
COSMOPOLIS

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Request for Payment

by Bob Lacovara

The production and delivery of the First Wave of the Vance Integral Edition is gathering momentum. As I write, I am enroute to the Golden Master meeting in New Jersey, where the first 22 volumes will be made ready for their final preparation before printing. Disks containing the Integral Edition will be sent to our printer, Sfera, at the conclusion of the meeting. From the files we send Sfera, 'blues' or proof copies of the texts are prepared for final review before printing at our

Golden Master meeting in Chinon, France in mid-September. Shortly after, Sfera will begin to print the Wave 1 volumes. As you may readily see, things are heating up, the times are becoming, ah, exciting?

Of course our printer, Sfera International, orders paper and cover materials for all 44 volumes at one time. If this were not so, there might be jarring inconsistencies in cover or page color or texture. A corollary, of course, is that Sfera requires a considerable fraction of the total printing costs of the entire 44-volume set 'up front'. Therefore, the time for subscribers to 'ante-up' has arrived.

Final pricing for the Readers' Edition of the Vance Integral Edition has been set. The cost to current subscribers is \$1250.00. For most subscribers, who have made their deposit of \$350, there will be a balance due of \$900. This balance is due by the first of October 2002. Current subscribers will be e-mailed a statement detailing their account status and amount due. If you have not received such an e-mail by August 15, please contact us at the e-mail address below.

The price of the Deluxe Edition remains unchanged at \$3000. Most subscribers to the Deluxe Edition will have a balance owed of \$2000. Like the Readers' Edition, this balance is due by October 1st.

Subscribers to one of the 26 signed Deluxe Editions, or one of the 200 signed Readers' Editions may lose their placement if the balance of the subscription price is not received by the 1 October date. Their place will be taken by one of the subscribers to the Deluxe or Readers' Editions who did not make the first-come first-served deadline for a signed copy originally. Subscribers who cannot make the 1 October date should contact me as soon as possible; otherwise their right to a first edition of their set might be jeopardized.

Shipping and Handling

As described in the Subscription Agreement (see the VanceIntegral website), shipping and handling is not part of the \$3000 or \$1250 cost of the edition.

This fee, estimated between \$50 and \$75 for delivery to domestic US subscribers, will be billed and payable before the shipment of the second half of your subscription.

This fee will be determined exactly over the next month. Part of the difficulty is the determination of the exact size of each volume. Volumes will be shipped in a case of 22, but proper inner and outer shipping containers must be obtained. Most sets will leave Sfera in Milan for a volunteer's business in New Jersey, where loading facilities are available. From that point, the books can be packed in an outer container for domestic shipping.

Shipments to Europe will be made from Milan directly. Shipments to all other points will be made from the US.

The least expensive shipping method, consistent with care of the volumes, will be used. In the case of Vance fans 'down under' this may mean long shipping times, but at greatly reduced fees. (Should a subscriber have a request for special handling, we will try to accommodate them, at their expense, of course.) As mentioned in a previous article, subscribers are charged an amount for shipping and handling which covers actual shipping, packing, and handling charges which are incurred by the VIE itself.

Questions or comments are welcome. Write to me at subscribe@vanceintegral.com

Work Tsar Status Report

as of July 26, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

Wave 1

The Golden Master 1 meeting will be completed by the time you read this. For that meeting, the front matter of all 22 volumes has been reviewed. There are only about half a dozen texts that have not yet finished the normal process. They will be finished up in the next couple months due to the necessity of sending everything to the printer for setting. Blue-lines will be reviewed at Golden Master 2 which occurs mid-September.

Wave 1 is well on its way to being published!

Wave 2

Activity is resuming on Wave 2. Various TI jobs are seeing progress. In detail:

There are two texts that need special attention (Volume 44 items). There are only five texts left to

complete DD OCR-ing! There are only 13 texts active in DD-Jockey and currently 5 in DD-Monkey. There are quite a number of texts active in Techno-Proofing and many assignments have been made. There are 29 texts active in TI! And four have completed TI and are ready for Board Review!

I am confident that Wave 2 work will pick up very quickly and I expect a smooth flow for it due to everything we have learned from Wave 1.

Start planning for your Wave 1 volumes! Do you have enough room for them and the subsequent Wave 2 volumes in your bookcase?

38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Jack Vance and Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The following e-mail comes from Dave Reitsema, manager of *The Tanchinaros*:

"This week I read the following in the Foreword to Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and thought you might enjoy it. It was written by Alexander Tvardovsky in 1962; he was the editor of *Novy Mir*, a Russian literary periodical where the work first appeared, and he concludes with this:

I do not want to anticipate the evaluation of this work. . . although for me it is indubitable that it signifies the entrance into our literature of a new, original, and completely mature artist. . . But on the whole One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich belongs with those works of literature which, once we have read them, create in us a deep desire to have our feeling of gratitude to the author shared by other readers too.

"That desire to share has led me to give Jack's books to friends and family for over 20 years. And that quotation adequately states my reason for working with the VIE and spending the immense amount of time that effort has required."

VIE Publication Updates, and Reflections

Cover and spine stamping 'brasses' (for the 22 Wave 1 books) have been set up by Joel Anderson, and fabricated in Milan by Senior Biffi. These dozens of files, including corrections and replacements, have been proofed by Norma Vance and Steve Sherman, and sent, or re-sent, or re-re-sent, in orderly fashion to Milan, by Bob Lacovara according to a special protocol which, so far, has eliminated confusion. Bob, based in Texas, has had to do this work standing in water up to his knees, which makes the exploit all the more meritorious. In Milan

leather and paper have been ordered. In the State of Oregon, 'front matter' has been created by the mythological John Schwab. All over the world, and in New Jersey in particular with GM1, final touches are being put on the texts.

What have we accomplished, and what is the VIE accomplishing? We are taking the life's work of a great and unrecognized author, and creating a definitive archival edition. The Vance *oeuvre* is a fairly large one, composed of over 60 books, over 4 million words and over 145 texts. Wave 1 consists of about 60% of total words.

It must be emphasized that we are working in the context of the dawning digital age. This has greatly facilitated many aspects of the work—even to the extent of making the project possible—but it also creates special problems which we have assiduously, and I hope we can boast 'triumphantly', confronted. For various reasons the editorial quality of books has declined with the advent of the digital age. Not least among these reasons is digital technology itself, which has thrust upon authors most of the editorial work that used to be done by proofreaders and editors. In the context of genre publishing, such work has sometimes been sloppy and even unacceptably interventionist, as we have become aware. However, it is notorious that, in all categories of publishing, typos and other sloppiness are on the rise. We are creating the VIE from scratch. We are therefore faced with the same problem that editors have always had; getting the texts correct.

It goes without saying that we have done our TI work—which is to say: correction of the texts as regards their readings—with great conscientiousness. Among the more notable fixes are removal of a spurious 'happy' ending, restoration of missing passages (including one irreparably lost and now replaced by Vance) and restoration of titles. This has been done after consideration of all available evidence, and has necessitated, and continues to necessitate, special trips to the Mugar collection in Boston. But apart from such restoration work, the VIE has been, if possible, even more conscientious about making sure the texts are 'error free' in the larger sense. Here is what we have done to this end:

1 - Original digitizations were done from what were estimated to be the best texts available (later TI work sometimes showed the initial choices to be wrong, and in many such cases the texts were re-digitized, or other special measures taken).

2 - Each 'v-text' thus created was 'pre-proofed' three times.

3 - Each text was then subjected to 'double digitization' or 'DD', whereby 3 new digitizations of the text were created according to a special protocol, collated together, then compared to the v-text. DD, among other things, allowed us to eliminate 'scannos' and guarantee we ourselves were not dropping, doubling or otherwise confusing and confounding.

4 - Each text was also subject to Techno-Proofing which, among other things, allowed us to scrutinize all possible misspellings and inconsistencies (not all of which, by any means, are illegitimate) including such things as hyphenation use.

5 - After the texts were composed, each was subject to Composition Review by a special team whose mission was to ferret out several categories of compositional error, such as wrong page numbers, wrong chapter numbers etc., aspects of formatting and rogue spaces.

6 - Each text was then subjected to Post Proofing, in which teams of from 6 to 10 readers searched for typos in all categories, and occasionally found TI problems as well.

7 - All composed texts have also been subjected to RTF-DIFF, another function of Koen Vyverman's Vance Dictionary Analysis Engine, that allows comparison of composed texts (which have been manipulated in composition software) with the 'cor-bf' v-text, or final Word.doc. This is necessary because of hard to find errors that the process of composition can introduce.

8 - At Golden Master 1 (which will already have taken place by the time this is published) all aesthetic aspects will come under a final review, to eliminate aesthetic errors—or generate them, depending on your tastes.

9 - Finally, the proofs for each volume will be scrutinized, in September, at the Golden Master 2 meeting. This will take place in France. All may apply for an invitation (contact Tim Stretton).

Have we caught *all* the errors? Perhaps not, but we are, by now, scraping the bottom of the barrel. I do not know, but I am willing to bet, that no such effort—the creation of an integral edition of texts that have been subject to much degradation—has ever been made in the digital age. The VIE has been innovative in its techniques and uncompromising in its standards and I can conceive of nothing to add to our procedures.

It should be emphasized that, in several areas, there is no one right answer, and the VIE has often used pragmatic and discerning compromise, more commonly known as 'fudging'. Hyphens are one such

issue, but there are many: spelling, italic use, numbers presented as themselves or written out, formatting of section breaks (with and without numbers or dingbats), formatting of Vance's abundant 'hors-text' material, and probably others I can't think of at the moment. It should be remembered that, in many cases, original manuscripts are not extant, and the published editions, if there is more than one, often contradict each other. For many months we reflected upon such issues and, regarding hyphens, Alun Hughes formulated the policy which we have tried to use. We respect, as far as possible, Jack's original hyphen use, while rejecting such hyphenations which have gone conspicuously out of fashion, as well as consistently using a certain set of hyphenations, and hyphenation rules, provided by the Vances. Because of personal constraints—which have affected us all to one degree or another—Alun was not always present to enforce this policy, so it has not been carried out with full rigor; a certain amount of *hyphen consistency* has been imposed, at least within certain texts, or groups of texts. The arguments presented in favor of such regularization are often quite convincing, in context. However, hyphenation is a secondary issue. Vance's style is characterized by exuberant hyphenation, and in the VIE his original hyphenation will be more present than it is in many later editions of his early work.

There has also been great vigilance in restoring and retaining Vance's alternate or preferred spellings, uncommon word use, and neologism, which are too often washed away by editors. Some of these are eccentric enough that great battles have raged over them, but when we have evidence that this is indeed what Vance wrote, that we are not dealing with a mere strange or plausible typo, or authentic authorial error, they have been scrupulously retained.

This does not exhaust the special solutions and approaches we have had to use in TI, but it gives the flavor. Wave 1 is rumbling stolidly forward, and we continue to foresee delivery in late 2002. Any number of unforeseen obstacles may yet push this date back—so far none are in view, at least not clearly, and the great machine progresses with fateful speed. Please keep in mind that all of the efforts, *daily efforts* on the part of many of us, are 100% volunteer.

The Science Fiction Volume, and the Deluxe Edition

The deluxe version of the Readers' Volume was not yet the full blown version planned for the set. This has now been perfected, and will be used for the SFV deluxe version.

We have just received the 'dummy', and a preview peek has been offered to certain insiders. Here are some reactions:

"Beautiful." —John Vance

"Gorgeous." —John Foley, Steve Sherman

"Superb." —Bob Lacovara

"Stunning!" —Norma Vance

"... positively overwhelming. A work of art. Lucky future owners!" —Patrick Dusoulier

We hope deluxe subscribers will agree.

The news came last week from Milan that the Science Fiction Volume will not be ready before September. I apologize for this further delay of a book I hoped would come out last March! All the pieces of the book are in Milan but the vacations of Italian workers are causing a new delay. Much as we condemn their refusal to sweat over noisy presses during 52 weeks each year without interruption, until countries like Italy imitate China and Arabia, where civilization is supposedly so rife, and re-introduce the venerable institution of slavery, we can only arm ourselves with patience.

TI Notes

The following has been sent to me by Steve Sherman:

"One of the amazing things about the VIE is the propensity for resources to turn up just when we've needed them the most. The TI team has been taking advantage of the generosity of Dr. John Th. Rick of Toronto, Canada, who has offered to make photocopies of Vance stories found in his extensive collection of pulp magazines. This is of incalculable value, as we lack manuscripts of many of the early works, and we have found that the pulp versions tend to be more faithful to the author's original intentions than those later published in books. I thought John's services to the project deserved wider recognition and asked him to tell me a bit about himself. He wrote:

'I have a Ph.D. in Psychology (Neuroscience) from the University of Toronto, and am doing postdoctoral work at the Toronto Western Research Institute (part of the Toronto Western Hospital, which is affiliated with U of T). I am studying (among other things) brain mechanisms of learning

and memory, aging and Fragile X Syndrome. I am Canadian, and darn proud of it!

I inherited my interest in Vance, as well as the collection of pulps, from my father (though the first SF book I can recall reading was Edmond Hamilton's *Star Kings* [interesting bit of convergence/coincidence, there], which I still think is a great piece of space opera). My favourite Vance book is probably *The Dirdir*, and my favourite short story is probably *The Narrow Land* (in spite of its textual corruption). Other (non-Vance [for shame!]) favourites include Zelazny's *Jack of Shadows*, Bradley's *The World Wreckers*, Farren's *Necrom*, and lots of stuff by Poul Anderson, Harry Harrison, William Gibson and others.

