
COSMOPOLIS

Cosmopolis #12

December 2000

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Down Payment

The VIE will soon be asking for a down payment. Here is some information concerning purchasing your VIE book set.

How Much is the Downpayment?

The down payments are \$350 for the Reader's set, and \$1000 for the deluxe set. The full cost of the Deluxe edition will be \$3000. For the Reader's edition, the situation is more complex. We control costs carefully, but it is impossible to say what the exact price of materials and labor will be at the time of printing. The chief variable is paper, the price of which has been volatile, to say nothing of exchange rates. Also the total purchase quantity can not be finalized until near printing time, and storage of great quantities of such raw stock is not advised; so we must purchase our paper shortly before printing. Despite paper cost changes, and variable cost of labor, we can make estimates. After consultation with the printer, we are confident that our original estimates remain correct. The reader's set will cost about \$1100. However, this figure may have to be adjusted slightly upward, but we feel confident such an adjustment will not go beyond \$1300.

The prices above are only for the books themselves. We are obliged to separate the actual shipping and handling, since sets are destined for delivery to subscribers all over the world. Consequently, while the VIE will arrange delivery, each subscriber will have to pay a shipping and handling fee determined by the actual cost of delivery to their door. To estimate this cost for yourself, find out the rate of UPS delivery of two crates of books from Milan Italy to your home.

Subscribers can also choose to pick up their books personally in Milan, though the possibility for doing this will be limited in time. We may have other, alternate arrangements, such as other depots than Milan for sets in Europe and the US. We will look more closely at such solutions when the time comes. We will be asking for the balance of payment no later than March of 2002.

Mode of Payment

We will be using Pay Pal for credit card payments, and will also accept International Postal Money Orders, or US Postal Orders. We will also accept checks in US dollars, but your subscription will be credited when your check clears. If there is any cost associated with collecting your check, it will be deducted from your deposit. Exact instructions will be forthcoming in an e-mail.

When to Pay

The down payment request will probably be arriving in your electronic mail box sometime in January. You will have 60 days to make your down payment after this request. Beyond this date you will be removed from the current subscriber list. Should you currently be eligible for one of the sets in the signed and numbered category, you will, of course, lose this option. After this 30 day grace period, anyone may subscribe (or re-subscribe) by sending in a down payment, subject to the availability of subscription slots. The number of slots are not infinite, and, depending on demand, eventually some would-be subscribers may not get a set. Making a down payment on time guarantees your spot, and means you will probably move to a better place on the list, closer to, or into, the signed and numbered set categories.

Refunds?

Your deposit is not refundable, with these exceptions, and as provided by law:

- 1) Should the price of the Reader's Edition rise beyond \$1300 due to factors beyond our control, we will consider individual refunds on a per-case basis.

2) If by some unfortunate set of circumstances the VIE projects should fail, we will return peoples money to the extent possible.

Delivery Date

Our projected delivery date is November 2002. This date was chosen after discussion with the printer, as well as internal discussion. There remains a great deal of work to be done before this date to prepare the VIE for publication. We believe we can meet this date and we intend to meet it. This declaration of intent should not, however, be construed as a guarantee.

Description of the VIE Book Sets

The texts will include all of Jack Vance's published work (less the Ellery Queen books, which have been radically altered by editors and therefore repudiated by their author) plus some unpublished works (see elsewhere in this issue), as well as some variant versions of published texts. There will also be some VIE material such as the chronological list of Vance's works and information from TI. The total number of texts, without respect to length, is about 140. The set as a whole will be comprised of from 42 to 44 volumes, each measuring about 4.8 inches (12.5 cm) x 7.75 inches (19.5 cm), and occupy about 4 feet (120 cm) of shelf space. The books will be printed on best quality, acid free, laid paper, and sewn. They will probably include frontispiece illustrations by Paul Rhoads. The Deluxe Edition will be hardcover, bound in prime quality dark leather with gold and red stamping on spine and covers, gold leaf on the book block and genuine traditional Italian end-papers. They will probably also have raised ribs on the spines.

The Reader's Edition, will have good quality medium colored leather spines with gold stamping, and "hard" (although flexible) covers colored in harmony with the spine (see photo elsewhere in this issue). Printed on the front cover will be a version of the books title page, and a VIE book list will be printed on the back. The reason for this last feature is to perpetuate the sense of Vance's total oeuvre, even should a set become dispersed. This style of book may not be common at present, but do not be misled: this is a sewn book of traditional and standard design, an object both particularly robust and gratifying to handle and use. We are sorry we could not have a full set of photos of the exact book as we have conceived it but, as has been explained, it was not practical to do this. However, we are confident all subscribers to the basic, or Reader's Edition, will be delighted with their acquisition.

Signed Editions

The Deluxe Editions will have a special limitation page. The first 200 sets of the Readers edition will have a tipped-in limitation page with set number and signature. Mike Berro, with the approval of the board and through the generosity of Jack himself, has engaged to make available to all subscribers a specially designed official VIE bookplate, signed by Jack. The cost of the book-

plate will be nominal (about \$1, plus postage). Only paid up VIE subscribers will be eligible to purchase this bookplate. Details will be provided when the time comes.

Book Value

Please note that at \$1100, 43 (estimated) volumes cost about \$25 each (\$72 for the deluxe). This is less than the price of many trade paperbacks, and certainly less than any sewn book with a leather spine. This is basically the cost of printing and binding. Were the labor and expertise that is required to create the VIE to be included in the cost, it would be several times this amount. The VIE is subsidized by the labor of a world-wide army of volunteers, some of whom have already given several hours a day for over a year toward the realization of this project. It should be emphasized that the VIE is an unprecedented phenomenon which, we feel sure, will never see its like again. Only the gratitude of Vance readers, combined with the astonishing neglect suffered by his important oeuvre — to say nothing of the emergence of the Internet and various electronic tools on which it depends — could call the VIE into existence.

Help Wanted!

As we move into "post-proofing", which will begin to happen in the next few months, we will need more and more help. Post-proofing is the least nerdsome of all the many VIE procedures. If you can read: please volunteer. Those who feel qualified and inclined to do TI work should contact Tim Stretton as soon as possible. Please note that TI work demand a whole set of qualities not possessed by everyone. Potential TI workers are carefully screened, and must attend a TI conference. The next, and possibly last, conference, will probably be in Oakland CA in a matter of weeks.

Management

Wild Thyme and Violets, and Other Drafts

The VIE, among other never-before published items, will include: *Wild Thyme and Violets*, a 20 ms page outline for a novel; *The Stark*, a 70 ms page outline for what seems to be a series of several dozen novels, and *The Magnificent Red-hot Jazzing Seven*, a short draft for a movie treatment. These three works are like nothing else in the oeuvre. Though recognizably Vance, they understandably do not read exactly like his finished works; yet they are complete in themselves and read very well indeed on their own terms.

More than once I have heard Jack explain that the first order of business when conceiving a work of literature is to know the mood one wants. Reading these outlines and drafts one is struck by the fulsomeness with which he follows his own dictum. Each is saturated with mood, and each leaves this reader, at least, with an impression

as strong as any of the best works. But my experience of reading them was most distinguished by surprise. I knew that *Wild Thyme and Violets* was set in an imaginary Sardinia in some era of the past. I knew that *Stark* stood for "Star Ark" and concerned a gigantic inter-stellar ship. I knew that the *Magnificent Red-hot Jazzing Seven* involved jazz, a thing very close to Jack's heart . . . but these titles and scraps of information, despite my great familiarity with the rest of Vance's work, did not enable me to accurately anticipate the impact these amazing texts have. For me, who has had the privilege of reading them, they instantly became essential parts of the Vancian oeuvre. But since only those VIE volunteers who will be helping to prepare them for publication will see them before the VIE is published, in the interim I thought the rest of you would appreciate having your appetites whetted.

