
COSMOPOLIS

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A Visit With Jack Vance: 1967

By Guy H. Lillian III

Note: The earliest interview cited in Hewett and Mallett's The Work of Jack Vance is dated 1976. The following account is therefore of some historical interest. It was published in MagiCon Progress Report 2 in 1990, in anticipation of Vance's Guest of Honor appearance at the 1992 World Science Fiction Convention in Orlando. The text is copyright 1990 by the author and is reprinted here with his permission.

Twenty-five seconds ago, I set aside the issue of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE which contained Harlan Ellison's article "Xenogenesis."

As you probably know, Ellison's article was a catalog of the rude, repulsive, obnoxious, intrusive things science fiction fans have leveled upon professionals of the genre. The offenses cited ranged from bruising a writer's feelings by publicly informing him that his work was unfamiliar and therefore worthless, to disgusting physical assaults. It was a powerful piece of writing. It made me cringe.

Because I remembered . . .

The following is a verbatim entry from my diary, 4 November 1967. I was 18. I'd just started college at the University of California at Berkeley. I knew nothing. I didn't even know that it was an act of intolerable rudeness, once you discovered that a for-real professional gee-whiz science fiction writer actually lived near your home, to do as I'd done: call him up and ask if you can come meet him.

But I'd done it. And, tiredly, the writer had said sure, come on up. So my father had guided me to the correct address in the Oakland hills, and I'd met Jack Vance, and I wrote about it that night.

♦ ♦

4 November 1967. I met Jack Vance this afternoon after a steep climb up the narrowest of roads. He'd left a note pinned on some nails sticking out of a board leaning up against his unfinished, skeletal garage—he's tearing down his old house and building a new one at the same time on the same spot. I'd missed his note at first and

thought that I'd have to wait, but on looking at Vance's snoozing cat, caught a glimpse of it and dashed down to read, "I AM IN BACK. YELL OR MAKE A LOUD NOISE." I shouted his name and from inside the dusty carpenter-needed caverns came an answering, "yeah! Come on in." I went in and was greeted by a pair of large legs descending a ladder. *This*, I thought, *This is Jack Vance*.

And so it was, a much larger man than I'd imagined with a paunch, glasses, thinning hair. He was wearing old clothes and asked my name and said he'd be with me in a minute, then again mounted the ladder. In seconds he was down, apologizing for how the place looked, then inviting me upstairs into the house proper.

Vance's house [as it was then] is primarily one room filled with old books, including a bound set of LIFE, the old humor magazine. Jack put his hands, with very fat fingers, into his workpants pockets and his large quiet and tired face assumed a wistful look as he told me why he bought them: [when he was] a boy in San Francisco his grandfather had owned such a set, and Vance had read them all and—here he wrinkled his brow and shook his head ever so slightly, wondering -- when he saw *this* set in a junk shop, bought it. He didn't know why. . . . but I think he really does.

He's an interesting man, but not a weird one by any means. He reminded me of my own father in his attitude about things. After showing me his Hugo—he wasn't sure where it was ("Should be one around here someplace,")—finally saw it in a large empty aquarium along with an Edgar Award he won "for some murder mystery I wrote" (a surprise, since I didn't know he'd won an Edgar), and pouring me a cola, we sat down and talked a little about Cal, politics, writing, science fiction. Vance looks upon writing as "Just my job," which was somewhat of a sobering surprise for me: I half expected him to look upon this activity as *art*, a burning flame within him that must *flare*. . . . a romantic's view of writing. No, Vance doesn't seem to even enjoy his work that much—looks on it as just that, as his job.

How does it feel to win an award for his writing? Vance shrugged, "Ah, I don't give a damn, *but*," when one of his stories takes a Hugo, or an Edgar or a Nebula, it sets a mark for him to hit again. He *has* to be as good or better in his next story, or else he loses face—to the public, to the editors, and most importantly, I think, to the mirror. But he knows everything he writes nowadays is "salable"—and short stories and novelettes such as "The Last Castle" are *out*. . . . "only novels now are financially profitable for me." Just a job, just a job.

It's demanding, he said, an awful lot of hard work. When writing science fiction, he said, one has to know what he's talking about. Vance pointed at the copy of *The Star King* I'd brought for him to autograph. "Hell, I made a beaut in *The Star King* there. I gave Rigel a set of planets and Rigel's a *young* star. I—I know about these things, it was just plain clumsiness." He's tried to write his way out of that particular cul-de-sac in the two books in the *Star King* series that follow, *The Killing Machine* and *The Palace of Love*, the latter on sale downtown but which he still hasn't received from the publisher.

If he said anything to me that I could take out of there and keep, it'd be, "The most important thing that a writer has to have is self-confidence; I *know* I can write, and so I can write." Yeah, so maybe I learned something worth a lot personally after all. But I learned other things, too: that writing is, for Jack Vance and so very likely with most other free-lancers, an economic chore rather than art; a job rather than—or perhaps in addition to—a song that has got to rip its way out of the self. Writing for me must never be such a thing that I'd tend to shrug it off. Vance, I think, takes much more pride in his creations than he lets himself reveal.

His fiction is marvelous—and if I could write anything so marvelous I'd be bursting with self-pride inside. But it isn't enough for Jack Vance. Just like my father he wants a *boat* (only Jack's *building* his, along with his house), and like many a man he wants to sail around the world.

After an hour or so I had to leave, and Jack had to get back to work on his house. Like him, my generation is tearing down and building up, on the same spot, at the same time. We shook hands outside and Jack apologized in case he'd sounded either "too weird" or "too stuffy." To me he only sounded intelligent and honest, not "stuffy" at all. "It's a popular misconception that science fiction writers are weird," I said.

Jack grinned and scratched his thinning thatch of hair. "Well," he said, "some of them are."

I thought for a second of asking who, but I didn't, and like I say we shook hands and when I left he was smiling. He was walking back to his undone work when I turned away to go back to my car. [End of excerpt.]



I went on that evening to write in my diary about my girlfriend, whose name was Kate and who had red hair and who was wonderful and who dumped me like a Hefty Cinch-Sak four months later.

You can see why the aforementioned Ellison article made my eyelids tighten and my face squinch as if I'd bit-

ten something preternaturally sour. What a TOAD I was. I invited myself to a man's house and took up an hour of his time with nonsense. I dared project my Berkeleyn insolence toward men who worked for a living onto a being of accomplishment and purpose. This sort of thing happened often. A few months after my assault on Vance I called up Poul Anderson and begged myself an invitation to *his* house. How could I *do* that? I was lucky Vance didn't blow me away with a shotgun. Why didn't he?

These are obvious questions with obvious answers. I was gauche because I was young, enthusiastic and honestly loved science fiction. Jack let me come see him and escape alive because he was generous, forgiving and kind. He knew that it was important to a young person to be welcomed into the adult world—and he no doubt felt that he could spare whatever time stolen from his house, his writing, his private life. His was a marvelous attitude. When I saw him at the 1985 Austin NASFiC, a mere 18 years later, I did what I have always tried to do with those fine, generous, forgiving and kind people of science fiction I belabored with my company when I was new to all this. I thanked him for his patience with me when I was young.

His wife remembered me. He didn't. *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*, huh?

Well, the lessons taught on that visit remain. Writing is work. Rewards are meaningful only if internal. And there is still that look in his face when he talked about that set of magazines . . . that remembrance of the reading *he* did, when *he* was a boy, and how it filled *his* heart with laughter, and wonder.

Just the sort of stuff we've been given, throughout his career, from Jack Vance.



Guy Lillian is now a public defender in Louisiana and a multiple Hugo Award nominee in both the fan writer and fanzine categories. His fanzine CHALLENGER can be found at <http://www.challzine.net/index.html>.

COSMOPOLIS thanks David B. Williams for his mentioning this article and assisting in its republication in this issue. Thank you David!



Work Tsar Status Report

as of January 30, 2005

All texts are completed.

All volumes have been sent to the printer.

Blues have been reviewed for all but 3 volumes and those three will be reviewed in the first few weeks of February.

6 volumes (or more) are ready for final printing.

Delivery of Wave 2 volumes is planned in late spring or early summer of 2005.

The sun is flickering.

Last month:

- + In-TI: 0 texts (0%)
- + Post-TI: 4 texts (4.9%)
- + Volume Ready: 78 texts (95.1%)
- + Volumes Ready: 8 (36.36%)
- + Volumes Completed: 11 (50%)

This month:

- + In-TI: 0 texts (0%)
- + Post-TI: 0 texts (0%)
- + Volume Ready: 82 texts (100%)
- + Volumes undergoing blues review: 3 (13.63%)
- + Volumes being updated from blues reviewing: 13 (59.09%)
- + Volumes ready for final print: 6 (27.27%)

Joel Riedesel



38's Crucible

Printing and Packing Update

As of this writing all but 6 of 22 Wave 2 volumes are 'in print', which means they are queued up for final printing at Global Print (Cologno, Milan, Italy). The work is proceeding at about 2 volumes per week. This, combined with Torriani's Sr. Biffi preferring to bind the Deluxe volumes all at once has imposed a new packing date, a month later than announced: the last week of April. The previous date was based on our capacity to deliver finished material only. The various delays of last fall, though they only involved a week here and there, have, as predicted, meshed with production constraints in Milan to produce a cascade effect on the schedule. Still,

the new date is final, and we can now begin to plan the packing trip in earnest. Stefania Zacco has also stipulated that the second printing will be completed by the end of June, when second printing packing can occur.

All who have already volunteered for packing (even if they don't actually do it) have earned a 'packing' credit in volume 44, but volunteers continue to be welcome (though it is no longer possible to add a credit to volume 44). Depending on our budget the VIE will subsidize travel, board and lodging. Many of the previous packers have volunteered anew, which should recommend the exercise to others.



Subscriptions Are Closed!

