
COSMOPOLIS

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A Studied Whimsy

Among the hordes of fantasy and science fiction authors of the present day, one writer stands out as the master prose stylist: Jack Vance. But his mastery does not rest merely on the matter of style...

I am nearing the end of his *Lyonesse* trilogy, in the last pages of *Madouc*. And, once again, I come across an amusing concept that the author throws in for the fun of it, and to fill out his broad vision of the social world. This time, the social world includes not a strain of humanity in some far reach of the galaxy, but the strain of “humanity” in the fairies of Thripsey Shee.

The concept? “Sklemik.” In a footnote, Vance defines it thus:

Untranslatable: A fairy word signifying (1) passionate receptivity or involvement with each instant of life; (2) a kind of euphoria induced by close attention to unpredictable changes in the perceived surrounding as one instant metamorphoses into the next; a dedicated awareness to NOW; a sensitivity to the various elements of NOW. The concept of sklemik is relatively simple and quite bereft of mysticism or symbol.

I am reminded of ancient moral debate. (One often is, in Vance.) Is *sklemik* Epicurean? Cyrenaic? Though Walter Pater’s Marius the Epicurean might have been sympathetic to this gallant and carefree attitude, it doesn’t quite fit the philosophy proper (but then, neither did Marius). *Sklemik* would allow, if practiced successfully, immersion in complexity and even strife, which is not something cultivated in Epicurus’s quiet Garden. But the immersion would be an immersion into storm sans stress, sans pain. *Sklemik*-ian lightheartedness should allow one to gain happiness from whatever is thrown one’s way, thus achieving a happiness not far from Epicurean ataraxy.

Readers of *Madouc* don’t need a philosophical treatise to define and explore the limits of *sklemik*, however. Familiarity with Jack Vance’s droll prose is more than enough

preparation. To experience his work is to experience wonder after wonder. There is always just enough emotional distance, but never scorn or blunt satire, nothing to kill an eager attachment to each passing phase and phrase. Had not Vance invented the term, he would still have been an appropriate writer to cite under the heading. To read Vance is to delight in the NOW of prose fiction, and to achieve a kind of euphoria. There is this sense of timelessness to every one of his productions.

The sense of time in Vance’s work, however, is not simply this, not one unpredictable scene metamorphosing into the next, succession after succession. There is always a quite different sense, too, a sense of vast reaches of time, stretching back, back, back. (Implying, with less certainty, a stretching forward, forward, forward.)

As Vance sees it, human beings learn and unlearn the same lessons. Cultures take strange twists and turns, but humanity – despite whatever mutation of body and spirit – remains recognizable.

Vance’s characters are often “philosophical,” in the common if not the technical sense. And Vance frames their reveries and pronouncements with both irony and appreciation. He manages to strike a balance that prevents him from the preachiness of that queer creature, the “novelist of ideas.” Vance’s emotional poise is one uncommon to artists, that of a sage. His “poetry” and flirtation with fanciful beings is made not to inspire fear (what Epicurus fought), but to inspire joy at the wonder of it all, and perhaps a bit of wisdom at the sameness of it all, too.

For what interests Vance, chiefly, is man – man as both mutable and characteristically predictable being. Looking back at the period of his career, during which time the human sciences have gone through revolution after revolution, endured dogma after dogma, I can think of no writer better to recommend the serious student of humanity than Vance. If you can square your theories with the vision

of life that Vance paints, then your science will not be too far off the mark.

No science fiction writer has as strong a claim to anthropology as the “science” in his science fiction, no writer of the fantastic seems more thoroughly grounded in a view of life that reflects the true and enduring economies that beset the human spirit.

Timothy Virkkala

Textual Criticism & the *VIE*

The purpose of this short essay is to place the TI work that we are, and will be, doing on the *VIE* texts in the context of modern theories of textual criticism.¹ I hope that this will help readers understand what they will be getting when they subscribe to the *VIE*, and that incidentally, some light might be cast on why TI is not a straightforward job, and why corrected texts are not coming off the TI production line at a dramatic rate.

*One of the aspects of the VIE will be the restoration of Vance's works to the state intended by their author ... as far as possible all "editorial improvements" will be eliminated.*²

This is one of the first statements concerning editorial method to be found by the prospective *VIE* subscriber, and it is probably fair to say that its spirit pervades the *VIE* enterprise. It is hardly a controversial stance. The “intentionalist” approach to textual criticism (for this is what it is) has been the dominant twentieth-century approach. The author’s intention is paramount; all changes from the author’s original are corruptions; the ideal is the restoration of the author’s uncorrupted original.

A fairly common position has held that the definitive text is the last published during the author’s lifetime. This relies on a degree of belief in the author’s willingness and ability to see each edition through the publication process that is manifestly

¹ There is a brief and lucid discussion of these theories applied to critical editing in William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott, *An introduction to bibliographical and textual studies*, 3rd ed (New York, 1999), 75-86.

² The Vance Integral Edition, <http://www.massmedia.com/~mikeb/vie/Description.htm>

not sustainable in the context of late twentieth-century genre publishing. As a general rule, it is probably safer to think of the definitive text as the last for which the author retained demonstrable responsibility. This is the official *VIE* position.

In practice, this means that the first edition is likely to be the most definitive – because later ones will be more or less corrupt – unless Jack revised or otherwise took responsibility for a later text.

Attractive though the simplicity of this approach is, however, it is fraught with problems. Jack himself abridged *The Fox Valley Murders* for its publication as an Ace paperback in 1970, and that indeed is the author’s final version. Few, however, would maintain that it represented his “final intention,” and it is not the text that we will be using in the *VIE*.

Another interesting problem is raised by *Guyal of Sfere*. This story, originally part of *The Dying Earth* (to be published in the *VIE* as *Mazirian the Magician*), was revised by Jack for its republication in the collection *Eight Fantasms and Magics* in 1969. The revision was quite drastic, shortening the story appreciably and clearly affecting its colour and texture. It must represent the author’s final intention – but that presents the textual editor with two problems. First – and let us be blunt – few would claim that it is an improvement on the original. To my eye at least, it represents an uncomfortable compromise between styles twenty years apart. Second, should we publish *Mazirian the Magician* with one part heavily revised and now stylistically inconsistent with the rest? Perhaps this second problem provides the get-out, in that considering *Mazirian* as the “text” in question allows us legitimately to include the original *Guyal of Sfere*, with the revised version best considered as a separate text and published in the *VIE* as such.

