
C O S M O P O L I S

Number 24

March, 2002

Contents

Jack Vance Guest of Honor at Norwescon. . . 1	Jack and Norma at the convention in SeaTac
38's Crucible 1	<i>by Paul Rhoads</i> Project news, engineers and artists, Vance in France and more
The Future of the CLS 8	<i>by Till Noever</i> The CLS lives on!
Work Tsar Status Report 10	<i>by Joel Riedesel</i> Text progress as of February 24, 2002
You Have Done It! 11	<i>by Hans van der Veeke</i> Volunteer work credits for completed texts: <i>Abercrombie Station, The Flesh Mask, The View from Chickweed's Window, The Rapparee, Bird Isle, Bad Ronald</i>
Letters to the Editor 14	<i>Luk Schoonaert, Rob Gerrand, Paul Rhoads, Mark Paulin, David G.D. Hecht, Malcolm Bowers, Alain Schremmer, Derek W. Benson, Kelly Hughes, Ed Winskill, Till Noever</i>
Closing Words 20	
VIE Contacts 20	
The Fine Print 21	

Jack Vance Guest of Honor at Norwescon

Jack will be a Guest of Honor at the Norwescon Science Fiction and Fantasy convention being held over the March 28th to March 31st weekend in the Seattle-Tacoma area. Jack will be present for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, will be interviewed on Saturday, will sign books, converse and answer questions, and be otherwise available. Norma will also be there, with VIE materials for informing about or presenting the VIE project.

More information concerning the convention can be found at their website: <http://www.norwescon.org/> VIE volunteers and subscribers planning on attending please contact Cosmopolis editor Derek W. Benson in advance of the convention.



38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

THIS RUBRIC

What has for many months been called the 'Project Report'—a rambling round-up of project news—I rename this month. 38 is my VIE volunteer number, and these notes always seem to develop into more than a mere 'report'; it is not as if the project is about designing and manufacturing an improved veeblefetzter. It is a literary, artistic, 'cultural' affair, with ramifications up and down the spectrum of human experience—at least in my mind. Some readers find these interesting, but each month brings its little crop of gripes about my 'fascist blather', coupled to tactical insistence that Cosmopolis has no business discussing anything but technical

project questions, backed up by dark hints of desubscription should we refuse to run *Cosmopolis* according to their preferences. Such behavior is difficult for us humans to avoid. I observe in myself more quickness to complaint and rejection than to praise and gratitude, so I cast no stone. Meanwhile, and as always, all are urged to speak their own words, to enrich *Cosmopolis* with their reflections on Vance and the VIE, wherever these may lead them.

PROJECT NEWS ROUNDUP

Wave 1 is on schedule. Our stat guys tell us that, as of this writing, about 70% of Wave 1 texts are in or past Composition, with CRT and PP pumping along hard behind! Elements in the CRT team are now handling a bewildering array of procedures each 'known' or disguised by an acronym. Today, for example, to help me get on track with some of this, Robin Rouch wrote to me: ". . . what PCRV does [is] verify that Composition implemented the changes completely and correctly without negatively impacting other things in the text. Since we apply CRT principles when we do the verification, we also catch when the directed changes are wrong or misinterpreted. We even make sure that a change is done everywhere in the text (if consistency is appropriate)." Each composed text must be cycled through verification after Composition Review, and after Post Proofing, and then as many more times as it needs to happen until things are just right—and we are talking about 150 texts.

Meanwhile work goes on to prepare the next non-set promotional book: *The Languages of Pao and The Dragon Masters*. I hoped it would be on offer by now, but the Wave 1 push has been absorbing too much of our energy! We do plan to have it ready by April, with delivery probably in June. This will be a special book; there will be the never-before-published map of Pao; a new map of Aerlith, original illustrations and an introduction. The deluxe edition will (no doubt) have three color stamping on the cover, and we hope to offer the new 'Library Edition'. The texts are fully restored and corrected.

Speaking of maps, a whole crop for Wave 1 volumes are in preparation, including: The Vissle River, Ambroy, The Elder Isles (a general map, plus a detailed view, both copies of Jack's original!). For Wave 2 the never-before-published Durdane map is being readied, and there are more to come. These maps are as close to Jack's original sketches and intentions as possible. They must be formatted to the size and proportions of the VIE book end-

paper, and there will be no 'cutesy' add-ons.

SUBSCRIPTION OPPORTUNITIES

Raphael Oved, a Science Fiction book dealer in Toulouse, is offering his customers an extraordinary service; he is organizing collective subscriptions, where each participant subscribes to only part of the set. This process will bring more VIE sets into existence and make VIE books available to more people, at lower costs. The project itself cannot organize such things, but we encourage book dealers to do so. Since the books in the VIE sets are being sold 'at cost', we cannot offer dealer reductions. However, by adding 10 or 20% to the book price, dealers can finance collective subscriptions and turn a profit.

In this regard people should consider that the value of VIE books is certain to leap once the sets are printed and supply becomes definitively limited—to the sets in existence. The VIE book set will be a thing of the highest aesthetic and technical quality, and of historic provenance. Also, the project's publicity efforts are bearing fruit, and interest in Vance will, I am confident, be at an historic peak by the time Wave 2 is delivered, with no upward limit in sight. We hope, above all, this will stimulate commercial publishers to re-publish Vance (with VIE texts!); but it also means there will be a growing market for a rare good: VIE books, or even sets. For this reason sage persons will consider subscribing to a second, or even a third or fourth VIE set; *as an investment*. There is no way to calculate such things in advance, but I feel sure its value will double shortly after Wave 2 delivery (and even at that price, it would still be under 'market' price, for such books produced normally), and will then go higher.

Meanwhile, we will be collecting full payment for subscriptions sometime in the next four or five months. Keep dropping those pennies in your piggy bank! Remember, we must collect full payment before Wave 1 production, and after the final collection date, it will no longer be possible to subscribe for a set.

THE CLS

Till Noever (head of the Post Proofing sub-team Spellers of Forlorn Encystment) and a CLS contributor himself, has taken over as *Cosmopolis* Literary Supplement editor. We wish him luck. CLS readers need no introduction to Till, whose novel, *Tergan*, serialized in the CLS, has been a general favorite. *Tergan* is part of a trilogy, the first part of which will be published by EDGE Sci-

ence Fiction and Fantasy Publishing later this year (<http://www.edgewebsite.com/>).

WAVE 1

John Foley, VIE Managing Editor and head of Composition, has stipulated that the Wave 1 deadline depends on the relevant texts reaching Composition by the end of March, and an intensive push is making this happen. Thanks to our many managers, and in particular the efforts of Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Coordinator, there has never been a greater number of active workers. Chris Corley has recently commissioned a seventh Post Proofing team: 'King Kragen's Exemplary Corps'. Robin Rouch with her Clam Muffins and 'proud few' continue to perform prodigies of quantity and quality, Suan Yong and his 'monkeys' keep pace, to say nothing of John Foley's composers: Andreas Irlé, John Schwab and Joel Anderson. As for the myrmidons of Damien Jones, they are already forging into Wave 2. Speaking of Damien's teams, here are some names that will pop up in many VIE volume work credits: Dave Worden, Joel Hedlund, Charles King, Peter Strickland, Donna Adams, Christopher Reid.

Regarding TI, certain Wave 2 texts are already there, while remaining Wave 1 texts are all on the finishing stretch. Patrick Dusoulier, in particular, is currently devoting all his time to VIE work. Though not a native speaker, Patrick's mastery of English is exceptional (certainly greater than my own) and his TI work is characterized by rigour and wit, or that famous quality admired by all Francophiles: *esprit*.

ENGINEERS AND ARTISTS

The majority of VIE volunteers are Science Fiction (and in particular Vance) readers who are on the Internet, and the majority of these people happen to be engineers. Though most have some, or even much, literary culture, they cannot generally be classed as 'artists' or 'literary professionals'. VIE work therefore is mostly (though by no means exclusively) being carried out by engineers. This has been both a strength and a weakness. The strength is their capacity for hard and exact work over time, and an aptitude for harmonious cooperation. Engineers are people in touch with reality. They are therefore serious and modest. Unlike artists (and I should know) they do not inhabit a dream world where their personal will and whim holds sway. They are not squabblers over imaginary eggs. These virtues of engineers are the foundation of project success. Of course all VIE volunteers have a poetic chord in them — otherwise they

would not be so interested in Vance—but engineers often lack practical familiarity with Art and its making.* This has meant that earnest efforts of many VIE volunteers have sometimes been partly misdirected. It is one thing to read and enjoy Vance; it is another to be charged with 'correcting', or 'restoring' his work. This demands that one enter into Vance's way of thinking. For an engineer it is not necessarily simple.