SOME ROUGH CALCULATIONS

Subscriptions closed on January 25. Aside from a handful of ambiguous cases of partial payment, and a larger number of failures to pay the shipping fee (all of which Suan Yong is in the process of resolving), Suan reports the following numbers. In addition to the original approximately 500 original (or 'Wave 1') subscriptions—of which about 50 were for Deluxe sets—there have subsequently been about 100 new subscriptions. The current 'hard' total is 585, of which 515 are Readers and 70 are Deluxe sets. These numbers are not absolute. They include, and may be further augmented by extra sets for replacement of lost or damaged boxes or volumes, and there are the Special Subscriptions. Any replacement sets, after all replacements have been made, will probably be made available for a lucky few among those who missed the subscription deadline, but perhaps at a premium. It is not VIE policy to sell individual volumes for many reasons including inadequate staffing to fill orders and such sales would contradict the VIE's archival goals. But as a concession we have offered the 11 volume 'special subscriptions'. These did not turn out to be wildly popular, however 8 were ordered:

SF Hard Core: 3 Readers sets
The Missing Mysteries: 2 Readers sets
The Gaeen Reach: 1 Deluxe set
Fantasies and Sagas: 2 Deluxe sets

Final numbers comprising the number of extra sets for replacements will be decided by the board. But at 585 sets we will be producing 25,080 books—not counting the Gift Edition, the Science Fiction Volume or the Ellery Queen 'hor series' book. By the end of the project, next

July, we will have organized 12 conferences and work gatherings, including the packing trips:

Oakland Work Festival (Oakland CA)
TI-Europe (Chinon, France)
TI-USA (Oakland CA)
Golden Master 1 (Warren NJ)
Golden Master 2 (Chinon, France)
Wave 1 Packing (Milan, Italy)
Golden Master 3.1 (Chinon, France)
Golden Master 3.2 (Chinon, France)
Batch 1 Nuncing (Gatwick, England)
Batch 2 Nuncing (Gatwick, England)
Wave 2 Packing (Milan, Italy)
Second Printing Packing (Milan, Italy)

To this must be added the individual trips to the Mugar Library in Boston and to Milan for pre-production work. To the best of my recollection the following people have worked at the Mugar: *Alun Hughes*, *Steve Sherman*, *Suan Yong*, *Chuck King* and *Linnéa Anglemark*. Various pre-production trips to Milan were made by *Thomas Rydbeck*, *Bob Lacovara*, *John Foley* and *Paul Rhoads*.



Heavy Lifting, For Free

AND A FEW KUDOS

VIE book set, whatever else it is, is transcendently inexpensive. The thousands and thousands and thousands of hours of labor required would render these books so costly as to doom any commercial project. As it is subscribers pay production costs only (plus about 10% for unavoidable expenses), making these archival quality volumes cost competitive with trade paperbacks. When we think of volunteer work we tend to think of actual text or compositional work. It is, therefore, a duty, as well as a pleasure, to remind subscribers that much VIE work is managerial, work often as arduous as it is thankless. The champions of such work are certainly *John "Hercules" Schwab*, and *Suan "Lares" Yong*. John, setting aside his less notorious activities, was not only head of the digitizing team, not only a TI wallah, not only a member of the highly exclusive Composition team, he is the project Archivist (taking over from Mike Berro). This position involves more than stocking our thousands of files. John makes sure they carry names that make them recoverable, that they stay virus free, and, above all, he moves them in and out to *each job*. He has been at this work, day in, day

out, for the last several years, never (to my knowledge) missing his twice daily stint.

As much may be said of Suan; head of the Monkey team, Suan is not only a TI power-house, not only one of our site managers, but he keeps all our work records and subscription records. If the VIE functions something like a business, it is largely due to the individual efforts of Suan Yong. He serves as our 'customer department', processing all questions and complaints of subscribers.

Bob Lacovara is the other side of this 'business' coin. As our financial planner Bob is responsible for all the 'hard' business choices, including prices and expenditures (which are then ruled on by the Board). Bob created *Cosmopolis*; he was involved with *John Foley* in setting our technical standards. Generally speaking Bob has been our 'CEO'. He often describes himself, too modestly, as my 'right-hand man', but if we were a regular commercial enterprise (rather than a rag-tag band of volunteers, each flying his own flag) the hand, to coin a phrase, would be in the other glove; Bob is the 'big boss' and I a foreman on the factory floor. The VIE gross budget is probably not enough for one year's salary of this sort of work, and Bob has been at it since the beginning. If the project did not veer off into bankruptcy several years ago, or explode in some other way, much credit goes to Bob.

Another management powerhouse has been *Tim Stretton*. Tim started out in the project with a piece of the work now done by Suan and Hans, called 'gatekeeping' at the time. He then became head of the proofing team, later retroactively baptized 'Pre-proofing'. Tim presided over several innovations in our procedures, including the introduction of 'mentors' which later became the basis of the TI work system (with its 'seconds') largely designed by Tim (in cooperation with *Alun Hughes*, who designed the actual restoration techniques). In addition to important work as a Wallah, Tim was also one of the most active board reviewers. In addition Tim has done much of the organizational work for our conferences.

Joel Riedesel started out in the project as 'assistant clam' to his wife, *Robin Rouch*, or 'chief clam' of the illustrious Clam Muffin proofing team. Joel contributed to project morale by making available VIE logo-bearing shirts and caps, used as prizes to reward volunteer efforts. Joel, who became aware of systemic weaknesses in our procedures, created the post of 'Work Tsar' and began to monitor the progress of all jobs. This work has proved absolutely crucial in keeping diverse phases of the project synchronized and saving wayward jobs and texts from the oblivion of invisibility. Joel prolonged this work by cre-

ating the VPP team (Volume Post Proofing) which added an important security net during the preparation of the Wave 2 books.*

Hans van der Veeke is another volunteer who came in out of the cold to create a crucial role for himself. As 'volunteer coordinator' his most visible work has been to make sure that each job is properly credited. As I have explained elsewhere this is far from simple, and involves several checks and cross checks. Hans lives up to the spirit as well as the letter of his post, dealing with all sort of matters involving volunteers, including just cheering them up or smoothing their paths, often without the individuals concerned ever knowing about it. Hans is a highly important, if unseen, factor in the coherence and longevity of the project.

Rob Friefeld, who started out as a humble proofer, bit by bit became one of the key elements of TI. In recent years Rob has extended his VIE work to the web-site and aspects of work tracking (a vast subject in itself). Alun Hughes wisely organized TI work such that we first worked on texts which had good evidence available. This procedure, if it armed us as well as possible for the more difficult restoration work of Wave 2, could not eliminate the fundamental problem of their lack. Rob has been in the forefront of this particular work, pouring hundreds of hours into abstruse and thorny questions, laboriously guiding us to the light.

Again I wish to mention *Koen Vyverman* and *Ian Davies*, both of whom offered customized systems to the VIE, systems which evolved with our needs and offered new ways to analyze and correct our work at each stage of the process, from pre-proofing to re-composition.

Least spectacular of all, the 'arch-donkeys' upon whose backs the project rides like the pre-Christian world on the cosmic turtle, are the various team heads. First among these is *Chris Corley*, head of Post-Proofing:

* As a practical example of how these things work, take this e-mail exchange which occurred on Jan. 30:

Joel Riedesel writes:

...there is the EQ volume to work on. The three texts there are ready to be jockeyed. Any reason this can't happen? They've been ready for jockeying (according to my notes) for quite some time now.

Suan replies:

I think the only reason they've been frozen is because the organizational infrastructure for those early tasks have more-or-less collapsed. I nominate Chuck (who is both an accredited monkey and who seems to have the time and desire) to take charge of DD-Jockeying and monkeying of these texts.

We'll see how Chuck takes to this sly hint. Chuck is slated for an upcoming trip to the Mugar to work on these texts.

the ‘mother of all VIE teams’. Chris, with his sub-teams heads, has generated the greatest number, by far, of VIE work hours. It is therefore largely thanks to Chris that the ‘error free’ quality of most VIE texts is more than ‘virtual’. Chris is also an important TI Wallah, as well as the ‘father of techno-proofing’. Other team heads who deserve special mention are *Damien Jones*, who took on the ‘Jockey’ team (the essential post Double Digitization process) and carried it through (a labor of several years), and *Robin Rouch* who in addition to leading the Clam Muffins created the Composition Review Team now headed by *Marcel van Genderen* and the Composition Verification Team which checks that designated composition up-dates have been implemented, now headed by Bob Luckin, and finally, *Steve Sherman*, administrative head of TI for the past several years.

The above is not exhaustive. There are more people whose special contributions deserve mention in *Cosmopolis*. These are just some off-the-cuff remarks inspired by Steve Sherman who has served as executive head of TI for the last several years and who mentioned these folk in a letter to me.



What Is a VCR?

A soon to be antiquated audio-visual device? In the VIE it is another of the Laughing Mathematician’s little tricks which help us donkeys clean up composed texts. ‘C’ and ‘R’ in this acronym certainly stand for ‘composition review’, but I do not know which of several significations the ‘V’ might have. A ‘VCR’ is distributed to composers as a report indicating all instances, in a composed file, of the following:

- Double spacing.
- Double hyphen.
- Double period.
- Em-dash preceded by space.
- Em-dash followed by space.
- Ellipsis preceded by space.
- Ellipsis followed by space.
- Period followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Comma followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Colon followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Semi-colon followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Question mark followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Exclamation mark followed by opening curly double quotes.
- Period followed by opening curly single quote.
- Comma followed by opening curly single quote.
- Colon followed by opening curly single quote.

- Semi-colon followed by opening curly single quote.
- Question mark followed by opening curly single quote.
- Exclamation mark followed by opening curly single quote.
- Double opening curly single quote: Search string.
- Double closing curly single quote: Search string.
- Space followed by closing curly double quotes.
- Space followed by closing curly single quote.
- Opening curly double quotes followed by a space.
- Opening curly single quote followed by a space.
- Paragraphs with trailing space(s).
- Paragraphs with leading space(s).
- Botched narrative aside alert, part 1 [”—].
- Botched narrative aside alert, part 2 [—“].
- En-dash posing as a hyphen.
- Optional hyphen.
- Non-breaking hyphen.
- Non-breaking space.
- Closing curly single and closing curly double quotes separated by a space.
- Form-character AD posing as a hyphen.
- Control-character ID posing as a hyphen: Search string.
- Botched footnote text indicator, part 1 [* >>].
- Botched footnote text indicator, part 2 [<<*].

There are over 150 VIE texts; each has been composed, and each composition has been up-dated at least once, and often more than once. In these terms interested parties may represent to themselves our many opportunities to introduce errors. As you enjoy your error free VIE texts, spare a thought for the *Koen Vyverman*, the Laughing Mathematician, and the VIE volunteers who carried through the VCR correction processes.



