

QUANTA

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OUR COVER

This is an artist's conception of the atom-smashing machine known as the synchro-cyclotron, which General Electric is preparing to build at its General Engineering and Consulting Laboratory in Schenectady, N. Y. The principle employed by this machine makes possible extremely high energies with which nuclear researchers may bombard the atom.

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QUANTA

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QUANTA is published irregularly as the official organ of the WASHINGTON SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION.

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SPECIAL NOTICES: The proper mailing address for QUANTA and WSFA is:

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Please do not use any other address except for personal letters to officers and other members of WSFA. Please make out any checks for QUANTA, WSFA dues, etc. to Franklin Kerkhof at the above address. Otherwise it is practically impossible to cash them.

WASHINGTON SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this club shall be to bring together at frequent intervals those who are interested in science fiction and fantasy literature of any nature, and the encouragement of such interest among others. For this purpose we shall read and discuss science fiction and fantasy as well as general scientific literature, carry out appropriate demonstrations, encourage the reading and appreciation of science fiction and fantasy and the study of science, and perform such other activities as may be in sympathy with the foregoing objectives. No part of the net income of this club shall inure to the benefit of any of its members or any private individual.

OFFICERS

Louis E. Garner, Jr., President
Robert G. Briggs, Vice President
Roy W. Loan, Jr., Secretary
Franklin Kerkhof, Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Regular members - - - \$4.00 per year
Associate members - - 15 cents per meeting
Corresponding members 50 cents per year
Honorary members - - - No dues

Meetings are held on the first, third, and fifth Sunday of each month at 8:00 P. M., Room 1030, Transportation Building, 17th and H Streets, N. W., Washington, D.C. This is not our mailing address.

HOME, SWEET HOME

Be it ever so humble--yet, just how humble is the Earth? Is it likely that the human race could find a planet more suited for human life than the Earth? Indeed, could it find another one as well suited?

Considering the vast numbers of stars and the vast numbers of planets that probably circle them, it is reasonable to suppose that there is quite a large number of Earth-type planets revolving around Sun-type stars. However, the chances of man being able to reach even one of them within a thousand years are very small.

In Science-Fiction yarns, the more realistic writers confine themselves to Venus and Mars as extra-terrestrial abodes for men, assuming, of course, that the stars have not yet been reached. Mars, with its rare atmosphere and cold, dry climate, is scarcely our idea of a pleasant homestead, but man might be able to live there. We don't know.. You'll have to ask the Martians for the answer to that one.

Venus seems to be a wee bit warm. The surface of its clouds is almost at the boiling point of water, with the probability that it is warmer underneath.

We, here at the WSFA, come to the conclusion that we'd better not bang up this planet of ours too much, for we'd have a hard time finding another one as good. After all, man evolved on the Earth. Being "bo'n and bred heah," it stands to reason that most of us will want to go on living here.

--Miles Davis, Editor

TIME ON MY HANDS

By Leo M. Carroll, Jr.

In any discussion of Science-Fiction, sooner or later the subject of time travel is sure to be brought up. This topic is certainly one of the basic and probably one of the earliest plots of the stf story. (Wells' "Time Machine") Like Gaul, it seems that time traveling is divided into three parts:

1) The Paradox story in which the time machine or some variation thereof is used as a means to leave the reader either perplexed or helpless from laughter. A perfect example of this type of story is Anson McDonald's "By His Bootstraps."

2) This second type is a bit harder to define, but it could be called the Invention story. Those tales belonging to this group seemed to be mainly concerned with the development of the machine and its use. In most cases, this is used as a means to tell the author's ideas about the future as regards science, government, etc. "The Time Machine" was one of the first (and the best) of this type.

3) The third concerns the yarns which use the time travel concept as a means for setting the stage of an ordinary adventure story. There are far too many of this class to site one in particular as an example, and, in general, they are of hack quality.

Another innovation is the concept of paratime or alternate worlds, which is not usually considered to be true time-traveling. These seem to have begun with Leinster's "Sidwise in Time."

