COSMOPOLIS

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Contents

Composition 101: Organization

Now that texts are making their way through Textual Integrity, it is time for us in Composition to share with our readership what we are doing for the *VIE*. I will provide a number of introductory articles in the next few issues of Cosmopolis, and then we can share with you ongoing progress reports and analytical articles as we continue our work through to completion. It seems appropriate to explain in a word or two my philosophy of general silence on the subject of composition. It has been my long experience that matters of presentation typically and regularly overwhelm matters of content when both are being discussed. The quiet work of a few through the past two years has not been left undone, however, and we are now ready to spring directly to life to serve the *VIE*.

The Composition team was always defined by me to be a very small and skilled team. This is based on my experiences in publishing and management. Before we delve into our work flows and other aspects of *VIE* composition, it is appropriate to share with you how we are organized.

As the Head of Composition, I have various duties that essentially relate to the coordination of the effort and the ultimate quality of the work. For example, I will coordinate document flows inbound from TI and outbound to Post-Proofing as well as outbound to Final Production. I will decide the work assignments according to ideas developed between Paul and me. I will oversee the quality of the work through thorough internal reviews and will certify the documents when ready for the next stage in the process. I will be involved through to the end of the *VIE* project, examining and certifying the final Golden Masters for printing, and working with the Final Production team, including the final press runs in Milan.

In view of these responsibilities, I have developed three important positions in the Composition Team. The first of these is that of Master Designer, who is Paul Rhoads. Although he is indeed the Editor-in-Chief, the use of this separate title indicates the scope of his work on the Composition team. From the creation of the basic fonts, additional special fonts, spines, book cover and papers, frontispieces, front matter layout and the like to the nuances of the layout choices made on every page, the Master Designer has purview. The shape, the flavor, the impact of the *VIE* design will come from the members of the Composition team as the fruits from the ground tilled and tended by the Master Designer. He will work closely with all the team members—as a team member—which will permit us to produce a coherent creation. Finally he has placed in my hands the ultimate role of drawing these strands together.

The second position is that of Master Composer, who is Joel Anderson. This title and position indicate that I have acknowledged that Paul and Joel have closely developed the *VIE* typographical and page layout principles together. This close association accords a special place to Joel in compositional matters. He will be the master source of the canonical fonts and page layout instructions for all the Composers on the team. He will also compose the front and back matter of the volumes in very close association with Paul. One of the fruits of setting Volume 31 (Wyst)

first, is that it shall be used as the instructive prototype — the living example — of the compositional principles developed by Paul and Joel. Joel will also serve as the formal mentor for those Composers using the Quark Xpress on Mac platform and he will work closely and strictly with John Schwab to provide an identically behaving package for the PageMaker on PC platform (supported by John Schwab). Lastly, Joel will work with me to certify the Golden Master status of the volumes in Final Production.

The third special position on the Composition team is that of Assistant Head of Composition, who is John Schwab. He is fondly referred to as 'Herc' (short for Hercules), one of the only members of the *VIE* who still retain their early Olympian monikers. As my assistant, he will be the interface to the *VIE* document archive (inbound and outbound), the keeper of the version names, the communicator to the *VIE* Work Commissar, Suan Yong. He has already established our own web site for our internal work processes and document reviews and he will maintain our internal tracking (which will need to involve more tracking detail than will be kept at the Work Commissar's master tracking site). He will serve as the mentor for those Composers using the PageMaker on PC platform and he will work closely and strictly with Joel Anderson to provide complete instructions for all Composers. He will deliver and support the font packages and templates to the team, along with Joel. As so many of you know, John has been like bedrock for the *VIE*.

At last, we come to the Composers themselves, namely Joel Anderson and John Schwab, joined by Andreas Irle, Steve Frame and Jeremy Cavaterra. We have in these people an experienced group of Composers who are eager to prepare the volumes according to the aesthetic principles established for the *VIE*. We communicate on a private channel on a daily basis with one another solving the interesting compositional problems that arise. Next time, I will share with you the work flows we have developed to manage the effort clearly and properly..

John Foley

A New Format Sample from the Composition Team

For the information of VIE Volunteers and Subscribers, this month we present a two-page sample: pages 26 through 29, from *Wyst*. This text has been set, and Post-Proofed, and is now awaiting the addition of 'front matter', to be ready for the printer. (We will be delivering the ensemble of our texts to Sfera, over a period of a few months, beginning next spring.)

Our format, based upon the German editions of Andreas Irle, was perfected for the *VIE*, in the context of Amiante (the *VIE* font) by Joel Anderson. Amateurs of book making may appreciate the many subtle touches which give these pages their particular force and charm. Please note that our Italian sewn bindings open with ease — as we know from the dummy volumes prepared for us by Sfera — there will therefore be no squeezage at the spine, and these two-page spreads will be as you see them: without crop-marks! Nerds will be glad to know that we have worked with the printer to harmonize our electronic output with their printing equipment.