'My father began acquiring SF as a teenager starting in the forties, though he went back a few decades with Burroughs, Verne, and H. Rider Haggard (most of which I unfortunately had to get rid of when I moved). He also collected several (7-10?) boxes of SF periodicals beginning in the pulp era (which I have kept). This includes near-complete collections (up to the early 1980's, anyway) of *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Astounding* (aka *Analog*, to which I still subscribe) and *Galaxy*. I also have collections of *Weird Tales* (one of my favourites), *Startling Stories*, and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. Others include *Planet Stories*, *Super Science Stories*, and more (not sure if I have the titles correct). They've been languishing in boxes since my father's death in 1993, and I'm only now starting to get them out and take a look at them—being able to help out with the VIE is motivating me to dig in and figure out what's actually there (that's why I'm unclear about what I have—I haven't yet taken the several days it would require to sort them all out!).

'Because my research is taking up a lot of my time and my wife is expecting our first child, I doubt (regretfully) that I'll be able to contribute in any substantial way to the compilation of the VIE. However, I hope that I can continue to assist by providing copies of early texts to those who are doing more to further this great work.'

"We on the TI team hope so as well, and express our gratitude to John for being a vital link in the chain."

Luk Schoonaert's Vance Excerpt of the Month

(snatched from a far nook of the World Wide Web):

It goes like this. One Dark midnight a student entered the Baron's chamber and awoke the Baron from his sleep. The student cried

out, "Sir, I am distraught with anxiety! Tell me once and for all: what is Truth?"

The Baron groaned and cursed and finally raised his head. He roared, "Why do you bother me with such trivia?"

The student gave a faltering response. "Because I am ignorant and you are wise!"

"Very well, then! I can reveal to you that Truth is a rope with one end!"

The student persisted. "All very well, sir! But what of the far end which is never found?"

"Idiot!" stormed the Baron. "That is the end to which I refer!" And the Baron once more composed himself to sleep.

Luk comments: "This is utter brilliance . . . I'm in the process of re-reading *Ports of Call*, and I'm *incredibly* enjoying it. Only Vance can do this. It reminds me strangely enough of *Cugel*. Why? All the games Schwatzenale plays with the monks, with Moncrief etc. . . They remind me of *Cugel*. And then the above, those are the things that make Vance the Master!"

Thumb Your Nose at Inflation

Mike Berro recently informed us that a copy of the Gift Volume was offered for sale, and presumably sold, on the web for \$50—this when the book is still available from the VIE for under \$30. It adds credibility to my suspicion that VIE books will double in value as soon as published. I further speculate that their value will continue to augment thereafter. My logic is that 'real' market worth of VIE books is at least double, if not triple, their selling price, on the basis of aesthetics, materials and workmanship only, and without any reference to the editorial aspect—that our books are true, double-bore Vance, without editorial dumbing down or other desecration. Our extra 'costs' are all picked up by volunteers. Our books are, commercially, impossible, so their 'true' price is extremely difficult to calculate, but it is certainly much greater than their sale price which, again, has no relation to the market.

Anyone who wants a free VIE set, I think, should buy two, and then sell one. Only a few hundreds of sets will be printed, and there will be no second edition. This will favor their value as collectors items, but I think the real price pressure will come from new, and old, Vance readers hungry to get their hands on books—which are not being reissued. Selling a set piecemeal will probably net more cash than selling it whole, but whole sets will no doubt be a fabulous long-term investment, far better than the stock market. Recommend VIE sets to your friends on this basis, if no other; the shear

creation of sets is a goal of the project. The more books we make, the greater the long-term impact of the project. Market value of the SFV will be interesting to watch in the months to come.

All Nympharium Privileges Have Been Suspended!

Non-management volunteers, and subscribers, may not be aware that order and discipline within the VIE is maintained not by corporal punishment, economic incentive or lust for gold stars and brownie points (distributed without stint, and thus devalued). Instead we use the system of Pharesm the Sorcerer: inattentive or sloppy work is penalized by suspension of *Nympharium* privileges. Some of us have been so unfortunate as never to have seen the inside of the place, and have little hope of ever doing so—given our accumulations of penalty time.

The sexist nature of the *Nympharium* has provoked VIE managers of the female persuasion (e.g. Deborah Cohen) to establish a *Satyrium*. Robin Rouch, in addition, has set up a nympharium testing program, which functions, essentially, as a further access barrier—to say nothing of requirements regarding ‘special hats’. Personally I can tell you little about either *Nympharium* or *Satyrium*; I lack interest in the latter and am among those who have, so far, been excluded from the former—though on one occasion John Schwab allowed me a peek through a back-wall ventilator, where I caught tantalizing glimpses of colored veils in graceful motion; an illusion?

So the question remains; does the *Nympharium* really exist? Hans van der Veeke, VIE Volunteer Coordinator, recently back from vacation in England, has made an interesting contribution to this controversy. Hans wrote:

“Seen and done lots of things in England. Spent some time at the:



“So I’m rested and ready for some more action!”

A Nympharium ‘bis’ file was speedily created, and TI work has already begun:

TEXT-QUERY 11; NYMPHAEUM / NYMPHARIUM
TI-COMMENT 11; probable typo, due to the dazed state of the sex-crazed Composer. Still, worth asking if there’s a rival establishment somewhere. Competition is good for the economy . . .

COMMENT 15; This is a canard! In a ‘nymphaeum’ one can only look, not touch. It lacks the recreational appeal of the true ‘nympharium’. We need to know what Hans was *really* doing all this time in England.

COMMENT 38: We do indeed; last I heard Hans still has 4 months suspension time.

COMMENT 25: Oh, that. That’s our old facility . . .

COMMENT 38; Without original manuscript, how to know?

COMMENT 408: from: *The Traveller’s Guide to Sacred England*, by John Michell: Cirencester, a market town 16 miles southeast of Gloucester, was a center of Roman life from the first century A.D. Ancient roads from several directions are aligned upon its magnificent church tower, which is on the site of a Roman temple. Its museum has an astonishing display of domestic and religious Roman relics excavated in the neighborhood. Within a radius of 10 miles from the town more than a dozen country houses or villas have been discovered, the residences of a provincial nobility who, though they may have been of British stock, adopted the fashions of Roman civilization. Their villas were large, virtually self-sufficient establishments with farms, craft workshops, and the elaborate heated baths which are the hallmark of Roman culture.

The villa at Chedworth, seven miles north of Cirencester, is the best preserved example of a Roman-style, country house in the area. It is beautifully situated in a hollow within the hills overlooking the valley of the little River Coin. It was built some time after 100 A.D, and lasted for about three hundred years, after which the Romans departed and their villas were abandoned to ruin. Its very existence was forgotten until 1864, when a gamekeeper noticed fragments of Roman mosaics in a rabbit burrow. Excavations began that year, and the study and reconstruction of the buildings continue.

For students of Roman civilization, the attraction of Chedworth is its extensive range of Turkish and sauna baths, its apartments with underground and wall heating, and the fine mosaic floors made up of naturally colored pieces of stone. The techniques of the Roman plumbers and heating engineers are

wonderfully displayed; yet Chedworth is also interesting on a deeper level, as a place of religious ritual.

It is not at first obvious why the villa was built at this spot, for it faces east and is therefore cut off from the sun during most of the day. The reason for its position can be found at the northwest corner of the site. This is the place of the sacred spring, an infallible water source which wells up from the wooded hillside. A trackway approaches it from the nearby prehistoric Salt Way, indicating that it was a place of resort in times before the Roman invasion. The people of the villa heated its overflow for their bathhouses, and over the spring they erected a shrine, a *Nymphaeum* dedicated to the local spirit of the waters. An octagonal pool, lined and rimmed with stone, is still to be seen at the center of the shrine. Around it was a paved area which was later renewed, the original stones being used elsewhere on the site. Two of them, discovered during excavations, are marked with the Chi-Rho symbol of early Christianity (the Greek letters chi and rho being the initial letters of Christos). The symbols at Chedworth, thought to have been carved in the second century, are among the oldest relics of Christianity in Britain.

In the middle of the site, blocking the view to the east, is a former hunting lodge which is now the custodian's house, and adjoining it is a small museum. Finds from the site are lodged there, including the Chi-Rho stones. Other exhibits relate to pagan worship. Four small altars are carved with figures of rustic deities, and from the site of a pagan temple a half-mile along the valley to the southeast came a stone carving of a huntsman's dog attended by a hound, a hare, and a stag. On the floor of the dining hall in the villa's west wing a fourth-century mosaic shows allegorical and classical pagan figures within a fine geometric design. It has been much damaged over the centuries by tree roots growing through it, and the central image can no longer be identified. (It was probably Bacchus surrounded by nymphs and satyrs.) The four seasons are represented at the corners by symbolic figures. A rare item in the museum, probably used to set out the design of the mosaics, is a pair of Roman dividers. The wooded hills around the villa abound in wildlife, and its secluded hollow with the sacred spring is one of those spots which nature seems to have designated as a shrine of spirit. It is thus a natural center of pagan worship. Nearby are other Roman villas and temples, and with them are monuments some two thousand years older,

signifying the prehistoric sanctity of the area. From one of them, a barrow to the north of the villa, was taken a funerary urn containing ashes from a cremation, which is now in the museum. No doubt there were several different forms of religion in Roman times, coexisting in the same valley: cults of local deities among the relative British people, the worship of classical gods by the lord of the villa, and perhaps the new religion of the Chi-Rho symbol introduced by a Celtic Christian wife.

As all *Cosmopolis* readers should know, 11 is Patrick Dusoulier who, as a Frenchman, is an expert in these matters. 15 is the redoubtable Rob Friefeld, 25 that famous wag Bob Lacovara and 408 is Hans himself. Further comments should be added to the 'bis' file in strict accordance with correct procedure, and returned to the archive, via team-lead, in a timely manner, with correctly updated file name, on pain of further *Nympharium* privilege suspension.

News from the Frontis

Frontispiece creation proceeds. Vance's work offers a disconcerting abundance of subject matter, and is so visually vivid, that the illustrator must ask himself: how to avoid redundancy, to say nothing of competition with a master of images that the illustrator must, indeed should, lose? In the case of Vance, and in particular for the VIE, I think the trick is to enrich the book, or book set, with something that adds to the reader's experience of the story without compromising the spirit of it. Easier said than done, but I have the advantage of a clue from Vance himself. Discussing illustrations he pronounced himself in favor, but disappointed in almost all actual illustrations of his work. He bade me inspect one, showing Adam Reith. What Jack approved was this Reith's surprising maturity and ruggedness. I forget the name of the artist; the drawing is in felt pen, and uses a somewhat crude, cartoony manner. Reith has a vigorous pose. He inspects the horizon; his head is large and square, his face craggy. He seems a man in his late forties, a farmer, a ship captain, a trapper, a miner. The rest of the drawing includes only some perfunctory rocks and two unsatisfactory heads, apparently Anacho and Traz. For the *Tschai* volume, a Wave 2 book, I will make an attempt at Jack's Reith.

For *The Domains of Koryphon* I started out with the too obvious idea of the land yawl (see the VIE site where such a drawing decorates some of the pages). It would perhaps not be bad to show the windrunner depot, with yawl in the middle ground and fiap

negotiations in the foreground, but this scene is very well covered by Vance so that I think it could only be redundant. My current idea is to strike at the heart of the book with a view of Morningswake, the reader's first view: in the foreground the cryptid riding party approaches, and in the background the vastness of the Alouan . . . This scene is evoked only briefly by Vance, but it is Schaine's attachment to her home—not just the house, but Uaia and the domains—that fuels her inner development which, in my view, is the dramatic center of the book. Note the following excerpts:

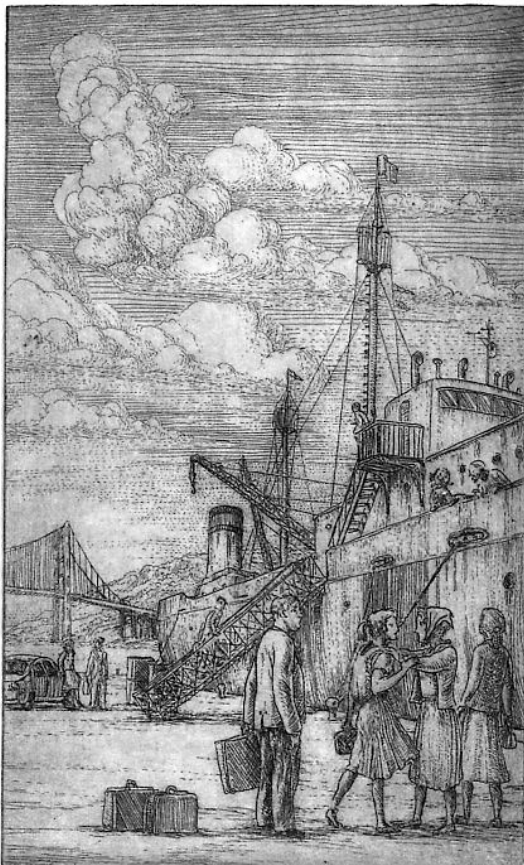
Morningswake Manor was no more and no less than the center of the universe. . .

. . . she saw herself against a backdrop of Morningswake. . .

"Schaine and Kelse live on Morningswake Domain in the Alouan, which they claim to be the single habitable area of Koryphon."

" . . . Morningswake is my home, so I've been brought up to believe. But what if I really didn't have any right to be there, would I still want to keep it? To be candid, I'm glad that my opinion carries absolutely no weight, so that I can enjoy going home without suffering pangs of conscience."

This month I present the volume 12 frontispiece etching, an illustration from *The Dark Ocean*:



(Pay no attention to image quality! This is proof #1 of state #1, casually scanned on baby equipment. The book will use something more finished and cleaner.)

