
COSMOPOLIS

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Sneak Peek

VIE volunteer Brian Gharst spoke recently with Jack Vance; here's a taste:

Brian: I have to make the final comment that I'll often be reading one of your books in my living room and my wife will be sitting there with me, and suddenly from nowhere a gasp of satisfaction will escape my mouth, and she'll know that I must be reading a Vance novel—because I hit one of those beautiful, very clever pieces of dialogue that are so satisfying to me.

Jack: Incidentally, I don't know how to express this, but I can't find the proper words to express my feelings toward you guys. It isn't gratitude exactly, I think it's just plain pleasure, that I have reached a bunch of people like yourselves. I was at this convention in Columbus and it just happened to occur to me—and I said this to a group of people—that I don't have any stupid fans! Everybody that seems to like my junk is highly intelligent, which I think is...well, it gives me a source of vanity, or something of the sort. But anyway, I do appreciate your interest, I can't say I feel gratitude for that's not the proper word. Thank you all!

Several VIE volunteers were on the telephone with Jack on the weekend of August 2-3. In an hour-long interview, Jack speaks his mind on a smattering of topics. To cite a few: art, poetry, editors, ceramics, the craft of writing, belief in the supernatural, his favorite authors, his early literary influences...

The full interview will be published in the next issue of COSMOPOLIS.

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A Different View of Jack Vance

by Norma Vance

Most of you reading this have probably read at least one biography of Jack or, if not, you are acquainted with his writing. As his wife, I have the inside track and instead of enumerating all his literary achievements, I have decided to write about the person you may not know very well, but who I hope you will enjoy getting to know.

My first impression of Jack was that he was—different. Certainly he was daring: to appear on a girl's doorstep with a bag of donuts and ask if I could make some coffee? The 56 years since have not altered my opinion. He is still daring, but his most notable quality is persistence; somehow the two seem to belong together. Persistence is what accomplishes things like excavating tons and tons of dirt to make room to build a house, or writing books, lots of books.

The rustic little house and property we bought in Oakland was not ideal, but it was cheap and the three lots

of hillside provided plenty of room for our five cats to roam. The terrain, however, was a challenge, hardly any space on which to build. Using a pick-axe, shovel, wheelbarrow and hard work, Jack created a building site. Wall by wall the rustic cabin disappeared and in affordable stages became a really comfortable place to live. All the while Jack made time to write. This could not have happened without his drive (or persistence).



Jack making room for the house, early '70s.

During the time the contours of our property were being changed, there was general concern that a nuclear war might develop. What did Jack do? He was already moving tons of dirt, so he dug a tunnel into the hillside: a few feet forward, then a turn to the left for about five feet, then a turn to the right and another turn left, terminating in a chamber of about eight feet on a side. He shored up walls and ceiling with heavy timbers, installed a small fireplace for comfort and light, a chimney to vent smoke. Before heaping extra dirt over the top of the excavation, he laid heavy black plastic over all. With lanterns and candles the space began to look habitable.

One day, when noise and activity in the house made concentration difficult, Jack retreated to the cave. He brought with him a thermos bottle of hot coffee, a canvas slingback chair, a pillow to rest his clipboard on. He made a fire in the fireplace, lit a lantern and set to work. Peace at last!

But as luck, or Mother Nature, would have it, rain began to fall. Not long after, a trickle of water found its way down to the plastic, then underneath it and finally into the cave. Drip-drip-drip! Onto Jack's head and shoulders, clipboard and paper. That was enough! The fallout shelter was a failure, though not entirely. The fireplace provided a safe venue for a young male child to satisfy his firebug tendencies.

A more successful venture was the treehouse. We had lots of big eucalyptus trees and our son John, as do many boys, wanted a treehouse. Jack chose a huge old tree

which, about fifteen feet up, had branches suited to supporting a platform. He installed a ladder, then a platform made from two sheets of 3/4" x 4' x 8' plywood. The walls also were plywood, with two windows and a door. There was a front porch with access through a hole in the platform.



Jack and the treehouse, 1973.

John and his friends enjoyed this playhouse for enough years, so that when a terrific windstorm blew it to the ground, along with its supporting branches, there was no great sorrow—just a little sadness.

One of Jack's most enduring interests is in the culinary arts. He likes to read recipes, read about memorable banquets such as in the *Epicurean*, concoct his own recipes and feasts, cook; take note of the latest best dining spots and of the talented chefs who make simple ingredients divine. Naturally this interest has its downside and dieting is the result. Luckily for him our son is not so affected. Jack has been known even to make a detour to a place called La Pyramide, in Vienne, whose repast was so memorable that I'm sure it will never be equaled. The remarkable thing is that we stopped at the restaurant on Easter Sunday, without reservations. Madame Point, who stood in the doorway to welcome guests, or to send them off, welcomed us more warmly

than we deserved; the epitome of graciousness, she requested a waiter to seat us and thus began the most memorable meal we had ever had, or hoped to have, in our lifetimes. We also sampled M. Pic and Paul Bocuse, which are highly rated, but we still liked La Pyramide the best.

When John was about six months old, I went back to work. Jack did much of the cooking for several years; one of his favorite activities was to create beautiful, delicious breakfasts for John. Some were so appetizing he took pictures of them, I guess to remind himself of what a pleasure it was to nurture his son and at the same time indulge his passion for cooking.



Jack and John, circa 1964.

Boats. They represented Jack's dreams of travel and adventure. Boats have always been at the forefront of everything for Jack; always studying plans to build his favorite, always looking for the safest, most seaworthy craft. At one time he bought plans to build a Piver 36' trimaran, even got so far as to finishing and fiberglassing the three hulls. Then Mr. Piver disappeared during a coastwise jaunt to the south in his trimaran. He was never found. This rather dampened Jack's anxiety to own a trimaran. He sold the three hulls and began his search anew.

We bought a 17' cutter-rigged Venture for our son to learn about sailing and be part of Jack's crew; a 35' ketch-rig Columbia for Jack; then a 45' Explorer designed by Huntingford, because the Columbia didn't seem large enough to accommodate a crew of three or four. The first two boats were sold and the Explorer documented and named *Hinano*. One of the happiest periods of Jack's life was spent in the company of John,

rigging *Hinano*, installing all sorts of hull-strengthening devices, radar, running lights, radio, safety net and railings, choosing sails, buying charts and planning itineraries. But at the same time glaucoma was stealing Jack's eyesight and John needed to start his studies at U.C. Berkeley. All was put on hold, though Jack continued his search for a compatible crew and still made plans.

With John unavailable and anyone else Jack would have enjoyed cruising with also unable to join him, he reluctantly decided to sell *Hinano*. Besides, the berth rental and upkeep were just too expensive for us to keep a boat that size indefinitely. For a millionaire maybe, but not for us. As luck would have it a man named Jack Storer fell in love with *Hinano* and was thrilled to buy her. For a shakedown Jack Storer invited a couple of friends to go with him to Monterey. On their arrival drinks of congratulation were consumed and when the supply ran out, his friends retired; but Mr. Storer decided to go ashore for another bottle. Unfortunately his foot became entangled in a mooring-line and Jack Storer was found dead in the morning. I'm not sure if this warned against falling in love with a boat named *Hinano*, sailing to Monterey, celebrating the adventure, or taking off in a dinghy by oneself. It certainly gives one pause. We were stunned and saddened by Jack Storer's departure.

Years before, when John was still a baby, Jack drew plans for a houseboat and showed them around to several acquaintances, but they were too cautious to be interested. However, his pals Frank Herbert and Poul Anderson were both adventurous in nature; they eagerly joined the partnership to build a houseboat. This was a happy time. Jack built the pontoons in our driveway and fiberglassed them there as well. Finally they were ready to be moved to a beach on the bay near Point Richmond. Several friends had now joined in the work, enjoying the sunshine, salt air and companionship. Every stage completed was cause for celebration; a party atmosphere prevailed.

Poor Frank Herbert could not stay the course due to medical problems. Also he and his family were planning a move further north, which meant he must give up being a partner. Eventually his place was taken by our guitar-playing friend Albert Hall, who had been joining us regularly to work. After the work-day was finished, Albert's songs and guitar kept us all happy, and occasionally we'd adjourn to a favorite restaurant with fish on the menu.

After the platform and under-pinnings were joined to the hulls, the next step was to move it to the water, where the cabin was built. One evening the owners of the little cafe, selling hamburgers and other sandwiches on the pier, brought a bottle of champagne to christen the houseboat, which was done immediately, though it never was given a name—just houseboat.



Houseboat with Albert Hall, Jack, Poul Anderson, circa 1962.

An outboard motor was installed at the stern, and connected to the steering wheel in the forward cabin by a Jack Vance innovation: two long reinforcing rods enclosed in an aluminum pipe. The mechanism performed remarkably well. (Incidentally, the nautical wheel was a gift from Frank Herbert.) The houseboat was painted white with blue trim inside and out. Six foam mattresses were installed on the bunks, curtains (which I made) were hung, toilet and wash-basin installed in the head and a potbellied stove for the kitchen-livingroom. Now it was time for relocation to the sloughs of the Sacramento-San Joaquin-Mokelumne Rivers delta. Jack and six other men and boys made the maiden voyage up the Sacramento River. An overnight at Dalrel's Yacht Harbor and an early start the next morning brought them in good time to Moore's Riverboat Yacht Haven on the Mokelumne River. This same moorage is where 'Houseboat' met its demise a few years later, but not before many happy memories were earned.



Our houseboat was ideal for life on the sloughs: vacations, parties and overnights, which usually were spent away from the harbor. The houseboat glided along

the sloughs to find an ideal anchorage. In the summer there were blackberry bushes loaded with ripe berries to be picked from Houseboat's deck. When the sun set we lounged on the porch with feet on the railing, a favorite night-cap in hand, and listened to the sounds of insects, animals and bird calls; it was sheer delight. Mornings were usually cold, but after stoking and lighting the little wood-burning stove, we soon had the cabin warm and cozy.

Jack and I were planning a trip to Ireland with John and likely would be away for a year or more. We would have to transfer ownership of the houseboat to our friend Ali (for Alidor) Szantho whose pleasure was fishing and he chose another partner who also enjoyed fishing. They felt the houseboat sat too low in the water for fishing, so they removed the heavy ceiling panels. The boat popped up in the water at least a foot, maybe more. This little alteration may have caused the houseboat's demise or perhaps it was a misadventure of some kind. We will never know.

I have mentioned Jack's daring and persistence and now I'd like to refer back to a younger Jack Vance—before Norma—for further evidence.

At the age of 18 Jack was living with his Aunt Nellie (his father's sister) in San Francisco, right next door to the twin house his mother had owned at one time. This privilege was afforded him in exchange for doing minor chores around the house. Along with almost everyone else Jack was fascinated with the construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. Before, there had been only a ferry-boat fleet to convey cars and passengers from the San Francisco side of the bay to the Oakland side and vice versa. The only alternative was to drive to San Jose; then cross the city from west to east to join highway 680 north and on to Oakland.

Steel towers were already anchored at intervals into the floor of the bay and soared upward very high; I'm guessing at least 200 or even 300 feet.* Cables also were being put in place between the towers.

One evening Jack rode his motorcycle to the building site. He secured it to a pole, then looked around, neither seeing nor hearing anyone. There may have been a sign warning the would-be trespasser to Keep Out, but he did not see one. Work on the bridge continued day and night; it would be a challenge not to be seen, since his plan was to climb the cable to the top of the first tower.

At the beginning the cable presented a gentle slope, and as he neared the tower the slope became steeper and steeper. The cable was approximately two feet wide with a wire rope on each side to grasp for security. The mere thought of being in such a situation would scare me so much I wouldn't even be able to grasp the rope, whereas, according to Jack, he felt no fear at all. He reached the

*This is a guess; they are probably much higher.

tower in about twenty minutes and almost immediately heard voices coming toward him from the direction of the second tower. The only thing that gave Jack pause was the thought of being caught where he knew he should not be, so he turned around without hesitation and carefully made his way back to the ground. Why did he do it? Because of the thrill.

Sam Wainwright was a student at U.C. Berkeley when Jack first met him as a reporter for the *Daily Californian*. Sam's brain worked overtime. He was brilliant and at the same time a bit mad. He was always doing something new, planning and organizing. Everyone knew of him because he made news, but not many friends. He was ridiculed more than appreciated. Jack saw past Sam's quirkiness, appreciated his wit and became his friend.

Sam organized the Thumbwagger's Club. So far only two persons had joined. Jack did not become a member but went along with the first competition to get a story for the *Daily Cal*. The game was to see who could thumb a ride from the foot of University Avenue, all the way to Salt Lake City, and back to Berkeley first. There were four people so Sam ordained two teams: Sam's and Jack's. All four wore T-shirts with a thumb on the front.

Jack's team got the first ride. The driver actually recognized them: "Oh! You guys are the Thumbwaggers!" Late afternoon the first day they made it to Reno. Sam's team made it to Sparks, Nevada. In the morning Sam's team got a ride with an Indian (American) driver who claimed to be going in the direction of Salt Lake City, but after driving 50 miles into the desert, he said goodbye and took off on a side road. What a predicament! Jack's team got a ride to Winnemucca, but the fun had waned for both teams.

Jack had heard that the Santa Fe Railroad was nice to hoboes and let them ride without bother, so he and his partner headed for the railroad tracks. No one seemed to be about, so they entered the caboose and made themselves comfortable, even built a fire in the stove. They were beginning to feel drowsy when the railroad 'bull' entered the caboose, brandishing his club and shouting. "Who do you think you are? Get out of here! Now!" (This was not a Santa Fe train.)

"But the train is moving too fast."

"It will go faster! You heard me. Jump!"

"Gulp. Let's get off now; it might not be too bad."

"Jump! I mean now!"

The train was rumbling along at 15 or 20 miles per hour. They jumped and received a few bumps and scrapes but were not seriously injured.

Jack's team made it back to Berkeley the next day and Sam's team finally arrived a day and a half later in some disruntlement.

Jack remained friends with Sam for many years, but he eventually became annoyed with him because no matter how many times Sam consulted him about various

problems, especially with the ladies, Sam never was able to act on the advice. Later, when Jack heard him on the phone to me, asking for the same advice as previously, he lost all respect for him and forbade him to call again. Poor Sam! Great potential, but unable to use it where it counted.

Jack had many friends while attending U.C., some of them full of the Old Nick. Thinking up tricks and mischief seemed to ameliorate some of the pressures of getting an education. Jack and three of his friends theorized that they could hoist a Communist flag to the top of the Campanile by doing the following: First they should place some stout twine around the four corners of the tower, tie the ends together, leaving a bit of slack. Next a cluster of five helium balloons should be tied to the string at each corner. Then the flag should be attached to the twine on the side visible to the most people. Each of the four mischief-makers held a stick with a string attached to a hook, the idea being to place the hook over the twine and jiggle it to keep the balloons moving upward and thus raise the flag. What was not counted on was a very strong wind which came up and almost at the same time the campus cops came by on their normal rounds. The wind alone could have spoiled the fun but when the boys saw the cops they scattered in every direction. There was so much noise and confusion with the wind that no one ever guessed who the culprits were.

Well, I could write more but I don't have the time right now—and maybe that's a good thing.



Norma with an early manuscript, circa 1953.



Work Tsar Status Report

as of July 27, 2003

by Joel Riedesel

WAVE 2

Yes, *The Stark* continues to need some clarification on some artwork in the front. Unforeseen circumstances have made this problem a little more difficult. Sharper minds than mine are going to need to figure it out.

Techno work is complete!

There are 26 texts in or ready for TI, six of which are not assigned. Two texts are in Board Review. Three texts are in Implementation and two texts in Security Check.

There are five texts in initial Composition while 14 texts are in various stages of Composition Review. There are two texts in Post-proofing and seven texts in Post-proof Composition Updating and Review.

As far as I see it, although there are still a couple of potential congestion points in the process right now, work is steadily moving along and we are making steady progress toward our goal. On that note we have fully doubled the number of texts that are volume ready since last month!

Last month:

- Pre-TI: 1 texts (1.22%)
- In-TI: 28 texts (34.15%)
- Post-TI: 42 texts (51.22%)
- Volume Ready: 11 texts (13.41%)

This month:

- In-TI: 26 texts (31.71%)
- Post-TI: 34 texts (41.46%)
- Volume Ready: 22 texts (26.83%)



Fun at the Mugar

by Chuck King

In July, I spent three fascinating days among the documents of the John Holbrook Vance Collection at Boston University's Mugar Library. The original purpose of my trip was Textual Integrity work: I went to compare the typed draft of *The Killing Machine* at the Mugar to the published version. It turns out they were very very close—the draft there must have been the final or nearly-final draft—so I finished up that task sooner than I anticipated. With additional time, another project occurred to me, concerning the hand-written manuscripts in the collection.

As others have recounted in COSMOPOLIS, back in the day Jack wrote initial drafts of his stories—even full books—by hand. (Reports regarding his barely-legible

handwriting are not exaggerated; let us all again give thanks to (and for!) Norma Vance.) In this pursuit, he made use of whatever paper was available, writing on the backs of junk mail, royalty statements, and young John Vance's crayon and pencil drawings and math homework. Of particular interest to us, he also wrote on the backs of old drafts of other books and stories. We have an index of what's on the *fronts* of the documents in the Mugar collection; I took it upon myself to make a record of what was on the *backs* of the hand-written drafts.

I have a rough list; someday I will put it together in a more organized format, but not right away because it will take a lot of work and, inasmuch as all the affected texts have been through TI already, it would be of purely academic interest for VIE purposes. However, I did learn a few things that may be of general interest to COSMOPOLIS readers.

In the sixties Jack wrote-for-hire three books that were published as Ellery Queen mysteries: *The Four Johns*, *The Madman Theory*, and *A Room to Die In*. Reportedly, his stories were heavily edited and substantially changed by the Queen people. There has been much speculation (at least by me!) of what they must have been like in their original form, but the Vances no longer have manuscripts of them. However, by piecing together several documents, we can construct an incomplete but mostly-all-there version of *The Four Johns*. There are 74 pages of a draft of *The Four Johns* in a box at the Mugar, reflected in the index, but there are another 49 pages on the backs of hand-written drafts of *Milton Hack from Zodiac* and *The Clutch of the Careless One-Woman* (ultimately published as *The Narrow Land*). So, all totalled we actually have 123 out of probably around 200 or so pages of *The Four Johns*. Another unexpected find was 29 pages of a draft of *The Madman Theory* on the backs of the hand-written draft of *The Pleasant Grove Murders*.

Finally, I found a page from an early draft of *The Palace of Love* on the back of the hand-written draft of *Emphyrio*—apparently an earlier draft than those present in their entirety elsewhere in the Mugar collection. It included two additional deleted stanzas from a famous Navarh poem, now presented for the first time. These go towards the end of the poem, just before the finger-snapping and heel-clicking final chorus:

A reeking water buffalo
Pawed the ground ferociously
I could have felled him with a blow
But Tim R. Mortiss returgled me

Who wants silver, who wants gold
On their anniversary?
I wish that I were five years old
Tim R. Mortiss conturgles me



Uncle vs. Grandfather

by Steve Sherman

The most famous continuity issue in the Vancean oeuvre—indeed for less detail-obsessed Vanceans the only—is the uncle-grandfather question in *The Demon Princes*. It will be remembered that in *The Star King* we are presented with a letter from Rolf Gersen to his grandson Kirth, detailing what the former has done to prepare the latter for his assignment and wishing him all the best in the accomplishment thereof.

As the digitized texts of the five novels became available to us, it was possible to search the texts for references to this issue. For me, at least, it came as a surprise that the sole source of this controversy is less than ten lines of text in *The Face*:

Here is the text, as published, a dialogue of Gersen's with a minor character, Daswell Tippin:

"I see you've had your share of wandering among the stars. Where is your home, may I ask? Usually I can make a guess, but in your case I am baffled."

