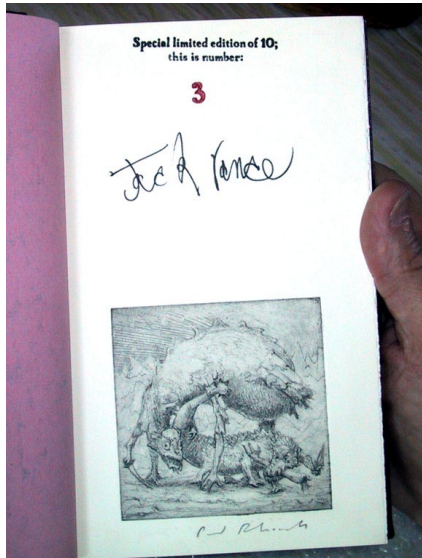

COSMOPOLIS

Number 32



November, 2002



Steve Sherman's Deluxe SFV Limited Edition bookplate. Photo by Koen Vyverman.

DD Scanning Completed!

by Damien Jones

The attentive ear will already have discerned the drop in background noise: absent now the mechanical whine of electro-motors and rubber drive-belts. In geographically disparate locations light-emitting diodes wink out and numbed minds return from sinister wanderings, or is that wonderings? A flutter of pages as the last book scanned is dutifully removed from the rack by its torturer and returned to its cell; drained, worse for wear . . . Proud.

The scanning phase of Double-Digitization is complete, in fact it has been complete for over a month but in this day of 'speed of light' communication and instant gratification I find it essential to impose a more 'humane' pace on others whenever I can.

We owe a great debt to those who have dedicated themselves to the scanning phase of the VIE project. These volunteers have spent time battling on the boundary of the digital world, putting their own prized texts to the sword as it were (there has been no survey but I suspect more than one book suffered harm). Not once was heard a complaint from any of these stalwarts. Moreover these same individuals are, or were, invariably involved in other areas of the VIE effort to boot! I humbly offer these volunteers my thanks, and would have them know that I for one will reflect on their efforts every time I open one of my treasured VIE books.

Naturally the entire scanning phase has been tracked with meticulous care. Accounts have been kept in duplicate, assigned and completed tasks entered with obsessive vigor.

Errors have been found, corrected, verified and then changed again on whim. The results are tabulated below.

In the meantime jockeying of the scanned texts moves forward with a mere handful remaining to be assigned. Before long I will have to praise these fellows too. The Imps on the other hand have enjoyed a prolonged period of pastoral repose, but storm-clouds are building on the horizon. I suspect that they too will rise to the final challenge with customary zeal.

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The final standings as per the VIE tracking database:

| <u>Stalwart</u> | <u># of texts</u> | <u># of words</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Richard Chandler | 96 | 2889.2 |
| Peter Strickland | 19 | 982.1 |
| Charles King | 46 | 876.3 |
| David Worden | 42 | 747.7 |
| Joel Hedlund | 41 | 709.5 |
| John A. Schwab | 16 | 543.5 |
| Thomas Rydbeck | 12 | 412.4 |
| Damien G. Jones | 10 | 395.2 |
| Billy Webb | 6 | 327.8 |
| Herve Goubin | 7 | 321.5 |
| Paul Rhoads | 14 | 285.9 |
| Richard White | 5 | 266.4 |
| Denis Bekaert | 5 | 224.7 |
| Mark Adams | 5 | 207.4 |
| Chris Reid | 6 | 206.6 |
| Dirk Jan Verlinde | 1 | 155.1 |
| Jon Guppy | 3 | 149.4 |
| Jurriaan Kalkman | 3 | 147.5 |
| Ian Jackson | 2 | 144.1 |
| Erik Arendse | 2 | 117.6 |
| John Robinson Jr. | 2 | 95.1 |
| David Mortimore | 3 | 79.4 |
| Andreas Irle | 1 | 62.7 |
| Huy Dinh | 1 | 62.2 |
| Koen Vyverman | 1 | 59.4 |
| Olivier Allais | 1 | 49.0 |
| Theo Tervoort | 1 | 46.3 |
| Mark Shoulder | 1 | 40.2 |
| Axel Roschinski | 3 | 32.8 |
| Hans van der Veeke | 1 | 30.1 |
| Joel Riedesel | 1 | 25.6 |
| Suan Hsi Yong | 1 | 17.4 |
| Sean Rainey | 1 | 3.2 |



Work Tsar Status Report

as of Oct. 26, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

Wave 1

By the time you read this, Batch 1 of the Wave 1 texts will be at Sfera and printing. The final process of Wave 1 was divided into five batches in order to expedite printing. VIE E-in-C Paul Rhoads was recently in Milan and learned that the batches will be printed at two week intervals, because of the work organization of the printer, in Gorgonzola (home of

the famous cheese). Therefore, with binding, Wave 1 cannot be ready for delivery before February.

Wave 2

There are only thirteen texts left in the Jockey and Monkey steps. In addition to those texts there are sixteen currently in Techno. Fortunately TI has a full complement of work and TI has been starting to move through their work. There are 43 texts in TI! Only eight of those are not currently assigned.

We have six texts awaiting Board Review and two ready for Composition. Once Wave 1 completes its last little steps over these next three or four weeks we should begin seeing texts move into Composition and even into CRT and Post Proofing!



Vance Women

by Chuck King

There she sits: a cap of hair (often as not, curls) frames her face, in which from a wide forehead and eyes, flat cheeks slant down to a pointed chin, with a wide and expressive mouth above. She is slim—at a casual glance, she might be taken for a boy, but upon closer inspection she is emphatically female, and exerts a mesmerizing allure. Aside from her physical attributes, she is set apart from the crowd by an aura of barely-restrained energy and intelligence.

Who is this paragon? From the foregoing description, it could be any of a number of Vancian heroines. Jack Vance is remarkably consistent in his portrayal of his female leads. Or, often as not, actual description is scant, leaving almost all details to the reader's imagination, but the few details that are provided tend to fit the pattern.

Each reader will of course have developed in his or her mind images of various characters. Below are a number of actual quotes from Vance's works, describing various prominent females. While these are not necessarily the entire sum of description of the women involved (Vance may scatter little details over an entire book or books), these represent for the most part what the reader was given upon first meeting the character in question. Can you tell who is who? See how you do; answers can be found on page 22. *Note:* not all of these are heroines; also included are a few noteworthy villains and supporting characters. *Further note:* resort to TOTALITY is, of course, cheating.

A. [He] watched her first with detachment, then interest, then fascination. Loose black curls framed her

face which at the moment was intent and preoccupied, but which on other occasions would seem to be a vivacious instrument of expression. * * * She moved with a jaunty carelessness which, with her pale faintly dusky skin, short straight nose and delicate chin, suggested a background of heedless privilege. * * * [He] watched her out of sight; her figure slender and shapely, without soft adiposity, was most appealing.

B. She was younger than he had expected and a great deal smaller. There were few inches more than five feet of her and she was slim to boot. She had a small face, short dark hair clinging close to her head. Except for lustrous dark eyes [he] thought her rather plain, hardly feminine.

C. A joyful providence had graced her with every natural asset: a cheerful intelligence, a fine sense of humor, a friendly affectionate disposition; and in addition—almost unfairly—glowing good health, a beautiful slim body and an impish snub-nosed face under a cap of loose brown curls.

D. [She] had been the 'ragtag tomboy', nonetheless charming and pretty... a girl of medium height, neither tall nor short, engagingly lanky but durable, as if she were good at swimming and running and climbing, which of course she had been and still was. Her skin shone tawny-gold from sunlight; her dark hair was a loose curly tangle. She was the girl with the sweet wide mouth and the alert marvelling expression, as if each successive instant brought some new wonder. She had loved with innocence and hated without calculation; she had been mercurial, gentle with small creatures, quick with gleeful gibes.

E. Even at this distance it could be seen that she was very beautiful—something in the confidence of movement, the easy grace... * * * [She] had a thick cap of black elf-locks; pale skin with the luminous look of old vellum; wide dark eyes.

F. ... a face that was jet, pale rose, ivory. A young face with an expression of vitality and intelligence: black eyes, short black hair, a beautiful clear skin, mouth without makeup. * * * She had a wide mouth, expansive and flexible. Her teeth were small, white, very sharp. * * * She looked like a healthy, very pretty high school girl who might be the better for more sunshine.

G. [She] had been a thin little girl, pensive and self-contained. Her dark curls and olive-pale skin had been inherited from one of her great-grandmothers, a Cantabrian from Old Earth; her features were so regular as to seem unexceptional until the delicate modeling of the short straight nose, the jaw and chin, and the wide sweet mouth were noticed. She had been a warm-hearted friendly child, but neither gregarious

nor aggressive. Her brain roiled with wonder and intelligence; more often than not she preferred her own company to that of her peers, and she was not as widely popular as some of her acquaintances. From time to time she felt a trifle lonely and a bit forlorn, yearning for something far away and unattainable, something she could not quite define, but presently the boys began to notice that [she] was remarkably pretty, and the odd moods dissolved.

H. ... [she] displayed [her father's] topaz hair and clearly molded features. She was a person of no great stature, slight and supple, and carried herself with barely restrained animation, like an active child on its best behavior. Her amber ringlets and clear tawny skin invested her with luminosity.

I. ... a slim, slight red-haired girl... she was very pretty in a style at the edge of the unconventional. Her face, rather wide of forehead and cheekbones, slanted across flat cheeks and down to a small chin and a curving pink mouth, which even when still seemed to express intriguing possibilities. Her gray-blue eyes, under dark lashes, were clear and direct. She was perhaps a trifle smaller than average but constructed of apparently durable material; she was engagingly suntanned, as if she spent much of her time outdoors.

J. [She], age nineteen, was contained in a slender nervous body of compelling contour. Ash-blonde hair swept smooth and bright to her shoulders. Her expression, while mobile and open, was not altogether guileless. According to the convention which relates the beauty of a woman to one of the flowers, [she] might be likened to a ginger blossom.

K. She was less careless, less flamboyant, less free with her opinions, and had become almost beautiful, though she still ran to leg and a certain indefinable informality of dress and conduct. * * * [She] looked at him, head at a sidelong tilt, and [he] suddenly became aware of matters he had never noticed before: the clear luminosity of her skin, the richness of her dark curls, the provocative quality that once had seemed boyishly abrupt but now was—something else.

L. ... a slender erect little creature so strongly charged with intelligence and vitality that... she 'gave off blue sparks in the dark'. [She] carried herself like a boy, though she was clearly a girl, and far from ill-favored. A cap of thick dark hair clasped her face; eyes of particularly luminous gray looked from under fine black eyebrows; flat cheeks slanted down to a small decisive chin, with a stern little nose and a wide mercurial mouth above.

M. The brown-haired girl... was remarkably pretty[.] He found her face fascinating, with curls low over her forehead, long eyes, wide cheekbones, flat cheeks

slanting to a pointed chin. A susceptible man, reflected [our hero], might find this face maddening, with all its mutable expressions.

N. . . . a pretty dark-haired girl with melancholy eyes At first glance [he] had thought her slight and frail, but on closer inspection he decided that she could bear up very well under a bit of playful rough-and-tumble.

O. [He] focused his gaze on a woman, and was taken aback by her miraculous beauty. She was dark and slight, with a complexion the color of clean desert sand; she carried herself with self-awareness that was immensely provoking

P. [She] was tall and long-legged, with an attractive tomboy abruptness of movement. In a crowd, [she] was inconspicuous. But looking at her now [he] thought he had never known anyone more appealing. Her hair was dark and unruly, her mouth wide with a Celtic twitch to the corners, her nose crooked from a childhood automobile accident. But taken together her features produced a face of startling vivacity and expressiveness, where every emotion showed clear as sunlight.

Q. He felt the tingle of her nearness—disturbing, distracting. Her beauty was more than conformation of bone and flesh. It was a witchery of the mind. She was a nymph-thing, a creature of silk and dreams and the pale night-lotus.

R. Her eyes were round, innocent, and blue in a rather thin face, where a wide mouth continually jerked and altered to the butterfly flicker of her thoughts—smiling, pouting, pursing, twisting askew, sagging at the corners in comic remorse, or with teeth clenched over her lower lip, as if she were a child caught out in a naughty act. Her body was slight and flexible, and when she was excited it squirmed with the unruly energy of a small affectionate animal. Girls were wary of her and in her company felt like frumps. The boys, however, were fascinated and she was the topic of endless speculation.

