COSMOPOLIS

Contents

View from the Ivory Tower

Alun Hughes

The second—and final—textual integrity conference was held over the weekend of 10-11 February, at the Oakland home of John Vance and his wife Tammy. Attendance was excellent with nineteen people taking part, including two from Australia and two from Great Britain.

The Conference covered similar ground to the initial textual integrity conference hosted by Paul Rhoads in France, but with a more practical emphasis, reflecting the fact that a number of us now have some real TI experience. There was a strong focus on the actual mechanics of doing the work, and small group sessions were run by Tim Stretton (*Wyst*), Steve Sherman (*Madouc*), John Robinson (*The Languages of Pao* and Techno-Proofing) and Jesse Polhemus (*The Dying Earth* books) to share experiences learned to date. We are now building up a good body of TI experience (especially when we add in the work of Patrick Dusoulier—who couldn't be with us—on *The Book of Dreams*).

The weekend also provided a good opportunity to test out the new TI Handbook, Alun Hughes' distillation of his TI expertise with a little input from Tim. The Handbook will be available on the relaunched TI website as soon as a couple of minor procedural points are ironed out. The Handbook contains many practical examples, but is short on general rules—for good reason! The more we look at the evidence available to us, the more we see that "one-size fits all" solutions simply don't fit the bill in most cases. TI will be literary detective work—and each story will be a new case.

The Vances' generous offer to host the Conference had many benefits. Oakland is home to a superb collection of manuscript evidence, and just about every conceivable edition of the books (indeed the books alone ran to 64 boxes!), which meant that people were able to start work on their assignments straight away. It was also a great thrill for everyone to meet Jack on the Sunday afternoon; and Jack's wife Norma came over on both days and held us

enthralled with her recollections. Only those who were there will know Jack's particular reason for writing *The Kragen*! We'll all remember with gratitude, too, the exceptional hospitality of John and Tammy—special thanks are due to Tammy who kept us all fed and happy while looking after young Glen, who was very off-colour all through the weekend.

It wasn't all work, of course! On the first day the eager folk were split into four teams to take the TI Trivia Quiz, set by Alun, Tim and John Schwab. The questions were designed to stretch, and after an epic struggle the Wankh, comprising Richard Chandler, Chris Corley, Jody Kelly and Bob Lacovara triumphed by a single point, with the Pnume, Chasch and Dirdir close behind, the clincher being the final question where the Wankh's knowledge of Finnish translations saw them home.

For those of us who'd been in Oakland this time last year, the chance to meet up with old friends was a great bonus, but it was also good to make so many new ones. After having spent nearly eighteen months corresponding with some of you, the time for a first meeting was long overdue. Having met all of our TI workers over the course of the two conferences, I feel confident that the future of this part of the project is in very safe hands. The enthusiasm, commitment and discrimination on display was most heartening: I salute you all—and look forward to receiving your completed assignments in the near future!

Tim Stretton, Textual Integrity Team Lead

The Lone Star State Shows Its Mettle in Oakland

The "quiz" was a set of 20 questions, selected to stump and puzzle, that was given to the attendees. We were divided into four groups, and I suspected right away that the division was hardly random: the three Texans (Chris Corley, Jody Kelly and me) wound up in the same group, along with Richard Chandler. The questions were of two sorts: things one might possibly know, and items of information which were, to my mind, dreadful cheats, being tidbits of arcane trivia. (Translate a title from Polish? Sure.)

After all was said and done, however, the Texans with help from honorary Texan, Richard, carried the day (as Texans are wont). But now, however, it's time for a confession. We enhanced our score through unconventional methods, which is to say that some folks of rigid mind might focus on the term "cheating." Seems that the last question and answer for the quiz was overheard by one of our team members. He (or she) expressed the laudable, if naive thought that perhaps he should abstain from helping us, as he'd overheard Tim, Alun and John Schwab making up the last quiz question. I had merely to observe that not a one of Jack's best characters would have hesitated for a millisecond to take advantage of such an inadvertent stroke of luck, and the deed was done: we wrote down our answer. Shortly thereafter, we graciously accepted the plaudits of the other worthy, but perhaps more fastidious, groups.

Bob Lacovara

Take the TI Trivia Quiz

For those of you with a mind for trivia, here are the posers we set our four teams in Oakland, dreamed up with sadistic relish over a leisurely breakfast. The teams had access to no reference materials other than their own brains. Test your own knowledge—answers in the next issue!

The TI Trivia Quiz

1. Which story had the original title of "The Uninhibited Robot"?
2. What is the full original title of *Showboat World*, the title under which the Underwood-Miller edition was published?
3. Give all the names under which Jack published novels or stories.
4. Which two stories were left out of the UK edition of *Eight Fantasms and Magics?*
5. How many of the Demon Princes did Gersen actually kill?
6. Which of Jack's works have been adapted for radio, TV or film?
7. Which of Jack's books have only been published in a single edition?
8. Which cover is shown below?

9. Give alternate titles for: "Sail 25", "The World Between", "Ultimate Quest", "The Absent-Minded Professor", *The Faceless Man*.
10. What will the VIE titles be for: *Take My Face*, *The Dying Earth*, *Bad Ronald*, *To Live Forever*, "Assault on a City"?
11. What was Malagate's name in the magazine version of *Star King*?
12. Which of Jack's novels had its first edition in Dutch translation in 1979, prior to the English-language edition?
13. Attach the right numbers to *Trullion*, *Marune*, and *Wyst*.
14. Which is the longest Jack Vance novel?
15. Which short story has only been published once?
16. Which novels or stories won Hugo, Nebula and Edgar awards?
17. Name the three Joe Bain stories.
18. Which two stories in *The Dying Earth* had their order reversed in the Hillman edition?
19. What was the title of "Guyal of Sfere" in the Hillman edition of *The Dying Earth*?
20. Which novel was published in Finnish as *Avaruusrosvot*?

Tim Stretton

Reflections on Contemporary Literature: Part 1

Paul Auster, A Contemporary Great?

Someone I met the other day just lent me (or forced upon me) a book, published in 1992, annoyingly entitled *Leviathan*, and written by the celebrated Paul Auster. She held it up, asked me if I had read it, and when I admitted I had not, hollered in shock. She thrust the book at me, insisting on its status of 'masterpiece' and exclaiming at the scandal of my ignorance.

I have become so disgusted with most contemporary literature that I have fallen into a habit once recommended to my grandmother by an eccentric friend of hers: "Don't read any book that isn't at least fifty years old!" he said, and I think the advice is basically good. However, now and then, for whatever reason, I do read a new book. When I started *Leviathan*, however, I realized I had already sampled it several years ago, and thrown it

down in disgust after ten pages. But this time I persisted to the end, only to learn that first impressions, yet once again, had been correct.

Fashionable trash! Dishonest, pretentious foolishness! An insult to an intelligent reader! Does this book have any qualities? It must be conceded one: chutzpah. Auster writes as if he were a genius: a sensitive, tortured artist, whose readers are begging for each word—a revolting performance. To assuage my spirit, and punish this impostor for what he, and his army of admirers, have inflicted upon me, I won't keep my disgust to myself or resist the temptation to compare him to a real writer, cruel and easy as the game may be. So, how does this toast of the New York literary smart-set compare to a literary non-entity read only by a few odd-ball sci-fi fans?

Auster's silly book begins with a great clatter: the narrator must write his story in great haste! He must save the reputation of his friend! This device reappears only at the very end, and is utterly unconvincing, a feeble ploy to give his scribble an aura of novelty. The narrator is named Peter Aron, initials P.A.—Paul Auster, get it?—but there is this other nuance: Peter and Paul are the two epistolary apostles; and Aaron is the brother of Moses, the one who did the talking—or writing as the case may be . . . In any case "Peter Aron" turns out to be Auster in all sorts of ways, as a glance at the back cover of the book reveals: both were born in New Jersey, both went to Columbia University, both lived in France for a few years, both came back to New York, both end up living in Brooklyn. But Auster also puts himself into the hero of the book, Peter's friend Ben Sachs[1]. Sachs, like Auster, writes articles on all kinds of subjects, and is *also* a darling of the New York literary smart-set. Sachs also plays Moses to Auster's Aron [sic]. Ben is the new Moses who will bring to us a new tablet of laws from the summit of the American Sinai—the statue of Liberty—and Auster-Aron will tell us all about it. Sachs starts out as a "successful" writer, and becomes "The Phantom of Liberty"—now that clever Paul Auster is borrowing from Buenwel! Buenwell's surrealist film[2] is an exercise in proving that there is no moral reality, only convention. As the 'Phantom of Liberty', Ben ends up going around blowing up statues of liberty. How did it happen?