(Editor's note: Guyal of Sfere appears in a recent anthology of stories of the far future, The Furthest Horizon: SF Adventures to the Far Future, edited by Gardner Dozois. St. Martin's Press, New York, 2000. Mr. Dozois forwards the story with a most flattering introduction.)

Fine – but what about *Cil*? This constituent story in *The Eyes of the Overworld* was also revised by Jack for *Eight Fantasms and Magics*, but only very slightly – few readers if any would notice the difference. It is likely that we will take

a different decision with respect to *Cil*, though without a simplistic theoretical foundation for that decision.

One could cite further examples. The early stories *The World-Thinker* and *I'll Build Your Dream Castle* were heavily revised by Jack for their book publication many years later in *Lost Moons*. In his introduction to that volume, Jack says:

"Two [stories] ... were so embarrassing that I rewrote a few stand-out passages, a lick-and-a-promise operation rather like putting rouge on a corpse."³

In fact Jack's revisions were rather more substantial than he suggests, though I would not quibble over his description of their effect. Some would argue that *The World-Thinker* has a kind of historical importance as Jack's first published story (though not his first written, or sold) and as such the original version is more important than the revised text, which is hardly an important work in its updated form.

The problem of the author's intention becomes even more complex when we consider prepublication states of the text. Take *The Anome*. The typescript in the Mugar Library contains several pages "rewritten at the publisher's request." Since we have both the revised and original versions of that text, which should we publish? It is quite clear that Jack was happy enough with the original and revised only because the publisher asked him to. Arguably his "intention" is best represented by the earlier state.

I choose *The Anome* for illustration here because it is very clear-cut as to what was changed and what the "original" reading was. However, many of Jack's novels, and perhaps most of them, were subject to changes at their publishers' behest. The evidence base, though, needs to be very strong before it is possible to disentangle the effect of such changes. In most cases we simply would not be able to even if we wanted to. Even in the best-documented case, *Emphyrio*, where all the prepublication states (holograph and typescript) survive, along with correspondence with the publisher, I am not sure we could confidently restore the text as it would have been had the publisher not requested changes. In the first place, Jack might have agreed with the changes; secondly, how can we tell which changes in the revised typescript were actually made because the publisher asked, and which were made because Jack himself decided to make them, given the production of a new typescript?

³ Jack Vance, *Foreword and cold facts*, in *Lost Moons* (San Francisco, 1982), 11.

A more recent theoretical approach to textual criticism, normally associated with Jerome McGann, treats the text as a social construct.⁴ Here, the author is only one (though an important one) of the agents who bring a text into being. The text is finally a product of a process that has involved the publisher, editor, proofreader, and possibly others. The model fits much commercial fiction very well.

Some of Jack's works engaged these external agents, and were affected by them, before a word was written. These include *To Live Forever*, written from an idea cooked up by Jack with Frank Herbert; *Abercrombie Station*, from an idea by Damon Knight; *The Augmented Agent*, from an already-drawn cover illustration. Some books and stories were commissioned to a theme, for example *Space Opera*, which was then rejected by its original publisher because Jack had taken the theme *too* literally.

Often, Jack would sell a novel on the basis of a lengthy outline, perhaps one-third the length of the published book. At any point from there on, the publisher could, and often did, influence the final text. Some of the books are "faithful" to the outlines; others, like *Shonboat World*, are intriguingly different. Who can say (in the absence of documentary evidence) whether the differences are authorial reconsiderations or publisher's orders?

One thing that's fairly clear is that at least towards the end of the process of writing a book – probably *after* the end as he saw it – Jack would often comply with a publisher's request for changes, but without enthusiasm, and minimally: making the fewest changes to the text that he could consistent with satisfying the publisher's requirement. This could have been the case with the "questionable" ending to *Gold and Iron*.

It's my expectation that only in a few specialized cases will we attempt a restoration of Jack's "intention" in cases where interaction with publishers or editors has resulted in a work that is arguably different from the one that Jack would have written without such intervention. In most cases, the lack of reliable evidence will make the decision for us, but I hope that the examples given above help to show that the concept of "intention" is suspect in any case, and particularly so in commercial fiction.

⁴ Jerome J. McGann, *A critique of modern textual criticism* (Chicago, 1983).

It is not, however, necessary to presume that the author's *intention* is what he *actually wrote*. To take an example from *Wjst*: it is clear from Tim Stretton's work on the typescript that at a fairly late stage Jack decided to change "Alastor Agency," which appeared numerous times in the book, to "Alastor Centrality." But he missed some of the occurrences, leaving an inconsistency which I would find it impossible to argue that he intended. But the TI task is not a hunt for inconsistencies. The texts are full of them, some easily spotted, some so well-hidden that it takes a special kind of enthusiast to hunt them down. The Vances' papers include a letter from a reader of *Showboat World* who has subjected the text to a minute reading; distances along the Vissel are carefully assessed against narrative evidence, the map, and the citations from the *River Index*; numerous "errors" are exposed.

At this point we might look at the proofreader's and copyeditor's contribution to the proceedings. So far, we've taken the view that (say) to eliminate the alien influence of Damon Knight from *Abercrombie Station* would be a nonsense – quite apart from the basic idea being his, Jack has clearly accepted it. I would also argue that he accepted sensible editorial intervention in a number of other works, for example *The Man In The Cage*. One school of thought of textual criticism prefers the first printed edition as "copy-text" (the preferred reading) on the grounds that the author can be expected to have concurred with the editor's or proofreader's emendations – after all, did he not check the proofs? Another school of thought prefers the manuscript, if available, on the grounds that it is simply not a safe assumption to make that the author checked, corrected and approved the proofs.

Of course, in Jack's case, we could argue that we don't need the theory, because we *know* what happened. Especially in the middle period, he didn't check proofs – when he got them – and changes were made to some of the texts which make up one of the reasons why we are producing the *VIE*.