The GM4 Process

The 44 volume VIE set is being published in 2 ‘Waves’. Wave 1 was published in 2002, and will be reprinted in the spring of 2005 for late subscribers.* For Wave 1, the ‘Golden Master’ process, comprising several stages, was accomplished at a meeting in New Jersey, USA, hosted by *John Foley* (‘GM1’, where composition was finalized), and a meeting in Chinon, France, hosted by *Paul Rhoads* (‘GM2’ where final review of proofs from the printer in Milan was accomplished). For Wave 2 we progressively found it convenient to subdivide the 22 volumes into 3 ‘batches’.

* There will then be a ‘second printing’ for subscribers who signed on after the ‘Wave 1’ deadline. Note that, apart from some trivial change in the front matter the ‘second printing’ books will be textually identical, including the tiny set of errors found in the Wave 1 books. Second printing subscribers, like everyone else, will be provided with a ‘Wave 1’ errata sheet.

GM3, which for Wave 2 corresponds to Wave 1 GM1, was accomplished at a meeting in Chinon, but we then found it convenient for GM4 (corresponding to Wave 1 GM2) to use a 'virtual', non-physical gathering, process rather than another meeting. This process was designed by *Chris Corley* and *Tim Stretton* at GM3. The batch 1 process was managed by *Tim*, and the batch 2 and 3 process has been managed by *Steve Sherman*. The batch 3 workers include the following:

Charles King
Karl Kellar
Thomas Rydbeck
Marcel van Genderen
Rob Friefeld
Deborah Cohen
Joel Riedesel
Joe Keyser
Steve Sherman
Robert Melson
Richard Chandler
David Kennedy

Below are the GM4 guidance notes, written by *Tim Stretton*. It is addressed to the 'Readers' and 'Managers' for each volume. Errata have been collected for both batch 1 and batch 2, and by the time these words are published batch 3 errata will have been collated. Batch 1 and 2 errata were ruled upon by the 'Nuncers' *Tim Stretton*, *Steve Sherman* and *Alun Hughes*. To do this they met at Gatwick airport on two occasions. Batch 1 and 2 volumes, with the exception, at this writing, of 3 batch 2 volumes, are currently being printed in Milan. Given the quantity of information to say nothing of the number of files with which we must deal, the somewhat fastidious aspects of these instructions are of the essence.

FOR READERS

The GM4.1 read-through in many ways resembles a post-proofing assignment, and certainly this is a major part of the job. It is a little wider in scope, however. You should note anything which would raise your suspicions if you saw it in the final volume. At the corresponding stage in Wave 1, common findings which were rectified included:

*-Kerning errors – particularly cramped words or lines
-Eccentric end-of-line hyphenation
-Inconsistencies in font
-'Classic' proofing errors such as missing punctuations
All textual matters should have been resolved by now. If a beer*

is called 'Darkwort' in one paragraph and 'Dankwort' in the next, the question has probably been debated and the decision taken to leave it: consistency is not a virtue the author aspires to. Nonetheless, if you are suspicious about such a change, by all means note it. The reviewers will have access to the TI files and will be able to make an informed ruling. In Wave 1, we made an average of 1½ changes per volume on TI matters, so we are quite prepared to re-open the books if necessary.

Please submit your notes to your volume manager in bis file form, with as much detail as is necessary to allow easy location of the passage in question. The note should start with a page and line number. A sample note might look like this:

*p 106/23 (655) Formatting
Dr. William Ledinger/Dr. William Ledinger
Extra space following period in abbreviation.*

The first line includes page and line reference, with the volunteer number in brackets, and an indication of the kind of error. The second line displays the suspect text, with the third line spelling out what you think is wrong with it.

Blues will be sent out on 29 July. The two-week proofing period begins on Saturday 31 July (feel free to start earlier, FedEx permitting!) and your report should be with the volume manager by Saturday 14 August. Your manager will be happy to answer questions throughout! If you are experiencing difficulties meeting the deadline, let your manager know as soon possible so that we can work out the best solution. It's much better to submit feedback on only half of the text than to submit no feedback at all.

FOR MANAGERS

You will have received the readers' reports by 14 August. For volumes where you yourself are the reader, there should be no difficulties over compliance; where you are not the reader, you will need to keep in contact to ensure that everything is going smoothly. The reader is responsible for reporting any problems, but the odd judicious enquiry will not go amiss.

At the end of the reading period, your job is to compile a composite bis file incorporating all readers' comments. You should not attempt to screen or vet readers' comments. The amount of time spent dealing with obviously misconceived comments at the review meeting will be negligible, and we would rather take that time than risk not seeing a potentially valuable comment.

The single file for each volume should be called:

iexx-gm4-bis.doc

where xx is the volume number. It would be helpful if the composite bis file had comments presented in page order, rather than all Reader A's comments followed by all Reader B's. This will save a great deal of moving back and forth through the blues at the review

meeting, and earn the gratitude of whoever is turning the pages!

Thanks in advance to everyone who has volunteered to help out in this late, but very important, step of the project. This corresponding stage at Wave 1 caught out a number of glaring errors which we would have cringed to see in print. I have no doubt we will achieve the same over the next month.



Volume 44 Post Proofing

Chuck King and his *The Fellows of the Institute* proofreading team completed work on volume 44 on January 8th. Chuck, a first time PP manager, had this comment to make:

This is my first (and, God willing, last) PP management job. . . This job was a real pain in the ass — I have much newfound appreciation for the work the PP team leaders did.

'The Fellows of the Institute' include:

Neil Anderson
Mike Barrett
Karl Barrus
Scott Benenati
Mark Bradford
Deborah Cohen
Phil Cohen
Patrick Dusoulrier
Andrew Edlin
Harry Erwin
Marcel van Genderen
Peter Ikin
Jurriaan Kalkman
Charles King
Franz Langelaan
Rod MacBeath
Michael Mitchell
Michael Rathbun
Glenn Raye
Errico Rescigno
Fred Zoetemeyer

This ad-hoc team will not appear on the work-flow diagram (by Suan and Joel Anderson) in volume 44, but will be mentioned in a footnote. The work accomplished by them on such harrowing material as the Catalogue of Titles and the VIE credits, is remarkable and has resulted in notable improvements of these sections. A special mention goes to now honorary VIE volunteer *David B. Williams*, who provided a number of important contributions to the Catalogue of Titles, as well as indicating a number of errors in the early draft. David B. Williams is a frequent contributor to *Cosmopolis*.

Finally, a special thanks to *Bob Luckin*, for CRT and CVT work on volume 44 above and beyond the call of duty. I suspect Bob of having poured dozens of hours into this work in the last weeks of January alone.



Shades of Koryphon

I recently came upon this almost comically vancian exposition by Lawrence Auster on Frontpagemag.com. It is in an article from August 30, 2004: 'How Strong Is the Arab Claim to Palestine?':

There is a myth hanging over all discussion of the Palestinian problem: the myth that this land was "Arab" land taken from its native inhabitants by invading Jews. Whatever may be the correct solution to the problems of the Middle East, let's get a few things straight:

-As a strictly legal matter, the Jews didn't take Palestine from the Arabs; they took it from the British, who exercised sovereign authority in Palestine under a League of Nations mandate for thirty years prior to Israel's declaration of independence in 1948. And the British don't want it back.

-If you consider the British illegitimate usurpers, fine. In that case, this territory is not Arab land but Turkish land, a province of the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years until the British wrested it from them during the Great War in 1917. And the Turks don't want it back.

-If you look back earlier in history than the Ottoman Turks, who took over Palestine over in 1517, you find it under the sovereignty of yet another empire not indigenous to Palestine: the Mamluks, who were Turkish and Circassian slave-soldiers headquartered in Egypt. And the Mamluks don't even exist any more, so they can't want it back.

So, going back 800 years, there's no particularly clear chain of title that makes Israel's title to the land inferior to that of any of the previous owners, who were, continuing backward:

The Mamluks, already mentioned, who in 1250 took Palestine over from:

The Ayyubi dynasty, the descendants of Saladin, the Kurdish Muslim leader who in 1187 took Jerusalem and most of Palestine from:

-The European Christian Crusaders, who in 1099 conquered Palestine from:

-The Seljuk Turks, who ruled Palestine in the name of:

-The Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, which in 750 took over the sovereignty of the entire Near East from:

-The Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus, which in 661 inherited control of the Islamic lands from:

-The Arabs of Arabia, who in the first flush of Islamic expansion

conquered Palestine in 638 from:

-The Byzantines, who (nice people — perhaps it should go to them?) didn't conquer the Levant, but, upon the division of the Roman Empire in 395, inherited Palestine from:

-The Romans, who in 63 B.C. took it over from:

-The last Jewish kingdom, which during the Maccabean rebellion from 168 to 140 B.C. won control of the land from:

-The Hellenistic Greeks, who under Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. conquered the Near East from:

-The Persian empire, which under Cyrus the Great in 639 B.C. freed Jerusalem and Judah from:

-The Babylonian empire, which under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. took Jerusalem and Judah from:

-The Jews, meaning the people of the Kingdom of Judah, who, in their earlier incarnation as the Israelites, seized the land in the 12th and 13th centuries B.C. from:

-The Canaanites, who had inhabited the land for thousands of years before they were dispossessed by the Israelites.

. . . Arabs are not native to Palestine, but are native to Arabia, which is called 'Arab-ia' for the breathtakingly simple reason that it is the historic home of the Arabs.

So the Palestinian claim, which only seems to be parallel to that of the 'blues', not only lacks the status of the Erjin claim, but that of the Morphotes as well (which, in fact, is the 'best' one). Their 'aspirations' turn out to be as 'here and now-ish' as that of the Outkers. I suppose they will just have to duke it out with the Erjinish Israelis on a basis of moral equality. As for the Morphotish Canaanites; if there are any left perhaps they can be found swimming in the Dead Sea.

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Rlaru, Lurulu, and the Grand Tournament at Mornune

IDLE THOUGHTS

Space Opera, written in 1964, exactly 40 years prior to *Ports of Call*, is clearly a precedent of the latter. Parallels between the stories are numerous. They begin with a Wodehousian nephew-aunt situation. They continue with a haphazard voyage. The destination of the *Phoebus* is the planet Rlaru, a near homonym of the 'lurulu'; and the latter may fairly be described as the goal, albeit non-planetary, of the *Glicca*. The *Phoebus* carries a troupe of classical opera performers, as well as the Tough Luck Jug Band. The *Glicca* carries the Mouse-riders.

