens wishing to take over Earth, but squeamish about exterminating the population themselves, take a few people chosen at random and give them each three one-shot weapons of such power that the aliens have every confidence in the human race exterminating itself. The weapons are good for only twenty-seven days, can only be used by permission of the original holders—the problem is pure fantasy. The plot does not improve on the idea much. All the chosen executioners agree not to use the weapons; two effectively dispose of them, and the others do their best to keep theirs from being used for twenty-seven days, in the course of which emerge about as many moth-eaten stock situations as will fit comfortably in 272 pages. Look in vain for any ideas as to how to modify the state of affairs such that the aliens were almost bound to win an easy planet. The book does succeed fairly well as entertainment: a film version of it is being made, and could be quite good.

"Born of Man and Woman", by Richard Matheson. (Reinhardt, 10/6.) A collection of shorts by a talented American writer. Precise contents are not known. Reviewer William F. Nolan said of the U.S. edition: "The book provides rich and varied fare for the jaded palate of the reader who seeks, but all too rarely finds, intelligently written and imaginatively conceived fiction in this overcrowded, highly competitive field". Matheson's novel, "I am Legend", due soon in a Corgi pocket edition, is an attempt to rationalise a supernatural theme.

"World of Mists", by Patrick Moore. (Muller, 7/6.) Sequel to "Quest of the Spaceways", this is a juvenile, but does not sacrifice too much to simplicity. The setting is Venus, a modified picture of the traditional world of oceans and swamps.

"Time Transfer", by Arthur Sellings. (Joseph, 12/6.) This volume of short stories

is not the only one to appear in a series called "Novels of To-morrow". I suppose misuses like this serve a useful purpose in a way, in that they must lead many people to realise that you cannot always rely on the maker's description of a product. But do we really want a world in which the only safe attitude is one of general distrust of everyone's word? This book is a rather painful collection of stories, slick, flippant stories veneered with scientific ideas, with not a trace of authenticity or originality anywhere.

"The Forbidden Planet", by W. J. Stuart. (Corgi PB.) By this time you have probably seen the film, of which Forrest J. Ackerman says: "The sorrowful fact is, the damn thing is just dull . . . besides being boring, it has too much about it that's ridiculous . . . they could have incinerated half the celluloid and still had too slowly paced a picture"; and quotes Ray Bradbury as remarking: "Plot, plot, who's got the plot?" This book version has to make do without the excellent sets and effects (some of them) and the novel electronic sound track which helped to carry the picture.

"Shadow of Authority", by Robert Waller. (Cape.) A somewhat lighter treatment of the now popular theme of official censorship in the near future. This time it is England in 1980. A body called the National Publishing Authority has a monopoly of printing which makes any other forms of restriction unnecessary. There is a Director of Taste who decides what the public can be allowed to read, and there is some mild satire on the B.B.C. in the system by which books are classified and labelled "Light", "Home", "Serious", "Adult Only" and "Educational". The author's restraint and avoidance of the more obvious horrors possible under authoritarian rule make the picture all the more clear and probable. We may not be in much danger of secret police with all-seeing spy equipment, advanced torture chambers, and the forcible elimination of individuality. But there is a very real danger of a thorough and universal censorship. The only reason it does not exist now is the weakness, inefficiency and internal divisions among those who would make up our minds for us. "Shadow of Authority" dwells mainly on the way the system would work from day to day, with its sly office politics, and shows how opposition might arise to destroy it.

"The Realities of Space Travel", edited by J. L. Carter. (Putnam, 35/-.) A number of British Interplanetary Society members contribute to an authoritative volume on the present outlook.

"The Inhabited Universe", by Kenneth W. Gatland. (Wingate, 15/-.) A modern consideration of extra-terrestrial life. We understand that Gatland gets beyond the conventional "life as we know it" line in this work.

(All prices quoted here are Sterling.)

