COSMOPOLIS

Contents

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The Logan Square Book Club vs. Jack Vance

by Chuck King

One of the stated goals of the VIE is to raise awareness of Jack Vance as a serious author, worthy of respect outside the narrow genres in which his work has heretofore been categorized. I have always felt that Vance is a stylist on a level with the greatest names in literature, and so when the opportunity came to do my part to further our noble goal, I leapt at the chance.

I am a member of a book club with a number of other people, none of whom are particular fans of science fiction or fantasy. They are regular folks, albeit all highly literate and avid readers. Members range in age from their 30s to their 60s, weighted a bit towards the top of the scale, and come from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, with a slight preponderance of former teachers. If anyone would be open to trying a new author, and would, potentially, appreciate Vance's skills, I figured it would be this group. I resolved therefore to introduce them to Vance. In April I hosted the club, and as host I got to pick the book we read. I chose *Night Lamp*.

Night Lamp is not my favorite Vance novel, but I like it a lot, and it had several other characteristics to recommend it. It is self-contained. I didn't think it would be fair to have them read one novel of a trilogy, so the

Lyonesse and *Cadwal* series (which include my very favorites) were out. It shows (in my opinion) Vance at the top of his game stylistically. And, it was readily available used on half.com and eBay for a reasonable price. In order to ensure that everyone who wanted one could get a copy, I began lurking on those sites several months before, and ended up buying fourteen copies of the book, which I then sold to the book club members at my cost.

So, I distributed the books, and on the night of the book club meeting to promote the Vancian theme I concocted batches of tipsic, Blue Ruin and Flurrish Zabamba for everyone's refreshment; there were even drams of "sour-mash rye whiskey, which Hilyer often described as 'Nectar of the Gods'". The membership arrived, and this group of book lovers commenced to discuss its first encounter with Jack Vance.

Imagine my shock and disappointment when the response was almost uniformly negative.

I was prepared for a range of opinions, but I was somewhat taken aback by the consistency of the response. One woman (who had actually been to the VIE website and read up a little on Vance) did borrow my copy of *The Hugo Winners Vol. II* to read Vance's prize-winning stories, but other reactions ranged for the most part from vague distaste to downright antipathy. But, while that book club meeting did not serve the purpose I had hoped, by turning a bunch of non-Vance readers into fans, it did at least provide some interesting insights into some of the impediments to mainstream success and acclaim for Vance. From the comments of the members I drew several conclusions.

First, I think that there is a sizeable category of reader that will not like any story, no matter how well-written, that is set elsewhere than in the 'real world'. From their comments, it was apparent to me that some of the people who didn't like the book were searching for a pretext upon which to object. For instance, one reader objected to all the Vance-specific terminology, names, and invented concepts (including keeping track of the relative comporture of the various Thanet social clubs). This same reader, however, waxed rhapsodic about recent books we had read, set in China, involving lots of obscure (to us, anyway) references to Chinese geography and social institutions. Clearly, this reader had no problem stretching his mind to encompass unfamiliar concepts and terms. His problem must have been with stretching his mind to encompass those particular concepts and terms.

I have a theory as to why this is, based on the inherent geekishness of all things sci-fi (or that look like sci-fi). For about fifty years now for better or worse (probably worse) spaceships and aliens (and, more recently, wizards and dragons) have been associated in the minds of many with the socially inept and unfashionable, and during adolescence people who are not already in those categories learn to distance themselves from them and anything associated with them. As people grow into adulthood social strata often realign, but as long as there is no distinct social benefit to be derived from science fiction fandom, the knee-jerk aversion which I believe is coded into many people in youth persists, and I suspect that it manifested itself in several of the book club members.

During the course of the discussion someone compared Vance to Jonathan Swift, commenting on the satirical character of the book. Swift had the good fortune to write *Gulliver's Travels* before fantasy was established as a separate genre and set aside into its own little literary ghetto. As a result his work was read with a more open mind when it came out, was appreciated, and is still studied today. Unfortunately, while Vance is a satirist of the highest calibre, the trappings of his stories have caused many readers to dismiss them out of hand. This is no great revelation to anyone reading Cosmopolis, but I think I may have figured out *why*.

So, had the story in *Night Lamp* been set in, say, China, it would have been accepted (I believe) more readily by the mainstream readers of the book club. But it would have lost much if not all of its satirical effect, since if it had been set in China it would have been taken as commentary on China and Chinese society. As it is, it holds up a mirror in which people in general, from wherever, can see themselves and their society reflected, since for the most part Vance's targets are universal. A dilemma for the satirist, to be sure.

Other readers objected to the book on what I can only call 'fashionable' grounds. It was not like other books that the book club generally reads, and while I thought it might represent an interesting change of pace, it was not generally appreciated as such.

A number of the books we read in the book club tend to fall into the category of tragic romances, with much hand-wringing and lavish descriptions of the emotional turmoil through which the protagonist goes through as she (it's often a she, but not always) becomes embroiled in her life-changing whirlwind doomed forbidden love affair. One of the members complained to me once that all the 'good' books she had read lately seemed to involve either incest or alcoholism — a far cry from a

typical Vance story, certainly. I have occasionally objected to these stories on the basis that there is nothing interesting in watching weak people fail; some of the book club readers objected to *Night Lamp* on the basis that it was, essentially, watching a strong person succeed. "How can you have affection for a perfect character?" was the actual comment. I think that misses the point of the book, but it illustrates how readers' expectations, and the novel's failure to meet them, impacted its reception.

Another objection to the book took this form: "If a writer puts a gun in the drawer in Act I, it had better be fired by the end of the play!" Several people took strong exception to the fact that Jaro was the actual instrument of his mother's death, but never paid a price for it. Maybe because I've read so much Vance, I recognize that a lack of justice on the cosmic level is one of his themes: characters do bad things and never suffer for them; other characters receive undeserved windfalls. My favorite example is Glinnes Hulden's appropriation of thirty million ozols in *Trullion.* But I digress. Furthermore, I never thought that the details of Jaro's mother's death were central to the story in *Night Lamp* anyway. Several book club members, however, were not able or willing to get around that issue.

The most amusing question indicating a betrayed expectation was, "Who is he writing for?" From the ensuing discussion, it became apparent that since there was no sex in the book, readers thought that perhaps they had been given a book written for younger readers, with no forewarning.

So, more reasons why Vance is not popular with the general reading public: insufficient incest, pathos and histrionics, and his endings are too happy. To be fair, that is perhaps an exaggeration, but I got the impression that some of the book club readers were looking for some of those elements.

All in all, I was most disappointed that everybody seemed to get hung up on plot elements, and completely missed the beauty and wit of Vance's language. That has always been for me the most attractive aspect of his writing. I guess before writing can be appreciated for its quality, it must be presented in a stylish package.

So, I'm afraid I did not strike the blow I had intended for Vance and his reputation in the world at large. I did learn some things, which hopefully are helpful in defining the problem we face in seeking greater acceptance of Vance and his work. I would be interested in hearing the opinions of other Cosmopolis readers: Should I have picked a different book? Have I identified the problems correctly? And, most importantly, does anyone see how they can be overcome? Despite this setback, I am resolved to continue the endeavor!

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Work Tsar Status Report

as of may 27, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

Wave 1

Wave 1 is rapidly approaching completion. By the end of May all texts for Wave 1 will either be finished or close to finished with Post Proofing. These last stages of Post Proofing have been superbly performed by our Post Proofing teams under tight schedules.

The Composers and the Composition Review teams have been very busy finding and fixing composition-related problems. During these steps a text may be fixed and reviewed as many as three or four times. There is a lot of coordination and management that both Robin (Head of CRT and Goddess of the Universe) and John Schwab continue to, uh, manage. They are quick to retract both nympharium and satyrium privileges due to unofficial file movements indicating someone's attempt at sidestepping our complex processes.

Meanwhile the RTF-DIFF step has been finalized and begun. Charles King is managing this new step (while also doing many other things: DD, Monkey, PP, CRT, etc.—this man is probably a machine, or, perhaps, retired?). Already he has around ten Wave 1 texts RTF-DIFFed. I fully expect the remaining to be completed by the end of June.

In summary for Wave 1 there are 50 texts to compile into 22 volumes. Over 30 of these texts have finished the normal Composition and Review cycle and about 10 of these have finished the RTF-DIFF and are ready to be compiled into volumes. There is perhaps one text left to complete Post Proofing. The remaining are being reviewed and updated by Composition and the Composition Review teams.

A volume consists of the texts for the volume along with lacets, credits, title and table of contents (ISBN, etc.) and occasionally a map. As all of these pieces of the volume are set, the volume can be fully composed

and a Volume-CRT check performed. Golden Master meeting 1 is concerned solely with ensuring that these volumes are indeed ready to be sent to Sfera. GM1 will be occurring at the end of July. I hope to show significant progress on completed volumes in this status report next month.

Wave 2

Wave 1 continues to be our primary focus, but Wave 2 also pushes forward. Wave 2 work should also complete a majority of TI work by the end of 2002 in order to meet a goal of producing Wave 2 by the end of 2003. Admittedly, the final steps of Wave 2 should be smoother due to everything we've learned from Wave 1.

In that light, the numbers for Wave 2 are as follows.

Wave 2 has approximately 80 texts (there are a few miscellaneous items in volume 44 that have not been completely settled upon. For example, *Dream Castle* was originally published early in Astounding Science Fiction. Underwood-Miller later republished it in 1982 apparently using the text from ASF. Meanwhile, there is a version in *Great Stories of Space Travel* in 1963 that is very Vancian yet quite a bit different than the ASF version. The VIE is considering publishing that second version in Volume 44 as well).

Miscellaneous: There are three texts that need some pre-proofing and special scanning needs.

DD OCR/Scanning: There are 8 texts left. And, only 9 scanning jobs to complete these 8 texts.

Jockey/Monkey: There are currently 18 texts in these stages.

Technoproofing: There are currently 19 texts in this stage. Technoproofing is an important task; anyone who has access to these texts (many are from early pulps or otherwise in a compilation) should contact Ron Chernich. This step has a potential for becoming a hiccup in the process. I myself am currently waiting for a number of pulps I've placed an order for so that I might be able to help expedite this step.

Textual Integrity: There are currently 28 texts in this stage. Wave 2 Textual Integrity volunteers are probably fully loaded with work at this point. I think it continues to be useful to encourage endurance here and set a steady pace. The months roll by at an ever increasing speed and there are now only seven months left before the end of 2002.

There are about 4 texts that have completed Textual Integrity and are in a later part of the process. Wave 1 composition resources are currently quite busy and so these texts are awaiting time when they can be complet-

ed.

Either next month or the following I will begin to go into more detail on the Wave 2 texts (once Wave 1 is essentially complete other than the final steps of actually publishing it).

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38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Honor Where Honor is Due

Every day I have reason to marvel at what certain people are doing for the project, but most often think of John Schwab. John is the spinal cord of the project. I can't figure out how he even manages to do what he does. To say nothing of our ever evolving procedures, v-texts in Word, InDesign and PDF to send hither and yon, our famous *bis* files fly thick and fast between dozens and dozens of people, in different teams and with different functions, getting updated according to an esoteric schedule that still mystifies me. Sometimes a bit of extra-curricular file shuffling gets indulged, and John has sometimes been tolerant of this, until recently, when he was moved to write: "It is becoming increasingly apparent that all future file transfers *must* go through me. You misfits have bollixed the system up for long enough!" So that is that. Still, if we 'misfits' can't handle a few miserable moonlight file transfers, how does John—no 'fit' as far as I can tell—do it? Mainly I'm just grateful he can.

Wave 1

All texts have made it, or are about to make it, through Post Proofing, and stragglers are getting final iterations of 'PPV', 'CPPR' and 'PCRV' under the aegis, or if you prefer, 'beneath the ferule' of the lovely, courageous and *gallante* Robin Rouch. Maps are getting lettered, thanks to Suan Yong, Andreas Björklind and Joel Anderson. The covers files are being readied for dispatch to Milan for the casting of stamps. 'Front matter' is being churned out by the ineluctable John Schwab. I myself am busy in a heap of copper shavings, fingers sticky with varnish and ink, in a heady atmosphere of tallow smoke and nitric acid fumes. In short: 'all is on schedule', if some of us get a bit nervous now and then even so. Given the num-

ber of files involved (for 22 volumes: text, spine, front cover, back cover, maps, in Readers' and Deluxe versions) we have a complex communication job with Sfera; it has been thought through, and is being managed by, Bob Lacovara.

Our 22 Wave 1 books have been composed by Andreas Irle, John Schwab and Joel Anderson. Andreas, of course, is at the origin of the basic format, but John and Joel have made important contributions. The former has shown a flair for bold innovations, and Joel Anderson texts are distinguished by a rare suavity. Within the Composition team, to say nothing of important aesthetic support from the CRT people, a great deal of 'synergy' has been achieved. John Foley and I have been keen on giving the edition a certain necessary homogeneity, but also on allowing each text, and volume, thanks to the personality and ideas of particular Composers, to have its own flavor, appropriate to it. I think this has worked.