"I was born in a world you have never heard of. As a boy I was taken to Earth by my uncle."

"And where did you live on Earth?"

"We never stayed long in one place. I know London well, and San Francisco, Noumea, Melbourne—wherever my uncle chose to educate me." Gersen smiled faintly as he remembered the style of his uncle's instruction. "I am also well acquainted with Alphanor, and the Concourse in general. May I enquire your name? I am Kirth Gersen, as you know."

"I am Daswell Tippin, at your service: a person of no pretensions."

And here is the TI dialogue among wallah, second and reviewer (Patrick Dusoulier, Tim Stretton and me):

TI-COMMENT 45; Proposition jointly conceived by PD, TS, SJS.

SJS—Vanceans have been savoring the uncle/grandfather question for so many years now, that I think few of us remember that 'uncle' occurs ONLY in *The Face* and only in that one piece of dialogue. The other four volumes use 'grandfather' exclusively. Anyway, Paul has stated on numerous occasions that no change will be made, and perhaps he is right not to remove this little bit of pepper from the book.

TS—I certainly didn't realize how few the references to 'uncle' were, although he was always 'grandfather' in my mind. The poignancy of the old man schooling Gersen in the deadly arts is a powerful image, and while his uncle could equally be an old man, it doesn't have the same effect. I know Patrick had considered raising this as a TI issue—maybe it should run its course that way. I had always opposed restoration on the grounds that we

couldn't reasonably infer Jack's intent from the evidence. That position seems unsustainable given your observation; and given the composition gap between *The Palace of Love* and *The Face*.

PD—I would add a strong emotional argument: the concept of the 'grandfather' (aged man, but still very strong and active) is tremendously appealing. The image of the 'uncle' is much weaker.

TS—this will of course be submitted to Oakland.

SJS—John Vance's response to Tim's query: "I've just gone over this with Mom. She discussed it with Dad; the man was intended to be 'grandfather' not 'uncle'. Dad either forgot, got mixed up, or had too many manzaniscos the evening before he wrote 'uncle'. We do not feel strongly either way about making a change. If the VIE wants to remove the discrepancy, the man was definitely Gersen's grandfather."

TI-PROPOSITION 45; uncle/grandfather

This proposition was adopted and your VIE edition of *The Face* has 'grandfather'. But note the response from Oakland. There is no strong feeling one way or another. The facts are definite, but a change is not required. Jack Vance evidently does not rank perfect continuity among his priorities.

We have declined to make continuity corrections in numerous other instances. We made one here. Were we correct? I honestly do not know for sure, but I think so.



Jack's Punch Line

by Patrick Dusoulier (a.k.a. 'axolotl')

Jack's characters are notorious for spending a not insignificant amount of time doing other things than just progressing the plot: I mean they eat a lot* (from simple grilled sausages to extraordinarily elaborate seven-course dinners), and they're not adverse to imbibing. . . Initially, I wanted to write a piece on the wide assortment, not to mention the quantity, of drinks consumed in Jack's texts. But then I thought "So many drinks, so little time" . . . I decided to leave that for another article, and to concentrate on one single line of investigation, just one sort of drink: 'punch'. This explains the title of *this* article.

What Kind of Punch?

Yes, what sort of 'punch' do Jack's characters drink? Most frequently, it is:

*See Max Ventura's remarkable article in COSMOPOLIS 40. Dammit! I'm green with envy, it's exactly the article I wish I had written! Of course, it had to be written by an Italian, if not by a Frenchman. . . ©

- 'rum punch', as in *Araminta Station*, among many examples:

On the terrace beautiful Yip girls served rum punches, gin slings, sundowners, Trelawny sloshes, malt beer and coconut toddy, all mixed liquors brewed or distilled at Yipton.

=> I chose this example because of all the other drinks mentioned. Yes indeed, someday, an extensive article must be written!

But it can be other kinds:

- 'wine punch', as in *Green Pearl*:

A maid entered with a tall silver ewer, and poured for Melancthe a goblet of wine punch, fragrant with the juice of oranges and lemons.

- 'fruit punch', as in *Book of Dreams*:

In the center of the square a refreshment stand sold cold drinks and ices. Gersen obtained a pint of cold fruit punch and seated himself on a bench.

- 'milk punch', as in *Bird Island*:

A florid middle-aged guest with a mop of white hair sat at the bar drinking a milk punch, and at this man's insistence, Ernest the bartender, in place of the cream, poured Rexie some milk punch and set the saucer in its usual place.

=> For those who have not read *Bird Island* yet: Rexie is the local cat. He is in for a big surprise, this 'milk punch' does not contain only milk!

So far, they are only generic sorts of punch. Sometimes, Jack can be a bit more specific:

- 'red punch', as in *Shape-up*:

Next came glasses of frozen red punch

=> I assume they are made with red rum, which some purists insist on using, as the only honourable ingredient for punch . . . More of this later.

- 'pomegranate punch', as in *The Dogtown Tourist Agency*:

He [Hetz] seated himself at a table and ordered a beaker of pomegranate punch with two stone-and-silver goblets.

- 'pisco punch', as in *Ecce And Old Earth*:

One proposed that they visit the Cantina La Dolorosita for music and dancing; another wanted to order a pitcher of pisco punch so that they might drink and talk philosophy; a third invited Wayness to go riding with him in his fast car.

=> the young men of Pombareales, in Patagonia, are trying to waylay Wayness . . . Out of simple curiosity, I checked 'pisco': is it a fruit? is it a rum? No, it is 'A type of brandy made from Muscat wine'. With Jack, one learns every day . . .

- 'carbonated punch', as in *The Face*:

A waiter approached; Tippin gave a terse order, and was served a small glass of carbonated punch, which he sipped as if it were a medicinal draught.

=> this 'carbonated punch' seems to be bitter, and is appropriate to Tippin's thoughts at the time . . .

But there are also specialties, deserving a more specific name:

- 'Tanglefoot Punch', as in *The Insufferable Red-headed Daughter of Commander Tynnot, O.T.E.*:

For a period they sat and sipped drinks: Waldo a clear cold Hyperion Elixir, Alice a goblet of the popular Tanglefoot Punch.

=> 'Tanglefoot' is an interesting word: it is widely used, and one 'knows' what it means, i.e. what it conveys . . . and yet, I found no entry for it in dictionaries, no official definition. When applied to a drink, one has a good idea of what it entails, especially when trying to walk away from a pub where you've had a few pints of 'Tanglefoot Ale', this excellent (but rather expensive) beer brewed in Dorset by the Badger Brewery. It is known to be 'deceptively strong' . . . In Jack's world, one may assume that the 'Tanglefoot Punch' recipe was invented in some place called Tanglefoot Tavern, as we can imagine from Shrack's remark to Jubal Droad, in *Maske:Thaery*:

"I hope to visit Erdstone Pool soon, if only to drink rum punch at Tanglefoot Tavern."

- 'Pingaree Punch', in *Ports of Call*:

Myron returned to the main saloon, to find Dame Hester and Marko Fassig sitting at their ease, each with a frosty goblet of Pingaree Punch.

- 'Pongola Punch', also in *Ports of Call*:

A waiter approached and Dauncy, with an air of wise expertise, ordered Pongola Punch for all.

=> In case some of you are checking my quotes as you read along, let me assure you that this is not a mistake, and that I am not drunk as I'm writing this . . . You will not find any mention of it in the TOR edition, but it appears in Jack's electronic draft that I used to do the TI work on this novel. It has been modified to 'Pingaree Punch' at publication time. As I write this, I do not yet know whether this was Jack's choice, or Tor's decision. It would be a pity to lose it, though.

- 'Montarada Punch', in *Emphyrio*:

"What is that you're drinking?"

"Montarada punch."

- 'Pink-eye Punch', again in *Ports of Call* (a novel that packs a lot of punch indeed):

"My wife Vermyra concocts an excellent Pink-eye Punch, not to mention an almost infamous Saskadoodle!"

=> This is Marko Fassig speaking. The kind of expertise required to concoct those drinks is transmitted from mother to daughter, apparently (the males being reduced to the role of tasters, I suppose), since we have Tibbet declaring:

"I have learned how to make Saskadoodle, Pink-eye Punch and Wild Dingo Howler, which was invented by a reckless smuggler named Terence Dowling."

- 'Cross-eye Punch', in *The Face*:

"That is our Cross-eye Punch, sir; it's fruit juice, sweet spirits of arrack and bangleberry rum, frozen and whipped."

=> this one must be extremely potent, since we find Gersen being admonished not to cross the boundaries of dignified drinking:

The Cross-eye Punch was a success. At a signal the waitress brought a second goblet. "This should be ample to your needs, sir," she told him

earnestly. "It is strong drink, and a stranger will not realize its authority until he attempts to stand erect. Sometimes these are known as 'Tickets to Redemption', because when folk take more than is necessary they become obstreperous, and must be punished."

=> Notice also that for this paragon of punches, we are given the recipe itself. Same goes for another (although it remains a bit mysterious), also found in *The Face*:

- 'Sunday Punch':

"That is our 'Sunday Punch'. It is enlivened with three tots of Black Gadroon rum and a half-gill of Secret Elixir."

=> a remarkable Punch to be found exclusively at the remarkable Traveler's Inn in Serjeuz, Dar Sai, whose remarkable manager is an excellent friend of mine . . .

Another recipe is provided for one of Wingo's creations, in *Ports of Call*:

- 'Sea Island Punch':

Schwatzendale stepped from the galley, where he had been testing Wingo's special Sea Island Punch, a compound of fresh coconut milk, lime juice, rum and a dash of apricot brandy.

We are also informed of yet another recipe in *Freitzke's Turn*, but the drink itself remains unnamed. Since the action takes place in Dongg's Tavern, at Masmodo on the island of Jamus Amaha, on the planet Gietersmond (one of the three 'Sister Planets' circling Jingkens Star), I propose to call it:

- 'Dongg's Punch':

"We make a nice punch, with rum, cabinche, tartlip juice, and lemon squash."

=> for once, we are even offered a description of the result:

With stately mien the barmaid served a greenish yellow mixture which Hetzel found pleasantly astringent. "Very nice," he told the barmaid.

There is a very special case where an ingredient is added to what must have been an ordinary recipe, with quite spectacular results, way beyond the usual 'Tangle-foot effect'. I refer, of course, to the episode of the Grand Ball, at Miss Picket's Academy, where Tiger Joe plays a prank that will eventually turn against him:

Tiger Joe, after a furtive look to left and right, poured into the punch bowl the contents of a little bottle he took from his pocket — a thick murky fluid.

=> I won't say more, I don't want to spoil your fun: just read *Bird Island* if you haven't already.

How is Punch Served?

OK. It's all very well to know the names of the drinks, even to know what's in them . . . but it's also very important, in the drinking art, to pay attention to the way the drinks are served!

Is punch served hot or cold in Jack's World? Essentially cold, even frosted or frozen. I found one exception, though, in *Throy*, a scene in Stroma:

Wayness served hot rum punch to her friends

It's also quite important, as a matter of etiquette, to know about the containers. First, where is the punch kept? Not too surprisingly, it is usually to be found in:

- punchbowls (or 'punch bowls', or 'punch-bowls', with characteristic Vancean disregard for spelling consistency), as seen in some of the previous quotes. The bowls can be made of crystal as in *Rumfuddle*, but also from silver, with special artistic enhancements, as in *Suldrun's Garden*, where among the treasures in Arbogast's strong-room is to be found a set of precious silver punchbowls, intricately carved to depict events of the mythical ages. It can also be served from:

- a beaker (see *Dogtown* quote)
- a pitcher (see *Ecce And Old Earth*)
- a silver ewer (see *Green Pearl*)
- a decanter (see *Maske:Thaery*)
- flasks. In *Ports of Call*, the famous locator Abel Merklint is quoted as follows, in his description of the planet Mariah:

Later, they will bring flasks of rum punch to where I sit on the porch, watching the sunset fade and the stars come out.

And what is it drunk from?

- goblets, mostly:

"Observe these goblets, some empty, others full or half full of rum punch!"

as Shugart exclaims in *Araminta Station*, at the sight of the Bold Lions 'carousing in typical style' . . .

- glasses, in *Bird Island*:

He ran with a glass of punch to the Reverend Dowbrett.

- cuplets:

"Gentlemen, I welcome you. Will you drink punch?" He poured out tiny cuplets of thick cold fruit syrup.

=> This is Rubdan Ulshaziz welcoming Gersen and Navarth in the city Atar, on the planet Sogdian, circling the star Miel. In *Palace of Love*, of course.

- wooden bowls, as in *Ports of Call*:

They were served frozen punch in dark wooden bowls, and gradually the spell cast by 'The Rite of Dawn' seeped away.

=> this is the Glicca's crew at the Grand Lalapaloosa on Lilibank Field.

Who Serves It?

In some cases, you just help yourself from the punch bowl . . . In other cases, it can be:

- a bartender (see Ernest, in *Bird Island*, who also serves cats. I mean, he also serves to cats . . .)
- a barmaid (see the quote for 'Dongg's Punch')
- a steward, as in *Domains of Koryphon*:

Kelse took Schaine's arm and led her to the buffet where Alger the steward dispensed refreshment, using formulas older than memory. Kelse and Schaine accepted goblets of punch.

- a footman, as in *Trullion*, at Lord Gensifer's residence:

The footman served rum punch in frosted silver goblets.

- a young waiter, as in *Araminta Station*, when Glawen says to Shugart:

"When the boy comes by, order me another rum punch."

- a waitress (see the quote for 'Cross-eye Punch')
- lots of waiters:

A dozen barefoot barboys wearing only white kirtles

- or lots of waitresses (even better, as far as I'm concerned . . .):

beautiful Yip girls served rum punches

- even clowns . . . as in *The New Prime*:

The buffet, the punch-bowl, the champagne wagons, tended by clowns,

Where and When to Drink It

Finally, a most important question: where and when should 'punch' be drunk? Jack's answers are varied, as they should be, and boil down to: anywhere, any time. But some circumstances and locations are worthy of note:

- on a terrace, as in *Deadly Isles*:

Black-eyes undoubtedly had returned to his hotel for lunch, and now sat out on the terrace with a tall rum punch.

If your terrace is under the light of astral objects, all the better, as in *Araminta Station*:

The other Bold Lions sat at a table to the side of the terrace, drinking rum punches to the light of Lorca, Sing and an array of flickering lamps.

- on the beach, as in *Rumfuddle*:

A hundred yards along the beach dozens of fairy lamps had been strung between the trees to illuminate a long table laden with fruit, confections, punch in crystal bowls.

- or above one, as Gersen chooses when he meets Walter Koedelin in *Book of Dreams*, at *Chancy's Tea House at the top of Sailmaker Beach*, situated to the north of Avente, the metropolis of Alphanor, first among Rigel's Concourse of Worlds, overlooking the Thaumaturge Ocean.

Of course, cafés, taverns and refreshment places are quite usual. We've already seen Tanglefoot Tavern, but it can also be in a *nearby sidewalk café*, as the one in *The Face*, where Gersen gets addicted to Cross-eye Punch. In *Maske:Thaery*, Jubal Droad sips his *decanter of wine punch* in a *garden café*, under a *sprawling shagwort*. I just hope for Jubal that this was not the season when the shagwort sheds its shag (try repeating this several times very fast), otherwise he must have found foreign matter in his drink. The most picturesque refreshment place I found is in *Ports of Call*, and is described as a *refreshment hut built of wicker and palapa thatch*.

And let's not forget spaceships! Punch can be drunk

- in the saloon:

Myron returned to the main saloon, to find Dame Hester and Marko Fassig sitting at their ease, each with a frosty goblet of Pingaree Punch

- or in the galley, as we've seen in the quote for Wingo's 'Sea Island Punch', when tested by Schwatzenale. Moncrief's famous trio of girls is not indifferent to the tests either:

Moncrief found Flook, Pook and Snook in the galley, where they were testing Wingo's Sea Island Punch.

It's Time for a Drink

All right. How do you feel, dear Reader? Thirsty, I suppose? Rightly so. Then here's a simple recipe for Rum Punch, the simplest I know, and easy to remember, should you find yourself in a spaceship galley, or in a tavern on a distant planet where the alien barman would not know how to mix this exotic Earth drink . . .

- One part sour (lime juice)
- Two parts sweet (sugar)
- Three parts strong (rum)
- Four parts weak (water)

The author of this very simple (and excellent) recipe particularly recommends key limes, raw sugar, Mount Gay red rum, and rainwater. Being a real connoisseur, he adds that the only part he would insist on is that it should be red rum, not white and not dark . . .

Final Word

I have not reviewed the totality of Jack's books for this piece of investigation. Should you spot an original detail about 'punch', something not already covered in this article (I mean I don't need any more straight quotes about 'rum punch', I have more than enough already . . .), please send me your extensive quote, with the title of the text, and comments, at: pdusoulier@wanadoo.fr I could add them to the content of this article (with due credit to the contributors) and post it later on the web at the usual meeting place of a crowd of Vance Fans (go and have a look: <http://pub1.ezboard.com/bjackvance>)

Thanks in advance.



38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Promotional Efforts

Max Ventura, contributor to COSMOPOLIS 40 and recent volunteer, is a professional web designer who is smartening up our site and creating a set of foreign language clones. Translations are being prepared by Max (Italian), Patrick D. (French), and Andreas Irle (German). A Dutch site is also planned and Max wants Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese as well. Anyone who masters these languages and wishes to help, please step forward! I have approached Suan about a Malay site, an idea he has taken under advisement. Foreign language sites will spread news about the VIE; foreign language surfers might also desire to become subscribers, even those who do not read English. The VIE is news in any language and there are many reasons to subscribe.

We brainstormed with Russ Wilcox, Arthur Cunningham and others about how to attract more VIE subscribers, and came up with the idea of a promotional flyer to be distributed in libraries, stores and conventions. Then Stephen Trump, a Canadian Vance reader, contacted the project concerning 'Torcon 3', the World Science Fiction Convention to be held in Toronto beginning August 28. Stephen is now official Torcon 3 'VIE rep'. The Torcon 3 guest of honor is George R.R. Martin, reputedly a Vance aficionado.

Anyone with ideas for use of the new flyer: contact us! Regarding subscriptions, we may accept up to 1000. Should we reach this number the project will have been a triumphant success. The more sets created, the stronger our mid- and long-term archival and promotional effect. Even a few years from now VIE sets will have accrued in value, by their rarity, importance and beauty. The more VIE sets created the faster the inevitable popularization of Vance, hastening book set value increase.



VIE Work Mails

WORK ON TEXTS FOR VOLUME 44

In reply to Joel Riedesel's weekly status update, Steve Sherman wrote:

The Stark [not assigned], *The Genesee Slough Murders* [ready for BR?], *Dream Castle* [alternate text: 'castl9' not assigned], *The Magnificent Red-hot Jazzing Seven* [not assigned], *The Star King* [not assigned], *Clang* [not assigned], *The Telephone was Ringing in the Dark* [not assigned]. With the exception of *The Star King* (which will probably be assigned to Chuck King when he finishes his current assignments), these are all V44 material and will need to be handled differently. The alternate *Dream Castle* is essentially a matter of making sure the text really agrees with that in *Great Stories of Space Travel* and that anything from the main text's TI that applies should be entered as a proposal. I actually think we've done that—I examined it for TI relevance when the main text came out of review and it has since had DD. I'd like to take a look at the latest v-text, but I suspect it's ready for the Imps or even SC.

The others are texts for which we have ms material; it's simply a matter of seeing if there might not be any minor editing required (e.g., making sure 'accommodate' is spelled correctly). This should be done initially by the current possessor of the ms or its copies . . .