We are supposed to care, and the book is going to tell us. In the end all we hear is some ideology à-la-môde, which is to say we are comforted within the ideas we already, presumably, have. The narrative is just a mish-mash of wooden psycho-drama and formless murder

mystery. As in Woody Allen films (which — aside from the amusing shtick of a grown man whining — are failed efforts to imitate Eric Romer), everyone sleeps with everyone else, or at least wants to. Beyond that, a series of terrible things happen which, we are led — or dragged by the nose — to understand, carry profound symbolic charges.

Of course, annoyingly, no one is responsible for anything. It is a maladroit piece of legerdemain Auster serves up several times, constructing elaborate situations the key to which is that no one really did it. Why? So that there will be no Truth, so that moralizing people can be shown to be mythologizing. How "post-modern", "deconstructionist" and "literary" it all is! What a comfort to our supposedly established opinions! There may be grains of verity in such a point of view, but when used as a serious principle, it transforms art into dross. Here is one sample of this stupid trick:

> . . . I no longer knew what to believe. Fanny had told me one thing, Sachs had told me another, and as soon as I accepted one story, I would have to reject the other. There wasn't any alternative. They had presented me with two versions of the truth, two separate and distinct realities, and no amount of pushing and shoving could ever bring them together. I understood that, and yet at the same time I realized that both stories had convinced me. In the morass of sorrow and confusion that bogged me down over the next several months, I hesitated to choose between them. I don't think it was a question of divided loyalties (although that might have been part of it), but rather a certainty that both Fanny and Ben had been telling me the truth. The truth as they saw it, perhaps, but nevertheless the truth. Neither one of them had been out to deceive me; neither one had intentionally lied. In other words, there was no universal truth. Not for them, not for anyone else. There was no one to blame or to defend, and the only justifiable response was compassion.

Have we learned our lesson, children? There is no Truth, you see, just Compassion. But this is just fashionable eye-wash: leftist, modernist, clap-trap: dithering which any child could see through. In fact, either Fanny is lying, Sachs is lying, or both are lying or confused. Why does Peter not give more attention to what we all know: that whatever happened was what happened, no matter what these two report about it?

Auster is dishonest. Sachs is praised at the beginning

for being apolitical (which means he must be either stupid or indifferent). But then, when the election of Regan rolls around, the whole country is wrecked! Everyone becomes a greedy profit machine! Worst of all; the Democratic party falls apart! As a result Sachs becomes discouraged, because his "ideals", "all he has worked for", is thrown down in the mud. The book also tries to justify divorce and adultery, while putting family life on a pedestal — everyone becomes god-parents of their friend's kids, and the kids themselves are presented as the royal road to Redemption.

Meanwhile we are treated to Auster's heavy-handed symbolism. Sachs' birthday falls on July 4 (or some other very American date). His 'wonderful' first novel, *The New Colossus*, is about American history. His mother got dizzy during a visit to the statue of Liberty and almost falls down the stairs of the torch arm. Libery went to her head? Then, on July 4th, with the statue lit up by fireworks, Sachs falls off his Brooklyn fire-escape because he was flirting with a woman not his wife. It's a psychological trauma; America, and Sachs himself, come tumbling down all together; the anti-Moses, slipped from the summit of the American Sinai, his tablets — his ideals — all broken up. A modernist version of the disgust of Moses and the cavorting woshipers of the golden calf.

Sachs' problems were not his fault — naturally, because nothing is anyone's fault — yet he feels guilty (misguided, noble fellow that he is) and he must redeem himself, etc. In the end he blows himself up with one of his own bombs. The statue of Liberty, as Auster carefully explains to us, is supposedly the one national symbol that is uncontroversial — an image we can all agree on. It is The New Colossus, or a post-modernist fetish, the zenith of "image" and "meaning". As an image it is subject to an infinity of interpretation, and its 'meaning' is therefore always shifting. Meanwhile Peter's-Paul's book is named after Sachs' second, unfinished, novel: *Leviathan*, which, for those not already aware, is the title of a famous work of Thomas Hobbs, a 17th century book inspired by Machiavelli, which explains how the state should be run: i.e. with absolute, atheistic, monarchical power. This title is so famous and unusual, that its reuse here can not be without significance. *Leviathan*, the real one, inspired disgust in most of Hobb's contemporaries, but it became respectable in the horrific 20th century. So here are all the pieces of Auster's message to us: 'America, as well as reality itself, is a crushing behemoth, and those who aspire to liberty, truth and goodness will wreak havoc.' Fine. But what of it? To answer that question, we must

translate the message into ordinary speech: 'if you are an adulterer or indulge in other sorts of other sinning, petty or grandiose, don't worry, be proud! You are really an admirable person doing your bit to fight against Reganism, the Republican party, and everything that makes America into such a lovable horror.' It is lovable because Americans are happy with their TVs, sofas, and disposable incomes, but it is a horror because Republicans are sometimes elected. This is what Auster's thinking boils down to.

The whole book is nothing but pandering to contemporary prejudice — including far too much reference to baseball and basket ball: Peter returns from France to get his "fix of double plays". This would be bad enough, but it is also poorly written. To begin with, Auster's favorite words are "mayhem" and "fucking". His prose is an unrelieved stream of clichés and repetitions. Here is a sample, picked out at random:

I found it impossible to rebuff Sachs anymore. He had been so forthright during our conversation over lunch, so clear about wanting our friendship to continue, that I couldn't bring myself to turn my back on him. But he had been wrong to assume that nothing would change between us. Everything had changed, and like it or not, our friendship had lost its innocence. Because of Fanny, we had each crossed over into the other's life, had each made a mark on the other's internal history, and what had once been pure and simple between us was now infinitely muddy and complex. Little by little, we began to adjust to these new conditions, but with Fanny it was another story. I kept my distance from her, always seeing Sachs alone, always begging off when he invited me to their house. I accepted the fact that she belonged with Ben, but that didn't mean I was ready to see her. She understood my reluctance . . .

Let's parse out the clichés, colloquialisms, banalities and galumphing phraseology:

- I found it impossible to rebuff him anymore
- He had been so forthright during our conversation over lunch
- so clear about wanting our friendship to continue
- I couldn't bring myself to turn my back on him
- he had been wrong to assume nothing would change between us.
- Everything had changed
- like it or not

- our friendship had lost its innocence.
- crossed over into the other's life
- made a mark on the other's internal history
- pure and simple
- infinitely muddy and complex
- Little by little
- to adjust to these new conditions
- it was another story
- I kept my distance
- always begging off
- I accepted the fact that
- she belonged with Ben
- I was ready to see her
- She understood my reluctance

Bad. Or as Auster himself might put it: 'This is bad, not good at all, as if the writer had no idea what he was doing and just strung words together like a drunken monkey with a phrase book and a fountain pen.' But the following passage shows Auster at his self-satisfied worst. Mind you, this is the stuff the New York intellectuals, and their epigones all across the nation and the world, want us to coo at, in docile admiration, as "great prose" and "deep thought". Note how it is as banal and heavy-handed as the preceding samples, as well as fundamentally repellant on a human level: the narrator is upset because he did not succeed in stealing his friend's wife from him. Note the parade of clichés:

I don't want to suggest that I accomplished this cure on my own. Once Maria returned to New York, she played a large part in holding me together, and I immersed myself in our private escapades with the same passion as before. Nor was she the only one. When Maria wasn't available, I found still others to distract me from my broken heart. A dancer named Dawn, a writer named Laura, a medical student named Dorothy. At one time or another, each of them held a singular place in my affections. Whenever I stopped and examined my own behavior, I concluded that I wasn't cut out for marriage, that my dreams of settling down with Fanny had been misguided from the start. I wasn't a monogamous person, I told myself. I was too drawn by the mystery of first encounters, too infatuated with the theater of seduction, too hungry for the excitement of new bodies, and I couldn't be counted on over the long haul. That was the logic I used on myself in any case, and it functioned as an effective smokescreen between my head and my heart, between my groin and my intel-

ligence. For the truth was that I had no idea what I was doing. I was out of control, and I fucked for the same reason that other men drink, to drown my sorrows, to dull my senses, to forget myself. I became homo erectus, a heathen phallus gone amok. Before long I was entangled in several affairs at once, juggling girlfriends like a demented acrobat, hopping in and out of different beds as often as the moon changes shape. In that this frenzy kept me occupied, I suppose it was successful medicine. But it was the life of a crazy person, and it probably would have killed me if it had lasted much longer than it did.