For various reasons the second Golden Master meeting ('GM2') has been pushed into September, though Golden Master 1 will still occur on schedule at the end of July. Tim Stretton is organizing GM2, which will be hosted in France. GM2 work consists of checking proofs for typos and setting errors, bloopers or, heaven forbid, missing text. Participation is by invitation only, but we need a good collection of eyes to drill into the thousands of pages of proofs we must deal with. If you would like to participate please contact Tim for information and to solicit an invitation (these will be granted gladly, but VIE travel subsidies are only for the few). We hope GM2 will also be convivial and useful beyond pure Wave 1 proofing work. The push-back of GM2 into September may compromise November delivery of Wave 1, but if most of the texts are without problems (and given all the upstream efforts, this may be hoped) then not. In any case there is no avoiding it; this is a phase of work that must take place, and this is the moment when it is possible.

Thanks to the participation of all of you, the first 22 volumes, half of the Vance Integral Edition, some 2,000,000 words — not counting final nit-picking adjustments and checks, fastidious and time consuming but touching only a miniscule percentage of the finished product — are *done*. *Bravo*.

Paul Allen Donates VIE Sets to Libraries World Wide

Long ago, round about Cosmopolis 1, it was announced that Paul Allen had pledged to contribute $50,000 to the VIE for the donation of book sets to libraries. This pledge is now being actualized; libraries, world-wide, are being selected by a special committee, composed of several librarians who are also VIE volunteers, including Alun Hughes and Betty Mayfield. Anyone with a candidate library may submit names to Alun Hughes, or myself.

Paul Allen himself offers this remark for Cosmopolis: "Jack Vance has proven himself as a prolific and extremely entertaining science-fiction, fantasy, and mystery writer — acclaimed not only by his die-hard fans but winning awards from the literary industry. The Vance Integral Edition will play a significant role in archiving Vance's work and this donation will help make that work available to wider audiences through local libraries across the country. By providing the opportunity for libraries to obtain sets of Vance's work, a greater number of people will have access to all of his work. We think the edition will be enjoyed and be a source of inspiration for years to come."

Paul Allen's generous gesture is indeed an important initiative which will broaden and popularize the success of the archival mission of the VIE. Though VIE sets will never appear on shelves of book stores, they will not simply disappear into private homes, but also become available to millions, thanks to dozens of sets, placed in important libraries all over the world.

Delays

I am sorry for various delays, particularly Gift Volume 2nd printing, and the later-than-hoped-for appearance of the Science Fiction Volume. The GV 2nd printing, though very little work was involved, took quite a while to get organized for three reasons: we had no established procedures for a second printing, we were busy with Wave 1, and at the last minute it got caught in the jaws of what is really a very important procedure recently set up for accurate communications with Sfera (see above). By the time this is published it should already have been printed and should be in the mail to subscribers forthwith.

The SFV, at the time of this writing, though it continues to be hampered by Wave 1 work, is well advanced. The cover files are in Milan, and final specs of dust are being flicked off the front matter, preface, and texts. I am hoping it can be delivered in July.

Wave 2

Others can tell the tale better than I.

Chief cat-wrangler of the 'Techno-cats', Ron Chernich, reports: "Wave 1 is complete and we are tracking

Wave 2 texts almost as fast as they emerge from Monkeying." DD and Monkeying, thanks to Damien and Suan, continue to glide along like well greased machines. Thanks to the persistent efforts of a few dozen people, over the last few years, all Wave 2 texts are going to TI in process-perfect form. Unlike Wave 1, Wave 2 promises to proceed with orderliness. Apropos; on May 15 Suan reported: "Subject: Monkey completions: *Dover Sparghill...*, *Enchanted Princess*, *Four-Hundred Blackbirds*, *Phalid's Fate*, *Phantom Milkman*, *Planet of Black Dust*, *Potters of Firsk*; all by—who else?—Chuck King. That clears out most of the monkey backlog."

the science fiction volume

This book—a nice thing in itself, a test of more physical aspects of the set books, and a 'promotional support' of the project—has been on order since the publication of Cosmopolis 26, and will shortly be printed in Milan.

The Deluxe Special will be offered in a limited edition of 10, with a special page signed by Jack, numbered, printed with an original etching showing a battle between Jugger and Fiend. The cost is $200. Contact Mike Berro to reserve one, if any remain.

We hope to be able to deliver in coming weeks, and will be advertising the book in Locus.

"flexible covers" you said?

Subscribers will be variously happy, unhappy, annoyed or overjoyed, to learn that there has been a policy change on 'flexible' covers. This has come about for three accumulating reasons. The first was the sharp corners of the GV. This was not a stopper, but it was a concern. The second is that the GV covers have revealed an over-sensitivity to humidity. The resultant warpage can be repaired by bendage when the humidity drops, but it's still not ideal. But the third, and decisive, reason happened just now, when we received from Sfera a dummy Library Edition volume. Rather than using buckram, the sample has imitation leather, and, of course, 2mm boards. Because the imitation leather is similar to the real leather (though not nearly as nice when compared side by side or in the hand), at first it seems to be a Readers' book, but with covers that are, well, just better. No sharp corners, not 'flexible' but perfectly lightsome and handy, and, presumably, with double the mass and strength, humidity-warp resistant (sample book is currently undergoing a humidity test). No book will stand being thrown in a puddle of course, but a normal book must be able to stand a minimum range of 'hydrometric variation'.

So, except for the Gift Volume, the 'flexible covers' are therefore officially a thing of the past. The first consequence of this is that the Library Edition no longer has a *raison d'être*, which simplifies things for management in the long run, but in the short run it means some scrambling.

1 - The offer of a Library Edition SFV on the site is revoked.

2 - Though we have made a special mailing about this, those who have already sent in money for a Library Edition, at their choice, will have their subscription changed to a Readers', or cancelled, with excess monies credited to their account or returned.

The flexible covers were part of my initial aesthetic conception of the VIE books, but: live and learn.

dictionaries?

For the benefit of my colleagues in TI, as well as all and sundry, here is an edifying extract from a book of which I am particularly fond; Robertson's *Development of Modern English* (1934), concerning that tortured subject, dictionaries. The last two paragraphs are my credo in the matter. Regarding Robertson's remark about the importance of dictionaries to the development of the language, Vance has certainly been both immune to such influence and one of the most fecund contributors to said development (if only the world knew it, as we do!); and the latter has something to do with the former.

The approach to the modern English dictionaries was by way of Latin-English glossaries, of which many appeared in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Just which of their successors deserves the title of first English dictionary is a point on which opinion is divided. John Bullokar's *English Expositour* (1616) is the earliest claimant; but it is soon followed by Minsheu's *Ductor in Linguas, or Guide into the Tongues* (1617), the first of etymological dictionaries; and by Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623), the first in which the word *dictionary* is used in the sense in which we now understand it. The full titles of Bullokar's and Cockeram's compilations suggest the early conception of a dictionary as limited to *difficult* words only: the one reads *An English Expositour: Teaching the Interpretation of the hardest Words used in our Language, with sundry Explications, Descriptions and Discourses* (incidentally implying also the early affiliation between dictionary and encyclopedia); the other, *The English Dictionarie: or, An Interpreter of hard English Words*.

Later dictionaries, with greater pretensions to completeness, are that of Milton's nephew, Edward

Phillips—*New World of Words, or a General English Dictionary* (1658)—and that of Nathaniel Bailey, the direct predecessor of Johnson—*Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (1721). Professor Weekley points out that it is only just before Bailey's work is published—in the seventh edition (1720) of Phillips' dictionary, to be explicit—that the familiar word *dog* makes its appearance. Bailey's volume seems, on the whole, to be the best candidate for the position of first complete dictionary. It was Bailey, too, who began the practice of marking the accent of words, in which he was followed by Samuel Johnson in his epoch-making dictionary of 1755. Johnson, however, did not give the full pronunciation, because, as he observed to Boswell, it was impossible to model this "after the example of the best company because they differ so much among themselves". He had come to believe, in other words, that he could 'fix' the spelling and signification of words but not their pronunciation. Not until after Johnson, therefore, was the final step taken in indicating the pronunciation of words: the vowel sounds were indicated, for the first time in a general dictionary, by William Kenrich in the *New Dictionary* which he published in 1773. This precedent was immediately followed by other British lexicographers of the late eighteenth century, and by the Americans, Webster and Worcester, in the early nineteenth.

It has been more than once remarked that there is a certain poetic justice in the history of dictionary-making since Johnson, in that the two races he particularly abhorred, the Scots and the Americans, have taken the lead in the production of English dictionaries. Noah Webster's *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* (1806), in its various revisions, was the leading authority during the greater part of the nineteenth century, and its chief rivals at the close of the century were two other American works, the *Century* and the *Standard*. The greatest of all dictionaries, the *New English* or *Oxford*, the first volumes of which were published in 1884 and the last in 1928, was begun under the editorial supervision of one Scotsman, Sir James Murray, and finished under that of another, Sir William Craigie.

And what of the authority of the dictionaries, their influence upon the speakers and writers of the language in the three centuries that have elapsed since Bullokar and Cockeram? It is probably correct to say that it is not until the eighteenth century, with the rise of the middle class to social prominence and the development of middle-class anxiety about 'correctness' in speech, that dictionaries and grammars (which increase in numbers and prestige at about the same time and in a parallel

way) take on anything like the character that to many minds they now possess: the final arbiters of speech. The general veneration of 'rules' in the early and middle eighteenth century—implicit, to take a single example, in the doctrine of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* that literature is to be both produced and judged according to a formula—naturally lends its weight to the treatment of language as something that must be adjudged, once and for all, as either correct or incorrect. Doctor Johnson's dictionary purported to give the correct meaning, spelling, and accent of all words then existing in accepted usage, and these words Johnson conceived to be all that would ever be necessary. This eighteenth-century attitude toward language and toward the dictionary as the final authority on language has been inherited in more recent times by both the users and the makers of dictionaries (despite the latter's frequent protestations to the contrary) to what is really an astonishing degree.

Recent dictionaries, it is true, maintain that they do not profess, like Doctor Johnson's, to tell what the standard of language should be; they merely record, in tangible form, the standard already set by usage. In theory, their attitude is much less dogmatic and conservative than the eighteenth-century one; in practice, it is not so very far removed from it. New spellings are recorded with great reluctance, new words sometimes knock long at the gates for admittance, and the indication of a change in pronunciation lags far behind the actual usage of good speakers.

The attitude of even well-educated persons toward the dictionaries is often curiously naïve. "What does the dictionary say?" is the usual question when any problem regarding the sound or form or meaning of words arises. The implication, of course, is that there is only one verdict to be found in any dictionary, and that dictionaries, of any kind and any date, are all equally valuable. No thought is given to the possibility of consulting the wrong dictionary, or to the discrepancy between dictionaries, or to that between dictionaries and good usage. No, 'the dictionary', however that authority is conceived, is all-sufficient; to question its omniscience is heresy. In the extremely conservative attitude of the dictionaries and in the docile acceptance of their authority by the great majority of their users we have a most important influence upon the development of the modern language. It is clear that when dictionaries, grammars, and handbooks of usage are widely circulated and uncritically accepted as the final word, the formerly free development of the speech is constantly kept in check.

Americans seem to inherit the eighteenth-century

attitude, or the middle-class veneration of authority, to a greater extent than Englishmen of equal education and culture. The educated Englishman is more prone to consider that his own observation of what constitutes good practice in speech takes precedence over any written guide. Much more than the educated American, he is likely to think of dictionaries and grammars as being primarily for those whose background and upbring-ing have not brought them in contact with the best tendencies in English. For himself, he quite frequently scorns their use very much as he would scorn to follow, in other aspects of social intercourse, the dictates of a book of etiquette. The following observation of a traveled and cultured Englishman illustrates this point of view: "When I came to America nothing struck me more forcibly than the respect paid to the dictionary, and the disposition to fly hotfoot to it when any question arose." If we have rejected the eighteenth-century dogma that dictionaries make usage, we still seem reluc-tant to accept, in all its implications, the converse of the proposition.

In this regard there was a recent dust-up in TI over the word 'telepathetic'. The phrase in question was from *Coup de Grace*:

"...as if brought by some telepathic/telepathetic urge, came the bonze..."

The textual evidence indicates clearly the latter as what Jack intentionally wrote, 'telepathic' being what we call, in TI lingo, a 'vasserization'—by which editors make words and phrases more standard and banal. The etymological, contextual and philological arguments advanced in favor of 'telepathetic' failed to influence some participants, who characterized it a 'typo', a 'bogus word' and preferred 'telepathic' for a whole set of reasons; until Chris Corley made this contribution: "...is this a neologism or a word legitimized by the OED? Looking under 'telepathy', one can find "'telepathetic' (rare)" as a synonym for 'telepathic'. This is not a word coined by Jack." This clinched it but, to some of us at least, telepathetic is a cleverly adapted, and even obvious, adjectival form of 'telepathic', eminently suitable in context. Also, perhaps Vance himself is the OED's source for this rare use? In any case the controversy was settled before blood flowed in fatal quantities.