A year ago it still seemed obvious to many of us that Vance's spelling and hyphenation should be standardized, that his often odd and sometimes irregular punctuation deserved critical attention and even 'correction', that his 'non-grammatical' phrases wanted fixing. And now that Composition has come to the fore, we are sometimes encountering an 'aesthetic' of straight lines and tidiness, not necessarily apropos. There is lack of familiarity with Gerard Manly Hopkins's 'pied beauty', or William Hogarth's 'serpentine line of beauty'. An artist dips a large brush in a pot of color and slathers it across a canvas, trailing strokes off into scumbles; another color he draws through the first making half-tones and tertiary hues; he throws a form into prominence with a note of black; he lays an ocher sfumato wash over another to confound it with the atmosphere. Drips and spatters? These are as nothing! Meticulously remove them, risking thereby collateral damage to a carefully calculated dramatic effect? Never! The *rules of grammar*; *consistency of spelling*, hyphenation, italicization; *vocabulary according to the dictionary*; when working with Vance's texts these things must be approached as an artist approaches them. I do not say this irresponsibly. Not only I, but many of us, have discussed all this with Jack himself, to say nothing of our regular e-mail contacts with Norma; I am not expressing my personal understanding, not just a supposed 'artistic' understanding, but Jack's own approach. The word 'correct' has an important meaning for him, but it is not necessarily what one would imagine.

All this would be much easier if we had sure and solid evidence sources, but this is more or less never the case. So VIE volunteers, from TI wallahs through Composition Reviewers, to Post Proofers, are up against problems the likes of which an engineer, as an engineer, never sees. For some it has been disorienting, and for most it has

* A special case is John Foley who, to a greater degree than any of the rest of us (so far as I know) is as much engineer as artist; so it is not for nothing that he is our Managing Editor, conceptor of the plan by which the project functions. Also, to point to the limits of my generalization, both Alun Hughes' and Tim Stretton's training is literary, and both are administrative professionals. Steve Sherman, though a self-proclaimed engineer, is also a singer who performs such works as the masses of William Byrd.

been a learning experience.

On the other hand, I, and perhaps others, have been learning from the engineers; there are many processes in the VIE about which, even a year ago, I would have been incredulous of the necessity; now I see that, though often laborious and tiresome, they are absolutely necessary. There are also many contributions to the project (the VDAE leaps to mind) that only an engineer could make. It has been an eye-opening adventure all-round.

For me it has also been the chance to observe the evolution of many engineers over the period of several years of work; it is a tribute to their human qualities that they have evolved so much—justly or unjustly I do not associate a similar degree of flexibility and open-mindedness with most of the artists I know. Exemplifying this capacity to learn, to work hard and harmoniously, is the following quotation from a recent letter of Patrick Dusoulier's:

“. . . we've learnt a lot, in particular that it's impossible to be perfect! We can only get near to perfection by teamwork and our assortment of methods, laboriously and painstakingly developed and implemented over the years of VIE.”

Members of the Composition Review and Post Proofing teams, many of whom are newer to the project, have been producing a flow of salutary observations and critiques of our texts, as set up in the format—where new problems appear—and I want to thank them for their magnificent work. Issues which they look at are things like the use of single quotes versus double quotes and italics. We have 'standards' for this (based on in-depth studies of Vance's ways of doing things, to aid discernment in consideration of the evidence in cases where a solution is needed) but there are textual combinations which refuse to fit any clear-cut category, and these can generate lively debate. Another issue, something which has already been discussed in *Cosmopolis*, is that the published texts are often larded with editorial commas. A place where these are almost systematically shoved in is, to quote Patrick, "in frequent expressions such as 'Oh yes!', 'Oh no!', 'Oh dear!' and 'Oh well.'" As a result it has been wondered if all such occurrences should not be 'corrected' in a consistent manner. This is the sort of question an artist would never ask, and where an engineer's lack of familiarity with artistic processes can lead him to confuse *predictable tidiness* with *literary correctness*. I commend to all the following comments from Patrick, which are a lesson in the importance of 'pied beauty':

. . . there may be exceptions. There are cases where the *Oh well comma* is quite appropriate. It

depends on the sentence, the context, and the evidence! Look at this from *Chickweed*:

"Hello," said Lulu brightly. "I'm from the TV Popularity Poll. Do you watch TV?"

"Oh, yes," said the woman, with a spark of interest. "I'm a real fan."

"Oh fine!"

Try saying the woman's "Oh, yes!" without a comma. Doesn't sound the same, does it? Another example (from *Book of Dreams*):

"Oh, Mr. Lucas, one interesting letter . . .

This sounds right; Lucas' secretary is drawing his attention. But imagine a torrid seduction scene between Mr. Lucas and his secretary, it'd be more appropriate to have: 'Oh Mr. Lucas . . .' Again from *Chickweed*:

"Oh, Maurice! Just where are you going?"

But:

"Oh Robert," sighed Lulu . . .

It's all in the absence of a comma—and the *sighed* helps too!

Again from *Book of Dreams*, is Treesong in his bantering, flippant (Spangleway) style when he talks to Alice:

"Oh, come, I'm sure you're over-modest . . .

And in *Chickweed*, Maurice trying to reason with Flora:

"Oh come now, Flora, don't be too hasty . . .

And from *Madouc*:

"Oh indeed! I remember it distinctly!"

But from *Chickweed*:

"Oh, indeed, intensely so."

It's a question of stress, emphasis, rhythm . . . and MS evidence.

Examples and counter examples from *Book of Dreams*:

"Oh, that affair?"

"Oh please don't go so soon."
 "Oh, I'm not expert at anything."
 "Oh my paladins, what now?"
 "Oh, come, I'm sure you're over-modest . . ."
 "Not yet! Oh dear no, not yet!"
 "Oh, worry, who is this?"
 "Oh no!" cried Taduca Milgher from her table
 "Oh, that would be Henry Lucas . . ."
 "Oh yes, I remember," said Rackrose.
 "Oh, and I must call Mr. Cleadhoe . . ."
 "Aren't you afraid I'll wear out? No? Oh well."

And from *Green Pearl*:

"Oh, if you wish, give me . . ."
 "Oh ha ha, I am not certain . . ."
 "Oh, your poor arm!"
 "King Aillas? Oh la!"

And again from *Madouc*:

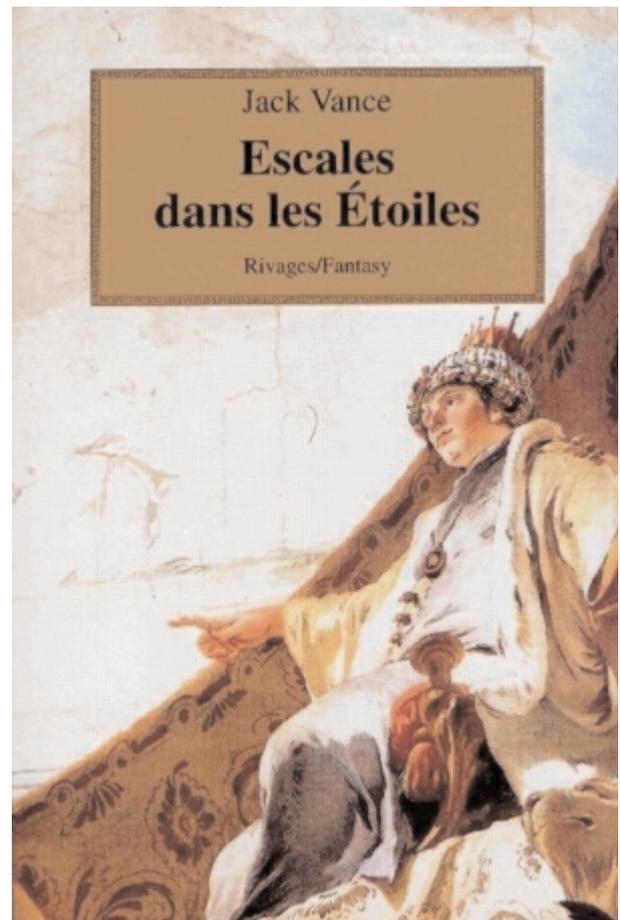
"Oh indeed! I remember it distinctly!"
 "Oh yes, we must have relics!"
 "Oh, just some rough old chalice . . ."
 "Murgen, oh Murgen!"
 "Oh truly, will it be so?"
 "Oh how I have changed!"
 "Oh, ah! So I did!"