Roger Wool falls in love with Madoc Roswyn, a Jean Parlier type vancian heroine by reason of plucky willing-

ness to exploit her feminine charms in pursuit of her ends. Madoc Roswyn, however, is richer than Jean Parlier. She is not merely trying to get ahead; she is obsessed with a mysterious mission, which she is forced to abandon, and she then repents of her Jean Parlier ways:

For a moment she looked off toward the dark village, then impulsively turned to Roger. "I've been extremely wicked, Roger. And you've been very kind to me. I'm ashamed. Truly I am."

"Don't let's talk about it," said Roger.

"But I must! It haunts me! Now that it's over I can see myself for the monomaniac I was."

"I'm sure you didn't mean to hurt anyone."

Madoc Roswyn laughed a soft forlorn laugh. "The sad truth is that I didn't care — which may be worse."

Myron's love-interest — not Tibbet, a foreseeable dead-end, but the Glad Song tavern keeper's daughter, at Sholo on Terce — is also a Jean Parlier type creature, but she is Jane Parlier in her ultimate expression. The Jean Parlier type is Vance's most characteristic female: oppressed yet spunky; hard, yet dreamy; moved by keen personal ambitions, gripped in a tedious and difficult struggle to thrive; dogged by the desire to love.

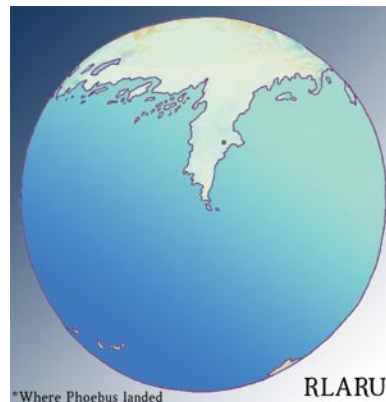
The marriage of Roger and Madoc is not without a certain vancian darkness, or tension:

Occasionally watching his bride an even darker apprehension came to trouble him: what if she should meet a man of her own race? She had assured him that none remained on Earth, but what of Yan?

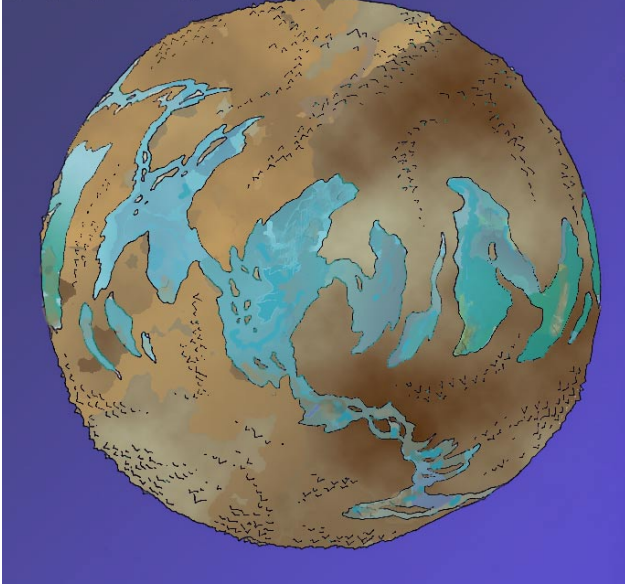
Between Myron and the Glad Song Tavern girl the darkness is more than a shadow; it approaches the absolute.

CULTURE AND MORALITY

Myron leaves Vermazen and returns there (as the *Glicca* returns to Tanjee). The *Phoebus* leaves Earth, and returns, after visiting various planets: Sirius Planet, Zade, Skylark, Yan, and Rlaru. Images of these worlds, if nothing else, suggest the variety of atmosphere Vance worked into this story. Sirius Planet is dismal. Zade is more varied and appealing. Skylark is an unrelieved Ecce-like jungle-horror



SIRIUS PLANET



with a Shattorack-like butte as its single feature in relief. Yan is oddly Earth-like. Rlaru is not un-Earth-like but it is a planet of few possibilities; the refuge of a fabulous civilization slid into somnolent decadence.

The worlds of *Space Opera*, like those of *Ports of Call*, present a set of contrasts which are only apparently gratuitous. The essence of each planet is related to the unraveling of the story. Sirius Planet is home to the bumbling, primitive byzantours, while Zade is home to a more diverse and more developed race, sometimes unexpectedly sophisticated. In both cases the Earth colonial representatives are more or less baffled and helpless, and in particular unable to steer Dame Isabel clear of disaster. Brutish or hyper-sophisticated, it's a case of 'different folks, different strokes'.

Skylark is a variation of that vancian favorite, the criminal society. Dame Hester's altruism is as ruthlessly exploited by these sociopaths as it is both imperceptible and irrelevant to the Byzantours, the Striads, the Water People and the Mental Warriors.

Yan is variation on the pre-historical or space-age transportation-of-men, or men-marooned, idea. We encounter it in *The Men of The Ten Books*, *Tschai*, *The Dragon Masters*, *Emphyrio* and *Blue World*, among others. The exodus recounted in *The Stark* presents the genesis of such a story, set in our present. If man could travel space, at convenient speed* and inhabit

* *The Phoebus* fled across the interstellar void, possibly as fast as thought, the velocity of which was yet a moot point. [Space Opera]

various worlds, this sort of thing would occur, as it did on Earth prior to the 20th century, when the planet became too small for us. Vance's interest in this matter seems to be about interest in the relation of the human psyche to the macro-environment, as well as the stage machinery it provides for the Swiftian brand of drama he favors. But the point of Yan in *Space Opera* is not to be found in this aspect, nor in Madoc Roswyn's secret per se — which, a bit contrived, helps make this story 'light'. Yan allows Vance to explicate a further aspect of his theme:

Madoc Roswyn laughed harshly. She gestured back to the forest. "They listen to the music; it is the first heard on Yan for hundreds of years. They listen but they hate you for it, and as soon as the music stops they will attack the ship."

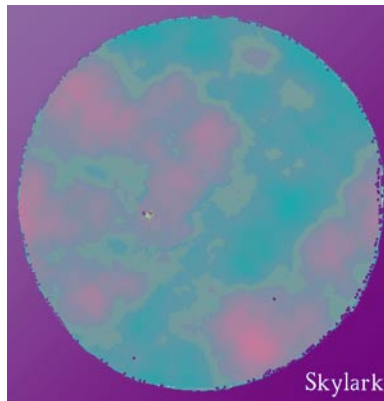
"What's this?" demanded Dame Isabel. "Why would they do such a thing?"

"They listen," said Madoc Roswyn, "but they listen in envy, knowing themselves and what they have done to Yan. . ."

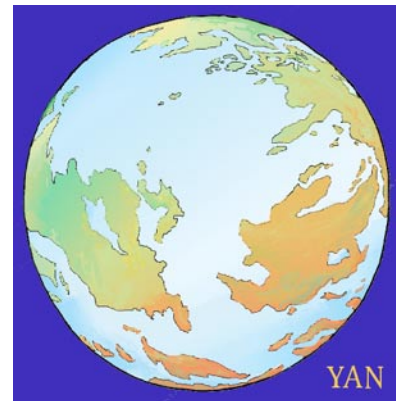
"This is ridiculous," Dame Isabel declared. "I can't credit human beings with such malevolence. . . They are human I presume?"

Like the Byzantours, Zadians and Skylarkers, the folk of Yan reject Dame Isabel's altruism, but for a new reason. They have become decadent barbarians, consumed by self-hatred because they have destroyed what they stood for.

The reader of *Space Opera* has now been offered the full scope of inter-cultural non-comprehension and rejection. First; different cultures, low or high, failing to share the same symbols, cannot make easy contact. Then, even when symbols are shared, reaction can be unexpectedly nega-



Skylark



YAN

tive. On Skylark the response is cynical exploitation. On Yan it is malignant hostility. These reactions introduce a moral factor which runs counter to what we may call the 'anticly Heideggerian cultural relativism' explicated on Serius and Zade.

What of the reaction on Rlaru? Dame Isabel, out of phase with reality, can't cope with any cultural preju-

dices or moral attitude but her own. Like Dame Hester, however, in the end she has an enlightenment:

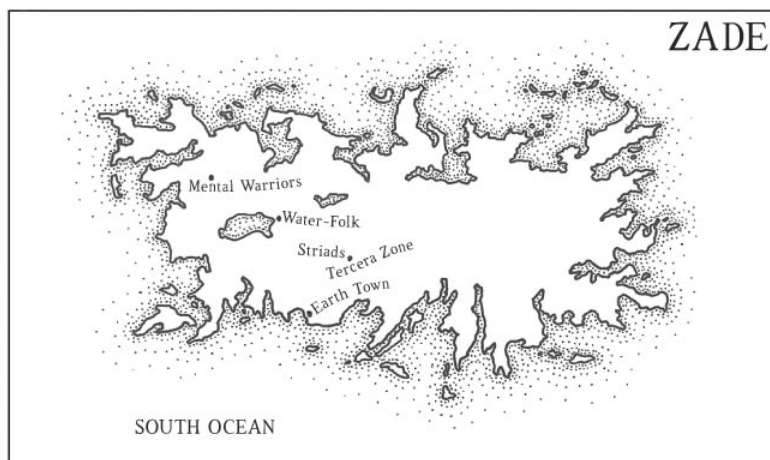
Dame Isabel felt confused and resentful. In a sense she had been mocked and ridiculed, though in a dispassionate and even kindly fashion. . . Why had not the folk of Rlaru explained themselves before she had presented her program? Clearly they had no need of anything the Phoebus could offer — except the Tough Luck Jug Band. Obviously folk of rather vulgar inclinations, thought Dame Isabel sourly. Their old fineness of discrimination had apparently died. . . And yet — no, of course not. Impossible. Dame Isabel resolutely ordered her thinking. A person must establish a definite set of verities, she told herself, and definitely abide by them, no matter how questionable these same verities. She drank her tea, set the cup into the saucer with a resolute click.