JACKS: LONDON AND VANCE
I have not read much Jack London, and what I have read I don't remember well, but I just saw a documentary about him (dubbed into French and therefore unreliable)

and there seems to be a set of interesting parallels with Vance. First of all Vance was born the year of London's death. Both are San Franciscans, and both sailors. Though Vance built several boats, London actually realized Vance's dream of building a boat and sailing the Pacific in it. The voyage was rather strenuous and London had to spend five months recuperating in a hospital in Sydney, where he also sold his boat, the *Snark*. London made lots of money, but he ran up debts even faster. On his gigantic model farm he built a piggery so big and modern it got dubbed *Pig Palace*. He also designed an extravagant home, with a central hall like a cavern of titanic chunks of rock and sequoia tree trunks—an altogether Vancian conception—but it burnt down, uninsured, before he could use it. Vance is also a house builder; lacking London's means, with his own hands he constructed his eccentric and extravagant house, which narrowly (by a margin of mere meters) escaped the great Oakland Fire of the 1980s—I presume the Vance's have fire insurance, though given what it must cost in San Francisco, they may not.

London was a journalist who did much traveling; he made the dangerous trip to Manchuria to cover the Russo-Japanese war. Vance's journalism seems to have been limited to jazz criticism in his college newspaper, and his travel, aside from his years as a merchant seaman, pure tourism. Both men spent time living and writing on Pacific islands, London in Hawaii, Vance in Tahiti.

London was a Socialist, eventually rejected by his fellows for, if I understood correctly, a pro-American and 'racist' position during the Mexican-American war. He was an extravagant dreamer whose millions allowed him to indulge his fantasies. Vance, though he did not escape all the 'advanced' intellectual fads of his time, was never a Socialist (as far as I know, and not in his maturity certainly). Also a dreamer, his efforts to realize them have been less spectacular, given his more modest means but, respecting differences of scale, with perhaps as many flops, successes, and extravagant personal adventures.

I retain the impression (which I cannot confirm) that London is an excellent *writer*, if a bit 'literary' in the pejorative sense of the term, but his stories seem to have an ideological coloring, which is always a fault. Vance, whose art is purely natural, and thus 'original' in the basic sense of the term, explores reality, without blinders, and thus gets open-endedly rich results.

Of course there are plenty of people from San Francisco who love to sail the Pacific in their own boats, or built houses to their taste, so these remarks are just idle

musings. However, any Cosmopolis readers familiar with London's work who would care to pen a comparison of London's and Vance's work, I, for one, would be curious to read it.

I once evoked London with Vance, who dismissed the subject with a contemptuous snort. Was it London's Socialism he disliked, or his foolish extravagances both material and intellectual? Vance is not the sort of person to disdain 'rivals'; his personal generosity regarding competitors is, if anything, too great.

NOTES FROM FRANCE, AND RELATED RAMBLING RUMINATIONS

Chirac, with massive support from the Left, retained his Presidential chair by 80% to 20% against the 'fascist' Le Pen. The Left, making the best of a bad situation ('Le Pen the fascist' is their creation after all), energetically mobilized their resources (mainly fanaticised high-schoolers who got out of a week of classes to party in the streets) to present 'spontaneous' and 'Republican' demonstrations in favor of a Chirac vote (they suggested wearing rubber gloves in order to handle the tainted, read 'non-Leftist' ballot). When Chirac won, they instantly credited the 'Republican' victory to themselves, and started, and have not ceased, to make demands. So far Chirac has appointed the very nice Monsieur Rafarin (President of the very well run region where I live) as Prime Minister. In fact the Left were putting themselves into marching order to retain their legislative majority in the coming June elections. Given the nature of the French Constitution, if they win and Chirac does not 'abdicate' (the word seems more appropriate to the 5th Republic than 'resign') he will show himself for the place-seeker he *seems* (not to use a stronger term) to be.

For those interested, Le Pen has the unique virtue on the French political scene of telling it like it is, and proposing common sense solutions to problems whose existence and nature is obvious to anyone not besotted by a Leftist mentality. However, he is indeed a sort of Socialist, and a populist. He makes blatant appeals to the 'little guy' and his program stipulates modification, rather than elimination, of the asphyxiating system of income redistribution that beleaguers France. However, in these regards the 'Republican' Left, as well as the 'Republican' Right', are no better. They, too, are populist and more or less Socialist.

Meanwhile French anti-fascist hysteria has had its first tragic result: Pim Fortuyn, recent founder of a Dutch 'extreme Right' party, was assassinated by a fanatical Leftist (first defined as a 'Green' then as an 'animal rights activist'). Fortuyn was a Socialist with an analysis of the European immigration situation similar to Le Pen's. Unlike Le Pen — a man 'from another age', bluff, unself-consciously aggressive and refreshingly unashamed of his old-timey rhetoric and values — Fortuyn was a young, out-of-closet homosexual, with a shaved head and a presence at once suave, poetic and commanding. His murder has induced what seems like a universal wave of chagrin and sympathy in Holland, and political commentators justly feared that his party, which did not even exist a year ago, would steal upcoming Dutch elections — which in fact they more or less did, coming in a strong second to the center right, to push the Socialists out of power. The French press is taking a whole different attitude to events in Holland. The members of Fortuyn's party are denounced as incompetent parvenus (how does the French press know this?) but the press has also not hidden the fact, also true in France but never shown, that there is *great* support for Fortuyn's party among citizens of Arab and black racial origin. The French Leftist establishment is running itself ragged trying to figure out why lower class French voters, whom they consider their property, went so strongly for Le Pen. These people live in a dreamland and use their brains uniquely to invent rationalization demonstrating the 'reality' of their dreams.

No mention has been made of this anywhere, as yet, but to me the fact is patent; the 'anti-fascist' hate campaign run in France is a pan-European Leftist tactic/ideology/psychosis — Berlusconi's Italy, Haider's Austrian province, Le Pen's success, and similar phenomena in Denmark and Holland are always mentioned together — and Fortuyn's murderer, fanaticised by the obsessive equivalence drawn between Le Pen and Hitler, 3rd Reich documentaries in characteristic abundance, 'news', 'commentary' and 'debate' all transformed into the most blatant propaganda, was thus inspired to a civic act of assassination. What would *you* have done if *you* had been a young German, with pistol, in 1934? What spirited young man has not dreamed of altering the course of history with a similar act of heroic self-sacrifice? The brown menace is upon us! The time has come for all good men to come to the aid of the party! Le Pen made repeated declarations in favor of 'all races and religions' and had no gas chamber plank in his platform, but these facts were dismissed as clever dissimulation; Hitler, it is claimed, also concealed his intentions. In fact Hitler made his intentions regarding the Jews, and Germany's destiny in Europe, *perfectly clear*, well before he came to power.

Le Pen has many more concerns and ideas than those which touch immigration, but it is a key issue for him. What is this all about? In Europe, in France, Holland and Germany in particular, State hand-outs are so extensive, the police are so hobbled by dreamlike legislation and angelic magistrates, and immigration policy is such, that the place is now lousy with foreigners practicing strange religions (like *al Qaedaism*), eating strange foods (sheep meat freshly killed in bathtubs on the 27th floor), speaking incomprehensible languages, wearing strange clothes, or being married to multiple wives, many living off the taxpayer thanks to 'family allocations' (calculated per head of child), to say nothing of 'social' housing and free schooling. When you add the now too-visible subset of brown and black children going in for hard-core criminality, you get a situation that has, at last, become impossible to ignore. How it all came to be is another story, and a long one. Ambushes by masked packs of 'youths' in the 'neighborhoods' on police cars are reported almost daily. The new government knows it can't fail to meet this challenge and survive the legislative elections coming up in scant weeks, so things are going to get hotter before they cool off.

During the whole second round of the Presidential campaign I waited, and waited, for responsible people to announce that Le Pen was not Hitler and that the FN was not a fascist party. I am happy to say I was not disappointed; Alain Finklekraut, in one of those fake debates, and after making as many bows as possible to the Leftists present, muttered that the FN is not a fascist party, 'yet'. Jean Francois Revel, an older man and, like Finklekraut, what the French facilely call 'a philosopher', in a literary program, made the good statement in a disgusted and off-hand matter, showing his contempt for the disinformation campaign. A forthright declaration, in a rigged, post-election commentary program, was made by the fearless Figaro journalist, Eric Zemour (youngest of the three, and of Arab descent). None of these men support Le Pen or the FN (I do not doubt the sincerity of their political positions, but the fact remains that for people in their positions, their careers would end yesterday if they declared themselves pro-Le Pen; 90% of French journalists vote Socialist) but their honesty saved French honor, in my eyes at least. Speaking for myself, my man was Charles Pasqua, who, I think, could have beaten Chirac, but he was maneuvered out of the race before the first round. Meanwhile, the *xenologic* problem is, at long last, being talked about openly, without cries of 'racist!' 'fascist!' and 'xenophobe!' ringing out before a single sentence is complete.

One of the post-election 'debates', in particular, reminded me of *Fader's Waft*, where Hache-Moncour undertakes to 'defend' Rhialto, in his absence. And just now I am reading, in Robertson's *The Development of Modern English,* about the differences between American and British English. Robertson's point here is that, while the differences are real, they are usually greatly exaggerated (he cites H.L. Mencken, Vance's *bête noire*, in particular). All of which reminds me of a pet thought of my own: *the human lust to imagine reality really to be as one would that it were.*

No one, unless in a careful preliminary operation they have transformed the meaning of the word, thinks of themselves as *evil*. We are all, with the exception of that rare creature, the sincere penitent, *good* in our own eyes. The calumniator, before he blackens and condemns, must first convince himself of the truth, or the ultimate justice, of his calumnies, and thus his own righteousness. The agitator and promoter of perverse or selfish causes must first whitewash them in his own eyes. But how easy this is to do, when the only barrier between what we wish and what 'is' are mere words, when reality is easy to ignore! Such organized ignorance of reality is a problem of maturity. Take an extreme case, an act of unvarnished selfish exploitation, like the sale of phony real estate. Con-men cannot possibly justify such an act in a world where other people are as human as they. The solution, as Vance has often indicated, is to exist at the center of an essentially infantile, solipsistic world, where things and people alike are mere animated decor, where one is a *master* at the *hub* of a *private infinity*, an Overman among undermen. Thus larceny becomes treasure hunting, murder becomes slaughter, and the superb indignation of the Leftist in the face of 'economic' or 'cultural' inequality, a 'sense of justice'. Is the 'poor man' an ignorant lout, lazy, profligate, selfish, vain and dishonest? Is the 'rich man' imaginative, modest, hard working, generous, honorable and frugal? Ah ha! Such 'virtues' are merely bourgeois habits. The 'values' of the rich cannot be applied to the poor, who are denied access to them by the bourgeois social structure itself! How can a poor man be honest when he is forced, by hunger, to theft? How can he be modest, when he lacks clothes to cover his nakedness, and his only source of self-respect is braggadocio? How can he be hard-working when the task he must do is demeaning?* How can

* This argument is particularly grotesque; if certain commerce is indeed demeaning by nature, no one should ever engage in it; prostitution, or other sorts of crime, come to mind, but no one is forced to engage in these. Sweeping up in the pantry, while not exactly exalted work, has nothing demeaning about it. I talked to a French violin maker about Vance today. Learning of Vance's

he be intelligent when 'society' has 'denied' him higher education, etc. etc. Reality, until it sneaks up from behind and clubs you over the head, is as plastic as clay.

But even so, why ignore it to such an extent? Merely wanting reality to be such and such is not the most basic reason people resort to its distortion. I want reality to be different in several respects; I hope for what I want, I work for it, but I do not *decree it to be*. Such decreeing is Vancian magic, as Daswell Tippin memorably remarks in *The Face*. It is also the deepest sense of 'deconstruction' and 'post-modernism'; by these we live in a world constructed by doctored symbols, where 'reality' is a poor sort of thing that serves, at best, as raw material to the protean 'discourse' that establishes true 'reality'. But why this transformational magic? Why this refusal to grow up and recognize the intractability of reality, and that other beings are as ardent and mortal as ourselves? The true reason is Evil itself, or for the Christians among us, the Devil. Evil has many ingredients; it is, first of all, selfishness. But this selfishness is not mere money grubbing and such, it is refusal to face the consequences of reality at the most basic levels; like mortality, our relation to others (that we are of the same nature and in the same boat as they), and our relation to all that is.

Where does the universe come from? To imagine that we ourselves are God is equivalent to imagining that the universe comes out of 'nothing'; infantile ideas.