As for the fonts, four of them are shown on these pages. The very handsome Amiante Small Caps, which can be seen on sample page 28, was created by Joel Anderson. The most notable particularities of Amiante are, *a)* the rejection of homogenized forms, *b)* the use of Modern Face proportions, *c)* an approach to italics inspired by 16th-century practice.

Concerning homogeneity: in Amiante, for example, the 'l' form is not reproduced as a constitutive element of the 'b', 'd', 'h', or 'k'. The bulge of a 'b', or the arcade of an 'h', is not merely a repetition of the 'p' bulge or the 'n'; 'i' is not a sawed-off 'l', 'j' is not an 'i' with a tail, and such letters as 'e', 'o' and 'c' are not based on the same ellipse. Each letter has its own shape, and each serif is designed for its own place in a specific letter, and is not a mechanical repetition of the 'font serif.' This is what is meant by 'non-homogenized'. It is obvious that homogeneity, though it does give a clean, authoritative look to a page, impedes legibility, since recognizing letters — the basic act of reading — is more difficult if they are as similar as possible, rather than being characteristic. Non-homogeneity, however, does not mean 'savage heterogeneity'. This also, obviously, would impede legibility. There is no easy solution, and artistic judgement is necessary. The claim that reading is a matter of recognizing words, and not letters, while not totally false, is essentially a canard. If it were true, then changing fonts — which changes the shapes of words — would render reading difficult, which it does not. And what of words which are similar in shape, such as:

food—feed; dad—had—hah—hod; oat—cat; etc.?

The more letters resemble each other, the more difficult to distinguish such words from each other.

Amiante's 'Modern Face proportions' make the letters narrower, and more widely spaced, than what is typical of contemporary typography. These proportions were invented by the 18th century French and Italian typographers who brought their art to its greatest perfection. Since then, the

temptation of a certain aestheticism, the charms of technology, and economic pressures, have not only deformed and homogenized letters, but squeezed words and lines as closely together as possible, in order to pack a maximum of text on a page. The most expensive part of any book, assuming it is not bound between ebony boards inlayed with rubies, is the paper. Cramming words onto a page of reduced margins has, therefore, become standard publishing practice, as is inevitable when 'democracy' becomes a 'cultural value'. Meanwhile, since book typography is now totally dominated by the contemporary avatar of Old Style—an aesthetic movement started over a century ago—letter proportions are unadapted to this situation. Old Style, a 19th century reaction to the growing mechanical look of Modern Face, revived the more gracious Old Face forms, meaning the sorts of letters designed by masters like Garamond and Caslon. But these proportions were conceived for the printed word of the 15th and 16th centuries, which existed in a context of cruder materials and techniques. They are not appropriate for the much smaller point sizes used in modern books. Letters with Old Face proportions are too wide, too highly contrasted, and have stems that are too long, for use at 10 or 12 points. To compound this error, Old Style, in its revival of Old Face, retained the tidiness of Modern Face, which, in the digital age, has become a numbing homogeneity, far worse than the mechanistic excesses of Modern Face to which it initially was a reaction. Amiante is an innovation in its adaptation of Old Face forms to Modern Face proportions.

As for italics: this sample does not show Amiante Italic, a font that will be used very sparingly since Vance does not use italics for narrative emphasis. The 'italic' font in the sample is not Amiante Italic, but Amiante Cursive, which has specific tasks in the *VIE* format. It will be used for things like ship names and poetry. As you can see, Cursive is not a standard italic font, that is a slanted, and slightly modified, version of the associated roman font. Though designed with Amiante Book in mind, Cursive is, in the Renaissance manner, not an associated but an independent font. As in Renaissance italics, its letters are closely spaced. Renaissance italics were designed to save space in less expensive editions. In contemporary typography we are used to having the italics more widely spaced than the romans, as can be seen in this sample from a recent, standard, handsome paperback, a French book published by the prestigious Editions du Seuil.

de Rome et des philosophes, c'est préparer les voies du Dieu vivant, déployer les étapes du pèlerinage de la cité de Dieu.
    Perplexae et permixtae mêlées et compénétrées comme

With Amiante, this relation is reversed. Though inform-

ed by historical fonts, Cursive is not antiquarian or nostalgic. It is a natural italic solution given the wider Modern Face spacing. Since italics are used for emphasis in the context of a roman font, the principle of anti-homogeneity calls for such a contrast.