HOLLYWOOD

FROM FORREST J. ACKERMAN

Have you ever met a morphosis? A pretty bad pun: I'm just holding my breath that it doesn't turn into an equally bad picture. The producer of *The Mole People* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* plans to film Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis". I shudder to think how the story may be metamorphosed by the time it is transferred to the screen. I can see it now: "The Studio that gave you *Tarantula*, *The Wolf Man* and *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, now proudly presents Franz Kafka's great horror classic—*The Cockroach that Conquered the World!*" I hope I'm proved a pessimist.

Universal Studios says their forthcoming *Land Unknown* is not to be viewed as SF, but rather as a factual picture. So when you see a dozen different dinosaurs departing themselves at the South Pole, bear this in mind.

Brynie Foy (of *The Return of Dr. X*) will produce Verne's "The Mysterious Island", less well-known sequel to "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea". RKO are doing "A Journey to the Centre of the Earth"; Foy had planned filming it too, but found RKO had already started on it.

The Allen DuMont Lab. has invented a time machine—it saves time, that is. Called an Electronicam, demonstrated recently in Hollywood, it shows an exact simultaneous view of what a movie camera is recording on film.

Homer Eon Flint's "The Nth Man", in the works at present, is about a man who saves the world; so it's been renamed *The Man who Destroyed the Earth*. Also announced lately are *The Boy who Saved the Earth* and *The Man who Sold the Earth*.

The reputed Abominable Snowman is the excuse for *Man Beast*. Also on the way are *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, *The Deadly Mantle*, *The Cyclops*, *The Uranium Monster*, *Not of This Earth* and *Mesa of Lost Women*.

The Mole People takes place in a subterranean city of lost Sumerians, unfortunately found again, which abounds with mutants, despots, high priests, sacrificial maidens and all the ingredients that made great serials around 1925. Len Moffatt sums it up: "Recommended to moles". And I might add, under tens. I doubt many of their elders will dig it. Seventy-seven monotonous minutes among the albinos and the buggy-eyed, warty-domed mole men with their Halloween make-up that might frighten a very small child or so, maybe. The only thing that frightens me about the picture is the amount of money it will probably make. At the end the Sumerians are hurled "forever" by the inevitable earthquake, but (remembering the *Frankenstein*, *Wolf Man* and *Creature* series) success might mean a sequel: *Mole Men Attack the Earth*, or *They Came from Inner Space*.

Cutuck, *Beast of the Amazon*, is not much better, though Curt Slodmak made it. It has a bird-headed monster that turns out to be strictly for the birds. There's some mumbo-jumbo about a cancer cure via the jungle formula for shrinking heads. Shot in Brazil in colour, but you can safely shrink from it unless you go for boa constrictors, water buffaloes, giant spiders and piranhas.

The Mesa of Lost Women is pretty much of a mess: high plateau in Mexico, mad scientist, giant tarantulas. For insectophiles, lovers of savage women, and movie-going masochists.

By comparison with the last three, *It Conquered the World* actually looks good. Same author-producer-director combination responsible for last year's *The Day the World Ended*, with about the same calibre product resulting. Maybe a shade better.

CLUBS

"I realise", said Director Rick Sneyr, opening the meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society on the 25th October, "that this is a historical occasion, but I will open it like—any other One Thousandth Meeting". It was also the club's twenty-second anniversary meeting.

The LASFS is the world's oldest science fiction club, having been founded in 1934 as Chapter Three of the *Wonder Stories*—sponsored Science Fiction League. Meetings have been held weekly for most of the years since, and for some years now in the present clubroom, named Freehafer Hall for Paul Freehafer, early active member who died in 1944.

At least a hundred came to the millennial meeting, including two foundation members, Forrest J. Ackerman and Australian-born Russell J. Hodgkins. Among others present were authors Kris Neville, Charles Beaumont, Ib Melchior, Ed Clinton, Frank Quattrochi, Gene Hunter, T. D. Hamm, E. E. Evans, Richard Martin, S. J. Byrne, Helen Urban and Winona McClintic. Numerous people sent goodwill messages. S. F. News editor takes this opportunity to regret that he meant to send a cable but forgot the date.) As might be expected, there were some bogus messages, such as "Our Hats are off to you". Signed "Stetson Bros."