Genesee Slough went through Techno* after Tim and I

*'Techno Proofing', a proofing process prior to normal proofing which makes use of our two automated proofing systems, Ian Davies' WordPick, and Koen Vyverman's VDAE, or 'TOTALITY'. SC is Security check, last step before Composition. Imping is implementation of changes approved by Board Review from Textual Integrity.—PR.

(Second and Wallah, respectively) wrapped up our TI phase. Unless Techno has raised issues that I need to address with the ms, this might be ready for BR [Board Review]. Again, I'd like to see the latest v-text to determine if this is the case.

The Kragen, by the way, will go to Richard Chandler for TI as soon as it comes out of Techno. He is currently working on *The Blue World* using ms material from the Mugar which will also be relevant to the earlier shorter version.

DIACRITICALS

The following is from VIE resident philolog, Patrick Dusoulie:

Koen has recently sent me (and to Suan, Steve and Rob E) a long list of words containing 'funny characters'. I browsed through it, focusing on the words with a French origin and the usual French set of diacritical marks, taking into account the flexibility to be found in American dictionaries, of course.

I came upon some 'anomalies'. Following Steve's advice, I'm sending you those remarks. It may concern some of you. Ignore my remarks where they've already been raised in TI, and addressed to your satisfaction. But in some cases they may be worth following up, even if the text has gone beyond TI. I rely on you to address them as necessary!

- déjà-vu, in *cugtcl*: incorrect spelling, it should be 'déjà-vu' (grave accent on the a) as in *Emphyrio*. I checked via dictionary.com that it's not a variant spelling.
- DieWüste: this is the correct spelling, corrected by Linnéa in *Space Opera* (I have raw-v4 here with me) . . . but unfortunately her correction suppressed the space between 'Die' and 'Wüste' . . . This (and several others) has been corrected in the 'proto-Textport' I did for the French Publisher Gallimard. I guess this will not escape attention in the VIE process, but just in case. (This is NOT a French word . . . OK. But I happen to have worked on *Space Opera*, and this one stuck in my mind . . .)
- paté: here's a good one . . . It's in *Son of the Tree*. I checked in my raw-v1 file, and I found horror! I hope it's been reviewed and corrected since. Here it is: 'Just as the goose being fattened for paté de fois gras never' . . . 'paté de fois gras' is in italics . . . Of course, it's not 'fois' (which means 'times' as in 'trois fois'='three times') but 'foie'='liver'!!! And since the whole expression is supposed to be in French, it should be 'pâté' (a circumflex accent on the 'a') not 'paté'. 'Pâté' is correct in *Rhialto* and *Ports of Call*. (Rob E. has subsequently told me that this has been spotted in TI. Recommendation was to correct the atrocious 'fois', but to leave 'paté' as it is. Not sure how it will end up . . .)
- protégés: in *devill*. I don't know the context, but if it's supposed to be 'the protected', then it's 'protégés'! (Rob E.

has subsequently told me that this has been corrected at a Comp stage).

- *précis*: that's in *killin**. Wrong accent, it should be an acute accent, '*précis*', as is correctly set in *Sabotage on Sulfur Planet*.

- *soirée-dansant*: in *magni*9. This is bad French, it should be '*soirée-dansante*' (feminine). But it may be considered as 'good American', who knows... I'd rather have it corrected, myself. I've seen some '*resumés*', but that's up to the Yanks to decide if they want to go that way. At least, the original French spelling is well known...

Note: there's '*naïveté*' and '*naïveté*', no problem with that, both are accepted variant spellings.

'MARVELLOUS' DEVELOPMENTS IN TI

The following communication from Derek, COSMOPOLIS editor and VIE *volunteer extraordinary*, to Patrick Dusoulrier led to a discussion of TI principles.

Derek Benson wrote to Patrick Dusoulrier:

... I'm wondering what the deal is on marvelous/marvellous. I noticed that your recent errata on *Emphyrio* have this word, with a comment by Paul, along the lines that it really should be 'marvellous'. So right now I'm imping a Wave 2 text, *Cugel the Clever*, and early in the story Cugel breaks into the place and examines luconnu's 'marvelous' collection. This is not marked by TI, there is no endnote on it. There is no other instance of this word in the text, regardless of spelling. So what I'm wondering is this: is there a policy to use 'marvellous' in all texts? Because if you're going to comment upon all of these as errata after the Wave 2 books are printed, and maybe Paul and others are in agreement, then the decision must be made right now and communicated to all and sundry to search any and all texts upon which we are working and make this adjustment now. I mean, if we want the 'marvellous' spelling, then the Wave 2 books should have it correct in all instances in all texts. This specific word and its spelling just make me almost want to puke, in case you can't tell by the style of my writing. It appears to me that sometimes in the Wave 1 texts Jack's marvell- has been changed to marvel- and in some texts the opposite way; not necessarily dictated by which was in the manuscript originally!! Pshaww... If you do not have a specific answer for me, what I'm planning on doing is marking the word in the v-text and put an Imp-Comment on it, suggesting that the spelling should be looked at.

Patrick replied:

Derek, you're hitting on one of the darker aspects of TI that has always left me very frustrated and dissatisfied... As much as I can understand that in the early stages we had to find our way, and policies were in the making, and kept shifting and changing, we've gone

far beyond that stage and yet, there doesn't seem to be a widely shared knowledge or consensus on a number of 'simple' points, such as 'marvellous', 'eery', 'kidnapped' and hyphenation consistency. Since I have left all TI activities quite some time ago I don't know how this has evolved, but my activity as 'Parallel Post Proofer' (not to mention RTF-DIFFer) enables me to see all Wave 2 texts, and I still find 'issues' of this kind... At least, I can assure you that 'marvellous' has been flagged by Oakland as Jack's preferred spelling... Does this mean we should use it in every instance? We often did this, at least when I was involved...

Steve Sherman commented:

Derek, thank you for raising this... I think you can be confident that there are no cases of 'marvellous' being changed to 'marvelous' where the ms has the former. There might well be cases of doubling the 'l' where the ms has the single, because of the word from Oakland. My own feeling (which is not VIE policy) is that we want to publish the work of Jack Vance as he intended it—and by that I mean largely as he intended it at the time of writing. Now we know that consistency is at the bottom of Jack's list of priorities. He has used various spellings over the years and he uses various spellings within a particular work. At the same time we have been informed by the Vances that certain spellings are preferred and can confidently be used on a universal basis, 'marvellous' being the most commonly cited example. It is my opinion that the application of post facto standards is unvancean, in that it imposes consistency in place of the inspiration of the moment. For example, I think it was a mistake to change the spelling of 'kidnapped' in *Bad Ronald*. There is a good body of evidence that suggests that Jack was most frequently spelling it with a single 'p' in the 50s and 60s. I am not persuaded by the argument that that makes it look like the 'a' is long. This is a legitimate and well-known spelling that will not confuse anybody for a millisecond. This issue is going to rise again, by the way, as *The Killing Machine* is currently in TI and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if the ms that Chuck consulted in Boston also uses the single 'p'. But as I say I don't make TI policy. I would like to hear from the other recipients on this question and perhaps at some point a decree can be issued to the wallahs list.

I made this comment:

... Fundamental TI policy was formulated by Alun at the Oakland festival: the VIE will be 'authentic, but not painfully authentic'. This policy must be seen as a refinement of the basic VIE mandate which is embodied in my promise to Jack 'to do the VIE as he would do it', if he were doing it. The 'basic mandate' is an ideal, most strongly felt in title changes and our attitude to rewrites. Alun, further, defined two aspects: meaning and presentation. Spelling, hyphenation and even aspects of

*Another v-code file name, this for *The Killing Machine*.—PR.

punctuation fall in the latter category, over which TI was given a certain degree of editorial latitude. The issue was then raised: should there be universal and consistent standards for spelling and hyphenation? Though never interested in it as such, I was never against such a thing, in its various possible manifestations (universal, by period, by genre, by text), assuming someone would take responsibility for the application. However such an approach was undermined by Jack's contempt for consistency, underlined by his interest in varying spellings to suit circumstances, often in response to impulses impossible for us mere mortals to discern. We could understand that in *Lyonese* he might prefer 'honour' to 'honor', but why 'grey' rather than 'gray'? Still, there it was, and it did nothing to encourage a general policy of universal homogeneity. Other approaches were discussed: homogenization within periods, within genres, or within texts or groups of texts. It had been my hope that Alun would be exercising active authority over TI work, but his professional life made this impossible, and we were cast back upon our own resources. In effect this meant that I, willy-nilly, as principal Board Reviewer (a task now fully shared with Tim, Steve and Rob), became arbiter of such questions. The policy I followed was to allow the preferences of TI workers on any given text to take the approach they preferred, within the ensemble of our guidelines. So, if hyphenation homogenization was proposed for a text, this was allowed. Spelling homogenization was also allowed, though, of course, no one proposed to homogenize known vancian variants. As a result there are texts which are homogenized, in different ways, and others which are not. As time went by my attitude became less complaisant toward homogenization. I never opposed it but, more and more, complained about specific instances or griped about it in general. Regarding the word 'marvellous', it came to my attention that sometimes this word has the single 'l' in early ms, and I recall proposing that, in such instances, this be respected. Meanwhile the attitude of Steve, who has become de facto head of TI, having started with homogenizing sympathies, has evolved to enthusiastic support of heterogeneity. This has been accompanied, in my understanding of Steve's approach, to a respect for ms evidence, or evidence in general, which even I have sometimes felt is too dogmatic. So goes the VIE! In the absence of a sure guiding hand, we have made our way as best we could. I recall proposing to Patrick, at the Chinon TI conference I believe, that he head up a commission of hyphen and spelling homogeneity. On reflection I don't see how such a job could have been done responsibly. It would have demanded a study of all hyphenations and spelling variants, with their contexts and date of use. At that early stage we were not in a position to generate this material. My feeling now? Our work would certainly have been more coherent had Alun

been able to take charge. However I do not think actual results, while certainly scruffier, are different in species from what would have resulted under Alun's guidance. Aside from the fact that all textual and TI evidence is preserved (so that our work remains transparent, reversible and correctible for future publishers), I think we can say we have followed the guideline: 'authentic, but not painfully authentic'. I do not see how we can do better, in the absence of a return in force by Alun, than continuing to scuttle along somewhere between Steve's now adamant heterogeneity and my own moody tolerance of homogeneity.

Tim Stretton added this:

Gents, TI principles and practices have evolved over time. People like Steve and me, who have been in on it from the beginning, have been part of that evolution. We both make rulings and propositions now at variance from those earlier in the project. The question of consistency is one where custom and practice have changed the most. How could this be otherwise? At the start of TI, in our foolishness and hubris, we thought that as Vance readers of decades' standing, we understood Jack's work. How laughable that seems now! In the two years since we have lived inside Jack's texts and manuscripts in a way that no Vance reader of the past—or indeed the future—can ever have contemplated. Still we don't understand the full range of Jack's gifts; but at least we have more understanding of 'how he does things', what's important to him and what isn't. One of the things we've learned is that, contrary to all of our prejudices, Jack just doesn't care about spelling consistency. We didn't know—or didn't believe—that when we decided that 'marvellous' has two ells. Now we'd say 'Jack is more likely to spell marvellous with two ells'. In the fast-track Wave 1 texts, where we had no ms evidence, these two statements lead to the same place: standardise on a chosen spelling. In Wave 2, with more plentiful ms evidence, we can see that Jack, being Jack, doesn't work that way. In *Cugel the Clever*, the text for which I was the wallah, Jack (or to be more strictly accurate, Norma) on occasion used a single ell. With such incontrovertible evidence, I saw no reason to make a proposition here. In trying to impose spelling consistency, I would have been elevating my own values ('spelling consistency is important') over Jack's: not, as I see it, the job of the wallah. There are, of course, other respectable positions, but this is where Steve and I have ended up. Here's one final example from the *Cugel the Clever* ms: *To either side stood a row of what appeared to be men-at-arms in brass armour with helmets of checkered bone and jet; forty in all, but only six suits of armor were occupied by living men, the others being supported on racks.* Note the variant spellings of 'armour' on consecutive lines (Ace had standardised on the US spelling). As Rob, my second, wrote: "Capricious? Careless? Genius? Who knows."

VIE vs. Underwood Miller

On a certain posting board, unrelated to Jack Vance, I came across this, from 'apagafuego': "I recently have had a chance to compare the VIE Readers' *The Face* to the same volume from the Underwood Miller five volume set. Oddly, the VIE book seems older, with a softer look to the font and binding. The frontispiece illustration in the U/M has the look of something from a 60's sci-fi magazine, while the VIE illustration reminds me vaguely of the pictures in a book of Spanish fairy stories I had as a child. Of the two, I rather prefer the VIE, partially because of its smaller size."

Our design idea was 'timelessness' so 'older' seems on target, given that the VIE book is some 20 years newer than the UM. As for 'softer', the paramount VIE format criteria, thanks to Andreas Irle, is: 'suitability for reading in bed'.

Given the discussion of text correction in COSMOPOLIS, non-VIE publishers come in for a good deal of rough. But the commercial editions, whatever their flaws, are how we discovered and have been nourished by Vance over the years. So: *three cheers for Daw, Tor, Coronet, Ace, Ballantine, Berkley, Granada, Del Rey and the pulps!* But, in a category by themselves, Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller deserve special gratitude. Their books, overall, are respectful of Vance's artistry; the volumes are handsome and of good material quality; with their re-publications of early stories and mysteries, they constitute a nearly complete Vance library, more so than any other publisher. Their books will certainly continue to play the major role in the promotion and preservation of Vance's work they have played for so many decades.



Equine Flatulence, Anyone?

Chuck King's whiskey series (see COSMOPOLIS 33, 34 and 35) was a blow to scotch and bourbon distillers as COSMOPOLIS readers converted *en masse* to rye whiskey. The music industry may also be taking a hit as traditional ditties move back to the top of the charts, in particular:

*Rye whiskey, Rye whiskey
Rye whiskey I cry.
If I don't get rye whiskey
I surely shall die.*

Some of us thought this was right up Navarth's alley and proposed a rubric for COSMOPOLIS: 'Horse Farts', presenting a new 'old' ditty, in the Navarthian taste, each month. Even though an alternate title, 'Equine Flatulences', was proposed by the couth Patrick Dusoulrier, and 'Hippic Aires' was also floated as a 'literary' alternative, the proposal failed to meet popular ap-

probation. Meanwhile we learned more about the rye whiskey song, which seems to have gone thusly:

*If the ocean was whiskey
and I was a duck,
I'd swim to the bottom
and never come up.*

*For it's whiskey, Rye whiskey
Rye whiskey I cry
If whiskey don't kill me
I'll live till I die.*

How should it be sung? How else: with snapping of fingers and clicking of heels in mid-air, as Chuck usefully pointed out.



No Publicity is Bad Publicity?

I don't want to show off or anything like that, but a certain author is not the only one with a posting board dedicated to him. Here is some of the persiflage from the denizens of 'my' board:

"Paul's self-serving comments and defense of fascism in COSMOPOLIS 40 are a disgrace to the work of Jack Vance . . . If he cannot be muzzled in the interests of the VIE, then . . . I will not rest until Paul is removed from all association with the VIE . . . [I will] undertake a complete review of all COSMOPOLIS articles [to snuffle out justification for] objection to Paul . . . he's going to get the full treatment . . . the honor and dignity of Jack Vance deserves no less . . . should it ever come to pass that Paul's views become associated with Jack's, then [(list of VIE management stars)] and the rest will have a lot to answer for because of their protection of such an unbalanced mind."

"We are dealing with the situation where a group of sane but invertebrate people are protecting and supporting a deranged individual incapable of self-control . . . destroying the creative legacy of [Jack Vance]."

"[I think] that creating a . . . forum . . . dedicated to PR-bashing is way too much honor to the shrimp. [I] had several e-mail exchanges and one phone conversation with [a certain project manager, and though] 'morally benumbed' [he, I claim, doesn't like] what is being published in COSMOPOLIS any more than I do. [None-the-less I harbor no] grudges against [(list of project managers). It is] lonely on the top [but not everyone is] a hero fighting for high moral principles [and, for inferior people] a nice set of books is what matters, with their names mentioned inside. [They tend to forget] that everything they enjoy . . . entertainment [and such] . . . is a direct result of intransigent heroism of the very few who never gave up

and sacrificed their lives... [COSMOPOLIS is] a publication that damages and insults Jack Vance's good name every month by disseminating primitive religious propaganda and bigotry" and... what "goes on within the VIE organization poisons people's perception of Jack Vance's noble works."

"Mr Rhoads' confidence in his own rectitude is such he probably has no inkling as to how mean spirited his actions appear."

"[I am] ready to sign a petition to have PR removed."

"[I am] in favor of jeopardizing the completion of the VIE."

"All subscribers return the existing books and get a full refund. If this is only possible as the result of a lawsuit, which plunges certain people into personal bankruptcy, so much the better... The books are then destroyed. Getting rid of the VIE is... a matter of cleaning up *filth*..."



COSMOPOLIS Bound

COSMOPOLIS will come to an end when the project is over. There has been talk of a bound version, and with enough subscribers there is no obstacle. It would probably be a two or three folio volume set. Its value and usefulness, if any, would be augmented by a good table of contents and an index, creating which would be a great deal of work... a job that might interest someone.



Is Jack Vance Anti-Christian?

PROLOGUE: WHY AN ESSAY ON SUCH A 'HOT' TOPIC?

The VIE project is a total success. In three years of ground-breaking work, several dozen people who had never met, inventing ways and means as they went, mobilized the efforts of hundreds of other Vance readers world-wide to publish and deliver 22 books of superlative quality to over 500 subscribers. Less than a year later work continues on the second 22 books. The last three issues of COSMOPOLIS, now in its 41st issue and with a readership of over 700 regular subscribers alone, have borne testimony to the satisfaction of dozens and dozens of subscribers who have taken the time to thank their fellow volunteers and comment on the quality of the project's product and process.

Meanwhile a handful of sourpusses have been militating to hijack the project, complaining it is being diverted to the promotion of fascism and Christianity.

The VIE is an association of Vance readers working together to a common goal: promotion of an artist they admire. The project has no other program or policy than promotion of Jack Vance. But VIE volunteers are not an army of robots; they are individuals free to participate, or not, as they choose. COSMOPOLIS is the common area of the project. In COSMOPOLIS all volunteers, subscribers or interested outsiders are on a footing of equality in an environment of freedom, the freedom which is the foundation of project success. In project work a companionable hierarchy is necessary, but in COSMOPOLIS we are all just Vance readers, 'project volunteers', 'subscribers' or 'interested outsiders' (a perfectly honorable status!) together, on an equal footing. Whatever Vance means to each of us may be expressed in COSMOPOLIS. Such expressions are offerings from individual Vance readers or project volunteers to their fellows; the net result is 'project animation'. By writing in COSMOPOLIS we let each other know we are there, we share our ways of being enriched by Vance's work, we encourage each other to the accomplishment of our historic tasks.

For nothing like the VIE has ever happened before, and nothing like it, I say, will happen again. Only the contrast between Vance's real artistic stature and the neglect his work suffers could provoke a reaction such as the VIE project, and that situation, I say, is historically unique. For me, beyond its obvious aims, the project is an act of cultural resistance to corrupt elites ruining a precious thing: Western culture. To others it is certainly other things. Whatever each person's motivations and thoughts I, for one, am eager to learn about them. Why should I not be glad to have more reasons to do project work than the one that comes naturally to me?*

The VIE is not, and must not become, an organization steered into an ideological ditch by militants who, in the name of their conception of the meaning of Jack Vance's work, seek to exclude or silence visions contrary to their own. Their basic weapon is the accusation that others have what is in fact their own secret goal: priority in the interpretation of Vance's work, or ideological control of the project. There is only one viable response to this tactic: all visions of Vance's work must remain welcome in COSMOPOLIS. Only by openness can the project thrive because we need all Vance readers of good will to accomplish our goal. If only Marxists or anti-Christians were allowed the privilege of interpreting Vance's work, or accorded the power to exclude ideas allegedly not shared by Jack Vance, volunteership would dwindle and work would bog down. I, for one, refuse to be part of an organization that squelches individuality.