S. Not the least of her attributes was the remarkable mass of raven-black curls, barely disciplined, which surmounted her head and swayed perilously as she looked this way and that. The placement of her glittering black eyes, close by the bridge of her nose, accentuated the expanse of her marmoreal cheeks. Today she wore a magenta gown, cut low to display the white pillar of her neck and a good deal of what depended below.

T. . . . an extremely tall and ugly woman with a heavy torso, lank arms and legs and great bony hips. A ruff of iron-gray hair surrounded her scalp and rust-colored blotches mottled her heavy face. Her features

were large, coarse and vulgar: eyebrows beetled over deep glaring eye-sockets; folds of leathery skin draped down her cheeks and overhung her jaw; her nose plunged and hooked to cover her upper lip. In spite of this, [she] projected such vitality and bravura, that her ugliness became a positive quality, and commanded fascinated attention. Her voice, loud and harsh, was like a prodrome of her person; her most private and confidential remarks could be heard across the chamber, though obviously she cared not a fig.

U. [She] was slighter than the others and possessed of a beauty not at once obvious. She had a small triangular face, great wistful eyes and thick black hair cut raggedly short at the ears. Her skin was of a transparent paleness, like the finest ivory; her form slender, graceful, and of a compelling magnetism, urgent of intimacy.



How Jack Vance Crushed My Dreams

by David B. Williams

Miss Young, my first-grade teacher, explained the alphabet and how various sounds are related to each letter. From that day, I was a reader. Think of an eight year old reading the daily newspaper, or a ten year old reading his mother's old college textbooks, and you'll be thinking of me.

I also proved to be adept at writing. In eighth grade the teacher often read my satirical compositions to the class, provoking gales of laughter. I was chosen as editor of my high school newspaper. I went on to a career in communications—book and magazine editing, speechwriting, public relations.

I discovered science fiction at around age twelve, when I picked up a discarded Arthur C. Clarke anthology. By 1959, I was fourteen ('the Golden Age of science fiction') and reading just about every SF magazine and paperback that appeared at the local newsstands.

SF authors were my heroes. Being skilled with words, I naturally thought about writing science fiction. I looked at the stories being published, and I said to myself, "If I really, really tried, I think I could do this." I might not become one of the greats, but maybe my best efforts could measure up to the lesser works of Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein.

After more than 40 years, I can remember the moment when those youthful dreams were crushed. I picked up the August 1961 issue of *GALAXY* and read a story titled *The Moon Moth* by Jack Vance. I knew this

guy was one of the field's pros, and I had read *The Miracle Workers* in an old issue of *ASTOUNDING*. That story stuck in my mind. There was something odd about it, a peculiar quality that left a mental afterglow.

So, I began reading *The Moon Moth* with a positive attitude but no particular expectations. When I turned the last page and finished the story, I knew that I could never be a science fiction writer. I was limp, deflated, all ambition burned away like dew before the rising sun. I might aspire to match the creations of Asimov, Clarke, or Heinlein, but I could *never* do what Jack Vance did.

So what did Vance do, and how did he do it? Typically for Vance, the plot of *The Moon Moth* is a mystery. The protagonist, Edwer Thissell, is sent to the planet Sirene as Consular Representative of the Home Planets. He finds an isolated culture in which individualism has reached an extreme. Each person wears various masks to express his personality and status. In addition, all speech is sung and accompanied with a variety of small musical instruments that can be squeezed, plucked, or stroked with one hand. On Sirene, life is an opera.

All social interactions are governed by acute considerations of status. The combination of personality, deportment, rank, and prestige defines a person's *strakh*. Each individual wears masks commensurate with his *strakh*. In donning a high-prestige mask, an individual asserts high *strakh* and must be prepared to defend it.

Thissell arrives on Sirene wearing a Sea-Dragon Conqueror, a mask worn on ceremonial occasions by persons of enormous prestige. The spaceport manager is aghast. "If the Home Planets want their representative to wear a Sea-Dragon Conqueror mask, they'd better send out a Sea-Dragon Conqueror type of man," he explains, and provides Thissell with a Moon Moth, a mask of trifling prestige.

Elaborate protocol also governs the choice of musical instrument to accompany speech. A correct instrument in one context can be insulting in another situation. On Sirene, what you say is less important than how (musically) you say it.

Thissell is still learning Sirenese ways when he receives an urgent order to apprehend a notorious criminal, Haxo Angmark, who is arriving that very day. Unfortunately, the message has been delayed, and Thissell misses his chance to intercept Angmark at the spaceport. Angmark disappears. There are only three out-worlders on Sirene in addition to Thissell. The corpse of an out-worlder is found in the harbor. Angmark has taken the identity of one of the out-worlders. Everyone is masked. Which of the three suspects is the wanted man?

The masks are essential for the plot. But an average writer would have been satisfied to conceal the characters' identities with conventional masks. Vance's masks are derived from the totemic mythos of the planet Sirene, and in the mask names—Moon Moth, Forest Goblin, Sun Sprite, Fire Snake, Sea-Dragon Conqueror—we glimpse the whole unstated history of Sirene with its real and legendary lifeforms and heroes.

Vance also is astute enough to realize that in a society using masks, individuals will choose different masks within their status to suit their moods or the purposes of the moment, just as we Earthlings choose different shoes for different occasions. Vance uses this choice of masks brilliantly to reveal the personalities and moods of his characters.

Like the masks, the musical instruments are native to Sirene. They are not central to the plot but very useful in complicating Thissell's attempts to deal with the Sirenese natives and a remarkable way to enhance dialogue and reveal each character's internal response to events of the moment.

And finally, *The Moon Moth* exhibits Vance the stylist under full sail. The writing is at once elegant and muscular, bold and sly. Scenes are drenched in color and full of inventive details. The dialog is formalistic but highly expressive. The text is supplemented by footnotes and quotes from learned journals.

Vance's style is often described as baroque. This refers to his elaboration of detail, not to use of antique language. Vance's texts are enriched by an elevated diction, but he seldom uses an obsolete or really rare word. Instead, he uses apt words in unexpected ways. The message alerting Thissell to Angmark's arrival describes the criminal as "superlatively dangerous". We are startled because 'superlative' is usually used to describe good things, not bad things. But here the word fits perfectly.

Hurrying to the spaceport on foot, Thissell meets a stranger on the path. Could this be Haxo Angmark? Thissell deploys his musical instruments and challenges the stranger, who responds: "Stand back or I walk upon your face." No fancy vocabulary here. The character says what we expect him to say, using perfectly ordinary words in a perfectly surprising way.

I don't suppose Ursula Le Guin needs my endorsement for her literary judgments, but I strongly second her conclusion that the characteristic qualities of Vance's writing are "an achieved style". Every writer has a style, but in most cases this style is derived from the writer's natural mode of expression. With Vance, each word and phrase has been consciously crafted for effect.

In a discussion of their fellow SF writers, Keith Laumer asked Piers Anthony what he thought about Jack Vance. Anthony said he liked Vance, except for his wooden dialogue. "Not wooden, carved," Laumer replied—a revelation in three words, worthy of Vance himself.

Why did *The Moon Moth* have such an impact on me? It wasn't the plotting. Vance deals with the mystery elements in perfunctory fashion, because the real story is Thissell's struggle to adapt to Sirenese culture and his ultimate triumph in using that culture to defeat Angmark. What overwhelmed me was Vance's stunning imagination and expressive skill. *The Moon Moth* is inventive, colorful, a bravura performance.

So that's how Jack Vance dashed my dreams of SF glory. And he quickly proved that *The Moon Moth* wasn't an accident. A new triumph appeared every few months: *The Dragon Masters*, *The Last Castle*, the first series of *Cugel the Clever* novelettes, the first three books of the *Demon Princes* sequence, the *Tschai* series. The 1960s was a great decade in which to discover Jack Vance.

After reading *The Moon Moth*, I knew that among all the craftsmen of SF, Vance's *strakh* was incomparable. Recognizing myself as a lowly Moon Moth, I could only look on in abject admiration. Hail, the Sea-Dragon Conqueror!



38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Argentina

His fellow VIE volunteers and subscribers, rising to the occasion, have financed the balance of Enrique Alcatena's subscription in amounts of \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50, \$100 and \$200. These donors include, but are not quite limited to: Norma Vance, Robin L. Rouch, Deborah Cohen, Richard Heaps, Marc Herant, Gabriel Stein, Rob Friefeld, Eugene Spears, Mike Berro, Steve Sherman, Koen Vyverman, Jason Ingram, James Gary, Joel Anderson, Hans van der Veeke, Wiley Mittenberg, Mike Ralston, Paul Rhoads, Charles King, Andy Nasser, Damien Jones. The unnamed persons are wives and other such associates of the above, plus those who have insisted on anonymity or whose participation has escaped my attention. I list them because of Enrique's intention of eventual reimbursement—in the radiant Argentinean economic future all men of good will wish for.

Meanwhile Enrique, aside from his regular volunteer work, has contributed an illustration to the COSMOPOLIS LITERARY SUPPLEMENT (see CLS 16), a very

handsome and suggestive illustration of *Coralia*, of persons riding a vehicle in a landscape of globulous plants, in a manner worthy of Mobius. I recommend it to the attention of all amateurs of illustration.



Project Work

While this issue is being prepared Thomas Rydbeck and I will be in Milan, where Errico Rescigno, resident of that city, will be working with us. Our mission is oversight of: first printing runs, storage conditions for books, arrangements for packing materials and space, questions of insurance and carriers. In regard to printing, a few SFV subscribers have reported occasional minor printing errors (a few patchy words by reason of insufficient ink) and I remain concerned that the print in general be properly dark and saturated, a quality which the GV lacked. The new printing technologies are very new, and we must not assume that these piles of shiny gadgetry will work perfectly.

Meanwhile Suan Yong, Bob Lacovara and John Vance are putting our clerical work in order, adjusting our finances and creating shipping labels. The five Wave-1 'batches' are being processed by John Foley, Tim Stretton and Steve Sherman (final errata rulings), Joel Anderson (final text updates), Robin Rouch, Chuck King, Chris Corley and Marcel van Genderen (final Post Composition Review Verification) plus the 'designated people' assigned to check the updated blues sent from Sfera for each book, and Bob L. who sends out the final files VIE CD. Robin, for medical reasons, is on VIE vacation (without interruption of salary, of course!). She is in our thoughts and prayers.

Post-GM2 work has proceeded with less alacrity than might have been hoped (one reason being Robin's indisposition, another being extra-VIE pressures). Final pre-printing preparatives for the 'late batch' volumes include finishing touches not only on texts but such things as map lettering, and it can get a bit complex. A recent letter from Bob Lacovara, our 'Chief Engineer' to Joel Anderson, our 'Dodkin's Jobber of InDesign' was this letter (quoted in entirety):

IEB09-1a-epback.pdf it is. Note: IEB (b for both)

I do not pretend to understand this letter, which was CC'ed to me in a routine manner, so don't ask *me* what it means, assuming it means *something* or that you are even interested. However, it is clear that 'Murphy's jargon effect' is reaching the ultimate degree in VIE work! To sum up: the Wave 1 books are now, inexorably, *in production*, and subscribers can look forward to having half the VIE book set in their

hands, and on their shelves, in a time to be measured in weeks. Patience!

Which reminds me; contrary to what a certain mathematician—who ought to have known better—suggested in *COSMOPOLIS* 31, VIE books are *not* expensive, and to prove it I will attempt a mathematical proof: assuming that shipping ends up costing \$50 (it may be less or it may be more!) a subscriber gets 44 books, *delivered to his domicile*, for \$1300 divided by 44, equals: \$29.55 per book. Many of these books will have over 500 pages, all, including ‘Readers’, will be exceptionally handsome objects of archival quality, with leather spines, sewn bindings and garnished with frontispieces, maps and various other appropriate decorations—to say nothing of custom typography—making them complete and fully satisfying. Find an equivalent book, physically speaking, on the market for less than twice that price, and I’ll eat my beret. All this without mention of the unique and superlative editorial quality of the texts, to say nothing of the historic circumstances of their creation. Hang on to your set for ten years and finance a loved one’s college education by selling it at the future market price!

In other areas, I know that most of the preliminary work for Wave 2 texts has been completed, and am looking forward to some Honor Rolls for such things as DD and Technoproofing, to say nothing of Wave 1 PP. Damien Jones and his silent laborious minions have amassed mountains of completed work. Meanwhile Steve Sherman has been kicking Wave 2 TI into motion. In order to prime that pump I offer some remarks this month (see below) on the subject of quotation marks.