Ed Clinton gave a talk on Wells' "Things to Come" film scenario, presenting what he would have said about it in 1935 after reading the book, but before seeing the picture. "I prophesy that this is a movie Forrest J. Ackerman will want to see more than once", he concluded: Ackerman has seen it so many times that we hear reports of the actors waving to him as he comes in.

Incidentally, Ackerman, George Pal, Ray Bradbury and probably others will speak in a 55-minute feature on SF over America's Columbia Broadcasting System on the 4th December.

Books

JULES VERNE: MASTER OF SCIENCE FICTION is the title of a new book of exceptional interest. (Sidgwick & Jackson, 12/8.)

I. G. Evans has selected extracts from fifteen of the Master's works — including a few of the less well known ones, though not any of the really fabulous rarties — with brief commentary in which he shows an intelligent appreciation of Verne and of science fiction, in itself a fabulous rarity in the book publishing world.

The books represented are: "A Journey into the Interior of the Earth"; "From the Earth to the Moon"; "Round the Moon"; "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea"; "Dropped from the Clouds"; "The Secret of the Island"; "The Child of the Cavern"; "The Begun's Fortune"; "Hector Servadac"; "The Steam House"; "The Clipper of the Clouds"; "The Floating Island"; "For the Flag"; "Five Weeks in a Balloon"; and "An Antarctic Mystery" (sequel to Poe's unfinished "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym").

Mr. Evans contributes a lengthy introduction reintroducing Verne to a new generation, and adds the most complete Verne bibliography we have seen.

SCPS: Correction to Page 2, Column 1: Larry Shaw is the editor of Infinity, not if, though he used to hold that position. James L. Quinn is the current editor of if.

LONDON CALLING

Time and place for the 1951 World Science Fiction Convention:

Royal Hotel - Vohurn Place
The Weekend of September 6-8

We hope to combine the best features of British and American Conventions of the past. At this stage we're not able to say much about the program except that we predict it will be the best ever, and with something for everyone interested in the field.

Whether you can attend or not, you can support the Convention by joining the World Science Fiction Society. Membership for the year is \$1.00, 7/6d Stg. or 2/6d Australian. USFS members get the quarterly USFS Journal, the Program — and a vote on the venue for 1952.

THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE

John Vyndham (President)
John Carnoll (Chairman)
Charles Duncombe (Treasurer)
Harry Turner (Publications)

John Brunner — Ethel Lindsay — Roberta Wild Vincent and Joy Clarke — Norman Sherrock — Walter A. Willis — David Newman — John Bates — Peter Hamilton — Fred Brown — Peter West — Nigel Lindsay — Terry Jaevus — E. F. Slater — Arthur Sellings — David Page — James and Dorothy Rattigan — Philip Doerr — D. E. Cohen — Frank Edward Arnold — Eric Jones — Ewan Hodger — and Ken and Patricia Bulmer (Overseas Publicity)
Trenca, 204 Wellmeadow Rd.
Catford, S.E.6, London

ANNOUNCING

THE

INDEX

TO

BRITISH

SCIENCE FICTION

MAGAZINES



— a guide to the five hundred and ninety-six issues of forty different science fiction magazines that were published in Britain from SCOPFS of 1934 to the end of 1954. That's about 3500 stories — we haven't yet counted them. The INDEX is arranged three ways: first, each separate issue is described, with such details as the number of pages, who did the artwork, changes in the editorial staff, besides the contents — not just the fiction, but the articles, editorial matter and usually all the unrelated fillers as well... then there's a complete index by author, and another by title.

Suppose your problem is of the nature

"WHO WROTE THAT STORY and WHERE IS IT?"

— you can look in the back and find it like this.

Notice that instead of naming the magazine and issue we give a number! That's because abbreviations would be hard with so many duplicated and similar titles. The main section gives every magazine a number, so we refer you to that. It looks like this:

229 ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION (contd.) 1944 - 5

August 1944
64 pp
Covers: Timmins

"Latent Image" . . . Wesley Long
Cuckoo . . . P. Schuyler Miller
City . . . Clifford D. Simak
The Yehudi Principle . . . Fredric Brown
House of Tomorrow . . . Roby Wents
Environment . . . Chester S. Geier

[Editorial: Sandwich for Hanks.]