One thing that has always interested me about this class of stories is the fact that the machines are never

explained. In an interplanetary yarn, almost the first thing the author does is to tell whether the engines are rocket or warpers or what-have-you. The same goes for all other types of stories except the time-travel tale. Never do the writers explain just HOW the characters get from here-now to here-then. I guess that they decide to leave it up to the reader to determine the method used. Was it done by sliding the machine along its fourth-dimensional axis? Or maybe you prefer shifting to a space-time frame with a time rate faster than our own and waiting until the correct number of years have passed on the earth. (To get back you, of course, shift to a frame with a negative time rate.) But no matter who disagrees with me, I shall consider no time story perfect until it gives a full explanation.

Another variation of the time story that seems to have been forgotten is the one that concerns itself with a time-scanner. The classic of this group is without John Taine's masterpiece "Before the Dawn". However, many fine short stories and novelettes have been written about this same theme. To be more specific, I am speaking about "E for Effort" by T. L. Sherred, which appeared in the May, 1947 issue of Astounding. (This story was later voted the best novelette of the year by the Washington Science-Fiction Society.)

If you will remember, this story has for its basic idea a rather complex plot, but its treatment and the description of the results of the scanner are what caused it to be so well liked.

The one point in the probability-world stories that has always seemed weak to me is the very idea of alternate paths. What I mean is this: just what determines when the time stream is going to branch? If, for instance, every act that I perform has its alternates, then every time I do something like picking up a paper, an alternate

world is formed in which I did not pick it up. Now considering that there are hundreds of similar things that I do each day and that there are two billion people in the world, each doing like things Hmm.'

On the other hand, maybe you subscribe to the theory that only important events cause new probabilities. If so, then you can answer one question for me. What determines which events are important enough to cause branching?

Another things, if there are alternate worlds, what is to prevent me from going to one (providing that I have the means, of course) that branched off at, say, Pearl Harbor, and finding my double there in order to bring him back with me? That would cause two of me to be in this world at the same time. What a thought!

As I have said before, no one has ever given an explanation of a time machine, although many different methods have been used. They range from bolts of lightning ("By Yon Bonny Banks," ASF, Nov., '45) through warps in time, past all the various machines and end up by having the power of the mind project a person through time-- ("The Helping Hand," ASF, Jan., '48). Some authors do not have the entire being sent back through time, but only the mind. Henry Kuttner made a great deal of use of this idea in his Pete Manx series, in which the mind of Manx was thrown back through time to inhabit the body of some individual of that period.

In certain of the equations of Einstein, some statements are made concerning the apparent passage of time while traveling at speeds near that of light. A few writers grasped upon this as a sort of one-way time travel. Now, I don't happen to agree with this, but if I did, it would seem to me that stories of suspended animation should also be included since these too are time travel of a sort... in one direction only.

There are certain things pertaining to chronokinesis, however, which all authors seem to disagree on. In fact, the writers themselves never agree in two consecutive stories. The trouble, briefly, is this: what effect does a time traveler into the past have upon the present? If, for example, I were to take a trip to the past what would be the results? One of two things COULD happen. The first, that any change in the past automatically changes the present, because the past is different and therefore the present ... well, you get what I mean, anyway. The alternative is that any excursions into the past have already happened (since it IS past) and that nothing can be changed. It doesn't matter much. If the present could be changed, we'd never know about it, because although it really had been changed, it would appear to us as though it had always been that way.

One easy way to avoid a good night's sleep is to start thinking about certain paradoxes that would develop with time travel. The most common one is the idea of going back and killing your great-grandfather. What would happen in that case? It seems to me that if he were killed before he had met your great-grandmother, you would have never been born at all or would be a totally different person. Now then, if you killed him, would you cease to exist when you got back, would you change, or upon going to your house, would you find a person like yourself but a descendant of a different great-grandfather?