Also this month, some of my other *Crucible* essays are sure to displease my critics. The indignation I manage to inspire in certain quarters gives me constant matter for reflection—to say nothing of the important delay recent wranglings cost in project progress time—and some of the fruit of the latter is on sale below. That there are people who find my thoughts not simply wrong, to say nothing of evil, but ‘peculiar’, ‘bizarre’ and ‘weird’ reminds me of how puzzled I was in my childhood at the admonitions of the grown-ups: ‘be true to yourself’, ‘seek truth’, ‘be honest’, ‘love others’. Why insist, I thought, on such banalities when grown-ups must have truly astonishing verities to reveal? But the latter never came. I grew to adulthood (very slowly) amazed, at last, by the hypocrisy and preciousness of those ‘banal’ injunctions I had not known how to treasure. We live in a world of conformity, pride, confusion, sin and hate; those who seek to obey the grown-ups get what they deserve for their foolish naïveté.



Quotation Marks, Vance and the VIE

This is one of those editorial issues that TI, and Composition, has had to wrestle with, and will continue to tackle until the dust settles on Wave 2. I will mention some of the issues and some of the solutions that have so far come up.

Vance engages in a great deal of formatting gymnastics and uses both single and double quotes in a host of circumstances. As always, when we have MS evidence, the issues are simplified. At other times we are up against conflicting or incoherent evidence. In these cases we tend to choose the classic solutions—which are generally supported by manuscript and discussion with Oakland—unless a Vancian solution seems more compelling. A change in VIE texts, by contrast with already published versions, is a new presentation of hors-text passages with regard to quotation marks. When such hors-text passages are not only speech, but quotation within speech, the clumsy situation of specially formatted text encumbered with both double and single quotes sometimes arises. In concert with Oakland, and in keeping with specific VIE ‘plaything’ formatting styles, VIE hors-text matter (or ‘playthings’, to use VIE Composition jargon) that is quoted (proclamations, poems, etc.) uses no quotation marks. We have found that the ‘spoken’ aspect is always clearly and naturally indicated by context. This sometimes presents technical problems such as an absent end-quote, as when such a ‘plaything’ ends a speech. But this never causes confusion, and results in clearer presentation than the heavy-handed logic of quotation rules. We have found that it is the best ‘solution’ to one of many formatting ‘problems without a solution’.

A more delicate problem is the use of single and double quotes for things that are not speeches. In general, and following Vance as best we can tell from the evidence we have, single quotes are used when quoted items are not speeches. However, Vance sometimes does use double quotes in these cases. He seems to do so when he wants to give the feeling of speech. In such cases we maintain the double quotes. One example: in *Coup de Grâce* is the following passage:

A man of ambition, Pascoglu hoped to develop the Hub into a fashionable resort, a glamor-island among the stars—something more than a mere stopover depot and junction point. Working to this end, he added two dozen bright new bubbles — “cottages”, as he called them — around the outer meshes of the Hub, which already resembled the model of an extremely complex molecule.

We have no MS for this story, but the published versions use double quotes for ‘cottage’, even though this is not a speech. Editorial sloppiness, or Vance’s intention? Here is the phrase formatted with single quotes, per standard practice:

. . . he added two dozen bright new bubbles — ‘cottages’, as he called them. . .

This is hardly wrong, but we lose something.
What?

The single quotes flatly indicate that, as a matter of fact, Pascoglu used the word ‘cottage’ to designate his ‘bubbles’, probably in his promotional material and when he talked about them. But with the double quotes we are brought closer to the man speaking the word, to the flavor of the commercialistic pretension of Pan Pascoglu. The double quotes, in this instance, give us the twinkle in his eye—romanticism? greed? vulgar entrepreneurial acumen? Whatever the case, it is a Vancian subtlety that should not be lost.



Vance: a Modern Classic

I have often insisted on the timeless and ‘classic’ value of Vance’s work, but it can also be recommended for its ‘modernity’. What is meant, in this case, by this tortured term? Its relativism and scientism, its materialism, moral confusion and more or less militant atheism, have been mentioned; modernity is, for many artists and thinkers, the great era of human liberation from the constraints of ‘the past’. We moderns congratulate ourselves on our defense of various freedoms. We flatter ourselves that our time is the first in human history where genuine human values—in fact our preferred values: tolerance, science, progress, liberation—have emerged. The modern era’s advancement of science, with consequent explosion of technology, has given us longer life, ease of travel and communications, riches, an ever increasing population, a plethora of informations about the natural world. Such progress is all very well. It is not to be mistaken for moral progress; we are simply more powerful. Meanwhile the modern moral atmosphere—by which I mean the breakdown of the distinction of good and evil—has brought certain issues interestingly into prominence.

For example: questions of identity. In olden times the question of who you were was not without importance, but the question of what you were was the question of questions. Our triumphant technology and commercial/materialistic dynamism have bulldozed the physical world flat, and Modernity has likewise reduced the spiritual realm to a featureless, sterile plain, where we stand blinking at each other in stupid satisfaction at having abolished from the world the distinctions that once gave life its savor. Who we are can only really have meaning in relation to what we are. But when there is no ‘what’, when all meaningful

distinctions are abolished, who we are becomes the only question, and thus the most important question.

Vance is one of the first ‘science fiction’ writers in the era when science, and scientism, became the primary cultural force in Western culture. In making this distinction I am using what seems to be Vance’s own definition of science fiction: stories about the impact of technology on the human adventure. Though Vance has not written a great deal of such fiction (considering his whole oeuvre), what he did write of it goes to the heart of the question. In stories like *The Plagian Siphon*, *The Enchanted Princess*, *Parapsyche*, *Nopalgarth*, *Ultimate Voyage* and *The Narrow Land* he explores not merely superficial aspects of the impact of technology on the human adventure (such as the possibility of walking around on the moon) but the ultimate, or ‘philosophical’ consequences. *The Plagian Siphon*, Vance’s only robot story (that I can think of) carries the computer/robot idea to its ultimate state. A machine with vast power over whole planets, malfunctions, apparently going ‘mad’, engaging in acts of random destruction according to an imperturbable ‘rationality’, which is nothing more than the internally consistent logic which is the highest ‘morality’ a machine can have. This may be one of Vance’s earliest stories, it may not even be a particularly good one, but it raises the ultimate questions regarding our new power enhancing tools.

In *Nopalgarth* and *Parapsyche* the problem raised by modernism’s atheistic materialism is addressed: ‘what of intuition? inspiration? clairvoyance?’ The answers may be fanciful fabrications but the question is fundamental. Vance points out that if these phenomena, whose existence he takes for granted, are material in origin, they must have a source which, in some manner or another, will look like what he suggests.

But these are minor and even superficial issues. More profoundly modern is Vance’s interest in identity. This is explored in different ways in several stories. In *The Flesh Mask*, written in the 1940s, Vance seeks the spiritual reality underneath those ultimate masks which are our faces, by looking at relationships that shift when a boy, made a monster by a road accident, is removed from his milieu—because of emotional complications arising from his monster persona—and returns with a normal ‘mask’. The same theme was suggested with the character Etarr, in *T’sais*; it is also touched upon in *The Moon Moth*. In *Marune* Vance gives us a character groping toward an identity robbed from him with an amnesia drug. By various means Pardero/Efraim recaptures aspects of his old identity but in reappropriating it brings with him aspects of his new identity. Howard Alan Treesong (*The Book of Dreams*) is a character who constructs several identities for himself, which he inhabits simultaneously, to liberate

separate and distinct powers: poetic sympathies, inflexible determination, weird murderousness, cool calculation, gaiety. With Kirdy Wook (*Araminta Station*) Vance explores identity distorting madness, schizophrenia, solipsism. Vance comes at the same question from another angle in *The Palace of Love*, in the traumatic effects of a traumatic childhood passion upon Vogel Filschner and his consequent obsession with the person of Jheral Tinzy—not a mere ‘psychological study’ but an essay on identity because Viole Falushe deliberately sculpts his own persona.

Similarly Vance explores what might be called the ‘identities’ of cultures. Such things have become absolutely banal. Only yesterday on French radio there was a long discussion on Corsican identity: French? Insular? Clannish, Republican? Oppressed? Independent? These are typically modern concerns, and Vance relishes them. This relish, I think, is profoundly based on his experience as a seaman. Vance anticipates multiculturalism by several decades. Although exploring it down to the last corner, he is not seduced by its most radical theses. A story like *Coup de Grace*—where by pure ‘cultural analysis’ a murder is solved—is an antic example; Vance is playing with the intriguing idea of the absolute supremacy of culture over person. But murder is in fact horrific and intolerable (as so many passages in his work attest) and Vance owes his reputation for cynicism to such pranks—in my opinion one of his funniest.*

A very different facet of Vancian Modernism is Vance’s interest in tourism. Tourism is one of the most characteristic phenomena of a world of expanding riches. Beauty is trammelled under the feet of vulgar masses in a blinkered quest for higher pleasures. The adventures of a Marco Polo in China or a Goethe in Venice: what does this have to do with ‘tourism’? Something at least, for the latter is certainly a descendant of the former, a grotesque mass culture version of the ‘grand tour’, fruit of our fabulous riches. Millions can now rub the magic lantern of Ali Baba and get whisked away to Egypt for a week—4 star hotel, pool, pyramids, casbah, Karnak, belly dancing, couscous. We are all magicians, but are we the Grand Motholam of Polo and Goethe, or the rag-tag ‘uncertain’ band exemplified by:

Pedants like Tchamast; mystics like Ao; buffoons like Hurtiancz and Zanzel. Vermoulian explores unregistered dreams with notepad, calipers and specimen-bottles. Teutch arranges the details of his

*It might also be asked, in the context of what culture, assuming the truth of the thesis of cultural supremacy, could such a story as *Coup de Grace* be written if not that of a ‘universal culture’, the culture that understands other cultures? The existence of such a ‘universal culture’ contradicts the thesis of cultural supremacy because there the person escapes the cultures by understanding them, as Magnus Ridolph does.

private infinity. Rhialto exerts his marvels only in the pursuit of pubescent maidens.

I first heard mention of the growing importance of tourism in the early 70s. A story like *The Kokod Warriors*, where pretentious vulgarians disrupt an exotic culture, was written in 1951. Later came stories like *Maske: Thaery* (1975) where the same issue is given larger and more serious treatment.

Another modern aspect is Vance’s concern and engagement regarding ecology. *Cadwal* is his ultimate reflection on the deepest aspect of this problem; the conflict between preservation of nature and the pressing interests of man. The forests of the Amazon, so I understand, are now mostly cut away. Are chain-saw merchants a greater danger to humanity than the manufacturers of land-mines? Should America and the U.N. concentrate on the hinterland haciendas rather than the tyrant of Baghdad? Brazil, for the moment, remains a sovereign State, and a ‘world order’ has not yet been put in place.



Vance and ‘Tolerance’

Recent web-based project perturbations, carried out in the name of love of, and concern for, Vance’s work, have caused me to reflect upon what can be learned from Vance’s stories about such things. Making no reference to the most extreme—and obviously confused—of the pretensions,* the basic argument is that persons (such as myself) whose personal ideas (as understood by the plaintiffs) are not only contrary to Vance’s ideals but repugnant in the absolute, should not be prominently, or even at all, associated with Vance’s work. Granting, for the sake of argument, the odiousness of my opinions, this is lust for ideological purity, to say nothing of its ‘anti-Right’ and anti-Christian tenor.