And so have we all.

Vancian 'inconsistencies' fall into several categories; some are simply insignificant. 'Correcting' those, while doing no harm to the texts, only imposes an aesthetic of orderliness, foreign to Vance's own. But most of the inconsistencies, such as these comma uses, are significant. They are differences that count, and must be preserved. As for visual aspects of the format—which I regard as very important—here, again, the imposition of rectilinear orderliness is not important to the core of the format's mission: presenting Vance's texts in a spirit akin to them.

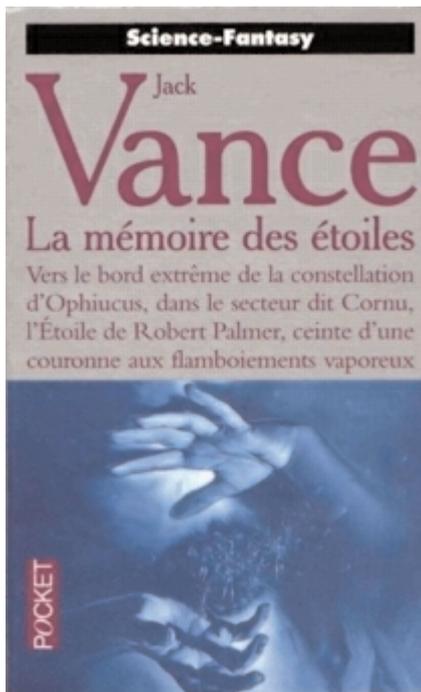
VANCE IN FRANCE, AND IN THE WEST

Patrick Dusoulier and Raphael Oved are part of what I think of as the VIE 'French connection'. 'Jack Vance' is



a name many more people recognize in France than, probably, in any other country. Why? Because the French are probably the most cultivated people in the world, and they know Art when they see it. For the moment Vance books have disappeared from French store shelves, but up until recently, in the Sci-Fi book section of any magazine stand or supermarket, and however few titles were on offer, Vance was always there. Also, most French Science Fiction books, and certainly Vance's books, have a 'look' much closer, or even identical, to regular French books. There is nothing tacky about them; they are designed to appeal to 'cultivated persons of intelligence and discernment'. First prize goes to *Les Editions Rivage*, edited by Doug Headline, a famous French literature-maven. Rivage Vance has the same physical quality as any Rivage book, and are presented with the same class, with only the discrete indication of a Sci-Fi rubric, 'Rivage/Fantasy' to indicate genre. Their covers are ornamented by details of paintings by Tiepolo*. The illustration is a sample, and Doug Headline has the honor of being the first mass distribu-

* An 18th century Italian painter.



tion publisher to treat Vance with full honors. Jacques Guarnard, editor of *Editions Pocket* who publishes regular paperback editions of Vance, and has been doing so for a long time, like Doug considers Vance to be one of the greatest writers of our time. This is not the treatment he gets from American publishers*, and the relation of American readers (VIE supporters excepted) to Vance reflects this. Finally, Vance has received no higher honor in his career than the 1998 invitation from the cultural service of the Departement of the Vienne, then headed by Bruno dela Chiesa, to be the guest-of-honor for the inaugural *Utopia*, which has lived up to its intention of being the most important European Science Fiction and Fantasy festival. That *Utopia*, whose mission is indeed the promotion of European, in contrast to American, writers, invited Jack Vance, and not for example, Lem or Calvino, should suggest something about the place Vance holds in the minds of members of the European literary establishment.

This French interest in Vance is an aspect of a much larger Franco-American connection. France and America have a special relationship. The two countries have not

* Thanks to one of Mike Berro's Vance message boards, I recently found this quotation from an American publisher discussing book selling: "Take your typical mid-list science fiction paperback, by a not-incredibly famous writer, but a *decent* writer, say, a new Jack Vance book." (emphasis added). On the other hand, we recently learned that Michael Dirda, a well known American literary critic, claims Vance as one of his favorite writers; we hope he will seize the occasion of the VIE project to use his position in Vance's favor.

only never been at war but have always been the most staunch allies. The name Lafayette is as famous across America, as the words of General Pershing, leader of the American expeditionary force in WW I, are in France: "Lafayette, nous voila!" (Lafayette, here we are!). Those Frenchmen who lived through WW2 hold President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower in their hearts. Few Americans, however, remember Admiral deGrasse, who with his French squadron fought the naval battles of the American Revolutionary War. Also not often remembered is the Louisiana purchase of Thomas Jefferson. What is now several southern and central states was once a French colony, the *biggest* of all the American colonies.

Before the American ascendancy, which dates from WW2, and keeping in mind the dominance of England throughout the 19th century, France was the most admired and powerful single country in the world for centuries. During this time French was the international language, as English has now become. It was even spoken as the first language in many European courts, notably in Russia. Until only twenty years ago all American school children studied French [At schools in Washington State during the 60's, we schoolchildren chose between French, German or Spanish — Ed.], and until the 1960's when it was dethroned by New York, Paris remained the cultural capital of the world. American artists, in all fields, always had at least a spiritual, and more often than not a real, apprenticeship in that city.

This fall from premier rank, hastened by the painful post-war collapse of the European colonial empires†, has not been easy for the French. Although the American intervention in Vietnam, until then a French colony, was, in a narrow sense, a helping hand to the French‡, post-war American anti-colonialism was not appreciated in France, and the Algerian war of the mid-1950's, a time when America was fighting a cold-war battle in Korea, was a difficult episode the consequences of which are still plaguing France. In addition, Communism, or Marxist thinking, has always been strong in France, a point of difficulty for Franco-American relations during the cold-war. Despite the present decline of the Communist party proper to a mere 5%, this problem is presently acute.

† Her African colonies were in fact a financial drain on France, but a national tonic. The weakening caused by de-colonialization was not economic, but 'cultural' or 'moral'.

‡ Though the uprising was essentially Communist inspired and supported, French abandonment of Indochina was, basically, a colonial defeat. Subsequent American involvement, on the other hand, was an anti-Communist cold-war action. Still, an American victory in Vietnam would certainly have been beneficial to France.

For these reasons, and others, and in spite of Americans being almost universally unaware of the fact, there is now a great deal of anti-Americanism in France. This co-exists with an even deeper, but much quieter, strain of pro-Americanism. It is an interesting, and sometimes upsetting, spectacle for Americans, such as myself, who live in France. The French are an extraordinary bunch, and I am a fervid admirer of them and their history—which they have trouble understanding that an American can consider part of his own. But for a painter (which is what I am, professionally) it is not possible to spend all one's life lost in admiration for Fragonard, Boucher, Renoir, Poussin, Corot and Watteau, and not feel at home in France. It is therefore with alarm that I observe the terrible crisis France is currently traversing. It is even a struggle for existence. Many Europeans, including most of the main-stream French politicians, are eager to see France dissolved in the acid of a 'United States of Europe'; so far, the European 'government' resembles nothing so much as what Vance presents as 'Authority' in *Dodkin's Job*.

But the rush toward a vague and dictatorial *European super-power* Utopia, is only one side of the coin. In a country infamous for strikes, the current wave of demonstrations by the police, and even branches of the army, as well as the doctors and nurses, are not to be taken as a mere prolongation of a foolish 'tradition'. 'Normal' French strikes are almost exclusively the affair of government functionaries, or workers in government owned industries* unionized by Communists or Marxists. Meanwhile criminality has risen dramatically; gangs attack armored bank trucks with rocket launchers and policemen are being gunned down at such a rate that recently their inadequate supply of bullet-proof vests became a national issue. The 'Euro' has just displaced a national money in existence since the 12th century, and Islam has displaced Catholicism as the most practiced religion (as measured by church/mosque-going). One of the effects, if not a direct one, of de-colonialization has been massive Muslim immigration; an Arab population which in majority has not wished, or managed to integrate. Though the pressure of organized political-correctness brigades (bussed around by the Socialist party to violently disrupt public gatherings they wish to censor) makes public discussion of the fact impossible, it is

* These are legion in France and though 'privatization' proceeds painfully, all, most, or a great part of the following sectors are still government owned: telephone, television and radio; road, rail and air transport, electricity, natural gas and gasoline; mining (now 100% defunct), car manufacture, airplane manufacture and space technology; banking and hospitals. Other sectors, like insurance and construction are far more regulated than in America.

notorious that Arab youth is responsible for the rise of violence and racketeering in the schools, and drug-dealing, gang wars and car-burning on the streets. These problems have become so severe that only the Trotskyite fringe parties (about 5% of the national vote) are still not calling for repressive measures. As for the 'French' youth, more and more are slipping into solipsism and escapism; 'rave-parties', which in France take the form of locust-like descents upon rural communities by thousands, or tens of thousands, of techno-'music' aficionados, who violate private property, abuse drugs, make a noise and a mess, and disappear after 48 hours.