The infant is born; he begins to accumulate consciousness, which necessarily begins with his evolving *self*, at this point essentially equal to his corporal urges. Food, in the form of his mother's breast, is his primal source of gratification, and gratification being a spiritual as much as a physical quality, he is soon engaged in a symbolic struggle with that more or less perverse minion, his alter ego, or 'mother', who controls his precious gratification. Not all infants have a tyrannical attitude, but many do — and it is only natural, and usually expands outward and dissipates in the welter of human experience. That this truly basic infantile 'psychic pattern' should continue into youth, or even on into middle age, is another matter, and an extremely important one — often explored by Vance, the source of much of my thinking on the matter.

There is nothing real — unless our lust for autonomy and personal power is 'real' — to suggest that our con-

sciousness, our eroticism (by which I mean what attracts and repels us, moving us through life) and our physical vitality are not aspects of the origin of *all that is*. The tree is contained in the seed. Behind the smallest spring, watering ocean-feeding rivers, are hidden reservoirs, in ground and sky, as great as the oceans themselves. The idea of God made man, in the person of the historical son of Mary, is not only inconceivable to a mere human mind, but ineluctable in fact. In esoteric thought the incarnation is a mere symbol of human divinity, thus our self-election to Godly rank. But while we are indeed the children of God, as we are the children of our mortal parents, we are not our mortal parents themselves, just as we are not God himself.

All that said, what about our opinion of Vance; is it a mere prejudice? Our factual preference of him to most other writers first of all, and then our realization, on reading and rereading him by appetite, that on every literary plain, artistic and philosophical, we can do nothing but judge him to be on the same level as the greatest novelists; is this a quirk of a mere shared taste? Do we have some odd characteristic, or is what we share a superior literary sense, or the mere luck of having stumbled upon a rare item? It is not as if many 'secondary' writers do not have fanatical followings (though as determined and dedicated as we, perhaps not).

Contempt of relativism, such as mine, does not eliminate the difficulty of judgement by reason of the smoked glass of subjectivity. *To judge well, know thyself*, as some sage surely must have said.

I am interested in Cosmopolis as a reservoir of opinion about Vance, a testing ground for our judgement, but that, in itself, is not enough. In addition to the work of gaining objectivity about one's own opinions, the modernist situation, which has hypocritically discredited hierarchical thought (thus all judgement), has made it necessary to reflect upon the 'methodology of judgement', the whats, hows and whys of intelligent and genuinely felt preference. I say that the discredit of hierarchical thinking is hypocritical because, like the rest of modernist foolishness, it ushers in a new era (the era of non-hierarchical thinking) by throwing dust in our eyes. A few words are banned, a few others awarded twisted and impoverished meanings, a jargon is rigged up with rusty nails and bits of string, and voilá: the golden age is upon us!

One of the things I find so extraordinary in Vance is his points of resemblance to great writers of antiquity — I am thinking of personal favorites such as Plato, Epictitus or Thucydides: dialogs of sly subtlety, passages

past as seaman and carpenter, he exclaimed that it proved that manual workers were just as intelligent and artistic as other people. Such a comment seems strange to an American, but the European attitude is different. This French artisan was glad to have Vance's example.

of ardent truth-loving passion, keys to the human situation. Though a man of his time (who can avoid that non-distinction?) Vance, as a writer, goes in — or only as a young man, and then rarely and tentatively — for no literary or intellectual fads. He remains mentally expansive in a time of mental contraction, where the withering of general culture has transformed most people into what Florence King calls 'Ignos'. How many readers, nowadays, can pick up his little winks, such as the reference to Swift in *The Murthe* (when Lehuster is said to have opened an egg at the wrong end). But that is window dressing. What counts is what modernists might call Vance's underlying 'ferocity' (a great modernist value!). For all his comprehensiveness, his large attitude toward human frailty, his robust acceptance of human and natural realities, he is not a man who amuses himself by trifling with evil and vice (by which I mean taking ambiguous positions). This is rare enough, but even rarer is his staunch disdain for ideological fads. Vance's work, for all it's clever toying with the subject, is no argument in favor of relativism, or against hierarchical thought, and this in the context, the very hothouse one might say, of anti-humanism and moral relativity which is scientism, or 'radical materialism', the weft of so much Science Fiction, including Vance's — in this regard Vance is like Jason who entered the labyrinth and killed the Minotaur.

I will give a single example of this hypocrisy, destroyer of what it pretends to create. Today we are supposed to believe in the equality of all cultures, by contrast with the evil past — unredeemed by the wonderful Left — and which, in our now debased minds, consists more or less of: the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, colonialism and fascism. *They* — those horrid colonizing, racist xenophobes — were bad. We, by contrast, do not exploit and destroy other cultures; no,

we are good: we love and include them, supposedly; in fact we don't give a hoot about them, except in so far as they provide an opportunity to show off how loving and tolerant we are. We, including the least uneducated, are more ignorant than people of a century ago about other cultures. How do I know? Take architecture. Today, the whole wide world is aesthetically dominated by a fad developed by Communists in Germany some 75 years ago, now in its 'post-modernist' phase; the 'international style' (cubic forms of steel and glass). Reference to our architectural heritage is disappearing — how many of us can recognize the Ionic order? — and architectural education, both professional and vulgarizing, is all and only about the usual: 'personal expression'. But here beside me I have The *Larousse pour Tous* (The Larousse for All,

volume one of two, in folio). It does not have a date, but, by internal evidence, I see that it is at least 100 years old. It is a popular *dictionnaire encyclopédique*. It has 8400 illustrations plus 175 full pagers, and 112 maps. On page 91, illustrating 'architecture' is a *tableau* offering architectural styles of 14 different civilizations/periods, in which east and west, north and south, ancient and modern, are presented in a heterogeneous and egalitarian manner; Asian and African examples represent 5 of the illustrations, or 6 if you count Russia. Examples include a mosque in Spain, so there is no *eurocentric* or *Christian xenophobia*. Contemporary purveyors of cultural relativism are way behind the 'dead white male colonizers' responsible for such books, which were rife at the time. It is easy to imagine a young Jack Vance nourishing his mind on such books, invitations to discovery, adventure, romance, the secrets of the ages! Today we are instructed in the awfulness of the West, and commanded to *respect* (ugh) other 'cultures', which we dutifully do, without interest or ardor.

YOUR VIE MANAGERS AT WORK

Once again the VIE is implementing a new work procedure: creating a new tool, forming a new team, and harmonizing this work with other teams and procedures. For those interested in what is involved I have copied some key mails exchanged in recent days, among Koen — the VIE's Laughing Mathematician — Chuck King — designated RTF-Diff team head — and elements from Archiving, Composition, Comp Review and Work-Flow.

Koen announced the readiness of the new Vance Dictionary Analysis Engine (VDAE) function:

"The RTF Diffing Tool, an introductory introduction:

"As all of you are presumably aware of, my VIE database — dubbed 'Totality' — has since its modest beginnings been thriving on the steady inflow of texts in the form of MS Word documents. Coming from pre-proofing and from TI, and culminating in the ultimate Word doc for each text, the cor-bf file.

"Totality has thus far yielded a bunch of output that is generally perceived as useful in various areas of our endeavor: VDAE spread-sheets for Technoproofing, Incredible String Retriever reports for VIE-wide word-lookup, VCR reports pointing to possible layout issues stemming from hidden 'features' in the cor-bf Word files, and some less obvious applications ranging from the analysis of the number of sentences per narrative paragraph across the works, to the rather frivolous outpourings of the Stochastic Vancifier.

"But all of the above has always been — and still is —

based on that sequence of Word files, converging to the cor-bf TI file.

"Some moons ago though, it became apparent that the transition from the Word-based cor-bf files to the PDF output as generated by our composition software (now narrowed down to Adobe InDesign) has not always been an error-free process that we might blindly put our faith in. Indeed, Post-proofing has discovered text gone inexplicably AWOL in more than one PDF-file, as compared to the authoritative cor-bf Word document.

"In the light of these unwelcome developments, it appeared a logical step for me to try and extend Totality support for the VIE beyond the stage of the MS Word files, and into the realm of PDF. Now, PDF-files as such are of no use to me as input for Totality. They might be useful, perhaps, to one even more steeped in geekishness than yours truly, but I know of no way to handle them directly, nor to extract all relevant textual content from them without losing track e.g. of the loads of special characters we have embedded in our Amiante font family.

"I believe it was Herc who finally saved the day by remarking that it is possible for InDesign to export the typeset files not only as PDF, but also as RTF — Rich Text Format — which is basically compatible with MS Word, and which I could envisage a cunning scheme for to feed them into Totality. It has been the implementation of this cunning scheme that has taken me so long in recent months. It has involved building a transformation engine that processes RTF files full of Amiante fonts, and translates these into plain text, correctly converting all the special characters, like e.g. the ligatures and all the small caps, into ASCII.

"Last weekend, I finalized this transformation engine — the Rich Text Converter — which presently effectuates 733 hand-coded font-transformations, and tested it on some InDesign RTF output that Herc had sent me. It appears to do what I think it ought to do, so now we are ready for the next step.

"Herc sent me two files for a test-run: drago8-fin-v2.rtf and langua-fin-v6.rtf. Indeed, the two texts for the upcoming hors-series VIE book. Today I whipped up a quick-and-dirty little report that compares the vocabulary content of each of these to their respective cor-bf documents. The results are attached. They may seem rather unspectacular, but bear in mind that this is a good thing as it indicates that at least for these two v-texts, there appear to be few — if any — real issues.

"The attached files are ASCII flat-files — or plain text. If possible open them from within a text-editor, and

avoid using Mickey$oft Word to view them. Word will try to be helpful and wrap those long lines for you, making the file somewhat unreadable. The best thing to do is open the 'Wordpad' application (which should be hidden somewhere in your 'Start'-menu) and look for the saved attachments. If you're using a Mac, BBEdit should be fine. Look at these in a fixed-pitch font like Courier.

"I realize the files look a bit spartan, being flat-files, and I may eventually format them as tabular Word docs with nicer formatting and all that, but in view of the urgency with v-texts already waiting in GM-ready state, I think we should really get on with it ASAP and forego the niceties until later . . .

"Please have a look at the contents, I believe the different sections are pretty self-explanatory. There is a section listing words that are in the cor-bf file but not in the fin-vsomething, followed by a list of words found in the fin-v — but lacking in the cor-bf, and then a list of words appearing in both files but with different frequencies.

"A closer look reveals that most of what the report throws up is in fact nuncupatory: 'CHAPTER' being composed as 'Chapter', Roman numerals in chapter titles being composed as Arabian numerals, some words having been end-of-line hyphenated by the Composers for aesthetic reasons, some stuff that was in italics and has been typeset as quoted text instead — But there are also some interesting bits that require closer inspection. Like the change from 'muffled' to 'muted'? Or one instance of 'crushing' ending up as 'crashing'? Or 'un-Paonese' becoming 'unPaonese'? Hmm . . .

"None of this reporting is cast in stone yet. I would invite you all to provide some feedback, and see whether I can make the report layout better and easier for you to scrutinize. In order to enable you to consider issues raised, you would however need to have access to all the relevant files, methinks. That would mean the fin-v-pdf files, the cor-bf.doc files, and any Post-proofing reports concerning these texts. I imagine e.g. that there has been a conscious command from above at some point that said "change 'muffled' to 'muted'". I also imagine this to be documented in a Comp or PostP bis-file somewhere . . .

"The following words were found in drago8-cor-bf.doc but not in drago8-fin-v2.pdf:

WORD	#OCCURRENCES
1	1
10	1
11	1
12	1
13	1
2	1
3	1
4	1
5	1
6	1
7	1
8	1
9	1
CHAPTER	13
Coalition	1
Masters	1
Muffled	1
individual	1

"The following words were found in drago8-fin-v2.pdf but not in drago8-cor-bf.doc:

WORD	#OCCURRENCES
Chapter	13
Ban-beck	1
Car-colo	1
Coali-tion	1
II	1
III	1
IV	1
IX	1
Muted	1
V	1
VI	1
VII	1
VIII	1
X	1
XI	1
XII	1
XIII	1

"The following words appear in both drago8-cor-bf.doc and drago8-fin-v2.pdf, but with different frequencies:

WORD	#OCCURRENCES in drago8-cor-bf.doc	#OCCURRENCES in drago8-fin-v2.pdf
Dragon	7	6
one	62	63
Banbeck	231	230
Carcolo	262	261
I	290	291
The	315	314"

Chuck King (designated head of RTF-Diff team work) wrote:

" . . . the files that should be 'diffed' are the last .doc

file (cor-bf) and the first .pdf file (fin-v1). Ideally I think this step should take place at the same time as initial CRT review, and the two reports generated could be folded together for the next pass through Composition. Obviously we can't do that for Wave 1 texts; for those texts I guess we should check against the most recent .pdf, and there will have to be an extra step, where the diff report is checked against the bis file to see whether differences result from changes due to CRT or PP. But for Wave 2, I think we should try to do diff and CRT at the same time.

"The input into the process will be the cor-bf file, the fin-v1 (or vX) file, and the output from Koen's apparatus. The output report should, I imagine, simply address each difference and flag any that are not obviously harmless (i.e., word hard-hyphenated by composer). At this point, I would like to try a couple and prepare a sample report, both to get an idea of how long this will take and see how those who will work with it subsequently like the report. I have Koen's report on *The Dragon Masters*, and I have drago8-fin-v1.pdf; all I need is the cor-bf file and I will prepare a report. So, if I can get that, we'll be in business."