City - G. D. Simak 229

or Gray Lemmas - E. E. Smith . . 194
(4 parts) -7

SMITH, George O[liver]
(see also Wesley Long, pseud.)

Atomic Bonanza 188
Beam Pirate 252
Booby Prize 448

SMITH, Jan
One More Chance 450

SMITH, Phillis Sterling
The Quaker Lady and the Jelph

A SHORT ESSAY ON LONG

by ARTHUR J. COX

Frank Belknap Long is a marginal writer in the world of science fiction; he exists upon the borderline of popularity. I believe that this is so not only because of the infrequent appearance of his *Outlines*, but also because of its uneven quality, strange characterization, disconcerting imagery and, during one period of his development, obtuseness of meaning.

But this coin is easily reversible: latent in these "defects" are these same characteristics that elevate Long's work at its best to a level of uniqueness not often achieved in pulp science fiction.

Long's work divides itself fairly easily into three periods. The first of these was his apprenticeship as a fantasy writer in the 'twenties and the early 'thirties. He was an admirer of Lovecraft, a member of that writer's circle of friends, and his stories were deeply influenced in subject matter, if not in style, by Lovecraft's work in *Weird Tales*, the magazine in which much of his own early fiction appeared.

This was a time of self-conscious artistry for Long. He was intensely concerned with the quality of his writings; seemingly, his stories ached to be read, yet throbbled with embarrassment at being exposed to the public eye. This passage appears in "Death Waters" (*Weird*, December 1924):

"His last comment seemed melodramatic and unnecessary, and we suddenly realized that the veteran was not an artist. He lacked a sense of dramatic values. We turned wearily aside and puffed on our long pipes. It is difficult to forgive these little defects of technique."

This paragraph was probably meant as a defense of the body of the story which followed as it was narrated by "the veteran", yet it so unavoidably and effectively calls attention to the writer's own style that its intent seems masochistic. Similar interjections appear in others of his early stories.

As the years went by, the self-consciousness of technique disappeared, apparently as Long became more confident, but it has remained in another form — the extreme self-consciousness of his characters, an almost invariable aspect of his stories.

A self-description of his work, of that he had been trying to do, appeared in a story almost twenty years after "Death Waters" in the same magazine "The Keeper" (*Weird*, March 1944).

"...he had written stories like drenched spider webs, pragmatic and strange and with a little gruesome wretch at the end which made people happy deep down inside. Very sensitive and imaginative people, of course, because only such people deserved to be made happy in precisely that way."

The story relates of the "murder" of one Michael O'Hara, fantasy writer and poet, at the hands of Mike O'Hara, hack and gossip-columnist. But one

morning Mike O'Hara is found dead in his newspaper office under strange circumstances, with a sheet of paper in his typewriter on which is typed: "Look for Michael O'Hara below the cliffs of Inishoven, where the silver lark takes wing. Look for Mike O'Hara here, where he shall run from the reaper and be cut down."

Perhaps this is an autobiographical account of a tragedy — Long's work did not acquire that back feel it so often has until the 'forties — but if so, we must callously shoulder it aside. We are not much concerned in this brief essay with the great body of his work, and can but touch lightly upon that which we are discussing: his better science fiction.

This divides itself neatly into two groups: his science fiction in *Outstanding Stories* in the 'thirties (which had, stylistically, its fantasy equivalents in *Weird Tales* of the time); and his stories in *Outstanding Science Fiction* in the 'forties (which had fantasy equivalents in *Outgoing Worlds*).

Long's stories in the Promethean era of *Outstanding* are among the best and least heralded pieces in science fiction. They are beautiful gems of simplicity both in construction and in prose.

About half of these stories are situated in the remote future, in the twilight period of man. Three of them — "The Last Man", "Green Glory" and "The Great Cold" — have a common background. They take place in an era in which man is dominated under, on and above the earth by insects, the ants and bees — and under the sea by barnacles, this last reversal the cruellest irony of all. Men are resigned to their lot, yet take pride in the tradition of their former greatness. "It was more than a legend", though their masters hold them in as little regard as we do their present progenitors.