The French media establishment, after a grace period following September 11th, have returned with a vengeance to what is known here as 'anti-Americanism primaire', with the result that it is harder than ever for the French to wake up to what is going on in the world. In 1936, if people had used the simple precaution of reading *Mein Kampf*, and taking it seriously, the greatest war in all history might have been averted. Today, the wise and foresighted will listen to the declarations of what are called 'Islamists'. They will also listen to the declarations, or silences, of 'mainstream' mullahs and imams, few of whom have made the sort of unequivocal statements it would be so nice to hear from them—in fact I have heard no such statements, and I am listening hard. It is also time to learn something of Islam itself, its history, its writings, its theology. What we soon learn is that, for far too many Arabs and Muslims, Islam is launched on a jihad against Christianity—for them equal to the West (and they see Judaism as a sort of para-Christianity). Before the screaming starts; this is not what I claim, this is what *they* claim or *do not* deny. The West, thankfully not including the American government, is hiding from the painful truth, just like so many did in the 1930's. Already tottering from internal corruption, the West, like a sick animal, is surrounded by vultures, hyenas and jackals growing bolder and bolder. Recently in France, an al Qaeda gang was stopped on the point of blowing up the cathedral of Strasbourg. This news item was quickly squelched. The church burnt to the ground in Limoges did not make it into the national news in any form, and synagogues are going down in flames all over the country. This last problem has become so severe that Israel is making a special effort to help French Jews emigrate. These people, if one is to believe their statements, actually feel safer in Israel than they do in France, where at least the population and the synagogues are being guarded. Meanwhile, more currently active al Qaeda members are turning out

to be French citizens than is good for my own peace of mind.

What is the relevance of all this to the VIE? The two most fragile aspects of human culture are Art and Religion. If Art disappears to be replaced by *Contemporary Art*, and Religion—in particular Christianity, the true religion—disappears in favor of the sort of unconscious, semi-conscious or more or less half-baked atheism and free-floating ‘spirituality’ that are now current; where is the harm? Bridges do not fall down, the price of bread does not rise, and life goes on . . . or does it? Eventually must it not be acknowledged that, for example, the urban environment is poisoned by the painful hideousness of most skyscrapers, which even begin to collapse—not for any intrinsic structural cause, but by reason of Islamic kamikazes? And might our bread, while remaining cheap, start being laced with who-knows-what germ? But what are a few toppling skyscrapers, or some insalubrious bread, compared to the sundering of the moral fabric of a whole hemisphere? How high do the rates of divorce, abortion, insanity, suicide have to climb before people take a closer look at atheism? The art of Jack Vance is an antibody against, at the very least, the anti-art, and anti-thought, which has taken hold in the West. Vance is a true artist, an artist at the highest level, and the West, the people of the West, need him, just as we, individually in the VIE, cannot live without him. He is also an artist that can teach us to respect ourselves and, while remaining open to others, to not undervalue the unsurpassed and living riches of our culture.



The Future of the CLS

by Till Noever

With Paul Rhoads and Joel Anderson—the current editor/composer team for the Cosmopolis Literary Supplement—overloaded from work, the CLS was under threat of extinction. This, I thought, would have been a pity. Death from starvation—lack of submissions that is—was one thing; regrettable, to be sure, but if there truly was no one to keep it fed, then so be it. Death from neglect, however, is a different matter. It would be an admission of defeat of sorts—and I really hate the thought of that.

I considered taking over production (editing and/or composition) of the CLS, just to keep it alive, but since I also contribute—substantially—it seemed to me that there was a potential conflict of interest here. The editor adjudicating and editing his own submissions? It has a self-serving ring to it.

Paul assured me that this is not an issue, but for me it remains an ethical dilemma. I therefore take over production of the CLS with a measure of misgiving, and if it is to survive there will *have to be* more significant future contributions from others than myself. I will not publish a CLS consisting mostly of my own work. So please send me stuff, because without that the CLS will, sadly, be non-viable.

CLS 12 will bring the final installments of Tim Stretton's *The Zael Inheritance* and Till Noever's *Tergan*. There will be more installments of Kenneth Roberts' *Wings of Iron*, and I'm trying to convince at least one volunteer/writer from New Zealand to contribute some of his work.

After CLS 12, beyond more of *Wings of Iron*, there are no firm plans. I am starting a new fantasy novel, based on an idea of Jack's, called *Never Fail*, and it was my intention to serialize that as it is being written: a daunting prospect; and it would have been daunting enough to do it as a mere contributor, but as an editor and/or composer? As I said above, I won't do it unless the volume of my contribution is less than 50% of what appears in the CLS; and preferably much less!

So, this is a clarion call for writers, not just of fiction, but also what I might call 'supplementary' material. By this I mean two new categories which so far have not been represented in the CLS.

The first of these are *Letters to the Editor*. Whatever appears in here is free-format, but to start with I'd like

to suggest readers' comments on what they've read. Feel free to critique—keeping in mind the rules of polite discourse. 'Flames' will be ignored. Feel even more free to just 'comment'. Authors tend to have tender egos, suffer from constant self-doubt, and thrive on compliments. Comments on the CLS itself would also help. These need not be benign, but ought to be rendered in a civil tone. I'm hoping for a flood of these, but would probably be grateful for the occasional drop—

I would also welcome material that might be considered extraneous in *Cosmopolis*, and which focuses more on the contributors, rather than Jack. I was thinking of such things as articles on Vancean influence in contributors' writings; details of their writing history; their aspirations in the writing arena; things like that. The CLS is, after all, a showcase of 'talent' among VIE volunteers and subscribers, and what may be interpreted as self-serving in the context of *Cosmopolis* may not be in the CLS.

I see it like this: for those of us who count Jack Vance among our primary influences in the theme, style, or content of what we write: in the promotion of our work we honor Jack and tell the world "look here, this is a guy we look up to, someone we admire". If we remain obscure, unknown, unpublished, unpromoted it's also a missed opportunity for promoting Jack; be it in our 'acknowledgements' or the dedications of our books. So, promote. Previous contributors especially are invited to submit this kind of material. They have earned the right to chat about themselves because they have delivered the goods. Blow your horns, people!

Those who haven't contributed are also free to express what one might call 'literary' opinions, especially relating to contributors' work. What Vancean elements do you detect—if any? What kinds of plot devices did you think worked, and which didn't? Characters you liked and those who fell flat.

E-mails regarding any aspect of the CLS should be directed to till@clear.net.nz If you're sending an e-mail regarding the CLS, please—and this is meant to make my life a bit easier—help me by adhering to the following guidelines:

- All CLS-related e-mails should, at the very least, have [CLS] somewhere—anywhere!—in the subject line (enclosed in square brackets, with no spaces between the writing and the brackets!).
- In order to resolve the *type* of CLS-related e-mail even further, the following details would be appreciated in the subject line of your e-mail (that way my e-mailer can sort incoming mail into the appropriate

mail boxes):

[CLS fiction] for a fiction submission or related correspondence

[CLS article] for an article submission or related correspondence

[CLS letter] for a Letter to the Editor or related correspondence

[CLS comment] for any kind of comment, not meant for publication

- Attachment text formats: MS WORD, RTE, TEXT (do not fancy-format)
- Attachment graphics formats: anything Photoshop will read/import (JPEG, BMP, PSD, PICT, GIF, etc)
- Submission deadlines:
 - For fiction: 15th of the month.
 - For letters etc: 20th of the month.

The plan is to get the CLS out monthly, together with *Cosmopolis*. If monthly turns out to be too frequent, bi-monthly issues may be the result. The first issue should come out together with *Cosmopolis* 25. That'll give me time to clear my own backlog of extra-curricular commitments and to get my act together.