One feature of time-paradox stories is that they are wonderful or terrible; there is no middle of the road. As the advertisements say, there have been many imitators of "By his Bootstraps" but none have proved its equal. It had everything a story of this type should have and, above all, it was logical. (My kind of logic, anyway)

Somewhere I once read what I consider to be the classic description of the Time-Paradox. It goes somewhat like this:

THE CASE OF JOHN SMITH

John Smith, genius, has invented a plane that will carry him around the world faster than it rotates, thus enabling him to return before he starts. The big day comes, and John heads for the airport. He gets into the plane but, before taking off, decides to look around to see if he landed (should that be "will land?") safely. He sees nothing, so he reasons that the plane must have crashed somewhere, and that he was killed. He, of course, doesn't want to be killed, so he doesn't take off. Naturally he didn't land, because he didn't take off in the first place. Remind you of Thiotimeline, doesn't it?

(Dear Ed: If I don't get enough letters on this article I shall write one on the fourth dimension. THEN stay sane!)

* * * * *

WSFA SPEAKS

20 cards - each with three places scored as follows:

1st place - 5 points

2nd place - 3 points

3rd place - 1 point

Total number of points - 180

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>MAGAZINE</u>	<u>NO. OF POINTS</u>
1)	ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION	91
2)	UNKNOWN WORLDS	30
3)	THRILLING WONDER STORIES	13.5
4)	STARTLING STORIES	10.5
5)	FANTASTIC ADVENTURES	9
6)	FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES	7
7)	AVON FANTASY READER	5
(TIE)	FANTASTIC NOVELS	5
8)	AMAZING STORIES	4
(TIE)	WEIRD TALES	4
9)	PLANER STORIES	2

Leo M. Carroll, Jr.

THE BARBER MYSTERY

By Richard S. Barber

As I was sitting peacefully at my sewing machine the other day, harming no one and contemplating no evil, I was suddenly disturbed from my placid philosophical studies of the revivifying effects of radioactive sour cream on termites. Looking up, I saw with horror a monstrous apparition which had just floated through the open door. In order to brace myself to the point at which I could stand the unbelievable terror of its presence, I took a small sip of Callistan Mogzig, a drink of such terrible potency that not even a termite treated with radioactive sour cream can stand its devastating power. As I smashed my empty ten-gallon jigger on the table, I immediately broke into the stirring strains of the space-men's chantey. The monster, terrified by the unharmonious cacophony, immediately fled, but not before leaving a missive which spelled the doom of both me and my world-shaking researches on the revivifying effects of radioactive sour cream on termites.

The fateful words which meant the death of one of man's most noble delvings into the unknown read thus:

EITHER YOU PAY THE LAST MONTH'S RENT, OR GET OUT!

I am sure that any kind readers can appreciate the magnitude of this blow to my vital work. This message meant that mankind would be set back several thousand years in his search for knowledge; for how can anyone contemplate the revivifying effects of radioactive sour cream on termites while seated on a park bench instead of before his beloved sewing machine?

Cast into the depths of deepest despair, I laid my hand upon the doorknob with the astoundingly novel purpose of opening the door. However, my super-developed ESP told me, that most terrifying BEM, my landlord, was gliding softly down the hall. After I had crawled out from under the bookcase which had toppled onto me as the

vibrations of his gentle footsteps undulated through the house, I again placed my hand on the doorknob, this time fulfilling the remarkable accomplishment of opening the door. My triumph at this feat of modern daring was short-lived, for as soon as I touched my marvelous portal, it fell into a small pile of tawny dust. Homer, my prize revived termite, sat on the pile of dust and regarded me with quizzical eye. When the gentle creature had received its commendation for its successful revivification, taking the form of a pat on the head, I noticed quite by accident that my right hand was missing up to the elbow. While placing a Band-Aid on the scratch, I marveled at the pleasant and good-tempered behavior of my prize revived termite.

Nevertheless, no mere admiration for a sweet-tempered pet could stay me from the trivial task of finding six month's rent. As I stepped out the door, I suddenly noticed a strange sensation of falling, which, taking into consideration the precession of the equinoxes and the curvature of space-time, was not surprising, for I actually was falling. Exhibiting that same streak of curiosity which made me the solar system's greatest expert on the revivifying effects of sour cream on termites, I pulled out of my back pocket my portable, 10-ton subsonic distance indicator and found that the depth of the shaft down which I was falling was exactly 374,002 feet, 9.3 inches \pm .00001% of error. This figure, too rough for my usual standard of accuracy, had to satisfy me for the moment, since not even my Super-Duper Thoroughly Mixed-Up Man Mind could give a closer figure at the moment.