The invidious militancy of would-be censors has already impeded the project. Months of my own work

*And I will be drinking rye whiskey for years to come!

time, which like that of a few dozen others happens to be disproportionately important, have been diverted to defense of project openness. Printing and delivery of Wave 1 were delayed and, though I am starting to be hopeful that a more normal situation is at last restored, Wave 2 has been slowed. I still look forward to a 2004 GM4 (Golden Master 4 meeting) but, as of now, Wave 2 delivery does not look likely prior to 2005. I hope that the project has at last understood the sacred and imperious necessity of openness. If so, it will be clear sailing. If not, expect further delays or, in the worst case, failure.

While some of this militancy is specifically Marxist, or PC, all of it is anti-Christian or crypto anti-Christian. I hasten to acknowledge that just as there is 'right wing' anti-project militancy, there are 'anti-Christian' VIE volunteers who would never dream of obstructing or hijacking the project, loyal volunteers implacably dedicated to openness. It is not 'anti-Christianism' per se that is the problem. However, the basic argument used by anti-project militants is that because the work of Jack Vance promulgates anti-Christianism the project must quash pro-Christian opinion. The battle, therefore, is over control of COSMOPOLIS: will COSMOPOLIS be open, or will it be controlled, at first or second hand, by anti-Christian ideologues? My position has been constant; I steadfastly invite everyone, those whose views differ from mine in particular, to present their views on Vance's work in COSMOPOLIS. So far the anti-Christian anti-project militants have preferred to denigrate COSMOPOLIS and attack the project via posting boards, e-mail and phone. The exposed part of these machinations may seem clownish but at various times they have succeeded and, to speak only of myself, I have been driven out of the project on more than one occasion. As a result I see it hanging by threads of *good will* and *staunch defense of openness*. But even these are not enough; COSMOPOLIS must shine with these qualities. All good-willed contributors, whatever their opinions or style, add to the light. Those who would hijack the project are put to shame by the spectacle of honest discourse and respectful co-existence between people of differing views. The strength of the project is harmonious heterogeneity.

To encourage such discourse on the subject of subjects, I will take a first step. I warmly invite reply, comment, criticism, argumentation, refutation (logical, impassioned, scholarly or intuitive), honest and lucid outrage, even clever and amusing vituperation!

VOLTAIRIAN THEISM

If religions are diseases of the human psyche . . . then religious wars must be reckoned the resultant sores and cankers infecting the aggregate corpus of the human race. Of all wars, these are the most detestable, since they are waged for no tangible

gain, but only to impose a set of arbitrary credos upon another's mind.—Baron Bodissey, in *The Face*

This statement by the Baron is certainly the most blatant anti-religious remark in Vance's oeuvre. It is not a remark made by Jack Vance. It is made by Baron Bodissey, a character in some of his books. Another character, Viole Falushe, makes this remark:

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Does Vance think beauty is in the eye of the beholder? When a true artist is at work, that a phrase is uttered by one of his villains is no proof it does not reflect his personal thinking. By the same token statements uttered by sympathetic characters are not automatically transcriptions of the author's personal thinking.

In 1995 I mentioned Navarth to Jack. In reply he confided that Navarth is his favorite character, the one with whom he most identifies. Perhaps, another day, or another year, the response would have been different—I do not know; it is certainly possible. On that day he did not mention Baron Bodissey as the character he most identified with.

I have always seen in Baron Bodissey the spokesman for a certain strain in vancian thought, an influence I suspect he encountered in his college days. It includes a 'neo-Rousseauian' 'romantic' suspicion of 'civilization' or, as Vance puts it, 'urbanity'. Man, according to this idea, finds his fullest realization in direct contact with the natural world, as opposed to second-hand living, predigested or 'vicarious' experience, which *is not*, but only *represents* life, in other words: art. The Institute of the *Demon Princes* books, or the story *Commander Tynnot's Red-headed Daughter*, are expressions of this Bodissian theme.

Navarth is the exact opposite of the Bodissian ideal. Neither sober, stoical, steadfast, realist nor nature lover, Navarth is giddy, uncertain, impulsive, fantastical. He does not seek health of body and soul in lone communion with the wilderness, but indulges in drink, disorder, public scandal. Impatient with regular work and sound living, he craves notoriety, novelty, blinking lights, refined cooking. He is both feverish and indolent, he is even an artist, one of the inventors of vicarious experience condemned by the Bodissians, like his hyper-aesthetic party at Kussines.

I am not trying to suggest that Vance disagrees with Bodissian doctrine, just that it is only one aspect of his thinking, that Bodissian pronouncements should not necessarily be taken hastily or word for word as transcriptions of the personal opinions of Jack Vance. In fact, in chapter 14 of *The Face*, Vance even presents Bodissian critics, including this overheated diatribe:

. . . He moves me to tooth-chattering wrath; he has inflicted upon me, personally, a barrage of

sheer piffle, and maundering insult which cries out to the Heavens for atonement . . .

Aside from the Rousseauian aspect of the Baron's thinking, his anti-religionism is another 18th century French influence, a descendant of Voltairian anti-clericalism. Voltaire was not an atheist. He was a theist who made the famous remark: *If God did not exist he would have to be invented*. However, whether or not Vance is an anti-Christian, he very clearly is anti-clerical, if the term is understood in its Voltairian sense: he is against 'clerics', which is to say, priests. Being against 'religion' is something else. Vance may indeed be against religion. But it is less religion, as such, than clerics that come in for the most vancian lambasting. While Vance's most famous priest character, Father Umphred, is Christian, the vast majority of his priests are non-Christians. From the 'elders of the hub' with their 'private infinities', to the besotted Chilites, horrific druids and animal training 'Intercessors' of *The Blue World*, to the 'kind folk' of Lumarth with their doctrine of 'absolute altruism' and the hierophants and thaumaturges of a sprawling pantheon of local gods, demons and demiurges, down to leaping Finukans and absurdly ritualistic Kalzibans, all have one thing in common. This thing is stated explicitly in chapter 1 of *Madouc*.

There were dozens of cults and religions, diverse except that, in every case, a caste of priests interceded between laity and divinity.

This complaint is Voltairian because it is both anti-clerical and theist. If the deity or deities in question do not exist, the intercession of priests is an organized fraud. If they do, it is unnecessary—or such is the implication. This non-atheist anti-clericalism is clear in Tristano's comment, in *The Green Pearl*, concerning the religion of Troicinet:

There are neither priests nor creed, which makes for a simple and honest worship.

Tristano's opinion is favorable exactly because priestly intervention is absent. Religion itself is not attacked, and this particular religion is approvingly qualified as 'simple and honest'. Another non-atheist or 'theist' passage is Aillas' royal invitation to the god Spirifiume to install himself in Troicinet.

By 'non-atheist' or 'theist' passages I mean those where, making allowance for obvious irony, a character or the narrative implies, opines or affirms the existence or possible existence of God, gods, demons, or any sort of supernatural force, spirit or realm. Defined this way any fantasy story is 'theist' but, making allowance for fantasy context, and also allowing for anti-clericalism, 'theist' passages can be found throughout Vance's work:

" . . . as to the persistence of superstition, only an impoverished mind considers itself the repository

of absolute knowledge. Hamlet spoke on this subject to Horatio, as I recall, in the well-known work by William Shakespeare. I myself have seen strange and terrifying sights. Were they hallucinations? Were they the manipulation of the cosmos by my mind or the mind of someone—or something—other than myself? I do not know. I therefore counsel a flexible attitude toward matters where the truth is still unknown. For this reason: the impact of an inexplicable experience may well destroy a mind which is too brittle."

—Henry Belt in *Sail 25*

Navarth pulled at his long chin. "Strange," he admitted. "Strange that this shell can convey us so far so fast. Somewhere there is mystery. It impels one to theosophy: to the worship of a space-god, or a god of light." — *The Palace of Love*

Jack Vance is no ideologue. Like Henry Belt he is open to the mysteries of reality. Like the rest of us he has personal opinions; like some of us he does not necessarily think the same thing every day or assume he knows everything. On some days Jack is certainly an atheist. I have been together with him on such days. On other days this is not so clear. I have often seen him steer conversation to religion, including such subjects as the nature of the Trinity. For a writer who mentions religions so often this should be no surprise. What whole and serious man has no curiosity about such things, has never entertained doubts regarding the existence or non-existence of God, about what may or may not lie behind the stupendous facts of our existence and the unfathomable extensions of space and time? Such doubt, such search, such hesitation; are they not essential aspects of human experience?

Vance's attitude is not sectarian. The ideological atmosphere of his work is best suggested by such an excerpt as this, from *Cugel the Clever*:

With nothing better to do the pilgrims engaged in lengthy disputations, and the diversity of opinion upon every issue was remarkable.

An atheist is not the same thing as an atheist militant. The former may be interested in lengthy disputations wherein the diversity of opinion is remarkable; the latter seeks to convert others to his creed. But if Vance were a man who sought to convert others to his creed why, as a writer, has he chosen to pass up so many chances to promulgate a favored credo? Where is the consistent anti-theist message which would certainly emerge? Instead, for each atheist passage, theist passages abound, to a general effect of doubt, questioning, search. Vance is not a militant of any kind; he is an artist. He does not want to convert, he wants to observe and recount.

Vance may personally be a doubter; this does not mean he wishes the rest of the world to embrace atheism. I can find no indication that the goal, or even one of the goals, of his work is promotion of unbelief. In any case such a goal would be unartistic because art is not propaganda, it is reaction to observation. Vance's work may feature doubt, but doubt is not automatically doubt of the existence of God; it might just as well be the opposite. Doubt, as such, generates search. Where search leads is, by definition, unknown. But demonstrating that Vance is not a militant atheist does not prove he is not anti-Christian. Voltaire was not an atheist but he was anti-Christian, and there are passages in Vance's that, indeed, seem anti-Christian.

Before we address those however we must dispose of an idea advocates of Vance's alleged anti-Christianity lean on most heavily: the presence of characters like the evil Father Umphred and other unpleasant or evil-doing Christian clerics or believers. Such characters might well be part of an anti-Christian program, but in themselves they demonstrate nothing. Even the most pro-Christian writers use bad Christian clerics and believers as characters. An example is Jane Austen.

Jane Austen was the daughter of a clergyman. She never married and spent her whole life under her father's roof. Her stories, about the domestic adventures of young women and their eventual marriages, are imbued with Christian values and thinking, and Jane Austen is notoriously a 'Christian writer'. Anglican clergymen, like her father, were part of her personal social universe, and also the universe she presents in her work.

Mr. Collins, of *Pride and Prejudice*, is not a bad man but he is stupid and ridiculous; the Austenian scale of values putting a premium on intelligence and discernment, Mr. Collins is one of her sorriest characters. In *Emma*, Mr. Elton, though bad, is not exactly 'evil' but on the short and highly sensitive moral scale internal to Austen's work he must be counted among her nastiest characters. Poor Mr. Elton, however, in typical Austenian manner, is not only unjustly victimized by the wrong-headed and prideful Emma—Jane Austen's declared favorite character—he also marries a woman as bad as himself who, we are given to understand, must eventually make his life miserable. Is this world-famous ridicule and exposure of the human failings of servants of the Anglican Church evidence of anti-Christianism? No. It is presentation of a reality; some men are unworthy of the stations they hold.

In chapter 7 of the gospel of *Matthew* we learn of the fate of hypocritical Christians: *Not everyone that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord!' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father.* And regarding corrupt priests in particular: *Many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesized in thy name, and done many wonderful works?' Jesus*

warns them: *I will say; I never knew you! Depart from me, doers of injustice!* Theologian and Christian prelates over the ages have not been unaware of these famous verses! Bishops encouraged medieval stonecarvers to show prelates tortured in hell on cathedral façades. In the same way, Roman emperors awarded a 'triumph' had a friend whisper in their ear, as the chariot rolled through the streets and the crowds cheered, that all is vanity and man is but dust.

Like Austen, Vance has a mind that is not one dimensional. Ridiculous, stupid, evil, greedy and corrupt Christian clerics and believers are a historical, contemporary, and no doubt future reality. Presenting that reality demonstrates neither Christian devotion nor its opposite. The gates of Hell, according to the prophecy, may never prevail against the Church, the Church may be the mystical body of Christ; it is also a human institution. When it is rich it attracts people who love not God but riches. When it is powerful it attracts people who love not God but power. When it is a mark of virtue it attracts people who love not God but marks of virtue, the better to hide their corruption from others, or themselves. Mischief will dog humanity to the end of time, when, according to Catholic doctrine, *Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.* Then, at last—some of us like to think—all will be put right! Meanwhile, according to another quotable source, we must *suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*, and nobody and nothing, not even the Pope and all his saints, can guarantee protection from fraud, hypocrisy and malfeasance of all known types, plus new types constantly being invented by demonically inspired minds.

So even if presenting hypocritical Christians might be a part, and certainly has been a part, of efforts to demonstrate the turpitude of Christianity, it is not, in itself, anti-Christian. To show Christianity to be bad, it is not the believers, promoters, or ministers of Christianity that must be shown to be evil, it is Christianity itself. In recent years the tactic of the Marxists, to save something from the wreckage of their creed, has been to argue that Stalin, Mao and Castro traitorously betrayed their ideal. The argument is clever and, if successful, Marxism will indeed be exonerated. After all if Marxism is good in itself why should it be rejected? If a cast-iron frying pan is used to bash someone's head in, this does not mean that cast-iron frying pans are evil.

But even if Marxists succeed in convincing the world that they have done no harm they will still face the objection that, unlike the obviously useful frying pan, they have never done any good, for—setting aside the verbiage of 'ideals' and 'theories' which Stalin, Mao and Castro have so vigorously instrumentalized—what real good have they done? By contrast, whatever the failing of its servants, or however small its inherent worth, Christianity has, at least arguably, done more to promote

human dignity, to protect women, abolish slavery, calm the passions of war, treat the sick, educate children, promote and preserve art and knowledge including decoration of the world with beautiful buildings, than any other institution. But even people who agree that Christianity has done some good, might still fairly think it is bad, for reasons transcending this narrowly utilitarian defense. So my point is not that, having done good, in whatever amount, Christianity is therefore wonderful; it is that an honest argument against Christianity would not be that it has been an exclusively noxious influence. If Christianity is bad it must be shown to be bad in itself.

WAS JESUS A FRAUD?

What are proper anti-Christian arguments? One might be that, since God—an old man with a long white beard perched up on a cloud—is a fairytale, pretending he exists, let alone building a whole way of life around a fantasy whatever beneficial results might accrue, is a lie and a fraud and, as such, should be stopped. This is the thinking behind St. Paul's famous remark that if Jesus is not resurrected Christians are madmen. But nowhere in Vance's work that I know of, in the mouth of either sympathetic or antipathetic characters, is Jesus' humanity, divinity or resurrection denied. Once again this in itself is no proof that Vance either believes or disbelieves these things. I suspect if tomorrow I asked Jack what he thinks of Christ's resurrection, he might snort. However this may be, in his work we find no attacks on Christianity from that angle. In fact, thanks to Koen Vyverman and the TOTALITY ISR*, we can assert Vance uses the word 'Jesus' exactly 11 times. One use occurs in this passage which reports the vision of a clairvoyant girl:

Jesus is seen sometimes as a light of great radiance, sometimes as a man of great stature. He's wise, kindly, a great teacher.—*Parapsyche*

Two of them occur in the mouth of the notorious Father Umphred himself. One is:

... the prostitute Jesus defended before the temple... —*Madouc*

Here Father Umphred makes reference to one of the famously surprising, courageous and benevolent things Jesus did, a reproach and example to all humanity ever since.

I find no passages in Vance's work that in any way contribute to the anti-Christian allegation that Jesus is a fraud.

CHRISTIANITY'S SHAMEFUL HISTORY?

Another angle of anti-Christian assault is to condemn

the history of Christianity as integrally, or for the most part, evil. This, as I mentioned above, is not a viable argument but it is a receivable one, and there are passages in Vance which seem to be of this character. In a tourist pamphlet Wayness reads about the cathedral and church of Kiev:

... visitors from across the Gaeen Reach come ... to marvel at the inspiring architecture and at the power of priests who were able to wring so much wealth from a land at that time so poor.
—*Ecce and Old Earth*

Does this pamphlet reflect Vance's view? Once again, affirming so would be hazardous. Like everything else in his work it is perfectly observed; this is exactly the sort of thing a traveler to Kiev, contemporary to the writing of *Ecce and Old Earth*, might have encountered, and the Europe toured by Wayness is, in essence, the Europe of the 20th century.

There is no denying that the history of Christianity has been marred by corrupt and avaricious priests, beginning with Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. But setting aside the genuine scandals, the exacerbated worldliness of certain renaissance Popes for example, most accounts of gratuitous ecclesiastical pomp and clerical indifference to human misery are distortions. If the Church has been rich it is because its implantation has favored social stability, peace and thus industry and wealth. The advance of Christendom, like the spread of the Roman empire, contributed to trade, prosperity and cultural enrichment. We find echoes of this historical reality in Vance:

Dun Cruighre was enlivened by much coming and going, with constant sea-traffic to and from Ireland and Britain. A Christian monastery, the Brotherhood of Saint Bac*, boasted a dozen famous relics and attracted pilgrims by the hundreds. Ships from far lands lay alongside the docks, and traders set up booths to display their imports: silk and cotton from Persia; jade, cinnabar and malachite from various lands; perfumed waxes and palm-oil soap from Egypt; Byzantine glass and Rimini faience all to be exchanged for Celtic gold, silver or tin.

—*The Green Pearl*

Were the riches of the churches of Kiev accumulated to the disadvantage of the poor? Russia is no Sudan or Bangladesh; with its fertile crop lands and abundant natural resources it has never been 'poor'. Before modern technology and transportation made food storage and distribution the banality it is today, even rich countries like France suffered regional famines. Natural disaster

*The Rue de Bac in Paris—so named because it once led to the embarkation where the Seine could be crossed by 'bac', a river ferry controlled by ropes, such as crosses the Camber estuary at Avallon in *Lyonesse*—is famous for the Marian apparitions which occurred there.—PR.

*Incredible String Retriever

aside, it was the nastiness of some land-owners, some kings, and all Communist dictators, that has made life miserable in Russia for many people. The Orthodox Christian Church, as far as I know, has done its best over the centuries to alleviate suffering by urging people to be pleasing in the eyes of God by treating their fellow human beings as brothers in Christ. In *Mark* 9:37 Jesus, taking a child in his arms, says: *Whosoever shall receive such a child in my name receives me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me but him that sent me.* The greatest literary attack on serfdom, the novel *Dead Souls*, was written by a devout, even 'fanatical', Christian, Nikolai Gogol. Another very Christian Russian writer who showed the terrors of serfdom was Madame de Ségur, in *Le Général Dourakine*. The Church is not responsible for human misery through the ages; to the contrary it has been the single greatest humanizing force. Is Vance unaware of this? Does he think such an assertion untrue?

There are other passages in Vance touching the alleged rapacity of the Church:

"... You will control none of the church monies; all funds must be paid into and out of the royal exchequer, with not a farthing for the popes of Rome!" — *Madouc*

But this remark in no way proves that Vance thinks the Popes sought to rob the world; it is a statement by the notoriously cynical King Casmir and, strictly speaking, expresses only his own suspicious rapacity, of which there is ample evidence:

Casmir chuckled. "Tell the priest to bring me gold from Rome, some of which I will spend on a fine church." — *Madouc*

If Umphred's detention of the secret of Dhrun's sire is the more important element, Casmir's greed also gives Umphred a string to pluck:

"Your Majesty, I submit that the cathedral will enrich the city, rather than the reverse. By this same token, a splendid cathedral will do the same, only faster." Father Umphred gave a delicate cough. "You must remember that at Rome and Ravenna the gold came not from those who built the cathedrals but those who came to worship."
— *The Green Pearl*

Even if this means that Churches fleeced local dupes, it contradicts the idea that they are money pumps for Rome.