Work Tsar Status Report

as of Feb. 24, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

More statistics for everyone's edification. Wave 1 currently consists of 2761.10 thousand words. It's possible this may yet change as we proceed. Wave 2 currently consists of 1517.50 thousand words. If Wave 1 is going to be roughly half the VIE, we'll obviously have to select which texts will actually be included in Wave 1. This selection will be further refined in the coming months.

As of now, 738.6 thousand words have completed Post Proofing and are in the last review stages to make these texts ready for Golden Master. That's 26.7% of Wave 1 work. Furthermore, there are 517.7 thousand words currently active in Post Proofing and another 662.9 thousand words that are in the review and implementation stages in preparation for Post Proofing. This means that there are only 654.2 thousand words yet active in TI, most of which are very near completion.

Twenty texts have completed Post Proofing, an increase of five since last month. These texts represent 738.6 thousand words and about 26.75% of the total for Wave 1. Four volumes are completely represented: 1, 10, 31, and 42.

(V.1) *Mazirian the Magician*
(V.4) *The Rapparee*
(V.6) *Masquerade on Dicantropus*
(V.6) *Abercrombie Station*
(V.6) *Golden Girl*
(V.6) *The Insufferable Red-headed Daughter of Commander Tynnott, O.T.E.*
(V.6) *Meet Miss Universe*
(V.6) *The World Between*
(V.7) *Clarges*
(V.7) *The Languages of Pao*
(V.9) *The Last Castle*
(V.10) *Bird Isle*
(V.10) *Strange People, Queer Notions*
(V.10) *The Flesh Mask*
(V.11) *The View from Chickweed's Window*
(V.17) *Rumfuddle*
(V.17) *The Men Return*
(V.17) *Ullward's Retreat*
(V.31) *Wyst: Alastor 1716*
(V.42) *Night Lamp*

There are twenty-one texts being Post Proofed or being composed for Post Proofing. These represent 1180.6 thousand words and about 42.75% of the total for Wave 1.

(V.4) *Big Planet*
(V.4) *Vandals of the Void*
(V.6) *Cholwell's Chickens*
(V.6) *Gold & Iron*
(V.6) *The Mitr*
(V.9) *The Miracle Workers*
(V.9) *The Dragon Masters*
(V.11) *The House on Lily Street*
(V.12) *Bad Ronald*
(V.17) *The Kokod Warriors*
(V.17) *Dodkin's Job*
(V.17) *Alfred's Ark*
(V.17) *Green Magic*
(V.20) *Emphyrio*
(V.26) *The Book of Dreams*
(V.28) *The Domains of Koryphon*
(V.29) *Trullion: Alastor 2262*
(V.30) *Marune: Alastor 933*
(V.37) *The Green Pearl*
(V.38) *Madouc*
(V.39) *Araminta Station*

The remaining 17 texts are in TI, of which three are in the review and implementation portions of TI. Those three represent 232.9 thousand words and 8.43% of the Wave 1 total while the remaining 14 represent 654.2 thousand words and 23.69% of the Wave 1 total. The seventeen texts that remain in the throes of TI are all close to completion; we hope to see most of them complete over the course of the next month. The three that are essentially TI complete are:

(V.17) *Sulwen's Planet*
(V.25) *The Face*
(V.36) *Suldrun's Garden*



You Have Done It!

VIE Work Credits

Compiled by Hans van der Veeke

Here are the volunteer work credits for each text that has cleared Post-proofing and is printer-ready. Under the same rubric we will announce each volume that is completed.

Check your name! A misspelling here may indicate a misspelling in our database, and thereafter in the books themselves. We don't want to spell your name wrong, or leave off a Jr. or Esq., or to overlook you altogether! For corrections contact Suan Yong at at suan@cs.wisc.edu

Abercrombie Station

Finished 28 January 2002

Digitizer

Chris Reid

Special reformatting

Patrick Dusoulie

Pre-proofers

Patrick Dusoulie

Lawrence McKay Jr.

Turlough O'Connor

DD-Scanners

Richard Chandler

Thomas Rydbeck

John A. Schwab

DD-Jockey

Mark Shoulder

DD-Monkey

R.C. Lacovara

Technoproofer

Rob Friefeld

TI

R.C. Lacovara

Paul Rhoads

Steve Sherman

Implementation

John McDonough

Hans van der Veeke

Damien G. Jones

Composition

John A. Schwab

Composition Review

Christian J. Corley

John Foley

Paul Rhoads

Post-proofing

"Tanchinaros"

David Reitsema (team manager)

Mike Barrett

Andreas Björklind

Carina Björklind

Charles King

William Schaub

Russ Wilcox

The Flesh Mask

Finished 5 February 2002

Digitizer

Andreas Irlé

Pre-proofer

Koen Vyverman

Paul Rhoads

Modifications

Steve Sherman

Norma Vance

DD-Scanners

Richard Chandler

Joel Hedlund

Paul Rhoads

DD-Jockey

Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey

Paul Rhoads

Technoproofer
Rob Friefeld

TI
Paul Rhoads

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
John Foley
Charles King
Robin L. Rouch
Marcel van Genderen

Post-proofing
"Dragon Masters"
Erik Arendse (team manager)
Angus Campbell-Cann
Jurgen Devriese
Marcel van Genderen
Jasper Groen
Patrick Hudson
Jurriaan Kalkman
Willem Timmer
Hans van der Veeke
Dirk Jan Verlinde

The View from Chickweed's Window
Finished 7 February 2002

Digitizer
Richard Chandler

Special reformatting
R.C. Lacovara

Pre-proofers
Michel Bazin
R.C. Lacovara
Turlough O'Connor
Dave Worden

DD-Scanners
Richard Chandler
Thomas Rydbeck

DD-Jockey
Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey
Patrick Dusoulier

Technoproofer
Donn Olmsted Sr.

TI
Linnéa Anglemark

Implementation
Derek W. Benson
Damien G. Jones
Chris Reid

Composition
John A. Schwab

Composition Review
Christian J. Corley
John Foley
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Penwipers"
Rob Friefeld (team manager)
Ian Allen
Bob Collins
Andrew Edlin
Rob Knight
Betty Mayfield
Errico Rescigno
Luk Schoonaert
Mike Schilling

The Rapparee
Finished 12 February 2002

Digitizer
John Robinson Jr.

DD-Scanners
Richard Chandler
John Robinson Jr.
Thomas Rydbeck
Mark Shoulder

DD-Jockey
Hans van der Veeke

DD-Monkey
Patrick Dusoulier

Technoproofer
Bob Moody

TI
Patrick Dusoulier

Implementation
Patrick Dusoulier

Composition
Joel Anderson

Composition Review
Robin L. Rouch
Christian J. Corley
Marcel van Genderen
Charles King
Paul Rhoads

Post-proofing
"Clam Muffins"
Robin L. Rouch (team manager)
Karl Kellar
Bob Luckin
Robert Melson
Jim Pattison
Joel Riedesel

Bird Isle

Finished 22 February 2002

Digitizer
Andreas Irle

Special reformatting
R.C. Lacovara

Pre-proofers
Douglas Wilson
David A. Kennedy
Hans van der Veeke

DD-Scanners
John A. Schwab
Joel Hedlund
Richard Chandler

DD-Jockey
David Reitsema

DD-Monkey
Dave Worden

Technoproofer
Matt Westwood

TI
Dave Worden
Steve Sherman
Paul Rhoads

Implementation
Mike Dennison
Derek W. Benson
Damien G. Jones

Composition
Andreas Irle

Composition Review
Charles King
Christian J. Corley
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing
"Clam Muffins"
Robin L. Rouch (team manager)
Marc Herant
Karl Kellar
Bob Luckin
Robert Melson
Jim Pattison
Joel Riedesel

Bad Ronald

Finished 27 February 2002

Digitizer
Gan Uesli Starling

Pre-proofers
David A. Kennedy
Gabriel Stein

DD-Scanners

Richard Chandler
Joel Hedlund
Koen Vyverman

DD-Jockey

Damien G. Jones

DD-Monkey

Suan Hsi Yong

Technoproofer

Rob Friefeld

TI

Rob Friefeld
Steve Sherman
Tim Stretton

Implementation

Derek W. Benson
Damien G. Jones
John McDonough

Composition

Andreas Irle

Composition Review

Christian J. Corley
Charles King
Paul Rhoads
Robin L. Rouch

Post-proofing

"Penwipers"

Rob Friefeld (team manager)
Ian Allen
Bob Collins
Rob Knight
Andrew Edlin
Betty Mayfield
Errico Rescigno
Mike Schilling
Luk Schoonaert



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

When I read through some of the criticism Jack Vance's books get, the most common comment is that the plots are weak. Yet the critics add "what a master of Language Vance is, and how he creates worlds as no other". . . Now let me share my opinion on this. First of all, I don't agree that his plots are weak, sometimes they are not the greatest or most original plots, yet he always surprises me with how the protagonist handles the situation. Sometimes it's a simple plot with a refreshing way of handling it, and I like that very much.