I commented to Charles:

"Perhaps you should begin with GM ready texts only, and then the bis file can be updated without fear of parallelism*. Needed corrections, if not sanctioned by the bis, would be 'obvious errors'. In the rare case where a TI issue was raised, TI would have to be consulted (the Second or the Reviewer). Then Herc has to organize a Comp pass, and then you, or Robin, or whomever, has to do PCRV†.

"I think you should figure out how much time the basic job takes (could be short!). Then you might want to set up an ordered list of the texts you want to do and communicate with Herc about getting to you, or yours, the appropriate files, and following up with Comp and PCRV, all to be tracked on a special page, or added to a current tracking page."

John Schwab reported:

"I can forward the files to whomever needs them when needed. The most necessary thing will be to tell me what to send, and provide an e-mail address to send it to. I will begin extraction of the .rtf dumps tonight provided my system survives the thunderstorms (already lost power twice in the last half hour)."

* **VIE** jargon for simultaneous work on one document, in this case a given bis file. **PWR**

† 'Post Composition Review Verification', which makes sure the composer has indeed changed what he says he has changed.

Meanwhile, Koen had written:

"The original plan was to have two RTF diffs done for each text, one pitching cor-bf.doc against fin-v1.pdf, and then one comparing fin-v1.pdf against fin-vx.pdf, where x stands for the final pdf file. Your [Chuck's] strategy seems sound, so I'd suggest that after this initial drago8 exploration, you might request materials from Herc and myself in a single mail, so that when Herc receives a request from you for, say, xxxxxx-fin-vf.pdf, he could do the .rtf dump of said file and send me xxxxxx-fin-vf.rtf which I'll then process and return the resulting report to Herc and yourself.

"Meanwhile, I've been tweaking my . . . erm . . . apparatus . . . somewhat. It struck me e.g. that there really is no need for three separate lists. The attached Excel file contains a single table wherein words with differing frequencies are listed near (as far as I can algorithmically determine) the words that they might have been changed into.

"For drago8, the list goes as follows—the first frequency is that of drago8-cor-bf, the second figure is the freq in drago8-fin-v2:

Ban-beck	0	1
Banbeck	231	230
Car-colo	0	1
Carcolo	262	261
CHAPTER	13	0
Chapter	0	13
Coalition	1	0
Coali-tion	0	1
Dragon	7	6
1	1	0
I	290	291
2	1	0
II	0	1
3	1	0
III	0	1
individual	1	0
4	1	0
IV	0	1
9	1	0
IX	0	1
Masters	1	0
Muffled	1	0
Muted	0	1
one	62	63
The	315	314
5	1	0
V	0	1
6	1	0

VI	0	1
7	1	0
VII	0	1
8	1	0
VIII	0	1
10	1	0
X	0	1
11	1	0
XI	0	1
12	1	0
XII	0	1
13	1	0
XIII	0	1

"From the above ordering, it should be immediately clear e.g. that the one 'Ban-beck' that is new in the .pdf file, is one of the 'Banbecks' from the .doc that got hyphenated. Same for 'Car-colo' and for 'coali-tion'. The 13 'CHAPTER's clearly become 13 'Chapter's. And all the conversions involving Roman numerals are immediately accounted for.

"Taking into account the fact that the cor-bf.doc always includes the story title, in this case 'The Dragon Masters', whereas the .pdf does not, explains the disappearance of a 'The', a 'Dragon', and a 'Masters'.

"After taking out all this obvious stuff, the few remaining items are those really worth checking out. I think this new format greatly improves the separation of the chaff from the real issues, but of course I'll let you be the judge of that..."

Robin Rouch reported to Charles:

"Just one note: in our latest version of Rumfuddle (rumfu7-fin-v3.pdf), we found many instances of hard hyphens; i.e., word-break hyphens in the middle of words even though the words were no longer at the ends of lines.

"That means that we cannot always assume that a hyphenated word is the correct alternative to the unbroken form. Your RTF Diff step may be the best way to ensure that problems like this don't slip through."

Robin copied this CPPR note from the Rumfuddle bis file as an example (numbers are page/line of the latest 'fin' pdf):

"Superfluous hyphens that should be removed:
24/1 ([Rob-]ert-son)
25/31 (back-lash)
31/10 (knowl-edge)
35/4 (half-way)
35/12 (paper-work)
36/2 (fire-place)
36/18 (paper-work)
37/24 (pass-ways)
37/25 (daugh-ters)
44/16 (Hok-kaido)
61/31 (Himm-ler)
63/9 (Heart-ed)
70/3 (Rum-fuddlers)

"(652) Doubtless, we did not find them all; a careful check must be made during PCRV."

Charles responded:

"Interesting...Do we also know where those hard hyphens came from? I just had a look at the VCR for rumfu, and there is nothing there to indicate that hyphen-trouble might have been inherited from the cor-bf Word doc."

John Schwab offered this explanation:

"Hard hyphens are usually the result of formatting issues. They are probably unrecovered remnants from having to force a hyphenation for composition purposes. This may include forcing a break to loosen or tighten a line or other reasons. Later, when the text is reset, they may not have been removed as text reflows. I would expect the bulk of the cases to be in files that were originally set in PageMaker or Quark. The update to InDesign could also have a bearing on this."

Robin asked:

"Koen, Does the RTF Diff tool enumerate double quotes? It is not unusual to find open quotes that should be close quotes and vice versa. Of course this is a gross measure — they can match up by chance — but it may allow us to notice when the quote type changes from open to close.

"And aren't single quotes and apostrophes different characters? If so, it might work for single quotes as well."

Koen explained:

"No, the RTF Diff tool does not check for balanced quotes, it functionally mimics the VDAE by focusing on words, not on punctuation. At the time VDAE was created, it was decided to make an exception for single quotes and hyphens, because those may be legitimately part of a word.

"If VDAE (and therefore RTF Diff) encounters a word starting with a leading single quote though, it will strip it off. Single quotes appearing further on in a word are left alone.

"In principle single quotes and apostrophes might be represented by different symbols in a font character set. However, before words are processed in Totality, all

fonts/symbols/characters are flattened into an ASCII file, and as of that point the differences in appearance between curly quotes and apostrophes gets lost. The reason I was able to check for potentially wrong curlies in the VCR reports is that the VCR program does not use the Totality word content for the texts, but instead manipulates the original Word files directly. This is to say that it could be done, but I'd have to develop a special single quote accounting tool — hey, that could be a SQAT. For the time being though, I envisage quite a bit of work coming up with the RTF Diff follow-up . . ."

Charles wrote:

"OK, let's get this show on the road. I think I have the process pretty well figured out, and I have asked Hans to solicit volunteers for my team. Pending team formation, I will try to do as many RTF-diff projects as I can myself. Later in this e-mail I request a few texts to get started, but there are a couple issues for consideration.

"First, Robin raised the issue of hard hyphens. I cannot get Acrobat to search for them (word-break hyphens, not 'regular' hyphens). Searching for 'Ban-beck' in *The Dragon Masters* turns up no instances, although it's clearly there (15/11-12). I only was able to find this by searching for every instance of 'beck' in the text; eventually it turned up this one. Notably, it doesn't come up if one searches for 'Banbeck' or 'Ban-beck'. Also, 'Banbeck's' at 23/22-23 does not show up in Koen's report, so apparently the difference is between hard and soft hyphens. I don't pretend to understand it, but in any event, I don't know that we will be able to rely on rtf-diff to spot problems like Robin found in *Rumfuddle*, since although it can identify how many instances of a word were hard-hyphenated during Comp, the Differs will not be able to locate them in the .pdf files (except by searching for every instance, which will not be practical in most cases). I am open to suggestions, but it seems to me that we may need to rely on CRT and PP to identify this problem, and then I assume the Composers know how to deal with it when it comes up.

"Second, and this is a stupid problem but it exists, I don't have e-mail capacity to send out large .pdf files. I don't even have capacity to receive them at my Yahoo! address without shutting down my mailbox due to exceeded capacity. I have an AOL address that I don't otherwise use at which I *think* I will be able to receive them, but I can't send out mail from Yahoo! with more than 1.5M in attachments, or from AOL with more than 2M in attachments. Most of our book-length texts are bigger than that in .pdf. Options I see are (a) posting the files on a web server somewhere to be downloaded

directly from the web (but I don't have a personal web page and John tells me he doesn't have space for this on his server anymore), or (b) having John e-mail the files directly to the Differ. I would love to hear other ideas. In the meantime, there should be no problem with shorter texts, so Diffing can at least begin with them.

"Finally, John and Koen: I think it might be most efficient if we went ahead and prepared the rtf-diff files for the texts that are ready, so that the reports are prepared and ready for Diffing as soon as I have team members to do them. So, to the extent you have time, please proceed to prepare diff files on the following texts:

Abercrombie Station
Alfred's Ark
Bad Ronald
Bird Isle
Clarges
The Domains of Koryphon
The Flesh Mask
Gold & Iron
Golden Girl
The Insufferable Red-Headed Daughter . . .
The Kokod Warriors
Marune: Alastor 933
Meet Miss Universe
The Mitr
Strange People, Queer Notions
Trullion: Alastor 2262
When the Five Moons Rise
The World Between

"I ask that you coordinate any logistical issues between yourselves, and forward the rtf-diff reports to me as soon as they are ready. In the meantime, here we go:

"John: please send to me cor-bf files and the most recent .pdf files for the following texts:

The World Between
When the Five Moons Rise
The Mitr

"Please prioritize these texts as you send to Koen the cor-bf files and .rtf versions of the .pdf files, to input into his device.

"We will see if AOL balks at receiving sizeable attachments.

"Robin: please send me the most recent bis files re each of the above texts, as well as *The Dragon Masters*. If the most recent version can be downloaded from the PCRV page, just say so; I can do that.

"Thanks, everyone. I am confident that once this gets underway it will go quickly."

I responded to two points in the above:

"Don't try to do things in RTF-diff that are not part of what RTF-diff does. Go with the flow!

"[Regarding your ISP;] you don't need to send any files; just ask John Schwab to send them for you. However, this is super-top priority work you are doing, and if you are willing to get what you need ISP wise, the project will foot the bill. Don't hesitate!"

[Robin also proposed a solution to the ISP problem.]

Joel Riedesel, Work Czar, wrote:

"Where should these reports go? To Paul for review? To TI for review? To Composer for fixing? We need:
 • Review of results
 • Implementation of decisions (Composition)
 • Review that implementation was completed

"With Tim S. deciding that a final TI-checkoff is nuncupatory [this related to another exchange about the TI readiness of so called 'Golden Master ready' files] we are only left with the RTF-Diff before texts are ready for compilation into volumes. Very cool. Obviously, we must fix upon this final bit of process (which I commented upon in a previous email).

"Meanwhile, you may also want to ask Chris Corley (cc'd) for volunteers. Chris has access via the PP sub-team managers to nearly 70 volunteers doing Post-proofing. Far be it for me to suggest that those people might be available and willing now that PP is wrapping up for Wave 1.

"I think that then leaves you to manage the work of getting all the inputs put together and the .pdfs to the right people. I can help with the .pdfs if necessary (I'm waiting for Herc to comment on what works better for the .pdfs . . . just mailing them to the appropriate people or a sub-website—I suspect the former if you just provide a list of emails for each item).

"This is very cool. As much as it distresses me to add this step to the process at this time, it looks obviously necessary and useful.

"So, have I actually said anything useful here? Not likely. Probably just rambling at the end of a long day. I'm practicing my ability to make it sound like I have something to say and talk about when Paul and I sit outside the nympharium without privileges."

John Schwab ordained:

"Completed reports should be sent to the archives for further dissemination (that would be me). Once a set process is developed, I will handle file transfers to and from the archive. Violators of this simple rule will be flogged!

"File naming: <vtext>-fin-diff: This format is so that my archives stay in order and I can find things quickly."

Reviewing the initial RTF-Diff reports, I wrote:

"No issues for *Pao*!

"For *Dragon Masters* there are two issues:

Muffled/Muted

"I checked cor-bf, fin-v2, and fin-v1 bis and find no reference for this change. Unless someone can come up with a justification for it, as in 'fin-2 bis', it must be corrected, with an order in the bis file, forwarded by the Archive to Comp, such as:

Drago-fin-v2

RTF-Diff:

Fix: 4/22 Muted/Muffled

"*However*, this is contingent upon a check of fin-2 bis. If this change is not documented and justified there, >Muffled< must be restored.

"Regarding the other find:

individual/one

"It is fully documented in cor-bf.

"For every issue found researches such as I just did for *Dragon Masters* must be done. Ideally this would be part of the RTF-Diff job, which would then go as follows:

1: Review RTF-Diff file

1A: no issues. _Job over_ (note to be made to this effect in bis?)