Here are the worst clichés:

• she played a large part
• holding me together
• I immersed myself
• private escapades
• the same passion as before
• each of them held a singular place in my affections
• cut out for marriage
• misguided from the start
• counted on over the long haul
• an effective smokescreen
• between my head and my heart
• the truth was
• I had no idea
• out of control
• entangled in several affairs
• dull my senses
• it probably would have killed me if it had lasted much longer

There are phases which are not altogether clichés. Are they any good? Judge for yourself:

• infatuated with the theater of seduction
• drawn by the mystery of first encounters
• hungry for the excitement of new bodies
• this frenzy kept me occupied
• I suppose it was successful medicine.
• the life of a crazy person

A few are particularly embarrassing:

• between my groin and my intelligence.
• juggling girlfriends like a demented acrobat
• hopping in and out of different beds as often as the moon changes shape

A grown man should be ashamed to write such phases. And repetitive! Oy vaysmir! One example:

"I fucked for the same reason that other men drink to drown my sorrows, to dull my senses, to forget myself. I became homo erectus, a heathen phallus gone amok."

We get the first idea four times, and the second idea twice. He could just have said 'To drown my sorrows I became homo erectus.' Or, 'I fucked for the same reason that other men drink. I became a heathen phallus gone amok.' Not good in either case, but less painful than the bloated version.

This is the work of a man enchanted with himself, who cares neither for his readers, nor for anyone else; think of poor Dawn, Laura and Dorothy! Maybe their hearts were broken by homo erectus? Not a word about that. They were nothing to him, and they are nothing to Paul Auster. But this anonymous trio is only slightly more anonymous than the rest of the characters. The narrator is constantly telling us how 'brilliant', 'wonderful', 'intelligent', and so on, his characters are. But once they open their mouths, or act, they only say and do banal, petty, foolish or criminal things. The dialog, what there is of it, is particularly disappointing and flat. Above all there is no correspondence between people's speeches and the endless descriptions of the characters that Auster drowns us in.

Even all this might be acceptable if Auster had some powers of description. But he does not. Women are "astoundingly beautiful" or "somewhat attractive". If he does describe them more fully, he has no power with words so it doesn't stick. Fanny is supposed to be short, or even a bit plump, but I have no clear picture of her. Maria has "long legs" and "attractive breasts". By contrast think of what Vance does to us regarding Lyssel Bynnoc's feminine attributes, or the potential nudity of a sheirl in *Trullion* or *Wyst*. Speaking of Maria (first Paul's mistress, then almost Ben's), the part of the book I actually enjoyed were the pages that introduce her. She is an "artist" whose work consists of such things as following strangers and taking photos of them, or having herself followed by a private detective who notes everything she does and takes pictures of her. If it had been done with intelligence, tenderness, or a sense of humor, it might have been more than an unintentional satire on the sort of thing that goes on in the contemporary Art world, and the effect it has on people's souls. Though Maria supposedly spends most of her time engaged in activities that are both extremely bizarre and paltry, in the narrative she mostly does things that a perfectly ordinary,

normal, even good person, would do. Auster needs her weird activities to "cause" certain things to happen—without any guilt being incurred by anyone, of course. She is one of his deus ex machinai.

Dialia, Peter's first wife, and Iris, his second even more so, are non-entities. In the case of Iris, besides repetition of how wonderful, beautiful and important to him she is, and the revolting description of a tongue kiss on a street in Soho (I think the word 'flailing' was used) we learn nothing at all. But the main female characters, Fanny, Maria, and Lillian, are also indistinct; Lillian perhaps less so than the others, but she is a crazy and violent degenerate. Her motives and thoughts cannot be of much interest in any case.

Such is this famous book; a farrago of heavy-handed symbolism, tepid, thoughtless or frantic modernism, characters that are hazy and forgettable. The situations are implausible, foolish or shameful. The writing is ado-lescent. Fifty years from now this book, and this writer, will be forgotten.

Compare it to anything by Vance. From *Trullion* which I have to hand, here is Vance doing something he does no more than necessary—the very thing Auster does almost exclusively, and always fails at—describing people:

Glinnes Hulden entered the world crying and kicking; Glay followed an hour later, in watchful silence. From the first day of their lives the two differed-in appear-ance, in temperament, in all the circumstances of their lives. Glinnes, like Jut and Shira, was amiable, trusting, and easy-natured; he grew into a handsome lad with a clear complexion, dusty-blond hair, a wide, smiling mouth. Glinnes entirely enjoyed the pleasures of the Fens: feasts, amorous adventures, star-watching and sailing, hussade, nocturnal merling hunts, simple idle-ness.

Glay at first lacked sturdy good health; for his first six years he was fretful, captious and melancholy. Then he mended, and quickly overtaking Glinnes was thence-forth the taller of the two. His hair was black, his fea-tures taut and keen, his eyes intent. Glinnes accepted events and ideas without skepticism; Glay stood aloof and saturnine. Glinnes was instinctively skillful at hus-sade; Glay refused to set foot on the field. Though Jut was a fair man, he found it hard to conceal his prefer-ence for Glinnes. Marucha, herself tall, dark-haired, and inclined to romantic meditation, fancied Glay, in whom she thought to detect poetic sensibilities. She

tried to interest Glay in music, and explained how through music he could express his emotions and make them intelligible to others. Glay was cold to the idea and produced only a few lackadaisical discords on her guitar.

There are no clichés here. The phrases are not about what a clever fellow the writer is, but are there to tell a story: Glinnes and Glay live by being distinct in our minds eye. We know them because they have person-ality, because there is something to know. Most of all, Vance's phrases are all simple, sober and graceful:

- entered the world crying and kicking
- in appearance, in temperament, in all the circum-stances of their lives
- amiable, trusting, and easy-natured
- accepted events and ideas without skepticism
- His hair was black, his features taut and keen, his eyes intent
- stood aloof and saturnine
- lackadaisical discords

It could be insinuated that 'watchful silence' is a cliché. But not when used to define the attitude of a new-born! Vance's models are so etched in his own mind, and his pen is so sensitive, that his terms are exact and the pictures he draws stay with us forever. I finished Auster's book only yesterday, and already it is indistinct in my memory. Not only that: I want to forget it.

Auster does not show us, he tells us.[3] He does not use words to evoke and make alive, but to list and to jabber. Vance also, at times, tells us how it is. But what a dif-ference! Here is another passage from Trullion which does this. But it comes after we lived though enough experiences with the characters to see the justus of the analysis. Note also that it does not pretend to plumb the depths of anyone's soul, only to cast light on behavior from a cultural perspective, and the analysis serves to crystallize what we already have learned from our own observation.

There were further darker implications deriving from the Trevanyi world view. He was not just Glinnes Hulden, not just a lecherous Trill; he represented dark Fate, the hostile Cosmic Soul against which the Trevanyi felt themselves in heroic opposition. For the Trills, life flowed with mindless ease; that which was not here today would arrive tomorrow; in the meantime it was negligible. Life itself was pleasure. For the Trevanyi,

each event was a portent to be examined in all aspects and tested for consequences and aftermath. He shaped his universe piece by piece. Any advantage or stroke of luck was a personal victory to be celebrated and gloated over; any misfortune or setback, no matter how slight, was a defeat and an insult to his self-esteem. Duissane had therefore suffered psychological disaster, and by his instrumentality, even though, from the Trill point of view, he had only accepted what had been freely offer-ered.

Such a passage may seem straight-forward. But it is based on a sure grasp of human nature and the kinds of things that motivate real people. Auster, for all his coy pretension about how much he has to teach us about America and ourselves, is incapable of anything like it.

We should reflect upon how memorable Vance's books are, and compare our experience of Vance to what is left in us of the pleasures of other writers. Compare, for instance, Fanny, Maria or Lillian to Zap 210, a strange, marvellous and haunting creature. No one who has read *The Pnume* can forget her frail figure, her pale skin, her dark hair first cropped short, then growing longer. But what we retain most of this emancipated pnumekin, is the emergence of her spirit. At first withdrawn, sub-dued, clenched; step by step she blossoms into a normal woman. There may be nothing particularly remarkable about the woman she becomes, but Vance's accomplish-ment is all the greater for that. As for the sci-fi frame-work in which this happens, since it is the same process as an innocent girl growing thorough adolescence, it is fully charged with human significance. The woman Auster can squeeze a little personality into, Lillian Stern, is a fatiguing savage, about whom it is annoying to have to read. Vance makes us eagerly live each step of Zap 210's awakening. In Auster's book Peter is supposed to be in love with Fanny, and Ben is supposed to lust after Lillian; but the only thing that happens to us is that we hear Auster tell about it, over and over again. In The Pnume we actually live something simple and deli-cate, but also profound and large.