Christendom is also reproached for being spread by the sword. Without seeking to white-wash the Church, and with the exception of certain episodes in its 2000 year history today deliberately interpreted out of context, I affirm that this is not so. But, whatever the historical facts, I can think of no episode in Vance showing forced

Christianization. Vance does, however, show the opposite: pacific Christian missionaries at work. From the preamble to *Madouc* we have the following account:

Saint Elric marched barefoot to Smoorish Rock where he intended to subdue the ogre Magre and bring him to the Faith... Magre politely agreed to hear his declaration. Elric spoke a mighty sermon, while Magre started the fire in his pit. Elric expounded, recited Scripture and sang the glories of the Faith. When he came to an end and declared his final 'Hallelujah!', Magre gave him a stoup of ale to ease his throat. Sharpening a knife he complimented Elric upon the fervor of his rhetoric. Then he smote off Elric's head, cut, drew, spitted, cooked and devoured the sanctified morsel with a garnish of leeks and cabbages. Saint Uldine attempted the baptism of a troll in the waters of Black Meira Tarn. She was indefatigable; he raped her four times during her efforts...

This may be a comic riff on legendary tales, it may poke fun at Elric and Uldine, but it also shows them to be brave, dedicated, benevolent and non-violent, real virtues of the historical saints who Christianized Western Europe, such as Patrick and Martin. Nor does the passage mock sainthood as such. Furthermore, in the guise of ogres and trolls, it paints the opponents of Christianity as the bloodthirsty pagans they often were.

The mark of the true artist is that he transcends himself through devotion to the Muse. The Muse, despising personal opinions, loves only reality and truth. When an artist shares her preoccupations she may deign to inspire him. Art is divine because through it humanity transcends itself toward beauty, reality, truth. Propaganda is something else; it is absent from Vance's work.

ANTI-CHRISTIANISM

In fact there are very few instances of what might truly be considered anti-Christianism in Vance. The most striking, it seems to me, is this:

Deeming the unsubstantiated dogma of a localized religious cult to be an undignified and unsuitable base on which to erect the chronology of galactic man, the members of this convention hereby declare that time shall now be reckoned from the year 2000 AD (Old System), which becomes the year 0. The revolution of Earth about Sol remains the standard annual unit. — *The Star King*

The basic caveat must again be mentioned: this is not Vance speaking, it is Vance imagining what a special commission for the establishment of galactic time might have proclaimed. When *The Star King* was written 2000 AD was 39 years away; it seems doubtful that Vance imagined such a commission would be convened so soon,

much less exactly in the year 2000, and I have always assumed this ruling was made sometime after 2050 AD. In any event there is no indication it was made *in* the year 2000.

The idea of rejecting a Christian based calendar has a celebrated predecessor; the French revolutionary calendar of 1798. The Jacobin terrorists who hijacked the revolution were fanatical anti-Christians. Among their atrocities must be counted the vast destruction of churches and works of art. The calendar they established put 'year 1' in 1789, the year of their revolution, the beginning of the *new era*. Not content to get rid of Christian years they recalibrated the months and renamed them according to a half-scientific half-romantic aesthetic. Vance's commission is not so radical; it leaves the old months in place. But its attitude remains flagrantly anti-Christian because referring to Christianity as a 'localized religious cult' flippantly ignores that this 'cult' had become, more than a millennium earlier, the religion boasting the greatest number of believers worldwide, a boast it could still make in 1961, and 2000—to say nothing of having been one of the most important forces in the development of culture and society over the millennia since its inception and of having been cherished by men who made the galactic age possible, like Kepler and Newton. Despite this obvious anti-Christianism the commission does something odd. One would think, as a benchmark, as starting point for the history of 'galactic man', it would select some event basic to that history, such as the first landing on the moon, the colonization of Mars, the invention of faster-than-light drive, discovery of the first habitable planet of another star. Instead it chooses someone's anniversary, the 2000th jubilee of the birth of Jesus Christ, a man born of a virgin, who was crucified, resurrected, and so on and so forth. If Vance's aim was anti-Christian he shot wide of his mark.

Another apparently anti-Christian passage is the battle on Rudyer Moor, recounted by Baron Bodissey in the prolongation of the passage from book 1 of *Life*, quoted above. The battle is fought between two orders of monks. It is not stated that they are Christians but the monastic orders involved are the 'Ambrosians' and 'Aloysians'. I have never heard of monastic orders bearing these names—though they may exist—but Ambrose was the bishop of Milan, and Aloysius seems like a name typical of the Egyptian hermits. The battle is a shame and a farce. If anything can be rescued for Christianity from this fiasco it can only be said that these fanatical warriors are not reported to have committed their depredations upon anyone but each other. But the passage oozes sly fun and is obviously not to be taken seriously. If Baron Bodissey had wanted to condemn religion by recounting wars fought in its name or between believers, real human history can offer more useful examples. As for the intentions of Jack Vance himself, beyond

entertaining his readers, once again they are not immediately obvious.

DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANITY?

What sort of anti-Christian writer would defend Christianity? In *Parapsyche*, written in 1957, we find one of several such 'defenses'. The context is a dispute between Don, a psionics researcher who defends the possible existence of ghosts, and the villain, Hugh, an evangelistic zealot. After Hugh leaves, the heroine comments:

"He shouldn't use the word 'Christian'," Jean said indignantly. "Christianity stands for gentleness and kindness, and Hugh is a bigot."

Later in the story the dispute resumes:

... "You may be a power-mad hypocrite, Hugh—or you may just be a plain fool. One thing you're certainly not—that's a Christian!"

... "I'm a Christian minister...no sneering atheist like yourself..."

"Christ taught kindness, the brotherhood of man. You're no Christian. You're a demagogue. A rabble-rouser. A hate merchant and a fool besides. You're worse than any atheist."

Boiled down to their epistemological essence, these passages are a confrontation of theism and Christianity against ideological extremism. Atheism is even fingered as bad. Don and Jean deny that Hugh is 'Christian', because his behavior is neither 'gentle' nor 'kind'. They would probably say the same of Father Umphred. Christianity cannot be held to account for actions of people who do not follow its precepts but exploit it for evil ends, any more than a frying pan can be accused of murderous intent.

However we interpret such passages from *Parapsyche*, careful readers will not automatically take them for Vance's personal views of today. They are the views of some of his characters, or views appropriate to a certain context in a story written 50 years ago. *Parapsyche* also includes an afterword in which Jack Vance makes his only published statement regarding Christianity I know of:

The author is no enemy of Christian ethical doctrine, as he has tried to make clear. But he cannot disguise his opinion of certain forms of evangelism.

As far as I can tell the opinion expressed here remains the opinion of the man. But it is somewhat vague; 'Christian ethical doctrine' is neither Christianity nor the Church, and 'certain forms of evangelism' might include forms less grotesque than Hugh Bronny's. Such a

statement is not incompatible with certain forms of anti-Christianism.

In other parts of the same story Don calls for a 'crusade' in favor of 'non-conformity' and a 'declaration of independence from religiosity'. But in an atheist society* what is 'conformist' about Christian faith or how is 'independence from religiosity' violated if religion is freely chosen?

Other 'defenses' of Christianity include this passage from *Strange People, Queer Notions*:

"We're an older race here in Europe, we have a spiritual tradition that you in the New World have discarded. The church is the dearest thing in the lives of those villagers; if you destroyed it and gave them all bathrooms and American kitchens with refrigerators and big American cars, you'd destroy their life."

Clarence an expatriate American, and Oleg Vroznok a Polish anti-Communist refugee, engaged in barroom repartee, line up behind two clichés: European spiritual probity and American materialist vulgarity. The opinion belongs to Oleg Vroznok, not Jack Vance. Still, it is a defense of the Catholic Church.

Finally, among many possible other examples, is this from *The Green Pearl*. Flary the pirate, condemned to death, speaks from the scaffold:

"The priest has put a choice to me. I may either repent my sins and be shriven, and thereby ascend to the glories of Paradise; or I may refuse to repent, and not be shriven, and thereby suffer forever the torments of Hell." Flary paused and looked around the crowd. "Lord Emmence, gentle-folk, persons of all degrees! Know then; I have made my decision!" He paused again, and held his clenched fists dramatically high, and all the folk present leaned forward to learn what Flary's decision might be.

Flary cried out: "I repent! I sorely regret those crimes which have brought me to my present shame! To each man, woman and child within my hearing I utter this advice: stray never an inch from the path of rectitude! Bear true faith to your earl, your father and mother and to the great Lord God, who I hope will now pardon my mistakes! Priest, come now! Shrive me my sins, and send me flying clean and pure heavenward where I may take my place among the angels of the sky and rejoice forever in transcendent bliss!"

Irony? Perhaps. But there are many vancian passages where pragmatic characters, Cugel for example, accept

the Pascalian wager. Pascal was a 17th century Frenchman, a philosopher and mathematician credited with building the first computer. His 'wager' is reasoned thus: either Christianity is true and there is a great reward (eternal beatitude) to be gained by wagering in favor of it (by belief), or it is not true, and belief is pointless. But wagering that Christianity is not true offers very little reward—at best the satisfaction of having been right—while wagering that it is true offers an 'infinite reward'. Therefore, even if the odds are 1000 to 1 against the truth of Christianity, since the possible reward is infinite, wagering in favor is mathematically advantageous. Flary's manner of making this wager, in the very last minute of his life, is amusingly vancian; there is so very little effort for him to make! Assuming Jack Vance himself is indeed an atheist, will he follow Flary's example and seize his last opportunity to regret a lifetime of sinning and capture an infinite reward? Who can say? It would hardly be the first time such a thing has happened.

EVIL ATHEISTS AND NAUGHTY ANTI-CHRISTIANS

As one would expect from the life's work of an author of broad sympathies and keen observation, there are not only naughty Christians, there are also misbehaved atheists and anti-Christians. In *Parapsyche* Stalin, 'atheism', 'evil' and Hitler are all mentioned together:

... Stalin the arch-atheist. There's two versions of Stalin apparently. One benign—the other evil. The benign shape... is fading, dwindling; the evil shape is growing more solid. He seems to be enduring punishment, like Hitler.

A condemnation of atheism by association? There can be no doubt that Vance disapproves of Stalin but does the fading of the 'benign version' and growth of the 'evil shape' in a passage describing a clairvoyant vision, written 50 years ago, indicate that Vance thinks atheism is evil? This would be too hasty a conclusion. However, there it is: at one point in his work, with no obvious irony, 'atheism' is linked with 'evil'. Perhaps, with the term 'arch', Vance is suggesting that, like the Christian zealotry of Hugh Bronny, atheism also can be carried too far.

Regarding unpleasant anti-Christians, Casmir comes to mind. Of course it cannot be said that Vance makes him an absolute monster:

He pronounced his decisions... without regard for rank, status or connection, and for the most part fairly, without extreme or harsh penalty, that he might enhance his reputation across the land as a wise and equable ruler.— *The Green Pearl*

Still, by any fair measure Casmir is a villain. Vance, a great writer, does not fall into the trap of anachronism;

*like France, as Father Pasquer declared in his sermon this morning, Sunday June 20, at the church of Les Trois Moutiers

Casmir is true to his time and situation. His religious ideas may have little in common with 19th century anti-clericalism but, in his way, he is against Christianity:

... he wanted no dilution of his authority. His subjects espoused a great variety of beliefs: Zoroastrianism, a whiff or two of Christianity, Pantheism, Druidical doctrine, a few fragments of classic Roman theology, somewhat more of the Gothic system, all on a substratum of ancient animism and Pelasgian Mysteries. Such a mélange of religions suited King Casmir well; he wanted nothing to do with an orthodoxy deriving from Rome . . . — *Madouc*

Casmir, like many Kings and States of history, objects to foreign influences, particularly those with universal pretensions and centers of control outside their borders. The Christian Church is, indeed, such an influence, but it is hardly the only one. The Comintern, with its control of Communist parties world wide was another, as well as the Freemasons with their international network of lodges, the U.N., the International Olympic Committee, the Red Cross. Even Catholic kings have been suspicious of Roman influence. Does Casmir object to Christian doctrine? Being power-hungry, greedy and cruel, he probably would, unless he wanted it as a cover for naughtiness. Machiavelli advises princes to do evil while making everyone think they are good, and what better way than proclaiming how 'Christian' one is? With reference to *The Prince*, the mask of Christian virtue is literally 'one of the oldest tricks in the book'. Regarding Christian doctrine Casmir is both ignorant and indifferent. Still, for most of his life, he worked to impede the progress of Christianity in Lyonesse.

It may as well be mentioned that Vance also offers a character who is a good Christian priest, though he might be finding his vows of celibacy a bit hard to keep:

Betty waved goodbye to the priest who stood watching rather wistfully. — *The Dark Ocean*

But we may hope, may we not, that through prayer and confession, he found the strength to respect them. And if not, that through confession and repentance he returned to the joy of faithfulness.

CHURCH AUTHORITY AND INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE

In modern terms Casmir is religiously 'tolerant', at least to an extent. His attitude might even be seen as a precursor of 'separation of Church and State' doctrine, understood to mean that people may do and think as they like, short of challenging State authority.

The great cleavage between pro-Christian and anti-Christian, whether on the national or personal level, is exactly this matter of authority. Those reluctant to

submit to Church authority tend to be against the Church. Rejection of Church authority seems self-evidently justified to many people today. Each person, we are taught, should be free to choose, or even invent, their own values. It is Christianity itself which has made such an attitude possible. Freedom of conscience is a uniquely Christian value. Before the Church assured freedom of conscience Philosophy never, exoterically at least, advocated it. Such forgetfulness has been facilitated by two centuries of anti-clerical agitation.

What does 'being free of Church authority' really mean? Surely, for example, only criminals want to be 'free of Church authority' in order to kill and steal? And which responsible and good-hearted person would call for 'freedom from Church authority' in order to escape the obligation to honor our parents? Also, however much we may be tempted, honest folk agree, in conformity with Church authority, that it is best not to covet our neighbor's wife or house. Some people may find it exaggerated that Church authority forbids taking the Lord's name in vain but if they consider that the Lord is a person (Jesus), even if he is only historical, or only imaginary, those of broad sensibilities may see that taking his name in vain is indelicate in the former case and uselessly gratuitous in the latter. On a theoretical level, at least, they may also agree that if Jesus is indeed our Savior taking his name in vain is an act of flagrant ingratitude.

But, contrary to popular misconception, Christianity is no heavy-handed one dimensional affair of restrictions. The Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins, the sacrament of confession, all, in today's jargon, are 'educational and counselling aids for people in distress'. The Church teaches that man is subject to temptation and that escape is not easy. The demons constantly entice us into their infernal dance. They promise us shining baubles, short lived delights, but the real price for their earthly treasures is long-term misery. The Gluttony that makes us addicted and unhealthy, the Lust that makes us unfaithful—in imagination if not in reality—the Greed that robs us of contentment with the riches we have: these are demons armed with hooks and pitchforks, dragging and prodding us into a gray world of slavery to passions we cannot control. Do we react with horrified rejection? No! Our passions are dearly exquisite! We *do not wish* to control them, we wish to indulge them! Even as they inspire self-disgust they remain our precious delight. What a conundrum! To be 'saved' is to escape ourselves, to take the road to freedom or, to use the Christian term, to 'accept the gift of life' (for 'sin is death') that is the true path to happiness.

Honest men, even when they reject the existence of God and the structures and methods of the Church, do not necessarily dispute this uniquely Christian vision of the human condition. Vance, I say, is such a man.

The First Commandment is in a class by itself. *You will have no god before me*. But we want no god at all! We do not want to submit! We want to be our own masters, control our own destinies! But if Man does not have one god, he has another. If that god is not God, it is the demon of Lust, or the demon of Sloth, or, assuming he can escape all those, Man is his own god. He is his *own Master*. This is the ultimate act of Pride, the essential sin; turning away from God in favor of ourselves. The serpent tempted Eve with the words: *you will be like a god* (*Genesis* 3:5). But why should Man not be his own god? The answer can be found in *Matthew* 6:27, *which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?*

A CHRISTIAN WRITER?

Vance, I say, is no anti-Christian. My opponents will be swift to point out that neither is he pro-Christian. But, suffixes excluded, might not Vance be, simply, a 'Christian' writer? The question is not as absurd as it seems. Vance certainly received a Christian up-bringing and it is easy to identify much Christian thinking in his work. For example in his most 'moral' tale, *D.P.*, there is an 'editorial', from the *Milwaukee Journal*, rejecting self-interested pragmatism in the name of 'Christian' morality:

We can't go on forever holding our Christian integrity in one hand and our inclinations in the other . . . let's reject forced patriation and enslavement . . .

Forced patriation and enslavement should be rejected on Christian grounds, according to the editorialist. Then take a story like *Alfred's Ark* which retells the famous Biblical tale with a vancian twist. But that twist, for all its vancian character, does not change the basic sense of the original. In the Bible humanity is cleansed of sin and gets a fresh start. In Vance the inhabitants of Marketville are confronted with their own mockery, selfishness, credulity and violence; since these people are not really bad we may hope their adventure provoked contrition and honest resolve to be better.

The moral of *Ullward's Retreat* is that what people desire is determined by fashion more than what is really good for them. This agrees perfectly with the Christian idea of our slavery to vanity (in the sense of vain things). And do we not find an echo of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus informs us that *the meek shall inherit the earth*, in *Dodkin's Job*?

Many of Vance's attitudes seem similar to the Pope's. For example, he is not promotional regarding divorce, abortion or homosexuality. Vance himself is not divorced and very few of his characters are. Regarding pre-marital sex, which in the Christian view is related to marriage, and thus the problem of divorce, it is neither frequent

nor emphasized in Vance's stories. Vance is no prude of course, but titillation is totally absent. In fact his sex scenes are often the opposite—think of the rape of Tatzel or the beddings of Skorlet and Jantiff; put-offs both. There is very seldom explicitness. The example that may come closest to being titillating occurs in *Night Lamp*:

. . . One button—two buttons—three buttons! One of her breasts appeared through the opening. Jaro bent to kiss it, then started on the other buttons.

The scene offers, approximately, the same picture as uncountable paintings showing a certain Mary, one teat poking out of her garment, with a small male going at it. This scene in *Night Lamp* is part of a long struggle between Lyssel's greedy family and Jaro's passions. Lyssel, though not exactly a saint, is in fact a very reluctant *femme fatale*.

Lyssel: It's all so intimate and sweaty. I'm not sure I'm up to it . . .

Dame Ida: Do what is necessary. A bit of fornication in a good cause is quite acceptable.

Lyssel (pouting): I would feel so foolish! . . .

Dame Ida: (scornfully): It's been done many times before. I assure you of this . . . You have the equipment; use it to advantage. It doesn't improve with age.

Meanwhile Jaro sweats in the throes of temptation:

Would she allow him to make love to her in order to fulfill this purpose? She might or might not be chaste, or semi-chaste, but she was definitely a teaser and he need waste no qualms on her behalf; Lyssel would do what was most entertaining for Lyssel. All in all, it was an amusing game. "So what is it to be? Yes? No?"

He seizes any excuse to justify giving in to his passion: Lyssel is not a person to be loved and respected but a teaser; it is all just a game; Jaro need have no qualms about exploiting her. And yet Jaro wishes Lyssel were good, that she really liked him; he complains to her:

You hypnotize me and vamp me . . . You don't even like me . . . See how my hand shakes? I'm fighting my primitive impulses.

The first scene mentioned above ends as follows:

Lyssel jerked away. "You don't care an ounce for me! You only want to do things to my body." With trembling fingers she buttoned her blouse.