2: Issue(s) found

3: Call for cor-bf and latest fin file and bis

4: Research issue

4A: Justification for change found. _Job over_

5: No justification for change found

6: Bis must now be updated with an order to Comp to make change

7: Return bis to Archive, alert Czar

8: Archive sends to Composer, who corrects

9: Corrected file receives PCRV

9A: Correction verified. _Job over_

10: Correction not verified. Repeat from 7

"Normally the job is self contained. There is either justification in the cor-bf or the bis for the change, or there is not. Anyone familiar with the use of these files can do the job. If something untoward turns up, ad hoc recourse can be had to TI."

Joel Anderson commented on the hyphenation issue: "True 'discretionary' hyphens that have been inserted in either PM or Quark survive the conversion to InDesign, and they work properly (the unimplemented ones can be

seen as little colored dashes riding on top of potential breaks by checking 'Show Hidden Characters' under the type menu in ID). These items have no effect unless a word to which they were applied is crowded, when they will hyphenate it, but *only* in the correct manner, at the end of a line. If these kind of things are present in the Word files, I don't know what happens. Word's own discretionary hyphens, at least, don't appear to function, although I can see them when present in a file placed as text in ID."

John Schwab settled an aspect of the hyphen affair: "A small text document (1 paragraph) was set up in InDesign. It contained one word with an end of line hyphen. One word with two non-breaking hyphens, and one word with three normal hyphens.

"The results of the .rtf dump are:

"End of line hyphen is gone (as expected).

"Non-breaking hyphens are gone (unexpected).

"Regular hyphens are still present (expected)."

In the middle of all this Damien Jones reported: "Charles King has completed ocr3 of DP, ocr3 of Dead Ahead and ocr2 of Temple of Han. Dave Reitsema has completed DDJ of Maske: Thaery."

And Patrick Dusoulier joined Charles' team.

Putting the last piece into place, John Schwab wrote:

"Just to inform all of you. Tracking of the rtf-diff phase will be handled on the Composition team tracking site. Update of coding is as follows:

—A white lit <ready> in the GM column indicates the text is ready for rtf-diff.

—A yellow lit <ready> in the GM column indicates that the .rtf file has been created and the process has begun.

—A pale-red <ready> indicates that the diff was performed and that issues remain to be resolved.

—A green lit <ready> indicates that the text has cleared diff and that no issues remain, or that the found problems have been resolved.

—The complete line for a text will be green once a file has cleared the GM1 meeting and is ready for press.

—The complete line will be in blue once the blues have been received.

"The page has already been updated to reflect these changes."

Charles is currently at work processing the RTF-Diff files which Koen is outputting.

Working on an illustration for *Ecce and Old Earth*, I stumbled upon this wonderful paragraph, one of Vance's signature themes, perhaps here in its more perfect expression:

"The Way of the Ten Pantologues ran beside the Bartolo Seppi Canal, and was lined with bistros, cafés, flower stalls, booths selling fried clams and potatoes in paper packets. Along the sidestreets dim little shops dealt in specialty merchandise: curios, off-world artifacts, incunabula; rare weapons and musical instruments pitched in every key imaginable. Certain shops specialized in puzzles, cryptography, inscriptions in unknown languages; others sold coins, glass insects, autographs, minerals mined from the substance of dead stars. Still other shops purveyed softer stuff: dolls costumed in the styles of many times and places, also dolls cleverly programmed to perform acts which were polite and acts not at all polite. Spice shops vended condiments and scents, oils and esters, of an interesting sort; confectionaries sold cakes and bonbons available nowhere else on Earth, as well as dried fruits, syrops and glazes. A variety of shops displayed models of ships, ancient trains and automobiles; while others specialized in models of spaceships."

♦

'Is is' and Jack Vance's Colons
By George Rhoads

In recent years a regrettable verbal construction has come into use in speech: the strange double *is*, as in such sentences as 'What the trouble with the world is, is stupidity.' This construction does not appear in print, since once put down it is detected and remedied. A speaker of such a sentence is aware she is in trouble after the first three words, and tries to save it with 'is is', making it doubly awkward. A better choice of words would be: 'The trouble with the world is stupidity.' But this fails to emphasize *stupidity*, as the bad sentence rightly does. To repair this lack one could put a colon between 'is' and 'stupidity', thus: 'The trouble with the world is: stupidity.' In speech one would naturally pause briefly before 'stupidity' and in writing the colon indicates this pause. A comma will not do. Commas serve to clarify a sentence, but cannot command a pause, as can the colon.

I learned this use of the colon from reading Jack Vance, among other larger lessons. An interesting essay

could be written on Vance's creative use of the colon, but, as the lion leaves the remains of his kill to the jackals, I leave this task to others.

♦

An Antidote to the Modern Educational Malaise

by William Tahil

A grandiose claim for the benefits of reading Jack Vance? A futile attempt to cast Vance as a figure worthy of literary attention? An ill-informed title to an even less well informed diatribe on the ills of modern society?

By no means! I submit the following essay, written in uncompromising *Unspiek*, infinitely preferable to the ever increasing torrent of Newspeak to which we are subjected, as a matter of information and practical stimulation which, if it does not find fertile ground among the universe of Jack Vance readers and aficionados, will be the very indictment that its detractors would claim to deny.

Much has been written on the 'decline of educational standards' in the Western world. Some people might say this is a myth and that children today exist in a completely different world to the 'pre-digital' age; hence, their performance, behaviour or character development cannot be compared to the 1950s, '60s or '70s. Others might assent and say that children today live submerged in digitalia—which combined with 'media' that are used to convey little other than trivia or puerile sensation—are one of the major causes of this decline.

I certainly belong in the latter camp and I sincerely hope that the vast majority of Vance readers do so as well.

I work in the Aerospace Industry, from which I would like to present some evidence for this decline. I will then present some ideas as to how the Works of Vance could be used as part of an effort to reverse this decline and help produce a society that is moving closer towards the potential peaks of human ability rather than continuing its present descent towards a new nadir.

Since 1998, the American aviation magazine *Aviation Week and Space Technology* has been running an on/off commentary and investigation into the decline of the US Aerospace Industry. In 1999, they identified 'people issues' and a 'looming dearth of intellectual capital' as key factors jeopardising the US aerospace industry's future health. I would not say that Europe is any better off. Studies by various consultants confirmed this decline and overall it is a 'big issue' in the industry, though naturally hotly denied by its leaders.

Please permit me to now quote somewhat extensively from the recent *AW&ST* article (May 6, 2002, P61) that prompted me to write this essay:

"The number of US graduates in computer science and engineering is at a seventeen year low right now."

"We're one of several industries that has concerns about its future workforce. We're seeing it in medicine, especially surgeons and even car mechanics."

"Our research shows a definite correlation between media and the brain development of children. Kids exposed to light screens for extended periods at an early age do not develop the sensory pathways that enable imagination and creativity. In fact, these children are considered sensory deprived."

"The problem of endangered minds—and the near collapse of our educational system—is literally a diminishing capacity for abstraction among the general population."

"Children . . . if they have to think, they have a real difficult time imagining—and I emphasise that word imagining—what is being asked of them. Developmentally, this diminishing capacity for authentic creativity is linked to a lack of imagination."

"In 1950, the average 14-year-old had a speaking vocabulary of 25,000 words. Today, the average is 10,000 words. Before the 1950s childhood had a rich descriptive narrative as its primary environment—storytelling and radio. Descriptive words were used and they demanded a child create a corresponding mental image . . . he painted his own mental picture. Now when we see *Star Wars* we all see Yoda the same . . . there's no real imagination involved in seeing Yoda. Creating a mental image of that creature requires a completely different set of brain functions than just calling up a concrete image of what we've seen previously."

"Media presents concrete images . . . undermines use of descriptive language . . . it is infinitely more difficult for the brain to process and derive meaning from symbolic and metaphoric language than to look at a picture."

"The Aerospace Industry, which requires creative, innovative people to design, develop, build and test cutting edge products is trying to draw from a pool that in general no longer has the capabilities to perform these

functions."

I consider these statements, which I see no reason to doubt since they correspond to my own experience as well, as shocking, horrifying and even cataclysmic. How can we continue to function and solve the problems ahead of us as a species if the latest generation in the richest and most powerful nation on the planet is as dysfunctional as this?

I consider myself very fortunate to have started reading Vance when I was about twelve. I was transported with Adam Reith to Tschai; I have travelled the Gaean Reach and encountered far more creatures, characters, worlds and realities than all the Hollywood scriptwriters could create in a thousand years—and they could never allow me to enter those worlds while enriching my intellectual capacity, knowledge and awareness as Vance does. Vance has had a profound influence on my inner reality—my thoughts and beliefs—and therefore on my aspirations, goals and actions.

I believe that we live in a thought responsive universe. That means, the physical matter and world we see outside is the expression of our inner world and thoughts. According to those who (claim) to carry out Astral Projection or Out of Body Travel, the less dense non-physical planes are highly thought responsive and circumstances mold themselves immediately to one's thoughts. Yes, just think what that means if it is true. (Be careful!) Fortunately perhaps, given the lack of control most of us have over our thoughts (myself included), the physical world is denser and slower to respond—by the time things happen, most of us have forgotten what we were thinking about anyway. Hence most of us see no connection. (By the way, if you think that the Universe is *not* thought responsive—then it won't be for you, will it?) But even without going into realms that some of you might consider esoteric or pure nonsense, I am sure you would agree that the mass mental reality of a large number of people gives rise to a physically manifested corollary—whether that is a certain pop star achieving 'No. 1' status or a pogrom. The requisite mental reality is now produced to order by the Thought Police on a computer for mass programming by television.

Vance is the antithesis of everything that is worst in modern society. Vance is the epitome of Symbolic and Metaphoric language. I humbly urge all Vance readers to consider the above extracts and what they mean. What future are we imagining for ourselves?

♦

The CLS

by Till Noever

CLS 13 is being published together with this issue of Cosmopolis. My sincerest thanks to Tim Stretton for his article on Vancean influence, and to Jeremy Cavaterra for yet another short story. Readers will also find the first two chapters of *Coralia*.

The fate of future issues hangs in the balance. The dearth of submitted fiction continues. The serialization of *Wings of Iron*, for a number of valid reasons, will probably not happen. We had a tantalizing taste of it, but now may have to wait for its official publication. I wish the author best of luck with his endeavours to get it 'out' there.

But now—have we really exhausted the supply of VIE members with stories or novels in their desk-drawers or computers? I refuse to believe it! For how can this be? We have *how* many volunteers?—plus how many more extra readers? Have none of them felt, or do they not feel, the—to me irresistible—urge to put finger to keyboard? (I know, it used to be 'pen to paper', but that was a *long* time ago.)

I think it was Robert Silverberg (but don't hold me to that) who once described Jack as a 'writer's writer'. If that were true, then where are all the writers among us? I confess to perplexity—but also admit that maybe my point of view is slanted.

Meanwhile, as a stopgap measure and in order to fulfil my self-imposed mission to provide Cosmopolis readers with a much-needed supply of fiction, CLS 14 might come out in a month's time, even if it's just with the next couple of chapters of *Coralia*. Anything that'll keep our minds off French politics.

And if anybody happens to find that story they wrote years ago and left on their old PC-XT or Mac-Plus floppy disk . . .

♦

You Have Done It!

VIE Work Credits

Compiled by Hans van der Veke

Here are the volunteer work credits for each text that has cleared Post Proofing and is printer-ready.