Another vancian hint! Through the 'and yet' the reader is offered a quick glimpse of several vancian verities. The first is that hot jazz is a superior music to classical opera. Given that the story emphasizes the operatic repertoire with accuracy and sympathy, the hint is subtle. But the denizens of Rlaru prefer jazz, and they know best. Or perhaps they only need it? When the Rlaruans communicate a message to Dame Isabel, it ends thus:

There followed other spectacles and vistas, and these seemed far away and long past, like memories half-forgotten. A parade of dead heroes came by, turning to search the faces of those who watched, as if asking for knowledge which had been denied them. All seemed to ask the same question, and then they were gone from view. Cities were built and listlessly abandoned: all goals had been achieved, all excellences attained. Nothing remained but idleness, casual amusement. . . Finally in gigantic enlargement appeared The Tough Luck Jug Band, with its music of boldness and assertion, enthusiasm conquering surfeit. For a brief space the world was renewed and wonderful things seemed possible.

Shades of Donald Rumsfeld! Rlaru is Old Europe. They adore jazz in Old Europe. There are several jazz shows on French state radio every day. Despite their anti-americanism they just can't get enough of that American *enthusiasm conquering surfeit*. The *Phoebus* leaves Rlaru, and the Rlarus, apparently, sink back into somnolence. Old Europe may listen to jazz — and play a lot of it themselves — but it seems to remain at the level of spectacle. Spiritual renewal may not be occurring.

The cultural leader of our time is America. But one day, like Yan or Rlaru, America too will slip into decadence.



That moment, however, has not yet come. Jazz — as the term is understood by Jack Vance, i.e. excluding commercial degradations, as well as be-bop, and the decadent offspring of that empty show-off style — is the quintessential expression of American cultural elan.

That Dame Isabel decides to stick to her 'verities' is vancian. He does not play fast and loose with his characters; they are who they are. That she calls these verities into question for a moment is not impossible. But the phrase 'no matter how questionable these same verities' steps over a line Vance respects in later stories. Dame Isabel is certainly a person to go as far as her 'and yet', but not to retreat from her 'impossible'. The line is unneeded commentary, which Vance allowed to actually slip into Dame Isabel's mind. I suspect that, if the book had been written, or revised, ten years later, Vance might have adjusted the phrase as follows:

Their old fineness of discrimination had apparently died. . . And yet — Dame Isabel resolutely ordered her thinking.

40 years later Dame Hester, pressed by doom, makes an even greater concession, and this time it is totally convincing:

The still figure gave a convulsive jerk; the eyelids lifted. She spoke in a guttural croak: "It is folly! There is nothing more; the doom is on me. I shall never breathe the sweet air of home again. Now I will do what I must."

THE JEAN PARLIER EXTREME

Jack Vance informed me, if my memory serves, that he wrote *Space Opera* when a publisher asked that he write a 'space opera'. It does not seem amazing that the book was rejected. What an elaborate joke! What does seem amazing is that the book written to replace it was accepted

in its place. This book was: *The Magnificent Showboats of the Lower Vissle River, Lune XXIII South, Big Planet*.^{*} For, despite the obscurity shrouding the term 'science fiction', the latter book answers the definition 'space opera' even less than the former; at least it has a space ship and aliens! The only 'aliens' in *Showboats* are the 'oels', and they are mere animals. Furthermore, the argument of both stories is the same; the vicissitudes of itinerant players.

The caprices of commercial editors are famously imponderable but, for a change, I will neither seek to penetrate them, nor to fire rockets of rhetorical indignation. Instead I will try to plot a few of the buoys which aid me to navigate Vance's work.

Like Madoc Roswyn and the Glad Song Tavern girl, Damsel Blanche-Aster is another phase of the Jean Parlier type. This is not immediately obvious, because she is more prudish than her sisters.

Zamp went forward [. . .] clasped her in his arms, and despite her horrified expression found her mouth and kissed her. She made neither response nor resistance; Zamp might have been kissing a doll. He stood back in frustration.

Damsel Blanche-Aster wiped her mouth and finally found words. "Apollon Zamp, I wish to accompany you to Mornune, this is true. But I had hoped that you might curb your lust, or at least focus it upon some person or creature other than myself. I am faced with a dilemma. I do not care to sacrifice either my goals or what you call my fastidiousness."

But Damsel Blanche-Aster cannot be called a prude. She is willing to play the ghost of Princess Maude, in the second act of *Evalsifer*, a role demanding nudity. She plays a dangerous game of 'come-hither' with strong minded or excitable men like Zamp and Gassoon, and must put up with a good deal of on-stage caresses from Zamp; fundamentally she should be seen as prepared to do pretty much anything in pursuit of her goal. It is not absolutely clear, for example, that she is not the one responsible for the disappearance of Zamp's iron. As for this goal:

"There is no mystery. Whoever wins Waldemar's competition earns a palace and great wealth. I wish to espouse such a man and live the life of a princess."

Zamp gave his head a marveling shake and poured the wine which the pot-boy had served. "You have calculated the course of

^{*} This is the sequence as Vance himself told it to me (unless my memory is playing tricks on me). David B. Williams thinks there must be some kind of mistake, since, as he writes: 'Berkeley asked for a book titled *Space Opera* but didn't like what they got, and Vance sold it to Pyramid. *Showboat* replaced nothing, since Pyramid, not Berkley, published it ten years later.' Whether this is Vance's fantasy, or mine, or something else: *si non e vero, e ben trovato*.

your life with meticulous care."

"Why should I not? Have I any other life?"

Her attitude is boldly mercenary and self-centered; she is thus the sister of Jean Parlier. This is vancian cynicism, surely, but it should be put in perspective. Madoc Roswyn, even if her quest and its dénouement are less convincing on the literary plane, is pursuing a racial or cultural injunction imbedded in her psyche. Damsel Blanche-Aster is also seeking to return home and regain lost advantages though she is decidedly less idealistic than Madoc Roswyn. The Tavern girl of Sholo is likewise motivated by something other than vulgar lust for material comforts:

The girl smiled doubtfully, looked over her shoulder toward the counter, then turned back to Myron and said in a rush: "I think that you have been educated at an advanced school."

"Yes," said Myron in surprise. "How do you know?"

"By looking at you and hearing your voice. What did you study?"

"The usual variety. I started in Economic Fluxions, then changed to Theoretic Aesthetics, then transferred into Cosmology, and there I stayed. What about you?"

The girl was amused. "My education has come from what I have read. It is not what I would like."

"Oh? What would you like?"

"I want to leave this place and never return! Perhaps I would go to a school like yours. Would that be possible?"

"No reason why not. What do you want to learn?"

"Everything there is to know."

These females are hardly the only vancian women to pursue private ambitions while flaunting, more or less discreetly, and to various degrees, the norms of civilized conduct. In *Trullion* the unappealing Marucha Hulden somewhat scandalously allies herself with the dubious mentor, Akcadie, to lead a life in accord with her personal ambitions. In the same book Duissane, the bewitching Trevanyi sheirl of the Saurkash Tanchinaros, is torn between various understandable goals and influences. She wins the hero's heart, and perhaps even the reader's sympathy, but she cannot be considered a model of propriety. Examples of such vancian women abound. Our final judgements upon them form a garland decorating all degrees of the moral scale. Damsel Blanche-Aster is a flower who fails to grace the upper end.

It is quite vancian that, to attain the material and social standing for which she lusts, Damsel Blanche-Aster flaunts the norms by which civilization flourishes, or which keep it from dissolving into the barbarism and squalor which she rejects for herself. That riches may accumulate and,

by the same token, that lofty social states may come into existence to be occupied by the happy few, it is required that more than the appearance of virtue prevail, to say nothing of honor, virtue's somewhat shabby worldly counterpart. It is also quite vancian that Damsel Blanche-Aster's strategy to win her largely materialistic end is a largely spiritual one, namely Art. King Waldemar, valuing Art, rewards it with riches and honors. Art is the flower of civilization. Once we have slept—no matter how hard or soft the bed—filled our bellies—on gruel or a twelve course meal of four wines—protected ourselves from the rain—under a tuft of thatch or below the vaulted ceilings of a palace—and warded off the cold—with a homespun smock or a golden tabard, what then? If one is not a vulgar scoundrel there are three choices: contemplation of Truth (philosophy), cultivation of Virtue (religion), and creation, or enjoyment, of Beauty (art). I can think of few vancian heroes or heroines whose aims are confined to the limits of brute materiality, or even the somewhat larger, though still constricted, zone of wealth and power for its own sake, unadorned by larger perspectives—though Damsel Blanche-Aster comes as close as possible. It is another vancian 'patient explanation of the obvious', in this case pointing out the tension between personal goals and civilization. Personal ambition, for power and wealth, whether temporal or spiritual, is one of the factors that call civilization into being. But civilization, once it is ripe, prompts desires which tempt some individuals to uncivilized behavior.

VANCIAN ART

I continue to be exasperated at the oft repeated opinion that Vance's stories lack plot. It is true that his artistry often conceals the raw mechanics of his literary machinery. This is the mark of a great artist, and those who repeat the plot criticism reveal their inadequacy as readers. The mechanics of *Showboat*, for example, if one has the courage to claw oneself away from its formidably delightful surface, display themselves with clarity. Like *Ports of Call*, where the goal is lurulu, and *Space Opera*, where the goal is Rlaru, the goal of *Showboats*—the 'McGuffin' or 'shmilblick'—is the grand prize at Mornune.

Lurulu is a purely spiritual quality. Rlaru is a planet whose civilization puts human pretences in perspective—or a philosophical lesson. The grand prize at Mornune, which will be rewarded to Art, is tinsel wealth and vulgar temporal honors. A saint might approve lurulu. Philosophers, sociologists and psychologists must respect Rlaru's lesson of modesty. The grand prize at Mornune has no

redeeming spiritual value, even if it may be considered essentially harmless. (These remarks are made on the basis of a hopelessly angelic moral standard in order to draw the contrasts with as much force as possible.)