So, do proofreader's changes have any textual validity at all? The "intentionalist" argument says "no," with the *possible* exception of the correction of clear slips of the pen. The "text as social construct" theory says "maybe." It is possible, and reasonable, to argue that the author, even if he did not check his proofs, nonetheless *expected* his work to be changed in proof. Jack's proofreaders have, at various times, "normalized" spelling and hyphenation; corrected clear and trivial spelling errors; corrected what would conventionally be seen as bad grammar; clarified awkward phrasing; killed elegant phrasing; arbitrarily changed punctuation. Some of this work may

legitimately be seen as restoring the author's intention – that is, we presume that the author did not intend crass mistakes in spelling or grammar, or inconsistencies of the type referred to above. If so, we should take advantage of that proofreader's work. That does not absolve *us* of the responsibility of restoring, as far as possible, the author's intention.

It is likely that of the over 400 proofreader's emendations in *Wjst*, we will accept perhaps twenty, or 5%. In addition, we will correct clear errors which the proofreader has missed – perhaps another five changes. It has simply not proved possible to define a clear rule about what we will change and what we will not. The harder TI decisions *will* be judgement calls; this is why we have a review mechanism in place that will allow these decisions to be tested at a level approved by Jack and Norma themselves.

The limited TI experience so far has shown that we can learn lessons from the way the manuscript materials have been treated that we would hope to be able to transfer to the TI work on texts where no prepublication evidence is available. A trivial example is Jack's consistent use of "blond" for a male subject and "blonde" for a female – proofreaders have inevitably preferred "blonde." Here I think we could confidently restore Jack's original even in the absence of manuscript evidence. With luck, we'll get a good deal more insight as the TI work with manuscripts goes on – this is one reason why it is important to start the TI work with texts where we have manuscript evidence, the other being the hope that we might still turn up manuscripts for some of the others.

A classic textual criticism problem arises with *The Languages of Pao*. The original version, published in *Satellite Science Fiction* in 1957, is considerably shorter than the subsequent book versions (Avalon, 1958, and Ace, 1966 – very similar texts, with the Avalon edition containing a couple of paragraphs not in the Ace, and preferred). Did Jack expand the magazine version to book length, or cut the book for the magazine appearance? In fact the internal evidence suggests that *both* texts are edited versions of a longer original; each contains passages not found in the other. Our choice of action here depends on the theoretical basis we choose for our work. One approach is to choose the most reliable copy-text and work with that. This would be the book version, as it presumably represents the author's final intention, and is authorized by him. Another,

also legitimate, approach is to try to reconstruct the “lost” original using as evidence the two “corrupted” sources. The latter approach is instinctively appealing (to me anyway!) but it contains the danger of “reconstructing” an original that never was.

As an aside – which published texts are pure Vance, untouched by editors? Maybe *The House on Lily Street* and *The View from Chickweed’s Window*, each published in only one edition, by Underwood-Miller.

For me, text-as-social-construct works better as an explanatory mechanism than as an editorial principle – “why did the text get like this?” It’s of little practical use without detailed knowledge of the relevant relationships. Let’s say (heaven forbid) I were editing Jeffrey Archer. It is well known that his novels are – at best – collaborations between him and his editors, and the same could be said of many best-selling authors. It makes little literary sense to restore Archer’s manuscript originals, though it might be interesting for other reasons. It is *because* we know that Jack hardly engaged with his proofreaders/editors at all that we are comfortable with rejecting most editorial intervention.

The varied nature of the textual evidence that we have for Jack’s work means that we can’t define a single detailed methodological approach that we will apply to each text. Sometimes we have nothing beyond a single published text (*Vandals of the Void*, *Bad Ronald*); or multiple drafts and setting copy (*Emphyrio*, *Tschai*); divergent published texts with no available manuscript (*The Languages of Pao*, *The Dragon Masters*); published texts with setting copy (*The Brains of Earth*, *The Last Castle*); published texts with manuscript versions that may not be final (*The Dark Ocean*, *The Houses of Izsm*).

Each case will need its own approach, but the overarching textual principles need to be constant. My own mental yardstick is “authentic, but not painfully authentic.” We will restore Jack’s intention but not his slips of the pen. It is a pleasure and a privilege to read Jack in the true original.

Alun Hughes, Textual Integrity Lead

Proofreading Update

Proofreading continues to gather momentum, with June proving to be a very productive month. With all the texts now digitized the only barrier to further progress is the number of

proofreaders we attract. I’m pleased to say that several new volunteers started their first assignments last month.

Our total number of words proofed is just a shade under six million, and nearly 250 proofing jobs have been assigned. *Cosmopolis* provides me with a good opportunity to say “thank you” and to list those who have been especially productive. There are no financial rewards, but the following are particularly worthy of their fellows’ esteem:

Most Jobs Completed

PROOFER	WORKS COMPLETE
Steve Sherman	10
Patrick Dusoulie	8
Ron Chernich	7
Michel Bazin Rob Friefeld Dave Kennedy	6
Chris Corley Bob Lacovara	5
Evert Jan de Groot Rob Gerrand Till Noever Suan Yong	4

Most Words Proofed

PROOFER	WORDS PROOFED
Steve Sherman	672,800
John Schwab	345,200
Michel Bazin	293,000
Dave Kennedy	275,000
Suan Yong	258,800
Ron Chernich	243,600
Rob Gerrand	237,200
Chris Corley	228,200
Till Noever	212,300
Patrick Dusoulie	199,300

The Mentor Team of Chris, Patrick and Steve (now back from his holidays) remains ready to help with any questions you might have. As well as providing informal guidance on request, the mentors do have an important role in ensuring that proofers’ work is presented in the correct format – so if your mentor asks to see a sample of your work, please do comply, even if you feel you’ve understood the proofing directives. More experienced proofers are generally no longer assigned mentors, but are still more than welcome to raise questions with any of them or with me.

Finally, I'd like to plug Suan Yong's errata database once again. What happens if you're reading one of Vance's books and a glaring typo leaps out at you? The thing to do is send it to suan@cs.wisc.edu where Suan maintains a record of these fortuitously discovered errors. Be sure to include the edition and page number, with enough information to enable later proofers to locate it:

Wyst, DAW 1978

TEXT-CHANGE 42.6 Jantiff saif quickly/Jantiff said quickly

Thanks once again to everyone for their unflagging enthusiasm. It can never be said too frequently that this giant proofing task would swamp the *VIE* without this unceasing volunteer effort.