This goodbye scene happens to be fully described in the book, but it includes a nice combination of elements appropriate to the set as a whole. The scene takes place in San Francisco and shows the harbor. It includes a freighter ship such as Vance worked on as a sailor and was later transported by as a tourist. It is also a familial scene, rife with both promise and menace—all very Vancian. There was quite a bit of communication with Oakland concerning various details.

Depth and Character Development

Continuing dialogue between Timothy Virkkala, Byron Marshall and Paul Rhoads. (Like last month, this is a reconstruction of e-mail conversations with added comments and last words).

MARSHALL:

Timothy comments [see *Cosmopolis* 28] that "the most fascinating thing in life is what makes people tick" and goes on to speak of ". . . our secrets, the diverse springs of our motivations." I don't think that we disagree about finding this amusing—I just tend to find it more superficial than Timothy does. Delineating the foolish, or just personable, way people act is part of the novelist's bag of tricks and a source of knowledge, of recognition and discrimination, for those of us who are readers. It can also help to set up an implied basis for independence—as when Vance describes the social climbers in *Night Lamp*, not with any particular malice or any pretense of revealing depth psychology, but with the obvious purpose of allowing those of us who wish some freedom from regarding life's purpose as tracking our fellow travelers. So it is "fascinating", or at least entertaining—but there are many other things of great significance besides "what makes people tick", most of the world, in fact.

In the mischievous misdeeds we all commit there is a great amusement. I cannot imagine a more pleasant way to write a book. Capek, also, wrote his books this way. The humor is always there, although at times more gentle than scathing. Timothy and I (and Paul) are in many ways more in agreement than in disagreement, in recognizing the charm and skill, the choice entertainment, that Vance provides in delineating Puck's favorite subject matter. Where Timothy and I differ is whether Vance's refusal to 'dig deep' (especially with his main characters) is a limitation, a weakness . . .

VIRKKALA:

I believe some of Vance's obsessions, such as criminal mysteries, and his lack of interest in regarding human motivations as the primary mystery to be explored and successively revealed, do prevent his work from attaining the highest level of literary merit. But in his best works he achieves so much that I don't believe you'll find a phrase like 'essentially trivial' in my judgments of Vance.

MARSHALL (continued):

For Tim, Vance is a diverting miniaturist, an enjoyable but essentially trivial writer. Timothy wants more of those springs of motivation, more unpeeling of the onion. But the diverse springs of our motivations are not always that revealing. . .

VIRKKALA:

That's because most writers who try it fail.

MARSHALL (continued):

Acknowledging our wellsprings and other quirks is one thing for, as I will say below, our peculiarities are what make us *us*. But are they revealing? There may still be, contexts, 'cultures', where it is worthwhile, and 'profound', for an author to delve into the wellsprings. My point is not to rule out such forms of writing, although Timothy says most writers who attempt it fail. But as there are contexts in which depth charges may be of value, there are contexts in which the author is pursuing other goals. Depth-writing may be most illuminating—perhaps—when a separation exists between the conversational self and the inner self; when the individual at the 'ego' level has found it necessary to be protective of the inner self, perhaps is unsure of it or unnerved by it; where there may be, as a consequence, a need to bring everything to the surface, to see things clearly, acknowledge all interests, and re-establish an integration. That is, certain cultures, certain times, certain personalities, may need a deep sea operation (and corresponding novels) to achieve that integration and simple, unspoken identity of all aspects of the 'self' that constitute the person. Vance affirms the positive consequence of such rescue operations by giving us people who are, clearly, themselves, and do not need a deep sea rescue to be themselves. This is why Timothy is demanding the unnecessary of Vance. Times change, and these other needs may become more important, or less important. Or an author may establish a context, which is the case with Vance, where the important questions are not whether the 'self' can

exist (he assumes it's there), but the nature of the world in which the person now acts. This leaves the critic who would 'explain' people to themselves with little to do.

VIRKKALA:

Authors do have many agendas. And that's fine. And these agendas may vary from work to work. I should go on record (if I haven't already) by saying that the best Vance stories, like *Emphyrio*, are not undermined by the mystery plotting, even if some sort of mystery remains central. And something about human nature is importantly revealed.

MARSHALL (continued):

To be piscine about it, Vance is in pursuit of different fish. Vance gives us a view of things in which what is important is to see how people are for, the most part, integral, and not fodder for someone else's analysis. Vance doesn't say that people don't have inner selves, of course; he takes that as a given. I think Vance successfully conveys a different context from the society of the divided self which might justify explorations of the kind of 'depth' which Timothy found lacking in Vance.

VIRKKALA:

I believe that almost every society censures enough in the individual that there is *always* a divorce between the inner and the outer man. Possible exceptions: the man of utmost integrity, and the dunce. The particular nature of this divorce varies from culture to culture.

MARSHALL (continued):

I don't see how the censure of society in and of itself creates a divorce between the inner and the outer self. That is what 'society' might like to do; it would like to be that powerful; and some are overly agreeable in crediting it with so much success. At worst, it is more an irritation or a slightly disagreeable nuisance. Timothy is over-ranking 'society', and giving it the importance it would like to assert, in a kind of undeserved tyranny. There are societies, however, which are so fiendish as to be terribly successful; and there are individuals who are so unfortunate as to be disrupted and confused by a mild society—society, after all, being the pattern of actions of other persons—that is more like water to a duck for more fortunate souls. But this is a useful observation on Timothy's part. For precisely one of the merits, indeed the joys, of Vance's tales and stories is that he constantly undermines this antic, indeed sometimes maniac, desire of 'society' to force itself on people trying to go about their lives. The inane behavior, although

often having a superficial charm, of the many strivers and questers for 'comporture', in *Night Lamp*, who are constantly attentive of how they can impress on Jaro Fath what he is missing, is high comedy. And not always comedy, as when his schmeltzing leads to a violent assault. Yet Vance presents us with a very clear picture: Jaro Fath, even without engaging in his society's favorite obsessions, has a life, has real personality, has a self, has mysteries and things to be explained, has goals, qualities and values, has a world to be examined and discovered, and a girl to win.

In any case, there are other writers who show a similar purpose to that of Vance, which may help us for a moment to see that he is not dallying among superficial entertainments. Lawrence Durrell is also a writer of 'landscape and place' (Timothy and I share a liking for Durrell). Durrell, in the *Quartet* books, seems constantly to be throwing us revelations. One might think that this is what he is about. The books are one revelation after another! And indeed it's part of the fun of the books, because he's teasing. He is turning this practice of disclosures and discoveries, of 'depth explanations of the wellsprings of our motivations' upside down. The revelations are quite fun (and they are 'true', that is, things are, apparently, different than they seemed—as things often are), but the joke is that these delightful revelations do not really 'illuminate', nor do they change our conception of the characters. Nor do the characters change. They don't, because, like real people, his characters are who they are.

In fact, Durrell's characters themselves serve up spurious 'revelations' as a joke. At one point the young narrator of the first book of the quartet, not unlike a young Hoffman taking his first romantic tumbles, trying to make sense of it all, shares with us Justine's diary. Now at last we know who she is! Now we understand her! Indeed, he says, she has almost a 'masculine' insight into herself. Later, we are gifted to yet another revelation. We find that Justine provided him her diary because she knew how much he, like a modern critic demanding 'wellsprings', wanted something like this. And there was nothing so profound about it at all. Indeed not! It was not her diary. She had handed him the nearest thing at hand—the 'diary' was in fact the writing of her previous lover, yet another writer. And all this time she is in fact acting in concert with her husband—they are an agreeable team—on their shared mission, their actual concern, which is a political matter.

What is going on here? Durrell with his series of mock revelations is not trying to put his characters 'in their place'. We discover that those we thought most introspective in fact regard events of the world of more interest—a very Vancean concern.

Durrell certainly acknowledges our interest in the many ways that people 'are'. But he is teasing us for our preoccupation with 'understanding them', for putting them in their place. Instead, he is allowing them the run of the place. And this is why Durrell's books are books of 'place', of landscape. As Vance is an author of villages, towns, countries, worlds.

This reminds me of a Vance story in which a young lady has several different names to go with her several different 'personas'. This was a nice affront, a flip of the finger, to the then-prevailing attitude that people should be 'simple'. (And easily understood.) She may have had different names and 'personalities' but as I recall the young lady is portrayed as very clearly, very definitely herself, a clear and distinct individual. The fact of her different names and her personas to go with them, just as would also be the case if they were to be provided serially as 'revelations' or as 'springs of motivation', does not alter one bit that she is a single personality, a single person.

The motivations and revelations which Timothy finds to be 'the most fascinating thing in life', and which are certainly humorous, are not that revelatory: they are the *stuff* of personality but do not explain it in any interesting way; at least, in the interesting context that Vance summons up; they do not 'place' the self; instead, they provide the individuating features that simply make us who we are. In this sense, of course, they are very important, for we are a complex of thorny individual features. They are us, but not an explanation of us. And such individuating details are the glory of all of us who share in the glory of the 'many' as against the glory of the 'one'. It is this individuating aspect, and its obvious consistency, no matter how many names and personas, no matter how quadruplex or lacking in apparent unity, no matter how lacking in approval in someone's analytical scheme, that makes us who we are, and has its charm, no matter how much the analyst fools himself with his inquiries. The self comes first.

In one of his most striking books, which to this day discomfits some readers, Vance addresses this point. I'm speaking of *The Dragon Masters*. On some planet, an alien race competes in pointless

skirmishes with humans. Both have selectively bred each other to produce beasts of burden and the equivalent of machines. Therefore, some of the 'dragons'—the alien race—you encounter are clearly anthromorphs, and others, the results of selective breeding, are more or less like dogs, sheep, horses, even automobiles, airplanes. Likewise for the humans. Some are clearly 'like us'; others, selectively bred by the aliens, are machines, beasts of burden, automobiles. This is Vance at his most essential: he throws aside the feel-good clichés of the mundanes, and never guarantees that a human being's worth is his participation in the values of, say, the Mayor of Westport. 'Human nature', in fact, not endangered by dabblings of biogenetics—simply is.

There is a desultory new work by Francis Fukuyama, the author of *The End of History*, one of the more hapless titles of recent pretentious writing. This confused author feels that an enormous danger is creeping down upon us: individuals using their own judgment with respect to technology. In particular, biotechnology. Where he comes down is clear: on the individual. Laws must be passed, he says hysterically. Committees and Boards and Rules must be established. The oddity is that Fukuyama feels, or so he says, that there is such a thing as 'human nature', and thinks of himself as rushing to the barricades—or the torches and hangman's ropes—to defend 'human nature' against the reductionists and biotechnologists. But of course he is agreeing with the reductionists and biotechnologists, as for example when some of their more unhinged fraternity think they have at last got 'human nature' down on the mat. Fukuyama correctly proposes that 'human nature' is far too abstract and complex to be reduced to a single formula. And that is the point. 'Human nature'—or the soul—is far too rich to be explicated away by biotechnology or its minor revolutions. It covers a wider range of types. It will not be traduced by biotechnology, and therefore there is no need to restrain individuals from using biotechnology for whatever they feel it gets them. Human nature is broader and less simply explained than many think who want to explain it or account for it.

This I think was the implied point-of-view in *The Dragon Masters*. It is the recognition, with human sympathy, for human nature no matter how it exists and how it is 'caused', that one finds in Heinlein and also notably in Philip K. Dick (in which a shopping cart can be fully human). The 'causation' and the creation, whether a test tube or standard human

motivation, is not the touchstone. Human nature simply is. Vance gives us the multifarious creatures of the world of *The Dragon Masters* because this flies so directly in the face of the modern intelligentsia's notion that people are to be explained, understood, or mastered, 'put in their place', allotted their position in the database. Who is to say which of the genetically engineered dragons are human, or soulful, or not, and when? Vance presents us with a baffling reality, and thus a baffling enigma from the point of view of the analyst. . . .

RHOADS:

I would agree with Marshall's point about what might be called the 'eternal and ineluctable nature of human nature'. But even if biotechnology poses no menace to human nature as such, it is a danger to society, as can also be learned from studying *The Dragon Masters*. Biotechnology ignores that our bodies, with our souls, are part of an articulated and indissoluble whole. This ensemble is fragile and therefore corruptible; it exists in time and space, but it is also fundamentally eternal and universal. This insight, by the way, is one of the strengths of the Catholic understanding. The non-Christian view can regard human nature, and human bodies, as toys of the will, to be molded for different kinds of social purposes, like slavery, as in *The Dragon Masters*. Considerations such as this is one of the reasons Christians regard atheism as so dangerous. The non-Christian view can be that bodies and souls are simply what they are, and that changing them would not diminish, but simply alter, them. This is a fundamental idea underlying cultural relativism, according to which the various cultures are incommensurable and each has its specific 'mind', and that, with proper techniques, these minds may be altered or exchanged. Vance famously toys with such ideas in *The Dragon Masters*, but that is all. Serious reading of his stories does not support this doctrine. The men of various valleys at war with one another, the Sacerdotes who consider themselves over-men and permit themselves to stand aloof, the dragon-servants—some of whom do baby-sitting duty—the basics with their self-serving metaphysics and the human monsters who are their slaves, each have different views, interests and goals. But all are operating in and against the same ultimate reality. Each must, at some point, cope with the others, and their success depends upon the extent of their comprehension of, and accommodation to, reality.

Note also this passage from *The Miracle Workers*:

"I am puzzled," Sam Salazar told Hein Huss. "I cannot understand the creature's actions."

"Small wonder," grunted Hein Huss. "He is one of the First Folk, you are human. There is no basis for understanding."

"I disagree," said Sam Salazar seriously.

"Eh?" Hein Huss inspected the apprentice with vast disapproval. "You engage in contention with me, Head Jinxman Hein Huss?"

