
COSMOPOLIS

Number 34



January, 2003

Contents

Work Tsar Status Report	1
<i>by Joel Riedesel</i>	
38's Crucible	1
<i>by Paul Rhoads</i>	
Wave 1 delivery progress, Texas A&M, French translations, Board Review thoughts, VIE jobs available, COSMOPOLIS bound, and <i>The Dragon Masters</i> game	
Nectar of the Gods	6
<i>by Chuck King</i>	
The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation part II	
An Interesting Place to Visit	9
<i>by Lynne Hardy</i>	
Roleplaying in the Dying Earth	
Letters to the Editor	11
<i>Alain Schremmer and Jim Pattison</i>	
Closing Words	12
VIE Contacts	12
The Fine Print	12

Work Tsar Status Report

as of Dec. 28, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

WAVE 1

Volumes 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 31 have been printed. Volumes 20, 29, 30, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 are in the process of being printed. That's 17 out of the 22. The last five volumes are being finalized.

WAVE 2

There are now only 7 texts left in the Monkey step and 13 texts currently in Techno. TI continues along and some texts are already entering the composition review cycle. PP has even been active already. Expect PP work to become busy soon.

I hope that everyone had a pleasant holiday season!



38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Wave One Delivery

The question in everyone's mind: *when do my books arrive?* By now a good many are printed and probably bound. I have seen a first set of unbound proofs, six volumes worth—several weeks ago. Now that Christmas is winding down we can refocus our attention on sending books. All volunteers, including those I forgot to mention, should step to the fore! The plan remains to descend upon a theoretical *auberge* or Inn of some ilk, in the neighborhood of Cologne Monsese, an industrial suburb of Milan with wonderful Milan on one side and the poetic landscapes of the Po valley on the other. Of course we won't be there to fill our eyes with seeing but to pack books in boxes! Thomas Rydbeck's estimate of *eight people for five days* remains unchallenged, though we will, necessarily, make do with whatever we get. The time will be late February or early March. Volunteers will have travel, hotel and food expenses paid, in full if necessary. If you can free yourself for a week in Italy of hard work and as much fun as we can collectively generate:

Please contact me if you wish, or hope, to volunteer:
prhoads@club-internet.fr

Bob Lacovara, in coordination with Sfera and the usual aid from Suan Yong, has been making mailing calculations. Our basic plan remains to do a bulk shipping by container to America and to send European orders (about 25% of total) locally. We may even do some European distribution by volunteer car. Australia and Asia remain a problem and we may need an Australian volunteer willing to receive a bulk shipment to reduce costs to Australian and Asian subscribers. Contact Bob Lacovara if you are able and willing. A loading platform may or may not be necessary.

Packing and shipping is where our volunteer structure is weakest. This sort of punctual task is not facilitated by a world-wide reservoir of work-at-home potential, but requires a cadre of non-virtual bodies at the place to do the thing.

For this Milan trip, at last, there will certainly be a COSMOPOLIS photo-reportage.

Meanwhile Wave 2 seems to be off to a running start with the usual suspects bravely doing the dirty work: Steve Sherman and the TI gang, Damien Jones and Suan Yong with their troops of trained Imps and Monkeys, and, of course, those great structural columns of the VIE edifice, VIE Chief Engineer Bob Lacovara unwearyingly counting the beans, and John Schwab (a.k.a. Hercules) running the archive, effectuating file transfers, and directing the details of Composition Team work. See John's newly enhanced Composition tracking page on the site! Chris Corley and the Postproofers, Robin Rouch and her Proud Few, and chief Cat Wrangler Ron Chernich and his Techno-cats, are all back in the saddle, with Hans van der Veeke in his habitual role of outrider, herding in wandering volunteers. Derek Benson and his editorial team maintain COSMOPOLIS' high standards through thick and thin, including recent vacations. It continues to be a pleasure and a privilege to work with all of you.



Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

We are thrilled to learn from Christine Shupala, Associate Director for Systems and Technical Services, that the *Mary and Jeff Bell Library* at Texas A&M, one of the most prestigious State universities in America, is a VIE subscriber. Dr. David Mead, a scholar of science fiction and member of the English Department, offers a graduate class in science fiction and has asked his university to subscribe to the VIE—both for his course and his own research.

We applaud Dr. Mead, and his university, for this action which, in the manner of *strakh*, confers augmented prestige upon all parties to the transaction.



The French Connection

I just learned from Arlette Roseblum—generally considered the best French translator of Vance—that when she informed Jacques Goimard—head of *Press Pocket* and French Sci-Fi publisher and Maven *par excellence*—that the VIE was preparing, and had indeed in many cases already prepared, *ne variatur* editions of Vance texts, he was extremely interested. His subsequent contact with Vance's French agent, Lenclude, may well be the reason Lenclude contacted Norma, who put them in touch with us, in order to get texts for the correction of extant translations. Patrick Dusoulier, official VIE contact for these transactions, reports that, after initial contacts, all has been quiet on this front.



Idle Thoughts of an Idle Board Reviewer

Doing Board Review of *The King of Thieves* I was amused to come across Vance's use of the Sci-Fi burlesque term 'Men-men' to define the human, or humanoid, primitives of the story. *The King of Thieves* seems to have been written in 1947. I am not sure when Wood wrote *Flesh Garden* but Vance's off-hand use of this savory bit of satire suggests a reference to Wood while the latter's orchestrated *mis en scene* of the term suggests it is original with him.

The Dogtown Tourist Agency, written in 1973, is based on a subject that, once again, only came to the foreground of people's consciences several decades later, namely: Globalization. The mystery that confronts Hetzel is a *Sci-Fi decor* version of buying Manhattan for a trunkful of glass beads or paying Indonesians 14 cents an hour to make radios. It is perhaps not surprising that a merchant seaman is the author.