I want to address a word to our many Post-Proofers on the tortured subject of 'kerning', or the spacing between particular pairs of letters. Though it is not impossible that some kerning errors may crop up, Amiante's kerning is finalized. Post-Proofers, by the nature of their work, must scrutinize the texts closely. They will inevitably, therefore, find what seem to be kerning errors. But three points should be kept in mind:

1) In digital book setting, with its partially automatic justification, some aspects of letter spacing are determined exclusively by the software;

2) Amiante is spaced with unaccustomed wideness; and

3) Amiante kerning is as good as, or better than, that of standard commercial fonts. Note the aforementioned sample; I don't know what this font is, but it seems to be a French version of Times. The 'French' part is mainly the short stems. It was English typography that led the way into Old Style, and French typographers, who have been the world masters up until recently, though they have now tumbled into the Old Style error, still retain aspects of Modern Face. But notice—and this is merely a page chosen at random in the book which happens to be to hand—there are several instances of kerning here that might be criticized:

Line 1: Ro, ré
Line 2: ét, pé
Line 4: Pe, ée, tr

But no one should look this closely! As the 52 basic letter glyphs decline themselves through the pages of a book (and there are really several hundred glyphs in a font!), with their thousands upon thousands of permutations, there is a certain rough-and-tumble that must be accepted. For example, the pair 'py' may be correct in itself. But it will look one way when followed by 'd', which is an under-slung letter with a certain relation to the slanted 'y'. It will look another way followed by 'v', which is slanted in another direction, thus: pyd, pyv. Unless each word were individually adjusted (as was possible in the era of metal type!) true kerning perfection is not within reach, and the conditions of digital typesetting must be lived with. Please spare the PP team management a plethora of pointless kerning errata! They have enough other information to process and organize as it is.

Finally, and I repeat: we display this sample for VIE project information only. Comments, including unfavorable ones, will be gladly accepted, and published, by Cosmopolis. But no one should nourish hopes of sending us back to our draw-

ing-boards to revamp our designs, or dream of imposing (ugh) 'focus groups' upon us. Of the infinity of ways the *VIE* might be, the way it really is cannot, by the heterogeneous nature of things, please everyone. Andreas's prime desideratum was that his books be convenient to read in bed. To this has been added my own prime desideratum, that the books be convenient to carry around in a pocket (for which reason there will be no dust jackets, and the Reader's edition will have 'hard' but 'flexible' covers, in non-dirtying colors!). These will be books to have in the hand, and to read with ease and pleasure, not objects to hoard. Andreas' and my desiderata will be met fully, for which we, at least, are gratified. Beyond this, the *VIE* books will conform to a typographical aesthetic, which may be contestable, but which consistently adheres to a particular vision of how the work of Jack Vance should be presented. Further, though the Deluxe edition will be of Babylonian splendor, both editions will look very handsome on any shelf, and both will be as tough and permanent as a book can possibly be. This is much, but it is not all! The books might have been larger, the font might have been 12pt Garamond, the paper might have been smoother, the covers might have been blue buckram with shiny dust jackets ornamented in pulp-style! We can only hope that each subscriber, in the long run, will be satisfied to a reasonable extent.

(The example of *Wyst* follows page ten.)

Paul Rhoads

Idle Thoughts of an Idle VIE Volunteer

As with many of us, Vance texts cross my computer screen at the whim of the *VIE* work flow. Right now the Composition team is busy setting *Meet Miss Universe* and, for the Gift Volume, we are looking at *The Murthe.*

The former struck me as a perfect example of the Vance/sci-fi problem. This story is 'science fiction' because it takes place in a future where humanity travels space and is thus in contact with alien races, and what other premise is more typically science fictiony? But this story is pure Vancian farce. A group of promoters have mounted a universal exposition (really 'universal' for once!) but it is not doing well. They are losing money. To solve their problems, they turn to a tried-and-true formula, which has saved the shirts of so many promoters, namely: "bring on the girls!". But, given the nature of their 'universal' exposition, the beauty contest they run must involve 'beauties' from all the races in the universe. And here is where the Vancian farce heats up; what is a beauty contest in this het-

erogeneous situation?

It is the old problem of Relativism. What is the sense of the word 'beauty' when we human males—if I may speak for my species, and sex—prefer featherless, monocephalic bipeds, equipped, not with five or three, but exactly two mammary glands, which, furthermore, must be positioned, not vertically in the dorsal region, but with horizontal symmetry over the thoracic cage. However, the masculine denizens of Centauri 8518 prefer their females in a fish-like model, red of color, about 20 feet high, with 18 legs. The promoters come to grips with this problem thanks to a familiar, if half-baked, relativistic notion: each contestant will be judged by the standards of beauty of her own world (i.e. There is no 'Beauty', only subjective opinion about it) and she most in conformity with her corresponding standards will be the winner.