"Only in a limited sense," said Sam Salazar. "I see a basis for understanding with the First Folk in our common ambition to survive."

"A truism," grumbled Hein Huss.

MARSHALL (continued):

Vance so often takes up the situation of the 'equalitarian' society, because the equalitarian must spend so much time monitoring and gauging, checking and grading, adjusting and administering himself, to make sure he fits the square holes for which he is designed. He is in a situation of constant dithering; he is a form of psychological quality control. Something similar happens in the apparent opposite, the hierarchical society. There too, each hectored individual devotes himself to putting down, or ranking up, his comrades. In both cases, social participation is paramount. It is of course quiet satire, and very amusing, to see this fretful concern over meeting the grade, finding the place. We can all recognize something of ourselves in this. The two schemas really merge. In opposition to it is the alternative that Vance's novels suggest. In which people are simply as they are, and the shift of interest is to the world around them and the worlds of knowledge, ideas, activities in which they can partake.

Here's a nice example, from the great days of Hollywood movies, of the Vancean point of view. It demonstrates how the depth of human nature is not being denied, but affirmed, and more accurately than in a style of analysis which has lost its bearing: the Greta Garbo movie, *Queen Christina*. Garbo is glowing, and throughout the movie has that sort of heightened dramatic style typical of the movies of its time. In the film, people speak almost with that kind of clarity and indirection we find in Vance. At the conclusion, as she is leaving her country for her lover's, giving up 'everything', the director gave Garbo this instruction: the camera would be upon her face, and she was to register no discernible emotion, no sign of happiness, no sign of sadness, no clue as to what she thought. No clue at all. An enigma. It is a great moment. There is no revelation. As if we could with any accuracy

circumscribe, limit, control, what someone at this moment thinks—'really thinks'!

This absence of revelation does not convey shallowness. It is not a demonstration that she does not have a personality, or that she is not profoundly aware of all that she is doing and all that is happening. It is the assertion that we can not pin it down. We cannot put her in her place, as she leaves her home country for a distant land. To attempt to delineate what she is thinking would be impossible, inadequate—and not remotely honest. Not because there is an absence of depth; but because we know it is there, and accepting it, we honor it. She is like, for a moment, the God in Job, who is a whirlwind, and does not speak in simple messages. And indeed, the human being, part of the world, is as rich as the entirety of the Universe, just as a single point in an infinite line contains an infinity in itself.

As Capek evokes in the touching conclusion of *An Ordinary Life*, the face is an enigma: there is too much to be said. And there are other points, when a person's emotion and feeling is as clear and radiant and direct as if the face is an open window on the soul. It is a beautiful thing to see, a release as important to us as the previous reticence, and a moment for laughter, crying, and thankfulness—for being forgiven.

What is to take the place of the 'most fascinating thing in life': 'what makes people tick'? What replaces the unpeeling of the layers of the onion? The wide world, that is, the objective world in which people have the freedom to be, to live, and to act. Vance in his travelogues of character spells out that it is an awareness of the real world which provides us with something of sufficient interest: all the things that people can think and imagine and discover and enjoy and which they can make their way into. Are Vance's heroes, in so doing, different from his lesser characters? No; no more correct, and no less so. They do not need to be validated by an analytical scheme. Their validation is simply given, a metaphysical assumption of great importance. There is comedy and delight in Vance's world: he has provided us a liberating view which restores the world to us.

RHOADS:

True! But I think Vance *also* shows depth and development, if in his own, sometimes oblique, way. But Timothy must mean not just depth of character, but 'character development' in the *lit. crit.* sense. Though these may not be Vance's 'central strategy', or primary concerns, they are there.

MARSHALL:

I mentioned that Vance's presentation of the various 'personas' of a character did not prevent us from seeing that this person had a clear and even strong character. This would be true whether the different personas were presented simultaneously (choices of the character within the story) or 'serially' (as a series of revelations) or even as a kind of motivational unveiling (ah ha! here is what is 'really' at work) etc . . . The varieties of personas, surprises, motivations, and so forth, are naturally of interest, for they make up the gritty individuality of a person.

In many of Vance's protagonists there is at least one obvious, and simple, 'motivation', that of revenge or restoring of justice; and there is in other characters a source of humor in seeing those who do foolish things, especially if they are not quite aware of it, such as social climbers. Such details of character are the delineation of character, not the 'explanation'. In the Vancean case, an 'explanation' might be of little interest, or (as in the case of Durrell's characters) a spoof put on by the character themselves, an act, a persona.

There can be books which work with something more like Tim's paradigm, in which character 'explanation' or deeper aspects of character are of importance. My point is that although Vance's books are not that kind of book, and don't work with that kind of paradigm, this does not deny them greatness. There are other things of interest besides the unwrapping of onions.

However, I am open to the possibility Paul wishes to point out, that (in his 'way', perhaps) Vance does some of what Timothy finds missing and the absence of which limits Vance's books. There is something that one might call 'character development' which consists of a character learning how to cope, and also reflecting on experience. I am curious as to whether Paul agrees to this, or regards it as a trivial use (or misuse) of the term, and would prefer some other description for it. I am also curious as to whether Timothy might say that this was what he meant all along (or, alternatively, regards it as a trivial kind of thing, perhaps a misuse of the word.)

What I find so fresh and 'liberating' in Vance is revealing of truth, of possibilities and strengths. It's not done by lecturing, and it's not done by deep analysis of his characters—Vance might very well be appalled by the wordy analysis I am giving his books—it's done, instead, by the way he presents his characters, and the freedom he gives them to go

about their lives (perhaps in many cases foolishly.) The profundity is provided by 'showing', not 'talking'. By implication, perhaps. It is not however simply the result of his writing in a genre, or writing entertainment, of his being forced to use one-dimensional characters, or something of the sort. For one thing Vance's characters do not seem to me in the slightest to be one-dimensional. He has this knack by which through his very reticence, and dialog, by his various crafts and selections, the consistency of his vision, the style of his narrative, the selection of events, that he convinces us (well, me) that these are far from one-dimensional characters, but 'real people', with all the implied depth and indeed opacity that real people can present. A Vance character can never be 'one-dimensional' or limited to his superficial description, for I know that there is a 'full person' there. This is his knack.

In any case, it is just where I find this profundity, through the narrative of these interesting characters and their interesting pursuit of things, that Timothy seems to find a limitation, and believes (apparently) that without a deeper 'searching', of 'motivations', of deeper layers, that Vance's novels, while good in many ways, are self-limited, handicapped, and prevented from greatness.

In Vance's novels such 'analysis', such classification by the sagistic author, seems absurd: and it is just this point, extended to life, that makes Vance especially interesting. By Vance focusing on, rather than explaining his characters—the impression that they are 'full people'—we get a metaphysical lesson: there is something worth acknowledging: the 'full person'. To reduce this person to the depth-novelist's analysis would be a travesty.

To refer to certain types in Vance's novels . . . To 'explain' or 'classify', seems to me exactly what Vance's *equalitarian* characters are constantly seeking for. For the 'equalitarian' characters, as similarly their apparent opposites, the 'social climbers', must both find their worth in their ranking and grading compared to their social partners—what I called a kind of 'quality control' of human life. They are each busy being the analytical novelist for each other, and even for themselves. They are constantly trying to measure up. Vance allows his equalitarians, and his social climbers, to spend their lives in their chosen pursuit, in this idle game, a round robin, a rat-chasing-his-tail, of understanding themselves in terms of their peers, inferiors, superiors, etc.

I think his *preferred* characters do little of this, or regard it as decorative at best, the equivalent of finesse in choosing wine (as the young woman in the early book selects 'personas', as we might choose wines or cultivate roses.) But are his preferred characters then self-obsessed, self-concerned? Yes and no. They care little enough of what others think, but are frank and observant of how others behave, and of the consequences they must take note of (. . . the wonderful Saki quote: *when surrounded by greyhounds, one should try to avoid giving an overly successful impression of a rabbit.*)

Of course, Vance has also given us, with his usual frank interest, examples of egocentric characters who implode into themselves, who become black holes, so to speak, of personality, in which no light can extend beyond a narrow radius. (There is a character—not the protagonist—in one book: the wise men of the culture eventually become domineering and perverse in their inability to see anything beyond themselves. Vance is giving us here an example of the curmudgeon, the cranky. [In *The Blue World*—P.W.R.]) On the other hand, it is true that his 'independent' characters take their goals, their purposes, very seriously—and do not ask whether they could rid themselves of their 'motivation'. They do not doubt it because someone else might doubt it.

But his characters who are neither social climbers nor equalitarians, who neither 'analyze' their motivations nor, in a certain style, 'grow' or 'develop', are not limited: for they—as can the human self in general—participate in much bigger and wider things than just the social dance: they participate in the broad world with its many aspects and extensions—in ideas, in arts, in space, in time, and in possibility. It is a metaphysical entity, and partakes in the bigger metaphysical entity of the world.

Since Vance manages, I think, to convey to us that his unanalyzed characters are, indeed, fully human, he provides us with a tactful reminder that the fully human does not require social validation or analytical explanation, because the fully human is part of something that is much bigger than the individual: the world itself.

I find all sorts of profundities in Vance!—that's 'great' enough for me. If anything keeps him from being 'great', it is certainly not the absence of the point-scoring analysis of certain kinds of books, in which the interest of the character, as also the worth of an individual, is the degree to which he

can be captured and catalogued and pinned down by a wise author.

In any case, for me it is more than simply the light comedy and the entrancing locales that makes Vance interesting; it is, as I must have now made clear almost to myself, the metaphysic—the implied metaphysic, perhaps. The lesson he provides, by demonstration, of the nature of the self, and of the world in which the self lives.

RHOADS:

The idea: *character development is the most noble aspect of fiction* is interesting to me for a specific reason. I agree with the proposition to the extent I think humanity must be at the center of the highest art, but I suspect character development is only one aspect, from a literary standpoint, of humanity.

MARSHALL:

Yes, in which case there can be fiction, such as Timothy takes Vance to be, where even though these other aspects are more emphasized, the result is still noble. Could I amend your earlier remark to: 'character development can be one of the most noble aspects of fiction'? There are things that pass for character development, analysis of motivation, and revelation, and the like—such as, to take an obvious instructional example, the Jerry Springer Show, where I am not sure that anyone comes off being noble.

I gather (since I do not claim to be well read) that the better examples of what Timothy is thinking of, are more likely to be found, and made more sense, in 19th and early 20th century fiction. What would either of you say of the 'Russian' writers—Tolstoy, Dostoevsky? Do Shakespeare's characters develop, in general? Or is it that they learn a useful lesson? Is it that we discover their fatal flaws? Or do we simply discover that there are consequences for them of being who they are? I'll provide a different question. Are any of Vance's novels 'tragedies'?

RHOADS:

The question is surely not: *is exploration of the motivation of a fool deciding between hitting himself over the head with a wet noodle or a fly swatter, a better literary point of departure than the interesting deeds of an admirable hero?* The real question surely must be, *other things being equal, does absence of deliberate exploration of the depths of human character (motivation, development, contradictions) make impossible the generation of enough literary speed to escape the gravitational tug of mediocrity and make the leap into orbital greatness?* Which is more to the point: Tim's idea that 'analysis of character', or 'character development' is

the essential subject of literature, in the absence of which it cannot be 'great', or my own more general thought that literature cannot develop its full potential if it is not, essentially, about humanity? In the first case greatness of literature depends on the treatment of a certain aspect of humanity, in the second it depends on humanity being the central subject treated. The basis of my point is that a writer who puts science fiction subject matter—defined as technology and theories about the nature of nature—before interest in Man, cripples his literary possibilities. According to this idea 'Science Fiction' as such—apart from whether or not the amusement value of a given SF book is greater or less than that of a given 'psychological novel'—cannot gain literary orbital speed because it is just not using the right fuel.

Timothy's idea is a special case of mine, so we agree that literary hierarchies concerning subject matter—quite apart from the problem of their treatment, upon which modern criticism is uniquely focused—are essential to the correct assessment of literature. Tim's opinion seems characteristic of 19th and early 20th century attitudes, where 'character development' was emphasized. But he could also be thinking of Shakespeare, where 'depth' more than 'development', seems to be what is valued. Do Hamlet, Macbeth or Othello 'develop'? We do learn a great deal about their inner states; Hamlet is plagued by doubt and desire for vengeance, Macbeth by ambition and anxiety, Othello by passion and jealousy. But is not Gersen also plagued by revenge and doubt? Do not the *Demon Princes* books confront the problem of justice and revenge, in a way which articulates the question of second hand revenge, or third hand punishment, which is what State Justice is? Violen Falushe is plagued by love and jealousy, though in ways different from Othello, and if Vance does not provide an analysis in his narrative voice, an analysis is there none-the-less. Timothy's emphasis on the values of the psychological novel agrees with the last thoughts literary critics had when they were still thinking. My own attitude was only developed recently, provoked by the question of whether Vance is a science fiction author. Though I have not gotten farther than the division of subject matter into human and non-human, I think I can show that Vance satisfies Tim's criteria (see below). But showing this would not, as Timothy points out, be enough to prove he is great. Interest in character and its development by an author is not enough.

This interest must be successfully transferred to the literary plane—the problem of treatment.