Vance never pretends he knows more than his readers, or even his characters. He never indoctrinates or preaches. He never leans on psudo-sophisticated ref-erences to inject meaning into moribund exposition. Auster follows the deplorable example of Umberto Eco, trotting out a tinsel scholarship that is in fact pathetic, or insulting. I would not blame Auster so severely if his trashy book were not proclaimed a masterpiece; but as

matters stand he must take full responsibility. Vance leaves sophistication aside. He happens to be a very well read man, almost without a doubt far more so than Auster. Just one example: Jack Vance can recite passages of Ezra Pound from memory. But in all the time I have known him, he has only done this once, at a moment when the circumstances called for it and the poetry moved in him. He would never do such a thing to impress anyone, least of all the "chattering classes".

Vance does not play gratuitous tricks in his books. He builds his stories not on the flotsam and jetsam of con-temporary prejudice, but on the foundation of reality, using not vapid and synthetic language structures to make up for an absence of understanding, or frantic lit-erary tactics to make up for an absence of a real story, but true observation, sober, independent thought, and the fruit of a cultivated imagination. Auster seems like a puppet by comparison, his strings pulled by leftist intel-lectualism. Auster is apparently trying to update the subject matter of a John Updike and treat it with the antic literary approach of a Milan Kundera. There is nothing wrong with that approach — though it's not going to give him, in itself, what he needs to write some-thing decent — and I suppose he succeeds in this for-mula, flattering to the post-modernist sensibility, to the extent he is able. If he had any real understanding of anything, any depth to his humanity, and if he were sen-sitive to language, he might be a worthwhile writer. Meanwhile he presumes to teach us. But we can learn nothing from him that we don't already know — and ought to have rejected. He is really trying to flatter pre-tensions which he is impolite, or stupid, enough to assume we share. To put it another way; he is trying to suck up to our weaknesses. Vance neither presumes to instruct nor holds his punches.

Paul Rhoads

1. As in Oliver Sachs of: *The Man Who Thought He Was Married To His Hat*; a key to the psycho-mayhem Auster is so fond of.

2. The most memorable sequence from this film shows people sitting around a table on toilets, as if it were a fancy dinner; and then a man wolfing down a meal in a tiny room, and looking up in shame and confusion when someone inadvertently walks in—as if our conventions of eating and defecation were pure human constructs with nothing real underneath them.

3. I do not mean to imply that description is to be avoided in writing. Vance is one of those writers who generally prefers to show, rather than tell. But telling is fine, if it is done properly. Another neglected great, Anatol France, whom Vance resembles in the philosphical aura of his work, is a specialist of descrip-tion. Here is a passage from Les Dieux Ont Soif (The Gods are Athurst), a book about the French revolution. Such telling and engaging passeges, which in this case France weaves into the scene of Louies' vist to Gamelin's painting

studio, are unthinkable for an impovrished writer like Auster. Vance reader's however will not be on altogether unfamilliar ground. Vance often paints portraits of such characters who live in two worlds at once. Akadie the Mentor comes to mind.

> Wearing a hat beribboned like a maypole and feathered like that of a salesman at work, the citizenesse Rochemaure was bewigged, powered, made-up and perfumed, her flesh still fresh, none-the-less, under all the artifice: those violent and fashionable dodges which betray the furor to live and the fever of those terrible times where tomorrow is so uncertain. Her corsage with its wide lapels, shimmering with enormous steel buttons, was blood red, and it was impossible to tell, to such an extent was it's style both aristocratic and revolutionary, if she wore the color of the victims or of the torturers... Louise, Masché de Rochemauer, daughter of a lieutenant of the King's 'chasses', widow of a procurer and, for twenty years, faithful fiend of the financier Brotteoux des Ilettes, had adhered to the new principles. She could be seen, in July 1790, hoeing the ground of the Champ de Mars. Her decided penchant for the powers-that-be carried her easily into the arms of the revolutionary regime, while her spirit of reconciliation, her ardent nature, her genius for intrigue, kept her attached to the aristocrats and counter-revolutionaries. She was a person who got much about, frequenting terrace restaurants, theaters, fashionable caterers, eateries, salons, newspaper offices, anti-chambers and committees. The revolution offered her new things, diversions, smiles, joys, business affaires, fruitful enterprises. Joining political intrigues with intrigues of the heart, playing the harp, drawing landscapes, singing romances, dancing Greek dances, giving dinners, receiving at her house the prettiest women like the countess of Beaufort, and the actrice Descoinges, staying up all night at the card table, she still found the time to be pitiable in the eyes of her friends. Curious, active, provocative, frivolous, knowing men, ignoring the crowd, equally untouched by the opinions she embraced as by the opinions she had to repudiate, understanding absolutely nothing of what was happening in France, she was enterprising, bold and audacious though ignorance of the dangers and by an unlimited confidence in the power of her own charms.

(Text translated and adapted from the French, by P. Rhoads)

Double Digitization

Rationale

In reflecting on my experiences at the Textual Integrity (TI) Conference recently held in Oakland, I realize what a rare and special privilege it is to be able to work with the Vance *oeuvre* so closely. Only a Vance fan could appreciate my awe at being in a room stacked with Vance publications of all descriptions and in a wide variety of languages, and to meet the Vances themselves. There are three points that I would like to convey about the Oakland TI Conference and what I learned there about how Double Digitization (DD) relates to the TI workers' job.*

Efficacy

A typical novel-length text will have on the order of 1000 endnotes by the time pre-proofing is complete. Among the TI workers tasks is examination of each end-note in the light of the ensemble of the textual evidence. *Wyst* was the first v-text to be TI-ed. The worker was Tim Stretton, and he did the job before DD was implemented. When he revisited his job with the results of DD he found that the results of DD alone provided, or would have provided, enough evidence to deal with approximately 30% of the endnotes. DD, in addition to its basic purposes, thus makes for an important simplification of the TI workers' job, with a consequent gain in time. The question of time, with regard to TI, is significant because several sources must be consulted; in some cases, the TI worker may even be required to review manuscript evidence in the Mugar Library in Boston. Any reduction in the TI effort afforded by DD, therefore, means that the text ultimately gets to the printer more quickly.

Schedule

A tentative publication date for the VIE has been announced, and the VIE Management team is making every effort to schedule all assignments to minimize the time required for a text to be ready for final printing, and to maximize the number of VIE volunteers kept busy across all texts at any time. For texts that have completed pre-proofing the remaining phases are: DD, Techno-Proofing, TI, Composition, Post-Proofing. Texts that did not originally require digitization (i.e. for which the Vances have provided computer disks) will not require DD; however, there are still many texts that will require it. One of the aspects of the DD effort is to prioritize work so that no TI job is delayed waiting for DD. DD is part of the "critical path" for many texts: any increase in the time required for DD means an equal delay in a text's readiness for the printer.

Volunteers

In light of the efficacy and schedule implications of DD, it is imperative that ample volunteers are available and working toward completion of the DD effort. A thorough summary of DD procedures and methods has been provided in previous issues of Cosmopolis, so I will not rehash them here. Rather, I will leave you with what I hope is sufficient incentive to volunteer for DD: If you want to help ensure that you receive your VIE volumes in the fall of 2002, volunteer for Double Digitization! The VIE is not an inevitability; it is a volunteer effort and depends on the good will elbow-grease of us all.

Chris Corley Double Digitizing Team Lead (retiring)

DD Techniques

DD-ing *Mazirian the Magician,* I have jotted down some technical reflections for other DD workers.

The greatest obstacle to correct OCR-ing seems to be flaws in the paper. These flaws are partially carried over into my various enhancements, since they are all based on the same images, though because modified are variously interpreted by TextBridgePro9. But it is obviously excellent to make scans from different books, as most DD jobs are organized.

I persist in doing DD manually, usually cutting my books apart and scanning one page at a time. I do not scan and OCR directly from an OCR program, but use an imaging program, as if I were scanning photos.

A problem manual scanning presents is file management. Here is how I deal with that: in each work session I scan a whole chapter. I use a pre-cropped, horizontal scan area, which saves scanning time. This is also an advantage when I crop the page, because the danger of clipping off a hanging line at the bottom of the page is lessened when the page is "abstracted" by being horizontal. When I crop I also take the opportunity to double check the page number-for reasons explained below. It takes no time to turn the page upright afterwards. I use the Twain interface with my scanner, and set it up to give me a good initial scan. This means: grey, 300dpi and, depending on the state of the pages, increased brightness and increased contrast. I have found that the contrast setting usually needs to be double the brightness setting. I also increase the gamma. These settings must be adapted to your equipment and the state of the pages you are scanning. However, even if your scanner settings can not be played with, what counts is getting a good initial scan. The scan, open in an imaging program, can then be cropped, saved and enhanced—if needed.