Does the story do more than cleverly exploit the discontinuities created by the encounter of different cultures? Does it, I mean, teach us anything? We should be permitted to think, after the Bali bombing, that at least some Indonesians hold values radically different from Western ones. To say nothing of the Muslim question, and quite apart from bombings, and with due respect for our common humanity, there are surely aspects of, for example, Balinese culture that offer special joys to its members only. Ardent pursuance of desiderata dictated by one's cultural norms is common to all human groups, and if we take the Gomaz biological-cultural impulsions as a metaphor for purely cultural ones, there we are. Swindlers use tactics based on knowledge of these desiderata. But in the case of the Gomaz, are they worse off for abandoning their *Love wars* in favor of abundant, if artificial, *chir*? The Indian woman grinding corn on her stoop may be picturesque, and useful to the promotion of tourism, but she might prefer to buy her corn pre-ground in a supermarket. The real effects of 'globalization' on the 'third world' and our vision of those effects are not necessarily equivalent. Our anthropological, aesthetic and sentimental lenses may introduce distortions.

Though board review of this text has not yet taken place, *Freitzke's Turn* treats the same theme on the medical/biological plane. Kidney and eye transfers from places like India and Moldavia to the first-world, thanks to our money and technology, is a phenomenon referenced by Vance with his usual obliqueness. Conwit Clent's missing organ, though a drastic set-back for himself, is, even in his own opinion, a risible matter. The name Faurence Dacre, whose origin would seem to be the French word *fiacre*, a carriage of a type often used for funeral processions, mixed with Florence (as in Nightingale) irresistibly suggests a delicate declination of the name 'Dr. Death'. Dacre is one of Vance's few *mad*

scientists, along with Palafox. Sabin Cru is Dacre's greatest victim, both as guinea pig and member source, and this native fisherman is not in the same cultural situation as Clent, the playboy millionaire. That Dacre saves Sabin Cru's life is, once again, a vancian hint at the thorny nature of these issues.



Other VIE Jobs

If there are people kicking around out there itching to do extra VIE work, there are some special jobs, unrelated to actual book production.

THE VIE ELECTRONIC TEXT ARCHIVE

It would be good if someone would take charge of preparation of the final VIE electronic output. Already publishers are starting to clamor for VIE texts and because our work is organized for creating typeset pdf documents we continue to lack clean, correct electronic texts for others to use. This work would start with the RTF-diff and bis file material, which include a text file extracted from the final, or penultimate, pdf text (used for electronic checking of the textual aspect of the page set stories), the 'RTF-diff report' (documenting differences between this text and the 'cor-bf', or 'board final' text) and the 'bis-file' which contains all final changes. Output would be a set of electronic files textually identical to the VIE books but with only a minimum of formatting: paragraph indents, text breaks, in-text footnotes. This collection of documents would become the essence of the VIE electronic heritage.

VIE EDITORIAL DOCUMENTATION

A special hors-series volume documenting VIE editorial restorations would be a fascinating and unique document of interest to philologically inclined Vance readers or anyone interested in 20th century editorial practices. The essence of this book would be a catalogue of significant VIE corrections to extant publications. It would include introductory essays by TI folk on our methods and discoveries, many of which could be adapted from extant documents including the TI handbook and COSMOPOLIS articles and others prepared specially. The catalogue would be a list of textual changes, referencing the VIE volumes, and thus be a companion volume to the set. My own idea for its structure would be to exclude certain categories of corrections (obvious typos, spelling, hyphenation) which could be covered in a general way in the introductory essays or introductions to given texts. Such text introductions could be prepared from comments in the *cor* files and the textual history documents. All actual word changes would be documented, with references to MS and other published versions, and

pertinent TI comments from the *cor* file could be appended. In fact the most challenging part of the work would be choosing which of these comments to include.

But there are many ways to organize such a book. It would be a good deal of work but not arduous since all the material is sitting there, nicely organized, just waiting to be put together. The SC (security check) diffing methods could be used to locate each change that wanted documentation. Related commentary could then be extracted from *cor* and *bis* files, and the proper page reference found in the VIE volumes (*bis* files could help here since they often reference final pdf version pages).

Anyone interested in taking on such jobs should contact me.



COSMOPOLIS Bound

One VIE volunteer has expressed interest in this idea:

"...the process of putting Vance's oeuvre into...beautiful and pristine form has been incredibly inspiring, and it would be nice to be able to sit by the fireplace, look at all those beautiful books, and flip through COSMOPOLIS while reminiscing about how it all came to pass... My vision for a COSMOPOLIS collection would be folio-sized... a coffee-table-style book. I'm planning to make one myself... I'd bet that plenty of others would be interested in having something like this."

This is indeed a nice idea. COSMOPOLIS is already formatted so *all* that remains to be done is 1) wait until the last issue comes out, 2) divide the issues into equal sized volumes, 3) choose paper and cover design and materials, 4) get the price and collect subscriptions, 5) print, 6) deliver.

Naturally anyone can make a unique set of bound COSMOPOLIS for themselves in the comfort of their own home with a little help from their local binder. To produce a 'standard' or 'official' bound version there will have to be sufficient interest, and it would be a post-Wave 2 activity.



The Dragon Masters: the Game

Most COSMOPOLIS readers may never have heard of *Play by Mail* (PBM) games. When I was contacted, a few months ago, by Vlad Degen—head of *Last World Games* and friend of the Vances—who informed me he had acquired the PBM 'game' rights to *The Dragon Masters*, this was the first I had ever heard of such games myself. Vlad invited me to participate in the elaboration of the game, rousing the

hibernating game designer that lurks in my breast. A few months later, which is to say 'now', the game is extant. Contact Vlad Degen at lastworldgames@yahoo.com if you wish to play.