Regarding tragedy, there are certainly tragic aspects in Vance's work, even if none of his main stories are tragedies strictly speaking (*Wild Thyme and Violets*, and the Suldrun episode of *Suldrun's Garden* are exceptions). Take the family of Glinnes Hulden, in *Trullion*. His father becomes embittered when the merlings steal his daughter, drown her in the waters of the Fens, and eat her. He obsessively hunts merling, and eventually himself falls victim to his hated prey. Meanwhile Glinnes' mother prefers the dour Glay, and at her husband's death takes up with Akadie the mentor. These fateful events color Glinnes' life with a certain tragedy, and it would be easy to multiply such examples of 'tragic color'. In 19th century literature, and it is an aspect of the romantic emphasis on emotion, there is great interest in 'character development' as well as tragedy, or even histrionics. Jules Lemaitre, the great 19th century French critic, pointed out that such things can be mere matters of taste. Happiness and small events are not less important, from a literary point of view, than unhappiness or extreme events. Rascolnikov, in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, develops through a series of intense experiences from a murderer to a pious man. Is this 'development' at the 'center' of the book? In a way it certainly is, but is it what is most important about *Crime and Punishment*? In Tolstoy's *The Brothers Karamazov* the characters also progress, in spiritual understanding for example. But for these Christian writers reality is as much spiritual as physical. The development that some of the characters undergo explicates the nature of reality, as the authors understand it, in particular the interplay of the physical and the spiritual. In my opinion the most 'important' thing about these books, what makes them so amusing and rewarding to read, is the artistic, or dramatic, exposé of a vision of reality. The use of character development, I contend, is only one means to this end. What makes these books great is not that they use some particular means to their end, but that they achieve that end, and, in particular, that the end they achieve is worth achieving. I think Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are particularly great writers because their understanding of reality is deep and true, and because, by whatever means, they express it powerfully. A character like Natasha, in *War and Peace*, though so memorable and fascinating, cannot be satisfying to someone looking only for character development; without any explanation, after dozens

of tumultuous chapters, Natasha settles down to being a wife and mother, a sort of Tolstoyan Everywoman. The episodes with General Kutuzof are fascinating, but Kutuzof does not develop; he is just there, with his deep understanding of Russia and Russians, and makes the story happen around him by dealing with his army, and fighting Napoleon, the right way. There is development here, but it happens in our own minds as we come to understand more about Russia.

Perhaps the ultimate, or most crystalline, example of character development, though it cannot exactly be called 'romantic' since the development in question is not at all 'tragic', would be Jane Austen's *Emma*. Emma starts out with a flaw: she is, to put it more bluntly than is justified, a shortsighted busybody and a snob. But she takes some hard knocks, and gets over it. Is this, with all that goes with it, what makes *Emma* such a great book? To the extent that it is the tensions and changes in Emma's character that drive the story, yes. But on a deeper level, and again, Austen's vision of reality is at the center of the book. It is no good making characters develop if your understanding of what such development might encompass is paltry. In *Emma* George Knightly does not develop much, nor do the rest of the characters, and we do not require development to take an interest in who and what they are, what they do, and how the story unfolds around them. In this sense Emma's development is a mere device.

Great artists are great because they tell us something true about reality, and Man is at the center of reality. This statement runs contrary to current ideologies, according to which art is important to the extent it expresses the individuality of its 'creator', and man is no more at the 'center' of reality than anything else. The result is the sort of 'art' people are now busy 'creating'. But what do we care what the mollusks of Alpha Centauri do in their spare time, or that a given rocket goes faster than another, or the iridescence in the spittle of some anointed 'genius' on display at your local 'art' gallery? Such things *might* interest us, a bit, from time to time.

VIRKKALA:

Byron's attack on character development and revelation is in many ways very post-modern—he could almost be writing some manifesto defending Barthelme, Gass, Brett Easton Ellis and That Crowd! Since I have yet to read a long fiction from any of these people that satisfies, I tend to judge that, in

terms of the novel, post-modernism is mostly a slide down, like much of High Modernism was.

Like the avant-garde before them, the *pomo* [post-modernist] writers have merely found new ways of turning a major art into a minor one. They descend from the heights of Albrecht Durer and El Greco and make 'wall hangings' instead of great art. The novels of the modernist *and* the *pomo* generally fall short of the grandeur that others have achieved. I have nothing against wall hangings, but Mondrian ain't Leonardo—just as Cage vanishes in Sibelius's shadow and Barthelme's novels seem as mere molehills compared to the mountains of Tolstoy or Trollope or Austen. Vance also limits himself with his mystery obsessions, etc., but at his best his works stand above the bulk of *pomo* novelists. One reason for this is his firm grounding in a genre that expects and demands a *story*. Another is his love of invention. Still another, his broad-mindedness. The feeling I get from most *pomo* writers is one of insularity. Vance is not insular.

The *pomo* theorists of the novel say things very similar to Byron's line that character revelation and interiority are 'presumptuous.' Now, I can buy this when it applies to real people, and saying things about the hidden aspects of people in history or the news—or even next door. There's something kind of creepy about the non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood*, and it isn't the murders; it may be the presumptuousness of Truman Capote himself. (Vidal had a great quip to the effect that Capote hadn't created a new form of novel, he'd merely come up with a new form of lying.)

But in the best novels we're dealing with *fiction*. Each of us knows (I hope) what it feels like to be human. By creating fictional characters, and developing them (in three senses: revelation of existing character, artful suggestion of depth, and by depicting change; Byron seems to be saying that human beings do not change, which is something I do not believe), the novelist is not being presumptuous. He's not dealing with Gertrude Stein's Oakland, with no 'there' there. Nor is he invading any actual personality's privacy. Since by introspection and empathy we have some glimmering of the depths of human nature and its twisty paths in the real world, in his fictional world the novelist presents a pocket drama that expands our appreciation of what it may mean to be human.

RHOADS:

I can't follow what Timothy is saying about post-modernism, unless he is talking about the synthetic

admiration that is worked up for such authors as Robbe-Grillet, or other literary equivalents of abstract painting. If this is what he means, then I don't think he is addressing what Byron is saying. Be that as it may, I will now try to demonstrate that Vance, in his special manner, gives us as much 'depth of character' or 'character development' as any writer. Vance's attitude is famously cool. He does not offer us vicarious experience, an aspect of his distaste for the maudlin and overblown. His heroes reflect his taste for reserve. With this, his protagonists have a unique, let us call it Vancian, relation to other characters; in a sense all Vance's characters are 'main characters'—or all are 'secondary characters', as you like. The terms are not necessarily appropriate in Vance's case. Unlike most writers, though his characters are at the center of the story—which in Vance's case is another way of saying that the story evolves out of the characters—Vance constructs his books in such a way that the story is the thing. This is what makes the idea of heroes and protagonists nupatory, in his case. In the Gersen books the villains are almost the protagonists, or 'heroes'. The situation is common: Reith, Cugel, Etwane, are all characters who serve as paths into, or generators of, a story where other characters can take on great importance. This approach gives a special weight to Vance's secondary characters, which in turn contributes to the atmosphere, or feeling of realness, of the story.

This point is difficult to make. Other writers, also, tell stories, and have secondary characters which have importance. What I am trying to bring out is that Vance's characters, though completely 'interiorized' by their creator, are not his dear darlings, and his secondary characters are never just props (the same is true of Jane Austen). He works without special indulgence or disdain; there are no cardboard cut-out good guys and bad guys. He does not compromise with his sense of reality, his knowledge that each person is the 'center of an infinity', that no one is a mere personification of evil or an abstract champion of justice. Other writers often dote upon their characters (e.g. Paul Auster with his egocentric crypto-autobiographical protagonists), use stock bad-guys or play fast and loose with reality to one illegitimate degree or another. Vance seems to look at his characters from a distance. His heroes are not embodiments of flattering ideals. They have problems and weaknesses, which are not mere props but related to the nature of the story. Gerd Jemasze could have

been warm and charming, instead he is taciturn and brusque. His character corresponds not only to the logic of who he is (though a land-baron *might* be gracious and amiable) but to the obstacle the heroine, and the reader, must overcome to understand the value of what he stands for. Aillas becomes absurdly infatuated with Tatzel, out of pride and shame, and Shimrod, from innate softness of character, is subject to befuddlement by Melancthe. These situations drive whole sections of *Lyonesse*, a major theme of which is the war between the sexes. Jantiff Ravensroke is somewhat moony and dreamy, making him an easy mark for the plotters, and causing him to foolishly pursue the giddy and headstrong Kedidah, all of which helps Vance display the miasma of egalitarian society. Cugel's tendency to braggadocio and avarice make him reach too far, causing his dramatic reverses. Rhalto's foppery inspires jealousy—and just because Rhalto the Marvellous is a comic character does not mean this foppery and jealousy is not beautifully observed!

Such traits of character could have the virtue of corresponding to the story but still lack depth. What is 'depth' in this case? I say it is presentation of some basic state of being which is rich enough that the reader learns something about what it is to be human. Writers like Dostoevsky or Dickens do this with loud cries and large gestures (all magnificent!). Vance, somewhat like Thackeray, does it by lifting an eyebrow, which may make it harder for some to notice but does not make it any less real. Vance sometimes deals in cataclysmic sentiments, but his preferred mode is delicacy.

What is deep in an author, is what he shows us about human nature and life, or to put it in Christian terminology, *the adventure of the incarnated soul*. The degree of this depth can be measured by the combined effect of surprise (ours when we grasp the insight) and force (with which it strikes us as true). Here are two such examples, first from *The Miracle Workers*:

A man's normal state is something near madness; he is at all times balanced on a knife-edge between hysteria and apathy. His senses tell him far less of the world than he thinks they do. It is a simple trick to deceive a man. . . .

Now from *Gold and Iron*:

She said in a soft voice, "We're slaves; slaves have no need for confidence."

"I'm not a slave until I feel like a slave."

Something seemed to give way inside of her. Her voice became harsh. "You have no concept of Magarak's reality; you refuse to think; you live by ready-made emotional doctrines—a

substitute for thought. What is worse, you try to wrench reality to fit your ideas."

"I've heard all that before," said Barch evenly. "Sometimes the emotional doctrines work out. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because neither you nor I are really pals with reality. We don't know whose emotional doctrine it fits. . . . Anyway—whether it's impossible or not—if there's a way out of this Magarak slave-camp, I'll try to find it—and I'll take you with me if I can." He took hold of her shoulders, squeezed as if to shake her into confidence. With dull annoyance, he noted the quivering of her flesh. He took his hands away.

These phrases have specific contexts, and I do not mean to elevate them to the status of Vancian Doxa, but the insights are surprising and gripping: man's state is balanced on a knife-edge between hysteria and apathy, and he is not 'pals with reality'; how true! Add to this the 'ambiguity' of Barch's relationship with Ellen and, even in such early work, we have something which, if it is not real depth, resembles it *bougrement*—as the French inimitably can say.

Jane Austen is incontestably a deep author. I have always felt that Vance has several points in common with Jane Austen. Both love the sea, country houses, trips to other places (though Jane Austen's rarely get farther than Bath) gatherings of disparate characters, problems of class. Both are comics by temper, with broad and deep views of humanity, like other greats such as Shakespeare or Cervantes. Both are apt to poke mordant fun at the incongruities and absurdities of the human condition. Such absurdities are not infinite in number, and it is not hard to find more or less exact parallels in their work, such as this one concerning the discrepancy of outer and inner, from *Persuasion*, volume I, chapter VII:

...they were divided only by Mrs. Musgrove. It was no insignificant barrier indeed. Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment; and while the agitations of Anne's slender form, and pensive face, may be considered as very completely screened, Captain Wentworth should be allowed some credit for the self-command with which he attended to her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for.

Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions. A large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But, fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronize in vain,—which taste cannot tolerate,—which ridicule will seize.

Note how Jane Austen, in addition to the more general considerations her joke points to, is poking fun at literary pretensions; the conventional guise of tragic sorrow is not true—and yet it is a prejudice we all tend to have. Exactly the same sort of 'unbecoming conjunction' is treated in this passage from *The Green Pearl*, chapter XIV, section III:

Melancthe leaned back in her chair and thoughtfully sipped wine from her goblet. Presently she spoke, in a soft even voice, though a subtle ear might have detected nuances of mockery and annoyance. "Amazing how chaste little virgins like Glyneth can excite such wild extravagances of gallantry, while other persons of equal worth, perhaps blemished by a goiter or a pock-mark or two, can lie suffering in the ditch, eliciting little if any notice."

Shimrod uttered a melancholy laugh. "The fact is real! The explanation derives from day-dreams and ideal concepts far more powerful than justice, truth and mercy all combined."

These examples are indubitably evidence of a similar shade of humanist concern in both authors—this is not the sort of thing you tend to get in science fiction.

But what of *depth of character*, or treatment, that is deep, of specific characters? In *Pride and Prejudice* it takes quite a while for Lizzy and Darcy to get past all the obstacles of their own flaws and many outer barriers to their marriage. In two key scenes between the lovers, Jane Austen shows them revealing their feelings to each other. In volume II, chapter XI they have an initial honest confrontation, where Darcy declares his love, Lizzy rejects him, and Darcy departs:

The tumult of her mind was now painfully great. She knew not how to support herself, and from actual weakness sat down and cried for half an hour. Her astonishment, as she reflected on what had passed, was increased by every review of it. That she should receive an offer of marriage from Mr. Darcy! that* he should have been in love with her for so many months! so much in love as to wish to marry her in spite of all the objections which had made him prevent his friend's marrying her sister, and which must appear at least with equal force in his own case, was almost incredible! it was gratifying to have inspired unconsciously so strong an affection. But his pride, his abominable pride. . . .

Lizzy, at long last, overcomes her prejudice, and in volume III, chapter XVI, we are gratified with a scene of happy result (to refresh the reader, remember that Lizzy's family has some shamefully bad elements (thus Darcy's prideful disapprobation) but that Darcy did his best, in secret, to repair some

*Note Jane Austen's Vancian use of '!' as comma.

of the damage they wreaked):

Elizabeth was too much embarrassed to say a word. After a short pause, her companion added, "You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once. My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject for ever."