But the situation is more than a simple reversal of power. Long has effected a subtle transposition: mankind seems to have lost that spontaneous impulse to individual self-preservation which seems so natural to us, and in its stead we find the mechanical disregard for death possessed by the ants and bees, the individual existence of one of them having no biological significance to the species as a whole. For the men of Long's remote age death holds no terrors: they are not contemptuous of it, for contempt implies more consideration than they give it.

In "Green Glory", Atanma, dweller in subterranean tunnels, survivor to the ants' exalted creed of world conquest, is chosen for a mission. He is to carry a tiny fungus spore in a cylinder to the hive of the enemy bees; he will then plant it and the fungus will spring forth in a green explosion, overwhelm the great hive and destroy all life in it. He is carried to the hive of the bees by a flying insect which in turn supposed to depart, but it chooses to wait; asking Atanma, whose death is supposed to mark the completion of his duty, to plant the spore and return swiftly instead of waiting to see it blossom. This action is inspired by admiration for Atanma's tiny courage.

"Atanma was stunned and frightened. He started back in amazement and looked busy up at the great shape. 'Why do you disobey the Great Mother?' he asked, with tremulous gestures."

"The winged form replied: 'We who fly above the earth do not obey the small ethics of your little world of the tunnels. We have seen the barnacles in their majesty and the bees in their power, and we know that all things are relative. Go, and return quickly.'"

In the great hive, Atanma meets a creature he has never seen before, a woman — "one of the night-shapes which visited men in their dreams" — who saves him from the devouring maw of a bee-grub. With her he discovers new emotions he did not know before, but the old loyalties are not easily extinguished.

Despite the woman, despite his opportunity for escape, he plants the spore and he and the night-shape are "covered forever with a shroud of deepest green"; while far away the great winged shape waits with thrumming wings for a man who will never return.

Only in one story does there appear a brief burst of defiance. In "The Last Man", Maljoc goes stinging into the homerium of the females to choose his mate. He has been counseled not to select too beautiful a creature, for men and women of singular physical appearance are frequently "lifted from the little slave world of routine duties in the dwellings of the masters and anaesthetized, embalmed and preserved under glass in the museums of Agraban", just as the ancestors of men captured beautiful insects, impaled them with slivers of steel and arranged them in boxes in neat display. Despite this warning, desire overcomes caution. The two are seized by a master and swept away into the sky until Maljoc, with a strange defiance that transcends his instinctive obedience to the masters, injures the giant creature and deliberately releases the woman and himself from its hold, so that they fall, held tightly together, to the earth far below.

"But in that moment of swooning flight that could only end in destruction, Maljoc knew that he was mightier than the masters, and having recaptured for an imperishable instant the lost glory of his race, he went without fear into darkness."

(This ending has given me a thought which I would not mention if it had not been advanced to me by another person, just as hesitantly as I am advancing it here. That is, that Maljoc and his mate consummated their marriage in their flight earthward — something which Lang could hardly state explicitly in a pulp story, but which might possibly represent another exchange of characteristics between man and insects: for many insects mate in flight — for example, the firefly, the male sweeping the female sleet and both forming a beacon of minuscule love, until the completion of the act, upon which their lives and lights are figuratively and literally extinguished.)

The third story, "The Great Cold", likewise ends with the small brief spark of coupled tragedy-and-triumph against the great dark of the remorseless future.

In these three stories we find nearly all these qualities, both stylistic and thematic, which characterized Lang's work in the 'thirties. "Lost Planet", "The Blue Earthman", "Vapour Death" and "Exciles from the Stratosphere" are similar in atmosphere and, though different in background, contain also the themes of fierce pride in race and tradition. In what is perhaps his finest story, "The Flame Midget", we find again the consciousness-of-size motif, as we do in "The Lichen from Eros", and in an inverted fashion, "Spawn of the Red Giants" (as well as "Giants in the Sky" in *Noirde Tales*). In "The Flame Midget", we rediscover also the preoccupation with flight-and-death when Richard Ashley is carried into the stratosphere and set spinning like a pinwheel in fiery splendor by the spaceship which had been berthed in his right kidney.