There exist three games based on Vance's work: the *Dying Earth* game by Pelgrane Press in England, the *Lyonesse* game, by a Swiss group, and now LWG's *Dragon Masters*. These games are not of the same type. The first two are 'role-playing' games, a form of gaming which began in the 1970s with 'Dungeons and Dragons' and has become a thriving genre. I have always been an enemy of role-playing games because I regard them as an unhealthy mixture of theatre and game. The 'player' seeks a virtual—ersatz and impoverished—experience in a milieu that intrigues and seduces him, as a personage he is not.* My disapprobation may mean little, or even nothing, to these role-playing game designers but Vance's unequivocal objection to vicarious experience would seem to be more pertinent than even in the case of vicarious experience sought in the worlds of his own stories! Still, it may be asked: what is the difference between reading Vance and playing a role-playing game based on a Vance story; are they not both vicarious experiences? Does the reader not identify with the characters in the story and thus 'live' it? The only difference between the reader and the player, they will claim, is a slight one of scenario change.

A game, even the most simple and abstract, is a sort of model life, in the measure life can be understood as a problem to be solved or 'game to be played'. Chess, Checkers, Go, or any game, is a 'world' in which the parameters, compared to real life, are extremely restricted so that genuine mastery of the global situation may be achieved. Seen as a game, life is mysterious and can often be extremely frustrating to play. Games therefore are a way to enjoy the 'problem' or 'game' aspect of life in small doses without any real-life consequences to failure and with the chance of catching a sniff of that divine odor of mastery which eludes us in the infinite arena of the real. Games are fun in themselves, amusing ways of passing time alone or with others, a refreshing vacation from weight of the real

*To give an idea of the sort of thing that is involved in role-playing games here is one player's description of the process of 'character creation' in the *Dying Earth* game: "Character creation is easy. The Game Moderator selects the power level of the campaign from Cugel-level (low), Turjan-level (medium), and Rhialto (high). This determines the initial number of character creation points available and maximum for character abilities—these maxima can be exceeded by paying extortionate numbers of creation points. Players who are willing to submit to the whims of dice rolls can gain bonus creation points for their characters."

'Extortionate' is an interesting neologism, perhaps peculiar to the Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) world? A more truly vancian set of ratings would have been: low: Bunderwal-level (inept but pretentious), medium: Lodermulch-level (honest and true but crude and also despised), high: Soldink-level (hypocritical and tenacious).

world, a harmless outlet for our natural hungers for mastery and success.

A work of literature on the other hand, or any artistic work, is not this at all. Degraded literature and art indeed provides only flatteries and gratifications, but real art confronts us with an awakening view of the world we truly live in, showing, or hinting at, its adamant complexities. It is a perversion of its essence to convert an awakening experience into a vicarious one. For real life is not limited to the boundaries of our pleasures and desires. It may include them but it includes innumerable other and contradicting elements. Vicarious experience, no matter how 'rich', is, by its nature, limited to a truncated version of life narrowly modeled on our pleasures and desires. We make love to desirable partners without ever a thought for changing diapers or paying college educations; we slaughter enemies without ever a thought for hospital bills, or the chagrin of bereaved wives and mothers, even if the latter is Madam Grendel weeping in her submarine home. We may ourselves be 'slaughtered' but our game self has several more 'lives', and if not we can just start the game anew. Vicarious experience may include 'disagreeable' aspects but in the virtual environment of vicarious experience they are so drained of their sense that they too can become aestheticized objects of desire. The indulgence in demonic imagery of many rock videos is a case in point; there are many people who find skulls covered in gore appealing in some kind of way. If the skulls were real they might be less interested, and if it were their own skull their interest might diminish further—though not necessarily. Those who, consciously or unconsciously, engage in devil worship find their ultimate 'pleasure' in different degrees of self-immolation. This is the profound root of horror.

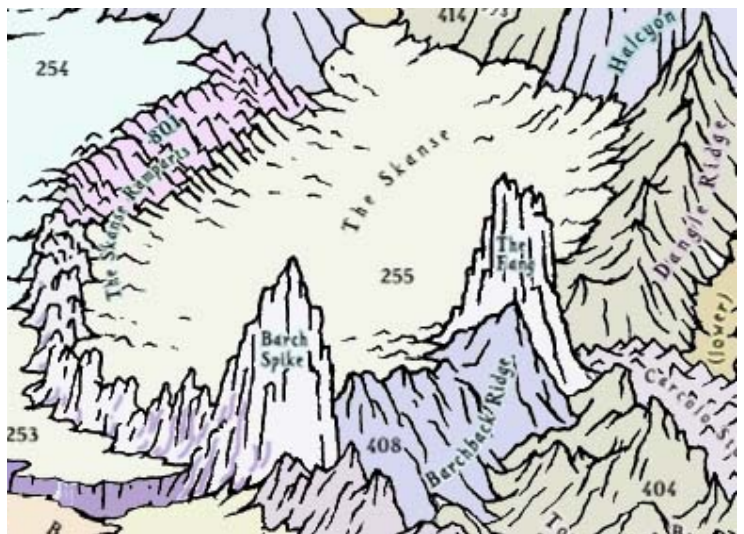
Play by Mail games have a certain association with role-playing games because they seem to have begun as a form of Dungeons and Dragons. However, though role-playing elements can be cobbled onto them, by essence PBM games are merely a species of normal board or strategy game adapted to the electronic environment and the Internet. What distinguishes them from classical board games is that, thanks to the Internet as well as commercial exigencies, dozens of players participate, and, thanks to computing, moves or turns are calculated simultaneously and occur, for technical game reasons, only once or twice a week. The main play activity is inter-turn communication with other players to coordinate actions. PBM games also have another source: the so called 'simulation game'. This is a species of game that arose in the 1960s, at first as a way to study, or familiarize oneself with the details of historical battles. The Avalon Hill company put out a particularly successful game of this type which simulated the various North African battles of World War 2. Most simulation