Elizabeth feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand, that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced, was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do. Had Elizabeth been able to encounter his eye, she might have seen how well the expression of heartfelt delight, diffused over his face, became him; but, though she could not look, she could listen, and he told her of feelings, which, in proving of what importance she was to him, made his affection every moment more valuable.

They walked on, without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said, for attention to any other objects.

I present these passages as a reminder to those who have read the books, and as a hint to those who have not, of breadth and depth of human emotions treated, as well as the quantity of 'development' the characters undergo. Jane Austen's 18th century manner may mask some of her constant high-humor to modern readers. For those who have not yet acquired the knack, note that in such a phrase as: *he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do*, she is laughing at another 'unbecoming conjunction'; Darcy, normally so dignified, looks a fool as he gushes—to any eyes but Lizzy's. Unlike the Russian authors, Jane Austen pokes in a humorous nose even at such delicate moments. Being able to see greatness in the Mozartian Jane Austen, as opposed to seeing it in the Wagnerian Dostoevsky, is a step toward seeing it in the Haydenesque Vance.

There is no Vance book with marriage, or even love, as the actual plot motor; so an exact parallel to these scenes does not exist. Still, there are many scenes of love declaration, or their Vancian equivalent. In *Night Lamp* we see two young people who, though naturally attracted to each other, have distinct backgrounds, strong personalities and evolving goals. Each is a product of a particular past and subject to particular constraints. In their first 'love scene' the tone is one of typically Vancian lightness, similar in character to Jane Austen's. Yet the atmosphere is not gay. Both Jaro

and Skirlet are oppressed by the weight of their lives. Vance, always discrete, sometimes tells us their thoughts but more often hints at actions and thoughts he does not show or state. The dialogue is playful, indirect, provocative, but behind it is a flow of emotions which is easy to empathize with—because it is so apropos to analogous circumstances in our own inner lives and so limpidly displayed. Jane Austen's society is different from Vance's. People do not express themselves in the same way, and do not discuss the same topics. Such differences are superficial; on the deepest level both present us with fundamental human reality. The passage is in Chapter VI, section II, it begins:

Skirlet jumped down upon the flat, paused to catch her breath, then crossed to stand gazing down at Jaro.

and ends:

The call-button at Skirlet's shoulder sounded a small tinkling chime. A voice uttered peremptory instructions. Skirlet responded, hesitated, looked toward Jaro, but quickly turned away. She studied the slope, picked out an expeditious route, gave Jaro a wave of farewell, then was gone.

Jaro watched until she had disappeared over the ridge, then gathered his belongings and returned to Merriehew House.

(The following comments assume familiarity with the whole passage.) Skirlet's mixed emotions and conflicting thoughts, as she hesitates, looks down, and then quickly turn away, are pretty clear, or clear enough, to the attentive reader, just as are Jaro's, as he watches her and then returns home. They are more ambivalent sorts of feelings than those of Lizzy on her couch after the departure of Darcy, a difference that is circumstantial only. Note that the events at Piri Piri, on Marmone, recounted by Skirlet are more than an amusing episode. The French word for 'worse' is 'pire', and this mini-sociological study is not gratuitous. Marmone society is erected on a base of hedonism. Vance gives it a solid material base (half a year of work) and supports it with firm social traditions (formalized debauchery followed by acceptance of a half-year abstinence). Still, it is a terrible society, where it would be normal that a young woman should accept rape. 18th century English society is much more in accord with the needs of human nature. If one compares the latter to the society of Thanet (where Jaro lives), one gets the sense that, on a sort of rough and ready moral scale, Thanet falls half-way between 18th century England and the *Sensenitza* of Marmone—about where modern western society would fall. It is not unimaginable that Skirlet would pose nude for Jaro, while such a

development is harder to imagine in the case of Lizzy and Darcy—though Jane Austen’s characters do like to draw (see *Northanger Abbey* for example), and a great deal of nude drawing did go on in the 18th century (see Fragonard’s *The Model* where a mother exposes her daughter to a happy painter). The young men who pursued Skirlet into the forest are a contrast to Jaro’s more proper conduct; he is also alone with her in a sort of forest. In both cases the same force is at work: eroticism. When society has a better structure the erotic impulse is under better control, and human freedom—Skirlet’s from the danger of rape, Jaro’s from thralldom to his baser impulses—is augmented.

This episode may show that Vance can be ‘deep’, but it does not present ‘character development’. But examples of the latter abound. In *The Miracle Workers* Hein Huss goes from dogmatic rejection to embrace of science. In *Gold and Iron* Roy Barch goes from one-dimensional pugnacious masculine self-assertiveness to a much more complex attitude based on self-understanding and broader sympathies. Schaine Madduc goes from being attracted to Elvo Glissam and repelled by Gerd Jemasze, to being indifferent to the former and in love the latter. One of the most notable cases of development occurs in *The Pnume*, where Zap 210 metamorphoses from a neuter to female—to say nothing of the development of Reith’s feelings for her—in one of the most haunting Vancian episodes. Here are a few markers on the curve:

They were alike as mannequins from the factory: slender and straight, with skins as pale and thin as paper, arched coal-black eyebrows, and regular, if somewhat peaked, features. They wore the usual black cloaks and black hats, which accentuated the quaint and eerie non-earthliness of the earthly bodies. They might have been five versions of the same person, although Reith, even as the idea crossed his mind, knew that each made sure distinctions, too subtle for his knowing, between herself and the others; each felt her personal existence to be the central movement of the cosmos.

Her thin body pressed against him, trapping warm pockets of water which pulsed away when one or the other moved. Once, as a boy, Reith had rescued a drowning cat; like Zap 210 it had clung to him with desperate urgency, arousing in Reith a peculiarly intense pang of protectiveness. The bodies, both frightened and wet, projected the same elemental craving for life. . .

Exposure to the sunlight had flushed her face. In the rather flimsy and clinging gray undergown, with the black hair beginning to curl down on her forehead and her ears, she seemed a somewhat different person than the pallid wretch Reith had met in the Pagaz refectory. . . Was his imagination at fault? Or had

her body become fuller and rounder? She noticed his gaze and gave him a glare of shame and defiance.

"Why do you stare at me?"

Zap 210 looked up. "What are those little lights?"

"Those are stars," said Reith. "Far suns. Most control a family of planets. From a world called Earth, men came: your ancestors, mine, even the ancestors of the Khor. Earth is the world of men."

"How do you know all this?" demanded Zap 210.

"Sometime I'll tell you. Not tonight." They set off across the downs, walking through the starry night, and something about the circumstances put Reith in a strange frame of mind. It was as if he were young and roaming a starlit meadow of Earth with a slim girl with whom he had become infatuated. So strong became the dream, or the hallucination, or whatever the nature of his mood, that he groped out for Zap 210's hand, where she trudged beside him. She turned him a wan uncomplaining glance, but made no protest: here was another incomprehensible aspect of the astounding ghaun. So they went on for a period. Reith gradually recovered his senses. He walked the surface of Tschai; his companion— He left the thought incomplete, for a variety of reasons. As if she had sensed the alteration of his mood Zap 210 angrily snatched away her hand; perhaps for a space of time she had been dreaming as well.

This reminds me of a wonderful moment in *Mon Oncle*, the Jacques Tati film. Each day Hulot comes home to his apartment building where he greets his neighbors, including a young girl, just on the verge of becoming a young woman; he uses an affectionate and fatherly kiss. But one day the miraculous transformation has occurred; Hulot bends to kiss her, notices the change, wriggles out of the kiss and greets her in another manner, now appropriate, while the girl displays delighted triumph. It is a small thing, but so human and true! Zap 210’s development is not of the same order as Emma’s development. It occurs almost at a cellular level, but it is no less real, well-observed and important, for that.

Finally, regarding the objection of Vance’s alleged ‘mystery obsessions’. I would agree that one can feel, throughout Vance’s work, the effect of his passage through the genres. But I do not think that any of his work relies fundamentally on the ‘obsessions’ or interests, and techniques which define them. *Gold and Iron*, superficially, is about escaping the domination of an alien race. But fundamentally it is an exploration of a cultural/racial encounter. There is nothing in the structure of the story which does not serve this purpose, which includes an exposition of Vance’s view of what could be called the *American ethos*—the

hero does not relinquish his indomitable determination even when he loses an arm. This mutilation may be unique in popular literature, to say nothing of the non-marriage which ends the book. If we take the Lekthwan culture for a symbol of European culture—and I suggest this idea only in a limited sense—the message of the book could be said to be that American vitality is a pre-eminent cultural value, if only one value among many necessary to the full flowering of an individual or culture. I am not that well-read, but I doubt any other ‘space opera’ lends itself to this sort of reflection, which is of a basic character, and most useful.

Even in Vance’s mysteries, ‘who done it?’ is never the basic question, and sometimes not even a question at all; *Bad Ronald* for example. This book is about an exploration of a criminal type. The eventual capture of Ronald is almost a formality, the final triumphant chords of the symphony. That Vance is particularly interested in the psychic phenomena that Ronald represents, is clear in his use of similar characters elsewhere—Paul Gunther, Viole Falushe, Treesong. The books featuring these characters have a ‘catch the crook’ structure only in a most superficial way. They are really structured to allow an exploration of this psychic condition, and its consequences. The ‘psychic condition’ in question is, it must be emphasized, not merely one among many, but the basic source of evil. Evil arises from that human psychic structure which makes us capable of rearranging reality in our imaginations, in accordance with our desires. This power is indulged by many types of people for diverse reasons, but when the motivation is selfishness, the consequence is evil. How creative imagination affects the world is a basic Vancian theme. Another example would be *Marune*. The question; ‘who killed Matho Lorcas?’ is certainly not at the center of the book. Is the central question the structurally equivalent; ‘who poisoned and exiled Efram?’ I say the main issue is ‘Pardero’s’ recovery of his ‘true’ identity, ‘Efram’. Is this not really a dramatization of the tension between ‘cultural identity’ and ‘universal mind’?

VIRKKALA:

I realize that there’s more to Vance than a reliance upon the mystery novel format. It’s just that the mystery plot is the thing I most often object to in his work! Now, in Vance’s Ellery Queen mystery, *The Four Johns*, the mystery is well done, is even a sort of comedy of manners—the manners of a man framed for murder! The manners of his

suspects to the crime! This book, no matter how manhandled it may have been (or not) by Vance’s EQ editors, remains a droll little mystery, and as such deserves no condemnation. A very *miniature* miniature, true, but not to be condemned for that. In his science fiction books, however, the mystery elements often please me much less—they too often undermine otherwise more promising work. I’m afraid I’m thinking, at the moment, only of two: *Wyst* and *Araminta Station* (and its first sequel, the only one I’ve read).

As I’ve written before, *Wyst* is a fine, fine book up until the very end, where the unravelling of the mystery plot and the political contrivance of The Connatic trivializes the significance of the revelations about Arrabin society. I think the ending is much more deleterious to the book than Twain’s much-abused ending to *Huckleberry Finn* was to that great comedy.

In the *Cadwal* books, a very long series of adventures contain many, many nice touches, yes. But I wound up with an empty feeling about what I’d read. Too much energy seems to have been put in rather uninteresting criminal and political plots. The characters don’t justify the sound and the fury. It signifies too little. This is lazy Saturday afternoon reading, not great art.

In *The Moon Moth*, on the other hand, the criminal arrest plot is integrally tied to the comedy. To complain about *that* mystery would be foolish. This is an artistic triumph.

I’m afraid I’ve come off more as a carping critic than as an admiring enthusiast in these debates. Perhaps this is my basic ‘yes, but’ fault: when I begin to come to agreement with someone, I can’t help but hasten to add the provisos. So, to conclude on a more positive note, let me say that I much prefer *Emphyrio*, the *Lyonesse* books, and even *To Live Forever*, to the novels I mention above. These latter succeed in whole as well as in part. They achieve an artistic unity. They do, I readily confess, reveal important elements of individual character in human society. They are not undermined by trivial plotting, though plotting they have. They are near-perfect. They provide the best reasons to continue to read and admire the work of Jack Vance.

MARSHALL:

I’d like to return to my original point, which is that what Vance does is quite important, not merely entertaining although it certainly is entertaining. I’m in agreement with Paul, above, when he says that what is ‘deep’ in an author, is what he shows us about human nature... and when he goes on to

insist that what makes Emma's 'development' of interest to us is that we are given a world worth knowing.

Describing 'what makes people tick' can be entertaining and, when done right (as Vance does it) charming: the charm evoked when Puck speaks of us as the fools we most certainly are. Puck is not catching us out, you notice: he is smiling. Ruefully, perhaps. But then too, we are willing to share the joke. When done as Puck does it, or Vance, it is not unlike that genial satirist, Offenbach, in the first act of *The Tales of Hoffman*. Much of society (and high technology, on occasion) is fad and even fraud, we learn from poor Hoffman's travesty in the Inventor's Domain. In a beautiful moment in this light-hearted first act, Hoffman is provided with the inventor's Magic Glasses which are so like the virtual reality goggles of a few years ago that this could be a parody of an issue of *Wired*. The glasses show Hoffman an illusory world—they convince him the automaton girl is a living doll. When the Girl herself in her mechanical absentmindedness knocks the glasses to the floor, Hoffman is alarmed; the inventor offers him a new pair, for a price, of course, and asks—"Would you prefer to see the world as it is, or as it is Not?" Hoffman answers in a heartbeat: "As it is Not!"