Lyssel, in spite of her guilty role, speaks the truth; Jaro does not care for her as he should. What he really wants, exactly as Lyssel accuses, is to 'do things' 'to' her

body. Vance is not being prudish! This is a no-holds-barred anatomy of passion, manipulation, temptation and spiritual struggle; a veritable catechism in fictional form.

Vance's view is so large and ironic that it is constantly opening out, if always in surprising ways, upon vistas of the sort of truth Christianity has been exploring and explicating for ages. Take this astonishing passage, also from *Night Lamp*:

Assume that you are lying in bed asleep. Your dreaming brings you into the company of an alluring woman who starts to make exciting suggestions. At this moment a large dirty pet animal clambers upon the bed, and sprawls its hairy bulk beside you with its tail draped over your forehead. You move restlessly in your sleep and in so doing press your face against one of its organs. In your dream it seems that the beautiful woman is kissing you with warm moist lips, causing a delightful sensation. You are thrilled and exalted! Then you wake up and discover the truth of the contact, and you are displeased. Now then: consider carefully! Should you enjoy the rapture of the dream? Or, after beating the animal, should you huddle cheerlessly in the dark brooding upon the event? Arguments can be developed in either direction.

Nothing could be more vancian than this vivid picture of our mortal nature, the contrast between our bodies and our spirits, the glamour our minds throw upon the strange parade of 'things', the moulded dust emerging and sinking to the crucible of creation.

The only time abortion is mentioned, that I recall, is in *The House on Lily Street*, where a monstrous criminal tries to destroy, with money, lies and rationalizations, the baby he has conceived in the womb of one of Vance's most loveable and unforgettable characters, Gally Bethea. Gally, though she has so little going for her, resists. Two points for the Pope.

And homosexuality? Like the rest of the human panorama it is present. The most important homosexual characters are Kex, of *Strange People*, and Tamurello and Carfilhiot of *Lyonesse* (Casmir is also mentioned as a pederast). These three characters have a few things in common; they are colorful, inventive and bad. Vance presents no condemnation of homosexuality; the message of his work seems to fall somewhere between tolerant and fascinated distaste.

Another Christian aspect of Vance's work is his conception of evil. I will limit my exploration of this theological subject to two passages. In *Guyal of Sfere*, speaking of the origin of a demon, the Conservator explains:

Blikdac, like the others, is from the mind of man.
The sweaty condensation, the stench and vileness,

the cloacal humors, the brutal delights, the rapes and sodomies, the scatophilic whims, the manifold tittering lubricities that have drained through humanity formed a vast tumor; so Blikdac assumed his being. . .

According to Christian theology evil entered the world through Man's disobedience, in particular his pride (whims, delights). Since then sinners have been hard at work encouraging, justifying and protecting their 'rapes', 'sodomies' and 'lubricities'. Anti-Christianism has thus condensed and formed a vast tumor. Evil comes from Man, who excretes and cultivates it. Thus it grows, until a troupe of conquering demons strides the earth: Anger, Greed, Hate, Murder, Sloth.

Finally, whatever his personal opinions concerning cosmology, Vance knows what the Church teaches about the difference between scientists and God:

I am Master Mathematician, the first since Phandaal, yet I can do nothing to your brain without destroying your intelligence, your personality, your soul for I am no god. A god may will things to existence; I must rely on magic, the spells which vibrate and twist space.* — *Mazirian the Magician*

God wills things into existence; this is the teaching of Christianity. Man may only twist and vibrate what exists. To approach this large question from the other end, and as Roremaund the skeptic comments in *Cugel the Clever*:

Who created this hypothetical 'creator' of yours?
Another 'creator'?

Who indeed? Vance leaves the question unanswered.

VANCIAN RELIGIONS

Vance has so many religions it would be fun to establish an analytical catalogue and phylogeny. Here is a sketch for it.

• Islam

Vance hardly mentions Islam but there is a possible relation with *The Blue World*. *Dune* was written by Vance's friend Frank Herbert after discussions between the two men, and Vance seems to have written *The Blue World* in reaction. What was his exact motivation; me-too desire for a bestseller? a joke? an homage to a friend? Whatever the case *The Blue World* is a sort of anti-*Dune*. Rather than all desert the planet is all water. Rather than useful worms there are noxious kragen. Rather than the rise of mystical conquistadors the story treats the defeat of obscurantism via the search for truth. The heroes of *The Blue World*, rather than becoming zealots become scientists. They do not thrust forward into a future transformed by

*Tamurello has a similar problem with Melancthe—PR.

a metaphysical doctrine but dig into the past for knowledge, learning, in the process, that they are descendants of criminals. Too much should not be made of this. I simply have the impression Vance did not share his friend's admiration for Islam which, unlike Christianity—or the rosy picture painted by anti-Christian pro-Islam propaganda—was and is a religion of flattery and the sword.

- Buddhism

Buddhism is also hardly mentioned but the unforgettable Bonze of Padme is clearly inspired by it. As *Coup de Grâce* shows, the doctrine of reincarnation engenders low esteem for human life. In places where Buddhism or reincarnational ideas dominate, like China and India, this has translated into poor treatment of people, though not always as radically 'benevolent' as the Bonze's.

- Paganism and Animism

Most of Vance's religions are variations of paganism—the worship of particular or local gods—and animism or nature worship. Paganism and animism have no crisp line of separation; the Ska, for example, are said to recognize a 'pantheon of divinities representing natural forces'. Among vancian 'local divinities' may be mentioned Phampoun and the other demons of Lumarth. Such demons are creatures of brute power but lack both omnipotence and omniscience. Druidism is Vance's favorite form of animism, probably because of his fondness for trees. The latter does not blind him to Druidism's historical reality which he always presents as the murderous thing it was. Vance's admiration for trees is also not without limits. His own house is surrounded by eucalyptus which make an impressive display, swaying in the wind and rattling their stiff foliage; Jack wants them cut down in favor of the view and to protect his home from the fire-menace of their resin loaded fibers. The Wiccans take no heed of the horrific roots of their creed, which brings us to a separate class of vancian religions:

- Female Mysteries

These occur in *Tschai*, *Cadwal* and *The Murthe*. Their common denominator is hostility to men, and all are presented in a negative light. In fact 'female mysteries' are not really religions but overheated gender-politics. However, Vance does not fail to do justice to the not altogether unfounded female complaint that men treat them poorly. The most notable example occurs in *Ecce and Old Earth*, spoken by the misused Miss Shoup:

As a class you are a crass and brutal pack of animals, stinking of rut, proud in the majesty of your genital organs.

- Metaphysical Creeds

Another set of 'vancian religions' are really 'metaphysical creeds', or philosophies, such as the Doctrine of

Arcoid Clincture and 'original Gnosticism'. Funambulous Evangelism is not a metaphysical doctrine but a physical doctrine regarding the dust of the dead, coupled with a respectful attitude that forbids treading upon it. It is not precisely a religion, more a sort of universal ancestor worship like Shinto gone to seed. Then there are the solipsistic and hierophantic Elders of the Hub, exercising control over private infinities. The Chilites are similar; drugging themselves into erotic communion with Galexis Achiliadnid, whom they describe as the 'nervous essence', corresponding to 'female women' as candy to sludge; she has 'a million beatific forms' which are 'individual but universal, for all but for each alone'. The Chilites avert their souls from 'sordid stuffs, the greases and taints, the First Order Palpabilities'. Though the rationalizations of the Chilites, like dreaming while a pet animal is in the bed, is imaginary or 'spiritual', it depends upon the effect on our organism of plant extracts so is therefore not altogether spiritual. Vance seems to disapprove of such solipsistic creeds even more than of false 'universal doctrines'. The Chilites and the Elders of the Hub are nasty metaphysical masturbators.

- Universal Doctrines

Among 'universal doctrines' might be mentioned Gilfigitism. According to 'orthodox Gilfigite theosophy . . . Zo Zam, the eight-headed deity, after creating Cosmos, struck off his toe, which then became Gilfig, while the drops of blood dispersed to form the eight races of mankind.' This is a caricature of any one of an infinite number of 'localized cults' with pretensions to universalism, certain African cults for example. Most universal gods, such as Zeus, started small before taking over the universe; Finuka is notable in this regard because of the debate regarding his universal versus local status (see page 87 of VIE volume 20). But some universal doctrines have no 'local god' origin; Vance mentions Gnosticism (as opposed to 'original Gnosticism') which falls in this category, being a heresy of already universal Christianity. Regarding omnipotent gods Vance does justice to the vulgar anti-Christian complaint, in this line from *Cugel the Clever*:

Haxt . . . declared that he would feel easier if Gilfig had heretofore displayed a more expert control over the affairs of the world.

The fallacy in this idea, of course, is its neglect of the problem of human freedom, the latter being a major vancian theme.

Regarding universal gods, of whatever origin, Casmyre the theoretician offers this:

"My philosophy presupposes a succession of creators, each absolute in his own right. To paraphrase the learned Pralixus, if a deity is possible, it must exist! Only impossible deities will not exist! The eight-headed Zo Zam who struck

off his Divine Toe is possible, and hence exists, as is attested by the Gilfigite Texts!” —*Cugel the Clever*

Casmyre’s doctrine recalls Ghyl Tarvoke’s speculation regarding a ‘situation of infinity’ in *Emphyrio*, and is probably the closest thing to a ‘poetic metaphysics’, or a justification, explanation or reaction to the artist’s manipulation and generation of ‘realities’.

Here is a draft chart of vancian religions and their conceptual relations:

	MATERIAL/real	SPIRITUAL/Imaginary
UNIVERSAL	Metaphysical Creeds Parapsyche Nopalgarth	Christianity Gilfigite Finuka
PARTICULAR local	Druids Spirifumi Phampoun	Roman pantheon
PERSONAL solipsistic	EVIL	Chilites Elders of the Hub

MATERIALIST SPIRITUALITY

Vance’s notion of evil is equivalent to a ‘personal’ or ‘solipsistic’ ‘religion’. The Demon Princes, bad Ronald, Paul Gunther, Ramus Ymph, etc., all worship a god who is themselves, they themselves and the rest of the universe together, constitute a monadic ‘infinity’ which they lust to control. Higher up in the ‘universal’ category of materialist religions, are metaphysical creeds. Related to ‘scientism’ these pop up here and there in Vance’s work in several ways, like the racial memory via trans-generational cellular matter, illustrated in an episode of *Lyonesse* about the Ska. The idea behind *Parapsyche* is that ‘spiritual reality’ is a function of ‘collective mind’. Related to the notion of ‘collective unconscious’ and ‘zeitgeist’ (‘spirit of the time’) spiritual realities are here generated by fame and can thus be affected by propaganda. The same idea underlies *The Miracle Workers*; the power of the jinxman’s demon is a function of its notoriety. Once established the demons can be traded between jinxmen, like any intellectual property.

The teachings of Gurdjieff are a full blown metaphysics of ‘materialist spirituality’; a closely related concept underlies *Nopalgarth*. According to Gurdjieff ‘spiritual’ reality is a type of materialist reality science has not yet discovered, as if there were gradations to matter like there are gradations of waves, from audible to visual to radio etc. ‘Nopal cloth’ allows Xaxans and Men to manipulate the higher order material. Nopal and gher live in symbiosis with the higher ‘matter’ of human brains, the environment of ‘thought’, providing intuition, sixth sense, and other psionic faculties, all understood as

‘physical’ operations characteristic of the matter which constitutes this realm. Without the nopsals men are restricted to the logic they can generate on their own. Gurdjieff’s doctrine is carefully elaborated and may have suggested aspects of Scientology to Hubbard.

Materialism, or the rejection of spirit, or ‘invisible reality’, has a long history. The Greek gods, many of whom became part of a universal pantheon, were not particularly convincing to thoughtful people—and the Greeks were the first really thoughtful people thanks to their unprecedented degree of personal freedom. Consequently some Greeks were tempted by materialism. But after 2000 years of Christianity—and the effulgent passage of such thinkers as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, thoughtful modern Westerners cannot embrace materialism with perfect ease. Modern materialist doctrine lacking the self-evident character it could have for some pre-Christians, materialist militancy often has a pugnaciously anti-Christian cast. Promotion of theological and philosophical ignorance is, therefore, a tactical aspect of the materialist/atheist project. Fictionalized and allegorical explications of this can be found in the work of C.S. Lewis.

I do not mean to suggest that Vance is theologically or philosophically ignorant, though I see no signs of exceptional or particular expertise. But why should he? Vance is a poet, and the way of the poet is not the way of the theologian or the way of the philosopher. The way of the poet is also not the way of the militant. In my view Vance is a poet who, by the lottery of time and place, was influenced by anti-religious, materialist prejudices which, for example, he ensconces in the thunderous foundational opus of Baron Bodissey. But being a poet, like Navarth, he cannot be trapped in metaphysical doctrines. The poet has his own way, the poetic way, of apprehending reality. What does the poet apprehend? The shifting, glittering, kaleidoscope spectacle of time, things and souls. In the limping hag he sees the delectable young coquette. In the scared frail boy he sees the wise strong man. Where others can only see blue sky, the poet finds pink, salmon, green, brown, gray; his vision is ‘mad’ but it is deeper, wider, truer than the bleak if efficacious spectacle of discrete objects and simple events which is the joy of the scientist. To the scientist a chemical reaction is a chain of events; to the poet it is magic.

There is no false religion; whatever Man believed, was; whatever stage of abstraction Man could conceive, he could attain . . . Religion was, God was. But they were functions of Man; the mind of Man was the Creator. — *Parapsyche*

Starting from the jejune idea according to which God is something Man invents, the vancian twist is that, once invented, God does not remain subjective but starts to

become objectively, not merely subjectively, real. In the same way the dream of the poet becomes real in the minds of his listeners, and the world is changed forever.

NEO-PAGANISM

A final word on the religion of Troicinet. This sort of religion crops up here and there in Vance and is of a different nature than all the others and the only type that seems to get overt approval. It is characterized by imposing no constraints and having no priests. This aestheticized or sentimental paganism is called 'Neo-paganism'. Here is what G.K. Chesterton has to say about it:*

The Neo-Paganism preached flamboyantly, by Mr. Swinburne, or delicately, by Walter Pater, is no longer new, and it never at any time bore the smallest resemblance to Paganism. The ideas about the ancient civilization which it has left loose in the public mind are certainly extraordinary enough. The term 'pagan' is continually used in fiction and light literature as meaning a man without any religion, whereas a pagan was generally a man with about half a dozen. The pagans, according to this notion, were continually crowning themselves with flowers and dancing about in an irresponsible state, whereas, if there were two things that the best pagan civilization did honestly believe in, they were a rather too rigid dignity and a much too rigid responsibility. Pagans are depicted as above all things inebriate and lawless, whereas they were above all things reasonable and respectable. They are praised as disobedient when they had only one great virtue—civic obedience. They are envied and admired as shamelessly happy when they had only one great sin—despair.

The neo-Paganism ideal is more than a mere frenzy of lust, liberty and caprice, it is an ideal of full and satisfied humanity. By contrast, the ideal of Christianity is supposed to be asceticism. When I say I think this idea wholly wrong as a matter of philosophy and history, I am not talking for the moment about any ideal Christianity of my own, or even of any primitive Christianity undefiled by after events. I am not, like so many modern Christian idealists, basing my case upon certain things which Christ said or forgot to say. I take historic Christianity with all its sins; I take it, as I would take Jacobinism, or Mormonism, or any other mixed or unpleasing human product, and I say: the meaning of its action was not to be found in asceticism; its point of departure from Paganism

was not asceticism; its point of difference with the modern world was not asceticism; the main Christian impulse cannot be described as asceticism, even in the ascetics.

Let me set about making the matter clear. There is one broad fact about the relations of Christianity and Paganism which is so simple that many will smile at it, but which is so important that all moderns forget it. The primary fact about Christianity and Paganism is that one came after the other. Some speak of them as if they were parallel ideals—even as if Paganism were the newer of the two, and the more fitted for a new age. These people suggest that the Pagan ideal will be the ultimate good of man; but if that is so, we must at least ask why it was that man actually found his ultimate good, and threw it away again!

There is only one thing in the modern world that has been face to face with Paganism; there is only one thing in the modern world which in that sense knows anything about Paganism: and that is Christianity. That fact is really the weak point in the whole of that hedonistic neo-Paganism of which I have spoken. All that genuinely remains of the ancient hymns or the ancient dances of Europe, all that has honestly come to us from the festivals of Phoebus or Pan, is to be found in the festivals of the Christian Church. If any one wants to hold the end of a chain which really goes back to the heathen mysteries, he had better take hold of a festoon of flowers at Easter or a string of sausages at Christmas. Everything else in the modern world is of Christian origin, even everything that seems most anti-Christian. The French Revolution, newspaper, anarchists, Physical science, the attack on Christianity; all are of Christian origin. But there is one thing, and one thing only, in existence at the present day which can in any sense accurately be said to be of pagan origin, and that is Christianity.

Neo-paganism is, therefore, a sort of anti-Christianism; and Vance's Neo-pagan sympathies seem to have the same origin as the Bodissian doctrines and his tastes in jazz: the fads and fashions of the 1920s and '30s. Neo-paganism is more aesthetic than metaphysical, and its most important source may be *Daphnis and Chloe*, a Greek story which inspired artists of the turn of the century like Maurice Ravel. It recounts the sexual awakening of a boy and a girl in a setting of grottos, goat meadows and gardens; Chloe is then kidnapped by Pan, with ensuing alarms. Are there echoes of *Daphnis and Chloe* in *The Flesh Mask* or *Bad Ronald*, in the romance of Glawen and Sessily, in Vogel Filschner's passion for Jheral Tinzy, in the episodes involving pairs of children in *The Dirdir* or *Throy*, in vancian gardens such as that of Mazirian or names

*From *Heretics*, an excerpt of the Gutenberg project digitization. Thanks to Bob Lacovara for bringing this book to my attention.

such as 'Daswell Tippin', 'Wayness', 'Cloebe', 'Clodig' or 'Cleone'? The parallels, if any, are far from perfectly obvious.

Anti-clericalism has a long and varied history, from anti-Papists to Utopian revolutionaries, and it remains an important force. Vance's anti-religious attitude, to this reader, has nothing of the crusade. It seems an opinion, somewhat diffuse in nature; an influence from young adulthood. If it still colors the thought of the man, for the artist it is merely grist to the mill.

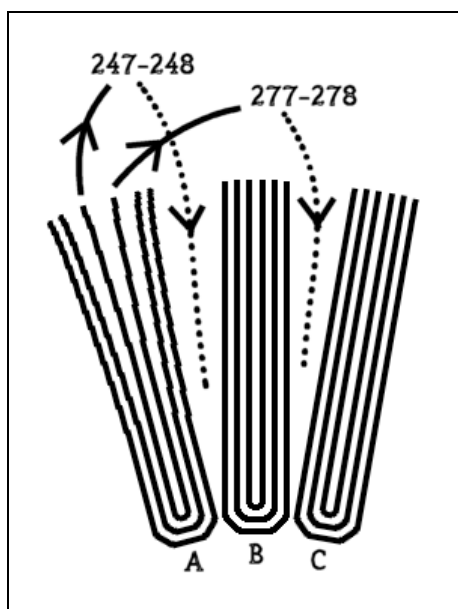


Book Repair for Fun and Profit

by Suan Yong

As described in *Cosmopolis* 39, a number of VIE books were found with misplaced-folio pagination errors. I experimented with a method of repairing these, and found it to be highly successful: the end-product is durable, the traces of repair are only visible if one looks for them, and while it is flawed from a book collector's standpoint, it is perfectly adequate as a reading copy. Some of these books will be offered on Ebay, so if you are interested, please go to www.ebay.com and search for 'Vance Integral Edition' or seller 'suanyong'.