In philosophical jargon, this solution 'flows from the logic of Conventionalism'. Conventionalism is the idea that Truth is just a matter of convention, or habit, or 'authoritative opinion.' Conventionalism is appealing to inferior spirits because, if Beauty is real, then all things, however disparate, are to be understood, among other ways, in a hierarchy of the beauty they embody. Troublesome! By the same token, if Truth exists, then one statement might be truer than another. Even worse! It is indeed a serious annoyance to those who, rather than wishing to have truer ideas or more beautiful things, fear that the 'truth' of their ideas and the 'beauty' of their things, which they have no intention of calling into question, might receive a middling, or even a low, rating. Conventionalism is therefore useful to all who wish to impose their personal untruth and ugliness upon others.

It is not as if Conventionalism, or Relativism, have no place in our thinking. Certain things are indeed conventional, and certain things are indeed relative. Whether we drive on the right or the left side of the road is a matter of convention; and whether a thing is the 'best', or the 'biggest', within a certain group or class of thing, may be a relative matter. But this does not change that driving on a certain side of the road, all things considered, may really be better, or that at the end of the day, something really may be best or biggest. But, outside their proper uses, Conventionalism and Relativism become absurdly, and even dangerously, false. To see this falsity (if not the danger) is a process childishly simple which, none-the-less, few are willing to engage! One way is to contemplate the following statements, for a period of about 8 seconds:

There is no Truth.
It is true that there is no Truth.
The above statements are True.
There is Truth.

Recoiling from syllogisms, it will be objected that, when it comes to girls, nature has implanted in boys automatic reactions insuring the propagation of the species, however contrary to the individual interests of the boys, or of the girls for that matter. This raises the question of the relation of Beauty to these instinctive, or natural, reactions, which clearly are not the same for the human boy and the Centauri 8518-ian boy.

It is a good question, but not one Vance's promoters care anything about. What they want is to show a profit with their exposition! They put their plan into action and, what else? a monster wins the prize. To compound this farce, the monster turns out to be a gentle, affectionate and guileless creature, quite 'female' in some of her spiritual attributes.

Is it not a fine mockery of science fiction? Vance imagines the sci-fi future, but instead of seeing cataclysmic wars between competing alien empires, or such-like, he imagines a 'universal' exposition, the financial troubles of its promoters; and then amuses himself by having them adopt the traditional solution, mentioned above. One might ask, to paraphrase Navarth, where, in science fiction, is its like?

As for *The Murthe* (my favorite single Vance story), I can't resist bringing to your attention this passage:

Zanzel sprang to his feet. "This is preposterous! Must we welcome each scoundrel of time into our midst, to satiate himself on our good things, meanwhile perverting our customs?"

The burly and irascible Hurtiancz spoke. "I endorse the progressive views of Zanzel! Lehuster may be only the first of a horde of deviates, morons, and incorrect thinkers sluiced into our placid region!"

To those of us who live in the famous 'first world', particularly if we live near the borders with the 'third', this passage is full of familiar echoes. A compact caricature of 'xenophobic rhetoric,' the argument cannot, however, be dismissed so easily. Apart from Lehuster, the Murthe, a veritable "scoundrel of time," has indeed sluiced into the placid region, with intent to commit all the malfeasance irrationally attributed to poor Lehuster. But what of Lehuster; what is his goal? Does he wish to contribute to the 'progress of humanity'? Note that Hurtiancz expresses his approval of Zanzel's views by characterizing them as 'progressive,' demonstrating the infinite expandability, and thus meaninglessness, of this foul term. Does Lehuster wish to help the down-trodden, the only possible justification for his incursion our own society, soggy with leftist sentimentality, would recognize? No. His stated goal is: maintenance of placidity which, quite apart from the struggle between men and women, opens up a novel perspective, completely stifled in our time, a time doped-up to jittering incoherence on the steroids of 'progress.'

In fact Lehuster's intention is to stifle the 'resurgent female force.' In other words, from the perspective of today's prejudices, Lehuster is an oppressor of women, and it is Zanzel, who would promote the Murthe, who is the hero. But Zanzel is ensqualmated, and it is in this condition that he intended murder upon Lehuster. Here we may recall Rhialto's remark: "Ensqualmation evidently fails to ennoble its victim." Many such changes might be rung upon conceptual bells of *The Murthe*; is Vance not exquisitely wonderful?

Paul Rhoads

Project Report

All interested in the exact status of project work can consult the excellent *Master Tracking Chart*, maintained by Suan Yong. Even more detailed information may be found on the other tracking charts, like the Composition tracking chart maintained by John Schwab. They are all linked to the project site.