During the 'forties Lang's stories acquired a different air than that which they had possessed in the previous decade. Perhaps the most obvious change was that the childlike naivety was replaced by a growing sophistication and increasing complexity of outlook. His science fiction stories in the Promethean era had had a charming simplicity of style, strongly reminiscent of fairy-tale writings; now, apparently, a counter-reaction had taken place, the stylistic pendulum swinging in the opposite direction.

There is less of a difference between extreme simplicity and extreme complexity from the viewpoint

of effect, than would seem at first thought: both are usually more or less desperate attempts to achieve the same effect, that of seeing things as if for the first time — seeing them in a new way.

In various ways, complexity of prose or lack of it aside, Lang has succeeded in his objective: he has often achieved the goal of seeing and presenting accustomed things in an unusual light. To choose at random a carefully selected example, there are the Neanderthals in "Bridghead" who are coloured red and blue, like the posteriors of baboons — for after all, there is no reason why they should be so monotonously and dullly coloured as we present-day whites, negroes, orientals, polyneSIans, and so on. Then, there is the following description of some animals discovered on an alien planet:

"The creatures walked upright and were vaguely lizardlike, but with a raw-skinned aspect of face and limb that made me reexamine the idea that they could be true reptiles. Embryonic! I'm tricky, but there's a certain flabby pinkness which suggests the unfarmed, the countess."

If you read the passage again, editing out the disgust connotations, you may recognize the species he is describing.

And the love of seeing things afresh, the desire to escape the dullness of familiarity, expresses itself openly in Lang's work — as in this other passage from the same story, "The Unfinished":

"My hands were steady on the controls, but for a moment I felt like a badly scared giant killer swinging down from a beanstalk that would have spanned the gulfs between the stars. I really did. Star reveres are linked to the world of childhood in a variety of ways, for they see the same strange hues everywhere they turn."

As the reader might suppose from the above examples, Lang's complexity of style does not lie so much in any deep, involuted prose, but in peculiar construction and presentation.

His stories of the 'forties have drawn more expressions of puzzlement and confusion from readers than perhaps those of any other writer (with the likely exception of A. E. van Vogt, and with him it is a different matter, having more to do with plot complication than presentation).

As the classic example, we might begin with the first of the new "series": "To Follow Knowledge", which Mr. Campbell has called "a completely strange story". The method of construction used in "To Follow Knowledge" appeared to a certain extent in "Alien the Living", "Bridghead" and "Canova Yaker" (which, although it appeared in *Unknown Worlds*, is science fiction if we use the definition of "stated or implied naturalistic explanation for phenomena"). It appeared definitely in "Fitch", and "The Trap", and somewhat in "The Critters" and "Guest in the House". The fantasies "Step into my Garden" and "It will come to You" in *Unknown Worlds* also seem to belong to the group.

In many of these stories, no explanation worthy of the name is given; rather, the meaning of the stories becomes recognizable only when we realize that they are *allegations or analogies*. The core of one of these stories is not an explanation, as with most science fiction stories, but a metaphor. We might compare an explanation to a blueprint and a metaphor to a model, a description in three dimensions — like the bodiless images of the soldiers in "Titan the Living", which are projected ahead in the attack to draw fire.

This must remain merely a suggestion; but if our analogy does hold true, if a Lang story of this period is essentially an inflated poetic image, then it is conceivable that events in such a story would not appear in a sequential pattern — perhaps there would

be blurred transitions between bits of action and dialog.

I'm stacking the cards. For such certainly appears to be true of "To Follow Knowledge", and to a lesser extent of "Census Taker", "Filch", "The Trap", "Bridgehead", and his fantasy "Step into my Garden". Of course, some of this blurred transition, this non-sequentiality, might be explainable on the ground that several of the stories have time-travel as their subject matter — "Census Taker" and "Bridgehead", to be specific; and "To Follow Knowledge" concerns multi-possible worlds.

But such an explanation is not totally satisfactory: first, it does not explain the stories which do not fall into the time-travel category and, secondly, it does not explain why Long is so fascinated with the theme — even injecting it, apparently unnecessarily, into his fantasy "Fisherman's Luck." I might be suggested that the chaotic order of time-travel appeals to him, as it bears some correspondence to his own creative processes.