I do not regard it as either useful or possible to conceal my opinions when discussing Vance. It is not possible to speak meaningfully about such subjects as anti-colonialism, egalitarianism, the politics of ecology or other such issues (central to stories like *The Domains of Koryphon*, *Wyst* or *Cadwal*) without understanding the issues, and such issues cannot be understood, in any

*One of the more virulent examples would be the following, from an anonymous chat-room poster using the moniker ‘Attel’ (of sinister connotation): “. . . I hope to accomplish. . . a complete disassociation of the VIE project from Mr. Rhoades [sic] and any other VIE Board members who share his views on racism and Jews. . . [and] before final printing [submission of] the final drafts to some kind of peer review group (for example The Science Fiction Writers Association) for examination of texts. . . for changes that may indicate a racist bias particularly against Jews, and after review issue an independent report regarding the significant addition of racist remarks within VIE publications. . .”

meaningful sense of the word, without having a feeling about them. Are my ideas different from Vance's, as they may be deduced from his work, and if so what place is such difference accorded by what might be called the 'Vancian attitude'? It seems obvious that the 'Vancian attitude' is one of great openness, and this openness is what gives Vance's work its 'philosophical' feeling. Be that as it may; how are Vance's opinions on politics and religion best characterized? Based on his work alone*, and very broadly speaking, I think it is fair to say that Vance's politics are 'not Leftist', and that he is 'anti-religious'. But this statement needs a great deal of qualification. Vance is 'anti-religious', but only in a specific way. He is often skeptical of organized religion**, however, he clearly regards it as arising from aspects of society, human nature and reality which are permanent conditions. He is not a writer of 'Utopias', books painting pictures of society as the writer would like to see it. Instead he shows us different kinds of societies constructed to reveal particular things needed for a given story, itself an adventure in the nature of permanent reality. It is true that some of these societies seem to reflect what we intuit are conditions congenial to Vance personally. However, even in these cases, he is not complacent about them; he does not seem to regard them or present them as unqualifiedly good but simply as situations interesting or congenial. An example: Vance is interested in the idea of the ancestral family house; but the situations of Morningswake, Clattuc House or Benbuphar Strang, all 'ancestral family houses', while they may have idealized elements, are hardly ideal***. Morningswake is at the center of a political maelstrom that finally erupts into a regular little war. Clattuc House is the scene of seething internecine feuding, and those who love it most risk to be excluded by the cold workings of the Charter and genealogical and merit-based formulas. Benbuphar Strang, while attractively picturesque in a gothic style, requires a Rune's peculiar acculturation to appreciate fully—fascination for which cost poor Matho Lorcas his life. While Vance shows some truly nefarious 'religious' activity—the most extreme being human sacrifice as

*I am well placed to speak of the opinions of the man himself, but will not do so here.

**The category 'religion' is not the unproblematic term it seems to many. 'Buddhism', 'Islam', 'Shinto', 'Judaism', 'Druidism', 'Wicca', 'Christianity', 'Calvinism', 'Paganism', 'Catholicism', 'Yoga', 'Dianetics' etc., from a sophisticated Christian perspective as well as others, are not simply more or less overlapping or related terms for approaches to what is essentially the same phenomenon. I will not go into it here but it is awareness of such distinctions—eradicating by the crudely anti-religious—which accounts for the non-offense of sincere Christians regarding Vance's treatment of 'religion', which we regard, in large measure, as critiques of various superstitions, heresies and aspects of paganism.

***All three edifices will be illustrated in VIE frontispieces (Wave 1).

practiced or planned by Druids in *The Son of the Tree*, *The Palace of Love* and *The Green Pearl*; other religions seem to receive Vance's approval, such as worship of Gaea, or Aillas' proposed importation of Spirifumi worship (*The Green Pearl*). Vance is interested, quite simply, in the history and sociology of religion, as the following passage describing Gaea worship suggests:

"... They are great ones for churches, these Celts; nevertheless they are still more pagan than Christian. In every forest you will find a druid's grove and when the moon shines full they leap through fires with antlers tied to their heads. How does it go in Troicinet?"

"We do not lack for Druids," said Sir Tristano. "They hide in the forests and are seldom seen. Most folk, however, revere the Earth-goddess Gaea, but in an easy fashion, without blood, nor fire, nor guilt. We celebrate only four festivals: to Life in the spring; to the Sun and Sky in the summer; to the Earth and Sea in the autumn; to the Moon and Stars in the winter. On our birthdays, we place gifts of bread and wine on the votive stone at the temple. There are neither priests nor creed, which makes for a simple and honest worship, and it seems to suit the nature of our people very well..."

Gaea worship draws the attention of its practicers to the wonders of nature and helps officialize, with suitable pomp and solemnity, such events as the changing of the seasons and birthdays. This meshes nicely with our sense of the Vancian attitude, so alive to the beauties of nature and loving festivities of all kinds. Mainly Vance satirizes clerical abuses but, even when the religions they represent are absurd, such as Finuka worship in *Emphyrio*, its proponents are not necessarily monsters of evil but can be essentially decent and rational people, such as the 'troop leader'. An interesting case is the somewhat Hindu religion which lightly pervades the world of the *Demon Princes* books. The longest passage regarding this religion shows Vance's interest in 'the phenomena out of which organized religions arise, both in society, human nature and reality':

The Astropolitans are divided into thirteen cults, each dedicated to a distinct Supreme Deity. To determine which image sits on high, the Astropolitans, each seven years, conduct a Tournament of the Gods with trials to measure Paramount Power, Inaccessible Loftiness and Ineffable Mystery... Over the past twenty-eight years the god Kalzibah has proved himself so consistently and the god Syarasis has so often failed that the Syaratics are gradually deserting the cult to become ardent Kalzibahans. — (The Palace of Love)

Is Vance being ironic? Perhaps, but the deeper message remains unaffected; such phenomena are persistent and Man, being what he is, superstition—whatever its ultimate metaphysical value—will continue to flourish. Byron Marshall has also commented on Man's penchant for putting a face on the invisible—using an example in which readers familiar with the whole of the passage, above, will note the aptness:

. . . if a real person behind one door, and a computer behind another, were to answer questions from a panel of human observers, the questions and answers slipped back and forth beneath the door, can the human observers tell which door houses which? Behind which door is a person and behind which door the computer?

In an exercise of exaggerated positivism, the bright idea was that if the human observers can't tell which door has the computer and which the human, then artificial selfhood has been achieved: there is no difference, if superficial actions show no difference to observers.

Aside from the perfectly obvious logical flaw in this argument the problem isn't whether the human observers might eventually decide that the computer behind the door is 'just like a human', the problem is how do you keep the human observers from attributing human nature not only to the computer behind the door, but to the door, the door handle, the light switch, the candelabra, the rug, the window sill, the tree outside, the sun, the grass, the family car, and everything else.

Vance's work is also notable for what might be called 'syncretic religious tolerance' as demonstrated, for example, in the conversations in the chapter called *The Pilgrims in Cugel the Clever*. Some people read such passages as sweeping denunciations of all religion; I think they are missing the point. A similar passage occurs in *Spatterlight*:

At the entrance to the bridge stood a monument ten feet tall, holding a bronze plaque to the attention of those who passed. The characters were illegible to Cugel. Çaulph Rabi thrust close his long nose, then shrugged and turned away. Doctor Lalanke, however, declared the script to be a version of Sarsounian, an influential dialect of the nineteenth aeon, in common use for more than four thousand years.

"The text is purely ceremonial," said Doctor Lalanke. "It reads:

TRAVELERS! AS DRY SHOD YOU CROSS THE THUNDERING TURMOIL OF THE RIVER SYK, BE ADVISED THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ASSISTED BY THE BENEFICENCE OF KHAIVE, LORD-RULER OF KHARAD AND GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE

As we can see, the river Syk no longer thunders a turmoil, but we can still acknowledge the generosity of King Khaive; indeed, it is wise to do so." And Doctor Lalanke performed a polite genuflection to the monument. "Superstition!" scoffed Çaulph Rabi. "At the Collegium we turn down our ears in reverence only to the Nameless Syncretis at the core of the Hub."

"So it may be," said Doctor Lalanke indifferently and moved away. Cugel looked from Çaulph Rabi to Doctor Lalanke, then quickly performed a genuflection before the monument.

"What?" cried the gaunt ecclesiarch. "You too, Cugel? I took you for a man of judgment!"

"That is precisely why I gave honor to the monument. I judged that the rite could do no harm and cost very little."

Varmous dubiously rubbed his nose, then made a ponderous salute of his own, to the patent disgust of Çaulph Rabi.

The point made here is similar to Pascal's famous 'wager', which for the past several centuries has been one of the most important arguments in favor of Christianity.

Taking all the above together, I deduce that Vance cannot be read as an advocate of the suppression of organized religion. He may, or may not, want to have no part of any organized religion himself; whatever various of his characters may think and say, he does not discuss his own opinions in his works of fiction. He may or may not agree with some people that the total suppression of religion would be a universal good—evidence for such an attitude is absent from his work. Vance's attitude to religion wavers between several poles: condemnation of barbaric superstitions and practices, anti-clericalism, sympathy for aspects of local cults or paganism, and what, to coin a phrase, might be termed 'Pascalian agnosticism'. Most important would be his attitude toward Christianity but the subject is too important to touch on in a few words; I will only mention that Vance, in his four million published words, has had very little to say about Christianity, and there is certainly nothing in these four million words that can be labeled 'anti-Christian', at least in any profound or important sense, despite the Father Umphred character.

From these considerations I deduce that my own religious convictions, whatever they may be, or anyone else's, are tolerated by the 'Vancian attitude'.

What of politics? As much as Vance is interested in religion as a human, or perhaps 'sociological/psychological' phenomenon, he is even more interested in politics, and some of his stories go into great detail about, for example, the establishment of a political system. See, notably, *The Chasch* (the reorganization of Pera), *The Brave Free Men* (the reorganization of Shant) and *Throy* (the reorganization of Araminta Station). In *Maskee: Thaery* as well as *Cadwal*, political organization and governmental procedures are much dwelt upon.

But the most clear cut indication of Vance's political interest is certainly *The Stark*. On page XIII-3 of the manuscript occurs, for example, this phrase:

. . . how to govern humanity? How to insure freedom, the full scope of individuality, rewards to the virtuous, punishment to the evil, without the apparently inevitable lapsing into decadence and license?

This is a remarkably pungent and suggestive statement of the political problem, and *The Stark* might almost be said to be a systematic anatomy, or even teleology, of political systems in the absolute.

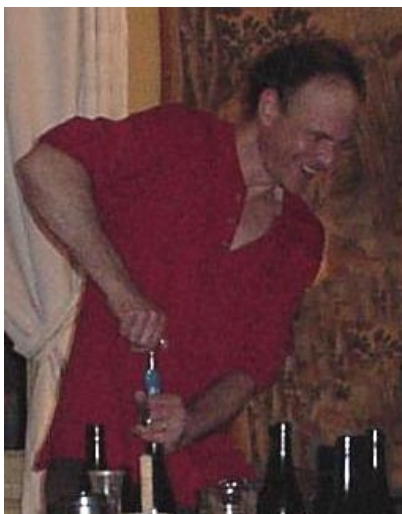
Political issues of many kinds are raised in many stories, but I have always thought *Trullion* a particularly suggestive example with regard to Vance's personal feelings, since the environment of that world is so close to him personally. The Fens are inspired by the physical environment of his youth (the Sacramento estuary) and Trill society is, in many respects, modeled on the California world of the 1950s. In spite of the sex and drug aspect of Trill culture I do not think it reflects the 1960s. Nowhere in Vance, that I can see, is there

approval of revolt for its own sake against order and authority, or the championing of free sex and drugs in the 60s manner. Trill society is, instead, a reflection of the 'bohemian' atmosphere prevalent in artistic milieus in the post war period until the late 1960s. Having myself grown up the child of artist parents during that time I recall this atmosphere, which was soon overcome by the social bulldozer of the Woodstock Generation. The Trill situation of material plenitude—where people work only to the bidding of mood or necessity—is enhanced by beach parties, star gazing, mild stimulants, easy romance.



Breakfast at ÇM2: Robin Rouch, TI sultan Steve Sherman and Koen Vyverman, enjoying 'the good things in life': food, drink, fellowship. Photo by Joel Riedesel.

Such was the situation of my own early life. Though we were 'poor', each summer my father, who made his money by occasionally doing some house painting, bought a car for \$50 and off we went to spend the summer by the sea, perhaps in a shack with no plumbing or electricity, but free and easy like Polynesian royalty, with sunset viewing, beach parties, clam bakes, the flow of 'spiritous liquors', and the loose and easy attitudes of bohemian adults.



VIE Editor-in-Chief at ÇM2 banquet, demonstrates expert hand-eye coordination, the result of early training. Photo by Joel Riedesel.