My mind then turned to the philosophical problem present. Could this happen according to the dictates of present day science? If I had allowed myself to think the most fantastic thoughts, I might have come up with answers to the problem which would read something like this:

1) I am dreaming,

- 2) I am falling down an abandoned mine-shaft or,
- 3) I am reading a science-fiction story.

Since the falsity and unreason of these thoughts were immediately apparent, I never even thought them, but quickly hastened to the obvious conclusions that:

- 1) A dero is molesting me, or,
- 2) I am the center of a tremendous inter-galactic plot involving all known races and several that the science-fiction boys haven't thought up yet.

In either case, my actions were quite simple and very easy to carry out. When I landed, all I had to do was to conquer a race of six hundred million billion super-entities by mental power alone; then teleport to the surface of the Earth and publish my experiences in "Amazing Stories."

The contributions to my Barber Mystery Club would support me in regal style for the rest of my life (eventhough the contributions would be in Chinese and Confederate Collars). All my former competitors in the termite revivifying field would then spend all their time looking for caverns which are exactly 374,002 feet, 9.3 inches deep. My fortune would be made!

When I landed at the bottom of the cave, I was immediately rushed by every one of the six hundred million billion super-entities. I had no trouble with the first 599,999,999,999,999,999, but the last one almost proved my match. After a seventy-year struggle in which we destroyed no less than 623 galactic civilizations (in other space-time continuums, of course) I finally conquered the evil-minded scoundrel and teleported back to the surface.

I regret to say that not even "Amazing Stories" would accept this true story, and so it appears in "QUANTA," in order that all the faithful may hear evidence of the Most Astonishing True Story That Never Happened."

There is a moral to this tale, and it is:

1) If you start delving into the revivifying effects of radioactive sour cream on termites or,

2) If your welding machine starts telling you your fellow workers' thoughts,

It would be wise to see a reliable psychiatrist and not write science-fiction, for you may start people looking for underground caverns, too.

* * * * *

SPLITTING THE INFINITIVE

One of the most closely guarded secrets of the era can now be told, how an anonymous group of grammarians, working in secrecy in a remote section of the country, have finally succeeded in splitting the infinitive.

The so-called "Bronx-Project" got under way in 1943, with the installation of a huge infinotron specially constructed for the job by Cal. Tech philologists. Though the exact details are still withheld for reasons of security, it is possible to describe the general process.

From a stockpile of fissionable gerunds, encased in leaden cliches to prevent radioactivity, a suitable subject is withdrawn and placed in the infinotron together with a small amount of syntax. All this material must be handled with great care as the slightest slip may lead to a painful solecism. Once inside the apparatus, the gerund is whirled around at a great speed, meanwhile being bombarded by small participles. A man with a gender-counter stands always ready to warn the others if the Alpha-Betical rays are released in such high quantities as to render the scientists neuter.

The question is often asked: Can other countries likewise split the infinitive? I think we can safely answer, "No." Though it is true that Russia, for one, is known to have large supplies of thesaurus hidden away behind the Plural Mountains, it is doubtful if the Russians possess the scientific technique. They have the infinitive but not the know-how.

And that is something on which to congratulate our own brave pioneers in the field of grammatical research. Once it was thought that the infinitive could never be split—at least, not without terrible repercussions. We have shown that it is quite possible, given the necessary skill and courage, to unquestionably and without the slightest shadow of a doubt accomplish this modern miracle.

---Author Unknown

* * * * *

HISTORY OF WSFA

By Franklin Kerhof

It all began at the Philcon. Before the Philcon, I had never met any local fans except Mr. & Mrs. Dillard Stokes. I had no idea that others even existed. However, among all the other shady dealings that transpired at the Philcon, Russell Swanson, Bob Briggs, & I were introduced and decided that there should be a Science-Fiction club of some kind in Washington.