Secondly, and this is what I have to say to all the critics that say his plots are weak or non-existent: *So what?* When I read a book of Jack Vance, I have such great joy reading it that it doesn't matter at all. I have never had the thought "Too bad the plot was so weak" when I finished one of Jack's books! No, I'm amazed about the beautiful prose I just read, it's funny, sarcastic and refreshing. Jack's books are not about plots, they are about how people handle things, situations; as far as I understood Vance takes a person, creates a setting (planet, universe) and sends the person on a quest. Often a personal one, revenge and justice are very often the motives. I enjoy the books incredibly and I don't understand how a critic can say when he finishes a book: "Wow, great story, incredible language skills, too bad the plots stunk. . ." Come on!

And something else, just reading through the *Ellery Queen* novels, *The View from Chickweed's Window* and *Bad Ronald* I really don't think one can say that Vance's plots are weak, or he cannot come up with a mysterious one! I think, in fact I'm pretty sure it's not Jack's goal to come with a plot but to tell a story, a voyage, the evolution of his protagonist.

I could go on. . . And on!!!

Let me say it again: Jack Vance=God!

Luk Schoonaert



To the Editor,

Paul Rhoads writes near the end of his broad report, that "I do tend to see in the VIE project itself an example of how Jack Vance can help save the West".

This begs the question that 'the West' is in danger and needs saving.

Paul thinks that "the 'virtues', 'tolerance' and 'open-

ness”, are fashionable, and are of Christian origin. How so? The reverse is the case, I would have thought: Christian Spain tolerate the Incas? Christian Italy tolerate the North Africans? Christian US tolerate the central and south Americans, Christian British tolerate virtually anyone else?

The problem with religions—and Judaism and its two offspring, Christianity and Islam, are no exception—tend not of themselves to foster ‘tolerance’ and ‘openness’. It’s a political issue, not a religious one.

Paul says that Islam inflicted on the world the first ‘crusades’—forgetting that ‘crusade’ derives from ‘cross’, and that the crusades were Christian attacks on Islam, not the other way around.

He defines the West as “the ensemble of peoples who descend from the Roman Empire, Christendom and the Renaissance (including Australia, New Zealand and—to one extent or another—the Americas)”. And he believes that we in the West are in danger of collapsing because, like the Roman Empire, rot is setting in. He believes “the modern West is a magnificent fruit, corrupt at the core”. Where’s the evidence of this? Where are some examples?

The Roman Empire, and the West, are groupings of cultures that are not static but continuously changing. All things grow, develop and die, including civilizations. Tolerance and openness have never been highly valued by most cultures, except by some in the last hundred or so years.

I watched the movie *Pleasantville* last night on video—incidentally not a film that tries to attack Western values. If you want to get an insight into the Taliban, watch this movie for when the townsfolk go berserk, attacking those who are different, destroying art and burning books. (Fortunately, reason prevails.)

It is too easy to demonize others. Any culture has the potential for evil. It doesn’t have to be Islamic. Remember it was Christian Germany that persecuted the Jews, Christian Russia that bequeathed the Soviet Union.

Paul writes: “Our culture has come to mock such virtues as courage, perseverance, faithfulness, or even knowledge and strength.[...]Vance is one of the few contemporary writers, the only one I know of, who presents Western culture in a positive light.”

Lighten up, Paul! Go into any book store—all the self help books and management texts extol the virtues of knowledge, courage, et al. And read some science fiction: there you will find plenty of good writers—Jack’s contemporaries—who present Western culture in a positive light. For example, Brian Aldiss, Philip K.

Dick, Arthur C. Clarke, Theodore Sturgeon, even writers I am not too keen on like Robert Heinlein. The sense of wonder they convey is part of the sense of human nobleness. Then there are other writers—John Steinbeck, Elmore Leonard, James Elroy to name three that come to mind—who certainly value courage, perseverance and faithfulness, and who aren’t afraid of looking at the human condition to show the struggles it can take to achieve them.

Rob Gerrand



To the Editor,

I am glad to learn from Rob Gerrand that all is well with the West, that the calumny of Christianity is justified, and that we may persist in complacent ‘enjoyment’ of atheistic materialism in spite of what gives every indication of being the gravest crisis of civilization in 1500 years. Rob’s no doubt kindly meant recommendation to ‘lighten up’ echoes the recommendations of certain pacifists of sinister memory.

The bland assertion that Islam descends from Judaism leaves aside the many other ‘parents’ of the bastard monster in question—like Arabian animisms (of which the Kaabaa is a visible relict) and the bandit culture of the Bedouins with its booty-ethic. Islam and Christianity should not be confounded as co-equal descendants of Judaism. Islam was invented half a millennium later than the advent of Christ, and Christianity was as important an ingredient in the Islamic soup as Judaism. Mohammed claimed, as do his followers, that Jesus was the greatest of all prophets, excepting Mohammed. These followers can hardly object therefore if I mention how, in the Islamic ‘sacred’ writings, we learn that the polygamist Mohammed, personally and as chief brigand, presided over several massacres, including that of 900 Jewish men followed by the enslavement of their wives and daughters. Islam descends from Christianity the same way Mormonism does—or that Disney’s *The Little Princess* descends from the story by Hans Christian Anderson—they are rip-offs.

Rob writes: “Paul says that Islam inflicted on the world the first ‘crusades’—forgetting that ‘crusade’ derives from ‘cross’, and that the crusades were Christian attacks on Islam, not the other way around.” Etymology—the history of words—as interesting and important as it is, must surrender the place of honor to the history of men and deeds. During centuries and centuries Islam spread itself, and the incompetent, brutal,

intolerant rule of its practicers, by sword, fire, rapine, enslavement and theft, right into the heart of what is now modern Europe (a process presently repeating itself as previously Christian sections of Europe fall, bit by bit, under Islam's sway). At one point, about half way along in this ascension, when Jerusalem had been closed to Christian pilgrims, the Church urged the latter to reopen it. For a time they succeeded in doing so, and these were the 'Crusades', recently associated in washed minds with alleged Christian turpitude. Also during the first millennium saints like Martin, Patrick and Benedict were converting the world to Christianity by renouncing mundane power and following the Holy Spirit—something both Muslims and atheists, by definition, care nothing about.

As for Till's letter, it offers a convenient structure for a three volume *Summa Against Heresies of the Third Millennium*. However, this being only the letters-to-the-editor section of *Cosmopolis*, I will respond in lapidary style to two points only. Till wrote, ironically: "The contents of religious edicts are more significant to the understanding of a religion than its practice." He means that to understand a religion we should pay no attention to its doctrine but only to what its practitioners do. I have no illusions about militant atheists sitting still for a lecture on Christian doctrine, or the facts concerning the Inquisition* and the Crusades—how the work of the Dominicans was one of the greatest anti-killing forces in the history of humanity or how the Crusades were a mere chivalresque interlude in the saga of Islamic imperialism. So I will limit myself to wondering why, whenever it is a question of Christianity, the only personage of interest to atheists is the maligned Torquemada, a man many centuries dead, while when it is a question of atheism there is never a mention of the deeds of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Ho-Chi-Minh, Pol Pot or Castro—men of our own time, anti-Christians who wielded their daggers in the name of their anti-gods to cause slaughter and misery of such vast extent that history has never before seen the like—not excepting monsters such as Atilla the Hun. Are not the sixty resolute heretics (who could have saved themselves with a word) burned to death by the Spanish civil authorities some five hundred years ago, as nothing by comparison? More Israelites are killed every few months, to the cheers of anti-Westerners in and out of the West. The most charitable thing that can be said of what might be called

* Let it not be suggested that I think there was never a churchman who was naughty. Of course there were; the detestable bishop Cochon, responsible for ecclesiastical involvement in the murder of Joan of Arc, is an example.