But the world Trullion also has negative elements, so typically Vancian: the merling who spoil the swimming and eat the children, smoldering social tensions among aristocrats, commoners, Trevanyi—to say nothing of danger from Starmenters. Another clearly non-1960s aspect is that neither Glinnes, a typical exemplar of his society, nor his society itself take any exception to his having served in the Whelm, and in particular to his participation in repressive military campaigns. Glinnes is not like a returning Vietnam veteran, but like a Korea veteran, coming back neither hero nor pariah. Into this situation Vance introduces not a 1960s style anarchic anti-authoritarian social force, but the Fanschers who are, one might say, the opposite of the hippies—though this would not be correct in all respects, particularly with regard to hippy conformism of dress and attitude—the 'independence of spirit' proposed by both hippies and Fanschers may in fact be less hypocritical of the latter. My reading of *Trullion* (written in 1973) is that it results, in at least one important way, from Vance's reaction to the emergence of the 60s movement in San Francisco. It is a disguised confrontation of the 50s world, of which he seems to generally approve, with the 60s, but his Hippy/Fanschier reconfiguration makes for a crisper contrast. The sociological message of the story is that society will always be in mutation and that movements, such as 'flower-power', will leave more or less of a trace and exert more or less influence. The Fanschers, like the hippies, disappeared, but we are led to assume that their ethic will remain a counter-cultural element in Trill society with greater or lesser consequences for the future. The political message of *Trullion*, if any, put in crude terms, might be labeled: 'Left of center' with reference to the pre-60s Left. *Cadwal*, by contrast, includes certain clear-cut critiques of aspects of Leftism. Written in the 1980s, three decades after the explosion of the older bohemian world by radicalized youth, *Cadwal* might still be seen as disapproval of the 60s Left by a member of the pre-60s 'anti-Communist Left'. I don't have any reason to think Vance was particularly politicized in his youth. His interests seemed to have been girls, jazz, food, writing and science, in approximately that order—a pretty normal distribution. Vance is now labeled 'Right-wing reactionary' by certain know-nothing contemporary Leftists, but he may well have thought of himself as politically to the Left, prior to the 1960s, and may not today see himself as on the Right.

This is my reading; but however it may be the antidote Vance seems to prefer against what are, objectively, illusory—not to say dishonest—political positions; ironic. Finding no Vancian support for the 'ideological cleansing' which certain folk advocate, I can only conclude that their interest in Vance is secondary to their interest in other things. In this regard I agree with them: the work of Jack Vance is not to be taken as an

absolute or an ultimate guide; other things are of higher importance. Speaking for myself these would include the very American values of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, which are neither of them equal to relativism or license. That anti-religious and censorial forces are as active as they are within or near the project is proof that these values are in danger and, as Vance himself hints, constant vigilance is required.

Some people involved in the project are not only very Leftist in their political feelings, but very anti-Christian. Their feelings in these regards are often crystallized around the Republican Party and the so called 'religious Right', both of which they regard as great dangers to freedom. What to do? How can such a diverse group as VIE volunteer/subscribers find a *modus vivendi* that permits work to proceed? There are three possible choices that I can see:

- 1 - Suppression of all points of view.
- 2 - Suppression of all points of view but one.
- 3 - Suppression of no points of view.

Choice 1, which might be called the 'narrow hobby' approach would, in my view, cause the project to wither. Vance's work touches many areas of life and the stimulation he provides to our minds is part of what is important about him to many of us. The project depends on people bringing themselves, and their strengths, to our work. An interdiction on being oneself, including the expression of what might interest us about a given aspect of Vance in the context of the project, would evaporate my interest in it. This goes farther than the vitality of COSMOPOLIS (itself highly important) and I fail to see how useful text-work could be done in such an atmosphere of thought interdiction.

Choice 2 is the 'totalitarian' approach. It would never occur to me to even imagine imposing my own point of view as the unique view permitted within the project, even if I could define my own 'point of view' to such an extent, or as if such 'imposition' even has a sense. In fact the 'totalitarian' approach means domination, by force, by the ideas of some person or persons. I would not dream of being personally 'against' those who might disagree with my views. It might as well be mentioned, however, that the totalitarian impulses so far brought to bear upon the project have come from people who declare themselves in disagreement with me on religious and political issues. I do not say this to try to sully their particular opinions; it is simply ironic, for obvious reasons.

Choice 3 is the only approach that allows all to be themselves, and all to be, and remain, together. But it imposes true tolerance; the willingness to be friends with people of differing views. The basis for such friendship would be, in our case, a common interest in Vance, but must also include reciprocal recognition of our honorableness. This would not forbid sturdy debate,

if such is called for, but it does put ideological denunciations and bans out-of-bounds. Are people who denounce others as out-of bounds therefore themselves to be put out-of-bounds? Christian theology teaches us that human nature is 'fallen'; human relations therefore are, and will remain, messy, and in certain ways and to a certain extent irresolvable. On the practical level of the project, only genuinely honorable people who are willing to recognize each others' honorableness can participate. Others must be pushed, or allowed to drop, away. Both has happened, and no doubt will continue to have to happen. Given some of the fauna out there, the vitality of the project depends upon it.

The above will seem to some to give no answer to what might be called a 'pragmatic' position, according to which the alleged unpopularity of my views, which 'appear' to 'dominate' COSMOPOLIS, pose a danger to the project by reason of alienation. Solution suggestions range from censorship to auto-censorship. But this is really a version of Choice 1 or Choice 2. When certain persons, who may never have had any real intention to subscribe or volunteer, loudly proclaim a boycott against the VIE for the odiousness of what gets published in COSMOPOLIS or who is associated with the project, this should be taken for what it is: at best a symptom of intractable intolerance and at worst a totalitarian tactic. As far as I know there has actually been only one case of bonafide de-subscription. A certain person, who has made a down-payment, has announced they will not subscribe—that they no longer wish to be associated with the creation of the complete and correct archival edition of the works of Jack Vance—for the hallucinatory reason that I, so they claim, am a supporter of the head of a certain minority French political party. Assuming this is not a cover for inability to complete their payment, if, in fact, I *were* such a supporter, this reasoning might—if by a tortured rationale—make some kind of sense, but since I am not (as was made explicitly clear in the COSMOPOLIS article in question) what are we to think? Does it mean nothing to this ex-subscriber that Suan Yong, Bob Lacovara, John and Norma Vance, Joel Anderson, Robin Rouch, Joel Riedesel, Joel Hedlund, Richard Chandler, John Schwab and Mike Berro—to mention only them—people who have been in the VIE as long as I, or work as hard as I do at it—have probably never even heard of this politician? Putting such considerations aside, let us say that this person argues that, while I may not be a direct 'supporter' of the politician, I am still a pollution upon the project because I am not one of those who consider him a Hitlerian. This person is not alone in believing that the politician is a Hitlerian. These people believe that if he became President of France he would build concentration camps, gas-chambers, ovens, and generally take up where Hitler left off—a claim repeatedly made in the French media

and which is believed by many people I have spoken to. I have already addressed aspects of this issue and will not go into it again, except to mention the following facts, which no honest person will deny:

1 - Though the French have constitutional provisions for outlawing political parties considered beyond the pale, and have even exercised this law, the party of the politician in question has existed for decades and has never been outlawed, even when, as has been the case many times during the past quarter century, the Left has been in power.

2 - The politician in question, who is branded a 'xenophobe', is voted for in significant numbers by French citizens whose racial origins are the countries of the now defunct French colonial empire.

3 - The politician in question specifically denies being an anti-Semite or a xenophobe.

These facts may be interpreted in various ways, but the first one, by itself, ought to render my attitude tolerable—or one would think so, unless it is in fact that the Left uses the politician in question as a tactic to divide and sully their opponents; the French elites, with rare exceptions, treat the several million French citizens who vote for the party in question as pariahs, making it impossible for the center Right to cooperate with its outer wing, as the center Left does with its outer wing. My major concern about this issue, and the reason I mentioned it in *COSMOPOLIS*, is my attachment to the libertarian, sober, humanistic, light-hearted Vancian spirit of truth seeking. Others may understand the message of Vance in other ways. Others may only be impressed by his poetic powers. I love his work also for the rampart I believe it is against anti-freedom forces, and the training it gives in seeing reality coldly and squarely. I therefore cannot watch a spectacle of what appears so clearly to me as grotesquely blatant and exaggerated propagandistic distortions and manipulations, in an important Western country like France, without a sense of profound inquietude. It is somewhat astonishing to me that people aware of what goes on in France, who have also read *Cadwal*, to name only that book, do not share my concerns.

I feel I should also address what I regard as the somewhat hysterical attitude of some VIE folk regarding the American Republican party and the so called 'religious Right'. The ideas of Republicans and Christians may indeed be terrible things, but they are not illegal and should, along with those who hold them, be treated with a minimum of respect and tolerance.

But I feel the need to go farther, that I should make very clear why I use such terms as 'hysterical'. First, a few personal facts: I am neither a Republican nor a member of the 'Moral Majority' or 'Christian Coalition'; I am politically unaffiliated. Regarding my religious beliefs—which are Roman Catholic to the last jot and

tittle (if you want to know what I think, read *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*)—they are, to me, primarily a private matter based on my conviction that Jesus Christ is who he said he was and concerning the eventual locality of my sojourn in eternity, the prospect of which I regard as a certainty. So much for my 'fervor'. I mention these things so there will be no accusations of underhand dealings.

Many people feel that the 'Right' is gaining ground or has indeed even captured control of the world and, through GWB, the FMI, the Pope and other malefic forces—animated by ignorance, motivated by greed and lust for power—is ruthlessly instigating wars, oppressing the poor, promoting religious fanaticism and shamelessly enriching itself. Some of these people will not grant that this supposed dominance of the West by the Right, if it exists, has been achieved democratically—which would at least entitle it to a certain legitimacy. Some people, in other words, feel that their opponents have gained power by the nefarious use of anti-democratic methods. How can a person such as myself even address such a mentality? As a designated member of the party of darkness, I feel diabolicized. Others on the Left (most others, luckily) have a more realistic view: they acknowledge that Western 'Rightists' are as democratic as Western 'Leftists', and some even acknowledge, though approvingly, what seems to me the dominance of Leftist ideas among the majority of Western elites. Though I deplore this situation and welcome any alleviation of it, I regard it, at least formally, as having come about democratically. I therefore do not diabolicize Leftists, regarding them as evil schemers stooping to any tactic to achieve illegitimate ends. They may, in my view, be misguided, and even 'nasty-minded', but I do not regard them as evil. What do I mean by 'nasty-minded'? A 'nasty-minded' attitude condemns people for reasons exterior to the reality in their hearts—which only a certain person, who will go nameless, can see the bottoms of. Meanness, hate, intention to hurt, is condemnable. This is the sense of Jack Vance's definition of evil:

The man is evil who coerces obedience to his private ends, destroys beauty, produces pain, extinguishes life. It must be remembered that killing evil men is not equivalent to expunging evil, which is a relationship between a situation and an individual.

Racism, a fashionable 'crime', is 'nasty-minded' because it condemns persons for reasons completely exterior to what is in their hearts, or their 'spiritual reality'. Hate of people because they are poor, or rich, or other kinds of 'classism', also condemns persons for reasons exterior to their spiritual reality. Political and religious intolerance are in the same category for it assumes that an exterior aspect—in this case association with a given group—indicates the dispositions of the heart. It may be true that the exterior may, in some

cases, accurately reflect the interior, but a man with white skin (for example) may be good or bad, just as a poor man or even a Christian (to pick two other examples at random) may be either good or bad. My view of Leftism (not Leftists per se) is that it is soaked with nasty-mindedness. Each Leftist position, to the best of my analysis, is a rationalization for some kind of nasty-mindedness. But nasty-mindedness is a very common, not to say universal, human failing. It is therefore no preserve of the 'Left', and in any case must be regarded with indulgence.

As I have hinted in another context, I am a 'small government' type with a perhaps misplaced faith in individuals working together locally to address almost all issues outside what I regard as falling legitimately within the purview of national oversight. This faith has been vindicated in regard to the VIE. But in the real world my political opinions, like most peoples', carry the proverbial weight of 'last year's mouse droppings'.

There are perfectly good Leftist-style reasons to regard Leftism with suspicion—given its long and still unresolved history of indulgence toward certain tyrants, but many Leftists still refuse to take this seriously. Meanwhile, with only the flimsiest historical justification, the 'Right' is constantly associated with Fascism and Hitler. And yet, in the 1920s and 1930s, at a time when segments of the Left were longing to import Leninism and Stalinism, the American 'Right'—not with any notable intelligence—was concentrated exclusively on internal economic issues and advocated a short-sighted isolationism (the Left, then having succeeded in electing a President, was also isolationist, though the President and his aides were not). During the War there was no significant sympathy for Hitler on the Right (except among a minority of Americans of German heritage) and after the War the Right was wholly anti-Communist; a fact still held against it. The Left, on the other hand, *by its own standards*, is indelibly stained; Communists internationally supported Hitler (servilely obeying orders from Moscow) during the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact, which lasted until 1942, several years into the War which began in 1939. After the War the pro-Communist part of the American Left was weaned of its pro-Communist attitudes slowly, some people long refusing to acknowledge the facts about conditions in Communist countries, to say nothing of trying to alleviate them, or even making them worse.