I save the scan in a folder named for the chapter. I name it by its page number, in 3 digit form (e.g. '032' for page 32). It is important that the scans line up correctly so they can be fed into an OCR program conveniently. But it is also important to keep track of the relation of the scans to the actual pages, because there is a danger of getting them out of order (by putting them in the scanner out of order) and page number nomenclature helps avoid this. It is a nomenclature that can be important even if the book is not cut up, because it is possible to turn two pages by accident. If I have any doubts, I check the heads and tails of each scan in order to be sure I have not introduced an error.

Once I have saved my basic scan, I enhance it by increasing the brightness and contrast. What I seek to do is eliminate all grey to make the image as crisp as possible. As always, the contrast gets increased twice as much as the brightness. The way to get this right is to blow up a test page so you can look into the pores of the image, and then find brightness and contrast settings that make the page as clean as possible. I save the enhanced scan as, e.g., 'x-032', in a folder called 'x'.

I now convert my enhanced scan to black and white, and save it in a folder called 'bw', with a 'bw' prefix (bw-032). This gives me three "usefully different" scans. I know, from prior experimentation, that when I put them though TextBridge9, they will give three "usefully different" OCR-ings. In other words, the errors that the OCR software makes with set of images will overlap as little as possible.

DD workers can experiment with such operations as 'focus', which their imaging software may offer. The way to see if such operations are useful is to look at what they do to a scan enlarged on your screen. Then explore the differences, if any, produced in OCR by comparing sample outputs.

For users of TextBridge9, I have found that the most powerful recognition settings are: "b&w any page" and "newsprint". After TextBridge has recognized the text, I go though all the pages and correct everything it points me to. This is part of taking advantage of mechanical processes. DD texts, of course, do not need to be proofed. The proofing has already been done to the v-text.

After I have done the OCR-ing, I do some basic work on the file. I start by "selecting all" and converting the whole text to format: "TxBr_2", a choice in the format dropdown menu of a file out-put by TextBridge9, and the only way I have found to get a single and proper format imposed on the whole file. I also flush out all bold and Italic by clicking twice on these buttons. I then eliminate rogue fonts and point sizes by imposing Times New Roman at 12 pts. I then survey the text quickly, using the "page-down" key, and remove any section breaks, and fix any wrong line breaks I notice.

I then use a search and replace protocol to get proper ellipses.

Replace:	*period period period*	By:	*ellispis*
Replace:	*period space period space period space*	By:	*ellispis*
Replace:	*period space period period*	By:	*ellispis*
Replace:	*period period space period*	By:	*ellispis*
Replace:	*ellipsis space*	By:	*ellispis*
Replace:	*space ellipsis*	By:	*ellispis*

TextBridgePro9 tends to interpret hyphenated words at line breaks as two words. Spell check washes most of these out, but not when the divided word is two dictionary recognized words.

Çuyal is particularly full of ellipsis. Often these appear in TextBridge's OCR-ed text window as a blank space between words. When I add in the hyphens that belong in the space, I then often found that the exported word file had the hyphen after all, and my added hyphen inserted an extra. TextBridge does not seem to be strong for hyphens which are sometimes reduced to 2 periods, and following quotation marks are often reversed. The Global-Search-&-Replace hyphen protocol I was using by the end is as follows:

Replace:	*period period period*	By:	*hyphen*
Replace:	*period period*	By:	*hyphen*
Replace:	*period space period space period*	By:	*hyphen*
Replace:	*period space period*	By:	*hyphen*
Replace:	*hyphen space*	By:	*hyphen*
Replace:	*hyphen double-quote-right*		
By:	*hyphen double-quote-left*		

There are further variations that can be useful, but this depends on the state of the OCR-ing.

I then run spell check on one of the OCR-ings. Spell check turns up various things, mostly words broken in two. This gives a little boost for the jockey.

Paul Rhoads

Techno Proofing

Using WordPick Lists for Proofing

These notes explain how "WordPick" files can help people engaged in Techno-Proofing. WordPick is a proofing tool which creates word lists to help proofers home in on possible errors in the book they are proofing.

When you are sent a Book to proofread, amongst the supporting files will probably be something like:

BOOK.STD
BOOK-A.TXT
BOOK-H.TXT
BOOK-S.TXT

BOOK.STD is the lists of words remaining after looking up every word in the book in a dictionary. If a word makes the list, it is not in the dictionary and may be an error.

The remaining three files are simply BOOK.STD broken into three parts for convenience. BOOK-A.TXT contains only words with the ending "apostrophe s", BOOK-H.TXT contains only hyphenated words. There are often a lot of words in both these files which are mostly correct, so putting them in separate files helps to reduce clutter in the last file, BOOK-S.TXT.

BOOK-S.TXT contains all the other single words without apostrophes or hyphens. Some words in this list may be correct, such as words coined by Jack Vance, but anything else is a suspect word and worth taking a closer look at.

In summary, the purpose of these lists is to draw your attention to words in the text which may be errors. If you prefer, ignore the supplementary files and just use BOOK.STD, as it contains everything in the others.

If we know some words are correct, why include them in the list?

The simple answer is that the lists are computer generated and the dictionary I use for lookups does not include many hyphenated words or words with apostrophes.

The lists would become more efficient if we could reduce the number of words in them that are OK. For example, we could turn hyphenated words and apostrophe words into plain words and check these in the dictionary, thereby eliminating most of them.

This can be done, but there is a trap here. Doing this just might let a genuine mistake past. For example big's is an error but taking the 's away leaves big, which is an OK word. So in the meantime we have to put up with some of these.

The list may also contain numbers, and symbols like * <<* and so on. You can ignore the numbers if you wish, but take note of the symbols; it is highly likely they are not supposed to be there.

A list can pick up errors or inconsistencies faster than reading the book itself. For example in "Ports of Call" there are two versions one underneath the other:

Owlswick
Owlswyck

Even when two variations are separated by a few lines, they can still catch the eye of an attentive proofer, as in:

Merklint's
· · ·
Mirklint's

Please contact me if you need further details. I am also pleased to hear your suggestions for making the lists more useful. You can reach me at delta1@ihug.co.nz. I hope this explanation has been helpful for you.

Ian Davies

FOOTNOTE. For those curious about the technicalities, here follows a note about the reference dictionary that I use for computer lookups.

It is a living creature, constantly growing. At present it contains 300,746 entries. It is essentially an English dictionary although there are quite a few foreign words also. However the inclusions are somewhat arbitrary. If I know a foreign word is correct and it isn't already there, then I can add it to the dictionary, hence the term 'a growing creature'.

At 300,000 plus entries this reference is already far more extensive than the Word for Windows spell checker of some 70,000 entries. However bigger is not always better. The bigger a dictionary, the more chance there is of counting as correct, an unusual or archaic term which in our context should be regarded as an error."

Here is an example. I have a list of 45,000 names of people from all over the world. Some of the names are quite imaginative! If I added these to my master dictionary, the following "typos" would immediately be considered valid words:

Aab, Ag, Fionnchaomh, Searc

What if the typo was searc when it should have been search?

If you find a valid word in my lists that shouldn't be there, then it's just a nuisance. But if I exclude a typo that SHOULD be there, then that's a major disaster.

My reference dictionary is constantly changing to reflect this reality, although the balance between completeness and current usage is sometimes a delicate path to tread.

Post Proofing

The VIE Post-Proofing effort is getting organized. No texts are currently in Composition, but several soon will be. Once a volume is composed, Post-Proofing for that volume must start. Post-Proofing will probably begin some time in April. So what is Post-Proofing, exactly? I think it can best be summarized by describing two key points: what it is, and what it is not.

What is Post Proofing? For each *VIE* volume, Post-Proofing will consist of ten separate readings, by different people, of the text exactly as it will appear in the printed book. The goal is to catch typos ("teh" for "the", missing quotation marks, etc.), as well as errors of presentation such as incorrectly formatted footnotes or unintentional internal inconsistencies of various kinds. All errors found in Post-Proofing will be sent back to Composition. Post-Proofing is the final Quality Assurance step for the entire *VIE*. It is the biggest of all the phases of *VIE* work.

What Post-Proofing is not: Post-Proofing is not Textual Integrity! While TI issues may emerge in Post-Proofing, in which case they will be looped though a TI review, if there are more than a very few such issues, it would show that the TI phase of *VIE* work had not succeeded. If this turns out to be the case it will be a serious matter indeed! However, we are confident in the long preparations made for TI, which is now proceeding well, and in the volunteers who are doing TI work on the texts. Post-Proofing is proofreading in the classic sense.

Post-Proofing will be organized into approximately ten sub-teams. Each sub-team will be responsible for four *VIE* volumes, give or take one or two depending on length and the progress of other sub-teams. Each sub-team will be composed of anywhere from ten to twenty volunteers, organized along roughly geographic boundaries. Planning is essential to completing Post-Proofing as quickly as possible, and I will be asking all volunteers to commit to a completion deadline when assignments are made.