For whatever reason, I thought *Wild Thyme and Violets* would be set in a Lyonessian golden age, and have an atmosphere similar to that of Dunsany's *The Charwoman's Shadow*. Tim Stretton, who had read it before I did, defined it as "gothic", and indeed no other term could get any closer. But if *Wild Thyme and Violets* is 'gothic', it is gothic like nothing else. When I read it the first surprise was that the time of the story, though unspecified, seems to be the 18th century; the only Vancian story set in that era. The next surprise was the power of the mood. I did not anticipate any mood in an outline. But, to me, this text is more saturated with mood than any other Vancian work. I will not attempt to define this mood other than to say that it is heavy with the odor of wild thyme, punctuated with glimpses of violets on the silent, sunny hillsides around the town Gargano and, despite the gothic elements, has nothing oppressive about it. The story it most resembles is perhaps another story unique in Vance's oeuvre: *Strange People, Queer Notions*. Both are set in Italy, have no central hero, and concern the loom of decadence. One of Vance's most striking themes is here revisited in an utterly new way: the study of the evil man. There are echoes of Bad Ronald, Viole Falushe, Namour and others. In this case however the study is more intimist, the peer into the abyss more sustained, the mood more dispassionate. At the same time there is a full dose of sly yet festive Vancian humor. But these two aspects — the festive humor and the cold inspection of evil — by some miracle of artistry are so perfectly harmonized that their simultaneity is only remarked in reflection. Another new yet familiar element is Lucian, a young ne'er-do-well painter. Lucian is a Cugelian incarnation of Jantiff Ravensroke, as his beloved and tragic Alicia is a Suldrun-like incarnation of the mute gypsy witch: Glisten. The relation of Lucian and Alicia is even more intense and dreamlike than that of Jantiff and Glisten. Lucian lacks the full measure of Cugel's ambition and resource; but he is Cugel as Cugel might really be, with the hidden warmth of Cugel's heart, such as it is, in flower.

The Stark, I anticipated, would be — what else? — a work of science fiction. Could any other possibility exist? But, of all Vance's "science fiction", *The Stark* is as far from the essence of science fiction as any other of Vance's "sci-fi", or even more so. This for a simple and clear reason: no other Vancian story is so thoroughly concentrated on political philosophy. In this regard it outdoes *The Domains of Koryphon*, *Wyst*, and *Cadwal*. It outdoes them even added all together, for *The Stark* is the vastest of all Vance's political/philosophical conceptions and statements. To mark this as strongly as possible, not only does it treat a wide spectrum of the political/philosophical problem, it is actually set in the present (or the present of its writing, which was, I believe, the 1960s) and the early sections are mainly concerned with the Cold War. Therefore it is the only Vancian story — outside of his mysteries — directly about actual 20th century history (the evocative *D.P.* being only metaphorical, and dealing only with one aspect of certain 20th century events). Through the technical problems of constructing a space ship large enough to hold the earth's population, and the sociological considerations opened by the impending destruction of the earth by an errant star: *The Eye of Lucifer* — science fiction elements both — the major theme is in fact the struggle between America and Communist Russia. The struggle against Communism continues for many more of the over 20 episodes, each possibly intended to be a novel in itself, even after the Stark has begun its voyage. This story, though only 70 ms pages long, is not only Vance's vastest political exposition but is the vastest Vancian conception 'tout court', spanning hundreds of years and uncounted adventures, all in the context of a sustained meditation on man's political nature and fate. This meditation, far from being haphazard and without structure, pursues a relentless logic which surprises, even astonishes, at every juncture. I read *The Stark* with bulging eyes and knuckles white from gripping the pages. Like *Wild Thyme and Violets*, or even more so, it is a text essential to full appreciation of Vance. We owe a debt of thanks to Hap Watson, who owns this precious manuscript, for his care of it and for allowing the VIE access to it.

Altogether different is the draft movie treatment: *The Magnificent Red-hot Jazzing Seven*. I believe it is the latest of these three texts, and is, again, a unique item in the Vancian oeuvre. Soaked in atmosphere, this time the atmosphere of the America of Vance's youth, this treatment recounts the adventures of a failing hotel which tries to repair its fortunes by bringing together a disbanded set of down-on-their-luck jazz musicians. Before W.W. II there was a genre of movie in which the story was just an excuse for a series of musical numbers. In like manner *The Magnificent Red-hot Jazzing Seven* is conceived to favor the sheer presentation of jazz music. And yet, as a text it is so compelling it sticks permanently in the memory, and plays a special roll in explain-

ing Jack Vance the artist and man. It is comic, mellow, gentle, yet rollicking, vaudevillian and sassy. For a filmmaker, as intensely in love with 20s and 30s jazz as Vance, who wanted to produce a musical showcase, this treatment could not be improved upon. But, incomplete (because without a musical sound track) as it remains, the text itself makes powerful reading on its own. It is nostalgic yet not maudlin, silly yet endearing, deliciously inconsequential yet unforgettable. It is the idealized image of a bygone era, an era which lives on in Vance's heart, and which, as all Vance readers will recognize, is the essential element in what is most attractive in the rest of his work, be it Tschai, Durdane or Night Lamp.

These are not the only rare and unknown items the VIE will publish. The final volume of the VIE will include several outlines including the outline for a third Joe Bain story, and another untitled mystery, about 100 ms pages long. Each has its own importance and delights.

Paul Rhoads

TECHNICAL NOTES

Techno-Proofing News

(Patrick Dusoulier has been assigned The Book of Dreams by TI. While he awaits DD on this text, he has gotten busy with the Daw edition, manuscript, and VDAE, and here are some of his "bingoes":)

"Glocher": appears twice, "Golcher" appears 5 times. Spotted with "GPNS" method (see "Squeezing the Lemon", C11).

"bicep" : 2 occurrences. Wrong spelling, correct spelling is "biceps". Found with "ROC" method. WARNING: the VDAE warns us that there is another "bicep" out there somewhere! Koen's ISR "Incredible String Retriever"* will come to the rescue of course, but we need to put a mechanism in place to take the alert to the right quarter.

"valetudenarians": 1 occurrence, Wrong spelling, correct spelling is "valetudinarians". Found with "ROC" method. This is a fairly frequent spelling error: an "e" instead of an "i" in an unstressed syllable. We French (gloat) pronounce the "i" correctly, which is why I had no problem with it (I've been informed that: "the French are arrogant", so I'm trying to conform and confirm!)

Several of Patrick's finds will be subject to closer TI inspection:

"naiveté": no umlaut on the "i", but an acute accent on the "a" and on the "i". The manuscript is also incorrect, but has "naivete"; no accents at all. Found using "WAFA" method.

"naive": missing umlaut in v-text and manuscript. Elsewhere in Daw this word is spelled in the French manner.

Puch/Puck (?): although manuscript, Daw and v-text agree, I have doubts: the "Land of Puck" on Moudervelt is mentioned in Daw, page: 119, and Elvinta Gierle's husband is introduced as being "from Puch" on page: 155. Is he not, in fact, from Puck?

"myrieapod": thought strictly speaking this is a misspelling, the correct spelling being "myriapod", one may argue that this could be the proper name of this creature.

Patrick adds: The VDAE tool and methods have proved their worth once again. Note that in all these cases but one, the v-text conformed strictly to the published edition, so the v-text has been well proofed. Note that DD can not spot any of these problems. I have also come upon other issues using the VDAE, but they'd been end-noted by proofers already.

Inspecting the manuscript, Patrick has found a number of editorial abuses in the published edition, of which this is an interesting example:

The use of quote marks to 'highlight' a word in a dialog. Typical example: Gersen wants "a suite of several rooms" at Swecher's Inn (which request is rather pleonastic, by the way . . .) The innkeeper asks if Gersen is alone, Gersen admits he is, and the innkeeper says: "And you want 'several rooms'?" This is a construction often used by Jack; I can almost hear the innkeeper saying it . . . a nuance completely lost in Daw.