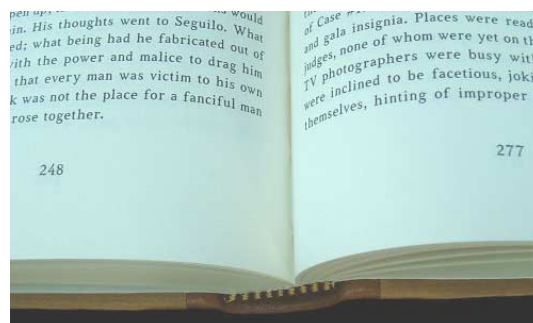
The text block of a VIE book is composed of a stack of sewn signatures, each signature being a folded 'mini-booklet' of up to 32 pages. The nature of the error is a folio (a sheet folded into two 'leaves' making up four 'pages') being sewn into the wrong signature, as illustrated in this picture:



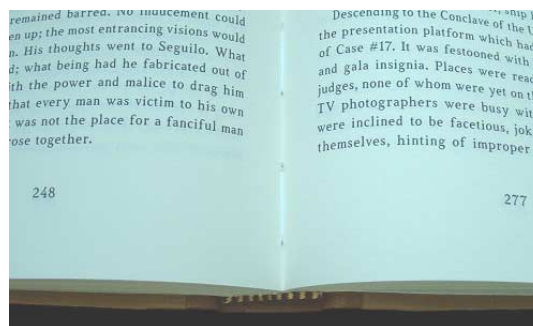
Here we have three signatures, labeled A, B, and C, where the folio printed with pages 247-248 and 277-278, which belongs on the outside of signature B, has been mistakenly sewn into the middle of signature A. The repair involves two steps: (1) cutting out the two mispaginated leaves (the solid arrowed lines), and (2) gluing these leaves in their rightful place (the dotted arrowed lines).

PART 1: EXTRACTING MISPAGEINATED LEAVES

To maintain the integrity of the text block when the book is open, there is actually some glue daubed along the gutter of the innermost folio of a signature. By applying careful pressure to the two sides of the book, this can be spread out to reveal the threads holding the signature together:

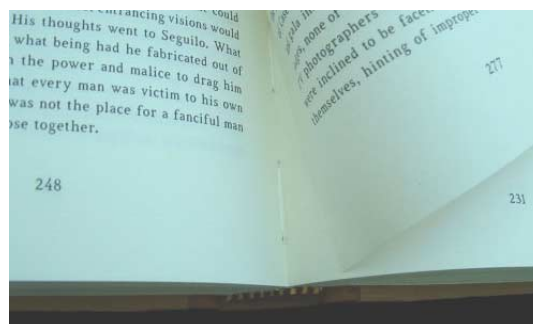


The 'before' picture of the mispaginated folio in signature A.

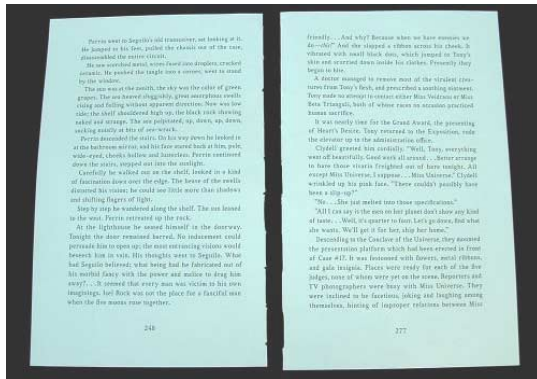


The mispaginated folio spread out to reveal the threads.

Next, a sharp pen-knife is used to carefully cut the folio in two, taking great care not to cut or fray the threads:



The two leaves are cut away, being careful to leave the threads intact.



The two mispaginated leaves extricated from the text block.

Once the two leaves have been successfully extracted, what's left of signature A now contains pages in sequential order: we're halfway there. However, a small gap will now be visible when the book is viewed from the edge, where the extracted leaves used to be.



The remainder of signature A, with the pages in sequence.



Extracting the pages leaves a noticeable gap in the text block.

PART 2: INSERTING LEAVES

Each extracted leaf must now be inserted in between two signatures. The outermost folios of the two adjacent signatures are held together with some glue in the gutter: again pressure is carefully applied until the two signatures are separated.

ched a hand behind her head, touched
epily at Perrin. Real or not, Perrin's
ears. Real or not, . . .
said. "I'm real. . . ." She came slowly
his thoughts, face arch, ready.

246

bunk. . . think up myself, it's not real. . . Go away
fiercely. "Go away." He listened. It must
now. It would be lifting a heavy arm, the
in the moonlight.
"No, no," cried Perrin. "There's no
held up his head and listened.

249

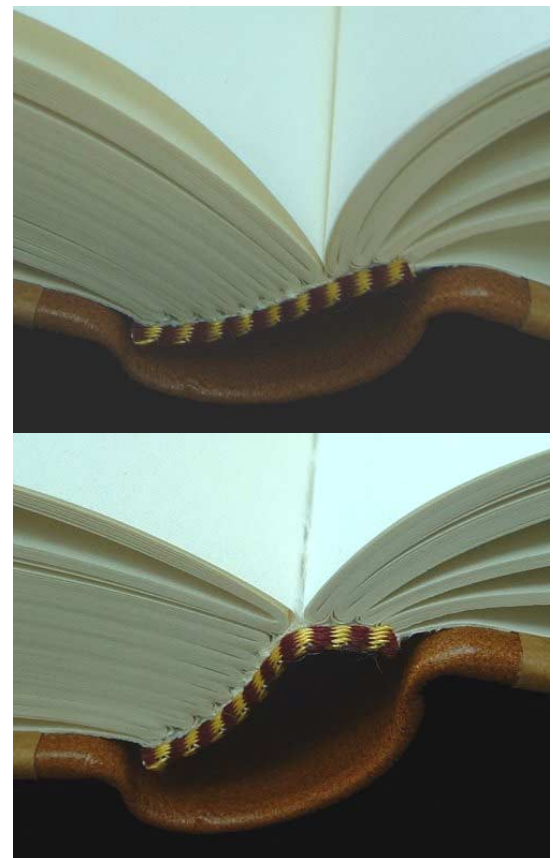
ched a hand behind her head, touched
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246

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fiercely. "Go away." He listened. It must
now. It would be lifting a heavy arm, the
in the moonlight.
"No, no," cried Perrin. "There's no
held up his head and listened.

249

The gutter between signatures A and B—the destination of the first extracted leaf—before and after pressure is applied to separate the signatures.



A closer look at the separation of the signatures.

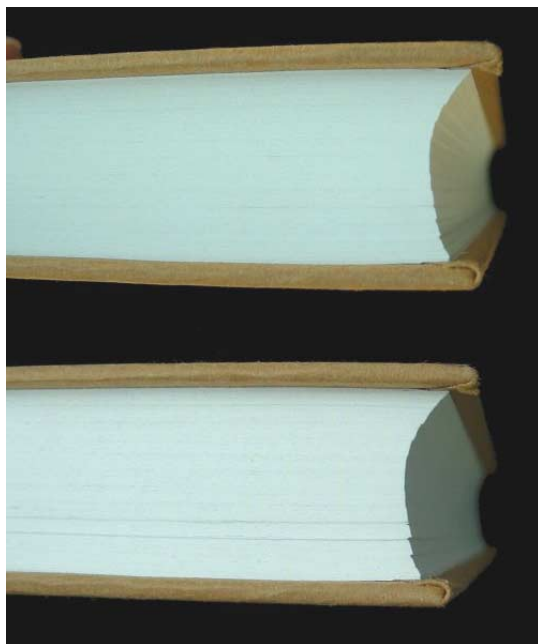
Note that this separation disrupts the careful alignment of the textblock along the spine: as seen in the picture above, a sharp angled corner is now formed by

the (inner) spine. (In a well-bound book like the VIE, the inner spine will always be curved nicely.)

Next, I daub a good amount of glue along the gutter, and carefully guide the leaf into place. Pressure is then applied as the glue dries, and voila! We have a repaired book.

VISIBLE TRACES

Probably the most visible sign of repair is along the edge of the text block, as seen in these pictures:

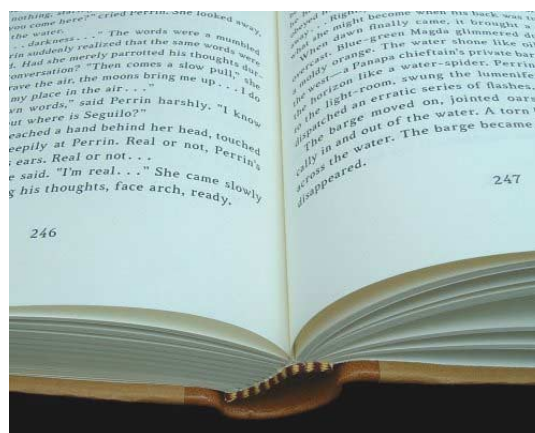


Edge view of the book, before and after repair.

One can see that signature B (the signature surrounded by the replaced leaves) is slightly displaced, so that the curvature of the fore edge of the text block is less than perfect. Also the replaced leaves are not in perfect alignment with the textblock. The severity of these effects will vary, depending on how careful (or lucky) I was with any specific book, but they are all quite minor, unless you're a meticulous perfectionist (a.k.a. a collector).

The next visible trace is the gap in the middle of signature A, from which the leaves were removed. After applying pressure to the repaired book, the gap is not nearly as glaring as pictured earlier (that photo was taken fresh, immediately after the excision).

Finally, the most exacting inspection will reveal that the 'openability' of the inserted leaves is about 1-2 mm less than the rest of the book. This is an unavoidable feature of this repair method, since at least that much of the inner edge of the leaves must be used up to glue them into place. As shown in this picture, the effect is minimally noticeable.



Decreased openability (amount of exposed gutter margin).

It is my hope that the fruits of this new hobby of mine will find good homes among Vance fans, or be shared with friends to 'spread the good word' of our favorite author.



About the CLS

CLS 23 will be published in association with this issue of *Cosmopolis*. Apart from the continuations of *Dragonchaser* and *Finister*, it also contains a historical vignette related to the *Lyonesse* trilogy, contributed by Max Ventura. Thank you, Max, for finally coming out of the writing closet.

Being a writer is an affliction which may or may not be genetically influenced. However, it's nothing to be ashamed of, and certainly more respectable than a lot of other vices marring otherwise apparently bland, 'normal' or 'ordinary' characters.

Needless to say, anyone else willing to 'come out' will be welcomed and few questions asked. In other words: dare to be brave! *Carpe diem*. Whatever.

Till Noever



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I find it . . . I suppose 'quaint' is the word . . . when I read the words 'ruling class' written in anything penned after the death of . . . Oh, I don't know. Lenin maybe?

Are there people who actually still *think* in that kind of terminology? I suppose there must be; just like people still think of the world in terms of religious concepts, and earnestly quote Jesus, as if anything that's been written about what he said—if he existed and said anything at all—were sufficiently reliable to constitute anything more than, at best, unfounded speculation.

To Alain I would like to say the following:

Nobody is free. Everybody is ruled by somebody. This can be by consensus (as approximated in the system we know as 'representative democracy') or by coercion (overt or covert, secular or ecclesiastical), but the fact remains that we are unfree. It's always been that way and *will* always be that way. 'Ruling classes' differ from one another over history only by membership. The best we can hope for is that those who rule are wiser than those who don't—or, if we notch down our expectations a bit, that those who rule are fitter to do so than those who don't.

Overall, at least in the demesne of the 'Western World', this is arguably so. The system is rather imperfect, but that's inherent in all of human society, and a reflection of the imperfections which lurk inside all human beings. The do-gooders of every persuasion would do well to remember that.

Unfortunately though, do-gooderism—the mental equivalent of the common cold, with some strains definitely more virulent and nasty than others—appears beyond eradication.

Regards,
Till Noever



To the Editor,

Martin 'Luther King' Read whines:

Mr. Rhoads has intimated that some of his writings have been misinterpreted. . . I am certainly not the only reader of Cosmopolis who has a similar understanding of these articles. This suggests that Mr. Rhoads has written in a manner that invites misinterpretation; if he truly wishes to silence criticism of his political writings he needs to make a clarification of his views in Cosmopolis.

I have 'intimated' nothing; I have stated, flatly, that Martin Read has not 'misinterpreted' but *lied* about what I have written. If others have likewise 'misinterpreted', it 'suggests' *not* that I have 'written in a manner that invites' such and such, but that they are just as confused or mendacious as Martin Read.

I am eager to apologize for any wrongdoing, eager to thank anyone who corrects, improves or teaches me, and eager to clarify anything I have written that might be misunderstood, in however slight a degree. But the extracts of my *Cosmopolis* writing presented in Martin Read's letter of accusation represent my considered opinions in a clear and exact manner impossible to misconstrue. I stand by what I meant. I stand by how I said it. Martin Read himself, I say, is not only capable of understanding these straightforward statements but *does* understand them. When he uses such phrases as 'invites misinterpretation' he is doing exactly what he accuses me of doing: promoting a personal agenda that has nothing to do with the VIE or *Cosmopolis*. By pretending that,

whether or not I really am a fascist, I am, wittingly or unwittingly, promoting fascism, Martin Read is doing his best to discredit, confound and silence what he sees as an ideological opponent. Meanwhile his claim that I wish to 'silence criticism' is, to use a term Martin Read favors, 'disingenuous'. To the contrary I have always welcomed and even called for it! Gratuitous insult and dishonest distortion is another matter. However, because I do not share his views, in the name of my understanding of the work of Jack Vance, Martin Read wishes to silence me. To this end he seeks to embarrass me by suggesting I have fascist sympathies or that I encourage alleged fascist activity in his neighborhood.

Martin Read's effort to justify his allegations against me is a sorry spectacle of self-contradiction and invented history. For example, he makes this cynical remark:

Can Mr. Rhoads be so disingenuous as to give the Front National's promises any particular credence?

The implication is that only crypto-fascists take the published program of the Front National seriously. The Front National's consistent and repeated condemnation of gas-chambers*, denial that they want to build any, and the fact that they never have built any, means nothing. This is their secret intention because Martin Read & Company says so. However let us assume that Martin Read & Company are not cynical manipulators seeking to discredit their political opponents but are correct: the Front National *is* a 'fascist' party which, once in power, rather than trying to institute its published program, will start building gas chambers. In this case what about Martin Read's indulgent attitude toward murderousness that is not latent but historical? The Front National is an exclusively French party only 30 years old, whose successes have been exclusively democratic and constitutional; but unlike Martin Read's attitude to their declarations, Communist declarations continue to inspire his confidence and respect:

Communism asserts a universal brotherhood of people, and that all are equal. . . basic principles [that] are, in many ways, admirable.

For 150 years Communists have been clawing their way to power with riot, murder and lies. They have starved, enslaved and slaughtered millions on a world-wide scale for 80 years but, despite all this, because their ideal is 'universal brotherhood'** they are no serious menace.

According to Martin Read, Hitler was worse than Stalin because Stalin was merely a 'traditional' tyrant—no worse than Attila the Hun—while Hitler was an 'idealist' who 'perverted modern civilization'. So, since Stalin was a mere traditionalist:

*Why do they mention such things at all? Because the leftist media is always asking about them.

**For Martin Read's information this is a Christian, not a Communist, ideal.

Most of the people of Russia who kept their heads down and toed the official line could be relatively confident that they would not be targeted.

Martin Read is here speaking of the most murderous tyranny in the history of humanity which he presents as relatively benign; those who meekly submitted, as is right and proper, had nothing to fear from a traditionalist like Stalin. Stalin's 'traditional' method of consolidating personal power consisted, according to Martin Read, of murdering only foolish imprudent trouble-makers, incapable of keeping their heads down or toeing the official line—a mere tens of millions of people. This, for Martin Read, is nothing really scandalous, obstreperous opposition to 'universal brotherhood' perhaps being, in the judgement of Martin Read, properly suppressed by such 'traditional' methods. On the other hand Martin Read might admit that the millions of Ukrainians Stalin deliberately starved to death, even if they did 'keep their heads down and toe the official line', could not be 'relatively confident that they would not be targeted'? Will Martin Read, rather than summoning me to clarify my limpid statements in favor of democracy and against tyranny, care to do some clarifying of his own?

Martin Read insists that Stalin was no idealist, but does admit that:

Stalin's crimes [were] carried out under the guise of ideals

So, according to Martin Read, Stalin did exactly what Martin Read says the Front National is doing: lying about its intentions. Martin Read has a double standard: no matter what is said or done in the name of Communism, it is 'admirable' or only 'traditionally' bad (whatever that means), but no matter what the Front National, or any other group designated as 'fascist', says or does it incarnates ultimate evil. For Martin Read, Stalin, a normal 'traditional' tyrant like Ivan the Terrible, may have been a bit naughty now and again, he may have exploited Communist ideals to his private ends, he may have murdered millions and stifled the life of half the world for half a century, but he never did anything *truly* foul; compared to Hitler's crimes:

. . . Hitler's crimes were overwhelmingly motivated by ideals; he was a true fanatic. Not only did Hitler make use, like Stalin, of modern methods to increase the scale of his crimes, he perverted modern civilization itself.

So, according to Martin Read, Hitler's being 'motivated by ideals' is what proves that Nazism is fundamentally worse than Communism. But does not Martin Read not also state that:

Communism asserts a universal brotherhood . . .

And is this not an ideal? If being motivated by ideals is the worst thing, why are Communists not as bad as Nazis? Martin Read will reply that Nazi ideals are different in nature from Communist ideals, that Communist ideals are nice, but Nazi ideals, racial superiority in particular, are not nice. But why is the ideal of class

superiority (for this is a basic tenet of Marxism) any better? Martin Read makes no mention of Marx's doctrine of class struggle, the cleansing the earth must receive so that bourgeois filth be swept away in favor of the proletariat. Martin Read also ignores Marx's exacerbated anti-Judaism and anti-Christianism, shared fully by Stalin who, like Hitler, organized a Jewish extermination program which processed hundreds of thousands of murders, as well as systematically persecuting Christians.

Why is racism worse than classism? Why is killing people for what they have in their pockets or in their minds any worse than killing them for the shape of their nose? Or are there different kinds of murder and different kinds of death, some nicer than others? Is the proletarian not the 'brother' of the bourgeois, or are the latter some sort of insect to crush? If merely mouthing guff about the 'brotherhood of man' is enough to make you morally irreproachable no matter what mayhem you commit why is Martin Read not a Papist? No institution in history has mouthed more guff in the promotion of universal brotherhood than the Vatican.

Stepping out of Martin Read's incoherent imaginary world, his pretension that Stalin's crimes were 'traditional', because motivated exclusively by personal hunger for power, is worse than 'disingenuous'. Can he tell us what is 'traditional' about dividing society against itself in the name of 'progress', 'the dialectic of history', 'anti-colonialism', 'anti-imperialism', 'atheism' and 'Socialist Man'? Whatever Stalin's intimate personal convictions, he cannot be exonerated of being an 'idealist' or 'fanatical', according to Martin Read's definition of these terms, even if this analysis had any pertinence, which it does not. The persecution of 'kulaks', the 'bourgeoisie', 'intellectuals', 'Christians', and a long list of other categories of folk, was carried out in no 'traditional' manner, whatever that might be, or in the name of any traditional value I can identify, but by mobilizing cadres of thugs in the name of Communist ideals like 'class struggle' and 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. If Stalin did not personally believe in these ideals I fail to see what difference that makes, but Martin Read merely asserts that Stalin did not believe in these ideals. Stalin himself claimed he did believe in them.

To prove that Hitler was not a Marxist, Martin Read makes the gratuitous assumption that Nazism is the dark side of capitalism while:

. . . a basic tenet of Marxism was 'the appropriation by the people of the means of production', this to be achieved by the nationalisation of industry and the collectivisation of agriculture.