Check your name! A misspelling here may indicate a misspelling in our database, and thereafter in the books themselves. We don't want to spell your name wrong, or leave off a Jr. or Esq., or to overlook you altogether! For corrections contact Suan Yong at suan@cs.wisc.edu

---

THE DARK OCEAN
Finished 26 April 2002

Digitizer
Rob Friefeld

Pre-proofers
Antonio Duarte III
Rob Gerrand
Evert Jan de Groot
Steve Sherman

DD-Scanners
Richard Chandler
John A Schwab

DD-Jockey
Hans van der Veke

DD-Monkey
David A. Kennedy

Technoproofer
Koen Vyverman

TI
Patrick Dusoulier
Alun Hughes
Paul Rhoads
Steve Sherman
Tim Stretton
Koen Vyverman

Implementation
Donna Adams
Hans van der Veke

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Christian J. Corley
Marcel van Genderen
Brian Gharst
Charles King
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"King Kragen's Exemplary Corps"
Robert Melson (team manager)
Neil Anderson
Michel Bazin

Mark Bradford
Lucie Jones
Antony Kimlin

♦

ARAMINTA STATION
Finished 26 April 2002

Digitizer
Bill Schmaltz

Special reformatting
John A. Schwab

Pre-proofers
Michel Bazin
Richard Chandler
John A. Schwab

DD-Scanners
John A. Schwab
Peter Strickland

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
Steve Sherman

Technoproofer
Patrick Dusoulier

TI
Alun Hughes
Paul Rhoads
John A. Schwab

Implementation
Derek W. Benson
John McDonough

Composition
John A. Schwab

Composition Review
Rob Friefeld
Marcel van Genderen
Brian Gharst
Charles King
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing

"Spellers of Forlorn Encystment"
Till Noever (team manager)
Malcolm Bowers
Rob Gerrand
Ed Gooding
Peter Ikin
Bob Moody
Bill Sherman
Michael J. Smith

"Clam Muffins"
Robin L. Rouch (team manager)
Ed Gooding
Karl Kellar
Bob Luckin
Jim Pattison
Joel Riedesel
Luk Schoonaert

♦

BIG PLANET
Finished 2 May 2002

Digitizer
Joel Hedlund

Pre-proofers
Michel Bazin
Jody Kelly
Steve Sherman

DD-Scanner
Richard Chandler

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
Suan Hsi Yong

Technoproofer
Karl Kellar

TI
Patrick Dusoulier
Paul Rhoads
Norma Vance

Implementation
Donna Adams
Damien G. Jones

Composition
Joel Anderson

Composition Review
Andreas Björklind
Charles King
Bob Luckin
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Dragon Masters"
Erik Arendse (team manager)
Angus Campbell-Cann
Marcel van Genderen
Yannick Gour
Erec Grim
Patrick Hudson
Jasper Groen
Jurriaan Kalkman
Hans van der Veke
Dirk Jan Verlinde

♦

THE KOKOD WARRIORS
Finished 2 May 2002

Digitizer
Luk Schoonaert

Pre-proofers
Ron Chernich
Carl Goldman
David Reitsema

DD-Scanners
Mark Adams
Charles King
Peter Strickland

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
David A. Kennedy

Technoproofer
Joel Riedesel

TI

David A. Kennedy
Paul Rhoads
Steve Sherman

Implementation
Donna Adams
Damien G. Jones

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Charles King
Bob Luckin
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Sandestins"
Jeffrey Ruszczyk (team manager)
Deborah Cohen
Michael Duncan
Brent Heustess
Matt Picone
Axel Roschinski
Mark J. Straka

♦

EMPHYRIO
Finished 3 May 2002

Digitizer
Joel Hedlund

Pre-proofers
Peter Bayley
David A. Kennedy
Richard Linton
Steve Sherman
Suan Hsi Yong

DD-Scanners
Joel Hedlund
Thomas Rydbeck

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
Suan Hsi Yong

Technoproofer
Axel Roschinski

TI
Alun Hughes
Steve Sherman
Tim Stretton

Implementation
Damien G. Jones
Hans van der Veke

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Christian J. Corley
Marcel van Genderen
Brian Gharst
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Sandestins"
Jeffrey Ruszczyk (team manager)
Ian Allen
Deborah Cohen
Michael Duncan
Charles Hardin
Brent Heustess
Mark J. Straka

♦

ALFRED'S ARK
Finished 3 May 2002

Digitizer
Donna Adams

Special reformatting
Steve Sherman

Pre-proofers
Foppe Brolsma
Patrick Hudson
R.C. Lacovara
Paul Rhoads

DD-Scanner
Paul Rhoads

DD-Jockey
Paul Rhoads

DD-Monkey
Paul Rhoads

Technoproofer
Bob Moody

TI
Patrick Dusoulier
Paul Rhoads
Thomas Rydbeck

Implementation
Patrick Dusoulier

Composition
Joel Anderson
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Paul Rhoads
Andreas Björklind
Marcel van Genderen
Brian Gharst

Post-proofing
"Penwipers"
Rob Friefeld (team manager)
Robert Collins
Andrew Edlin
Rob Knight
Betty Mayfield
Quentin Rakestraw
Mike Schilling
Kelly Walker

"Clam Muffins"
Robin L. Rouch (team manager)
Ed Gooding
Marc Herant
Bob Luckin
Jim Pattison
Joel Riedesel

♦

THE NEW PRIME
Finished 3 May 2002

Digitizer
Derek W. Benson

Pre-proofers
Betty Mayfield
Thomas Rydbeck

DD-Scanners
Richard Chandler
Dave Worden

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
Suan Hsi Yong

Technoproofer

Peter Ikin

TI
Patrick Dusoulier
Helmut Hlavacs
Paul Rhoads
Tim Stretton

Implementation
Donna Adams
John McDonough

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Christian J. Corley
Per Kjellberg
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Clam Muffins"
Robin L. Rouch (team manager)
Ed Gooding
Marc Herant
Bob Luckin
Jim Pattison
Joel Riedesel

♦

THE GREEN PEARL
Finished 6 May 2002

Digitizer
Gan Uesli Starling

Pre-proofers
Steve Sherman
Dirk Jan Verlinde

DD-Scanners
Damien G. Jones
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Check Your Credits!

by Hans van der Veeke

For some time now I have been running an article on credits per v-text in Cosmopolis. In these articles I list the credits for each text which finishes Post Proofing. You were in a position to correct me (via Suan) if you thought your name was missing.

Now I am preparing the actual volume credits where all volunteers who worked on a text in that volume will be listed, once, in alphabetical order.

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♦

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

In the *Work Status Report* in Cosmopolis 26, in the discussion of the soon-to-be-formed RTF-Diff team, I was identified as "Charles (a.k.a. Chuck) King, of Clam Muffins and CRT fame". While, as always, it is a wonderful thing to be a Clam Muffin, I cannot claim any such surfeit of comporture. Rather, when I wear my Post Proofing hat, it is a striking affair of silver and black, with red and violet plumes. Yes, I am one of the dynamic and inexorable Tanchinaros: "Never a team with such decision, such impact, such finesse!"

Just to keep the record straight.
Chuck King

■

To the Editor,

It's obviously coming together. My supreme thanks for all of you who are dedicated to this enterprise. I wish that time permitted my participation in a more material manner.

I will cherish these books beyond description and I cannot thank all of those who are making this happen enough.

From the bottom of my heart . . . THANK YOU!
Karl T Radtke

■

To the Editor,

In reading Paul's article in which I am quoted on the sayings of certain NASA house organs, I noticed a typo or some other sort of omission which rendered my meaning unclear. As printed in the last issue, my statement said: "Then I wouldn't worry that there should be at least 48 white women for every white male at NASA. As it is, some of the 48 white women have been fired to make room for minorities, which indicates that women are getting the sticky end of the stick yet again."

My intended meaning was this: that if NASA demographics reflected the male/female ratio in the US, there should be about equal numbers of men and women employed by NASA. As a matter of fact, the NASA article reported a ratio of 52 men to 48 women and minorities. This indicated to me that of the roughly 50% of work slots which should be filled with women, under the assumption that slots are filled on demographic ratios, some of those slots were actually filled by minorities. Therefore, women, as usual, get the shaft.

Perhaps that will answer anyone who suspects that I

am incapable of simple math, and in the same article reads that I am the VIE financial manager!

In a similar vein:

Now, I have no objection, in principle or practice, to minority employment at NASA, or anywhere else! But if the numbers of identifiable groups at NASA must match American demographics, then women have been short-changed. I also wish to note that it is impossible to actually meet demographic ratios: in engineering, at least, women make up only 20% of the degreed workforce. Therefore, when I walk into a large NASA meeting and see much more than 25% of the crowd is women, I wonder: what are they doing here? Some, I suspect, are non-technical workers who have been promoted to management. All to the good: unless they are managing technical staff.

I myself have ample cause to be upset with US government hiring practices. I was briefly considered for a position at NASA. However, the responsible party discovered that 'Lacovara' was an Italian rather than Hispanic surname, and told me, "I will deny this if you repeat it, but we need to hire a Hispanic for this position. Sorry." Well, I wasn't all that sorry. First off, it was NASA's loss, not mine. Secondly, who would want to work for a person who says such a thing? It means merely that they are either lying to you or are willing to lie in the future, and very likely, lie at all points in between. My response, although vulgar, was unprintable.

Far worse in some ways than quota-based hiring is the preferential treatment that the government, not just NASA, accords 'minority-owned' businesses. The theory, I suppose, is that the government should give preferential treatment to minority-owned businesses. Why? Because they also employ minorities? Well, no. Most of the minority-owned businesses around NASA's Johnson Space Center are run by men or women (women get a special break as well) who are sometimes a minority by only the greatest stretch of the imagination. And they do not, as a general rule, employ a particularly large proportion of minorities. They do, however, enjoy special access to government and government-contractor contracts, because such contracts to minority-owned businesses throw off 'minority credits' to the contractee.

But wait: it gets worse. Often, a large contractor to NASA shops about for a minority-owned business or two to gather their minority credits. The minority-owned business, of course, is a paper shell. It may have been started by an upper manager of the contractor, or a retired NASA manager. It has no employees. That's not a problem. The large contractor lays off a group of its own people, telling them that they now have the option of working for Uncle Tom's Engineering, at reduced wages and benefits, or becoming unemployed. The Uncle Tom, of course, is a silent partner to these transactions. (My reference to Uncle Tom is not meant to imply that only black minorities run such businesses: all minorities are allowed to play, as long as their particular group ID is on some government list. No, Italians are not minorities. Nor Poles, nor Jews, nor Swedes . . .)

In the end, who profits by this outrageous method of business? The government gets its engineers below the previously existing market. The large contractor makes its share on the money paid by the government to them destined for the minority-owned business. The minority-owner becomes wealthy. 'Only' the engineers and other working staff take a hit.

If your son or daughter is considering a career in engineering, all to the good. Have them go to work, however, for a company which ships a product and therefore, must make a profit.

Equal Opportunity quotas are the product of the foolhardy philosophies of guilty liberals. They are an evil thing.

Bob Lacovara

▪

To the Editor,

When a couple of years younger than Benjamin Steenbock, I too wrote highly passionate indictments of 'the Left'. But then later, little by little, I started to question the *basis* on which I was making these pronouncements. And, to my great distress, I too found out time and again, at first usually by accident, then more and more often by *logic*, that at the very least, I had been had — and not only by my teachers. In that respect, hence, age has its advantage and, by the way, Paul Rhoads' age being about halfway between Steenbock's and mine, I wonder what *he* thinks of Steenbocks's denunciation. My point though is that *logic* is the only incontrovertible evidence and, like Rhoads', Steenbock's logic is very . . . sparse and thus very hard to follow. And, before anyone jumps to unwarranted conclusions, let me say that the few remarks to follow are not intended to demean Steenbock in any way: passionate error is a whole lot preferable to the unctuous mindlessness of all mainstream U.S. media, *New York Times* first of all. Also, I must confess that I have yet to read Rhoads' *Afterword to the Above* in *38's Crucible* in any detail. (A *dis*advantage of age is that you have to watch your blood pressure.) Now to the remarks.

Were I to call Steenbock an idiot, would that make

him one? No more is National Socialism socialism. (I will say that, if I have never been had by Stalinism, I *have* been had by Mao's Cultural Revolution. But that is another, if relevant, story.) Were I to commit atrocities in the name of Steenbock's and Rhoads' ideas, would that make *them* ultimately responsible for the crimes? I would like to suggest to both that they read Chomsky and/or Hermann on how information on 'facts' reaches us and on what we build our opinions upon.

Steenbock also ought to bone up a bit more on the issue of 'running a country'. Roughly, the options range from 'might makes right' to 'opportunities for all' but, as stated, the latter leaves the door wide open to the former. (It is Sen's distinction that he gave a clear meaning to the phrase in his *Inequality Re-examined* which, by the way, Rhoads should now receive soon.) Finally, which 'status quo', in the U.S. case, is Steenbock backing:

> Senator Bradley points out that in the twelve years between 1977 and 1989 the richest 1 percent of the population collected two thirds of the increase in personal income during those years. The middle class saw their income rise by 4 percent, while the rich saw theirs rise by 77 per-cent.— *Alan Ryan, New York Review of Books, March 21, 1996*.
>
> Representative George Miller, in a letter signed by forty-four other Demo-crats to the ninety-one C.E.O.s of the nation's largest companies who had placed a two-page newspaper ad urging President Clinton and Congress to agree on a seven-year balanced budget, pointed out that, if corporations paid the same share of taxes they did in 1954, the deficit would be gone in one year, with no cuts required.—*January 22, 1996*.
>
> By 1989, the richest one-half of 1% increased their share of the nation's wealth from 24% in 1983 to 29% in 1989 . . . The holdings of those 500,000 families were worth $2.5 trillion in 1983. By 1989, they had risen to $5 tril-lion . . . The holdings of those families grew by almost three times as much as the national debt grew during that same period. In fact, those 500,000 families could have paid off the entire national debt, not just its growth, and still have owned 10% more wealth than they did in 1983. — *Representative David Obey to the Center for National Policy as reported April 8, 1996*.

As for the *current* status quo, Steenbock might wish to find out the answers to such questions as, compared to such 'Socialist' countries as most in Europe or, say, even Cuba, what the level of literacy and numeracy are in the U.S., what the infant mortality rate is, what percent of the population has medical coverage. He could also find out what they now are in the former USSR compared to what they were before the fall of the Iron Curtain. I am afraid that he will find the numbers uncomfortable which, please, is not to say that I support, or ever supported, Leninism and/or Stalinism. (The terms are much more precise than Communism.)