Tim Stretton, Proofreading Lead

Vancian Punctuation

Corrected *VIE* texts are starting to roll off the Textual Integrity assembly line. As specified in the *VIE* Master Plan, these texts take the form of a set of *TI propositions* and are subject to several stages of review. *Wyst* has been corrected by Tim Stretton on the basis of comparison of published editions and, above all, the *setting copy*. A setting copy is the author's final manuscript with the editors' changes marked on it. It is the reference used by the typesetters. As Alun's article makes clear, there is no absolutely positive way to get back to Vance's original intentions in all aspects and details. But, so Alun Hughes informs me, nothing helps more than a setting copy.

The *Wyst* *TI* file contains over 400 proposed corrections. The majority concern quotation marks altered from Vance's usage. Vance does not write: *The "thing."* He writes: *The "thing"*. The second most common problem is the question of commas before "and" in lists of three. Vance, generally speaking, doesn't write: *"Tom, Dick, and Harry,"* he writes: *"Tom, Dick and Harry,"* but the editors have systematically shoved in a comma. The third most common problem is many other sorts of added commas. Next come the occasional removed comma, as well as alterations of other aspects of Vance's unconventional punctuation. Finally, and numerically least significant, are changes of Vance's words themselves. As with the punctuation, the editorial word changes are all in the same direction; toward more banal, common, unoriginal and

colorless usage. Some of the changes must even be placed in the "shockingly tasteless" class. However, there are also mistakes in the authorial manuscript and in several instances the editor makes legitimate corrections which must stand. A final category of corrections is that in which there is a problem with the manuscript reading, but the editorial correction is also questionable. Here is where the *VIE* must work with great care, and even consult the author himself if need be. Luckily such instances, in *Wyst* at least, are few, and concern very minor points.

It is a great privilege to review a *VIE* *TI* text, especially given Tim's excellent work. Seeing so many instances of parallel text scroll before my eyes – one Bowdlerized, one pure Vance – my ideas about Vance's punctuation have been brought into focus, and I thought I would share some of my reflections with *Cosmopolis* readers.

Vance punctuates in original ways, but there is nothing illogical or eccentric about it, for his punctuation serves specific ends which have their own hierarchy. Many rules of punctuation are pure convention: commas on either side of the word "however," the comma before "and" in lists, question marks used only as full stops. Vance rejects all this. Most writers use punctuation for only one purpose: to make their phrases grammatically clear. Vance has a different, less technical and more artistic goal; not grammatical clarity, but dramatic force. In practice this means changes and nuances of rhythm.

Vance's punctuation, considered over-all, can be said to be more about timing, or to borrow musical terms: *accelerando* and *retard*, than about grammatical clarity. His punctuation is not used to remove possible grammatical confusions, but to sculpt the meaning and beauty of his phrases. If no spoken pause occurs where standard punctuation would be positioned, Vance does not occlude his phrases with it: he is not servile to inartistic rules. His punctuation does not trot along behind the grammar, it leads the way, directing the flow, pauses and accelerations he wants to give his phrases in pursuit of an image or meaning.

Two examples – which show how the editors insist on mindless convention, while Vance is concerned with drama and sense – the published text has:

In an airy voice she said: "Esteban is such an extravagant man! I never take him seriously. Especially after a mug or two of swill, when he fantasizes most

outrageously. I don't know if you heard him talking –" She paused and looked sideways, dense black eyebrows arched in question.

But Vance wrote:

In an airy voice she said: "Esteban is such an extravagant man! I never take him seriously. Especially after a mug or two of swill, when he fantasizes most outrageously. I don't know if you heard him talking –" she paused and looked sidewise, dense black eyebrows arched in question.

The editor's capitalized 's' burdens and deadens the phrase by imposing a full stop where Vance wants a nuanced pause. In addition, in contrast to "sideways," which only indicates direction, Vance uses "sidewise," a less conventional word which has the important advantage of also indicating *the manner* in which she turns her head. The whole effect is distinctly more limpid and vivid.

The published text has:

The quiet was broken by a brief clear sound: tink! Like a drop of water into a basin.

But Vance wrote:

The quiet was broken by a brief clear sound: tink! like a drop of water into a basin.

In the editor's version the exclamation point is used as a full stop which casts it in the role of mere emphazier of the word "tink." But in Vance's version "tink" is not the word! In his phrase as written what we have is a sort of neologism, or sound effect: "tink!" Note also the characteristically Vancian absence of a comma between "brief" and "clear" (in this case allowed to stand by the editors) and how it lightens the phrase, smoothing our way up to "tink!" These factors both contribute to vitalizing the writing because they make the sound echo in our minds' ears more clearly. Vance's structure is pure and symmetrical, and punctuated as it would be read aloud:

The quiet was broken by a brief clear sound: – 'tink!' – like a drop of water into a basin.

This limpid symmetry contributes to the sense because the unpunctuated phrases on either side of "tink!" throw up into relief the silence that is broken by the tiny sound.

The editors divides the phrase in to two sentences, but the second is not even grammatical, since it has no verb! (We are reminded of this line from *The Murthe*: "See how the grossness of [their] character has caused [them] a foolish indignity!")

This brings to our attention another Vancian elimination, which would not be risked by ordinary writers much less even occur to them; they would write: "like a drop of water falling into a basin." It is yet another instance of how Vance is unconcerned with convention and instead concentrates on the essence of the art of writing, which is to say: communicating meaning. The word "falling" would be damaging. The absence of this superfluous verb helps etch the meaning by not muddying the phrase with repetition: "Falling" would be repetitive because we already have an image of falling in our minds' eyes. Vance's sensitivity to the real relation of words, phrase structure, and the reader's imagination is the basis of the vividness of his writing.

In spite of an appearance of effortlessness, Vance is particularly careful about how his phrases both look and sound when read aloud. It is this (one might say) painterly care which gives his style its *aisance* and *grâce*. Insensitive to these transcendent qualities the editors tend to sweep them away. Since the *VIE* considers Vance a great artist, in contrast to most previous editors, we do not presume to judge his usages. We simply admire them and wish to give them to the world.