DD Demonstration

For those curious about how DD works, here is a quick demo. The example used is the first paragraph of page 11 of the Del Rey edition of Blue World (this paragraph begins with "vate" because page 10 ends with "pri-")

The following text is OCR out-put of TextBridge Classic:

vate float, were not those calculated to ease him through the careful routines of float society. Only this afternoon he had become involved in a dispute involving a whole complex of basic float principles. Sitting now on the bench before his hut, sipping a cup of wine, Skiar Hast watched lavender dusk settle over the ocean and brooded upon the headstrong folly of Meril Rohan, daughter to Zander Rohan. A breeze ruffled the water, moved the foliage; drawing a deep breath, Sklar Hast felt his anger loosen and drain away. Meril Rohan could do as she

*Patrick wrote to Koen: "The ISR is amazingly clever, and will be a powerful tool for TI. The only problem I see is a practical one: you are the only one who can launch the ISR. . ."

Koen replied: "Right; the ISR, as well as the VDAE, runs from within the SAS System. There is, therefore, no way for anyone but me to use these tools. However, this should not dampen our ardor! Send me your wish-lists by all means!"

pleased; it was folly to exercise himself~ither in connection with her or Semm Voiderveg or anything else. Conditions were as they were; if no one else objected, why should he? With this, Sklar Hast smiled a faint, rather bifter, smile, knowing that he could not fully subscribe to this doctrine

TextBridge Classic only works with black and white images, and has no settings. Given a good file however, it does a respectable job. The above paragraph has 6 errors. Here is the same image processed by TextBridge 9:

vate float, were not those calculated to ease him through the careful routines of float society. Only this afternoon he had become involved in a dispute involving a whole complex of basic float principles. Sitting now on the bench before his hut, sipping a cup of wine, Sldar Hast watched lavender dusk settle over the ocean and brooded upon the headstrong folly of Meril Rohan, daughter to Zander Rohan. A breeze ruffled the water, moved the foliage; drawing a deep breath, Skiar Hast felt his anger loosen and drain away. Meril Rohan could do as she pleased; it was folly to exercise himself — either in connection with her or Semm Voiderveg or anything else. Conditions were as they were; if no one else objected, why should he? With this, Skiar Hast smiled a faint, rather bitter, smile, knowing that he could not fully subscribe to this doctrine.

This OCR-ing is twice as good as the last, but still contains 3 errors. TextBridge 9 allows a multitude of settings. I have found that the principle to follow is: give an OCR program the best image you can, and make it work as hard as you can. Therefore, instead of choosing 'good quality print', 'vertical format', 'single column' and so on, choose 'degraded print', 'any format', 'color' — anything that makes the program look more carefully at the image. This strategy can be carried too far, and experiments must be made. But the general rule holds.

Now what do we do with these two files? Normally DD demands three OCR-ings, but for the purpose of this demo, here is the jockey result (using Word's compare feature) given by these two files only. The differences are shown in brackets, TextBridge 9 first, Classic second, and the erroneous words are underlined:

vate float, were not [those tbose] calculated to ease him through the careful routines of float society. Only this afternoon he [had bad] become involved in a dispute involving a whole complex of basic float principles. Sitting now on the bench before his hut, sipping a cup of wine, [Sldar Skiar] Hast watched lavender dusk settle over the ocean and brooded upon the headstrong folly of Meril Rohan, daughter to Zander Rohan. A breeze ruffled the water, moved the [foliage; f~ liage;] drawing a deep breath, [Skiar Sklar] Hast felt his anger loosen and

drain away. Meril Rohan could do as she pleased; it was folly to exercise [himself — either himself~ither] in connection with her or Semm Voiderveg or anything else. Conditions were as they were; if no one else objected, why should he? With this, [Skiar Sklar] Hast smiled a faint, rather [bitter, bifter,] smile, knowing that he could not fully subscribe to this doctrine.

Both versions get the name "Sklar" wrong in the first instance. This is as good as a correction, so long as the mistakes are different! Note that primitive TextBridge Classic corrects TextBridge 9 in the two following instances! I have noted that TextBridge 9 is prone to errors in names. This may be because it has built in "intelligence" features that confuse it when it comes to non-standard words. Whatever the reason, TextBridge Classic has proven useful in this regard. Note that "Skiar" is particularly close to "Sklar", because 'i' and 'l' differ basically only by the gap between the point and the top of the 'i' stem. This is difficult for both humans and machines. Note also that, once these jockey corrections are made, the paragraph is without error. DD will involve a third OCR version, as well as a compare with the v-text, which gives security margin .

Paul Rhoads

OCR-ing Points:

I have finished making an enhanced version of John Schwab's scans of *Strange People, Queer Notions*, and using them to make a new OCR-ing in TextBridge 9. It was a difficult and instructive exercise. The following is addressed mostly to TB9 users.

John made dual page scans, except where there was only a single page of text on the double page, and here the scans are "single page". TB9 will not recognize such images in "dual page" mode, which will create extra work for him when he goes to create his OCR-ing directly from these files. He will have to OCR the single pages separately in a different mode (like "any page") and, above all, make sure the final document gets put together in proper order. I cropped out each page, and used + 25 brightness, and + 50 contrast (in iPhotoPlus4, an Adobe baby program), to produce images with a minimum of paper noise.

Remarks:

- TB9 could not recognize the word "Blaine", which almost always came out "Blamne". There were also cases where the word "in" was transformed to "mn". I was using "news-print" mode, which may have contributed to this. In any case TB9 seems to have an alarming tendency to read 'i' as 'm'.

- TB9 out-puts text in a bewildering array of formats, particularly, I suspect, when lots of pages cropped into different proportions are used. It can make tidying up

the final version a real puzzle. Beyond a certain level of format noise my copy of Word will no longer do global re-formats. I got around this by out-putting from TB9 in "text-only", instead of Word-doc, mode. This reduces much noise. I then discovered that the TB9 format "TxBr_p2" (to be found in a TB9 out-put .doc in Word's 'format' drop-down menu) if used globally, gives a good result. "Normal" suppresses paragraph indentations, which may be a problem for the monkeys, and "raw text", which is best, is often not available for TB9 generated documents. TxBr-p2 seems to mean "style of second paragraph". The style of the first paragraph (TxBr-p1) does not have an indent. The first lines of the chapters of the book John scanned all begin without an indent and with several words in capitals. VIE format will indent the first paragraph, and there will be no capitals. These things will be taken care of in Composition, but it does no harm to have them fixed earlier on.

- It is important to use curly quotes because otherwise Jockeying and Monkeying are complicated by all instances of curly versus non-curly quotes being shown by Word's compare tool.

- It is also worth remembering that VIE format calls for no spaces on either side of both dashes and ellipses. The requisite space is built into the Amiante characters. I made a series of global changes to my OCR-ing to reflect this, replacing such configurations as >[dash space]< with >[dash]< and >[period space period space period space]< by >[ellipsis]<.

Paul Rhoads

Monkey News

Three chapters into monkeying WYST and already: bingo! As well as numerous small errors (mostly the result of digitization from a non-preferred - and notably degraded - edition) DD has turned up a complete missing sentence:

The v-text:

Jantiff looked from one to the other, bemused, "Is it really such a point of courtesy? I'll come too, in that case."

Skorlet shrugged. "As you wish."

As corrected by monkeying:

Jantiff looked from one to the other, bemused, "Is it really such a point of courtesy? I'll come too, in that case."

Esteban sighed and shook his head. "Of course not. Skorlet is merely a wayward person . . . None of us will go."

Skorlet shrugged. "As you wish."

Previous to DD this lapse could only have been picked up in a read against preferred, but because the omission does not turn the passage into obvious nonsense, it is a

kind of error difficult to catch even by this method. Indeed, such a read was done, and this omission was not noticed.

From the TI perspective, note that the Daw edition is more faithful to the ms than the Tor, which appears to be merely a degraded copy of Daw, containing all the earlier edition's mistakes and adding plenty of its own.

Tim Stretton

Up- date from Tim:

- 207 instances where the joc text was superior to the cor version : around half of these were already picked up by proofing.

- Several missing words.