A couple of weeks later, (Don't ask me for dates; I rarely remember them, and they are not recorded) we three met on Ninth Street and conspired. We planned a meeting to be held in my basement room of the local fans whose names and addresses we had. The meeting was held the following Saturday evening. Those present included Mr. & Mrs. Ray Courtis, Bob Pavlat, and Chick Derry, in addition to us three. I must confess that there were fewer than seven at several of our subsequent meetings. Willy Ley, Groff Conklin, and the Stokeses expressed their regrets at not being able to attend. We seven decided a few things, such as time and place of meetings and a name for the organization. We were to meet every other Sunday at our present meeting place, and were to be known as the Washington Science-Fiction Society.

We progressed fairly well; we attracted some new and valuable members; Willy Ley attended a couple of meetings and once we had both Mr. Ley and Seabury Quinn. Then disaster threatened. Russel Swanson, who had been acting

president, was discharged from the Army and left Ft. Myer for his home in Haddam, Conn., sometime in December, 1947. I found myself acting as president, secretary, treasurer, publicity director, et al. I won't say that I did my very best to keep things going--I won't say that the rest of us did. But school boys must go to school and study at nights; we working-men must work eight hours a day, get our rest, conform to social obligations, etc.

In short, not enough of us had enough time to keep everything going as it should. Perhaps the inclemency of the weather contributed to our difficulties. Perhaps we needed organization.

Sometime in the spring, Russell made a return visit and asked Willy Ley over for an interview. We had a better meeting that time than we had been having. Among those present was a bespectacled gentleman from Alexandria. He seemed to be quite actively interested in WSFS, but little did I suspect the extent of his interest.

At the next meeting, Louis E. Garner, Jr. returned bright and early, full of plans and with a rough draft for a constitution drawn up. Before the evening was over, and before we quite realized it, lo, we were organized! Garner was president, Briggs was vice-president, and I was secretary treasurer. Logally!

There are some who think over-organization is staring us in the face, but I doubt it. Garner may be a bit too ambitious; but we can compensate for that. Just look what we have done. By the time you read this we will have put out the second issue of QUANTA. Our publicity is working nicely. We have made active fans out of many adamant Washingtonians.

And now what? How about conventions? Washington would be nifty for nineteen-fifty; and if not, how about Washington in 'fifty-one?

NOTE: A parallel "History" was written by Bob Parlot. Time and space have prevented its inclusion in this issue.

F. K

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Louis E. Garner, Jr.

President of WSFA

SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY FANS ATTENTION!!!

You may have seen this statement a number of times on the postcards we have mailed in the past, announcing meetings of the Washington Science-Fiction Association. And you may have wondered, "What is the Washington Science-Fiction Association?" Or perhaps you have wondered, "WHO is the WSFA?" Maybe you have attended meetings of the old Washington Science-Fiction Society. Perhaps you would like to meet fellow fans but would not attend our meetings for arbitrary reasons.... "A bunch of juveniles, no doubt!" If you are young, "I'm only fourteen ... too young to join an association."

These arguments can be easily resolved. These questions can be easily answered.

Facts are presented easily ... if you have read the preceding pages of "QUANTA," you know the names of the officers, the history of the Association, the classes of membership, the dues, and our purpose. But you still do not know WHO the Association is, for names are meaningless. Robert Briggs, Vice-President, may be young, old, large, small, skinny, fat, sensible, stupid, insane, sane ... he may even be an "it." So I'm going to tell you ... and then YOU may wish to join our Association; to meet fellow fans in this vicinity; to participate in our activities; and to enjoy the privileges of membership.

There is no age limit on membership. Our members range in age from less than one year to more than sixty years. We have members of high school age, college students, and older members. No one group constitutes the great majority of membership... there are more members over 21 than younger members.