Paul Rhoads, Editor-in-Chief, the *VIE*

Anti-Science Fiction Redux

Thanks to all who are participating in this discussion. Before replying to a few more points I would like to clear up a misapprehension. David Hecht wrote: "By now it is clear that there is a certain – not tension exactly – but, shall I say, asymmetry, between the *VIE* editorial staff and the "typical" Vance reader (of whom I consider myself one)."

The *VIE* books will not bear the trappings of science fiction (which would be illogical anyway, since the edition will also include "fantasies" and "mysteries" and will have but a single format) and our publicity campaign will not insist on Vance as *science fiction author*, but as *great author*. Beyond this there is no official *VIE* position on the question of Vance and science fiction. All the arguments about science fiction signed by me are mere personal opinions. I cordially invite everyone to share them, but I do recognize that the invitation may not be universally tempting!

Lee Lewis wrote: “I have on numerous occasions lent a book to a ... non-science fiction reader ... and they invariably return [it] within a couple of days saying, “Sorry, I can’t get into science fiction.””

What seems to be happening is that Lee’s victims read the first page and realize right away that, since the story is set in the future, they have been slipped a volume of (yech!) science fiction. I don’t think they are put off by what is in the book, as Lee seems to suggest below, because I don’t think they are giving it a chance, thanks to their anti-science fiction prejudice. Lee continues: “... the problem is that a large majority of Vance’s books contain all or at least most of the elements of what is seen as science fiction; ‘Spaceships and Aliens’ (albeit human ones mostly), strange worlds and advanced technology.”

I confess! There are dribs and drabs of science fiction décor in most of the books. But my point is that Vance’s “science fiction” is not science fiction in essence. In substance, or décor, it is – if you like. I have already offered my definition of the essence of science fiction, but another aspect has not received much attention: why is Vance not very popular as a science fiction writer? There are only two possibilities: either he is not a very good writer (we’ll have no trouble agreeing to exclude that one!) or, he does not please the majority of science fiction readers. Can this be for any other reason than that he is not giving them what they want? Bits of décor are the only thing that justify labeling Vance a science fiction writer. Therefore, given his artistic stature, he is a candidate for being moved into another category, or at least out of the one in which he is inappropriately stuck.

Lee adds: “... it should not matter under what genre Jack Vance is classified, the important point ... is that there are a lot of people who are missing out on a truly great writer ...”

I emphatically agree! But obviously printing up a few hundred copies of all his books is not, in itself, going to do much to help Vance reach a larger public. Therefore the *VIE* project should be more than a sort of fan club fabricating an exclusive set of books for its private consumption, but a broad front promotion machine for Vance’s oeuvre; thus: the special format of the *VIE* sets, library donations, a *VIE* specific font, *Cosmopolis*, the *VIE* publicity program, the *Cosmopolis* Literary Supplement (coming soon!) and (... Magnus Ridolph patted his neat white beard with a napkin...) my personal crusade to unglue Vance from the science fiction label! The *VIE* project, in all its aspects, is a completely unprecedented honor

bestowed on an author by his readers, and calls attention to Vance’s exceptional, and unjustly neglected, oeuvre.

David Hecht offers a definition of science fiction: “The key criterion that separates science fiction from other literary forms is that the changes and speculations are inseparable from the work: one cannot merely substitute (say) horses and six-shooters for rockets and ray-guns and maintain the integrity of the story ... *Sail 25* ... is clearly not science fiction: the scenario is one that could as easily take place in a naval or maritime academy (and training vessel) from the most ancient times to the present day. The scientific elements are clearly severable: hence, *Sail 25* is not science fiction.”

Quite so; in *Sail 25* there is a spaceship but, as David points out, what counts in the story are things which are not different in their essence from what might go on in any naval academy. What really counts about the story does not depend on the spaceship or nonsense about solar wind. If this is so, the same can be said of the mass of Vancian “science fiction” of the last 40 years. The most notable exceptions would seem to be *Tschai* and *Durdane* but, as I have tried to point out, the science fiction aspects of even these books are not what count about them. Of course *Clarges* and *The Dragon Masters*, both early works, are science fiction in essence: without technological immortality, or fanciful genetic manipulation: no story.

David continues: “... *The Gift of Gab* would clearly be science fiction: the central speculative element, the universal ability to establish abstract communication (for want of a better phrase) cannot be removed without destroying the integrity of the story.”

Exactly!! *The Gift of Gab* is science fiction, because without the premise of teaching fish to talk, the story evaporates. In the case of *The Gift of Gab*, the premise is that other creatures might have the same kind of brains as humans do and therefore we could teach them to talk. But fish, and other animals including dolphins, dogs and chimps, just don’t have human-like brains, and even if they can manage communication of a crude sort, by sound or sign, they can not “gab,” and we will never be able to teach them to do so. Therefore – and this is a key point – such a premise (which is not the only element in this story, as David points out) is, at best, amusing foolishness, from which we learn nothing of importance.

David continues: “*Dodkin’s Job* and *Ullward’s Retreat* are sociological meditations.”

Right! The issue in *Dodkin’s Job* is not that everyone has a permanently installed tube linking their stomachs to the municipal nourishment pump, and that one day the pump goes kablooey and everyone blows up like a balloon, or gets jammed and causes a famine, or that the tubes get tangled and disrupt public transportation: that would be science fiction. No; the premise of *Dodkin’s Job* is the true observation that governmental decisions are often made in a bureaucratic manner which ignores realities. This important story should be made required reading for the European Commissioners in Brussels; those of us who live under their weird jurisdiction feel like poor Luke Grogatch every day! Vance’s timeless observation depends on no scientific speculation. However, science fiction décor helps him make the point in a comic way.

David continues: “Yet, there is a subtle science fiction issue in *Ullward’s Retreat* that pushes it over the line into science fiction: the notion that, in a society where population pressure has made access to ‘real’ open space impossible, people’s perceptions will change to consider the ‘fake’ spaces that are available to be more desirable.”