games are too complex to be fun for non-enthusiasts, and when they are they lose much of their historical interest. My own gaming interests are concentrated on a problematic middle ground between classic and simulation games. John Foley and I, in one of our early collaborations, developed such a game on the theme of submarine warfare in the Atlantic. This game, I believe, is a perfect compromise between the two genres, classic and simulation. It was a hybrid of a glorified form of 'checkers', and 'battleship'. For us boys it was both fun, because easy to play, and interesting historically because problems of submarine warfare, if only crudely, were made evident, including such relations as the relative speeds of cargo ships, submerged and surfaced submarines and destroyers, the efficacy or lack thereof of torpedoes, the capacities of sonar and depth-charge patterns. We named the game *Wolfpack* and presented it to a company called S&T (Strategy and Tactics) which produced a magazine and a new simulation game each month. The S&T people patted us on the head and sent us home and shortly thereafter S&T published a game called *Wolfpack*, our game larded with vast quantities of sluggish detail, an indigestible mass of rules, charts and calculations. In this form the game had no success and quickly slipped into oblivion. Having been warned of this very danger by my father, we had taken the precaution, before showing it, of mailing the game to ourselves via registered mail and preserving the sealed package—an object I still possess. It would have been possible to confront S&T with evidence of their bad faith but these were still the pre-litigious days and we were young and innocent! I am glad I never did anything about it; it could only have been a painful experience, and I learned a useful lesson.

I think PBM games have a source in 'simulation' games, not from the historical battle angle, but for reasons that have to do with the nature of PBM itself. Because it is so easy for a computer to process great masses of detail these games can encompass myriad elements. Each player need only give general indications and the computer does the dirty work of calculation. Furthermore, for people to play a game together on the Internet (the advantage being that the Internet makes it possible for players to gather) the turns must be played at a snails pace of one or two moves per week because there has to be enough time for people from Australia and Finland to discuss the situation before each move, and then enough must happen each turn to give the game a sense of drama and event. Where the classic D&D game could be played in an afternoon, PBM had to find a new mode, so they are structured to 'simulate' the events of a 'year'. The player is put in control of a battery of elements, often the direction of a kingdom. This analysis is speculative since I am familiar with only a small corner of the PBM world.

I do not see the 'simulation' aspect as essential to the PBM format, and eventually purer PBM games may evolve. Meanwhile PBM systems are vast and unwieldy programs which cannot be either created or modified with ease, and the simulation approach, for this reason also, will continue to dominate in the foreseeable future.

LGW currently runs several games, all variations on the theme of petty barons battling it out for control of a world; the *Dragon Masters* game, likewise, puts the player in the situation of a Joaz Banbeck or Ervis Carcolo, a leader of a domain of Aerlith controlling an army of dragons. The player must manage and develop his resources and army, and the winner is the eventual tyrant of Aerlith. The exigencies of PBM, namely that dozens of players participate, required that the Aerlith game map define areas well beyond those described in the story. So, in addition to Banbeck Vale and Happy Valley, there are over a hundred other domains, along with mountain ranges, crevasses, cliffs, seas and so on; over ten times more area.



The resultant map may be viewed at: <http://207.229.114.106/dmgsite/images/dmmap.gif> Creating it was an electronic adventure for me because it is the first 'electronic image' of any importance I have ever made. Begun on paper, the base image drawing, with scanning and 'stitching', was built into the final map blank, and then colored and so on with electronic tools. The working files were sometimes over 50MB and manipulating them with Adobe Illustrator 10 on a computer putt-putting along on a Pentium II made it one of those *adventures in the extreme* so popular these days. Hundreds of names were required; among others Patrick Dusoulier supplied me with a useful list. Norma Vance also offered a name inspired by her recent reading of Chuck King's article in *COSMOPOLIS 33* about Whiskey; the Vances had recently sampled new whiskies and a certain 'Cragmore' had

appealed to them. Norma suggested the variation 'Cragmoor'.

The *Dragon Masters* game map may be an innovation because it functions both like a regular chess-board style 'map' but at the same time as a 3D illustration. The colors serve both to define areas as areas and to reinforce the illusion of space and environment.

As for dragon battles—the heart of the game—they are structured by a system, inspired by the story but elaborated in several directions for the needs of the game, whereby different dragons, with different weapons, on different terrains and in different situations (ambush, charge, enfilade, defense, etc.) are more or less effective against other dragons. This is an exploitation of the 'rock-paper-scissors' idea. For example: Juggers can wallop any other dragon except the Fiend. The Fiend armed with tail-ball can beat the Juggler but is bested by the Blue Horror, and so on. As for the battles themselves, they are resolved by a system of calculation based on player chosen Moods and Modes which affect the intentions and bloody-mindedness of given Platoons of dragons. All these factors are simply indicated by the player and the system does the rest. This game is like a combination of Chess, Risk, Stratego and Monopoly with the battle of Austerlitz thrown in.

Those interested in studying the *Dragon Masters* game 'World Book' will find it, now or in the near future, linked to the game site:

<http://207.229.114.106/dmgsite/index.html>

Fans of a certain illustrator of *The Dragon Masters* will find new examples of his efforts in this direction as part of the game site.



Nectar of the Gods

The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation

by Chuck King ("If we modeled ourselves after you, sir, there'd be no room to move for the whiskey." — Sail 25)

PART II: WHISKEYS OF SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

This is part two of a three-part series of articles on the appreciation of whiskey. Based on references scattered throughout his works, Vance seems to have some appreciation for the Water of Life, and at the very least a number of his readers enjoy a wee dram from time to time. In the last issue I gave some general background on how whiskey is made and some tasting tips; this installment goes into more depth about the whiskeys of Scotland and Ireland, and next issue will focus on American whiskeys.

"Scotch on the rocks, so long as the dream goes on."