Several trips to the Mugar library are currently being organized—Alun Hughes is even in Boston at this writing—and we may have reports from there in upcoming issues of Cosmopolis. John Foley has been putting the Composition team into marching order, as his article indicates, and the number of texts composed is slowly climbing. Alun, after an absence from *VIE* work occasioned by personal circumstances, is now back on post. The *VIE* must be organized in such a way as to accommodate such inevitable absences. Principal Managers need to be seconded by people who can step into the breach, and volunteers should keep Hans van der Veeke, the Volunteer Coordinator, and their team leads, apprised of when they can be available for *VIE* work, and when not. Our approach must be flexible, and people's places will be held for them during absences. It cannot be said that Alun was not missed, or that the rest of us are not breathing easier now that he has returned, but thanks to prudent organization much of the slack occasioned by such an important absence was indeed taken up by Tim Stretton and the other TI managers.

This month a certain amount of work has been devoted to the Gift Volume, since Sfera must have our material by the end of June in order for the books to be ready for the fall. The texts, though only Green Magic has had the full TI treatment, are now ready, and set, and are being scrubbed down by special Post-Proofing teams. All have received

some TI attention, with many problems submitted to the Vances. The Gift Volume texts, therefore, while not yet definitive, are all significant.

The Post-Proofing team has been proving itself formidably efficacious. Hats off to Chris Corley, the Sub-team managers, and all the Sub-team members! It is thanks to this degree of intelligent organization, and willing work, that the *VIE* project is winning through to its goal.

Several people, including Norma Vance, responded to last month's call from DD scanning, by lending books and magazines. Richard Chandler's on-going and gargantuan task, with this important help, is back on track. Special thanks is due to these text lenders, without whom DD scanning would be blocked. It should be noted that, just as the Vances do not possess all text manuscripts, so they do not possess all the needed publications, and the project cannot do without the help of many people. These loans, which bravely run the risk of degradation of precious personal property, will each be credited as a 'digitization job' in the *VIE* book credits.

The Management

Ǥark and Ǥookin uttered shrill cackles of laughter . . .

The Cosmopolis Literary Supplement, No. 8

We have new chapters from *The Zael Inheritance* and *Tergan* this time, and another adventure featuring Dogbold the Deft — download your copy of the CLS today!

Post Proofing Report

Post-Proofing is off to a good start, with five texts completed: *Wyst, Ǥolden Ǥirl, Masquerade on Dicantropus, The Moon Moth, Alfred's Ark.* The first three of these are texts that have proceeded through the normal process of Pre-Proofing, Techno-Proofing, Text-ual Integrity and Composition in preparation for publication in the VIE volume. The last two will appear in the VIE Gift Volume (see Cosmopolis 15). Four texts, all for the Gift Volume, are in Post-Proofing at the time of this writing: *Coup de Ǥrace, Dodkin's Job, Ǥreen Magic, The Murthe,* with

another (*Flutic*) to follow soon. All of these assignments will be either completed or nearing completion by the time Cosmopolis 16 is released.

The Gift Volume is being handled somewhat outside of the normal VIE procedures because of its special nature and near-term deadlines. It was decided that a snapshot of the texts as they existed about a month ago should be delivered to Composition, bypassing Techno-Proofing and TI. However, Norma Vance was consulted on several issues, so these texts may be considered 'partly' TIed. Green Magic is the exception. It is fully TI-ed and reviewed. The other Gift Volume texts will continue through TI, Techno-Proofing, Composition and Post-Proofing to reach completed status for final publication in the VIE; therefore, the versions that appear in the Gift Volume may differ in small particulars from the final VIE version.

Of the texts completed by Post-Proofing, *Wyst* is by far the longest. There is a slight inaccuracy in the first paragraph above with regard to *Wyst*: it never benefited from the multiple-reader scrutiny of Pre-Proofing. It is reasonable, then, to expect that there were more errors per page, on average, in *Wyst* than there will be for most other texts. Here is a summary of the issues found in *Wyst* by Post-Proofing:

- 24 punctuation errors
- 13 footnote formatting issues (including asterisk/dagger placement)
- 9 'special text' formatting inconsistencies (mostly the letters from Jantiff to his family)
- 8 miscellaneous
- 7 kerning problems
- 7 page numbers missing

Of these (69 in 316 pages of text), the kerning problems and the missing page number problems resulted from the fact that *Wyst* was the first text to go through Composition and into Post-Proofing. The kerning problems have been corrected in the font; page numbers were missing due to an initial decision, subsequently reversed, to omit page numbers from pages on which chapters begin.

Wyst had an average of about 0.22 issues per page which is, surprisingly, lower than for the other two non-Gift Volume texts: Golden Girl (0.70 issues per page) Masquerade on Dicantropus (0.32 issues per page). Many issues found in the two shorter works were either kerning or word hyphenation problems, and the majority of problems found in the shorter works had to do with presentation rather than textual issues.