Inquisition-Crusade fixation is that it is a more or less innocent or honest form of stupidity.

Till also wrote, again ironically: "Pope and Church had a much firmer grasp on scientific truth than Galileo." Till is suggesting, of course, that the Church *did not* have a firmer grasp on *scientific truth* than Galileo. But the question at issue (the one referred to, for there were several others) was not, as is pretended, whether the Sun goes around the Earth, but the location of the center of the universe. Galileo claimed it was the Sun, since the Earth could be demonstrated to orbit around it. The Church disputed not astrophysical heliocentrism, but Galileo's pretension that the Sun is the center of the universe, a claim linked to a metaphysical devaluation of man. Scripture states that man is God's principal creation ('made in his own image'), and today no one would repeat Galileo's claim. It is now generally known that the Sun is one star among billions, situated along one arm of one of the billions of galaxies that make up the known universe. The question of 'center' is both physical and metaphysical. It can be argued that the physical 'center' of the universe is located at some *point*, measured according to criteria regarding the physical structure of the universe. Such a point, could it be found, would probably fall somewhere in intergalactic emptiness, nowhere close to 'Sol'. But the 'center of town', or a 'cultural' or financial 'center', is never the mathematical, 'center' of a given place, but principally spiritual or symbolic. It may be that there is other life in the universe. It may even be that there is other 'intelligent life'—free, knowing beings for whom right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, truth and un-truth exist. This has not yet been demonstrated, and until it is the Church remains correct: the Earth is the 'center' of the universe, or to put it another way: the most important and interesting place therein.

Paul Rhoads



To the Editor,

Please cease the publication of the pointless, irrelevant religio-philosophical bickering among Till Noever and his critics. What, I ask, has this to do with the VIE? These interminable screeds, no matter how steeped in sophistry, have no place in *Cosmopolis*. I would even venture to say that Mr. Noever's original comments ought not to have been published in *Cosmopolis* in the first place.

Sincerely,
Mark Paulin



To the Editor,

As appears clear from his latest response, Mr. Noever has no interest in actual debate of his—ahem!—eccentric views. Rather—I now realize—he has chosen to play the fool, in an attempt to draw others into like action. Doubtless he believes that the current material in *Cosmopolis* is lacking in panache, and would be enhanced by his efforts to draw us all into a vortex of nonsense, of which he seems to wish to be the focus.

Mark Twain once observed that it is counterproductive to argue with a fool, as outside observers may have difficulty identifying which is which. Under the circumstances, I respectfully withdraw from the field, leaving Mr. Noever to assert that black is white, the sun rises in the west, or whatever other amusing proposals he may wish to add to those he has already propounded.

Very respectfully,
David G.D. Hecht



To the Editor,

I see Till has generated a steaming heap of correspondence hardly related to Vance or the VIE at all. While it would be better left to compost (and indeed his last letter shows signs of composting all by itself) I'll add a pile of freshly-chopped olive branches on top in an effort to promote tolerance, a virtue that is indeed high above culturally inferior notions of indifferent detachment. I should mention I know Till and used to work with him, and he's not a ratbag, really.

Till's original epistle was of the kind known in Internet parlance as a troll, a provocative assertion designed to generate controversy and stir debate. In a fascinating etymological resonance, Till resembles a troll as well. Not the plastic kind with a huge shock of hair, more like Mangeon the troll in *Madouc*. The attitudes of the two are not entirely dissimilar either; but this is by the way. Trolls of the Internet kind not infrequently arouse intemperate ire, as Till's seems to have done, but I'm sure this was not his goal. Till was born in Germany. Not that one should hold that against him; there have been Germans born before and no doubt will be Germans born again, and there is no helping it. He feels, though, an atavistic need to follow his national trickster namesake Till Eulenspiegel in stirring things up occasionally. For all the strengths of the Teutonic character, it is not notable for delicacy of nuance and lightness of

touch. So when Till endeavours to toss a wryly teasing argument into the *Cosmopolis* frogpond, while it seems to him that it leaves his hands as an ordinary enough rock designed to make a slight splash and spread ripples across the water, it can seem to others that it lands like some huge Wagnerian Brünhilde from on high in a galumphing splash of mud and water that nearly empties the pond. No wonder some croaks of protest rise up from the reeds.

For the moment, I suggest that we stop chucking rocks and croaking like an Aristophanean chorus and let the water trickle back. Let not the comparatively civilized interchange of views in *Cosmopolis* sink to the level of the Internet, with an endless flame war of point-by-point and even word-by-word rebuttals! Be kind to other *Cosmopolites*, be they frogs or trolls, and allow them some latitude for their idiosyncrasies. The points raised have become so broad and numerous in any case that they would be better addressed by well-reasoned articles (of near-Rhoadsian length) rather than more personally-directed letters.

While it should be obvious, let it be noted that I find it hard to take completely seriously Till's original asseverations, the overly harsh replies, the assumed airs of innocent bewilderment in response, and (especially) this missive itself . . .

Just another frog in life's great fairy tale,
Malcolm Bowers

P.S. I'd guess, from hints in *Tergan*, that Till's mystery document was the US Constitution. It inspires no such dumbfounded Star Trek-like awe in me, but I will say it was cogently expressed and not without merit. Sadly, since its creation it has been vitiated by a series of amendments, and so used by members of the American legal profession that it would be better printed on rolls of soft tissue.



To the Editor,

I knew it. I am being discriminated against. The proof? All Letters to the Editor are signed in *italics* . . . except mine! I am being belittled to boot: Rhoads didn't even rise to my bait. I see that I should bone up on religion but I will leave that for some other lifetime.

Alain Schremmer

P.S. My offer of sending Sen's *Inequality Reexamined* to Rhoads was real. Let us say that it would be a token of

my gratitude for his having launched the VIE.

P.P.S. I would love to read Paul Rhoads' comments on: *Who Owns You, A mock trial* [at Cal Tech in collaboration with Loyola Law School, with Judge Marilyn Hall Patel, who presided over the Napster copyright case] *explores the intersection of patents and genetic-property rights*, a report by Gary Stix in *Scientific American*, March 2002. This is one of these cases where Science Fiction is about to become (natural?) Law.



From the Editor,

I see that it was too much to hope for that I could slip such an obvious one past Alain; I must learn to be more subtle! And there's no recourse for me now but to eat some humble pie. My sincerest apologies are herewith tendered for any and all, actual or implied, negativities in connection with the presentation of Alain's name in last month's *Cosmopolis*.

But the problem remains: *Cosmopolis 23* has already been published, spread throughout the *Oikumene* for any and all to see for all times to come. What has gone before cannot be changed; what is, is! All I can do is to offer Alain's name here as it should have appeared there: *Alain Schremmer*.

Derek W. Benson



To the Editor,

I read *Cosmopolis* for the first time over a year ago. I was excited to learn about the VIE (I wish I had the money), but was confused by one of Paul Rhoads' articles on Vance's pro-colonial stance. It actually put me off Vance for a while. I assumed that, as someone working side-by-side with Mr. Vance, the ideas belonged to Mr. Vance and not to Mr. Rhoads.

I have just finished reading the Letters in the last few issues of *Cosmopolis*. In one, Mr. Rhoads asks people to write in and 'keep *Cosmopolis* free'.

As the owner of a small bookstore, I have access to thousands of writers. Jack Vance is my favourite. To me, he is a fictional anthropologist with a flowing style that's not mired in the 20th century. With an economy of words, he evokes a time a thousand years ago or a thousand years ahead. I would say he creates, but the places he uncovers were already (or will be) there.

As an evangelical Christian myself, I can understand Paul Rhoads' defensiveness towards the current cultural

climes and also his desire to share his ideas. I hope, however, that his more enthusiastic opinions don't rub off on the Vance legacy. The scandal with C.S. Lewis' supposed 'Editor' Walter Hooper has dragged on for four unfortunate decades. I can see that there's a healthy amount of differing opinion in *Cosmopolis*, and that's excellent. Like all great literature, there are many different things that can be reaped from a Jack Vance book. Mr. Vance has certainly had more opportunity than most to bring new worlds and new ideas to a varied audience. As another letter-writer said, Jack Vance's words should be allowed to speak for themselves.