Such is the nature of human nature, and passages such as this in Offenbach's final triumph are not unlike *Morreion*, or other Vancean tales of the Dying Earth. The satire in Offenbach continues, and the compassion of the true human observer comes into play. When the smart set, the high society of Paris attending the salon, mesmerized by the inventor's magic, go to dine, there begins the opera's great anthem, a great march. And we notice that these folks are, in fact, also marionettes: puppets on a string. Shortly after, the mechanical beauty is torn apart by her co-inventors in a dispute out of Enron or WorldCom: who has defaulted on what payment? Without his magic glasses, Hoffman rushes in to save her and discovers her head, left to itself, a spring bouncing from her forehead. He cries—"She's automatic! She's automatic!" And the comedy is finished, the first act is over. The point to observe is that when Offenbach writes the music for the human comedy, for the puppets marching happily into the ballroom, when he writes the 'Great March' from *The Tales of Hoffman*, he does not write a travesty; there are no mechanical burps and clinks. He writes one of the most beautiful marches ever written—and there is a sadness in its great drive forward. In a similar fashion Vance, however

much he shows us as we are, but need not be, gives us our space, our due, our majesty and independence, even when this also involves the sadness of failed hopes and efforts, as in the overpowering sadness of the conclusion of the *Demon Princes*.

What makes us tick, our motivational springs, is part of the human comedy, but in Vance's approach does not establish our 'comporture'. It is because he does not mistake the particularity of our actions or ourselves as epiphenomena, as something to be traded in for a deeper explanation, does not try to dredge up replacements of greater worth, that he can provide us with a world of real people in which, crucially, the greater interest lies in that real world in which they exist. It is in this way that he provides us not only with the delights of observation but with a growing delight in the sense of the nature of things. (It is for this reason that he appears as a writer of 'place' for Timothy.)

Since in fact we act as we do, and need not bother overmuch with 'explaining ourselves', not being charged by life with being our own pollsters or sociologists or psychologists, having little need for regarding ourselves as chapters in textbooks or grant applications or scholarly journals, we benefit by turning our attention not only to such practical matters as how we can vary the terms and rigors of our existence, but turning our attention to the existence of the real world itself, as the realm to be explored and shared—one of the themes of *Night Lamp*. There can be other forms of novels, needless to say, for at times people may need to make room for their 'full selves' and some novels can assist in this task. But Vance's choice does not, or so it seems to me, deprive him of the profundity that Timothy now grants him for work after work—profundity *and* charm! indeed, we are talking about Vance, that personable author!—and of the portrayal of a sense of the world that makes of him far more than a graceful miniaturist. Though certainly he is graceful. (Timothy debated earlier what composer most resembles Vance, and reading the masterful and deeply joyous early chapters of *Night Lamp*, I realized that one of the symphonies of Mozart had this same combination of natural energy and joy.)

Any author who in even one work (the five *Demon Princes* books, *Night Lamp*, *The Dragon Masters*, *Nopalgarth*, *Cugel* . . . the list is not short!) can provide us with charm, grace, and also be profound . . . I think, in a casual throw of the phrase, that author can smile and consider himself blessed as 'great'.

About the CLS

by *Till Noever*

I've decided to postpone publication of CLS 15 until the next issue of *Cosmopolis*, for two reasons. One is that Andreas, the CLS composer, now has placed upon himself the demands of a young family. I remember it well: a job and a young family leave little mind space or time for much else, and first things come first.

As a consequence I'll probably end up doing CLS composing as well as editing—and for that I need just a little more preparation time. The second reason for the delay of CLS 15 is that I'm hoping for at least one more short story to flesh things out.

So, gentle readers, this time you're stuck with endless expatiations on 'great art' (or not).

Sorry about that!

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

Re: Paul Rhoads, *Cosmopolis* 28:

I note that despite asking twice, you did not directly address my question: "What is it about Christianity which makes the evidence for it more compelling than the evidence for Islam or Mormonism to any objective observer?" Instead you simply claim that the evidence is much better, but that you don't want to bore me with it... I am perplexed by your reasoning here, was I not inviting you to bore me with it? A less trustful person than I might assume that perhaps you could not think of any such evidence, and were glossing over this—just as I had obliquely hinted in my original message might happen.

Telling me that you think Muhammad was a fraud and Smith a madman are not enough—I already guessed as much—what I am looking for is not for you to treat your assumptions as proofs, but rather to show me the facts that lead inevitably to these 'truths', and why these facts are fundamentally different from the facts about your religion. If you don't like the term 'objective observer', try 'impartial judge', or whatever you like—though we can't completely remove bias, this does not mean that we should therefore trumpet it as a virtue; much as a Catholic does not extol his lust for his neighbor's wife simply because he cannot help feeling it.

I find it amusing that you assume I am a militant atheist, which I am in fact not—I militate only against militation in all its many hideous forms. (A very Vancian ethos, wouldn't you agree?) All dogmas need examination in my world, scientism no less than any other. Nor am I a member of the 'counter-culture' (a quaint idea), and I certainly do not subscribe to the theory that religion is the source of all evil. While your attempts to turn the attack onto my views are interesting, they might be more effective if you had any idea what they were, instead of once more assuming you already know.

Anyway, you are deliberately misunderstanding the point that I am making; there is not *enough* evidence to believe in any religion *without* faith; and conversely, there is never enough evidence to disbelieve in any religion if you *have* faith. Believe what you wish—I hold no rancor for those who do—but please leave off the righteous arrogance of such statements as "Islam is a demonic plot invented by a charismatic bandit", for this is the kind of religion for which I hold no brief. Perhaps a bit of self-interrogation and humility might be in order for you, since you apparently prize these qualities highly enough to recommend them to me.

In closing, I wish to point at the telling sentence in your essay: "For Christians, however, the problem does not exist..." Or in other words, "Wrap a little faith-sugar around the problem, and it'll go down easy."

Re: Alain Schremmer:

I'm glad you enjoyed my little essay—in fact I did not feel any need to demonstrate why this debate doesn't belong in *Cosmopolis*, I was being facetious. In my opinion, everything is about everything, and the only time 'off-topic' should be invoked is when the topic begins to bore and fails to instruct.

John Rappel

* * *

To the Editor,

Paul, in his passionate espousals of things he believes in, crosses the line sometimes and risks abusing his fellow Vance fans. Has Paul stopped to think, for example, how many VIE subscribers are Muslims? How would they react to reading Paul's view that "Islam is a demonic plot invented by a charismatic bandit" except to feel insulted.

Or atheist subscribers feel about his attacks on atheists—militant atheists, of course. I have personally met and talked with the Pope, we have

shaken hands, yet I am an atheist. We had no problem being civil with each other.

This just confirms my view that Paul's tirades risk antagonizing VIE subscribers who may be Socialists, Fascists, Democrats, Republicans, monarchists, theocrats, Catholics, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, or any other thing under the sun. Paul seems to have forgotten that we VIE subscribers are united by our admiration for Jack Vance's work, whatever our individual differences.

So please stop attacking us!

Another bugbear of mine is Paul's line that Vance is not a science fiction writer, whatever else he may be. I have no problem with arguments to that effect. But to put up straw men as examples of what science fiction is and what, clearly, Jack is not, is silly. He writes, "Here is what 'science fiction' readers are reading, and liking: high-tech gadgetry-gobbledygook and Yoda-ish aliens saving our skins and souls."

I can only conclude that Paul has read very little science fiction (nor much of H.G. Wells, whose short stories are one of the foundations of the field). It is a broad church. There may be some who like 'high-tech gadgetry-gobbledygook' but I am not one of them, and nor is Vance. What of writers like LeGuin, Dick, Aldiss, Ballard, who write more about the 'inner space' than the 'outer'?

Consider the start of the following review by John Clute in the latest *SF Weekly* (issue 273, July 15, 2002) of stories by Ted Chiang (whom I haven't yet read—but on the strength of this review will now hunt down):

"For a while, reading Ted Chiang is like staring too long at the execution of a stone face on vellum. It is not a warm face, it does not absorb the sun, or your gaze, it is a philosopher-king face, a bodhisatva face: There seems no way in. But then something catches your eye. Maybe you notice that the face has been executed in one continuous unicursal line that never leaves the page, and so you're caught like Theseus, and you follow the line down through shade and fractal till nothing can be seen but insides, where it is bigger than you could have guessed, and the Minotaur has you.

"You have begun to read a story by Ted Chiang. You will not be able to find your way out again until he has finished. It is a most extraordinary feeling. I was myself forced by circumstances of travel to read piecemeal some of the tales assembled in *Stories of Your Life and Others*—which contains everything Chiang has published in the 12 years of his career—and each time I stopped before

finishing I had the strange sensation that I had not truly left the story at all. That I could not truly leave before the end.

"This is not supposed to happen after the age of 12 or so, 12 being the Golden Age of Story. It is *certainly* not supposed to happen with tales so seemingly remote from normal human sensations as the earlier work assembled here. The continuing mystery of the work of Ted Chiang is that, like some Minotaur Aleph out of Jorge Luis Borges, it holds the attention."

He sounds fitting company for great writers including Jack Vance.

In summary, can Paul please turn his massive intellect to the things we have in common, whether religious, political or literary, rather than to the things that divide us.

Rob Gerrard

* * *

To the Editor,

In response to Chuck King's article *The Logan Square Book Club vs. Jack Vance* in *Cosmopolis* 27:

As much as I admire Mr. King's efforts to break through the preconceptions and predilections of modern readers to arrive at an appreciation of Jack Vance (and I in no way intend this as discouragement) I believe that it's a futile effort.

First, in terms of what is termed 'literature' in the year 2002, this has declined to a specialized taste, now largely controlled from the halls of academe, and the only works accepted by the druids in this particular cult (the 'small presses' etc.) are those who subscribe to the cant of the universities and what is PC. . . something which Jack Vance, I'm glad to say, is thoroughly *not*. So Vance is absolutely black-balled from the crowd who swoon and drool over every word penned by the likes of Toni Morrison and Don DeLillo.

In terms of popular fiction, the mass of books 'out there', Chuck King has put his finger right on it: Vance does not write books where virtue is particularly rewarded, or where there is some inexorable tendency for the universe to make everything come right in the end. Worst of all, in a society that is yielding to egalitarianism more and more every day, he just won't wash. I could spend some time explicating this point, but this would be pointless when one of the masters has done the job already:

One doesn't have to be a prophet to predict the consequences. . .

Reason will be replaced by Revelation. Knowledge will degenerate into a riot of subjective visions: feelings in the solar

plexus induced by undernourishment, angelic images generated by fever or drugs, dream warnings inspired by the sound of falling water. Whole cosmogonies will be created out of some forgotten personal resentment, complete epics written in private languages, the daubs of schoolchildren ranked above the greatest masterpieces.

Idealism will be replaced by Materialism. Diverted from its normal outlet in patriotism and civic or family pride, the need of the masses for some visible Idol to worship will be driven into totally unsociable channels where no education can reach it. Divine honours will be paid to shallow depressions in the earth, domestic pets, ruined windmills, or malignant tumours.

Justice will be replaced by Pity as the cardinal human virtue, and all fear of retribution will vanish. Every corner-boy will congratulate himself: "I'm such a sinner that God has come down in person to save me." Every crook will argue: "I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged." The New Aristocracy will consist exclusively of hermits, bums, and permanent invalids. The Rough Diamond, the Consumptive Whore, the bandit who is good to his mother, the epileptic girl who has a way with animals will be the heroes and heroines of the New Tragedy, when the general, the statesman, and the philosopher have become the butt of every farce and satire.

Herod, in *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio*,
W.H. Auden, 1940

John Avelis Jr.

White Heath, IL

* * *

To the Editor,

How to Kill Dogs by David Alexander in *Cosmopolis* 28 was amusing, but you should have placed it in temporal context by noting that it was previously published in 1988 (see M140, Hewett and Mallett, *The Work of Jack Vance*). This is not a report on recent events.

Paul Rhoads presented several items of interest, including Brooks Peck's review of *Ports of Call*. Brooks lamented, "Sadly, what *Ports of Call* lacks is a central plot to carry it from port to exotic port." Brooks is otherwise highly complimentary, but he wonders: "After 50 prolific years of writing, is he [Vance] finally losing focus? Is he slipping?"

Paul dismisses this critique as "the usual complaint. . . that Vance can't plot." But this is not the usual complaint. To ask whether Vance is finally slipping after 50 years indicates that Brooks believes Vance could plot prior to *Ports of Call*. Paul never actually addresses Brooks' question.

I have to line up with Brooks. After a good beginning, plot-wise, Myron is put ashore and the novel becomes a string of beads without a string. Vance develops each situation wonderfully, but

eventually I began asking myself, "Where is this story going?"

In fact, there is another, equally serious technical fault in *Ports of Call*. Myron, the viewpoint character, becomes superfluous and essentially invisible during substantial portions of the text. Myron simply drops from the list of players, even though there is no second or parallel story line that would justify a change of viewpoint character.

My concern grew until I reached the last page of *Ports of Call*, which ended so abruptly without resolution that I realized this was only the first part of a longer work. I could therefore cross my fingers and hope that Vance would bring it all home, dramatically, in the second volume.

I am no expert on drama, but the essentials have been known since before Aristotle wrote them down. To function as a proper story, Myron must eventually cross paths again with Aunt Hester and settle the score with Marko Fassig, just as Odysseus eventually had to conclude his series of adventures and achieve his original goal, to return home (and Cugel had to eventually return to Almerly and confront Iucounu).

Otherwise, another Homer comes to mind. At the end of one episode of *The Simpsons*, Marge is trying to deduce the lesson of that week's odd incidents, but none of the suggested lessons seems to apply. Homer asserts that there is no lesson. "Life," he says, "is just a bunch of stuff that happens." This is often true in real life, but it is not effective plotting. I am looking forward to *Lurulu* and hoping that it isn't just another bunch of stuff that happens.