- 10 or so "wrong" words, e.g. "whiling" for "whirling" which might have been picked up in a more detailed pre-proofing or in post-proofing.

- Numerous punctuational lacunae which would not have been picked up in proofing (usually commas interpolated by Tor or exclamation marks missed in digitising and subsequently by proofers).

- A similar number of omitted quotation marks.

DD has immense power to pick up things which the human eye tends to miss. No doubt had the text had the customary three pre-proofs many of these errors would have been caught; but many would not.

Technical Notes seems to have become a regular Cosmopolis feature. Do not hesitate to share your discoveries and procedures.

View from the Ivory Tower

Textual Integrity Update

Fresh from the European TI Conference — hosted by Paul Rhoads and his wife Genevieve at their home, Chateau St Louand in Chinon, France — it is a pleasure to write this month's TI report.

The Conference was attended by the European-based members of the TI Group: Alun Hughes, Linnéa Anglemark, Patrick Dusoulter, Helmut Hlavacs, Paul Rhoads, Thomas Rydbeck, Steve Sherman, Tim Stretton, Koen Vyverman. This group represents seven nationalities (Welsh, Swedish, French, Austrian, American, English, Belgian), who live and work in six countries. Alun's presentation of the theory and practice of textual criticism underpinned the weekend's formal sessions. The major topics were the ways Jack's works were written, and how his original ideas and manuscripts were modified by the commercial publication process. We also learned how to assess the kinds of evidence available to us, and how to approach correcting the published texts.

Steve showed us the work he is doing to restore Madouc from Jack's original files, which gave us a fascinating opportunity to see how faithful various publishers had been to Jack's original intentions. Interestingly, the British Grafton edition appears the most respectful, if by no means perfect. There was also the interesting discovery that Ace chose to censor reference to King Casmir's partiality for his page-boys — so if you've only read this edition you won't know what I'm talking about! Credit is due to Dave Kennedy whose detailed pre-proofing first brought this to light. The visit gave us a chance to look at sample volumes produced by Sfera. For the first time; an idea of what the finished VIE might look like! One notable observa-



Chateau de St. Louand

tion is that it has been difficult to do full justice to Amiante. More than the PDF screen version might suggest, the sample volume was clean and crisp: there was no hint of raggedness or eye-strain. This was a book I could have spent a long time reading — which with a four million-word oeuvre is encouraging . . . The flexible-cover sample sat very snugly in the hand; a true "reader's book".

The weekend was as memorable for work and intellectual rigour as for conviviality. It would take Jack himself to do justice to the procession of roast fowls, cheeses and wines with which we regularly fortified ourselves. Many and varied were the topics of conversation at table: the scope of TI, project administration and, of course, our favourite parts of the Vance canon. Wisely waiting until our last evening, Paul also took us to the wine cave of *Chateau de St. Louand*, one of the best wineries of Chinon.

On every level the Conference was a great success. I know that I'll find it easier to deal with the administrative side of TI now that I can put faces and personalities to more of the people I'm working with; and we all went away with a greater share of Alun's textual lore (and more work, of course . . .). Everyone lucky enough to

have been there will long remember the stimulating company and enchanting surroundings. I can hardly wait for the US Conference!

Tim Stretton

TI Conference Report

The purpose of the TI conference was to explain the job to prospective TI workers. TI work is not at all obvious. It is both more and less complex than generally imagined. Though our goal is to bring the texts into conformity



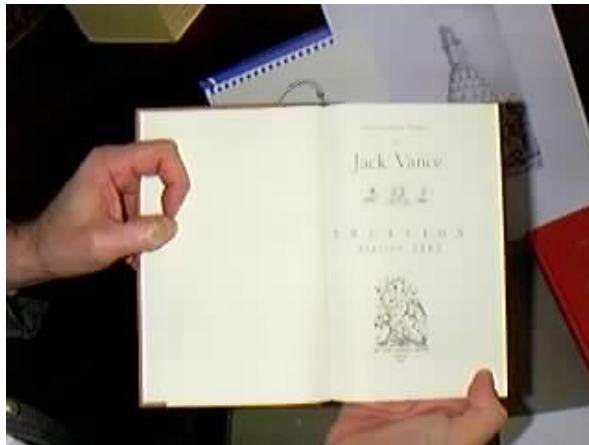
Big Planet for breakfast (Tim, Steve)

with Vance's intentions, we intend to do so only and always with the use of solid evidence. However, this still leaves great scope for the intelligence and literary sensitivity of the worker, to say nothing of investigative skills. Alun Hughes gave us an overview of the many ways Vance's work was written and edited, in other



VIE format models (Andreas Irlé editions & etc.) Sfera Sample volumes, DD sample sheets, illustrations. The book at lower left is the new sample volume:

words: the processes (and there were many over the years) through which the texts went from conception to printed edition, and from edition to edition. There is nothing immediately obvious about this. Alun put his



Title page of Trullion, as set by Joel Anderson, in one of the sample volumes

explanations in historical perspective, since the situation of Vance's oeuvre differs in significant ways from that of earlier writers, and even from many contemporary writers. Editing a writer operating in a frequently sloppy genre market is very different to editing writers who benefited from more respectful treatment. In fact, according to Alun, the whole VIE Textual Integrity problem is unprecedented in the history of textual criticism. The first job of the TI worker, as Alun made clear, will be analysis of the "textual evidence" in order



Dinner at "La Treille" At table, clockwise from lower left: Steve, Koen (hidden by Steve), Linn a, Patrick, Tim, Alun, Paul, Thomas.

to establish the "stemma", or relationships between the various manuscripts and published editions. Many cases are quite simple but, to illustrate the scope of the problem, here is a hypothetical example: we may have access to a manuscript for text X. But this manuscript



Helmut, Alun, Linnea, Thomas, Patrick, Steve, Koen and Tim. Alun holds a rare bottle of Chinon ros : 1987 .

may not be a final draft. Text X may also exist in 4 published versions. Two of these versions (publications A and B) may have been separately edited from a final draft (which we do not have) by different editors. A third publication (C) may be a photographic reproduction of B, while a fourth (D) might also be an edited version, but based on publication A (and therefore simply a degradation of A). Furthermore, publication B might post-date publication D, which would further confuse the issue. The TI worker (with Alun's help) must thus, first, determine these relations so they may come to the



Alun and Tim stroll the estate while making the first TI assignments

conclusion that: publications C and D are without value to the TI process, while the ms, and publications A and B, are. The relative value of these evidence bases then must be established, to determine which ones are useful and/or reliable, in what ways and to what degree. The early draft ms cannot be used as the base or "copy" text, since a later final draft may have been significantly changed by the author.

Alun explained a real case of one text where we do not have a manuscript. We have two published versions which are known to both have been edited from the final

manuscript. Each was edited in a characteristic way: the first with little respect for paragraph breaks and punctuation (a common feature of magazine publication), the second more respectfully of these aspects. The latter, however, seems to have more actual word changes. The TI worker's job is to analyze these differences, in the light of TI guidelines, and with any help the Vances themselves can provide, and to then propose (not impose) the correct readings. The Vances themselves will be the final arbiters of any doubtful propositions. Alun insists that the TI worker of a given text must become the "world expert" on that text.

These examples are given merely to indicate the issues involved. The specific tasks may be much simpler, or even thornier, depending on publication history and the available evidence. For instance, the TI worker dealing with *The House on Lily Street* will find a single published edition and a single, final, manuscript. The challenges here will be more limited than, for instance, the *Durdane* books where the manuscript evidence is more equivocal and the publication history more varied.

The other major aspect of the conference was an explanation of TI methodology. There is, again, nothing



Textual Evidence

obvious about this, and several of the processes involved have to do with how TI lies in the work path of the overall VIE process. It will not be possible for TI work to be properly done by workers who do not attend the TI conferences. The next (and last) one is scheduled for mid-February in Oakland, California.