And now for Bob Lacovara: In these days of what a friend of mine used to call 'Absolute Relativism' his take on the description of the spring is quite refreshing. But his take on Faith limiting Reason is rather lacking. He reminds me a bit of those students who first invoke faith (in their previous teachers) on the matter of 1/2 + 1/3 being equal to 2/5 and then, upon being rebutted, retrench behind their right under the First Amendment. Don't laugh, it happens a lot more than you would like. In any case, I would draw Lacovara's attention to a couple of articles in the May 9 2002 *London Review of Books*: *What's in the bottle?* by Donald MacKenzie and *Intergalactic Jesus* by Jerry Coyne. They answer him a lot better than I ever would.

And now for Rhoads: Since I find—with much relief—that he and Noever are really *friends*, I will leave the demolition of his concept of 'right-reason' to the latter. And even though I know that Rhoads does not have the time to read, I recommend to him at least the second of the two articles in the *LRB* mentioned above. It should get him truly going. And, as for his future 'Collected Rantings on Vance', I hope that he counted me among the six he plans on selling them to. May I suggest though that the volume look the same as the VIE but in a very different color? (Re. La Pléiade). After all, *à tout seigneur, tout honneur* and, to anyone sharing Rhoads' literary taste enough to buy the VIE, his Collected Rantings on Vance would be a must. Even at the price of them including unreasonable views on Socialism, property and religion. There is always a price to anything and, in *this* case, the price would be very light.

And, last but certainly not least, in reference to the Editor's response to Lacovara's 'Zeroth Hat', he should have remembered that an editor, like Caesar's wife, ought to be above even suspicion.

Alain Schremmer

■

To the Editor,

Paul Rhoads' interminable pontifications upon the truth of Christianity — which drift further and further from a contextual relationship with the aims of the VIE — have provoked this reader beyond restraint, and into the hitherto inconceivable activity of letter-writing to Cosmopolis. However, lacking the skill to properly demonstrate why such a debate has no place within Cosmopolis (and, without involvement in the project, other than to purchase the volumes, also lacking the effrontery to do so), the lesser task of disproving the assertions of Mr. Rhoads becomes imperative — despite its propagation of the off-topical.

Mr. Rhoads' arguments rest mainly on his insistence that verifying the provenance of chronicles of events assures us that the events themselves are accurately depicted and explained. Notwithstanding his dubious claim that the Apostles themselves wrote the Gospels (a cursory search of the Web will reveal this trend of thought limited almost exclusively to Catholic sources), he asserts that these books supply 'evidence' to back faith — but the trouble with accepting these books as proof of anything does not lie in verifying their authenticity as documents about Christ, but rather as objective truth about Christ. Two thousand years ago magicians and prophets were common everywhere, and many of them were purported to perform the same miracles as Jesus did, up to and including being resurrected from the dead. Is it more likely that Jesus was the only true worker of miracles in this time, or that he was merely the one whose followers managed to perpetuate the myth of his magical powers most successfully? I submit that it is the second hypothesis that is more likely, and the lack of contemporary accounts *other* than the Gospels which might independently corroborate the unique nature and existence of this prophet tell strongly against any other interpretation unpolluted by the need to prove what is already believed to be true.

Similar questions arise about the 'Marial apparitions' supposedly witnessed in the last century; rather than a conspiracy of witnesses, it is necessary only to note that people believe what they want to believe, are generally more credulous than skeptical, and that eyewitness testimony is no better than hearsay unless there is corroborating evidence to accompany it. If I tell you that I saw my friend Jim yesterday, little proof is needed for you to accept my statement, because it is not all that unlikely or unique an event to occur; if I tell you that I saw the Virgin Mary yesterday, a reasonable response would request compelling evidence other than my word to accept the happening as fact, as such an event is both unlikely and unique in experience. Similar arguments citing numerous witnesses could be applied to many unlikely phenomena; UFOs, for example, have had thousands and thousands of seemingly reliable witnesses to their reality, yet their existence remains extremely doubtful because no other evidence exists which cannot be explained by other, more mundane processes.

I would pose a conundrum to Mr. Rhoads: what is it about the 'evidence' which supports Christianity which is absent from similar 'evidence' supporting Islam or Mormonism?

To take the first case, Islam has a far stronger claim to historical verifiability of its main prophet, who not only can be reliably proved to have authored the words attributed to him, but also is a historical personality whose reality and works are attested to by independent sources. Muhammad performed miracles, one of them witnessed by 1500 people where he produced water from an almost empty vessel, and it gushed forth to slake the thirst of all. Islamic miracles continue to happen to this day, and many of them are attested to as vehemently and sincerely as any Christian miracles could be. The faith of Muslims is no less than that of Christians; indeed, it might be argued that in general it is more.

Looking at Mormonism, Joseph Smith's historical reality cannot be doubted; his finding of the 'golden tablets' which contained the Book of Mormon was not only witnessed but is attested to by the signatures of the witnesses involved. His miracles included healing the sick and finding lost things by the use of a 'seeing stone'; these miracles, again, are attested to by witnesses. As far as contemporary miracles go, a cursory search of the net turned up this page:

http://www.greaterthings.com/Ridenhour/Ministry_Moments/index.html

which lists more than one 'miracle' accomplished by Mormon faith. That faith is no less keenly felt than Christian faith, and once again is rather more fervent. (Visit Salt Lake City, as I have, and you would see for yourself)

It seems that Christianity, Islam and Mormonism must all be true — according to the reasoning of Paul Rhoads, where miracles, witnesses and historical documents brook no opposition. All three meet his criteria of truth; and yet at most only *one* could be true in a final and definitive sense. Any reasonable person proceeding from an objective view of these religions (as well as the others in the world, most of which share the common factors which so entrance their believers), should con-

clude that these are mutually incompatible systems with no way of determining which is correct, and will proceed to the understanding that this is because none of them are true, despite the 'evidence'.

Any further attempt to resort to 'faith' as a basis of truth falls down against this observation: faith creates contradictory theories of truth that cannot be resolved, and no external test can tell you which theory might be correct. Essentially faith becomes an unnecessary premise; discarding it makes the task of comprehending the universe paradoxically more difficult, yet much more likely to be successful. Keeping faith forever hampers the search for truth, because its presence implies that Truth has already been found, and thus does not need to be sought any further.

I conclude by repeating and slightly expanding the question, which otherwise is likely to be glossed over in reply: what is it about Christianity which makes the evidence for it more compelling than the evidence for Islam or Mormonism to any objective observer? And if there is nothing, does it not seem more reasonable to reject all three rather than embrace one?

John Rappel

∎

To the Editor,

The lessons learned by Chuck King from the Logan Square Book Club (discussed in this issue) are probably representative not only of the current literary malaise afflicting a large part of the English-speaking world, but indeed reinforce my personal motivation for being a VIE volunteer—which is not to 'save the West' (leaving out whether it is in need of or even *can* be saved) but to pay back my personal debt of gratitude to Jack. Not many of us get a chance like that; let's rejoice that we have it.

Maybe one day the pendulum will swing back and a gem like *Night Lamp* will not have to suffer the vituperations of 'top of the scale' 30-60 year olds—but that day is not yet. It would be nice if it happened in Jack's lifetime though, and maybe we can do what we can to help it go back that way.

To Alain Schremmer I would like to apologize, because I've decided not even to attempt to demolish, or dig around any further in, the increasing mound of logorrheic rubble heaped on top of the truth (or 'Truth', or whatever) by the discussion I initiated. If it were only Paul on the other side of the debate I could cope and maybe even continue to enjoy it, for behind his arguments I sense an earnestness and passionate sincerity I can appreciate, no matter how much we disagree. I wish

I could say the same for certain others.

I shall wise up—at least for a while, and until I just can't help myself again—and proceed to do what fiction writers are meant to do, and which I enjoy: writing fiction. At least I'm honest about it just being 'fiction'!

By the by, a note of thanks to John Rappel. In his letter he said some things—especially about faith and the nature of the 'evidence' put forth by some to support its 'validity' (and thanks, John, for mentioning UFOs, because it puts it all in perspective, doesn't it?)—I was itching to say, and now mercifully don't have to. Indeed, he said it better that I would have. Thanks also to Paul for hoisting himself by his own petard, when he referred, in his article in the current issue, to his 'pet thought', namely 'the human lust to imagine reality really to be as one would have that it were'.

Ha!

Regards,

Till Noever

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From the Editor,

I write in response to Chuck King's call for opinions concerning his Book Club experiences presented in this issue. Hopefully other readers will have comments and suggestions to send in to Cosmopolis about this important VIE objective, the spreading of Vance's word to the masses; please do so! as maybe your personal perspective or suggestions are different than others', possibly VIE management personell haven't considered your ideas or views as every individual's viewpoint is unique. I'm writing here my personal opinions, not representing Cosmopolis policy or VIE management.

The choice of *Night Lamp* was fine; it is a good book and is also typical Vance, containing all the elements one expects to find: the mystery which the protagonist must solve, strange new societies with Vancian satire upon our own societies through his created ones, high adventure and intrigue, enchanting Vancian use of language. Possibly the story is too much the murder mystery, but if so, why should this be a disadvantage? Murder mysteries sell by the droves. I suspect, as Chuck has indicated, that many average readers cannot accept the sci-fi geekish trappings, and dismiss all authors of such in advance. This doesn't necessarily have to be the case, some sci-fi or fantasy works are considered classics, for example the Swift book, some of Jules Verne's work, J.R.R. Tolkien. I propose that for Vance to be discovered (by the correct people) and raised to the level of the great classical writers in the English language, the cor-

rect work must be found and chosen as *the singular example*.

Chuck's choice of *Night Lamp* was a good choice in his situation, as the book has been recently published and is therefore more readily available than earlier works. But if one wants to find *the singular example*, the epitome, a work truly extraordinary, there is only one choice: *Emphyrio*. If there ever was a book which should have been published and promoted separately from the VIE set as an example of Jack's work, this is the one. The *Gift Volume* and the upcoming *Science Fiction Volume* are fine and even wonderful, but none of the stories in these books are his single best work.

What is it that sets *Emphyrio* apart from all the rest of Jack's work and almost all literature ever written? The mystery in this book, the riddle to be solved by the protagonist, i.e. the identity of the Lords who rule humanity with an iron fist, is the best mystery ever. Reading the book the first time, one isn't even aware early in the story or in the mid-story that this is the mystery which Ghyl must solve. During my first reading I first discovered how important this question is when Ghyl sat staring into the eyes of the Damaran and solved the puzzle for himself. As the story concludes, Ghyl returns to Halma and confronts Lord Dugald, and the realization came to me as it had to Ghyl, I was thoroughly dumbfounded, flabbergasted in a way I cannot describe. I started laughing giddily, as Ghyl had done before me. I still remember this moment succinctly, many years later.

But the most important element of this story is of course its epic nature. Ghyl Tarvoke, born in normal circumstances, sets out upon his search for Truth, takes the name of the hero Emphyrio as his own for the election, and in fact becomes Emphyrio reincarnated, returns to Aume, or some say, Home, and frees his people from tyranny and oppression. I ask you: who among us has not dreamed this dream? Our own dear planet Earth is covered in tyranny and oppression in various guises: dictatorship, war, famine, poverty. Would not all of us prefer to see this changed? My apologies if I offend anyone, but if you have never thought this thought or dreamed this dream, then you have no heart and you have no soul.

Is not Ghyl's classic struggle as important as the protagonist's struggle in *Moby Dick*? It is! Is not his struggle as important as the protagonist's struggle in *Don Quixote* (recently voted the greatest novel of all time by a panel of 100 distinguished authors)? It is! If you do not understand this immediately when reading this

greatest of all great novels, then I cannot help you, there's nothing I can write here to convince you. To me, it's obvious. *Emphyrio* is one of the few great novels of all times concerning the search for Truth and Hope, an important message for all mankind. It is quite simply *the greatest story ever told!*

The introduction to this story in its first publication in Fantastic Stories, written I presume by Editor Laurence M. Janifer, reads:

"Once in a while, a story comes along which is so good that it defies easy description. This is one: this is easily Jack Vance's finest novel of this decade—and just possibly the best novel he has ever written. Herein you'll find all those lavishly arcane details you've come to expect of Vance—the rich amber colors, marvelous modes of alien custom, carefully detailed languages and histories—but a good deal more, besides. Clever, as Vance stories are usually clever, but also warm with a depth of humanity not always to be found in Vance, or indeed in most science fiction.

"This is the story of Ghyl Tarvoke: an epic story of a young boy's growth into manhood and his search for Truth. It is also the story of the legend of Emphyrio, and its re-enactment. This is a story that will impress its shape upon you."

It has done so.
Derek W. Benson

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Closing Words

COSMOPOLIS SUBMISSIONS: when preparing articles for Cosmopolis, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send raw text. For Cosmopolis 28, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is June 25.

Derek W. Benson, Editor

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