The plot of *Showboats* is as elegant as the Pythagorean Theorem. The first section of the book is in the form of a fugue. The competition of King Waldemar is proclaimed in Cobal but Apollon Zamp is not on hand. Only two masters may hope to represent the Vissel River at Mornune: Zamp and Ashgale. Ashgale, with Hasche-Moncoursque aplomb, undertakes to convey the news of the competition to Zamp which, naturally, he fails to do. But Zamp discovers the truth and arrives in time at Lanteen. This situation is beautifully introduced by the conversation on destiny, which—shades of lurulu—opens the book. To punish Ashgale for his perfidy, Zamp sabotages the *Fironzelle's Golden Conceit* and so wins the invitation to compete for the grand prize. But Ashgale takes fulsome revenge upon Zamp; Zamp is tricked into provoking the destructive fury of the Whants. *Miraldra's Enchantment* is destroyed and Zamp is ruined. His pluck and artistry are his only remaining resources, along with the safe-passage to Mornune. End of part one. Enter Throdorus Gassoon, aesthete, dreamer, collector and, above all, master of the *Universal Pancomium*. Damsel Blanche-Aster, becoming a plot-force in part two, has attached herself to Zamp; mysterious and alluring, driven by a secret goal, she is the Madoc Roswyn of *Showboats*. To get to Mornune she plays Zamp and Gassoon, just as Madoc Roswyn, to reach Yan, played Roger Wool and Captain Gondar.

THE SCALE OF CULTURE

Madoc Roswyn's purpose is to renew the link of her cultural heritage—which, as it turns out, has decayed into decadence. The planet Yan, however, is not the goal of the *Phoebus*, which is Rlaru. There is, however, a relation between Yan and Rlaru: they are the extremes on the scale of culture: barbaric decadence and hyper-sophisticated enervation. The golden mean, the living, dynamic culture, is exemplified by the Tough Luck Jug Band—and grand opera as well, even if it is a notch or two up the scale toward hyper-sophistication. To put this another way, Africa and the barbaric parts of Asia represent one extreme. Europe and the hyper-sophisticated parts of Asia represent the other. America is the golden mean. The *Phoebus* inflicts a dose of living culture, exasperating the Yan and intriguing the Rlarus. In both cases, despite their initial reactions, it might be a renewing seed.

In *Showboats* the cultural scale is drawn not by planets but by the aesthete sophistication of Gassoon at one end, and the vulgar showmanship of Zamp at the other. In *Space Opera* Madoc Roswyn and her mystery fails to coincide with the goal of the *Phoebus*, Rlaru. In *Showboats* this is corrected: Damsel Blanche-Aster and her mystery coincide with Mornune, the ship's final destination. She is, furthermore, the bone of contention between Zamp and Gassoon, who represent the qualities exemplified in *Space Opera* by the planets Rlaru and Yan. The dynamic between the three main characters provides the impulses for the second part of the story, which I will not trace out. The third part of the book ends in a crescendo of anti-climaxes, culminating at last not only in the realization of everyone's ambitions (less the romantic designs of Zamp and Gassoon on Damsel Blanche-Aster), but in friendship between them, symbolically resolving the cultural conflict, or restoring the golden mean; in this case Macbeth presented with savvy and flair. Art must *live*.

The same plot evolution from *Space Opera* to *Showboats* continues with *Ports of Call*. Roger Wool, as mentioned, is a Wodehousian forerunner of Myron Tany; apparently bland persons victimized by domineering aunts upon whose fortune they depend. This character as I have argued elsewhere is typically vancian. They are even a phase of the essential 'American' or democratic protagonist. They are 'ordinary' people who rise to heroic status. Achilles and Aeneas are demi-gods, Arthur and Beowulf are kings. Gersen is born into an obscure family of farmers. Reith is a mere space-scout. In *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy shows how almost hopeless are the aspirations of the low for the high. This story was written in the same decade as Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and a half century after *Moby Dick*. A Yankee engineer handily trumps a king's noblemen. Ahab, no aristocratic demi-godish Jason or Aeneas, classical sailor-heroes both, is a whaling captain, the mid 19th century social equivalent of an oil-rig foreman; here is the creature the democratic Melville promotes to protagonist of a veritable tragedy of Grecian scope.

Apollon Zamp is another important vancian type which runs the gamut from the full-bore fantasy scoundrel, Liane the Wayfarer, to its dark 'realist' variation, Paul Gunter. Between these outer limits we find the unappealing but fantastical Visbhume, the plucky Celt Paddy Blackthorn, the hapless but adroit technocrat Milton Hack, and that hard-bitten female variation, Jean Parlier. This 'Cugel-type' is a picaresque adventurer, more or less at odds with the world, driven by simple ambitions or resentments and armed with a personal philosophy of indomitable self-

reliance. Halfway between the Cugel-type and another important vancian type represented by Throdorus Gassoon falls the antic sleuth Magnus Ridolph. Ridolph is cugelian in his peripatetic and quirky personality, disaster-prone fate and indomitable resource, but navarthian by his age, recondite tastes and unhabitual perspectives. We encounter him in the philosophical and kindly puppet master Holkerwoyd who, like the unprincipled Master Floreste, or the crafty yet benevolent Moncrief, is also an artist. Throdorus Gassoon may not have all Navarth's flamboyance and artistic pretence but like the mad poet he is a bumbling and crotchety eccentric living on a boat at the margins of society, dreaming grand dreams and thinking strange thoughts. *Showboats*, therefore, offers amateurs of Vance a most delicious encounter: 'Cugel meets Navarth'. Even more gratifying: both are in love with the girl from the Glad Song Tavern—or, if you prefer, Jean Parlier.

One of the funniest lines in all Vance occurs during the pell-mell dénouement of *Showboats*:

Gassoon attempted an indulgent gesture, but restrained the swing of his arm. The Green and Gold Tabard constricted his shoulders, and forced him to careful and controlled motions lest he burst the brittle fabric. The Princess Blanche-Aster, on a couch of carved jade, sat blank-faced, like a porcelain doll.

Here is the vancian machinery in its essence; the Green and Gold Tabard, product of the Norns and their magic loom, is charged with kingly virtue yet it remains a mere section of cloth, subject like any vulgar cloth to tear-age and disintegration. This sort of perspective in other circumstances is called the 'Catholic attitude'; the bread really is bread and the wine really is wine but they are also the body and blood of Christ. To express this another way, it is the essence of moderation. The Extremes are extreme by virtue of simplification, or impoverishment. Moderation is 'the mean' not because it balances between the extremes but because it contains both, like the head of a magician constraining the explosive power of the syllables of a spell. As an example take jazz. It is neither brutishly vulgar even though it is full of vital force, nor is it dryly sophisticated even though it does not lack nuance and subtlety. As a practical example take a solo by Bix Beiderbecke; impossible to imagine anything at once more graciously suave and more nervously vibrant.

Damsel Blanche-Aster has achieved her worldly ambition, but to what end?

Zamp bowed once to Gassoon and again to Princess Blanche-Aster, who returned an abstracted nod. Zamp thought she seemed

dull and bloodless. Her green silk gown was embroidered with pearls and black iron beads; her blonde hair had been worked into an elaborate confection of curls and coils: was it for this that she had returned to Mornune?

In addition to apparel and coiffure in the Mornune style, it is true that Damsel Blanche-Aster may order her enemies cast into the Bottomless Lake. But what of that? Says Zamp:

I am three parts wandering minstrel to one part aristocrat. The river winds blow in my blood!

Ho for the life of a peripatetic player! Zamp is inhabited by lurulu. Damsel Blanche-Aster, on the contrary, seems stuck in trap of her material ambitions. She seems the extreme negative example of the Jean Parlier class: cynicism at its worst. Still, she does not practice murder like the girl of Sholo and her further adventures may tell another tale. She is a person of intelligence, taste and verve, and does not lack hints of human depth absent in many real persons.

". . . why should I waste time and energy just to pull your chestnuts out of the fire? You have made it quite clear that you detest me."

"No, no, no!" cried Damsel Blanche-Aster. "I detest no one, not even you! But I can make no personal commitments — not now."

"Nor ever."

Damsel Blanche-Aster's eyes sparkled. "Why do you say that? Because your sulks and vanities and foppish habits leave me cold? Look at you with your blonde curls, your airs and graces, your ridiculous hats!" She stamped her foot. "Once and for all make up your mind! If you win at Mornune, you gain wealth, and this is your prize, not my admiration, which you may or may not gain!"

PERIPATETIC PLAYERS

Space Opera, Showboats and Ports of Call have something else in common: all are accounts of wandering bands of artists. Dame Isabel presents grand opera and jazz in spite of herself. Zamp and Gassoon present Shakespeare. Moncrief presents his own original tableaux-dramas in the vancian style. Of course Vance is crowded with theatrical presentations, each one another demonstration of his plot mastery. Take this example from chapter 2, section 4 of *Araminta Station*:

The production was entitled "The Charming Antics of the Bugtown Folle", and dealt with the affairs of assorted insects, all dressed as peasants. Foliage and painted scenery indicated a village of small cottages and shops in a dark nook of the forest, with a broken ped-

estal of gray-green marble to the rear. Insects scurried here and there, transacting bits of business, usually with droll consequences. A company of small beetles danced to the chirping, scratching, honking music of an insect orchestra. A white chrysalis hung on a tree to the side; from time to time the sides bulged and jerked as if from activity within. The bugs gathered to watch, in awe and reverence.

The activity inside the pale shell became more urgent, and the orchestra began to accent the thrusts and bumps with plangent guttural tones.

The chrysalis began to break open; light focused on the activity and left the rest of the stage in darkness.

The chrysalis broke open; instantly the orchestra became still. Out of the aperture hopped a horrid little white imp, with distorted features defined in black. It made gleeful chattering sounds, then went fleeing from the stage on bounds and jumps, while insects and orchestra produced sounds of consternation.

The light shifted from the broken shell and for a moment the stage was passive. Then: a sudden splash of new light to the top of the pedestal, and here stood Sessily the butterfly, body encased in a soft gray stuff, antennae sprouting from her forehead. The wonderful wings waved as if of their own accord, in exact gentle rhythm.

Sessily turned slowly upon the pedestal, wings beating continually, her face a study in entranced concentration. She sank to a cross-legged sitting pose, the wings quivering and vibrating, to show off their startling color: purples and greens, deep reds, burning dark yellows, velvet black as rich as any of the colors.

Sessily slowly rose to her feet, as if lifted by the wings. She stood smiling a rapt half-smile, delighted with the easy movement of the wings. Every eye watched her in fascination; she made an image of irresistible appeal and Clawen's heart seemed to contract in his chest.