David B. Williams

* * *

To the Editor,

Regarding Alain Schremmer's statistics on the rich and poor, I do not doubt they are as distorted as Brian Gharst points out; the contention that a majority in the first world are getting poorer is patently false. But even if true, a growing gap between rich and poor does not mean that the poor are getting poorer; they could simply be getting richer more slowly than the 'rich'. But, after all, what if, while the rich get richer the poor really are getting poorer? It is certainly too bad that the poor should become poorer, but why is this assumed to be related to the growing riches of the rich? The connection is completely obscure, except to minds dominated by Marxist ideas—which conceive of people in economic and class categories only, and

understand their relationships in terms of class struggle and 'dialectical materialism'. Even on the most sprawling hacienda in the most exacerbated oligarchy one could imagine, could the rich get richer without the poor not getting at least a tiny bit richer too?

The question really is: *what can the government do to help the poor get richer?* My own amateur opinion is that it can do nothing, in a positive sense, while negatively it can at least not stand in the way of people's efforts to enrich themselves, or others—by giving them work or money. As matters stand, to say nothing of confiscatory taxation and redistribution, most States presently hamper these processes more or less by creating vast structures of control which end up smothering economic relations. They complicate employment by paperwork and 'social' charges, as if an employer were the nanny of their employees, which inevitably reduces the number of jobs available by encouraging displacement of activities, robotization or simple discouragement, as well as dampening wages. Inheritances and gifts are confiscated with special taxes, which tax money twice. While I do not think I am a 'libertarian', because I am not against government regulation in principle, and particularly in certain areas, I would totally eliminate all such paperwork, charges and taxes. This would generate jobs, making labor rarer and putting upward pressure on wages. Money not taxed twice would enrich the economy and thus also contribute to upward wage pressure. All this would enlarge the tax base—even if the 'children of the rich' would also be richer.

Regarding the minimum wage, I think this should be a matter of social norms—not laws—but it should not be a matter of sheer economic force. A 14-year-old does not need to be paid 'minimum wage' for raking a lawn (though, in most places, 10 cents an hour in such a case should be frowned upon!) and a 30-year-old without family, who does not pay for rent or food, does not need a 'living wage'. Everyone likes to earn as much as possible, which is both understandable and not a vice. While a measure of emergency State aid to needy individuals in difficulties of various kinds (natural disaster, medical or economic catastrophe) is certainly a good thing, it should be obvious by now that routine economic assistance is corrupting and therefore counterproductive. My own feeling is that best would be a unique flat tax on individual money earnings only, whatever their source: work or investments.

Regarding corporations, which seems to be at the root of so much shenanigans, I suggest their elimination, and that only real individuals be the legal recipients of money (remember Kotzash Mutual, which protected both Lens Larke and Ottile Panshaw). This would make economic relations more clearly dependent upon, and thus encourage, personal honesty. Tax-free status would continue to exist in that money spent in certain ways would not be taxed (though I would eliminate tax breaks otherwise), and tax-exempt status could include accounting periods of longer than a year, depending on the nature of the activity—perhaps arranged on an individual basis with a local authority. For business similar rules could permit treasurers to hold un-taxed funds in readiness for categories of expenditures, such as plant or tool purchase or renewal, insurance or punctual hiring. The local authority overseeing these arrangements, and the individuals and associations they monitor, could appeal to a higher authority, which itself would in any case monitor the local authorities for unfair treatment or corruption. This structure provides ample room for shenanigans, but probably no more than before, and the advantages of simplicity and economic dynamism would be tremendous, both for individuals and State revenue collection. I doubt this would imply any expansion of revenue services but certainly such reorganization would make work less technocratic for the tax men.

And while I'm at it: regarding liability, the real problem is not the protection of individuals by interposing corporations, but the state of liability jurisprudence. I think the fictitious concept of corporate liability (think of the *Atillia Çargantyr* and Harkus Transport) is an important cause of the inflammation of liability jurisprudence over the last 30 years, and the elimination of corporations would pull this jurisprudence back into more reasonable bounds. I also think that eliminating the corporation would benefit profit sharing.

Regarding investment, rather than ownership of a corporation, investments would be more punctual, real and individual. Money would be lent only from one individual to another, on specific terms. This would create an expanded and more interesting sector for brokers who would have to get closer to both businesses and investors, and could set up all sorts of intermediate investment formulas. Business liability could be shared by groups of individuals through contractual arrangement, which would contribute to a sense of personal and collective responsibility, rather than the present situation

where each person is a monad swimming in the corporate swamp. Bankruptcy, in my dream system, would always be a matter of individuals or groups of allied individuals, who would thus take greater care: I would favor remodeling that refuge of scoundrels, Chapter 11. If they misplace their shirt their victims should not be stripped naked so they need not shiver in the cold. Debt reduction should not exceed about 20% and payment delays not exceed about 15 years. . . . how easy it is to adjust human affairs on paper! The above lucubrations should be taken for what they are; a momentary speculative flight of fancy by a Vance reader interested by such passages as the latter chapters of *The Brave Free Men*, or *The Chasch*.

Last month's censorship effort—which provoked letters between about five individuals over many days, is only a single example, most of which remained hidden but the repercussions of which are deeper than some are prepared to admit. I do not claim there is an organized conspiracy, but these attacks are almost always joined or supported by others, always pretending to represent a majority or claim to speak for a group, often use veiled threats of either the rabble-rousing or palace rebellion variety, and sometimes succeed in destabilizing aspects of the project. All are attempts at censorship, of a certain color, as indicated by what they have in common: angry complaints about my opinions. Secondary blather about respect for the 'majority', the proper role of *Cosmopolis*, or de-subscription, is a blatantly obvious cover for intolerance. We have not yet reached the point where such intolerance is respectable—thank heaven—so my reactions to these attacks deal directly with the covers.

Regarding the point some think is legitimate (the pretension that *Cosmopolis* should be the equivalent of a fly-fishing periodical) I say: Jack Vance is neither model train nor postage stamp but author of *The Murthe*, *Wyst*, *Cadwal*, *The Domains of Koryphon* and *Emphyrio*. These stories, to mention only them, are, in my view, some of the most powerful and useful critiques of such vital and controversial social issues as feminism, egalitarianism, environmentalism, leftism, anti-colonialism, religion, not to mention censorship. It is not inappropriate to discuss these stories in *Cosmopolis*, or to follow up such discussions as interest in them leads. I read these stories one way. Others may read them another. *All* readings, particularly those not my own and which thus might have something to teach me, are of interest to *this* *Cosmopolis* reader.

The VIE is not a specialty service provider publishing a topical magazine with paid advertisement and bought by its readers for what Carl Sandburg called 'spot-cash money', but a volunteer project, and *Cosmopolis* is its 'public space'. Publishers of and contributors to specialty magazines are paid for their work. Derek and I, and all other contributors, subsidize this publication, to the extent of 100%, with our time and effort. Readers get it gratis. Articles are signed by their authors and appropriately titled—no one is misled into reading opinions they don't want to read about. The mission of *Cosmopolis* is to serve the VIE project, and its content is wholly driven by its contributors. To borrow the cry of Patrick Henry, with a slight variation: *Give me freedom or give me a salary*. Derek is untroubled at the idea of conforming *Cosmopolis* to the *diktats* of certain readers; meanwhile his editorship is exemplary, and Derek and my relations are perfectly cordial, proof, if any is needed, that it is possible for people of good will to disagree on serious issues and remain friends. All *Cosmopolis* readers are free to read selectively, or not at all, as well as to alter the over-all color of *Cosmopolis* by becoming contributors.

The accusation, also frequent, that some dare not contribute out of fear of the nasty 'attack', by me, this will open them to, is an absurd calumny or a cover for cowardice. Public discussion is public discussion, a fact as true 2500 years ago in Athens as it will be 2500 years hence, on the Concourse worlds. My personal opinions, like those of all other people, are both opposed and supported, in and out of *Cosmopolis*. Nothing worth doing is easy, and those who wish to speak out—as I do—must accept the risks which, after all, are hardly cataclysmic. I am grateful to all *Cosmopolis* contributors, and continue to wish for an even greater quantity and variety of *Cosmopolis* contributions because, in agreement with my non-'silent critics', I too would like to read other writers than myself!

Some people cannot abide an open society, and try to make the VIE a closed one with threats. After several 'VIE years' of putting up with them, it is now my turn to issue a threat: I will no longer respect desire for anonymity, or even the normal protocols of e-mail privacy, when it comes to this stuff. Censorship attempts which come to my attention, whether addressed to me personally or communicated to me by others, will be quoted and transmitted without qualm.

. . . Having written this, I have just been set upon by yet another would-be censor, in a deluge of letters rife with the usual crabbing and nastiness. To sum it up euphemistically: my opinions are wrong, my writings gratuitous, my manner inappropriate, and all are a danger to the VIE. The writer claims to represent a well-connected behind-the-scenes group very concerned about the matter, and that he himself is a nonpareil paladin of Vance's work who will not allow *the cause* to be damaged. Whatever reality lies behind its intimation of group activity—perhaps none—and whatever the value of its arguments—zero in my estimation—the letter presents itself as the manifestation of a conspiracy and seeks to censor *Cosmopolis*. As I think I have already stated, should such a condition somehow come about—which will not happen without a fight—my connection with the VIE will come to an end. I will not, while I retain freedom in the matter, be associated with censorship—several other high level volunteers, including many who will not fail to inform you that they agree with 'none of Paul's opinions', feel the same. In addition, the writer, as usual, insinuates that people have, or will, de-subscribe if I am not silenced. My political opinions may be 'incorrect' and I may be a Christian who takes his religion seriously, but the political and religious convictions of *Cosmopolis* contributors, or anyone else, though at times they necessarily rise to the surface in discussions of Vance's work, have precisely *nothing* to do with the set of books we are on the verge of publishing. Failure to recognize this is a grotesque symptom of intolerance, and refusal to subscribe for such reasons has the moral status of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. I continue to believe there are in fact no cases of de-subscription or ideological non-subscription—though there may be some non-subscriber, for other reasons, who exploits the fact to make this claim.

My attitude toward this pressure will remain adamant. Anything less would be unworthy of the faithful staunchness I believe is recommended in Vance's writing. I know the standard arguments in favor of appeasement, but if someone can find support in Vance's writing for such an attitude, I'd like to hear about it. Finally, here are a few comments on the subject from others:

From Byron Marshall (contributor to *Cosmopolis* 28): "Why in God's name should not a journal devoted to a creative, inspiring, and delightful author such as Vance not take on whatever topics and themes its various contributors wish? Why should one not welcome that in this surprising

puddle on the tide pool of the 21st century new ideas evolve—or old ones get reinvigorated? Censorious head wagging devotes itself to scaling down human action. Self-appointed critics can easily master the following desultory rule: if the journal of hopscotching isn't about hopscotching, it's strayed beyond hopscotch. Even a monkey or a computer might be assigned a role as the hopscotch police. Free discussion and ideas are a problem, for it is not obvious that the overseer has any overseeing to do.

"Paul is [. . .] a spirited Catholic convert, conservative, and a delightful master of argument. His views are hardly the views of the majority of the volunteers of the VIE, one gathers: quite the contrary: but they are challenging and worth reading. Paul's column is Value Added. He makes *Cosmopolis* into a vigorous place for intellectual discussion. [. . .] I was delighted not only with his vigorous and beautifully crafted discussions of many things, but his defense of keeping the full plate at the human meal, whatever the oysters say."

From former *Cosmopolis* editor Deborah Cohen: "Hope no one decides to 'censor' *Cosmopolis*, or even turn it into a strict-definition 'specialty' zine [. . .]. Controversy as well as endlessly hashing out impossible-to-resolve topics prevent the algae from clogging the pond. The VIE as a world-microcosm could prove to avoid Belfast or West Bank quagmires, while still allowing space for all to not only breathe, but emit hot air."

Paul Rhoads

* * *

To the Editor,

After several attempts at responding to Rhoads' latest, I had to own up to the fact that I was not up to it.

Years ago, on prime time television, Reagan accused the Vietnamese, on the occasion of some yellow rains, of chemical warfare. After a whole year of work, a few scientists published an article in the *Scientific American* demonstrating that the yellow in the rain was bee, pollen-dyed, shit.

Rhoads' numerous throw-away edicts are similarly unfair in that they leave me in a quandary: either I retort with another throw-away edict—say "property is theft" in response to "socialism is theft", which does not seem to me to lead anywhere, or I write a page for each one of Rhoads' edicts which seems pedantic even to me.

So, after pointing out that the quotations from Sen were deliciously chosen out of context, I must, regretfully, throw in the towel.

*Regards,
Alain Schremmer*

Closing Words

Thanks to proofreaders Rob Friefeld, Till Noever and Jim Pattison.

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Derek W. Benson, Editor

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VIE Contacts

The VIE web page:

www.vanceintegral.com

For questions regarding subscription:

subscribe@vanceintegral.com

To volunteer on the project:

volunteer@vanceintegral.com

Paul Rhoads, VIE Editor-in-Chief:

prhoads@club-internet.fr

R.C. Lacovara, 2nd-in-Command:

Lacovara@vanceintegral.com

Joel Riedesel, Work Flow Commissar:

jriedesel@jmana.com

Suan Yong, Process Integrity:

suan@cs.wisc.edu

Damien Jones, Double-Digitizing:

dagjo@pacbell.net

Ron Chernich, Techno-Proofing:

chernich@dstc.edu.au

Alun Hughes, Textual Editor-in-Chief:

alun.hughes@btinternet.com

Steve Sherman, Textual Integrity Administration:

Steve.Sherman@compaq.com

John Foley, Composition:

beowulf@post.lucent.com

Christian J. Corley, Post-Proofing:

cjc@vignette.com

John Schwab, Archivist:

jschwab@dslnorthwest.net

Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Ombudsman:

hans@vie.tmfweb.nl

Derek Benson, Cosmopolis Editor:

benson@online.no