Kelly Hughes



To the Editor,

I share Till Noever's wonderment that the pages of *Cosmopolis* have lately become the home to such orthodox Christian apologetics. The defenders of the faith seem to have no sense of the irony of a Vancian forum being used for these purposes. This is of course quite apart from the merits of the religious arguments themselves. It's clearly time for a *Cosmopolis Religious Supplement*, if only to truncate the space given to these polemics in a paper dedicated to the works of a presumed atheist whose wickedly funny satires upon religion are one of his main literary charms. As always, the mark of the didrams is the seriousness with which they take themselves and their a priori arguments.

There is a noteworthy aspect to Vance's universes. Though religion is widely seen (indeed an inordinate number of worlds were settled by various sectaries), Christianity is nowhere to be found. The only reference to it I remember is an indirect one, rejecting the practice of a local cult as the basis for a universal dating system (in *The Star King*). Even Earth, or at least Toronto, has accepted the doctrine of the Sacred Shin.

Why is this?

Ed Winskill



To the Editor,

A little reaction to the quote Paul Rhoads used of me in *Cosmopolis 23*: Jack Vance=God. Let me explain what I mean with that sentence:

1. I'm joking and exaggerating of course . . . It just means that I believe Jack is the greatest writer of all times. He got me to start reading, and after 15 years of reading his books I'm still crazy about them.

2. Jack is God, in the sense that he creates worlds, characters and histories. He creates a person and lets that person grow throughout his books . . .
3. Of course it doesn't mean that we Vancians are cultists . . .

And a second remark: after reading this month's *Cosmopolis* I see a lot of letters going on about Politics and Religion, people discussing about their views on Communism, Christianity etc. etc. . . . Now I'm not against freedom of speech, but let's not forget that *Cosmopolis* is about Jack Vance and not about the previously mentioned topics . . . I'd like to see a bit more Vance related discussion like there is on the Vance EZ-Board (<http://publ.ezboard.com/bjackvance>) than about differences in religions. I know the topics have started somewhere with relation to Jack's stories but I feel that they're way off in the stage they are right now.

Luk Schoonaert



To the Editor,

First of all a note of thanks for disregarding the calls for cessation of what some correspondents—including, apparently, my esteemed friend, former colleague, and current PP-Team member, Malcolm Bowers—consider an exchange unworthy of this e-zine. Such calls will continue to be made, for a variety of reasons. My suggestion to those who make them is to refrain from reading letters which touch on topics they find somehow off-putting to their tender sensibilities. This is such an obvious remedy that I almost hesitate to make it, were it not for the recurrence of such calls for suppression of certain materials, and continuing attempts to limit the contents of what's being said to a particular limited vision of what *ought* to be said.

I'd also like to point out to these folks that such exchanges—and *especially* those of the nature we have on-going right now—far from being inappropriate to this forum, should indeed be welcomed, since their very existence highlights a fundamental aspect of what one might call 'Vanceanism'. That people of such divergent views should read the works of the same writer and come together in this enterprise is proof, if any were needed, of the multi-faceted scope of his work. The expression of such divergent ideas in this forum, far from constituting 'bickering'—despite occasional injections of tedious and apparently endless and repetitious forth-and-backs of assertions and counter-assertions, well-nigh all of them founded on nothing but the writer's opinions—is a celebration of what we're doing. That we fall into the usual traps of human interaction is

hardly unexpected, given that we all *are* human (I think) and imperfect (this I know).

Back to the current exchange of views.

I want to congratulate Malcolm for figuring out the obvious and identifying the mystery document. He gets a free lunch out of this, at a cheap restaurant of my choice. For his perspicacity and his shrewd observations, not only of the Teutonic character but also amphibian psychology, I'll even forgive him his swipes at my physical features—which I always thought weren't *that* off-putting!—and, though not without difficulty, even refrain from retaliating in kind.

As for the rest of the point-by-point argument going on here about who did what to whom first, last, where, whenever, what for . . .

It doesn't matter a whit *which* creed the perps in question adhered to, or even who is in the 'right'. Just about all religious and ideological frameworks in the history of the human race—and atheism, too—have, on one hand, been used by decent people as contexts for their lives, to provide certainties in a mysterious and bewildering universe, and to give an understanding of why it should matter what they do and to provide a 'higher' justification, if any such were needed, for being decent folks. Those very same metaphysical explanations and ethical precepts have also been—still are, and forever will be—used by louts, criminals, deviants, control-freaks, perverts, and a dazzling panoply of other psychos—from 'common' criminals to High-Inquisitors and higher—to provide reasons and/or justifications for whatever *they* did, are doing, and will continue to do.

Life is even further complicated by the exigencies of existence, which tends to disrupt and make a mockery of the simplifications we impose on it with our ethical systems. Ethics and life are not easy bedfellows. Human existence is a minefield of, often agonizingly difficult, choices, and reliable guidelines are impossible to come by. The basic mystery of our existence continues to elude us for a number of reasons; and these reasons in turn are hidden from us, because if they weren't then we *would* know. But we don't. So . . .

. . . to paraphrase RAH: "Anybody who tells you that they know 'the truth' is either a fool or trying to sell you something—or both."

In my more jaundiced moments I am inclined to concur with this view. In my lighter, more optimistic, ones, however, I tend to go for one Jack suggested in *Parapsyche*, a thinly-disguised metaphysical treatise, and even thinner-disguised polemic against religious hubris and the delusions of those who think they 'know' anything.

" . . . *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.” And a little further on: “. . .there’s an elemental mystery to the universe and to the why of things. Everyone is free to speculate.”

No doubt some will try to bury these lines in glib sophistry and throw-away dismissals, or maybe even pervert them into a defence of religious fervour. Still, here they are.

Paul’s recent letters and responses inspired me to leave you with this thought. Insofar as the structure of the cosmos may be said to mirror a fundamental order inherent in everything, including things not physical, let us hark back for a moment to Paul’s comments about Galileo, the Church of Rome, and the issue of where in space lies the centre of the universe—and what symbolic value one may derive from its putative ‘location’. I invite you all to savour the delicately ironic touch contributed by science to this aspect of the debate: the insight that the centre of the universe is—at the same time and depending on how you look at it—nowhere and everywhere. ‘Nowhere’ in the same sense that the surface of a sphere cannot be said to *have* a centre. ‘Everywhere’ insofar as that same surface is expanding, and every point on it may be understood as lying at the centre of the expansion.

Regards,
Till Noever



Closing Words

Thanks to Andreas Björklind for composition and to proofreaders Carina Björklind, Rob Friefeld, Till Noever, and Jim Pattison.

COSMOPOLIS SUBMISSIONS: when preparing articles for Cosmopolis, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send raw text. For Cosmopolis 25, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson or Nita Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is March 25.

Derek W. Benson, Editor

VIE Contacts

The VIE web page:

www.vanceintegral.com

For questions regarding subscription:

subscribe@vanceintegral.com

To volunteer on the project:

volunteer@vanceintegral.com

Paul Rhoads, Editor-in-Chief:

prhoads@club-internet.fr

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

Lacovara@vanceintegral.com

Joel Riedesel, Work Flow Commissar:

jriedesel@jnana.com

Suan Yong, Process Integrity:

suan@cs.wisc.edu

Damien Jones, Double-Digitizing:

dagjo@pacbell.net

Ron Chernich, Techno-Proofing:

chernich@dstc.edu.au

Alun Hughes, Textual Editor-in-Chief:

alun.hughes@btinternet.com

Steve Sherman, Textual Integrity Administration:

Steve.Sherman@compaq.com

John Foley, Composition:

beowulf@post.lucent.com

Christian J. Corley, Post-Proofing:

cjc@vignette.com

John Schwab, Archivist:

jschwab@dslnorthwest.net

Hans van der Veeke, Volunteer Ombudsman:

hans@vie.tmfweb.nl

Derek Benson, Cosmopolis Editor:

benson@online.no



The Fine Print

Contributions to Cosmopolis

Letters to the Editor or essays may be published in whole or in part, with or without attribution, at the discretion of Cosmopolis.

Cosmopolis Delivery Options

Those who do not wish to receive Cosmopolis as an e-mail attachment may request 'notification' only.

HTML versions of many past issues are available at the VIE website. The PDF versions of Cosmopolis, identical to those distributed via e-mail, are also available at the website:

<http://www.vie-tracking.com/cosmo/>

If you wish to have the most current version of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, follow this link:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>



Cosmopolis is a publication of The Vance Integral Edition, Inc. All rights reserved. © 2002.