The system of government which results is called, by Marx himself: 'socialism'. Since Martin Read knows nothing about history, unless he is being 'disingenuous', he will be surprised to learn that Hitler, who came to power two decades after the Russian revolution, called himself a National *Socialist*, which is what the term 'Nazi'

means, and that Hitler, true to his public engagements, behaved like a socialist, nationalizing vast sectors of the German economy and imposing uniformity and centralized discipline on society as a whole—exactly what the Bolsheviks did. Martin Read need not take my word for this; any historical study that is not an organ of PC propaganda can set him straight.

However, putting all these objections aside, let's again give Martin Read the benefit of the doubt, this time regarding the relations of Hitler and Stalin to their respective ideals; according to Martin Read's theory Stalin is a 'traditional' tyrant who lusted after personal power and exploited nice ideals to his un-idealistic *selfish ends*, while Hitler espoused nasty ideals, in which he sincerely believed, and which he used to gain his unselfish *idealistic ends*. Would this not mean that Hitler was frank about who he was and his goals, and selfless in his actions, while Stalin lied about himself and his goals, and that trickery was his method? If Martin Read's theory is true, Stalin seems not only as bad as Hitler but worse! In my own view the difference between Hitler and Stalin is like the difference between a 23-foot ogre smashing people flat with a club, and a 29-foot ogre disguised as a 19-foot ogre (or, in Martin Read's case, as Dolly Parton) smashing people flat with a club.

Martin Read lists the crimes of Hitler, the ultimate in abomination:

He perverted Darwinian theory, anthropology, eugenics, medicine and industrial methods . . .

All these nice things, wrecked, by that bad person! If only Hitler had not fouled things up so much the Brave New World might already be here, with its baby factories and Martin Read in charge of the brain-programming department.

Martin Read pretends, like me, to be motivated by concern for the world situation, and claims, also like me, to understand the nature of the solution:

At present there is a resurgence of extreme nationalism and extreme right-wing politics in Europe. It is not difficult to find the cause of this: poor economic performance, recession and high levels of unemployment.

This is the tired story, now two centuries old; the world is menaced from 'the right' and a materialist economic view explains everything. In my opinion, by contrast, we are living the moribund peristaltic twitchings of leftism, menacing freedom and good will with lies, slanders, insidious distortions, and the proper response is insistence on Truth and Freedom in the manner of Emphyrio.

Am I too harsh on Martin Read? Should I be conciliatory and hold out the hand of friendship? Is he, deep down, not really a good person who is only somewhat misguided? The Internet exposes the VIE to each and every militant ideologue with a two-penny Internet Provider. When a group or a publication that is Internet

based and open to all winds starts having real success, like the VIE and COSMOPOLIS, the noses of the Martin Reads perk up. Presenting themselves as purificators and saviors they are not potential friends, they are parasites and usurpers.

That isn't all; Martin Read's mincing talk about who is, and who is not, a 'gentleman' is the mark of a prissy snob. Martin Read aristocratically eructates and performs digital nasal hygiene while I, in low plebian manner, belch and pick my nose; but these are not the only differences between the patrician Martin Read and vulgar me. Martin Read also lies and slanders.*

I have said it before but why not say so again? I do not support the Front National. This is not because they are 'fascists'—it is impossible, for a normal person, to be against something because it 'is X' if it is in fact not X—but because they are socialist. In any case my non-support is moral only; I live in France but am not a citizen so cannot vote. As indicated the first time the subject was raised, if I had had a vote it would have been for Charles Pasqua, if he had not been sidelined by other anti-democratic shenanigans.** The Front National is a fringe political movement with a program of moderately leftist social and economic policy, firm immigration control and an anti-federalist European stance. The French main-stream left (meaning the Socialist Party), historically commanding only some 25% of the popular vote, wins elections by dividing the 'right'—branding the Front National 'fascist' to obstruct cooperation, by moral disqualification, with the main-stream right—and alliance with the Communist party. Since the Communists *assert a universal brotherhood*, alliance with these actual Stalinists, as opposed to the fantasy Hitlerians of the Front National, carries no opprobrium. And yet the French Communist Party took orders from Moscow up to the bitter end. Nor am I an 'apologist' for the Front National program or its leader. Disgusted by the anti-democratic tactic of 'fascist branding' I have sought to show that there is nothing 'fascist' in them. If Martin Read wishes to insist that their program is just a bunch of lies, that is something else. I take them at their word; the French government, which has been controlled by the left for most of the last 30 years, could outlaw the Front National any time it likes. Why have I discussed such things in COSMOPOLIS? Because they are related to my interest in Jack Vance, in ways I have made clear.

Those who share my concern about the health of democracy in the world will be glad to know that the

*I have learned many things from Jack Vance, but Norma Vance has taught me things too. Norma is a woman who takes no crap. Sometimes I have found her reactions exaggerated, and once quizzed her about what seemed excessive fuss. She replied without hesitation: "It makes me feel better". Feeling better is no small matter.

**Which reminds me of the old gag: *If we had some ham we could have ham and eggs, if we had some eggs.*

French left, as an elected political force, is kaput in France. The French Communist party has finally evaporated, while the leftward wing of the Socialist party electorate has drained away into Trotskiesque fringe parties through the leak of the last Socialist government's unsurprising failure to interfere with the reality of reality. Though there are some bright spots on the French 'right', the collapse of their opponents is its major advantage. Perhaps Thierry Wolton's latest essay: *Comment Guérir du Complexe de Gauche* (How to Cure the Leftist-Complex), and Jean Sevilla's most welcome: *Historiquement Correct 'putting an end to the Politically correct version of the past'*, will help. Meanwhile both left and right have been forced to admit that some of the Front National's ideas were not so fascist after all, and have even instigated them. As a result the country is a bit better off, and defectors to the Front National have returned to their original parties, on both right *and left*.

Regarding Steven Sullivan, I will not trouble to untangle his intentions from his ironies, if any. He may be interested to learn there are other Christians than myself in VIE management.

Regarding one of Alain Schremmer's comments; I am not alone in regarding George Walker Bush's election as constitutionally legitimate. Sharing my view are the judges of the Supreme Court of Florida and the federal Supreme Court, as well as Al Gore, the president's Democratic party opponent. Also included in this group is the overwhelming majority of American citizens. How do I know? Because if anyone fools with the sovereignty of the American people they take up the arms the Constitution guarantees they may bear, and—to paraphrase a certain author—nowhere is the massive uprising of red white and blue freedom fighters upon which Alain Schremmer's theory depends.

Paul Rhoads



To the Editor,

I read Mr. Read's letter in COSMOPOLIS 40. However, it seems to repeat (but at greater length) what he has said in a previous letter: that he doesn't like the writing (or attitude) of Paul Rhoads. Ah, well. Mr. Rhoads must live with this somehow. But, having delivered this indictment of Mr. Rhoads, has he anything to say? It just seems to be a lot of copy to say "what a jerk". Perhaps Mr. Read feels that verbiage disguises lack of content.

However, I should like to voice agreement with Mr. Read's last paragraph. Whereas I regret the lack of his detailed response to my letter (perhaps he doesn't like me, either), I must agree that he has taken up enough of all COSMOPOLIS readers' attention.

Sincerely,

Bob Lacovara

To the Editor,

Paul Rhoads was so obviously spoiling for a fight in his response! I mean, you heckle, you expect a put-down, fair enough, but "dishonor the American founding fathers"? What the . . .?!? That's so insanely, irrelevantly wide of the mark I can't even take offense! I'm reminded of those people who call Martin Sheen a 'traitor' because, in a TV series, he plays a president who is different from the current one.

Anyway, Paul, sorry, I'm not rising to the bait. Enjoy life on your planet!

Cordially,

Andy Gilham



To the Editor,

I read COSMOPOLIS because (i) as a volunteer and subscriber, I want to be informed about the progress of VIE, (ii) I can learn interesting facts about Vance and his works, and (iii) I enjoy hearing the views and differing perspectives about Jack's work of others who share my enjoyment of his writings. I skim through and, if interested, read articles, letters, and editorials that have at best a tangential relationship to these topics. I often find myself in disagreement with the views expressed by Mr. Rhoads in his column. But I have no desire to limit his expression of those views, no matter how odd they might seem to me. I am a firm believer in the marketplace of ideas. I heartily agree with the editors' oft-expressed views that if one does not want to read such matter, the simple solution is to ignore it. (A defensible case could be made that Mr. Rhoads should exercise more discretion in stating his views because, as Editor-in-Chief, he is a public representative of VIE and Jack's works, whether he likes it or not; but I am not the one to make that case, given my strong commitment to free speech and the free exchange of ideas. At any rate, I assume that if there were a serious problem, the VIE Board of Directors could replace the Editor-in-Chief.)

For these reasons, I have never felt the urge to enter into the various debates swirling through the pages of COSMOPOLIS, and have never written a letter to the editor until now. I am compelled to write, however, by Mr. Rhoads' column on 'The VIE Crisis' in COSMOPOLIS 40. I have only rarely visited and never posted to the Vance message board, and I have no interest in the parochial personal or political disputes among those who feel compelled to do so—except to the extent they endanger VIE and its mission. After reading Mr. Rhoads' self-serving 'explanation', which apparently omits more than it discloses, I am compelled to conclude that the only 'crisis'

was in the mind of Mr. Rhoads (and, I suppose, those of his like-minded supporters).

Nothing posted on the message board, or anywhere else, could cause the least harm to the VIE mission. After hearing of the controversy, I visited the message board, and saw what struck me as a few very immature people with too much time on their hands casting schoolboy invective at each other. The attacks on Mr. Rhoads were silly and, I am willing to assume *arguendo*, unjustified; his counterattacks were equally puerile. To think that any of this nonsense could have any adverse effect on VIE is like thinking a gnat could harm an elephant. Mr. Rhoads states that a "small group has been militating against the project". So what? Who cares? He says that all his time was absorbed by the 'crisis', presumably in responding to silly personal attacks. The simple solution: ignore the message board and get on with the important work of being the Editor-in-Chief. The message board affects our project only if Mr. Rhoads lets it. Unfortunately, he rose to the bait.

Though it was not adopted, there was an obvious and honorable solution to this 'crisis': Mr. Rhoads could either resolve to act more maturely than his attackers, ignore them, and continue his duties as Editor-in-Chief; or, if he was incapable of doing so, he could resign his duties, accepting the gratitude of myself and all the other VIE volunteers who owe so much to him for his vision and hard work on behalf of our endeavor. To his credit, Mr. Rhoads honorably chose the latter option. Frankly, the story should have ended there—nobody is indispensable.

Instead, whoever is responsible for these things (I assume ultimately the VIE Board) chose a third option. The BBS was taken away from Mr. Berro, whose commitment to Jack Vance predates VIE. Even worse, the new Vance BBS administrators "chased off some of the agitators and discouraged irresponsible behavior". To call this by its proper name: censorship; there is no other word. Because certain people expressed their views in ways that offended Mr. Rhoads or others, they can no longer express those views on a forum that, honoring a writer, should be committed to free speech. This is outrageous.

Mr. Rhoads says COSMOPOLIS is a "public forum for VIE volunteers, subscribers and interested outsiders", and that its editorial policy is "openness". Unfortunately, these noble sentiments evidently do not apply to the BBS. Mr. Rhoads has, often and vigorously, expressed the belief that he has a right to publish his views, regardless of whether they offend others, and that any attempt to censor him would be wrong. I wholeheartedly share this view. Unfortunately, Mr. Rhoads does not seem to believe that it applies to others, when he finds their views offensive.

This is a very sad day for the Vance message board,

COSMOPOLIS, and VIE.

Sincerely yours,
Karl L. Kellar

- * -

To the Editor,

Today is a red letter day. My box of books arrived in perfect condition. They are beautiful indeed and I salute you all who helped to bring this project together. I'm certainly looking forward to the rest of them and they already take pride of place in my lounge.

Cheers,
Chris Budgen
Christchurch, New Zealand

- * -

To the Editor,

I just wanted to drop you folks at VIE a quick note and thank you for all the hard work. The VIE is an amazing accomplishment and I truly love my books. They are worth every penny.

I was turned on to Jack Vance by Jerry Hewett who kindly mailed me one copy of *The Best of Jack Vance*. I have been hooked ever since. It's strange given how much science fiction and fantasy I read that I never got into JV...

Thank God that has been rectified.

Once again, thank you all so much and you should feel very proud of the VIE project.

Sincerely,
William Dennehy

- * -

To the Editor,

In this world of duality there are those who create and those who complain. Whoever would rise above the ruck will arouse their envy, and must struggle against them to realize his dream.

As I trudged up the rocky artistic road I did not encourage Paul to follow me, but he did. In New York City he found scant outlets for his painting, so he went to France ten years ago without even a knowledge of the language, and there he found acceptance and admiration for himself and his work.

Paul's bold imagination then conceived a plan to publish the complete works of an author he admired. "Impractical! Quixotic!" I might have said, but did not. Paul contacted fellow Vance admirers and under his creative stimulus and inspired leadership the project was launched and has been a success, so far.

A housefly lands repeatedly on a person's nose for no other purpose than to call attention to itself. "Look at me!" it seems to say. "I am small and weak. You are great and strong, yet I possess the capacity to annoy you. For this you must acknowledge my power!"

Paul and I fought side by side against the barbarians in ancient Rome. Paul now fights again against certain envious insects who can not bear to contemplate the greatness of his plan. They envy his unacknowledged ability to know what must be done and how it must be done to assure success of the project. They envy his leadership abilities and brand him a dictator. Of course he *is* a dictator. His dictates must be followed in order that the project proceed as planned and agreed upon by all. I will fight with him. I would enjoy squashing his opponents like the bugs they are, but I have a better weapon: the power of my mind. Superannuated though I may be, my mind remains strong. Beware!

George Rhoads



Dear Sir,

You have been kind enough to publish some of my writings in previous issues of your magazine, for which I am thankful, and whereby I should find reason to feel gratified, were it not for a lingering feeling of frustration that mars this rosy feeling of contentment: I refer to the fact that, so far, none of my articles has stimulated among Readers the slightest urge to dip sharpened quill in vitriolic ink, to write an irate 'Letter to the Editor', one of those indignant letters drenched in scathing sarcasm, dripping with acerbic irony, rife with insults and unfriendly epithets, replete with distorted quotes, misinterpretations, and ad hominem attacks. . . . What have I done (or not done) to deserve such contemptuous indifference? Why is it that some guys should have all the fun and attention? Why should they draw all the 'nasties', and I, none?

The Hypothetical Great Architect in the Sky knows that I have tried: in my piece on *Big Planet*, I hoped that the sub-titles 'No Religion', 'No Kids', 'No Politics', would have me branded immediately as an Atheistic Pro-Abortivist Anarchist. . . . No such luck. And my sub-title 'No Persons of Jewish Heritage', which I hoped would bring upon my head accusations of Anti-Semitism like a hailstorm? No reaction at all. The most recent blow was the deep silence following the snide remarks I deliberately made about Editors in my piece on *Palace of Love*: I expected at least a 'Letter from an Editor to the Editor'! But no, not for the likes of me. . . .

Must I then be thwarted at every turn in my legitimate quest for recognition? Like Faude Carfilhiot, I see that I will have to "take the clay of Destiny in my hands and shape it to my will." Expect some 'Letters to the Editor'

concerning my articles in the future. . . . I need say no more. . . .

Patrick Dusoulie



Dear Sir,

It is my duty, as a strict follower of the Teaching (Glory to the Teaching Didrams!), to express my indignation at the recent editorial trend followed by your publication. I refer to a series of articles written by a certain Charles 'Single Malt' King, and to this latest piece of alcoholic propaganda (the so-called 'Punch Line') hiccuped by P. Dusoulie. Must I remind you of Didram Bodo Sime's 'Obloquies against the Toper and his Drink', with its Motto: "It is not good to inebriate nor to souse, using swillage, near or far beers, or distillations."?

I am surprised that a prestigious magazine such as yours should stoop so low as to encourage inebriation and the partaking of essences, liqueurs, stings and fermented products: the stuff is pernicious, and ultimately leads to corruption of body (particularly the brain) and soul. It is no surprise that such notorious toppers as Mr. King and Mr. Dusoulie (who was never seen on a photograph without either a bottle or a glass in hand, or most likely both) would want to proselytise their abject vice, but you, Sir, as a responsible Editor, should not allow your publication to become a vector of unspeakable practices.

I hope that in the future you will expunge such articles, and will wisely choose to publish in their stead extracts of the Teaching, advocating the merits of tea and raisin water.

Valdemar Kutte

Director, Grand Salon Orchestra
of Gladbetook



Dear Sir,

As General Manager of the Traveler's Inn in Serjeuz, Dar Sai, it has been my pleasure to have Vrf.* Dusoulie as a guest in my establishment for the duration of his investigations into various matters pertaining to beverages. Never have I seen such dedication to work! Vrf. Dusoulie spared no efforts to sample the local products, never hesitating to start all over again if he felt there had been the slightest error in his methodology! And he prolonged this far into the night, never complain-

*Editor's Note: Vrf. is the abbreviation of 'Vharsfel', an honorific title for which any attempt at translation is doomed to failure from the start. It conveys a feeling of immense respect for the magnitude of the person's intellect, his ease of conduct in any surroundings, his debonair behaviour and impeccable aplomb in all circumstances, allied to a full capacity to appreciate the best things in life. The closest, but necessarily imperfect, approximation that comes to mind may be 'Monsieur'.

ing about overtime! Truth to tell, I suspect him to be some kind of workaholic.

In the course of his investigations, he made the most laudatory comments about our 'Sunday Punch', and promised that he would mention it in favourable terms in the article he was to write for your magazine, provided he received the customary fee one expects in such dealings. I make no complaint, our bargaining session was lively but fair.

I would now like to bring to the attention of your Readers our schedule of prices for deliveries of this specialty drink.

Case of 6 bottles of 4 gills each SVU 6.99 per case
From 4 to 8 cases SVU 5.99 per case
From 9 to 18 cases SVU 4.99 per case
Above 18 cases Unit price to be debated

These quoted prices are exclusive of shipping and freight insurance. They are free of tax, but may bear local tax depending upon location of destination, to be paid by the recipient.

We can provide special rates of shipping and insurance for delivery within the Oikumene. No deliveries can be made to The Beyond, due to prohibitive risks. Customers from The Beyond are welcome to pick up their orders from the premises. They will be guaranteed safe-conduct within a radius of 0.25 light-years.

Special Bargain: for any order placed before 31 August 1532, and for a minimum quantity of 4 cases, the Customer will receive a bonus gift of five wooden punch-bowls, each bowl being fire-engraved by hand with the name of a Daemon Prince, in the special Asbestos® font designed by the great Oikumene artist Raul Whays. Any Customer who actually manages to decipher the names will be awarded a full refund of his payment.

Finally, for those of your Readers who would like to order bottles of our special ingredient, our 'Secret Elixir', I am sorry to say that this is not generally available for delivery. I can be ~~contacted~~ ^{bribed} contacted directly if the need is pressing. Our secret recipe falls in the same category.

Let me finally express my admiration and gratitude, Sir, for the excellent quality of your magazine, and for giving me the opportunity to spread across the Oikumene the feeling of good-fellowship generated by our Sunday Punch.

Anton Ferschmuss
General Manager
Traveler's Inn
014555A Serjeuz
Dar Sai
Cora System
The Oikumene



Closing Words

Correction from COSMOPOLIS 40:

The library at Texas A&M–Corpus Christi subscribed directly to the VIE. A VIE subscriber has donated a VIE Readers' Edition to the main library of Texas A&M (College Station).

Thanks to proofreaders Linda Escher, Jim Pattison, Steve Sherman, and Suan Yong.

COSMOPOLIS Submissions: when preparing articles for COSMOPOLIS, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send plain text. For COSMOPOLIS 42, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is August 28.

Derek W. Benson, Editor

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