The issue in *Ullward’s Retreat* is not overcrowding and a consequent change in human perception. If it were, David would be right; the story would indeed be science fiction. *Rumfuddle* is a science fiction story, because the premise is that there are parallel worlds, and the drama depends on this speculative premise which, if removed, would destroy the story, per David’s test. Take away the parallel worlds; no more *Rumfuddle*. But the premise of *Ullward’s Retreat* is essentially different in nature. It is not a speculative science idea like parallel worlds. Instead, it is a permanent, or eternal, human issue. What is this issue? It does not have anything to do with perception, or space. Space is simply a clever example which Vance uses, taking advantage of the liberty of science fiction décor, just as Jonathan Swift used undiscovered islands he populated with Lilliputians and talking horses.

The premise, or issue, in *Ullward’s Retreat* can be hinted at with the phrase: keeping up with the Joneses. On Mail’s Planet, where Ullward has his retreat, there are mosquitoes and other inconveniences from which the artificial spaces of Earth are free. The people crammed on Earth think they value open space for itself, for the privacy it confers, and so on; and they really do, up to a point. But basically they accept their crammed living condition, just as so many people put up with rush hour. They don’t like it, and would ameliorate it if they

could, but only so long as other aspects of their lives are not compromised. The people in the story, though they don’t know it, prefer their artificial environment to a genuine wilderness. They are the sort of city folk who don’t understand wilderness, or care about it. But all this is not Vance’s point; it is just the set-up. His point, the knock down, is about ownership. For these people what counts about large (and especially larger) spaces is not size but prestige:

... “*How far does your property extend?*”

“*Five hundred miles west to the ocean, six hundred miles north and two hundred miles south.*”

Worbeck shook his head solemnly. “Nice. A pity you couldn’t get the whole planet. Then you’d have real privacy!”

The point is not about space, and it applies as much to us today as it does to the people of Vance’s comic future; it is not what we have that really matters, but how much of it – mainly how much more of it than others! Reality distorting and defying consequences follow; thus the story. There is nothing essential to science fiction here. It is not science speculation like parallel worlds, fish that can learn to talk, or municipal feeding tubes. What is in question is an eternal human issue. But again; Vance uses science fiction décor to make a point in a powerful and comic way.

David also mentions Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Orwell’s *1984*. These books are by great authors who used science fiction décor the same way Vance does. Test tube babies and two-way television surveillance are sinister ideas closer to being realities than when the books were written, which is more than can be said for the flights of speculative fancy in most science fiction. But Huxley was not really concerned about test tube babies as such. They are a metaphor that allowed him to make points about, among other things, people cut off from family and tradition; a human type more and more prevalent in modern society. As for *1984*, it is about modern tyranny, known as totalitarianism. The Evil Empire itself may have had no two-way televisions, but with tattling neighbors they still managed to get lots of people into their gulag. The issues dealt with in *1984* do not depend on science fiction speculation. As in Vance, they are simply dramatized by its décor.

As far as science fiction goes, my point is this: there is a difference between books which are about exploring ideas

which are essentially unimportant (robots with feelings, Gee-Whiz technology, “intelligent” life on far planets, people that can fly, extrasensory perception and so forth) and books which take liberties with reality in order get us closer to it, to show us and tell us something important, permanent, and human.

Paul Rhoads

VIE Format Introduction

Two example *VIE* format pages are attached to the end of this issue of *Cosmopolis*. The title page uses four fonts, Amiante: Title, Small Caps, Note, and JV. The latter is a 36 point special face including only the letters ‘J’, ‘V’, ‘k’, ‘n’, ‘e’ and two different ‘a’s and ‘c’s, one each for “Jack” and “Vance,” as well as a custom ‘o’ and ‘f’ adapted from Cursive. All these fonts were drawn for the sizes used. The pages of text are set in 9.7 point Amiante Book, with 12.9 points leading. At 9.7 points, its ideal size, Amiante Book corresponds to most other fonts at 10 points, given its x-height of 440 and accentuated color.

One word, “prutanshyr,” is in Amiante Cursive, also at 9.7 points. The footnote is set in 8 point Amiante Note. These numbers, as well as other parameters not mentioned here, were established only after months of experimentation. Of the several ligatures in Amiante Book, two can be seen in the sample: ‘ffi’ and ‘fi’. Note also that, per Jack Vance’s request, a calculated dose of extra space (about 160 units) is added after full stops.

The basic page format is that of Andreas Irlle, but this is adjusted using the geometrical precepts of typographer and book designer Jan Tschichold. However, these precepts were not applied mechanically. Achieving a harmonious relationship between text and pages, according to Tschichold’s own ideals, required much fine tuning and careful and respectful breaking of his rules. More extensive examples will be made available in the months to come.

Joel Anderson

Notes from Readers

Mail was somewhat slower this month than last month. But here is a letter from a reader...

From Richard Anderson

Now that the Amiante typeface has been revealed to readers of *Cosmopolis*, I’d like to voice my concern regarding the aesthetic decisions underlying Amiante’s design. In essence, Paul Rhoads has devised a set of fonts that impedes rather than enhances readability, and he has subsumed clarity of communication to a theory of art that has no place in typography.

Readability – basically, the ease with which the eye scans a line – is a function of physiological and psychological factors that are optimized when a high degree of uniformity exists between the characters within a specific font. In this regard, Amiante is a step in the wrong direction. Idiosyncratic differences between characters, such as those that Mr. Rhoads advocates with regard to width, height, and serifs, are easily picked up by the eye as it moves across the page, and their net effect is to disturb the pace and rhythm of the reader. This effect is akin to placing a flat spot on the wheel of an automobile. Not only will the rate of travel be slowed, the trip will be less pleasurable thanks to the constant thump-thump-thumping.

One need only examine a book printed as recently as the early twentieth century to understand the reduction in readability caused by minute variations in characters – a diminishment that occurs irrespective of whether such variations were created intentionally by the foundry or haphazardly through the process of ink flowing into the pores of paper.

Apologies to Mr. Rhoads, but he veers into the nonsensical when contending that a computer-realized roman-style font such as Adobe Garamond, with its seeming perfection, “numbs the faculties and even impedes legibility.”

Consider the words of typographer Jan Tschichold, who spent his life contemplating the placement of type on a page: “In a masterpiece of typography, the artist’s signature has been eliminated. What some may praise as personal styles are in reality small and empty peculiarities, frequently damaging, that masquerade as innovations.” To put this concept another way, when reading Jack Vance’s prose, the only artistry we should be cognizant of is his as a writer. The artistry of the typographer must necessarily remain invisible.