Paul Rhoads (photos by Koen Vyverman)

Proofreading Update

The proofreading team has now processed a total of more than 9,700,000 words, and the one-hundred-

thousand-word club now has 25 members. The complete list:

PROOFER:	WORDS:
Steve Sherman	1,217,200
Dave Kennedy	821,090
Michel Bazin	620,000
Suan Yong	390,700
Ron Chernich	378,600
Till Noever	377,290
John Schwab	345,190
Chris Corley	310,800
Rob Friefeld	269,000
Patrick Dusoulie	249,000
David Mortimore	246,900
Rob Gerrand	237,200
Deborah Cohen	216,100
Dave Worden	194,890
Richard Chandler	191,000
Tim Stretton	181,890
Jeff Ruszczyk	170,690
Evert Jan de Groot	164,500
Bob Lacovara	147,090
Jody Kelly	127,600
Erik Arendse	126,100
Lee Lewis	117,700
David Mead	115,400
Gabriel Stein	107,190
Linnéa Anglemark	102,790

To those proofreaders currently with an assignment: could you take a couple of minutes and send me mail (steve.sherman@compaq.com) with a brief summary of your progress so far?

I want to say a bit about what is to come. As mentioned last month, we are approaching the end of first-phase proofreading, or PreProofing, which precedes the Textual Integrity phase of the project. As files come out of TI and Composition, we will commence second-phase proofreading, or PostProofing. The objects of our attention will be documents in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). These documents will each represent a single, complete volume of the *VIE*. Each file will be proofread ten times. Where possible, pairs of proofreaders will be asked to proof in tandem, one volunteer reading the file to the other, who follows the text looking for errors. Any errors found will be recorded in a document called (for historical reasons: see the history page on the website at: <http://www.massmedia.com/~mikeb/vie/History.htm>) a "bis file" (a French term). When all ten proofreads are complete, the bis files will be collated and approved by Proofing, checked by TI if necessary, and turned over to Composition to be implemented.

Many proofreaders have volunteered only to work on shorter texts. We are considering a methodology making possible work on single stories within a volume. This presents many logistical problems however: a volume with seven stories, each proofed individually, ten times, would yield 70 bis files. Stay tuned as we mull this over.

We will be asking for a high level of commitment for PostProofing. To this point, we have been content to have proofreaders work at their own pace, and, as can be seen on the website, time-to-completion has varied wildly from assignment to assignment. We will ask PostProofers to commit to a deadline date; we will need to collate the bis files by a certain date so the volumes can be checked out of Composition and gotten to the printers on schedule. We're not yet certain what the deadlines will be; my current thinking tends toward asking volunteers to dedicate an average of one hour a day to an assignment. I'd be interested in hearing what proofreaders think about this matter: write a letter to *Cosmopolis* or drop me an email.

At such time as the emergence of a volume from Composition becomes immanent, I'll be writing to all proofreaders, asking them to make themselves available for PostProofing. Please start thinking now about how much time you're willing to offer the *VIE*. This will help us greatly with our planning.

If PostProofing is performed with the same enthusiasm and dedication that have characterized PreProofing, we will accomplish great things, for which I and the rest of *VIE* management will be deeply grateful. I continue to look forward to the day when Jack Vance holds in his hands a copy of the *VIE*—his work as he himself intended it—and know that we will be filled with pride at what we have achieved.

Steve Sherman
Proofreading Team Lead

The *VIE* e-Mail Lists

The *VIE* maintains a variety of e-mail lists. Most of these are "internal" working groups, whose members are active participants. Other lists include our volunteers, the subscribers to *Cosmopolis*, and subscribers to the Edition itself. These lists are never intentionally disclosed to third parties. Further, the *VIE* does not make unsolicited contacts to the members of the *Cosmopolis* and Edition lists, except in specific cases. In those cases, the e-mail will be sent by a qualified member of *VIE* management, a list of which appears at the end of each issue of *Cosmopolis*. For all other communication, *Cosmopolis* is the "official" voice of the *VIE*. If you receive unwanted e-mail from the *VIE*, or from someone who claims to be associated with the *VIE*, contact Paul Rhoads or me. We have a zero-tolerance approach to unauthorized use of our lists, and will do what we can to prevent such use. For casual communication among interested parties, we endorse the use of the Vance EZ-Board, which can be located by navigating <http://www.vanceintegral.com>.

Bob Lacovara

A New Mode of *VIE* Communication

Text Based e-mail Groups:

The *VIE* is a vast, unprecedented enterprise. To those of us privileged to work in it, it is a source of pleasure and pride. We have learned a great deal about what we are doing, and we are still learning; as any of the participants of the highly productive European TI conference can tell you. One of the products of the conference was the decision to implement a new *VIE* tool: text based e-mail groups. These are already functioning and many volunteers are involved in them. As soon as texts start to leave pre-proofing to enter Techno-Proofing, DD (including OCR-ing, jockeying and monkeying) and eventually TI, an e-mail group will be created by Tim Stretton. Included will be those involved in work on that text: a pre-proofer still not done with his job, a Techno-Proofreader, the various DD workers, the assigned TI worker, as well as the TI proposition applicator (under John Schwab) and an assigned composer (if cupatory), as well as the various team heads. All information about the progress of any given text through the *VIE* process, as well as concerns and issues about its preparation and correction, will thus be shared by all the workers involved. This will build a text team, familiar with the text in question and its problems, capable of aiding each other. We are excited about this new initiative.

Science Fiction Redux: #2

Is Vance a {Insert Genre Here} Writer?

Is Jack Vance's being labeled a science fiction writer what prevents his entering the main stream? Whether you believe he is one or isn't one, or care whether he gets a mainstream audience, I don't think that Vance will ever escape the "science fiction" and "fantasy" labels. Furthermore I believe that Science Fiction needs Jack Vance. It also needs George Orwell and Aldous Huxley and Ursula K. Le Guin. It needs them the way crime fiction needs James Ellroy and spy fiction needs Graham Greene and John Le Carré. In short, it needs good writers who write science fiction to remain identified as science fiction writers rather than be "stolen" by the mainstream so that Departments of Literature cannot complacently contend that there are no good genre writers.

If we accept the definition of a science fiction writer as being a writer who asks "what if?" questions of a technical flavor and then answers them, then Vance is not such a writer. Vance uses technical artifacts merely as props—his "what if?" questions are not technical. But then neither are Philip K. Dick's, neither are Ursula Le Guin's. The category for a writer who creates an arbitrary universe and populates it with characters and stories is usually "fantasy". Science fiction writers are

generally characterized by the rigor and consistency of invention, rather than the necessarily technical nature of the questions they pose. Consider some of the concepts explored by Vance:

To live is to deny others life — *To Live Forever*. Should uniqueness confer value, and at what price? — *Emphyrio*
What is the nature of legitimate ownership? — *The Gray Prince*. Can you modify culture purely through language? — *The Languages of Pao*

All of these works are pre-1975, but some are hardly “early”. If we are to concentrate on later works — dominated by Cadwal and Lyonesse — we see books that cannot fail to be considered genre by the mainstream. Vance’s “future” universes are devoid of personal computers, robots, email, voice mail, nanotechnology, and virtual reality. On the other hand they are replete with projacs, starships, genetic engineering, dexax, interstellar navigation by dead reckoning, and calculator repair men.

It’s much much too late for Vance to escape the tag of science fiction writer, and no-one will be fooled if we pretend otherwise. If we want him to receive just acclaim we must hope for science fiction as a whole to be elevated, and for this to happen its best proponents need to be identified with it.

Tonio Loewald

Paul Rhoads replies:

I do indeed care about making the world at large aware of Jack Vance, and I do contend, based on personal experience, that the genre labels, sci-fi in particular, are the most important barrier to this. The genre barrier is not impenetrable, but it is only writers who get to the top who have a chance of being extracted by a wider public. Examples would include Bradbury, Vonnegut and Lem. Others who have made it to the top of the sci-fi hit parade, Asimov, Heinlein or Herbert, have not escaped the genre. All six writers may satisfy science fiction readers, but only the former can satisfy non-science fiction readers. This is because the former are good writers whose work, to various degrees and in various ways, escapes science fiction; while the latter are inferior writers whose minds, while perhaps furnished with powerful imaginations, are stuck in the sci-fi rut.