How did the *Wyst* Post-Proofers do? I am pleased to say

that nine out of eleven proofers submitted their work on time or early. An additional 'special assignment' proofer was able to provide input by the deadline as well (in spite of a vacation!), so feedback was received from ten people. This gives me hope that Post-Proofing deadlines will be reliably met by a majority of proofers, something that is essential to our publication date target. The first mission of Post-Proofing is timeliness, or expedited completion of work, and the *Wyst* Post-Proofing team hit this mark. The results for the Golden Girl and Masquerade on Dicantropus jobs were similarly encouraging.

I am less pleased to say that the largest number of errors found by any one proofer was 30. This amounts to a 56% error rate, meaning that the best proofer of the lot missed well over half the known errors. Several obvious errors (missing period, missing quotes) were found by only one person. But this is something we have learned about proofing; the main thing is getting many pairs of eyes to scrutinize the pages! The product of the error rates for each individual is 2% (The probability that a given error in the text is missed by all proofers—Ed.). If this error rate is representative of all the errors in the text, there may well be another three or four errors lurking somewhere in *Wyst*. I console myself with two facts: (1) Several of the issues reported by Post-Proofing were not errors; so Composition and TI have proclaimed. This lowers the effective error rate; (2) *Wyst* had no pre-proofing, and the number of errors per page may well have been higher in *Wyst* than it will be in future Post-Proofing assignments.

Learning from the *Wyst* experience, I see how a better job may be done on subsequent texts. In the near term, for example, I will be assigning texts to more than ten people, if more than ten people are idle at the time a job is ready. This will depend on how much work is output by Composition, which in turn depends upon TI, so I will have to work with the other teams, and do a certain amount of calculation and anticipation.

Overall, I am satisfied with the work done by Post-Proofing, so far. We are learning more about how to proof the VIE texts, how to work with the font, and how to streamline the rather cumbersome logistics of Post-Proofing work.

Finally, I must make yet another plea for volunteers. The pace is increasing, and there are only five Post-Proofing teams fully manned. Two more Sub-team Managers are standing by, waiting for volunteers. We need your help! All Post-Proofers who complete their assignments on time will receive a mention in the 'Credits' section of each text on which they work, so Post-Proofing is a good way to have your name permanently associated (in print!) with the work of a great author.

Chris Corley

Letters To The Editor

To the Editors:

Thank you for the essays on Vance as literature, and especially for tackling the tough question of how his work reflects a Christian underpinning. I've assumed that Vance is very much an agnostic, if not an atheist, but have also been struck by the moral-comedic and therefore Christian underpinnings of his outlook. I'm looking forward to more treatment of this topic. I suspect that many Vance-lovers are, like that Vance-lover Gene Wolfe, practicing Christians (as am I). And it is interesting that except for a brief excursion in Suldrun's Garden, Vance never touches Christianity; and indeed, the ridicule of religion often encountered in Vance's works, only comes from a wicked character. Vance's invented religions are absurd, but so are all the non-Christian religions in this present world, riddled with odd taboos. And indeed, one of the great superiorities in Vance is that he does acknowledge that religion plays an important role in human life, unlike most modern and most SF writers.

On another but perhaps related topic: I never feel that Vance's 'other worlds' are all that 'other'. I think he builds on his own experiences in the Pacific (I hope I have this fact right) and creates societies that explore odd but very human societies. Of course, not all of his societies are complete enough; some are rather abstracted. But all are, at some level, believable and revealing. Vance explores how a free and inner-motivated person might act within such societies, but his free persons are always ethically fixed according to a very conventional, Christian-type of moral scheme. Even bad old Cugel shows us right and wrong by being wrong so often, as with any traditional picaresque narrative. Apart from such an 'absolutist' moral foundation, Vance's stories make no sense. His sense of comedy, and occasionally tragedy, depends upon it. And this makes him far superior to 'modern' novelists.

I don't always agree with Paul's ideas, but I delight in his essays. I hope Cosmopolis can continue to offer them even after the VIE is published.

James Jordan

To the Editors:

I found Bill Sherman's critique of Paul Rhoads's destruction of Paul Auster's *Leviathan* interesting. I sympathized with many of Sherman's points. Why? Not because I'm a Paul Auster fan—I've not read any of his books, even the one I own. I simply suspect that one should not trounce on one book by an author, so vehemently, without consulting other books by the same author.

My suspicion was strengthened when I went to my book-

shelves and picked out the only Auster novel resting there. I read the first page. The first few sentences of *The Music of Chance* were very much like what Mr. Rhoads ascribes to Vance: 'efficacious.' And I saw no evidence of Auster's obsession with economizing on sentence length.