The business of curious transition appeared again, confusingly, in a later story in *Astounding*, "Prison Bright, Prison Deep". This story is concerned with a mystery, and at various points the characters arrive at explanations, with so more trouble and effort than that by which the reader arrives at the same information by reading it from the printed page. There is a blur, and one of the protagonists is acting strangely, to the bafflement of the reader, because of some subterranean thought process that suddenly took place.

Whatever drawbacks Long's method of story telling has had, and there are several, it has one major virtue: he has been able to handle delicate ideas on story themes, which otherwise are too fragile to be useable. For example, "The Trap" is based upon the association that perhaps just as life takes strange forms, life itself might be a form or pattern. Stated this way, it not only sounds like nonsense (which is probable), but very awkward — which it isn't under Long's handling.

In his more recent fiction he seems to have abandoned the style in which he wrote "To Follow Knowledge" and the stories which immediately followed. These stories of his which I have read in the past few years seem to be hackneyed and uninspired (including the above "Prison Bright, Prison Deep"), with an occasional exception such as "The Unfinished". Long would seem to be a very "spotty" writer, but I believe that it is worth reading his poor work in order to read his good.

A PARTIAL READING LIST:

"Alice the Living" . . . *Astounding*, Jan. 1944 (US)
 "Beyond the Spectrum" . . . *Astounding*, Aug. 1934
 "The Blue Earthman" . . . *Astounding*, Apr. 1935
 "Bridgehead" *Astounding*, Aug. 1944 (US)
 "Brown" *Astounding*, July 1941 (British)
 "Census Taker" Unknown, Apr. 1942 (US)
 "Collector's Item" *Astounding*, Oct. 1948 (British)
 "Comes" *Astounding*, Feb. 1938
 "The Critics" *Astounding*, Nov. 1945 (US)
 "Exiles of the Stratosphere" *Astounding*, July 1935
 "Filch" *Astounding*, Feb. 1946 (US)
 "The Flame Midget" *Astounding*, Dec. 1938
 — in "The Best of Science Fiction" (Conklin)

"The Great Cold" *Astounding*, Feb. 1935
 "Green Glory" *Astounding*, Jan. 1935
 "The Last Man" *Astounding*, Aug. 1934
 "Lesson in Survival" *Thrilling Wonder*, No. 10 (Br.)
 "The Lichen from Eros" . . . *Astounding*, Nov. 1935
 "Lost Planet" *Astounding*, Nov. 1934
 "Manhunt" *Thrilling Wonder*, No. 104 (Br.)
 "The Miniature Menace" . . . *Future*, No. 4 (Br.)
 "Prison Bright, Prison Deep" *Astounding*, Feb. 1951 (Br.)
 "Red Storm on Jupiter" . . . *Astounding*, May 1936
 — in "Flight into Space" (Wallheim)
 "The Bearing Plot" *Astounding*, Feb. 1936
 "Spore of the Red Giants" . . . *Astounding*, May 1937
 "The Spiral Intelligence" . . . *S. F. Monthly*, No. 2
 "Temporary Warp" *Astounding*, Aug. 1937
 "Throughback in Time" *S. F. Monthly*, No. 4
 "The Timeless Man" . . . *Super Science* (Br.) undated issue, "Gateway to Darkness"
 "To Follow Knowledge" . . . *Astounding*, Dec. 1942 (US)
 — in "S. F. Adventures in Dimension" (Conklin)
 "The Trap" *Astounding*, Nov. 1945 (Br.)
 "You Face" in "The Best S. F. Stories — 2nd Series" (Conklin)
 "The Unfinished" *Super Science*, No. 5 (Br.)
 "Vapour Death" *Astounding*, Oct. 1934
 "Willie" *Astounding*, Feb. 1944 (Br.)

The collection *THE HOUNDS OF YINDALOS* (Macmillan Press, 1950) includes "Death Waters", "The Peepers", "Bridgehead", "The Flame Midget", "A Stitch in Time".

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