The Amiante set of fonts, as described in the recent issue of *Cosmopolis*, may have some usefulness in captioning

illustrations, but its archaic, arthritic, even tipsy character severely hampers its utility for body text. I applaud Mr. Rhoads for taking on the considerable (yet obviously enjoyable) task of developing a typeface suitable for the *VIE*, but I fear his solution is one that will reduce the project to novelty or, worse, a joke. Far wiser to stick with such tried-and-true standards as Garamond, Baskerville, or Caslon.

Paul Rhoads responds:

The small, scanned sample of Amiante, in *Cosmopolis* volume 1, issue 6, can not be said to have revealed Amiante, merely to have given a glimpse of it in the context of the historical samples. I will not here reply fully to Richard Anderson's comments. However, I will state that while, obviously, the letters of a font must belong to one family, that they should be as homogenous as possible is quite something else. Distinctions among letters is not like a bump on a tire, but like the tread, without which the car slides off the road. Also, the differences used in Amiante are anything but "idiosyncratic." There is a reason behind each, and I will illuminate these at another time if necessary. Of course Amiante must be judged in context, in the *VIE* format. I think people will find that switching from Amiante to a typical font is like walking into fog.

As for the suggestion that Amiante reflects a "personal style" with my signature all over it, I must protest. Of course there is no escaping a damning fact: I *am* an "artist," but I make the admission with sincere shame, and I protest that I am not an artist like the *others*. I reject their subjective definition of Art, along with all their ugly, self satisfied, even masturbatory, works! A real artist must reject, and even escape, himself. He must dedicate himself to the search for and expression of objective Truth. I defy anyone to indicate how Amiante could be more conventional in its letter forms than it is. The example given in the last *Cosmopolis* was intended to demonstrate this. Amiante differs, in the main, from the best contemporary fonts in two ways: in its rejection of the errors of late Modern Face typography; and in being *more* classical in form. I subscribe wholeheartedly, even enthusiastically, to the pronouncement of Jan Tschichold cited by Richard Anderson.

As for the unevenness of pre-20th century books: I think Richard Anderson is referring to the jitteriness sometimes associated with metal type-setting, in cases where the letters are not properly lined up. This is a problem eliminated by digital typesetting, and which is not regretted by me. I am referring to differences in letter *forms*, and I contend that such

differences were an integral part of the conception of fonts beginning with Jenson, and ending with the decadence of Modern Face, and that this is what should be revived. When the names Garamond, Baskerville and Caslon are pronounced, I am inspired to insist that Amiante is closer both in fact and spirit to what these names evoke than the Adobe fonts which shamelessly, ineptly and illegitimately exploit the reputations of these sublime artisans.

Finally, Amiante was not created according to an aesthetic theory. The impulse behind its creation, as I have stated, was an uninstructed and slowly developed dissatisfaction with Adobe Garamond (which was my own initial choice), which became so pronounced it caused me to reconsider, make further researches, and finally conclude that the only solution was to create a font. The supposed theories, as my article makes clear, are not theories at all, but observations, many of which were made after Amiante was finished, when I started studying the history of fonts. Did I enjoy creating Amiante? Well, being an artist, this is the kind of thing I do enjoy, but this sordid fact should not be held against poor Amiante!

As is always the case, we appreciate your comments, praise and criticism. Again, I invite all of our readers to contribute to our letters section.

Bob Lacovara, Editor of *Cosmopolis*

Bob's Closing Comments

With these last few paragraphs, I bring the seventh issue of *Cosmopolis* to a close.

July's Short Issue

Our issue this month is relatively short. This is due to a combination of reasons.

On one hand, I am traveling for my day job, in which I perform numeric simulations of the Space Station's behavior when commanded to slide and spin (well, all right, translate and rotate) while I alternate with consideration of safety issues for a vehicle which will approach the Space Station autonomously. At times, I cannot help but feel that

the work might be defined as science fiction. Why? Well, consider the décor...

Next month should see the introduction of the *Cosmopolis Literary Supplement*. Dedicated to Vance's literary influence, the *Cosmopolis Literary Supplement* will publish poems, novellas and novels in serialized form. Contributions to the *Supplement* will meet these criteria:

- 1) The author must recognize in Vance a major influence.
- 2) This influence (in tone, style or theme) must be perceptible to the CLS editors.
- 3) Work submitted must be on a respectable literary level.

More information will be forthcoming in the August issue of *Cosmopolis*.

Postal Delivery of *Cosmopolis*

After the publication of our last issue in June, I received several requests for distribution of *Cosmopolis* in hard copy. As much as I would like to satisfy those of you who would be willing to subscribe to *Cosmopolis* in print, there are formidable obstacles to overcome.

First, we publish electronically anywhere in the Gaean Reach which has connectivity to the Terran Standard Internet. In order that all subscribers might have the option of receiving physical copy, and to avoid the shipping lag inherent in the movement of physical objects, I must have a local office on each of the six continents on this planet to which *Cosmopolis* is now directed. From that local office, *Cosmopolis* would be printed and then posted.

Secondly, there is the matter of cost. Although one day my successor, Mr. Kirth Gersen, will have no need to give a moment's thought to such banal matters, I am afraid that I am not in his position, nor, for that matter, is the *VIE*. Therefore, a subscription fee would be asked, and with this will come the attendant problems of collection, cost of supplies, and monetary exchange. Regrettably, offers to pay in SVU cannot be honored at this time.

At this time, the *VIE* management are considering the ways and means of offering hard copy for subscription; the eventual offer of this service is by no means certain; but those of you in despair over 6 megabyte files: be assured that we are thinking the matter over. Meanwhile *Cosmopolis* is available in the HTML version.

Submissions to *Cosmopolis*

With the increasing quantity material arriving on my desk for *Cosmopolis*, I would like to state the following guidelines for articles. These requirements don't apply to letters to the editor, which may be sent via ordinary e-mail.