And our membership represents an amazing, to say the least, variety of fields: we have a professional chemist (Roy W. Loan, Jr.), a General Semantics expert (Frank Kerkhof), an embalmer (Herbert E. Rominger), a zoologist (Philip N. Bridges), a Technical Sergeant in the Army (Charles Gillespie), a Naval Lt. Commander (E. G. Leeth), a Physicist (J. W. Smith), a Psychologist (R. K. Pavlat), an Accountant (T. E. Forbes), a Radio Engineer (R. P. Curtis), a Librarian (Ralph Moritz), a Technical Consultant (the author), a Doctor of Mathematics (Mrs. E. S. A. Whitmore), an internationally known Rocket Expert (Willy Ley), and high school and college students. I could go on, but this gives a rough idea of "WHO" constitutes the membership of the Association.

Further details cannot be easily given. I cannot tell about the religious, political or other beliefs of our members, nor do such matters concern us. We are interested in one thing only. Are they FANS? They all like and read Science-Fiction and/or Fantasy. But for different reasons ... some are collectors, some read S-F as an excellent form of "escapist" literature, some are interested in S-F through their work in scientific fields, others are interested in S-F from a literary viewpoint, and still others consider S-F to offer a unique "something" which is quite difficult to define.

We are all individualists. That is one distinguishing mark of a S-F Fan. Some like E. E. Smith's stories, others think he stinks. The same statement would apply to almost any pro-writer ... Taine, George O. Smith, Van Vogt, Temple, De Camp, Merritt, and so on. No one could doubt for a minute that we are individualists, if he would but listen to one of our general discussions.

What about the meetings?

A good question, but not easily answered. Our meetings are quite informal -- usually preceded and followed

by a first class bull session. The business, when we have any to conduct, is disposed of in a democratic manner and as quickly as practical under the circumstances. Then we go into the program.

The first part of every program is our auction and what an auction!! Magazines will sometimes be sold for as little as six or seven for ten cents, books for as little as five or ten cents, while, at other times, single copies of magazines will bring forty, forty-five, and even fifty cents and more if the bidders don't run out of change.

Items can be auctioned in two ways: 1) Material is donated to the Association and the proceeds of the auction go into the club treasury; or 2) items will be auctioned for individuals, with 10% being deducted as commission for the Association. Books and magazines are traded and sold between individuals, of course. It often happens that a member will bring several items to auction, but will sell or trade them all to other members in the pre-meeting bull session.

After the auction, we have our regular program, which may be a talk, or series of talks, a debate, demonstrations, experiments, book reviews or criticisms; or almost anything similar. Occasionally, we will have a "name" present at meetings, some well known pro-author or nationally known fan. A general discussion is always held as part of the program.

Most of us are quite fond of the general discussion. As fans, we are always anxious to air our personal viewpoints and if possible, to college a load of egoboo.

So our meetings are almost always interesting. I will admit, of course, that once in a while, a very long while, we have a fairly dull meeting, but it

is a special kind of dullness. When fans are bored, they are bored in a very scientific manner.

One thing is certain ... we are not a business organization. All officers are elected by vote of the membership, and no part of the funds of the Association can go as personal profit to any member. We watch our Treasurer carefully, especially when we go to "Brownie's" for our after-meeting refreshments. We also make a careful note of how much he bids at auctions.

And we like ... in fact, we actually want ... to meet other fans.

Therefore, both personally and on behalf of the Association, I want to invite all District Area fans (Virginia, D. C., Maryland,) individually and collectively, to come to our meetings and to apply for membership in the Association. To other fans, both national and international, we extend the hand of fraternal friendship and invite you to visit any of our meetings whenever you happen to be within walking, flying, driving, bussing, training, swimming, crawling, or teleporting distance of Washington.

One further point: **SUBSCRIBE TO QUANTA!**

Note on "Genesis of an Addict"--

With regard to one or two criticisms which my article received on a particular point, I should have stated: "The great emphasis on interplanetary and interstellar stories has been a comparatively recent development ..." Actually the emphasis on this type of story has been evident since about 1930.

-- Philip N. Bridges

40 Grozier Road
Cambridge 38, Mass.
12 August 1948

Dear Mr. Davis:

I have at hand a copy of your new magazine, and since you have cleverly arranged to make it possible, I have read it not only from cover to cover, but I have read the cover as well!