If you are interested in volunteering for Post-Proofing, please contact Hans van der Veeke (J.J.C.van.der.Veeke@gasunie.nl) or Christian J. Corley (cjc@vignette.com).

Management

Proofreading Update

The one-hundred-thousand-word club now has 28 members. As usual, my thanks go to Suan Yong for producing this list.

As of Saturday, 17 March 2001:

Person	K words	Words
Steve Sherman	1473.7	1,473,700
David A Kennedy	945.8	945,800
Michel Bazin	620.0	620,000
Suan Yong	449.0	449,000
Till Noever	432.8	432,800
R C Lacovara	392.5	392,500
Ronald A Chernich	378.6	378,600
John A Schwab	345.2	345,200
Christian J Corley	310.8	310,800
Deborah Cohen	273.8	273,800
Rob Friefeld	269.0	269,000
Dave Worden	267.5	267,500
Patrick Dusoulier	249.0	249,000
Peter Bayley	246.8	246,800
Rob Gerrand	237.2	237,200
Dirk Jan Verlinde	228.3	228,300
Evert Jan C de Groot	200.0	200,000
Richard Chandler	191.0	191,000
Tim Stretton	181.9	181,900
Lee Lewis	176.1	176,100
Jeffrey A Ruszczyk	170.7	170,700
Gabriel Stein	166.6	166,600
Richard Linton	127.7	127,700
Jody Kelly	127.6	127,600
Hans van der Veeke	126.1	126,100
Erik Arendse	126.1	126,100
David Mead	115.4	115,400
Linnea Anglemark	102.8	102,800

For all intents and purposes, Pre-Proofing is finished. The almost-final round of assignments was made since the last issue of Cosmopolis appeared.

There are a few loose ends: for one thing, we can't proofread *Lurulu* until it is finished. Further, a number of unpublished texts are still being brought into *VIE* format: they are in the capable hands of the leaders of the Textual Integrity team, Alun Hughes and Tim Stretton.

But in essence, the vast bulk of our task is complete. We considered it a milestone to have, in Bob Lacovara's words, "captured" Jack Vance through the work of our digitizers. The proofreading of that impressive collection of texts is the next milestone. An honor roll will appear in the next issue of Cosmopolis, but you can look at the complete list of assignments at http://www.vie-tracking.com/work/, the new Process Integrity website.

This does not mean that work on these texts has ceased, or that we are smugly confident that the state of each text is perfection. Indeed, we are convinced of the reverse, which is why so much has been written about Techno-Proofing and Double Digitization in recent issues of *Cosmopolis*.

The first few texts have now come out of the DD process—scanning, OCRing, jockeying and monkeying—and each one of them has been significantly improved. Our suspicion that our original digitizations contained errors produced by the scanning process has been confirmed beyond a doubt. These efforts are now the most important activity being performed by *VIE* volunteers. I would like to urge any proofreader who is feeling a sense of emptiness from the lack of new assignments to make him- or herself available to the DD or Techno teams.

On a personal note, I will now move over to assist Alun Hughes with the TI team, though I will continue to make assignments to the elite monkey team.

Post-Proofing will be in the able hands of Chris Corley. I have greatly enjoyed my time with the proofreading team and in particular the contact with individual volunteers, whose enthusiasm for and dedication to the project has been nothing short of inspiring. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Steve Sherman
Proofreading Team Lead (retiring)

Letters to the Editor

Cosmopolis Editor:

I read *Cosmopolis* from time to time, and cannot fail to notice that there are two questions that consistently provoke attention and argument among the other readers and contributors, namely:
1) Can subscribers require some changes in the design or contents of the *VIE?*
2) Is Jack Vance an author of science fiction books?
Being a complete stranger to the unique and noble

process of restoration and unification of Vance's works, I hope, however, that my opinions can provide some insight into the collective attitude of the substantial fraction of VIE subscribers who, like me, suddenly discovered Vance's treasure while desperately looking for something readable in the bottomless ocean of modern literary mediocrity and sickness. The answer to the first question is easy and decisive: No. No, because *VIE* is not the subscribers' idea in the first place, because those who came up with this idea and incorporated to bring it to life have all the rights, moral and legal, to shape this edition according to their own preferences and tastes, and because our contributions (payments) will cover only a fraction of the costs involved in the preparation and production of this edition, considering the enormous time and efforts spent by the volunteers. It will be nice, of course, to have complete, rare editions of Vance's works on our shelves, and to be able to read them the way they were intended, without that subconscious influence of the poisonous and arbitrary softcover and jacket illustrations imposed on our brains by the pulp fiction "artists". Naturally, every one of us has his own vision of the ideal Vance collection, and can offer suggestions in this respect. We cannot, however, request or require changes. Strictly speaking, we are not buyers, and *VIE* project people are not sellers. We are all in this to preserve Jack Vance's legacy. Everything else is less important. I subscribed mainly as a supporter of the good cause, revolutionary in some respects. I don't have any time to contribute; therefore, I offer my money and, if necessary, other means of support. If this project is Paul Rhoads' child, let him bring this child up the way he considers best, and don't lecture a parent on how to shape the character of his offspring. If you are opposed to Paul's choice of the fonts or vignettes so much that it would totally spoil your pleasure after receiving your copy of the *VIE*, do us all a favor, and unsubscribe. If Paul Rhoads thinks that the *VIE* is a substantial step toward saving Western civilization from its impending doom, it's his belief and his business. Personally, in this I agree with him 100%. Wouldn't you pay a little to save the lost works of J. S. Bach from oblivion? 150 years ago, Felix Mendelssohn did what Paul Rhoads is doing now: he saved most of Bach's work for the posterity, though he was too late, and some heavenly music perished forever. (As the legend goes, Mendelssohn found some of the pages from Bach's "Passion According to St. Luke" being used as sausage wrappers by the Leipzig shop owner, who was very surprised to see a well-dressed, grown-up man bitterly crying over an unwrapped piece of his good salami.) Also, I suspect that the *VIE* project, at least partially, is Paul's way of expressing his dissent toward the appalling, ugly, and immoral world of modern art and literature. Wouldn't you use an opportunity to convince, by demonstration, the visitors of the modern art museum that most of what they see there are the king's new clothes, that real art is extemporaneous, that is, doesn't use the esoteric language accepted according to certain temporary fashion or style, that great contemporary art cannot be found in the government-subsidized, gallery-owner-approved, critically acclaimed institutions designed, maintained, and financed by the enemies of talent and skill who believe that "art is anything one can get away with", and strive to exterminate in embryo everything reminding them of their artistic impotence? Jack Vance's work is an epitome of real, extemporaneous art that demonstrates by contrast, to ignorant and sophisticated minds alike, the self-inflated, mundane, tasteless, skill-ridden, and sick character of so-called "modern literature". I don't want to project an impression that I agree with everything that Paul Rhoads has written in "Cosmopolis". Contrary to Paul's opinion, I think that Stanislav Lem is an interesting philosopher, a psychologist, and a most acute critic of totalitarianism, not merely a science fiction writer. I think that Heinlein was, first of all, a great popularizer of the new and true ideas of rational anarchism, and, only as an afterthought, an author of most entertaining books for young people. I think that Dawkins' "Selfish Gene" is one of the most important books of our time that gives us a new, vertigo-inducing view of impartial, inhuman truth as it is. I don't see Jane Austen's sentimental and shallow novels as a "must read" for anyone. And, by the way, there is no god. But I am most grateful to Paul for his staunch opposition to the deadly plague of our times, the so-called "modern art", for showing us the most curious works of Tiepolo, of which I was unaware, for some of his hilarious observations (I especially liked categorizing Karl Marx's works as science fiction), and, above all, for being an instigator, a driving spirit, and a gatekeeper of Vance Revolution. The second question, dealing with the alleged relation of Vance's work to the ubiquitous genre of science-fiction, would be very complicated if there would exist a mathematical definition of science fiction *per se* or, for that matter, of any other genre. There are discrete phenomena allowing us to mark them with labels, "0" or "1", "Yes" or "No", "Pleasant" or "Repulsive", etc., and there are multidimensional artifacts that can withstand any process