I have been accused of making odious comparisons between the barbarous acts of various tyrants; I am simply trying to indicate the contrast between an ongoing Leftist concentration upon the horrors committed by a certain tyrant—relentlessly associated with the 'Right'—between the years 1936 and 1945, while the horrors (numerically far superior) of a certain dynasty of different tyrants, extending from 1917 to 1989, was

undeniably treated with complacency by the Left. Furthermore, that the former tyrant defined himself as 'Socialist' also makes no impression on my accusers. Should not the Left, at the very least, begin to use a certain modesty and honesty against what are in fact loyal opponents?

The religious issue is far thornier. So many people, it is clear to me, are so misinformed (to put it mildly) on the issues and history, that one feels the matter to be very close to hopeless. I will limit my remarks to a very few aspects. First of all, just as the Left refuses to squarely acknowledge its compromising allegiances of the past, anti-Christians and atheists, so adept at condemning 'religion' for murder, refuse to acknowledge the murders, again far greater in number and intensity, committed in the name of their own affiliation, and which are ongoing today. But this Leftist style of argument is worthless; I do not oppose atheism because horrors are committed in its name! If God does not exist, atheists are correct; whatever was done, is done, or is not done in the name of atheism. However, many atheists, and anti-Christians in particular, do not have minds flexible enough to encompass such reasoning. Perhaps it is that, to some of them, since there is no possible legitimacy to the obviously impossible thought that God exists, when it comes to murder in the name of a figment, even one body is one too many. But does the obviously true thought that God does not exist make crimes committed in the name of that reality nuncupatory? Why are anti-Christians, so keen on body counts, completely careless of numbers added up in the name of their pet belief?

However, dropping away from these giddy heights of pure reason, lets us sink down into the swamp of politico-religious wranglings: some people regard Christians, and Christianity, as a nefarious force seeking to, or on the verge of, destroying basic American values, or even 'human rights'. They see them as working against what is regarded by many as the separation of Church and State, working to close down individual freedom and impose their morality uniformly upon all. However one chooses to interpret the Constitutional clause in question, study of American history makes clear to any lucid person that the first Europeans who came to live in the early North American colonies did so mainly in pursuit of religious freedom—meaning the freedom to practice Christianity in styles unpopular in parts of Europe. Those who interpret the Constitution, which was written by practicing Christians, as indicating only an interdiction upon the US Federal government from imposing a single style of Protestantism on the States, might at least be regarded by their political opponents as not totally unreasonable.

Jack Vance has been constantly inspired by this aspect of American history, as can be seen in example after example of his 'pocket histories'. Most of his

planets were originally settled by splinter religious groups. This phrase from *The Face*, is a typically atypical example:

Contrary to popular assumption, the first settlers were not religious zealots but members of the Natural Universe Society, who dealt gingerly with the new environment, and built nothing at discord with the landscape.

Vance makes reference here to certain 19th century Utopian groups. Another excerpt, chosen at random, again shows the Vancian riff on American history:

Moudervelt had first been settled by a variety of small groups: religious sects, clans, sporting associations, philosophical societies and the like. They had quickly exterminated the race of semi-intelligent beings in residence, parceled out tracts of land . . .

Such examples could be multiplied for pages.

Anti-Christianism is not a preserve of the Left. Christians, in regard to many political issues, are all over the spectrum but there are a couple of fundamental positions which they tend to share, and it is these that are regarded with such alarm by anti-Christians of both the Left and the Right: abortion and school prayer. I am well versed in the arguments regarding these issues, and I can only say that I find the anti-Christian position 'hysterical'. If abortion were again made illegal, and if prayer in school were again allowed, these two reversions* to a situation that was the status quo for most of the 200 year existence of the USA, can hardly, by themselves—however great a violation of 'personal freedoms' such 'reversions' may be—constitute the catastrophe of historical proportions which those alarmed by the influence of the 'Christian Right' seem to fear: the burning of infidels, the imposition of the chador as universal feminine dress code, and the recommendation of 'traditional morality': being anti-abortion and pro-school-prayer (for school districts that wish to practice it, which would seem to be the majority) I can't help regarding the suspicions of anti-Christians regarding my supposed hidden motives as hysterical. Being anti-abortion is regarded by many pro-abortionists as equivalent to being a murderer because anti-abortionists have murdered abortionists, yet they fail to grant that an anti-abortionist could legitimately regard as horrific what they see as the ongoing legal killing of millions of human persons. But in spite of what seems, to me, the glaringly obvious rightness of my positions, I am willing to grant that pro-abortionists are not

*'Progress', being an absolute value, 'reversion' to anything would therefore be anti-progress and bad. Thus, now that the wonderful 'progressive' innovation of belly-button piercing has at last been achieved, if, rather than progressing to chicken-bone-in-nose, the pierced belly-button were to go out of fashion and 'retro' approval of un-pierced belly-buttons be restored, this would be 'reactionary'. I often get the feeling that few people have read either Plato's *Phaedrus* or *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides.

monsters of evil, just people who are mistaken.* Why can some of my political opponents not have a similarly indulgent attitude toward me? Would such an attitude not be more in accord with the irony and placidity which permeate the stories of Jack Vance?

I know well that many people, including the majority of people who consider themselves Leftist or atheist, have exactly the indulgent, loyal and friendly attitude I am recommending. I urge them to continue to urge indulgence upon their fellows. I have not seen, in COSMOPOLIS or on any para-VIE organ, any anti-atheist or anti-Left stances that went so far as to seek to censor or exclude their opponents and, obviously, I would not tolerate, I would even tirelessly oppose, such an attitude if it came from anti-Leftists or Christians, which is to say, 'my camp'.



A Syncretic Phylology of the Vancian Locale

(The following reflection was inspired by a question posed on the Vance message board.)

It might be said that there are two basic Vancian universes: the Earth, with its present as well as its mythical past and future, and the science fiction 'future' of human expansion into the galaxy. The 'Gaeian Reach' is Vance's term designating that area of the galaxy controlled by human civilization. Outside the Reach is 'the Beyond' where either humanity itself, or civilization and the rule of law, is absent. Different stories offer different views of the 'Gaeian Reach'. Some, like *Durdane*, conceive of it as one of several expanding or waning Imperiums. The planet Durdane itself is situated in the far Beyond, apparently closer to the Ka and Asutra (or non-human) Imperiums than to the Gaeian Reach. *Tschai* and *The Dogtown Tourist Agency* also describe a situation where alien Imperiums, not necessarily at war but at least wary of one another, are contiguous; the planets Tschai and Maz are border points where Imperiums meet. *Tschai* is set in an early period of the human leap out to the stars, while *Dogtown* and *Durdane* are set much later. *Dogtown* uses a humorous, or 'antic' view of this situation, where *Durdane* uses a more tragic view. In the latter story Vance explores the philosophical issues underlying the aloof stance of the Historical Institute—or the legitimacy and even possibility, as well as the practical political consequences of historicism (conviction that any given historical period, including the present, is permeated with a spirit, or cultural attitude, unique and

*By regarding certain other people, which is to say non-born people, as non-people, and thus justifying murder—which is 'nasty-minded'.

incommensurate with all others, and thus the object of a sort of idolatry by the historian) and scientific sociology (by which men treat other men as pure objects of study). The alien menace symbolizes a moral dilemma as unequivocal as can be imagined. The Historical Institute is one of several underlying architectural elements of the Gaeen Reach. *Emphyrio*, if less dramatically, presents a similar situation to *Durdane*, with an alien menace and the Historical Institute in the background.

Most of the Gaeen Reach stories are without aliens. Exceptions include the Star Kings in the book of that name, who do not represent an Imperium but penetrate the human world on an individual basis, a situation based on their peculiar biological and psychological make-up, a Vancian creation predicated on the particular needs of the book in question, and one now regretted by its author (so he has told me). Thus a more or less purely human Gaeen Reach is the locale of the five *Demon Princes* books, as well as *Cadwal*, *Night Lamp* and *Ports of Call*, and the *Alastor* books.

The Alastor Cluster, mentioned also in *Maske: Thaery*, exists in the galaxy which contains the Gaeen Reach, but is distinct from it geographically and politically. The worlds of the Alastor Cluster are in close proximity to one another and therefore susceptible to organization in a loose monarchical system which exercises a degree of direct, centralized control, unlike the system of the Gaeen Reach. As with the Gaeen Reach, the structure of the Alastor Cluster always bears on the stories set there. The Gaeen Reach is more far-flung, held together politically, if at all, not by a coherent central force of keen symbolic impact, such as a Connatic, but by the messy, practical and natural development of such inter-planetary organizations as the IPCC, the Institute, the Historical Society, the Naturalist Society. Certain prerogatives, as exposed in *Ecce and Old Earth* and *The Killing Machine*, are reserved to the mother planet, such as registration of planetary deeds or printing money (a privilege shared by two other planets). It is, one might say, a conception based on the values of emancipation; enlightened self-determination, free-trade, voluntary cooperation.

But the Beyond is a major fact of the Gaeen Reach, and Vance shows us many planets located there—most notably *Durdane*, *Halma* and *Maske*. In tenuous contact with the Gaeen Reach, but lacking its defining institutions, *Maske* remains outside the sphere of influence of the Gaeen Reach, though one imagines that in years following the time of the story it will become absorbed in its expansion. Other planets of the Beyond are such places as *Sasani*, locale of *Interchange*, described as “a planet in the near Beyond”, and *Murchison*, locale of *Sabra*, described as “thirty light-years beyond the Pale”. *Cadwal*, *Night Lamp* and *Ports of Call* seem to be set in the farthest future of the Gaeen Reach.

Though *Glawen*, *Jaro* and *Myron* range far, we rarely get within hailing distance of the Beyond—though *Fader* is outside the Pale, actually hanging in the near fringe of inter-galactic emptiness. Compare the ominous loom of the Beyond in the *Demon Princes* books. In the later stories, like the wild west today, the Beyond becomes more an object of legend and aphorism. Here are three references from *Night Lamp*:

... he would concentrate on space studies: astronomy, the history and geography of Old Earth, the morphology of the Gaeen Reach, space technology, the locators and the ever more remote frontier which separated the Reach from Beyond.

“... I don't want you to do violent deeds, as if you were a space vagabond or a pirate of the Beyond.”

Wilbur Wailey, after a stint as locator, began to conduct enterprises of a questionable sort. His supreme achievement, by his own assessment, was his ‘Empire of Song and Glory’ on a world so far Beyond and so lost among the galactic wisps and star-streams that five thousand years later, it still had not been rediscovered.

Other stories are set in what are proto-States of the Gaeen Reach concept (*Big Planet* and *Space Opera*) or before it comes into existence chronologically (*Tschai*). *Magnificent Showboats*, also set on *Big Planet* but written at least two decades later, includes a phrase placing *Big Planet* in the Vancian universe: “*Big Planet* lies beyond the frontier of terrestrial law . . .”, and a few paragraphs later we read:

A hundred zealots have urged the imposition of terrestrial discipline, . . . but those who defend the status quo have always had the final pronouncement: ‘Big Planet represents for us that tantalizing vision of the land beyond the frontier where bravery, resource and daring are more important than mastery of urban abstractions.’

Thus the imposition of ‘law and order’ is a practical possibility, suggesting that *Big Planet* is located at a not inconvenient distance from, or actually inside, the Gaeen Reach. The sentiment in favor of the preservation of its pristine savagery is the same which animates the Institute and, though this institution is not mentioned in the *Big Planet* books, we may assume that it is members of the Institute itself, or their forebears, who are the quoted ‘defenders of the status quo’.