Vance seems to have no prospect of such an escape. He remains invisibly sunk in the genre mire, and to judge by sales volume and availability of books in print, he must be considered “minor”, or “very minor”, even within science fiction, and the situation is not getting any better. There are two possible explanations for this: either he is inferior to Asimov, Heinlein and Herbert, or there is so little of science fiction to his work that he fails to appeal to most sci-fi readers. And since these are the

only people who might ever read him . . . Tonio would certainly point out that he himself is a counter-example: a science fiction reader who appreciates Vance. But Tonio may fall into that category of sci-fi readers who have larger than average spiritual horizons — thus his appreciation of Vance. His attachment to science fiction as a genre may be due to a narrow literary horizon, combined with faithfulness to writers whom he has found enriching. Given time, and a wider exposure to general literature, such a condition may evolve.

Tonio, in his enthusiasm for science fiction as a genre, almost seems indifferent to whether or not Vance is discovered by a larger public, and he blames the low status of sci-fi on an alleged academic conspiracy. I do not credit this conspiracy theory, and my explanation of sci-fi’s low status will not please sci-fi boosters. It is, as regular *Cosmopolis* readers know, that science fiction is an essentially flawed genre, and that the low esteem in which it is popularly held is basically justified. Before the screaming and gnashing of teeth drowns out all further discourse, please note two things:

1 – Jack Vance himself shares this opinion. He does not like, or read, science fiction, and condemns it ‘en masse’ as juvenile. I do not mention this to prove I am right; it proves no such thing. But it does legitimate the expression of an “anti-science fiction” view in the context of the VIE.

2 – My endorsement of the essence of the popular opinion of science fiction, should not be misconstrued as the claim that this opinion is correct because it is a majority view. Furthermore, I am capable of appreciating science fiction. Finally, I am interested in the question of genres exclusively as it bears on the fortunes of Jack Vance, whom I consider a great among greats, profoundly in need of promotion for the benefit of all readers and the health of our artistic culture.

Advocacy of science fiction should be based on the worthiness and importance of the genre, and must therefore demonstrate this worthiness and importance. Tonio takes a stab at this. I find his points neither clear nor convincing but I will try to understand them as sympathetically as I can. Tonio rejects sci-fi trappings as the defining quality of science fiction. He writes: “Vance uses technical artifacts merely as props”. So props and trappings are not what make science fiction itself; here Tonio and I appear to agree that a space ship is a mere prop, like a cadaver or a saloon. The presence of a cadaver does not make a mystery a mystery, and the presence of a saloon does not make a western a western. There are cadavers aplenty in *War and Peace*, and there are saloons in *Huckleberry Finn*. Science fiction, Tonio is telling us, is defined by something deeper and larger; he writes: “[Vance’s] “what if?” questions are not technical. But then neither are Philip K. Dick’s, neither are Ursula

Le Guin's." In other words science fiction is about "what if?" questions. Tonio gives some examples drawn from Vance: whether to live is to deny others life, whether uniqueness confers value, whether culture can be modified through language, and the nature of legitimate ownership.

But if this is true — and here is why I suspect Tonio may not be as widely read as he might yet become — there are many other writers, writers who cannot by any stretch of the imagination be classified in science fiction, who also pose such questions! In *Pantagruel* Rabelais explores the question: should a man get married? In *The Martyrs* Chateaubriand proposes the thesis that Christianity is superior to paganism. Are *Pantagruel* and *The Martyrs* science fiction? In fact literary works which pose such questions or explore such theses already have a label: the "novel of ideas". This is no minor literary category, and it spans all of literary history. Rabelais wrote in the 16th century. Goethe wrote *Elective Affinities* in the 19th century, and in the 20th century the behaviorist B. F. Skinner and the notorious Ayn Rand have both produced 'novels of ideas'. What is a novel of ideas? It is an essay in the form of fiction. So what of essays that are fictional? Karl Marx proposes the ridiculous theory that history progresses to a pre-known conclusion. Richard Dawkins argues — in the face of the now theoretically unassailable "intelligent design" thesis — that "Darwinism" is true. Are they then science "fiction" writers?

Tonio offers a further stipulation: "[science fiction] writers are generally characterized by the rigor and consistency of invention, rather than the necessarily technical nature of the questions they pose." But how do Rabelais, Chateaubriand, Goethe, Skinner, Rand, Marx and Dawkins fail to fulfil this requirement? All are "rigorous and consistent", and if the work of Marx and Dawkins is not fiction or 'invention' per se, their theses arguably are.

The label 'novel of ideas' is also perfectly appropriate for the aspect of *The Languages of Pao* indicated by Tonio. So the question remains: what makes science fiction, science fiction? Besides failure to be more widely familiar with general literature, or blind prejudice, what can explain a refusal to admit that science fiction is about: science? Stupidity? Fervor? Tonio gives more than one indication of being an intelligent person, and since I don't know him I really can not do more than entertain suspicions about the extent of his literary culture. But I confidently detect fervor in his defense of sci-fi! Science fiction understandably engenders fervor. Not only have many people gotten "hours of reading pleasure" from it, but it concerns naturally exciting things. It arises from interest in, and excitement about, science; physics, cosmology and so on, and in particular the technological developments which might arise as a result of scientific progress, and their effects on society.

It is therefore concerned with the future and, by extension, deals with sociology and the other 'soft' sciences. This is heady stuff. The nature of sci-fi may have been clearer in the 1950s than it is now, but its essence is still the same. It opens upon such questions as: what if man went to the moon? What if aliens came down from Mars? What if there were robots? What if there were anti-gravity machines? From these first steps complex constructs can be imagined: the galaxy divided up between rival empires run by different kinds of aliens and robots, transport effected in genetically modified whales which swim through the 17th dimension, communications made through telepathy, and parallel universes with conflicting physical laws inter-accessed through uranium portals, and so on and so on. All this is indeed great fun, but on a fundamental level it is mere idle fantasizing and just not serious on a human level. However, there are many writers and readers interested in such science fictions — perhaps in more refined and evolved forms than the caricature I present above — and I say: God bless them!

To state my own preference; the best writer of pure sci-fi is Lem. One of his books concerns a message from outer-space. I don't recall the title, but the story takes speculation on this phenomenon to its limits and places the reader before questions of ultimates. It is, of course, a novel of ideas, but the ideas are science ideas and the setting is the future, so it is a work of "science fiction". The characters are mere props and the clever evolutions of the speculation are where the interest lies. I do not think interest in such a subject could be sustained as well in an essay, but at the same time I do not think this book is really successful as literature. It is, therefore, "science fiction", and as good as science fiction can get. The same with his *Futurological Congress*. In this book the characters — forgettable as usual — evolve in a series of virtual worlds imposed by mass drugging. When the characters escape one virtual world, they find themselves trapped in another, which is only somewhat closer to reality. First they think they are in a clean, warm, sunny place with spacious and efficient appurtenances, but they find that the "reality" is cold and snow, people who think they are riding in elevators scrambling up the cables, and luxurious restaurants which turn out to be filthy eateries. They next discover that things are "really" far worse; in the restaurant they are laying prone in slots in the wall, slurping from a common trough. One of the elements of the movie *The Matrix* was based on this idea. But while *The Matrix* turns Lem's idea into a heavy handed gothic nightmare, Lem uses it to comic effect with a real human issue that glimmers though the tissue of the sci-fi. Behind the illusion, in *The Matrix*, are aliens using humans for nourishment. In *The Futurological Congress* the manipulations of human perception are for the political end of civic tranquility. The latter notion may not be astonishing but it is at least

minimally thought provoking, while placing humans on a lower rung of an imaginary galactic food chain is just macabre foolishness.