— *The Deadly Isles*

It's an open question whether whiskey was invented in Scotland or Ireland, but even if they didn't invent it, the Scots have certainly embraced the spirit and produced some of the very finest examples of the distiller's and blender's arts.

Scotch whiskeys are divisible into two main categories: malt whiskey and grain whiskey. Malt whiskey is whiskey made from a mashbill of 100% malted barley. Grain whiskey is anything else, but usually Scottish grain whiskey is a light-bodied spirit made from a mashbill of predominantly corn or wheat. Malt whiskeys are made in pot stills in relatively small batches at numerous small malt whiskey distilleries scattered around Scotland; grain whiskeys are made at a small handful of big industrial facilities using continuous stills.

Scotland is home to more distilleries by far than any other country. At any given time, there are around a hundred different distilleries making whiskey in Scotland, compared to only about a dozen or so in the United States. A wide variety of whiskeys is important in Scotland, because most of the Scotch whiskey sold is *blended* Scotch. Good blends may contain dozens of different whiskeys, carefully chosen and balanced to produce the desired flavor and aroma characteristics. (J&B Ultima, at the far end of the spectrum, is a blend of 128 different Scotch whiskeys, including some from distilleries no longer extant.)

Most Scotch found in the average bar or liquor store is blended Scotch. Dewar's, Chivas Regal, J&B, Cutty Sark, Famous Grouse, Johnnie Walker in its various colors: all blends. Blends don't get a lot of respect these days—single malts have more snob appeal—but blending is a true art, and the best blends can be as flavorful and complex as good single malts. But, the worst Scotches are also generally blends.

Malt whiskeys tend to be very strongly flavored. Some consider this a benefit; see the discussion of single malt Scotch below. Historically, however, the general public has tended to prefer a lighter spirit for general consumption. Hence, the prevalence of blends. (To analogize to the world of beer, blends are the light American pilseners to single malts' rich ales and hearty porters: while the former lack the character of the latter, they outsell the latter by a wide margin.) Lest devotees of single malts cast aspersions on blends too readily, they should realize that it is sales to blenders that allow almost all of Scotland's malt distilleries to remain in business; few if any could survive just selling malt whiskey to consumers.

"Well, then, let us consider the matter over another gill of this excellent malt." — Ports of Call

Rightly or wrongly, the most prestigious variety of whiskey (at least, certainly the most expensive) is single malt Scotch. 'Single malt' indicates that the whiskey in the bottle all comes from the same distillery (i.e., 'single'), and it is pure malt whiskey, i.e., it was distilled from a mash consisting of 100% malted barley. Some Scotches are made from all malt whiskey but include malts from different distilleries; these are called 'vatted malts'.

Single malts are popular with whiskey enthusiasts because they tend to be more strongly and distinctively flavored than blends. The range of flavors available under the heading 'single malt Scotch' is staggering. Each of the roughly hundred distilleries making malt whiskey in Scotland produces its own unique spirit, and some produce several different varieties. Comparing a light Lowland malt like, say, Littlemill, to a heavy, peaty Islay dram like Lagavulin, it's tough to believe they are both classified as the same kind of spirit.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the differences between various single malts. These include the water, the variety of barley, the yeast used in fermentation, the shape of the still, and the climate in which the finished whiskey is stored, but three impact most dramatically the character of the whiskey, and those are (a) the fuel used in kilning the malted barley, (b) the type of cask in which the whiskey is aged, and (c) the age of the whiskey.

The three sat in the library, holding their daily conference, at which it was their custom to take a dram or two of smoky old malt tonic.

— *Night Lamp*

As you may recall from last issues' installment, malted grain is grain which has begun to sprout. In malting, the grain is spread out in a layer a few inches deep and soaked with water. This causes it to begin to grow; as it does so, enzymes are produced which facilitate conversion of starch in the grain kernel to sugar. After several days, when enzyme production has been maximized but before the meat of the grain has been converted to root and stem, the sprouting grain is heated in a kiln to stop growth.

Scotland doesn't have a lot of trees, so historically the kilns were fired by either coal or peat. A peat fire produces a great deal of pungent smoke, and malted barley kilned over a peat fire is infused with that smoke. The smoky character persists through fermentation and distillation. A peaty single malt is unmistakable: you can smell smoke from the glass (and on the breath of someone who has just quaffed a dram!). Malted barley kilned over a coal fire does not have the smoky character. Many distilleries mix peated and unpeated malt, resulting in more or less smoky character in their products. The peatiest, smokiest Scotches come from distilleries on the island of Islay, off the southwestern coast of Scotland. Ardbeg, Caol Ila, Laphroaig, Lagavulin,

and Bowmore are the classic Islay malts, smoky and strong, and each is considered among the finest single malts in all of Scotland.

Like whiskey in general, single malt Scotches tend to be classified into varieties based on geography. So, Islay malts are generally smoky and powerful; Lowland malts are generally light and grassy; Speyside malts (from the valley of the River Spey in the highlands) tend to be fruity and gentle; malts from the North Highlands and the other islands tend to be more robust. But, similarity between malts of a given region is, again, based on traditional similarities in production rather than necessity, and it is possible to produce malt whiskey of any character in any region. For example, the Bunnahabhain and Bruichladdich distilleries are located on Islay, but they produce whiskeys with little if any peat character. (Which is not to say they are not good; Bruichladdich in particular is a personal favorite.) At the same time, Longrow, from the Springbank distillery in Campbeltown on the mainland, is as smoky or smokier than any Islay malt.

After distillation, the new whiskey is filled into oak casks for aging. The thrifty Scots purchase used casks from other spirit producers, and the spirit that was formerly in the cask adds some character to the whiskey. Most Scotch is aged in bourbon barrels purchased from American whiskey makers, but a substantial amount (especially of single malts) is aged in sherry casks from Spain. Occasionally other barrels, such as other wine casks or port pipes, are used. Recently I saw a Springbank offering aged in rum casks, and it is reportedly very good, but I have not had any myself.