Articles should be prepared as follows:

- 1) Please send your article in sufficient time to make the deadline for the month. It has become increasingly difficult to accept articles after the deadline has passed. The deadline for *Cosmopolis* is usually the 21st of the month.
- 2) Prepare your article in Microsoft Word, or if this is inconvenient, in Rich Text Format. If neither of these are available to you, contact me via e-mail. Use a single column of text, in any font you prefer.
- 3) Although I will receive jeers from all manner of people, Christians as well as pagans, I generally follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* when I am in doubt of correct usage. However, in answer to my nay-sayers, I cleave to Hamlet's "Advice to the Players" in this case: "*though it make the unskillful laugh, (it) cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.*"
- 4) Don't spell "therefore" without the final 'e'. Only Paul Rhoads is allowed to do so, and I have a good reason for it, which I have no intention of revealing before certain signs appear in the heavens.
- 5) Don't confuse American with English, to wit: spell "color" without a 'u' unless you are a British subject. Ditto for similar words. This confusion has resulted in two wars – there is no need to start another, particularly since the British are one of our few really good allies in a serious firefight, besides the Canadians and the Australians, of course.
- 6) In short, except for the use of two columns, style your article after those you see here in *Cosmopolis*.

This will help me prepare the issue. Thank you.

VIE & Cosmopolis Staff

The VIE Web Page

www.vanceintegral.com

R. C. Lacovara, Editor of *Cosmopolis*

Lacovara@infohwy.com

Christian J. Corley, Assistant Editor, *Cosmopolis*

cjc@vignette.com

Paul Rhoads, Editor-in-Chief of the VIE

prhoads@club-internet.fr

John Robinson, Publicity Coordinator

johnange@ix.netcom.com

Steve Sherman, Volunteer Coordinator

volunteer@vanceintegral.com

Team Leaders:

John Foley, Composition

johnfoley@lucent.com

Alun Hughes, Textual Integrity

a.hughes@newi.ac.uk

John Schwab, Digitization

jschwab@uswest.net

Tim Stretton, Proofing Text Entry

tim.stretton@bigfoot.com

The Fine Print

Letters to the Editor

Letters to *Cosmopolis* may be published in whole or in part, with or without attribution, at the discretion of *Cosmopolis*. Send your e-mail to Bob Lacovara, with indication that you'd like your comments published.

Deadlines for Publication

Deadlines for any particular issue for VIE-related articles are the 21st of the month, but for short story inclusion I must have your copy by the 14th. If you have any questions about publishing your story in *Cosmopolis*, drop me an e-mail.

Cosmopolis Delivery Options

There are two delivery schemes for *Cosmopolis* readers. Those of you who do not wish to have *Cosmopolis* arrive as an e-mail attachment may request "notification" only. When a new issue of *Cosmopolis* is ready for distribution, an HTML version is prepared for our web site, and it may be viewed there.

A PDF version of *Cosmopolis*, identical to that distributed via e-mail, is also available at that site.

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For reprint information, address Bob Lacovara.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS
of
Jack Vance



T R U L L I O N
Alastor 2262



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gathered cauch*. He worked perhaps an hour each day, or occasionally as much as two or three; he spent considerably more time musing on the verandah of his ramshackle house. He distrusted most technical devices, finding them unsympathetic, confusing and — more important — expensive, though he gingerly used a telephone the better to order his social activities, and took the pulsor of his boat for granted.

As in most bucolic societies, the Trill knew his precise place in the hierarchy of classes. At the summit, almost a race apart, was the aristocracy; at the bottom were the nomad Trevanyi, a group equally distinct. The Trill disdained unfamiliar or exotic ideas. Ordinarily calm and gentle, he nonetheless, under sufficient provocation, demonstrated ferocious rages, and certain of his customs — particularly the macabre ritual at the *prutanshyr* — were almost barbaric.

The government of Trullion was rudimentary and a matter in which the average Trill took little interest. Merlank was divided into twenty prefectures, each administered by a few bureaus and a small group of officials, who constituted a caste superior to the ordinary Trill but considerably inferior to the aristocrats. Trade with the rest of the cluster was unimportant; on all Trill only four spaceports existed; Port Gaw in the west of Merlank, Port Kerubian on the north coast, Port Maheul on the south coast, and Vayamenda in the east.

A hundred miles east of Port Maheul was the market town Welgen, famous for its fine hussade stadium. Beyond Welgen lay the Fens, a district of remarkable beauty. Thousands of waterways divided this area into a myriad islands, some tracts

* cauch: an aphrodisiac drug derived from the spore of a mountain mold and used by Trills to a greater or lesser extent. Some retreated so far into erotic fantasy as to become irresponsible, and thus the subject of mild ridicule. Irresponsibility, in the context of the Trill environment, could hardly be accounted a critical social problem.

of good dimension, some so small as to support only a fisherman's cabin and a tree for the mooring of his boat.

Everywhere entrancing vistas merged one into another. Gray-green menas, silver-russet pomanders, black jerdine stood in stately rows along the waterways, giving each island its distinctive silhouette. Out upon their dilapidated verandahs sat the country folk, with jugs of homemade wine at hand. Sometimes they played music, using concertinas, small round-bellied guitars, mouth-calliopes that produced cheerful warbles and glissandes. The light of the Fens was pale and delicate, and shimmered with colors too transient and subtle for the eye to detect. In the morning a mist obscured the distances; the sunsets were subdued pageants of lime-green and lavender. Skiffs and runabouts slid along the water; occasionally an aristocrat's yacht glided past, or the ferry that connected Welgen with the Fen villages.

In the dead center of the Fens, a few miles from the village of Saurkash, was Rabendary Island, where lived Jut Hulden, his wife Marucha, and their three sons. Rabendary Island comprised about a hundred acres, including a thirty-acre forest of mena, blackwood, candlenut, *semprissima*. To the south spread the wide expanse of Ambal Broad. Farwan Water bounded Rabendary on the west, Gilweg Water on the east, and along the north shore flowed the placid Saur River. At the western tip of the island the ramshackle old home of the Huldens stood between a pair of huge mimosa trees. Rosalia vine grew up the posts of the verandah and overhung the edge of the roof, producing a fragrant shade for the pleasure of those taking their ease in the old string chairs. To the south was a view of Ambal Broad and Ambal Isle, a property of three acres supporting a number of beautiful pomanders, russet-silver against a background of solemn menas, and three enor-