Other parts of the stage had gone dark. From the side came a grinding roar. The lights fled from the pedestal; white glare picked out a band of imps armed with grotesquely tall halberds. The insects recoiled in confusion, then rallied and attacked with all ferocity. The imps were stung, rasped, pinched by mandibles, constricted by centipedes, gnawed by beetles. The stage spotlight, wan and diffuse, swam here and there about the stage. It touched the pedestal; the butterfly was gone.

From the orchestra came an outburst of frenzied polyphony which almost at once went quiet; except for a white spotlight wandering here and there the stage was dark.

The insects, glimpsed in the moving light, had become busy. With huge mallets, presses and rollers they flattened the imps to thin stiff sheets, distorting the features into near-abstract patterns.

From the direction of the pedestal came the sound of pounding. The light, straying upon the pedestal, discovered insects nailing flattened imps into a crude representation of a white and black butterfly.

No plot? Once again Vance has concealed his art. 'The Charming Antics of the Bug-town Folk' is an archetypal story of logical steps. The insects 'buy and sell, marry and have children', to paraphrase the biblical verse, and evil is born among them. This is the 'ur' story. But in the face of evil they are accorded an inspiring vision of goodness. When evil threatens them with annihilation, nourished by their vision of Good they rally and defeat it. But now, from the very shells of evil, they construct a totem, or idol, to Good. It is a new phase of ambiguity in the ongoing war of Evil and Good. This story opens the way to another, like the succession of cultural states detailed in *The Stark*.

As a final example of Vance's plotting power, we may look back to *Showboats* for a different sort of demonstration, perhaps the most daring in all literary history:

In addition to his witches' dance and banquet entertainments, Zamp now inserted sword-dancers, a coronation pageant, and an entire new sequence, to motivate the deceptions practised upon Macbeth by the witches. At the opening of his new scene the three hags were discovered working over a great cauldron, chanting spells, capering and clenching their hands, manipulating balls of blue fire, at last to produce (in the person of Deneis, the youngest of the mime-girls) a naked lank-haired lamia, who is then sent forth to suck the blood of Lady Macbeth in payment for the presages rendered Macbeth. Lady Macbeth awakens to find the lamia kneeling over her; the lamia flees and is then hunted down and killed in the forest: a scene which Zamp considered most effective. In revenge the witches instruct Macduff that his army must carry branches from Birnam Wood during their assault upon Dunsinane Castle. After the death of Macbeth and his lady, Zamp introduced an episode of somber pomp: the coronation of Malcolm, the new king, at Scone. Here Malcolm vows the extirpation of witchcraft, and the final scene is played once more on the darkling heath. The three witches at their fire cluck and chortle at King Malcolm's vain hopes, and address themselves to the invention of new intrigues and tragedies.*

To improve upon Shakespeare, who else but Vance?



* *Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran. . .*

from *Lamia*, by John Keats. But see other references.

More Thoughts on VIE Titles

Paul William Rhoads

A few reactions to David B. Williams's remarks about VIE titles in *Cosmopolis* 57.

Though Williams was, most probably, only being synoptic, it is not terribly relevant to talk about legal obligations regarding VIE titles. I feel sure that, if the original idea of the edition did not include restoring titles, and if he had not been asked about it, Vance would have made no special fuss about our using editorial titles, and would not have made his single request to change one of his own titles. I even suspect that, had we been a different sort of group than we are, we could have secured agreement to choose new titles pretty much as we liked. Many times, presenting Vance with textual issues of various sorts, including queries about titles, I heard him answer something like: 'Oh, just do whatever you think best'. This may be the mark of a praiseworthy Christian-style meekness, or blamable indecisive spinelessness, or something else. Whatever the case, it eventually became a bit disquieting. Our own attitude combined meekness and tenaciousness; Vance's tendency toward self-effacement was met with patient intolerance.

With respect to some of Williams' points: he declares himself baffled by *Gold and Iron*, but this title expresses the essence of the book! Being enslaved by aliens (*Slave of the Klau*), and the poor conditions on Magarak (*Planet of the Damned*), are only elements of the setting of a story which is, fundamentally, about cultural gaps. The Lekthwans are gold; the Earthlings are iron. This is doubtlessly symbolism from the folklore of colonialism. The story is clearly a development of the *Golden Girl* idea, which was inspired by a real colonial experience. The published titles are vulgar sci-fi hawking yelps which miss the point.

The Rapparee may not be a common word, but Vance is not necessarily easy to read. His work is full of uncommon words. This is one of the things that is attractive about it. There is no call to dumb it down. The published titles lack the spit, vinegar and panache of this title, perfectly expressive of the swashbuckling effect Vance was after. *The Space Pirate* is flatfooted; *The Five Gold Bands* is at once pointlessly obscure and leadenly obvious.

Dealing with Vance regarding titles, I never got the impression that, beyond preferring his own, Vance felt strongly about them. The title *To Live Forever*, for example,

did not seem to bother him. On the other hand, and despite my opening remarks, it seems clear to me that Vance does feel somewhat strongly about some of the titles, in particular: *The Dying Earth*, *The Eyes of the Overworld*, *Cugel's Saga*, and *The Wanhk*. But the feelings are different in each case. His objection to *The Dying Earth* seems to be motivated neither by disappointment at rejection of his own title nor by marked disapproval of editorial title. Many people cite the fame and favor of the latter, but these aspects are obviously matters of indifference to Vance.

Williams finds Vance's title non-memorable and illogical. In this regard it is felt that the stories were influenced by Clark Ashton Smith and/or Cabell, or that, since they are Smith- or Cabell-like the title should reflect this. In my somewhat extensive conversations with him, Vance has never mentioned these writers as influences but he has mentioned Baum with enthusiasm.* Personally, I do not see a Smith or Cabell influence, but I do see the Baum influence. Or, to put it more nicely, I think I can see how Vance recognizes an aspect of himself in Baum. Cabell seems to me a wise-ass version of George MacDonald, a writer who took his romanticism seriously but also his Christianity. Cabell has an arch or even antic side, but there is nothing childlike about it. He is deliberately obscure. Smith is like Dunsany without the humor, or to put it another way a decadent, over-ripe and atheistic return to original, or 'gothic', romanticism. Baum, on the other hand, is Sandburgian. Oz is practically the Rutabaga country—a lightly and gaily magical 19th century rural America, full of railways, bug towns and Pooder Boy-ish foolishness—than the dire and mystic realms of late romanticism. Vance, like Dunsany, does not buy into this strand of romanticism.† A story like *The Treasure of the Ghiblins* is as exuberantly impertinent as *The World-Thinker* or *Three-legged Joe*, or Cugel seeking to get the better of Madam Soldinck or hoodwink Madam

* Regarding the influence of Clark Ashton Smith on Vance, David B. Williams cited to me an interview in *Dream Makers II*, Berkley 1983, by Charles Platt. Platt claims that Vance said to him: "Smith is one of the people I read when I was a kid. But it only influenced *The Dying Earth*. . .one of the generative geniuses of fantasy. . .When I wrote my first fantasies, I was no longer aware of Smith—it had sunk so far into my subconscious. But when it was pointed out to me, I could very readily see the influence." Platt either made this up or went farther in his reconstruction than any real utterance of Vance would properly permit. I don't see Vance pronouncing any of these stilted phrases and I doubt he would have used the title 'The Dying Earth' so blandly.

† Dunsany's language, unlike Vance's, is self-consciously biblical (which is not only obvious but a fact of literary history). Dunsany's language is rather different in his later, and now obscure works (*The Curse of the Wise Woman*, *The Story of Mona Sheeny*), where its fundamental freshness and simplicity is better revealed than in the early stories for which he is more famous.

Croulsx. Like Vance in *Lyonesse*, Dunsany gets somewhat more serious in books like *The Charwoman's Shadow* or *Pan*, comfortable in a pre-romantic or 'golden age' atmosphere, free of mist-enshrouded northern obscurantism. If there is any influence, unconscious or otherwise, from these sources I suspect Dunsany's is more important than Smith's. In any case Vance's title is Baum-like: *The Wizard of Oz—Mazirian the Magician*. It is child-like, light-handed. *The Dying Earth*, by contrast, stresses a dark side that never properly materializes. If a character like Guyal is lined up with a parallel Smith character I think the romantic/anti-romantic (Smith/Vance) opposition would be clear. Here, I think, is the source of Vance's strong feelings; the title betrays the book. When a miniaturized Turgan is being chased by the dragon in the maze it is much less terrible than amusing.

The titles *The Eyes of the Overworld* and *Cugel's Saga*, by contrast, seem not to arouse in Vance any sense of betrayal of his work, only mild disdain for editorial fatuousness. Regarding *Overworld*; where David B. Williams feels this designation of the cusps is a 'matter of interpretation', the author does not. Vance is a man with a keen sense of words, and I have heard him state, several times, that 'to make sense' the title 'should have been *The Eyes of the Underworld*'. However, I agree with Williams that these eyes, however designated, and the Skybreak Spatterlight scale, are the central, and parallel, objects of each part of this double story, and would be nice sub-titles in a volume called *Cugel the Clever*. This possibility was even discussed with Vance. However, because of the VIE's concern with chronology, and because these two texts were written so far apart in time, given our preoccupation to explicate Vance's artistic history a one volume solution was not adapted. Since, in Vance's mind, *The Eyes of the Overworld* did not really have a title, but was called by, or known to himself as *Cugel the Clever*, and since, when pestered for it, he proposed *Cugel: The Skybreak Spatterlight* for the second story, that is what we have. That Vance needed to be pestered to get even this result should not suggest that he 'accepted' *Cugel's Saga*. He made it clear to me, several times, before there was any question of the VIE, that he does not like the title—but he is a somewhat complex man and interpreting his attitudes is not necessarily simple. I do hope some editor in the not distant future will publish both texts together as *Cugel the Clever* with sub-titles: *The Eyes of the Underworld* and *The Pectoral Skybreak Spatterlight*. David B. Williams, I wager, will join me in that wish.