Aging in a first-fill (i.e., not used for whiskey before) sherry cask will give a definite and unmistakable character to a malt. The Macallan is a good example: all of its single malt offerings are aged in first-fill sherry casks, and the light Speyside whiskey gives the sherry lots of room to assert itself. In recent years Glenmorangie has offered a series of twelve-year-old whiskeys aged ten years in bourbon barrels, then 'finished' for two years in either a sherry cask, a madeira cask, or a port pipe. Comparing the wine-finished versions with each other and with Glenmorangie's standard bourbon-barrel-only ten-year-old offering graphically illustrates the effect of aging in wine casks. Happily, Glenmorangie sells sampler kits for that purpose. Even more happily, Marcel van Genderen brought one to GM2! The Glenmorangie didn't last too long.

The age of a whiskey is how long it spent in the cask, not how long ago it was distilled or bottled. Once whiskey is put in a bottle, it ceases to develop. So, a whiskey distilled in 1928 and bottled in 1940 is effectively the same age as a whiskey distilled in 1990 and bottled in 2002. Note, however, that once a bottle is

opened, the whiskey can react with oxygen in the air, and if it sits long enough (months or years) it can deteriorate.

Under British law, spirit has to be aged at least three years before it can be called Scotch whiskey, but few if any single malts are palatable at that age. Single malts generally hit their stride at some point between eight and twelve years old, and continue to improve for another decade or two, before they start to deteriorate. Most single malts will have an age statement on the bottle; that number is the age of the youngest malt in the mix. Often distilleries will include much older whiskeys to give the finished product the desired character. (As long as the whiskey was all produced at the same distillery, casks of different ages can be mixed together for bottling and still be 'single malt' whiskey.)

Many distilleries offer their malt whiskey under the distillery name, but some do not; they sell their entire output to blenders, and don't bottle it themselves. A number of distilleries that offer their product as a single malt sell it at various ages. For instance, Ardbeg offers a ten-year-old and a seventeen-year-old; the Glenlivet sells its whiskey at twelve and eighteen years. There are also a number of independent bottlers—companies that buy casks of malt whiskey and bottle it themselves. These companies make available whiskeys from distilleries that don't bottle for themselves, and also offer whiskeys at different ages than might be available otherwise. Prominent independent bottlers include Cadenhead, Murray McDavid, and Signatory Vintage; there are others.

"The evening is young," said Joe. "I don't know what your social habits are, but what do you say to taking your car home and then checking out a bottle of Scotch?" — The Pleasant Grove Murders



Steve Sherman raises a glass (of Macallan, probably) behind an array of fine single malts (and one American interloper) at GM2. Photo by Koen Vyverman.

Single malt Scotch is available in such a wide array of characters that it is not fair to say you 'don't like Scotch' until you've tried a number of different malts in different styles. For the same reason, it's impossible to recommend

one malt as typical. Here are a few of my favorites: Highland Park (the northernmost distillery in Scotland, in the Orkney Islands), Ardbeg, Caol Ila (available only from independent bottlers, but worth seeking out—cudos to Dave Reitsema for bringing a bottle to GM2), Lagavulin (the most powerfully flavored Scotch there is—not for the faint of heart), Bruichladdich, Littlemill (a light-bodied Lowlander), Glenfiddich (a great bargain), Dalwhinnie, Glenfarclas, and Old Pulteney.

I'm not personally fond of heavily sherried whiskeys, but some people love them; as mentioned above, The Macallan is the leading proponent of that style. Aberlour bottles a cask-strength sherry-casked single malt called 'a'bunadh' which is very interesting. Of other finishes, the aforementioned Glenmorangie Port-finished whiskey is exceptional.

And finally, don't write off all blended Scotches! They're different than single malts, but not necessarily worse. Try, for instance, Johnnie Walker Black Label.

"Well, it's sure that I, for one, would never have the taste for the black-headed pint of spite that you are. I'd be drinking whiskey to ease my soul by night and by day." — The Rapparee

Irish whiskey differs from Scotch primarily in that Irish distillers use other grains besides malted barley (most characteristically, unmalted barley) in the mash. The classic Irish whiskey is distilled in a pot still, but much Irish whiskey goes through three rounds of distillation, as opposed to two for most Scotch malt whiskey. (Some Lowland Scotch distillers (i.e., Auchentoshan) distill three times.) Triple distillation results in a lighter-bodied whiskey. Irish distillers also blend their pot still product with column-distilled grain whiskey, but the average Irish whiskey has a higher percentage of pot still whiskey than the average blended Scotch. Some Irish whiskeys are pure pot still, and some are pure malt.

While there are dozens of distilleries in Scotland, there are only (to my knowledge) three in Ireland: Midleton, Cooley, and Old Bushmills (which is actually in Northern Ireland), and of those three, Midleton and Bushmills are affiliated. Midleton produces the best-known brands of Irish whiskey: Jameson, Powers, Paddy, Tullamore Dew, and Redbreast (the latter being pure pot still whiskey, and highly regarded, although I haven't had it—yet). Cooley produces Kilbeggan and the single malts Tyrconnell and Connemara. Bushmills' products are eponymous.

Irish pure malt whiskeys can be remarkably similar to single malt Scotches. Bushmills' single malt (available aged either ten or sixteen years) is reminiscent of a good Lowland single malt Scotch, while Connemara is made with peated malt, and has all the smoke of a great Islay, but is not as heavy. (I have not had Tyrconnell—yet.)

Of the blended Irish whiskeys I've tried, I'm partial to regular old Jameson. Jameson comes in various grades,

and the elite versions (Jameson 1780, Jameson Gold) are something special.