of classification, and emerge from it with that mysterious smile of inexplicable reason. Vance's is the latter case, in which any categorization or classification is impossible. There are non-binary questions that only can be answered with "Both, either, or neither". Is Greenland an island or a continent? Is United States a free society or a half-totalitarian regime where a majority of the media-brainwashed mediocrity and parasitic government wards mercilessly exploits a minority of the independent talents and entrepreneurs? Was Leonardo an artist, or a scientist? Does light consist of the particles or of the waves? Was Lev Tolstoy a fool or a genius? Is Universe infinite and eternal or bound and doomed? Was Richard Wagner a lying scoundrel or a great composer? Is Sun a primary source of useful energy or a primary source of skin cancer? Is Jack Vance a science fiction writer or an Esopus of our time? Both, either, or neither. The fact that Jack Vance himself disapproves of the "SF" label doesn't mean, of course, that those who like science fiction shouldn't enjoy his books as such. Why not? *Horribile dictu*, I am brazen enough to proclaim that I don't have to agree in everything with the Maestro himself. For example, I am allergic to jazz. I found Vance because I like good science fiction, and ain't ashamed of it. I think that the whole argument about Vance and SF is baseless. Every reader with brains instantly realizes that Vance exceeds, far and wide, any genre limitations. After that, as Baron Bodissey aptly puts it, "the point is moot". Readers of *Cosmopolis* are invited to describe their "Vance experiences". Here's mine, in short. Back in Siberia, I've read one of Vance's early stories in Russian ("A Gift of Gab"), published, along with Asimov, etc., in a SF anthology. Later Vance's works were "no-no" in the former Soviet Union, and when I was kicked out in 1987 and landed in Connecticut, I knew nothing of Vance, and even forgot his name. Trying to feed my son's mind with healthy, nutritious mindstuff, I purchased Dumas, Balsac, Heinlein, Rand, Orwell, Huxley, Lem, Ardry, Dawkins, etc. In search of more good books, I entered one of the CompuServe forums, where I instantly found myself waging a hopeless political and cultural battle with the overwhelming enemy forces, bellowing like a bleeding bear, and challenging the patience of the trigger-happy leftist mediators (who kicked me out in no time, of course). There, an old man called R. W. Odlin recommended to me Vance's books. I am infinitely grateful to this mysterious benefactor. Vance's books, along with J. S. Bach's music, literally saved my life, getting me out of the deepest depression, amplified by the terrible mistake of a doctor who injected a steroid medication that almost killed me. Vance has become the best teacher for my son, and a constant supporter for me, making me believe, again and again, that life and beauty, truth and justice, sense and reason, however oppressed, betrayed, or persecuted, still exist in this world—for those who seek. Like Bach and Edgar Allan Poe, Vance, probably, doesn't realize the unique size and timeless quality of his talent, though I am sure that he consciously avoids the fleeting expressions and particularities of our age, thus flying over the barbed-wire fence surrounding the field of self-expression allowed to modern writers. Any attempts to imitate Vance (Gene Wolfe comes to mind) are futile. He is neither vulgar, corrupted, obsessed with sex, or self-righteous enough to be modern. He has taste and skill: two things most culturally incorrect in our society. The fact that he is unappreciated in his time is actually the best compliment. Vance's cornucopia of words is impregnated with strange, powerful hypnotic force, stirring anxiety and healing at the same time, like a vivid dream of a sleeper who doesn't suspect that he sleeps, a dream which makes fiction a reality, visible, palpable, pungent, fateful, full of exquisite colors, a reality that shall lay out paths and connections in the minds of people for centuries to come.

Alexander Feht
Music composer and Russian translator
Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Cosmopolis Editor:

I have followed the dialogue about whether Jack Vance is or is not a science fiction/fantasy writer with great enjoyment. This energetic literary interchange redounds to *Cosmopolis's* merit, and no doubt earns the vast gratitude of its readers. On this at least I am sure we can agree. I'd like to add a brief note to the conversation.

My favorite reading mode involves stacking up anywhere from 3 to 6 books I'm currently working on and spending a while with each, migrating to different worlds with each switch. Typically 2 or 3 of the books are fiction (with one of these almost always being something by Vance), and a couple are non-fiction chosen from topics such as sports, rock music, or the art of street scams. A healing beverage always accompanies these sessions, most frequently my secret-recipe "orange driver." (Recipe available for the modest price of 19 silver florins.) During

warm weather the locale is usually out back by my pool, on a chaise lounge under a large pine tree. During cold weather it's stretched out on the sofa, with a blaze in the fireplace and soft, spacy new age music on the stereo.

I recently interleaved a selection of old fiction favorites: Asimov's 5-book *Foundation* series, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and Vance's *Trullion: Alastor 2262*. Rotating among them was not only marvelously enjoyable, but also an invitation to do a little comparative noodling.

I found more in common between the *Foundation* setting and the *Alastor* setting than I would have guessed. This is a letter, not an article, so I'm not going to get expansive. But the dynamics facing the Connatic's rule of the Alastor cluster and those challenging the Foundation empire — past/empire-being-shaped/empire-to-be, despite their non-comparable histories, are there to be seen. (Terminus is just dying to be the Numenes of its universe.) So are the ways in which the characters are shaped by the imaginative realities crafted by the authors, realities that have tantalizing connections to the world we know (politics!), but clearly can't ever exist. The only thing that's real is the human nature involved.

Tolkien's trilogy had nothing in common with Trullion, but it has plenty in common with — and put me in a retrospective process regarding — two of my Vance favorites: the Cugel novels, and the *Lyonesse* trilogy. The fantastic mythical beings, the impossible missions, the "on the road again" settings, the well-defined limitations of the magical powers invoked, the elegant language, and through all the connection to the human motivations we're familiar with . . . well, it wouldn't be hard to go on.

So, were it not for one fact, I would be inclined to risk a public roasting by Paul Rhoads (although he does it so well it would almost be worth it) by saying that if the *Foundation* series is science fiction, so is the *Alastor* series, and if *The Lord of the Rings* is fantasy, so is *Lyonesse* and *Cugel's Saga*. But here's the fact that deters me: the statement in *Cosmopolis* 12 that "Jack Vance does not like, or read, science fiction, and condemns it 'en masse' as juvenile." If Jack Vance doesn't regard himself as a SF/fantasy writer, then it most assuredly should not be asserted by me that he is — somehow, I think I'd be missing a point. So I'll accept that perhaps it's time to modify the category in which I've put Vance's fiction — which won't modify his standing as the author whose writing means the most to me — and chalk up this spirited and thought-provoking dialogue as another benefit of the work he's given us.

Carl Goldman

Project Review

The VIE project is a year and a half old. We are forging boldly into new areas. The time is ripe for a quick retrospective, and for passing out a few laurels.

Where We Are Now:

— Our texts (with a few minor exceptions) are digitized.
— The end of pre-proofing is in sight.
— The trip to Milan has created a link between project and printer.
— Thanks to Joel Anderson, our format and fonts are ready to go.
— A large team of TI workers has been trained in conferences in Europe (Chinon) and in America (Oakland). These were organized and led by Alun Hughes and Tim Stretton.
— The 'Double Digitization' and 'Techno-Proofing' teams are up to strength, and up to speed.
— We are beginning to receive down payments from subscribers.
— Chris Corley is busy setting up the most vast of all VIE efforts: Post-Proofing.
— An initial crop of texts has made it through TI, and is now entering Composition.

Special thank goes to the many people who joined the DD and Techno teams a few weeks ago, responding to our call for help. They have tipped the balance; we are now assuring a better flow of work from all teams.

Some History and Some Kudos:

The VIE was born in the winter of 1998, in the office of Norma Vance, at the sight of one of Andreas Irle's beautiful German editions: *Die Domänen von Koryphon*. The VIE books will have the same dimensions, and almost the same format, as Andreas' books. Andreas has helped elaborate the VIE format.

The project got going when Mike Berro created the VIE web-site, in August 1999, using ideas which had been worked out over the previous months. These can be condensed into the formula: 'create a large group of volunteers to accomplish the work!' Mike's page was so successful that the project would have quickly collapsed of its own weight if John Foley had not stepped in and created the Master Plan. This document, the skeleton of the project, traces out all the work that must be done, and how it must be done. It was a sobering document to con-

template. But the Master Plan forced us to understand the dimensions of the task. Our persistence has been vindicated; the project is healthy and on schedule.

In those early days Nick Gevers and Johan von Gijsegem were of great help. These volunteers are no longer with us, but at the beginning they played important roles, and the project could not have survived that period without their generous, hard work. At that time also, Suan Yong joined management. He was given the Olympian name "Lares", god of the hearth, and he is still living up to that name. Suan, though by far the youngest member of management, is a major pillar of the project.