The upshot? *Leviathan* may have been an experiment—perhaps a failed experiment.

I appreciated Rhoads' litany of first sentences from Vance's oeuvre. Ah, how I love a good first sentence! I think writers should beguile us from the first sentence on. Amusingly, the reason I gave up on Vance in my twenties was that Vance did not consistently provide those great first sentences. Too often he cluttered up the opening of his books with pseudo-historical, pseudo-anthropological matter, and at twenty-one I'd grown tired of that SF mannerism.

I've come back to Vance, however, after realizing that, first sentences or no, he pleased on the sentence level page after page, and in a style that was enchanting and 'world weary' at the same time.

Perhaps someday I'll read Auster, too. After reading Rhoads, however—and after consulting an Auster-fan friend, who described *Leviathan* as a boring failure—I'll probably start with *The Music of Chance*. After all, it's in my library, has a fine opening paragraph, and promises a pleasurable day's reading. —And so what if the movie made of it failed? Smoke, written by the same author, was great. And just as I don't judge a book by other books, I don't judge a book by movies, either.

Which brings me back to Vance. Vance books are not equal, either. If I had read *Big Planet* before The Dying Earth or Emphyrio, and believed that one book was all one should try of an author, I would never have said a kind word for Vance. An article taking a Vance book at random, and then excoriating Vance in the pages of, say, the newsletter of the Paul Auster Project, would have been just as unfair as Mr. Rhoads' piece.

But fairness isn't everything, and I wouldn't want to discourage such diatribes. They can be fun to read. And disagree with.

Timothy Virkkala
Kirkland, Washington

Paul Rhoads replies:

For the information of James Jordan: Vance not only did much travel in the Pacific, but all over the world. As an assiduous tourist he has spent extended periods in Europe, Asia and Africa, not to mention the Americas.

As for Paul Auster: the reactions to my diatribe have concentrated on questions of style, but my major objection concerned his attitude, which I adjudged faddish, pretentious,

servile and conventional.

Here in France we are in the midst of the Roland Garros (French Open—Ed.) tennis tournament, which gets much media coverage. I note the passion and essential modesty of the great champions, however noble or obnoxious they may otherwise be. In the world of pro-tennis, even a Pete Sampras can be bettered by a much lower ranked player (which is his consistent fate on the Roland Garros clay courts). These champions know they must give of their best, according to real criteria, to keep a place at the top. Artists, on the other hand, given the serious deformities modernism has worked on our mentality, are subject to no standards, even normal respect for their audiences. I certainly hope Paul Auster's other books are less embarrassing than Leviathan but, judging from his attitudes there, he has a long row to hoe. Big Planet may fail to be a great masterpiece, but there is no dramatic moral distance between it and Showboat World or Emphyrio. Vance seeks to entertain—which is something quite different from writing books snobs want to have read—and his attitudes are all the opposite of faddish.

As for Christianity, to underline one of James Jordan's remarks, Vance's presentation of the detestable Father Umphred, while not flattering to the Catholic church, does not constitute a criticism of the church *per se,* but an image of corruption in the context of the church. This image corresponds in truth to the inevitable reality of what people can be in particular situations. Vance is equally severe upon human corruption in all other areas of life.

Editor's Note

Thanks to Jeremy Cavaterra (composition) and Paul Rhoads (everything else) for help in the production of this month's Cosmopolis. Also to Steve Sherman and Bob Lacovara for proofreading, and to Joel Anderson.

Derek W. Benson

between sentences, not two. Please do not use the tab key when beginning paragraphs. For Cosmopolis #17, please submit articles and letters to the editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is July 20.

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VIE Contacts

Juille and Ferfan decided to cure Jantiff of his wayward moods. They diagnosed his problem as shyness, and introduced him to a succession of bold and sometimes boisterous girls, in the hope of enhancing his social life. The girls quickly became either bored, puzzled or uneasy. Jantiff was neither ill-favored, with his black hair, blue-green eyes, and almost aquiline profile, nor shy; nevertheless he lacked talent for small talk, and he suspected, justly enough, that his unconventional yearnings would only excite derision were he rash enough to discuss them.

To avoid a fashionable social function, Jantiff, without informing his sisters, took himself off to the family houseboat, which was moored at a pier on the Shard Sea. Fearful that either Juille or Ferfan or both might come out to fetch him, Jantiff immediately cast off the mooring lines and drove across Fallas Bay to the shallows, where he anchored his boat among the reeds.