Again, thanks to Koen Vyverman and TOTALITY for locating the Vance whiskey quotes. Next month: Kentucky! (and . . . San Francisco?!?!?)



A sad sight: empty bottles of Lagavulin, Glen Ord, Talisker and Macallan. Robin Rouch doesn't seem too upset, though. Photo by Chuck King.



An Interesting Place to Visit

Roleplaying in the Dying Earth
by Lynne Hardy

The Dying Earth is a rich fantasy world, full of complex characters and detailed environs. Thus it presents itself as a perfect setting for a roleplaying game and indeed one has been produced by Pelgrane Press (www.dyingearth.com). That is all very well, but what is a roleplaying game?

Everyone is familiar with board and card games, each of which has their own specific rules of play and conditions for winning. Board games require a board, dice and occasionally special cards that affect game play. Roleplaying games share some elements with board games, such as having rules and needing one or more dice. However, they are also distinct from board games in that, fundamentally, there is no board and there is no winner. Historically, the *Dying Earth* novels were actually amongst the inspirations for the first roleplaying game *Dungeons and Dragons*, as well as several other games since then.

So how do you play? Roleplaying is an exercise in imagination, shared with friends. One person takes on the role of Gamesmaster, or GM, and it is this person who is

in charge of keeping the game running smoothly. The other players, usually between two and six, take on the roles of characters from the world in which the game is set, in this case characters very like Cugel, Turjan or Rhialto. Together, the GM and the players interact to create stories of fantastical adventure. In some ways, it's very like improvisational theatre, just without the audience.

Many different companies produce rulebooks for these games and they contain the mechanics of how the game is played, as well as how to create characters. They also contain details on the places, people and creatures of the world in which the game is set. There is usually also a chapter with special advice for the GM on how to set the right atmosphere and how to develop stories for the players to enjoy. Although the players help the GM to flesh out the story, initially at least the basic ideas of what is happening around the players come from the GM. The GM also takes on the roles of everyone the players' characters meet, so good advice is a handy thing to have. Gradually, as the game develops, the players will have a greater input in the direction the story takes as they become more familiar with either the setting or the rules.

It may seem odd that you need rules if everyone is cooperating to create a story, but just as our world has physics to keep things ticking along nicely, games need some framework so that any decision the GM has to take regarding the success or failure of a character's action is anything but arbitrary. Some games' systems are complex in order to realistically model events and are a major part of the game; often, a complicated system has been designed so that it can be applied to many different settings. Others are simpler to better reflect the world in which they are set. This is the case with the Dying Earth roleplaying game (DERPG), where the rules have been specially written to recreate the twists of dramatic fate seen in the novels whilst remaining unobtrusive.

Creating a character is the first important thing to do in order to get a game started. DERPG has been written in such a way that this is very simple and straightforward. Every character has a number of skills and abilities that can be chosen or rolled randomly from lists provided in the rulebook. These skills help to bring the character to life. How good a character is at these skills is up to the player, as they have a number of points to spend on them—the more points you spend on a skill, the better the character is at it. Depending on what level of game you are playing, you have different numbers of points with which to build your character. Cugel level is the equivalent of the beginner's level in a computer game and is where most players will start; there are two other, higher levels named after Turjan and Rhialto. Whilst in a higher-level game your character will be more powerful and able to take care of themselves, the challenges they face will also be much greater.

Perhaps the most important skill in the game is Persuade, your character's ability to talk themselves out of, or other people into, tricky situations. In many games the ability to fight is the most important, but in keeping with the books, that isn't the case here. Of course, a character must also be able to defend themselves against verbal sparring, which is where the Rebuff skill comes in. Characters do have fighting and defense skills, they're just not the most important things a character can do in this game. Each of these four skills, as well as the Magic skill, have one of six different styles which give suggestions as to how the character uses that particular skill. In the case of the Rebuff skill, a character may deflect another person's argument in one of six ways: obtusely, warily, penetratingly, in a lawyerly fashion, contrarily or with guileless innocence. These styles are determined when the character is created and are very helpful in defining how the character behaves towards other people. This is all very useful for when you come to play the game, so that your performance of that character and their motivations are believable and consistent.

Magic is a special skill that every character has access to, but to become good at it requires you to devote lots of character creation points to it. This is really equivalent to the large amounts of time required in the stories to acquire magical proficiency. You may not have as many other abilities as players who don't take the Magic skill, but the game is well balanced and you won't be at a disadvantage (often quite the contrary!). Characters with a Magic rating can defend themselves against magical attacks and can learn spells. These spells are based on ones mentioned in the novels, as well as others inspired by the various magicians who appear within their pages. Even characters who don't spend points on magic can attempt minor conjuring tricks, known as cantraps. Whilst not very powerful they can be useful, such as lighting candles without the need for matches. After all, you never know when you may need a light.

So what do you do with a character once you've created him? Pretty much anything you want to, really. The GM will have decided on a challenge, or adventure, for you and the other players and the first time you play this may be as simple as just meeting the other characters. You decide what your character says and does within the game world and the GM will help to determine whether you are successful or not in your actions. Sometimes, you can act out what you want to do, such as persuading a mean landlord to provide better lodgings. In such cases, the GM may decide that your performance was good enough to succeed without recourse to the rules. Unfortunately, not all of us are sparkling orators and there are some things you just can't act out. It is in

these situations that the game mechanics come to the fore.

This is where dice come in to the game. DERPG uses a single standard six sided die to help resolve actions. Basically, a roll of 1-3 means that an action has failed, whereas a roll of 4-6 is a success. The points you spent on your skills and abilities allow you to re-roll the dice if the result you get isn't the one you want, so the more points you spent on a skill, the more times you can re-roll. Special rolls on the die can either add or take away from the number of points you have to use, but only temporarily. This game mechanic allows the players a greater control of their fate than you get in many games; running out of points, however, is not a good thing, so it does require a certain amount of tactical savvy in deciding whether to re-roll or save the points for another, potentially more important, roll.