It was in mid-autumn 1999 that Tim Stretton and John Schwab took over management of actual VIE work. Both have been indispensable ever since. Tim led the proofing effort, though now he has switched over to TI and the Proofing team was taken over by the indefatigable Steve Sherman, who has seen Pre-Proofing though to a triumphant conclusion. Steve has now also been transferred to TI, and Chris Corley is taking over for the Post-Proofing phase. John Schwab led the digitizing effort to triumph, and has now become "Coordination Commissar". His new job is to streamline, and urge along, the complex voyage of each text out of Pre-Proofing, through DD, Techno and TI, and into Composition. It is a complex task of organization and human relations. People who do this sort of work are normally called "corporate executives" and paid six digit salaries. I am sure John is putting in at least 40 hours of his free time every week on VIE work. The same could be said for many members of VIE management. Of course the VIE work itself is being done by about 200 volunteers, none of whom are being paid either! It is all out of gratitude for what Jack Vance has given us.

Gathering these volunteers was made possible by the Internet, and Mike Berro's site in particular. But the VIE also has a publicity program — for the moment in hibernation. John Robinson ran what was called "Phase 1" of this program, which involved alerting Vance readers, via the internet, to the VIE. John made hundreds of postings on different sites. The VIE has been mentioned in Locus magazine, and a full page article was written about Vance, and the VIE, in a local Oakland, CA paper.

It should be noted that members of management accomplish their share, and often more that that, of regular, non-management, VIE work. But I would like to name some non-management VIE volunteers. Michael Bazin, Till Noever, Ron Chernich, Rob Friefeld, Peter Bayley, Rob Gerrand and Evert Jan de Groot have all dis-tinguished themselves by proofing over 200,000 words. Among digitizers, Richard Chandler and Joel Hedlund (who have both since entered management) as well as Gan Uesli Starling, David Mortimer, and Christopher Reid (not to mention Suan Yong, again) were responsible for a disproportionate amount of work. This list is not exhaustive, and many others have worked almost as much as these folk; we know who you are!

While Tim Stretton was head of Proofing, the very successful Proofing Mentor program was launched. Steve Sherman, Patrick Dusoulier, David Kennedy and Chris Corley have done a great deal to train proofers, keep volunteers in the project, and improve the quality of text work.

When it became clear that we would need Double Digitization and Techno-Proofing, Richard Chandler, Chris Corley and John Robinson took management positions. Thanks to the inventive genius of Koen Vyverman and Ian Davies, we have special tools for Techno-Proofing; the VDAE and WordPick. The true father of DD and Techno-Proofing, however, is Chris Corley. It was he who, long ago, noted that there are typical scanning errors or "scannos" (e.g. and/arid, misinterpreted by OCR software because 'n' and 'ri' have such similar forms). This is the basic insight on which DD is built, and Chris was doing proto-Techno-Proofing long before the rest of us caught up. Chris has also served as the HTML editor of Cosmopolis. Ron Chernich has recently joined management as Techno-Proofing lead.

Several people, more and less publicly, have been of great help to me personally. John Foley is not only the head of the Composition team, he is also my closest personal counselor, and it is largely thanks to him that the project is moving in the right direction. Bob Lacovara's energy and analytic powers have also been crucial in many areas. Bob is, in addition to being one of our best text-workers, the creator of *Cosmopolis*, which has been a key to the project's continuing success. Debbie Cohen has recently become editor of *Cosmopolis*. Debbie is a former VIE gatekeeper (a post held successively by Suan, Tim, and Steve, and now by Hans van der Veeke) and a very productive proofer. Her robust and smiling presence is a great benefit to management. Bob is also in charge of our financial planning, and regulates many of our internal processes. He is our business contact with the printer, and one of the members, along with Patrick Dusoulier and Tim, of that most exclusive of all VIE teams; the "monkeys". In the hierarchy of VIE management, Bob Lacovara is second-in-command.

Behind the scenes I have received help from many people. I would like to mention Joel Hedlund, Kurt Harriman, Doug Wilson, Jesse Polhemus and Alan Bird. Joel Hedlund, in particular, has been of great help to me and, as head of the TI Library and in other ways, is an important element in the VIE effort. Kurt Harriman has done important work cataloging manuscripts in Oakland.

Though he is no longer with management, a special place is reserved for David Rose. David is someone who dreamed of a VIE long before our project was launched. Mike Berro put us in touch with him, and in the early days David was of great service, both to me personally, and the project as a whole. Though few are aware of the fact, David is one of the founders of the VIE.

I wish to also make special mention of Joel Anderson. Joel has been working closely with us, in a spirit of good humor and benevolent criticism, for about a year. Thanks to this publishing professional of real artistic talent and taste, our format has reached a remarkable degree of beauty and perfection.

A very special contribution is being made to the VIE by Ed Winskill and Bob Nelson. These two lawyers have done all the VIE's legal work, pro bono. They are not only insuring the legal health of the project, but their generosity is keeping lawyers' fees from being added to the book-set price, thus making the VIE more accessible to more people. Ed and Bob, by donating their highly paid professional skills, are making a real contribution to contemporary cultural life. They are not the only people donating professional services, but we are particularly grateful to them.

Alun Hughes has done a remarkable job getting on top of the TI problem. It is a much thornier and more complex business than we imagined. Those who visit Alun's TI-evidence page can not fail to be awed by the quantity of detail that must be mastered. I would like to emphasize just two of Alun's accomplishments. The first is the greatly important insight that, for the project to "correct" Vance's texts, we must begin with a stable point of reference; some one or another "preferred", or "digitized", published edition. I won't go into the importance of this insight, but it has made a difference to all our text work for the last year. His second accomplishment is the elucidation of the nature of the correction processes, as they apply to the work of Jack Vance. As Alun points out, Vance's case is like no other. Alun's contribution, though it has so far been mostly preparatory, has already been massive. He has built a solid foundation, as well as a capable team, to do this important and

exciting work, which is now in full swing. A visit to the TI web-site will fill in some of the details I can't go into here.

Mike Berro, in addition to creating and maintaining the web-site, and animating the VIE message board, also serves on the VIE board of directors. He is also the conceptor of the deluxe edition, which has been a total success, and is all sold out. He is also the benefactor who has financed our management operations so far. Mike is one of the founders of the VIE, and a courageous element in its success.

Finally, I wish to mention the efforts, good will, and sunny dispostion of Norma Vance, who continues to be a great and essential support to the project.

I never tire of making the point that VIE subscribers are, in fact, volunteers. But I urge everyone to do at least a bit of VIE work, one stint of Post-Proofing for example. When, at last, you receive your set, it will then be more than a purchase; it will be a personal accomplishment, and you will be proudly able to say:

I have participated to no small degree; let this be noted upon my scroll of honors!*

And it will be! All volunteers will be named in the volumes their work touches.

Paul Rhoads

CPA Needed

The Vance Integral Edition, as a California non-profit organization, is required by law to file tax returns and other financial documents pertaining to our business operation. Therefore, we are seeking the services of a qualified CPA from within the ranks of the Volunteers.

As has been stated in *Cosmopolis* many times, the VIE is entirely a volunteer organization. Many professionals whose expertise has touched some matter needed by the VIE have volunteered their time. Even now, as we are beginning to tally the volunteer hours which have been donated to the VIE, we are not surprised to see that the "hours" are better measured in "man-years."

Of course, for many of you who have volunteered, the reward will be to see the great works arrayed in over

one meter of shelf space, in forty-four volumes of the Readers' or Deluxe Edition.

It is our hope to find a qualified CPA among the ranks of "the friends of Jack Vance" who, by volunteering their professional skills, would like to make an important contribution to the accomplishment of the VIE project.

If you, or someone you know might be interested, please have them contact me at lacovara@infohwy.com.

Bob Lacovara

Afterword

So ends *Cosmopolis 14!* Life with the VIE is always a lively and energetic play of minds. Middle-way by temperament and training, I don't often voice my opinions (except to yell testosterone when people wrangle an issue beyond a certain limit), believing, like Paul, that the Truth Is Out There, and, unlike Paul, that it's better experienced than discussed. Still, I love the essays, letters, emails, arguments, cameraderie, that is a part of this endeavor: discuss away! A reminder: *Cosmopolis* is now on a 6 week schedule, so the deadline for *Cosmopolis 15* is May 1. Again, many thanks to Joel Andersen, our graphics genius who who composes *Cosmopolis*, and sets it in Amiante.

Deborah Cohen

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.

Cosmopolis Delivery Options

Those who do not wish to receive *Cosmopolis* as an e-mail attachment may request "notification" only.

HTML versions of past issues are available at the VIE website. The PDF versions of Cosmopolis, identical to those distributed via e-mail, are also available at the website. If you wish to have the most current version of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, follow this link:

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html

The Cosmopolis Literary Supplement, No. 6

Is available at the VIE download page: http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~suan/vie/cosmo/ Till Noever and Tim Stretton continue their books, we have another tale by Raphaël Mesa, *and* a new format.

VIE Contacts