As for *The Wanhk*, the story has already been told, but

here it is again: Vance, on his own initiative, took the trouble to call the Editor-in-Chief of the VIE, all the way in France, to ask that this title be changed. Given the type of man he is, that he made this initiative ought to demonstrate it was a serious matter to him. Whatever Vance's own feelings might be, David B. Williams' remarks do not seem to the point. Clearly Vance is not worried about British sensibilities with respect to Briticisms, but about his own sensibilities with respect to language. He is ribald, but not vulgar. In person he is capable of amazingly off-color remarks, but never, so to speak, in mixed company. In a moment of high good humor he once slapped his hand down on the table and, in terms I hesitate to repeat, proposed we go to a parlor and get twin propellers tattooed on our buttocks. This mild example is not displayed as proof of how 'off' Vance's colors can get, but of how unexpected and fantastical they can be. For the occasional farness of the 'off' you must take my word for it, and some things one just does not mention. I don't think self-abuse is even hinted at in Vance, even in *Bad Ronald*. Ronald, like Salvador Dali, was something of an artist. Unlike him, apparently, he was not a 'Great Masturbator'. Perhaps that phase of Ronald's impulses, unlike Dali's, were expended upon his creation, Atranta.

The Wankh matter has also provoked more discussion on the VanceBBS. A certain G.M. Frame, disapproving of Vance's change, made this argument:

Wankh looks to me like a transliteration of the chime portraying this race of these creatures. The W suggests a non-percussive initiation of the sound, such as that produced by brushing rather than striking a cymbel, the "an" in the middle describes the resonant character of the primary vibration, and the terminating "kh" suggests a deliberate truncation of the sound, as by pinching or clamping the vibrating sound source rather than allowing it full scope for natural decay. The word is carefully constructed, a single complex syllable, suitable for description as a "chime". This is the careful and apt choice for invented names that I had come to admire in Jack's writing. The two-syllable Wannek destroys this for me. A sad day when such an unfortunate resemblance to a questionable word results in the retirement of such an otherwise well constructed invention.

I am unmoved by such second guessing. Assuming 'wankh' is a transliteration, and not something else, the man who imagined this invented situation can be counted upon not to have forgotten it. Since he spent almost two years settling on an alternate term—for a long time he was settled on 'Wanish'—it may well be that the new term is even superior to the old, in creating whatever effect, transliterative or otherwise, intended.

The possibility that 'wankh' is some sort of chimish transliteration is obvious enough, and my own first reaction to 'wannek' was just the sort of comparison G. M. Frame describes. The result, for me, was that the new term is as suggestive as the old. Of course they are almost identical; both begin with the same 'semi-vowel lip-glide' (sometimes dubiously classified as a 'fricative consonant'), to be followed by a 'nasal dental-alveolar continuant', and both end, almost as brutally as possible, with an explosive velar stop. The final 'h', whatever it may or may not suggest, is in any case silent. If it does have an effect, that effect is lost upon, and thus (in the PC dispensation) 'discriminatory' against, the blind—among whom the author himself must be counted. 'Wannek' differs only by the introduction of the 'middle, front, unrounded vowel' ('eh') before the velar stop, and, of course, a 'silent' 'n' which may suggest prolonged ringing, or not, or something else (the same sound could have been spelled 'wahnek'). However, since for Vance 'J. Kavnes' is to be pronounced 'jack-vance', I see little difficulty pronouncing wannek 'wankh'. To this may be added that, in my experience, Vance has definite ideas on the pronunciation of but a single one of his invented names—likely also to provoke grumbling in the peanut gallery, where the name in question is universally mispronounced to rhyme with 'try'.

Assuming that 'wankh', as Frame suggests, was indeed intended to suggest a 'non-percussive initiation', a 'resonant primary vibration', and a 'deliberate truncation' by 'pinching or clamping', a number of other constructions would seem to do as well: 'fraund', 'shranghz', 'zhramv'; or if a 'w' is wanted: 'wengv', 'woungdzh' or 'phowmf'. If these are too cumbersome, various sounds such as 'vount', 'meming', 'zroon' or 'haump' would seem no less successful at achieving the sort of, if not exactly the same, onomatopoeic effect G. M. Frame claims for 'wankh'. Onomatopoeia is no amazing trick.

'Wannek' seems more delicate and precise. The introduced 'eh' transforms the end of the sound into a little click, suggestive of the parasitic noises which accompany the playing of any instrument, including the human voice, and therefore—why not?—that organ the 'Wannek' use to generate their chimes. This enhanced delicacy (which, I admit, may be a quality as irrelevantly subjective as any other) seem to express the hulking, aloof, complex and mysterious creatures in question as well as, if not better than, the word much regretted except by the author himself whose arbitration of his own imaginary worlds is

not only satisfying to me in full measure but would seem, metaphysically speaking, to be ineluctable. Is not Vance to Tschai as Laoomi is to Markavvel? Isabel May devolves, but Jiro *is* Isabel May.



The Mathematical Vance

William Tahil

An episode occurs in *Mazirian the Magician*, in the story called "Ulan Dhor Ends a Dream" when Ulan Dhor and Elai entered the chamber in which reposes the brain of Rogol Domedonfors. The personality of the ancient ruler was still extant: he who had knowledge of gravity and counter gravity, superphysic numeration, metathasm and corolopsis.

However, it would appear that his knowledge of the numerical Power Series was less advanced.

The eye swung to a tube on the wall, a quarter-full of grey powder.

The mouth gave a cry of wonder. "The energy has nearly dissipated! How long have I slept? With a half life of 1200 years — over 5000 years!"

To remind those of you who cannot instantly recall your chemistry education, the half-life of a radioactive substance is the time it takes for half of the atoms in a sample to decay to daughter products. For example the half-life of the element radium is 1,620 years. If we start off with 1kg of radium, after 1,620 years we will have 0.5kg left; after another 1,620 years, we will have 0.25kg left and so on.

So if the tube was a quarter full of powder, this would indicate that only two half-life periods had passed by, i.e. 2,400 years if the half life of the powder was 1,200 years.

Why did Domedonfors exclaim that over 5,000 years had passed?

If the original powder decayed into a substance that was also radioactive and therefore could also be used to generate power (which is quite possible) then we would have to add the half-life of that substance too—and any other useful daughter products. This could account for the 5000 year period, but the overall effective half-life would of course not be 1200 years.

This also assumes that the empty area in the tube was not filled with a radioactive gas (e.g. radon) which could also be used to generate power. Interestingly, the direct conversion of radioactive emissions into electricity has

been explored by numerous inventors with various designs of nuclear batteries, many times more efficient than the conventional nuclear batteries which only use the thermal energy of the radioactive decay to generate electricity. This was started in the 50s and 60s.

Possibly this type of analysis goes too far and ventures into the realms of the type of science fiction minutiae which Jack Vance abhors. Perhaps this example serves to illustrate the pitfalls of putting too much "science" into literature and why Vance chose to avoid it. In fact the comment 'with a half life of 1200 years' smacks of gratuitous Sci Fi kitsch, thrown in to jazz it up. Was this really Vance?

Perhaps Domedonfor's brain was not quite awake yet after the aeons of unexpected slumber!

The author is a researcher in aeronautics and renewable energy, residing in France. He adds: Reading Vance from an early age expanded my imagination, mental flexibility, purview of the human condition and appreciation that life should indeed be a rich tapestry.



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor

Thanks for the latest *Cosmopolis*, much enjoyed the update, very exciting, and thanks for the mention as an Italy volunteer--as you know, despite my fun jobs as senior writer for Vintage Guitar Magazine and running a television show, I'm also a Family Practice doctor here in lovely Santa Monica. So please, yes, keep me posted on the Italian adventure. Peace, and regards

Stephen Patt MD



To the Editor

For me, working on the VIE over these last years has been a special pleasure. To read Jack Vance's work, and help clean up the typos etc, has been a civilized treat. When I caught a real error - sometimes in a text there were very few - sometimes many like every double 'f' being omitted in the *Genesee Slough Murders* for no obvious reason - I felt like a successful treasure hunter.

There has also been the pleasure of being in the virtual company of extraordinarily intelligent and cultured people. The VIE volunteers put me in mind of the motley crew of academics, crossword puzzle enthusiasts and other eccentric geniuses who cracked the Enigma Code

in World War Two at Bletchley Park. I'm an intelligent educated person, entrance scholar in History to Oxford etc., but at the VIE I was more than happy to serve in the ranks and gape at the organization, industry and inventive genius of the legendary names so familiar from *Cosmopolis*. This unusual collection of able people—I would love to know what all of them do in 'real' life—are truly Vancian characters, dedicated to the minute study of this very special author, just as one of his characters might be to some arcane study.

A party is a wonderful idea, although turning virtual to real from all over the world would prove very difficult.

As to another author who might inspire such love and devotion—that would be very hard to find. I have a very soft spot for Patrick White and the world of his wonderful Sector General Hospital developed over many years. White's dry humor and extraordinary imagination strike many Vancian chords. But I suspect the VIE will remain a unique achievement.

Andrew Edlin #326
Fairfield, Iowa



End Note

David Reitsema, Editor, Cosmopolis

Thanks to proofreaders *Steve Sherman, Rob Friefeld* and *Jim Pattison* and to *Joel Anderson* for his composition work.

COSMOPOLIS SUBMISSIONS: when preparing articles for *Cosmopolis*, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send raw text. For *Cosmopolis* 59, please submit articles and letters-to-the-editor to *David Reitsema*: Editor@vanceintegral.com.

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VIE Contacts

The VIE web page:
www.vanceintegral.com

For questions regarding subscription:
subscribe@vanceintegral.com

To volunteer on the project:
volun@vanceintegral.com

To report textual errors in Wave 1:
errata@vanceintegral.com

Paul Rhoads, VIE Editor-in-Chief:
prhoads@club-internet.fr

R.C. Lacovara, Business Manager:
Lacovara@vanceintegral.com

Suan Yong, Process Integrity:
suan@cs.wisc.edu

Joel Riedesel, Work Flow Commissar:
jriedesel@jnana.com

Damien Jones, Double-Digitizing:
damien.jones@shaw.ca

Ron Chernich, Techno-Proofing:
chernich@dstc.edu.au

Alun Hughes, Textual Editor-in-Chief:
alun.hughes@btinternet.com

Steve Sherman, Textual Integrity Administration:
steve.sherman@t-online.de

John Foley, Composition:
johnfoley79@optonline.net

Christian J. Corley, Post-Proofing:
cjc@io.com

John Schwab, Archivist:
jschwab@dslnorthwest.net

Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Ombudsman:
hans@vie.tmfweb.nl