Another way of categorizing Vance’s work is with reference to his ‘aliens’ or as might be more accurate to say, his ‘fabulous bestiary’. This would not be a simple taxonomy but another way of looking at how Vance develops the Gaeen Reach. In the late works ‘aliens’ are, at best, mostly alien animals, or more or less ‘intelligent’ animals, or even what might be called ‘symbolic savages’. They include the *Banjees* of *Cadwal* and the *Loklor* of *Fader*. Throughout his work there are many such Vancian savages, symbolic and otherwise. The *Morphotes* and *Erjins* of *Koryphon* for example. The *Chasch* and *Dirdir* are similar but are no longer fully ‘savage’ because they are technology evolved and even the lords of an

Imperium. The Wannek, with the Pnume and Ka (*Durdane*), are an exception in that, unlike the Dirdir or even the diverse Chasch, their cultures seem more truly civilized. The Wannek recall the sprites of the green realm with their fabulously complex language of chimes, while the Ka have their great song and the Pnume have their world history museum: Foreverness. Though both make war, neither, and the Wannek in particular, seem to delight in killing for its own sake, like the Dirdir, or in cruel tricks like the Chasch. The Asutra and Ka of *Durdane* are also technologically developed, though they are much more 'alien' than the beasts garrisoning Tschai.

Presented in a more light-hearted spirit, the Liss and Olefract of Maz are also technologically advanced evolved masters of Imperiums, while the Gomaz, the autochthonous 'Mazians'—full sized variations of the puny Kokod Warriors—remain in the Banjee/Loklor category. I coin the term 'symbolic savages' for such as Gomaz, Banjees, Loklor, Green Chasch, Phung, Kokod, and others too numerous to mention, because such human tribes as the Emblems, Hoch Har or Khors of Tschai, the Waels of Maske or, from Caraz on Durdane, the Gorursk, Kash Blue-worms or Alulas—to name only them—are so close in spirit. The Sirenese of *The Moon Moth* might also be mentioned, being in a similar but special category: 'human' but, probably, products of 'parallel evolution' rather than being common stock with terran homo sapiens. Be this as it may, on the spectrum going from the aphonic, tool-making Banjees through the Imperium creating Dirdir and Liss, past the decadent Erjins, debased Morphotes, mindlessly warring Kokod, strange and violent Gomaz, and crude Loklor—almost human in their anatomical configuration—past the Sirenese ('humans' resultant from parallel evolution) and the mystically exotic Waels, Vance gives us varieties of savage and primitive societies characterized by complex, rigid, often barbaric customs, exotic modes of dress with an emphasis on leather and personal weapons. Some are also outlets for his socio/biological and psychological imagination, such as the termite colony organization of the Kokod Warriors, the love wars of the Gomaz, the telepathy of the Erjins and Waels. A fully worked out phylology and sociology of Vance's primitives, savages and symbolic savages would be both long and complex, but that section reserved to non-human technologically advanced aliens would have its source in a minority segment of his writings.

In no other work are we so plunged into an alien world than *The Asutra*, third book in the Durdane trilogy. Etzwane's sojourn with the Ka recalls such stories as *Crusade to Maxus* but is far more detailed, the apogee of this phase of Vance's story making. The root of this episode, with its echo in *Emphyrio*, is the articulation of the problem of the legitimacy of the Historical Institute's attitude, or the legitimacy of non-

interventionism, or of watching human activity as an entomologist might watch an ant colony struggling against the elements or attacked by wasps. Behind this lies the profoundly anti-human notion of scientism, that 'history' is an object of study on the same order as physics.

Mention should also be made in passing of varieties of Vance's early 'aliens' which include the hideously deformed Sons of Langtree (*The Rapparee*) physically modified by their planets into eagles, badaus etc, but true humans all the same; the primitives of, for example, Ballenkarch, best characterized as the Edgar Rice Burroughs-Flash Gordon creatures which Wallace Wood, in his Mad Magazine send-up, *Flesh Garden*, so aptly named 'men-men' (a menace which came after that of the 'bird-men' and the 'rock-men'). Then there is the *pot-pourri* of clownish interstellar creaturedom presented in such stories as *The Unspeakable McInch*, *Meet Miss Universe*, *Coup de Grace* or *Space Opera*—foreshadowing the 'Stars', both 'Trek' and 'Wars'.

Despite false starts, antic detours and counter examples, Vance's science fiction future is a logical and tranquil vision of the progressive exploration and settlement of the stars, which looks to Renaissance exploration and settlement of the new world, the colonial adventures of the 19th century in Africa and Asia, and Vance's own experiences as a merchant seaman transporting goods across the great oceans of 20th century Earth. We can watch the Gaeen Reach concept germinate and evolve, beginning with *Golden Girl*, *Gold and Iron* (with those culturally superior *men-men*, the Lekthwan), and *Nopalgarth* (with the Xaxan 'symbolic savages'), stories which relate Man's first contacts with other worlds. Then come stories set in early phases of Man's reach into space: *Sail 25*, *Noise*, *Abercrombie Station*, *Masquerade on Dicantropus*, *Shape-up*, *Sabotage on Sulfur Planet*, *Ullward's Retreat*, *The Potters of Firsik*, *Sjambak*, are situated in a later time of colonized stars in various states of interrelation. The Magnus Ridolph stories or *The Houses of Iszm* (with the lofty Izic, men-men of somewhat less exalted status than the Lekthwans), *Son of the Tree*, *The Gift of Gab*, *Crusade to Maxus*, *The Rapparee*, are other proto versions of the Gaeen Reach. There are also places where it is difficult to place the time, where Earth has been forgotten in Man's leap into the galaxy, such as *The World Between* or *The Dragon Masters*; though these would seem to be placed in a far distant future.

In the category of 'false starts' and 'detours' are stories like *Clarges*, *Dodkin's Job* or *The Languages of Pao*, concentrated on a terrestrial or local future where the exploration of space plays no particular role—by 'local' I mean a neighborhood of stars; in *The Languages of Pao* these are Pao, Mercantil, Batmarsh and Breakness. *Rumfuddle* and *The Plagian Siphon* use portals rather than spaceships, with Vance drawing typically Vancian

consequences from these machines; basically they are useful for transport of merchandise, commuting to work, clearing and disposal of waste and debris. Given the impossibility of faster than light travel these conceptions may turn out to be 'realistic' projections. Like *The Dragon Masters*, *The Miracle Workers* and *The Last Castle* (the content of VIE volume 9) are set on forgotten worlds in far times. Another forgotten world is Thamber (*The Killing Machine*) so the stories of volume 9 should not be seen as necessarily outside the Gaeen Reach concept but more likely a ramification of it; certain planets will become lost, and events on them will evolve in consequence. These stories all have aliens which need to be properly situated in the phylogeny sketched above. Similarly there are hidden worlds, like the locale of Thumbnail Gulch, or Teehalt's planet, both Beyond (*The Star King*). These also are a logical consequence of the Gaeen Reach situation and, like Bissom's End or Brinktown ("... once the jumping off place, the last outpost, the portal into infinity—now just another settlement of the North East Middle Beyond."), are wilderness, places of primal adventure, galactic wild wests, Calabrias of the Milky Way, stellar 'bad lands', gardens for the dark flowers of the human soul. There are a few 'science fiction' stories which are simply outside the Gaeen Reach conception, even in 'proto' form, such as *The Narrow Land*, or *Chateau d'If*, but these are exceptional.

Even in its most developed phases the Gaeen Reach conception remains a cousin to the Buck Rogers idea: an expanding human empire, but Vance's conception is essentially de-militarized, with the emphasis on commerce and cultural interaction. Vance is clearly more interested in what might be called his merchant seaman's orientation than in exploring ESP concepts (the Nopal) or space war (*Crusade to Maxus*, *Gold and Iron*), speculative evolution (*The Narrow Land*), or inter-dimensional transfer (*Rumfuddle*), thus the Gaeen Reach conception, whether in its 'proto', 'antic', 'quasi' or 'full-blown' versions, dominates his 'science fiction'. Many of Vance's books, of course, are set on contemporary Earth; these include his so called 'mysteries' including the dozen to be published by the VIE, plus the hopelessly degraded Ellery Queens. Also set on Earth are *Lyonesse*, *Wild Thyme and Violets*, as well as the Cugel/Rhialto stories. But several of his Gaeen Reach stories also take us to Earth, notably *The Palace of Love*, *Emphyrio* and *Ecce and Old Earth*. All these books, including the mysteries, to one extent or another carry us beyond a purely mundane conception of reality. I have already quoted, in the pages of COSMOPOLIS, this passage from *The Flesh Mask*:

The night was dark and clear; the stars glimmered, clean, remote, dispassionate. . . What was up there, among those far suns? If the spirits of the dead persisted, perhaps they might drift out there, out among the stars. . . Her skin crawled as she thought of Cathy. Pale, lonesome Cathy, wandering among those far black places. . .

This does not go to the lengths of the 'Tinkletoe Impspring', or the 'Forlorn Encystment', workings of the invisible realm from mythic past or faerie future, but Vance's view of even our present terrestrial reality is not merely prosaic. He may not unleash the full gush of his antic humor and infectious delight in the grotesque in his paintings of the contemporary world but these are not altogether suppressed. *Wild Thyme and Violets*, apparently set in the late 18th century—nearer to us than either *Lyonesse* (which must be situated in the neighborhood of 600 A.D.) or the impossibly distant Cugelian future—uses a dose of 'antic grotesquerie' midway between *Lyonesse* and the 'mysteries'. Could the Vancian tales all be placed in the same 'locale', indexed against a time curve with 'fantasy' at either end and 'normalcy' in the middle? This 'normalcy'—as in *Green Magic* which steps us into the green realm, a place we encounter again in *Lyonesse*—is hidden from 'fantasy' by a thin veil only. Given the similarities between Wayness Tamm's adventures (*Cadwal*) and those of Betty Haverhill (*Dark Ocean*), perhaps there is only a single Vancian locale: Earth and its galactic environs?

In a category by itself is *The Stark*, conceived in the 1950s. This compelling text is another Vancian link between our contemporary real world, and the science fiction future. Though it may be the ultimate Vancian just-so story, like the rest of Vance's Gaeen Reach based stories, it is rooted in but goes beyond the mere logic of its place and time. The Star Arc, a giant spaceship, is not a mere convention for generating exotic adventure, but a microcosm where the clash of peoples, cultures, nations, philosophies, religions, ideas and individual passions create an evolving history of syncretic sweep. The seeding of the galaxy effected by the Stark is not, however, necessarily an origin of the Gaeen Reach. In *The Stark* travel between stars remains calculated in decades and generations, rather than days. On such a basis the transposition of an Earth-like situation of communication and trade to the galactic scale cannot be realized. If, however, a 'star drive' were later to come into existence, the expanding Imperium would discover already inhabited worlds and, as several times happens in Vance, humanity would be led to wonder how it came to be, as in this passage from *The Chasch*:

Reith gave a laugh of bitter amusement. "I've been asking myself the same question: how did men come to Tschai?"

A truly systematic Vancian 'chronological topology' and 'phylogenical anthropology' would yield insights into the nature and message of the oeuvre. It would also include things I have made no mention of here: the 'fantasy' beings on a scale from gods and demons like Laoomi, Sadlark, Underherd and Blikdak, through the various mythical and fairy creatures such as sandestins and falloys, to para-beings like Shimrod and Kul, to say

nothing of plants, small animals, insects and microbes, as well as rock, metals and gasses.



Quote of the Month

from Derek W. Benson

I sought to express truth in all its vehemence. This is a danger. A meaning must be uttered idly, without emphasis. The listener is under no compulsion to react; his customary defenses are not in place, the meaning enters his mind. —Jack Vance, *The Palace of Love*



About the CLS and Other, Only Peripherally Related, Matters

by Till Noever

CLS 17 will be published together with this issue of COSMOPOLIS. It contains a story from Joel Anderson and several chapters of *Coralia*.

Though the CLS has been published on a monthly basis for several issues now, I won't be able to guarantee the same for the near future. Other tasks are occupying my attention and leave little time for focus on CLS matters. I am ineffably grateful for the existence of one Malcolm Bowers, the guy who composes the CLS. He lives in the same city as I, he knows what he's doing, he's an editor who routinely spots a gazillion mistakes I miss—and berates me for not using my spell-checker, when he knows darn well that I have! But I'm not complaining; not at all. Above all, when Malcolm says he's going to get something done, it will be so. I wish there were more of him.

Anyway, CLS 18 might have to wait until the middle of December, maybe just in time for Christmas. A few words on what's occupying my time to such an extent that the CLS has to suffer. It's the logistic nightmare created by the decision to produce and direct a movie.

All my own fault, of course. I mean, nobody said "do this, or else!" But after years of writing novels and film-scripts, and after recently watching a script being made into a movie—which may or may not ever go beyond the boundaries of New Zealand—and seeing how, despite its merits, it ended up *not* telling the story I wanted to tell . . .