Solitude and peace at last, thought Jantiff. He boiled up a pot of tea, then settled into a chair on the foredeck and watched the orange sun Mur settle toward the horizon. Late-afternoon breeze rippled the water; a million orange coruscations twinkled among the slender black reeds. Jantiff's mood loosened; the quiet, the wide sky, the play of sunlight on the water were balm to his uncertain soul. If only he could capture the peace of this moment and maintain it forever! Sadly he shook his head: life and time were inexorable; the moment must pass. A photograph was useless, and pigment could never reproduce such space, such glitter and glow. Here in fact was the very essence of his yearnings: he wanted to control that magic linkage between

the real and the unreal, the felt and the seen. He wanted to pervade himself with the secret meaning of things and use this lore as the mood took him. These "secret meanings" were not necessarily profound or subtle; they simply were what they were. Like the present circumstances for instance: the mood of late afternoon, the boat among the reeds, with — perhaps most important of all — the lonely figure on the deck. In his mind Jantiff composed a depiction, and went so far as to select pigments . . . He sighed and shook his head. An impractical idea. Even were he able to achieve such a representation, what could he do with it? Hang it on a wall? Absurd. Successive viewings would neutralize the effect as fast as repetition of a joke.

The sun sank; water moths fluttered among the reeds. From seaward came the sound of quiet voices in measured discussion. Jantiff listened intently, eery twinges coursing along his skin. No one could explain the sea-voices. If a person tried to drift stealthily near in a boat, the sounds ceased. And the meaning, no matter how intently one listened, always just evaded intelligibility. The sea-voices had always haunted Jantiff. Once he had recorded the sounds, but when he played them back, the sense was even more remote. Secret meanings, mused Jantiff . . . He strained to listen. If he could comprehend only a word so as to pick up the gist, then he might understand everything. As if becoming aware of the eavesdropper, the voices fell silent, and night darkened the sea.

Jantiff went into the cabin. He dined on bread, meat, and beer, then returned to the deck. Stars blazed across the sky; Jantiff sat watching, his mind adrift among the far places, naming those stars he recognized, speculating in regard to

others.* So much existed: so much to be felt and seen and known! A single life was not enough... Across the water drifted a murmur of voices, and Jantiff imagined pale shapes floating in the dark, watching the stars... The voices dwindled and faded. Silence. Once more Jantiff retreated into the cabin, where he boiled up another pot of tea.

Someone had left a copy of the *Transvoyer* on the table. Leafing through the pages Jantiff's attention was caught by a heading:

<div align="center">

THE ARRABIN CENTENARY:
*A Remarkable Era of Social Innovation
on the Planet Wyst: Alastor 1716*

</div>

Your Transvoyer correspondent visits Uncibal, the mighty city beside the sea. Here he discovers a dynamic society, propelled by novel philosophical energies. The Arrabin goal is human fulfillment, in a condition of leisure and amplitude. How has this miracle been accomplished? By a drastic revision of traditional priorities. To pretend that racks and stress do not exist would cheapen the Arrabin achievement, which shows no sign of flagging. The Arrabins are about to celebrate their first century. Our correspondent supplies the fascinating details.

Jantiff read the article with more than casual interest; Wyst rejoiced in the remarkable light of the sun Dwan,

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* For the folk of Alastor Cluster, the stars are near and familiar, and "astronomy" (star-naming) is taught to all children. A knowledgeable person can name a thousand stars or more, with as many apposite anecdotes. Such star-namers in the olden times commanded great fame and prestige.

where—how did the phrase go?—"every surface quivers with its true and just color." He put the magazine aside, and went once more out upon the deck. The stars had moved somewhat across the sky; that constellation known locally as the "Shamizade" had risen in the east and reflected on the sea. Jantiff inspected the heavens, wondering which star was Dwan. Stepping back into the cabin, he consulted the local edition of the *Alastor Almanac*, where Dwan was identified as a dim white star in the Turtle constellation, along the edge of the carapace.*

Jantiff climbed to the top deck of the houseboat and scanned the sky. There, to the north, under the Stator hung the Turtle, and there shone the pale flicker of Dwan. Perhaps imagination played Jantiff tricks, but the star indeed seemed charged with color.

The information regarding Wyst might have been only of idle interest, had not Jantiff on the very next day noticed an advertisement sponsored by Central Space Transport Systems, announcing a promotional competition. For that depiction best illustrating the scenic charm of Zeck, the System would provide transportation to and from any world of the Cluster, with an additional three hundred ozols spending money. Jantiff instantly assembled panel and pigments and from memory rendered the shallows of the Shard Sea, with the houseboat at anchor among the reeds. Time was short; he worked in a fury of concentrated energy, and submitted the composition to the agency only minutes before

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* It is no doubt unnecessary to point out that constellations as seen from one world of the Cluster differ from those of every other; accordingly, each world uses its local nomenclature. On the other hand, certain structural features of the Cluster—for instance, the Fiamifer, the Crystal Eel, Koon's Hole, the Goodby Place—are terms in the common usage.