Let me congratulate you on your achievement. I may say that it is the best S. F. fanzine I have read, and amplify that statement by saying that I was recently the guest of a man whose hobby is collecting all manner of publications of science fiction. He is a chemist in a company near Boston. In his cellar he has three walls covered with shelves containing complete issues to date of all U. S. and many British and German S. F. Magazines. He reads them all and keeps a card file on the stories that appear, and he has color-coded the indexes of all the magazines he has read according to the quality of stories. I might add that he is currently reading issues published in 1940.

He also has a frightening collection of fanzines, but when I asked to look at some, he demurred, saying they were too awful to show me. After considerable urging on my part he finally picked one out and said I might look at it--it was the best of the lot. It wasn't too bad, but I think Quanta is better.

I have one observation to make about science-fiction fans and writing. I once attended a meeting of the Stranger Club of Cambridge to hear Ted Sturgeon talk about S. F. writing. Now the curious thing about Mr. Sturgeon's views--aside from the fact that he told me he could not stand his story "The Microcosmic God" and

that as far as he was concerned it was strictly from hunger--was that he did not mention S. F. props and gimmicks at all during his talk. He did not speak of space ships. He was not concerned with atomic energy. He wasn't willing to take partisan sides on the (to me) burning question of whether telepathy is really proper for a science fiction story. Not at all. What Mr. Sturgeon talked about was character, plot, and style. One could see that to him the problem of writing science-fiction was primarily the problem of writing fiction. A fast-paced story, plausible characterization and motivation, and the dilemma an author finds himself in when he starts to write a story and finds that the characters he has created refuse to follow the plot he has thought up for them. (He suggested letting the characters have their own way, if you aren't depending on the story to pay your rent in the next few days.)

At the close of the talk, Mr. Sturgeon expressed surprise that so very few of the good science-fiction writers come from the ranks of the fans. He said science-fiction fans are intelligent and highly articulate, but they don't seem to turn into authors. Maybe he is still wondering, about ten minutes later, when we were all sitting around having coke and cookies, I heard the following conversation:

Two rather wild-eyed S. F. fans aged about sixteen or seventeen were discussing Sturgeon's talk when one of them said, "By the way, have you heard about my new story? It's really super!"

"No," said the other, "are you going to try to get it published?"

"Well, I really haven't written it yet, but I'm going to-- I'm just about to. And it's really going to be a wonderful story. It's about a werewolf. I've just thought of a really super way to kill one off."

If you like violent criticism in "Quanta," I will write you a letter setting forth my views on science fiction authors who use telepathy as a prop for their stories.

Gordon McLunk landed on the small, pea-green planet 1035 light years from Earth. Pausing only to take a small accommodating pill to accommodate him to the hydrogen cyanide atmosphere of the planet, he extricated himself from his hopelessly demolished spacecraft and cautiously looked around him. The first thing he saw was a huge, horrible-looking, slimy monster, with seven legs, chromium-plated teeth, and a purple feather-duster for a tail.

McLunk thought, "I wonder which way the nearest town is." The monster thought back, "Third row over, take the left hand road. It's about 10 kilometers from there. Watch out for the little red hoptoads. They are your most dangerous enemies. But the medium-sized blue-green tarantulas are your friends." "Thanks, pal," thought McLunk. And he started on his journey.

Charlotte D. Mooers

* * * * *

1503 3/4 12th Ave.
Los Angeles 6, Calif.

Miles:

I guess I liked QUANTA. To an old fan publishing hack such as I, the double spacing was rather bothersome. I'm glad you have paper to waste, tho. Bridges could have been more personal and not reported so many mags coming out. 'Tain't intrestin'. Briggs is more interesting than Kerkhof re writing prowess, but in my candid opinion they aren't speaking about the same things, and Korzybsky should have read a lot more psychology before making his pretty generalities. Re the article's quote on amentia, feeble-minded like to listen to fantastic tales, but have little imagination of their own. Not all fans fit the two-edged description.