So much for what science fiction really is, and how it can be good. It is now incumbent upon me to articulate what I claim is missing from science fiction; I must therefore define "literature". Literature, then, is the confluence of observation, feeling, and verbal expressiveness, and (most important of all) its proper subject is: Man. Pope Leo XIII, in *Rerum Novarum*, an encyclical concerning utopian socialist schemes, remarked: "All striving against nature is vain." Socialism's hope of creating the 'New Man' has, indeed, been shown to be what it is: an unworkable catastrophe, and Leo XIII has been proven correct in this regard. Science and technology now pretend to the same goal (hormone therapy, genetic engineering, manipulative surgery and etc.). But Leo XIII will remain correct, and these efforts will also fail (you heard it here first!). Man's conditions may change; Man himself remains the same. Man's conditions are certainly a legitimate aspect of literature, but Man is the essential literary subject, and his conditions only have importance relative to him. A literature which concerns itself only with a narrow slice of human experience, the problems of murder investigations for instance, constricts itself and is stunted. A literature which actually concerns itself with non-human things, like nature, or artifacts (like technology), is even further stunted. But if, as with science fiction, it concerns itself not only with non-human things, but with imaginary non-human things (robots, aliens, the 43d dimension) it is even further debased. Does this mean that a "mystery" can not be a "work of literature", or that a literary work can include no mention of a machine? Of course not! It is a question of dosage and, most importantly, what is at the core. Stories motivated most deeply by interest in, say, robots, are more or less vain intellectual exercises and must be internally withered by the nature of what they are. It is of no interest what a robot might think or feel, because robots cannot think or feel. If a robot is supposed to be a metaphor for man, this is also degraded; men are not like robots in any way, and a writer who assumes they are does not understand human nature and is therefore producing works lacking in depth. However, a robot might still be legitimate in fully developed literature as a parody of the incorrect view of man as robot. Huxley made this kind of use of test-tube babies in *Brave New World*. Vance's unpublished screenplay, *Clang*, concerns gladiatorial robots. But the story is not motivated by interest in these mechanisms. It is the people of the machine shops who design and build these special gadgets — adjuncts of a big gambling enterprise — and their human problems, which are at the core of the story. The robots themselves might as well be one-armed bandits or vacuum cleaners. Not so with Asimov! When the VIE is published you will read the symbolically pungent climactic scene of

Clang, where human qualities and heroism defeat mindless mechanical force, resolving a tangle of human problems.

As for Vance's aliens; in most cases they are metaphors for humans. A clear case would be the Erjins. The Erjins are another species, but what counts about them in the context of *The Domains of Koryphon* is that they look different, yet have the same aspirations, as men. They equal men, they are men, in the way that counts in the context of this story. Vance needs them to drop us neatly into a xenological view, now far less prevalent in the West than it was centuries ago, wherein the various human races were not necessarily equally human. This use of aliens is therefore not gratuitous, but serves real and important artistic/philosophic ends that could not be served any other way. The fascinating but detestable Morphotes are in the same category. Were Vance trying to show that animals are like men, this would partake of the idle fantasizing that dominates science fiction, for animals are not like men. They may be territorial in a brutish fashion, but they have no aspirations.

Literature must have observation. This means: knowledge of reality. It must have feeling. This means: caring about real things. Expressiveness is simply the ability to use words well; but there is an important link between observation and feeling, and expressiveness! Non-reality is not artistically nourishing. An artist cannot be very expressive about it because there is not much to be expressive about; there is no depth.* The creative powers of the human mind atrophy when turned in upon themselves. Imagination requires the fuel of reality. Only artists who have knowledge of reality have the chance to be expressive, because only they have something to express, and can thus try to take expressiveness to its natural heights. But they also cannot be expressive without feeling, and they cannot have deep feelings about non-real things, because non-reality — an empty, two-dimensional, solipsistic pageant — lacks depth.

In practice, however, "science fiction" is mixed in with literature. In the case of Lem there is not much literature, but the science fiction aspect is so well done that it makes good reading. In the case of a good writer like Brian Aldiss the literary aspect is important enough that his books, in my opinion, make fairly good reading. Still, reading Aldiss teaches nothing. It is not enriching. Like most science fiction it is bleak, if not paltry. In Herbert's sci-fi super-success: *Dune*, the sci-fi aspect is the drugs and aliens that make space travel possible, as well as the worm monsters — a conceit so much better handled by Vance! *Dune* has a sort of literary aspect, but it is a botch because Herbert is excited by foolish aspects of reality, like Islam taking over the world. Herbert has ideas, but they are sci-fi ideas, essentially silly, and can be of little interest to a person alive to the issues dealt with by, and the workmanship of, a Jane Austen or a Balzac. Because of paltriness of conception, Herbert

does not even express his ideas well. Take the atmosphere of the planet Dune, and compare it to the atmosphere of Dar Sai, or the Blue World. The latter are so vivid and “real”, while the former is only a vague indication.

As for Vance, and of course apart from the portion of his early work which is sci-fi, the science fiction aspect of his work is reduced to the final limit: the sci-fi decor Tonio says does not make sci-fi what it is. Carried one step further and any excuse to use the label would evaporate. Vance has even written many non-science fiction books. And even if “What if?” questions, as well as sci-fi trappings, are present in his work, neither one nor the other are what make him a great writer, or his work a body of great literature. These are matters of breadth of vision, depth of passion and power of voice. Were he a science fiction author in essence, his breadth, depth and power would be stunted and stifled, for the essence of science fiction is non-literary, and Art, to be great, must be fully itself.

Setting aside the early work, we are left with the question of why Vance makes any use of science fiction at all. If only the empty rind is left, why not discard that as well? But there is nothing gratuitous or inconsequential about Vance’s use of that rind. One of the clearest examples is, again, *The Domains of Koryphon*. This book, as Tonio indicates, is about the problem of property; a important human problem because it has dominated Western politics for two centuries. Vance makes his points by setting his tale in the context of the most extreme case: ownership of land and, by extension, conquest and colonisation. But if his points are true — and they are — Vance could have set them anywhere and at any time. So why did he not? Because no actual historical setting could ever be complete or clear enough; there is no historical situation that, by its limitations, does not mask or confuse some aspect of the question, to say nothing of drawing in real-life political passions. So what Vance has done is create a situation ideal for the articulation of the problem. There is nothing gratuitous about this created situation, a creation which depends on the trappings of sci-fi. In this sense, and in this sense only, Vance could be called a sci-fi writer, if one cared to alter definitions; for where would this leave real sci-fi?

It might now be objected that *The Domains of Koryphon* is merely a novel of ideas, and in a way it is. But, like *Pantagruel* or *The Martyrs*, it overwhelms this category. If it merely explicated a situation or argued a thesis, then it would be merely a novel of ideas. But it does both more, and less. The situation and the thesis that Vance exposes are so obvious and evident that his articulation of them, per se, hardly merits the terms “explication” and “thesis” — the way, say, Ayn Rand’s books support a complex, non-evident philosophy. What is Vance’s thesis? That

ownership has its origin in violence, and that an “owner” is he who can keep what he has. But these are no more than bald, undeniable, if not at first obvious, facts. They have nothing to do with “right wing philosophy”† as has been suggested. They indicate, but do not penetrate, the tortured realm of justice, and do not depend on any particular metaphysics. More simply stated: they lack the complexity to raise, or lower, *The Domains of Koryphon* to the status of “novel of ideas”. They are just hard truths. What, then, is this book? It is a work of literature — and a great one. Vance brings all its elements down to the human level. The book revolves around two things: the people, and the places, that Schaine Madduc loves. The evolutions of Schaine’s heart are not explicated by argument, but by making real the experiences and feelings of this particular young woman.

The rest of Vance’s “science fiction” is of exactly the same type. The decor is always there for a reason, and no other decor would do as well. Also, the feel of Vance’s future is not a sci-fi feel. His worlds, though sometimes exotic, are not unfamiliar in the basic sense of the word. I have compared Vance’s use of sci-fi decor to the method of Jonathan Swift when he created Lilliput, Brobdingnag and Laputa. Vance is one of those rare writers who combines full measures of dramatic, philosophical and inventive powers. This is the underlying explanation for his use of sci-fi decor. It is one of the things that makes him completely exceptional, and a great among greats.