And then there are Taglines. The formal speech patterns of the Dying Earth are one of the features that make it notably different from other fantasy worlds. To help players get a feel for the language, at the beginning of each game they choose (or are given) several short sentences of Vance-like prose, such as "You will excuse me sir; for after all, it's not as if your face was sufficiently memorable." During the game, the players try to use these Taglines at amusingly appropriate times. If the GM and the other players think that the usage was wittily clever, then the player is rewarded with improvement points. These can be spent after the game on improving skills and abilities. Taglines sometimes takes a little getting used to, as they are a unique feature of DERPG, but they are an entertaining challenge.

As an example, in one of our games, the character Mathebel attempted to cast an enchantment that caused the target to lose all volition and fall under the caster's control. Unfortunately, she rolled very badly and ended up casting the spell upon herself. Never one to miss a trick, another character, Trebizzio, started to issue a variety of silly commands to her, including bizarre songs and dances that generally made Mathebel look very foolish indeed. It was about this time that Trebizzio remembered the subject had full knowledge of everything that they were made to do whilst under the spell's control. Having been given their Taglines at the beginning of the game with no knowledge of what was likely to occur, Mathebel's player cleverly brought hers into play after she regained her own free will. "A variety of deaths by contrasting processes may well enter into your punishment" was her dire warning to her offending comrade. The players found this very amusing, but needless to say Trebizzio was very careful for the rest of the adventure!

In a roleplaying game, there is no winner. So, how does a game end? It may be as simple as you run out of

time on a particular evening—most groups gather for a few hours a week and the story they are creating goes on for weeks or even months at a time. It may be that the characters complete the task the GM set them, such as finding a long lost tome or discovering a new frippery for Duke Orbal. The whole point of a roleplaying game is to have fun with your friends, exploring new lands and discovering exciting treasures in a setting you enjoy. That way, everyone wins.



By Ralph Horsley. © 2000 Pelgrane Press.

But what if you don't have enough people to form a gaming group? At the bare minimum, you only need two people to play—one person to be the GM and the other to be a player. You could even take turns at being the GM. Every GM has their own style, which can lead to subtly different takes on a given situation. It is also fun for the GM to take time off from running the game and actually have a chance to play it (something that doesn't always happen). If you are short of players, your local hobby gaming shop should be able to put you in touch with other gamers. Internet newsgroups can also help you to identify other players in your area.

What if you just aren't interested in roleplaying? It is actually still worth looking at the material that Pelgrane Press have produced, all with Jack Vance's blessing. As with other roleplaying games, there is more than just the main rulebook available. These other books are known as sourcebooks and contain further, more detailed information on the Dying Earth in terms of interesting places, legends, customs, people, objects and creatures. These expand on the ideas set forth in the original stories whilst remaining faithful to the tone of those books. All of the games' books are well written, often in Vancian prose when that best suits the feel of the piece, and are an entertaining read, as well as being beautifully produced and illustrated. If you want to discover more of the Dying Earth, the sourcebooks are an excellent

resource, acting, if you will, as the literary equivalent of a good travel documentary.

The *Dying Earth* stories have inspired and delighted generations of readers. Roleplaying in the Dying Earth allows you to add your own small contribution to those tales. After all, it is a remarkably interesting place to visit.

The Dying Earth RPG is published by Pelgrane Press Ltd under license from Jack Vance.

<http://www.dyingearth.com>



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

Impelled by Bruce Downing's letter, I reread your "comment on Paul Rhoads' writings in this issue's *38's Crucible* [COSMOPOLIS 28, p32] concerning censorship or lack thereof". I quite agree with your argument re. specialty publications, although I note that readers of COSMOPOLIS do not "*purchase* the magazine because of its specialty content" (my emphasis), but since, in any case, COSMOPOLIS is *not* such a publication but a forum open to the VIE community, your "The illustration above is primarily for the benefit of Paul, who refuses privately to acknowledge the feasibility or legitimacy of such specialty publications" puzzled me no end.

Then, I reread *my* letter. My opening, "Attacks on Rhoads are what anyone with strong opinions has to put up with", was certainly in need of serious editorial care. But, I beg to differ with Brian Gharst as I don't see that I ever used "rhetorical bombs" or "crafted jabs". That's only for Rhoads but how enjoyable *these* are! I'm beginning to think that I wouldn't have it any other way.

I do agree with Brian Gharst that such a discussion would have to be extremely disciplined as the subject is indeed quite complex. What, for instance, does he think of the argument given by the people in the US who are currently depleting the aquifers, namely that the pumps are on *their* property? (Assuming that the word 'property' has any real sense.)

As I have mentioned before, I *have* peeled layers of prejudice and, rather than badly to paraphrase Sen's *Inequality Re-examined*, and Rhoads' comments notwithstanding, I recommend it to Mr. Gharst to whom I too wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year—even though I am a practicing atheist—as well of course as to everybody at the VIE and COSMOPOLIS, and even to Rhoads!

Regards,
Alain Schremmer

To the Editor,

In the current issue, Paul raises the possibility of issuing bound volumes of COSMOPOLIS once Wave 2 is complete. I think this is a great idea, and will gladly purchase a set. I was planning to burn a CD containing a complete collection of issues when the time was right, but two or three books that I could place in my bookcase beside my VIE set would be so much better. I think that there's much in COSMOPOLIS that's worth preserving in a more permanent form than a set of PDF files on a CD—formats that will eventually become obsolete, and probably sooner rather than later.

Jim Pattison



Closing Words

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

COSMOPOLIS Submissions: when preparing articles for COSMOPOLIS, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send plain text. For COSMOPOLIS 35, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is January 25.

Derek W. Benson, Editor

The Fine Print

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