Gus Willmorth

My dear Mr. Davis:

Yes, in answer to that mass produced postcard, I have received a copy of "Quanta". I tell you, I was very pleased to see that D.C.'s fanzine, at least, is larger than a flea's blanket. You should have seen the cute little job a society in England sent me. It was four inches square, with print smaller than a crooked contract.

"Quanta" has, if I may be permitted to praise and criticize for a few minutes here, many good points and many bad ones. Perhaps I had best get the gripes off my chest now. I've had considerable experience in cutting line drawings on stencils, and I know it's tough, but Mr. Briggs will have to admit that he didn't do your first issue justice. The cover, sad to say, is not one that would hit the reader in the eye with "Well, that's slick. Wonder what's inside?"

Philip Bridges, in his otherwise well done "Genesis of an Addict," seems to be suffering under the delusion that interplanetary and interstellar tales are "a comparatively recent development, probably due to the rapid rise of aviation ..." While researching for my term paper, "Science Fiction as a literary form," I found, and Mr. Bridges would have found, too, that though such stories are new comers to the magazine and periodical field, they have been in books for centuries. The first story of interplanetary travel, as far as we know, was Lucian's "True History" in 160 A. D. As for interstellar, we find it at least as far back as Voltaire's "Micromegas," 1772. Willy Ley will probably set up a howl if he hears what Mr. Bridges said.

Finally you, Mr. Davis, while writing a story that would have been good if you had had more space to tell it in, seem to have been affected by close contact with Cliff Simak and 15th century German music. It is a shame that you couldn't run more pages and develop your theme without so much straight narration. That is my last bellyache, the lack of space caused by having to mimeograph double spaced typing, but you can't pin that one on anybody but old man dollar, I guess.

The balance of material was excellent. You know, generally a fanzine will come out with a first issue that contains a whole slew of S. F. criticism, then they run out of things to criticize and the magazine becomes a sinkhole for amateur pot boilers. You'll avoid that, I think, because you have a large enough selection of subjects so that you can afford to be critical. The reprint from the New York Times amused me as nothing about the Russians has since I read a Communist paper account of Gary Cooper helping raise the red flag over the great Communist Party Hall in Philadelphia. "Nightpiece" was superb, although the drawings, begging your pardon, sir, were no better than Mr. Briggs'. I didn't squawk about them as violently, though, because I know you had a job on your hands, turning out a mag with the balance this one has.

The debates will prove popular, I bet. But it's space again here. They just aren't long enough. The discussion on the reader's own problems and activities was good, my technical gripe notwithstanding. The story ... I have spoken, as Burroughs says. The article, last but certainly not least, was informative, and I hope this sort of thing continues. But it should be longer. (You need closer type .. space again! Ye Gods.)

In all this, I'm not just trying to prove that the editor is the whipping boy for all the readers. I'm interested, I want to see this thing grow, both for my own reading pleasure and for the good of the Science Fiction readers in Washington and vicinity. Nothing is any good if it stays the same; runs the same old rut. And nothing is as good for a S. F. organization as a good-looking and good reading magazine, even if it is only published "when, if and while we feel like it." You have a lot of things yet to use. Criticism, in moderate doses, book reviews (that's another thing besides the article that makes Astounding the best magazine in the Science Fiction field), a letter column mebbe, better and closer reproduction mebbe, gosh gee whiz, mebbe even printing (one chick, two chicks, three ...)

But to get anywhere, it isn't enough to make suggestions. I wish to heck I could get down to the meetings Sunday evenings, but I can't, and that's all there is to it. However, find inside the envelope somewhere a money order for one buck, for which send me twelve issues of "Quanta" if when and while they come off the roller. And I've got some time on my hands, on weekdays, so if you think I can help out in any way, art or copy reading or just turning a crank, all you gotta do is give a whistle.

Yours with encouragement

Dick Roelofs.

* * * * *

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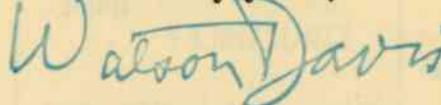
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