It occurred to me that letting someone else film your story is like starting to tell a joke and then being forced

to let someone else—someone who almost but not *quite* gets it, tell the remaining half. So, I picked out an old script of mine—a sort of romantic comedy of disguises and errors of judgment—re-wrote it for a low-budget context, and said to myself "let's do it".

Ha!

Writing—or so I found out when I started to do something a little different!—is actually a comparatively 'easy' activity. Let's face it, you sit behind your keyboard and do your thing. Any problems associated with or arising from this activity are entirely of your own making: story, plot, characterization, symbols, syntax, style. It's all between you and the keyboard. All problems get solved—or not—at that level. Apart from the occasional pesky editor, no real people are involved. You're a 'writer'. You 'write', literally. Contrary to what people—writers usually! who else?—will have you believe, it's not such a thing of mystery. Let's face it, there's really nothing much more to it than expressing, in some intelligible and hopefully entertaining and engaging form, the contents of your daydreams, your own joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, and the few basic stories that mankind has told for uncounted generations and throughout all cultures. It's really not such a big deal. Really!

Furthermore, writing is 'safe'. The people you make up are as you want them to be, or as they turn out *in your head*. No real people are involved. The characters may have aspects of people you've known or seen, but they are still just *in your head*. They may, at some later time, end up in your readers' heads as well, but there, too, they are imaginary—as is what they *do*. The swords they wield are *in your head*. So are the dastardly plots they conspire to execute or their romantic encounters. A flick of the fingers across a keyboard, a few changed words or paragraphs, and presto!, they do something else. Whole worlds of possibility wiped out with the press of the 'delete' key.

The writer of fiction is as close to a god as one can humanly get. I hesitate to suggest that that's why some people write fiction, but the idea doesn't seem too far fetched. I've created enough worlds and characters to feel the strange power that comes with it. Illusory it may be, but the sensation of it is definite. To counteract the pernicious influence of this feeling I tend to surrender to the story and the characters, confining my 'godly' activities to the setting-up of the situation, and an occasional fatidic intrusion to prod the story in one or another direction.

Writing is easy. Basically.

Having said that, I know a whole universe of 'struggling' writers ('struggling' not with the problems of getting published, but in the sense of struggling with themselves and whatever problems they have in that area) is going to descend on me and call me every derisive

name under the sun, moon, and stars. However, I'm unrepentant. I know there are a gazillion of those 'struggling' writers out there, who'd dismiss my dismissal of their grand internal conflicts as arrogant and demeaning. But, let's face it, their struggles have nothing to do with 'writing' as such, but rather with their more general personal problems, inadequacies, deficiencies, hang-ups, self-esteem issues, or religious, political, or sexual-identity conflicts. That they picked on writing as the medium for catharsis is incidental. They could also have chosen to become composers, painters, actors, computer-hackers—or serial killers or terrorists for that matter. We should probably be grateful that some of them chose writing. It's easier to ignore than serial killing. I think. . .

The point is that there's nothing inherent in 'writing' that makes it into anything else but the very *safe* activity of fingers pushing keys on a keyboard (or, if you're a dinosaur, writing in illegible longhand), putting one's daydreams or the contents of other kinds of mental processes into words. Like other forms of art, writing requires skill, but that's about it. ('Requires'? Maybe I should take that back. There are plenty of illiterate morons who have the audacity to call themselves 'writers'.) The only other prerequisite for becoming a writer of fiction is that one has to have stories to tell (again, maybe I should be careful calling it a 'prerequisite!'), and that one has to love telling them.

And I love telling these stories. And I didn't like what happened when I left the ultimate telling to someone else. So. . .

If only it were as easy and inconsequential as that!

My glib decision to stop surrendering the ultimate telling of my stories—at least those implemented as screen-plays—to others, suddenly threw me into another world of 'story telling'; one which a lot of writers avoid like the plague. I know this, because I've discussed it with them at some length. The spectrum of screen-writers (the ones most affected by this issue) ranges from those who'd happily undertake to direct their scripts to those who recoil at the very mention of such a possibility.

The latter's trepidation, whether they know it or not, is well founded; more than, I suspect, they can possibly know. For, once you step away from the keyboard and the world of the imagination and fictional characters, into the real world, you cease to be god-like. Your control over anything but the actual words in the script drops to virtually zero. You become instantly human. The contingencies of the real world descend on you from all sides, and there's no way you're going to make them disappear with a few deftly-written paragraphs or stylistic twists. Production of a movie, and especially a low-budget one (and we're talking less than a thousand dollars here!), is a logistic quagmire of un-thought-of

contingencies, unforeseens, and things-that-have-to-be-done-because-if-you-don't-you're-in-trouble.

The most humbling one—yes, 'humbling' is the appropriate word—has to do with *people*, and it's this aspect I really wanted to talk about—for I have learned something very remarkable over the last few weeks; something that hit me like a ton of bricks and quite possibly has left me a significantly changed person. And that before the movie is even being shot!

You see, *here* is the story (the script), and *there* are these actors, who have come for the auditions/screen-tests, and somehow whoever gets picked from over *there* will have to be put into the story *here*, and it all has to *work*. The thing is, the people one picks are never those one's imagined. Not even close! That's because the people one has imagined are cobbled together from people one knew, saw, heard of, or whatever; and those actors are *not* those people. About all they have in common with one's imaginary characters are age, sex, aspects of their appearance, language, and maybe some aspects of their internal lives: hopes, fears, aspirations, *angst*, longings, prejudices, and so on.

Those actors one finally settles on (let me say that I didn't 'settle'—the ones I ended up with are so darn good it scares me!) have to perform some magical existential meld with the characters in the script. This process is two-way, because the actors have to take on aspects of the imaginary people from the inside of the author's head; and the latter in turn have to (and this process has to happen in the writer/director's head) adapt to the real people who are going to 'play' them.

This process of merging the real and the imaginary is fascinating. It goes on inside my own head and actually changes *me* with it. This change isn't under my control any more, however; and for a little tin-pot god of the written word that's unsettling.

Tell you what else is unsettling: responsibility. I mean, I've been married for almost 25 years and have children since almost that long. So, responsibility for the welfare of others is not an unknown factor in my life. But this here is different. All of a sudden I've acquired this new 'family' of people I previously wouldn't have known from Adam or Eve, but whose lives, at least for the duration of the making of the film, now have become closely entwined with my own—and whom I will get to know better (and by whom I will get known) than I know anybody but my immediate family. These folks have to rearrange their schedules and lives to suit my shooting plans; often at some considerable inconvenience to themselves. All of that for no immediate pay, but merely for a prospect of a contracted share in any profits arising from the project. This goes not just for the actors, but also the cinematographer, the continuity person, the sound operator, and the makeup artist.

And why are these lunatics doing this? Because, for some strange reason they actually trust me to pull this off. Given the size and scope of the enterprise, and the fact that I've no record of directing *anything*, let alone a feature-length movie, that's... well, it's strange and disturbing and humbling.

Because I can't just decide to take a day off and say "I don't feel like it right now." You can do that when you're sitting behind a keyboard: "Not in the mood tonight. Maybe I'll write some more tomorrow."

Sorry, not this time. A whole bunch of people, real ones, have chosen to throw their lot in with me, and all of a sudden I wonder if I can really pull this off—and I know that I *have* to because there's really no option. All of a sudden it's not about telling my story all the way, but about much more. And yet it turns out that, in a strange sort of way it *is* still about the story, only now it's become something different, and when the movie is finally done I know it's going to be 'more' than anything I've ever just 'written'.

It's not going to stop me from going back to my planned, or unfinished or to-be-rewritten, novels, of course. There is something about building worlds and characters that doesn't want to let me go. Sometimes they are almost more real than 'real' ones. But I think, maybe whatever comes next might be just a little different.

Maybe better.

I hope.



Vance Women Answers

- A. Jerdian Chanseith, *The Face*
- B. Fay Bursill, *The Rapparee*
- C. Sessily Veder, *Araminta Station*
- D. Schaine Madduc, *The Domains of Koryphon*
- E. Kathryn, *The World Between*
- F. Jean Parlier, *Abercrombie Station*
- G. Wayness Tamm, *Throy*
- H. Maerio, *Marune: Alastor 933*
- I. Alice Wroke, *The Book of Dreams*
- J. The Jacynth Martin, *Clarges*
- K. Meril Rohan, *The Blue World*
- L. Skirlet Hutsenreiter, *Night Lamp*
- M. Sune, *Maske: Thaery*
- N. Janika, *The Dogtown Tourist Agency*
- O. Fiamella of Thousand Candles, *Coup de Grâce*
- P. Margaret Haven, *Nopalgarth*
- Q. Mardien, *Crusade to Maxus*
- R. Lyssel Bynnoc, *Night Lamp*
- S. Spanchetta Clattuc, *Araminta Station*
- T. Dame Vinzie, *Night Lamp*
- U. Shierl, *Çuyal of Sfere*

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

Attacks on Rhoads are what anyone with strong opinions has to put up with and I want to make clear that, if I withdraw from the argument, it is *for no other reason* than because I do not have anything significant to add to whatever I have written so far and that I will defend Rhoads' 'right' to appear in COSMOPOLIS to the last.

I will take the occasion, though, to point out that Mr. Gharst was a bit disingenuous when he merely said that his "*statistics*" come from "Economist Walter Williams of the Center for the American Experiment in Minneapolis" as if this were the ultimate, well-known objective source. He might for instance have mentioned that the Center supports Reagonomics. But that he would dismiss federal sources on such a subject was hint enough. The center can be looked up on the Web and interesting it is. One might also want to look up Mediatransparency.org on the subject of the Center's finances which is also interesting.

There is also an interesting article on the subject of "*opportunity to advance into the oppressive and greedy wealthy class*" by John Cassidy in the September 23, 2002 issue of The New Yorker.

Regards,

Alain Schremmer



To the Editor, in response to Bruce Downing,

If I did not publish any letter from Bruce Downing during my watch as COSMOPOLIS editor it was because I took it for a personal communication. My unwavering policy was to publish all letters intended for publication; if I misunderstood Bruce Downing's intentions, I apologize.

As for what Bruce Downing calls my 'Catholic fervor', it is no business of his. I have nothing to say in COSMOPOLIS about his anti-Catholic fervor because, likewise, it is no business of mine. My COSMOPOLIS writings are about the VIE and the work of Jack Vance—subjects which, in my understanding, are fairly large though not infinite; for example, the anti-religious attacks of which I have been the subject these past months have succeeded in impeding and delaying project work; they have thus made themselves, sadly, apropos to the VIE. Other persons may have other views about the extent of the subjects 'VIE' and 'Vance'; they are welcome to read, and submit to, COSMOPOLIS according to their criteria.

Is Bruce Downing serious in his proposal that discussion of religion in COSMOPOLIS be restricted to the opinions of Jack Vance? Does Jack Vance not have other

fish to fry than gratification of the censorial passions of a vociferous strike-force of anti-Christians? Can they not do their dirty work all by themselves? My comments on religion have included exclusively: a) exactly what Bruce Downing suggests, namely discussions of Vance's views of religion and; b) discussions of other people's discussions of religion in COSMOPOLIS. From me there has been no gratuitous word on religion—much less proselytizing—in COSMOPOLIS. I would be amused to see the contortions of a Bruce Downing attempting to demonstrate the contrary. I assume Bruce Downing does not object that I discuss other people's COSMOPOLIS submissions, or is it a privilege he reserves to himself?

However, let us assume, following Bruce Downing's hints, that Vance disagreed with some opinion on some subject in COSMOPOLIS; would Bruce Downing take this as a reason to censure that opinion, and how he suggest such a measure be applied?

Paul Rhoads

P.S. The annoyance to which Bruce Downing subjected me in COSMOPOLIS 31 is a function of the existence of the VIE and of COSMOPOLIS itself. Another function is the above adjustment of 'strains and imbalances in the cosmic equilibrium'.



Closing Words

Thanks to proofreaders Philip Cordes, Linda Escher, Rob Friefeld, and Jim Pattison.

COSMOPOLIS Submissions: when preparing articles for COSMOPOLIS, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send plain text. For COSMOPOLIS 33, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is November 25.

Derek W. Benson, Editor



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

Suan Yong, Process Integrity:

suan@cs.wisc.edu

Joel Riedesel, Work Flow Commissar:

jriedesel@jnana.com

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@io.com

John Schwab, Archivist:

jschwab@dslnorthwest.net

Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Ombudsman:

hans@vie.tmfweb.nl

Derek Benson, COSMOPOLIS Editor:

benson@online.no

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