To judge from his letter Tonio seems, first and foremost, a sci-fi advocate. He concludes: “If we want [Vance] to receive just acclaim we must hope for science fiction as a whole to be elevated, and for this to happen its best proponents need to be identified with it.” But if Tonio wishes to promote science fiction, that is his own affair. The VIE is about Jack Vance.

Finally, allow me to address, again, the mantra that my “anti-science fiction” attitude antagonizes and alienates others in the VIE project, and is therefore unhealthy for it. Apart from other considerations, all who wish to present a pro-sci-fi view of Vance in Cosmopolis are free, and even WELCOME, to do so. This will give the rest of us the chance to assess such views. Should anyone find them unconvincing, such people may present counter views, and so on. This is known as DISCOURSE; it is THE way to reach deeper understandings and, in an amicable manner, to journey together toward Truth. Any attempt to stifle discourse with such words as “alienating” or “antagonizing” is unworthy of our collective admiration for the work of Jack Vance which, among other things, is a paeon to genuine freedom. Furthermore, I realize perfectly well that many VIE subscribers, and especially volunteers, are sci-fi fans. My understanding is that such people pride themselves on having open minds and not being slaves to prejudice. I take this

self-assessment at face value.

If we, the people who actually read him, don't ourselves think about Vance as a great artist, I do not see how he can come to be understood in that way by people who have never heard of him and have no intention of finding out about him. There may be other ways Vance could be discovered by the world at large; if so, so much the better. But without such an attitude on our own part we remain in no position to do him any good. The issue is not really science fiction itself, but having a pure, untrammelled, and correct view of what Vance's work is.

*This is the profound problem with Modernism. Modernism rejects objective, in favor of subjective, reality.

† Right wing philosophy, presumably, is justification of "death, war and slavery", as Vance makes clear in *Cadwal*.

Why Cosmopolis?

Over the past year I have read with great interest Paul Rhoads' various essays on different aspects of Jack Vance's writings that have appeared in this forum. I freely allow that Paul has read Vance with far closer attention and alertness and more literary insight than I have; as noted in an earlier issue, I am very much a casual reader — except when I'm proofreading, of course. I found his piece, *What Sort of Artist is Jack Vance?*, in *Cosmopolis* #4, particularly acute; and his article on Vancian punctuation in *Cosmopolis* #7 sensitized me to the point of appreciating for the first time the subtle but significant variation from the standard in the closing paragraphs of Madouc. (No, you're not going to appreciate it either, just yet, at least not from the Ace or the Grafton editions. The former didn't quite understand what Vance was up to and introduced a further deviation that vitiates the author's purpose; the latter just thought it was an error and fixed it. You'll just have to wait for the *VIE*.)

This is not to say I've always agreed with Paul. I think he overrates *The Domains of Koryphon*, which sets up and shoots down its straw man in a way too pat to be entirely satisfying. And in his provocative piece about *Cadwal* in Volume I Number 8, Paul writes: "Vance arranges his story so that taking sides means more than simply choosing an ideological camp; the Yips, the Peefers or the Agents (i.e. the Third World, the Left, or the Bourgeois West)." And he writes: "Let us say that Smonny is Hitler, the Omphs are the Nazis, the Peefers are the Communists, and that Araminta Station is the Western allies." I can't accept these equivalences, for the simple reason that Araminta Station is a police state — which perhaps is what Paul is getting at when he writes that "siding with the Agents means siding with Bodwyn Wook".

The lengthy discussion of whether or not Vance is a

science fiction writer has seemed to me to miss the point on all sides, for reasons requiring too much length for my current purposes. But I do understand where Paul is coming from: he believes Vance will not get the attention due him unless the science fiction label is removed. I'm not sure: I've handed Vance books to any number of people who have handed them back, saying they don't read science fiction. I've insisted they overlook the SF trappings and appreciate the literary qualities, but they've found they can't get past the trappings. I suppose there are people who don't read Jane Austen because they are uninterested in the lives of early 18th Century minor English gentry. Their loss.

And then there are the discursions on modernism, art and Western Civilization in general. Some of you may find them tedious. Some of you may disagree, even violently (in some cases, so do I). Some of you may wonder what all this has to do with Jack Vance. To the latter, there is this answer: any great artist — and I agree that Vance is one — must be understood in the literary context in which he exists. You may raise eyebrows at the claim that bringing Vance to public attention is a step in rescuing Western Civilization from the brink of a new Dark Age. That sounds like the claim of a fanatic. Well, Paul Rhoads *is* a fanatic. In the first place, he's an artist, and if there is an artist of quality who has lacked fanaticism, I don't know who it might have been. And second, and most important: is not the *VIE* itself the creation of a fanatic? Let us be clear: this project would not exist without the vision and fanaticism of Paul Rhoads, and it would not have progressed as far as it has without his leadership.

As I have said, I don't agree with everything Paul has written, not by a long shot. In this issue, he refers to Richard Dawkins as an author of fictional essays. Now, Dawkins is one of the most lucid explicators we have of the Darwinian synthesis, which is a paradigm of such explanatory power that we still lack the courage to grasp all of its implications. But Paul insists that it is refuted by some notion of 'intelligent design'. It is typical of thinking driven by religious faith that it starts with the answers rather than the questions; to me it is a bit like telling God that he has to have done it in this particular way. In fact, there is nothing in the Darwinian synthesis incompatible with the notion that the universe was created by an intelligence that set things up to develop through apparently stochastic processes. The point is that one either accepts the evidence of the universe as telling us something about the nature of its creator (if it has one) or one sees that evidence as a line of deception laid down by the creator to mislead us.

Why am I even writing this? Why am I in my office on a day being charged as vacation? Well, to tell the truth, I came in to use the computer to write the TI evidence document for Madouc. But there have been some

exchanges of email and on the message board that I find troubling. Paul's opinions are strong, no doubt about it, but do people have so much difficulty accepting them (which is not the same as agreeing with them) that they resort to pot-shooting and name-calling? Worse, do they stop reading *Cosmopolis* on that account? That would really be a loss, to them and to the project. *Cosmopolis* is the voice of the *VIE*, not just of Paul Rhoads. There is a wealth of information of interest and even importance to volunteers and subscribers in every issue, and I'm afraid it's not getting read. Why do I say that? For one thing, last month I requested that all proofreaders with an active assignment get in touch with me about their progress. Exactly one did.

Of course, if I'm right, then the people who read this are not the people it's addressed to. But in the hope that at least some of those will read an article not signed by Paul, let me say this: if it bothers you to read strong opinions contrary to your own, fine; don't read them. I can't force you. But please don't neglect *Cosmopolis*. At least read about the state of the project, get excited about what we're doing. Better yet: write to us. Tell us where you disagree with Paul's interpretation of Jack Vance. Tell us about your role in the *VIE*. Tell us about your experience of Vance's writing. Participate. Get involved. That's what *Cosmopolis* is for.

Steve Sherman

Note From The Editor:

Deborah Cohen will again be taking over as *Cosmopolis* editor. Send your materials to her at:

chaschcity@hotmail.com

This issue of *Cosmopolis* was proofed by Steve Sherman, Tim Stretton and Chris Corley, who are only to be held responsible for what is correct.

Paul Rhoads

The Cosmopolis Literary Supplement #4

Is available on the *Cosmopolis* down-load page of the *VIE* site. It includes new chapters from: *Tergan*, and *Zael* and, by a new contributor, a ghost story: *The Wight in the Ditch*.

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The Fine Print

Contributions to Cosmopolis:

Letters to the Editor or essays may be published in whole or in part, with or without attribution, at the discretion of *Cosmopolis*. Send your text to Debbie Cohen. The deadline for *Cosmopolis* 13 is January 28.

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