
COSMOPOLIS

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Gratitude to Post-Proofers

Wave 1 Status

by Joel Riedesel, Work Tsar, VIE Merchandiser, and general nuisance

The VIE previously announced Gift Certificate rewards to Post-Proofers who proofread 400,000 words. Now that Wave 1 has completed Post-Proofing we've tallied the results and find ten people who qualify for this \$20 VIE Merchandise Gift Certificate.

Those people are (in thousands of words):

Malcolm Bowers	495.3
Rob Friefeld	448.95
Rob Gerrand	436.1
Karl Kellar	484.5
Bob Luckin	524
Robert Melson	460.3
Till Noever	503.6
Jim Pattison	517.8
Dave Reitsema	584.7
Bill Sherman	450.1

(Shameless plug: The head and pre-head of the Clam Muffins both read 726! All should aspire to such loftiness. Since we are responsible for producing the merchandise, we're not entering ourselves in this contest.)

The people above should look at the VIE Merchandise web page and decide what they want with their VIE Gift Certificate: <http://www.ourstillwaters.org/stillwaters/viepromo/> They can either purchase something totaling \$20 or add additional funds to purchase something larger. Since I am the person responsible for that merchandise, you only need to mention to me that you have one of these \$20 gift certificates (and I can verify that that is indeed the case—anyone that tries to get one by me may end up with a bust of Norma or John instead of Jack!).

Meanwhile, Wave 2 Post-Proofing commences. There are twelve people that I counted that have well over 300 and others near the 300 mark. It should take little effort for those people to achieve the goal of 400. And one should also keep in mind that it is entirely possible to achieve the goal in one Wave alone as witnessed by the above results.

Finally, if a Post-Proofer is curious about his or her word count or thinks I have a discrepancy, please contact me directly: joel@ourstillwaters.org



Colorado Contingent member and top Post-Proofer Dave Reitsema, with wife Pam, on a recent visit to the Work Tsar. Photo by Joel Riedesel.

Work Tsar Status Report

as of Nov. 24, 2002

by Joel Riedesel

Wave 1

Volumes 6 and 10 have been printed and Volumes 31, 39, 4, 11, 42, 9 and 12 are being printed. That's nine out of the 22. Meanwhile our post-GM2 processing has mostly finished ironing out its 'process' details and should finish up in the next month (of course, it needs to in order to finish the printing process and get everyone's 22 volumes into the mail!).

Wave 2

There are now only nine texts left in the Monkey step and the Jockey step is complete. There are still 16 texts currently in Techno (although some have completed and moved on to TI. TI's plate is still quite full but they have been moving texts on to Board Review. Board Review is active and three texts are being Imped and will be moving on to Composition soon!

Post-Proofing for Wave 2 will begin picking up steam within a couple of months. Start clearing your bedside tables!



Wave 2 Post-Proofing

by Chris Corley

Wave 2 Post-Proofing is underway! As of 25 November two texts are assigned, one of which will be completed by the time this month's COSMOPOLIS is distributed. Approximately twenty new Post-Proofing volunteers have signed up since the end of Wave 1, and most of them are busy with one of the new assignments. If you are interested in volunteering for Post-Proofing please contact volunteer@vanceintegral.com There is plenty of work—75 texts—still to do.



38's Crucible

by Paul Rhoads

Wave 1 Delivery and Work Progress

As mentioned in last month's issue, the Wave 1 books will be delivered not this year but in the early months of 2003. It turns out that the printer can process no more than two or three books a week, not from lack of

capacity in the absolute but in order to avoid shutting out other customers. I am sorry to have been, once again, wrong in my estimates. The good news is that printing is in progress and, by the time you read this, many volumes will have been printed and bound. GM2 update work is proceeding (and virtually finished) with 'calm deliberation' (single quotes indicating irony, in Vancian manner). 'Thank you for your patience' (single quotes now indicate 'embarrassed effrontery').

Regarding post-GM2 work, things are moving along but, in fact, not with perfect smoothness, witness this recent note from VIE Chief Engineer Lacovara to a VIE operative who will go unnamed: "We find it difficult to blame you directly, and so we are happy to report that your current privilege level at the Nympharium is unaffected. At this time, judging by the volunteers who are still ahead of you, you will qualify for a free weekend with our hand-picked Nymphs sometime in the second quarter of 3176."

From Walter Rocchetti, at Sfera, I received the following information on November 19: "Volumes 6 and 10 are printed. Volumes 31 and 39 will be printed by November 24. I have the go-ahead from you to print volumes 4, 11, and 42."

On November 21 Stefania reported: "I see that batch one is sewn and batch two is on press with three nearly ready! Bravo!"

Once the books are printed and bound, the next hurdle will be packing and sending. Thomas Rydbeck's analysis suggests this will require, ideally, eight people working for the better part of a week. I hope we can find a hotel in Cologne Monsese within walking distance of Torriani. I know that David Pahor and Hans van der Veeke hope to participate, as well as Thomas, myself and Errico—Steve Sherman will come during weekend time, if any. Other volunteers?

TI has gotten off to a strong start, and even Composition is again at work. I myself am busy with Board Review for *Dogtown* and *Freitzke*. I must compliment Suan for several sharp-eyed pre-proofing catches, Thomas Rydbeck's monumental comparison of editions, and Patrick's Cartesian analysis. These texts are somewhat degraded in all editions and the VIE restoration, while not dramatic, will be an important improvement.

Regarding Post-Proofing, Chris Corley reports: "Post-Proofing for *The World Thinker* has been assigned to Jeff Ruszczuk and his Sandestins. Projected due date for the PP Final Report is Monday, 25 November. I have assigned several new volunteers to his team, hence the longer than usual assignment duration. Wave 2 PP has begun!"



Report from Milan

We were three VIE volunteers in Milan: Thomas Rydbeck, TI wallah of such books as *Trullion*, Errico Rescigno, Post and Techno Proofer, and myself. Our work with Stefania Zacco and Walter Rocchetti, as well as with Srs. Loli, Biffi, the binders of Torriani, and Claudio Vitorrini, the printer, of Global Print, was cordial and efficacious.

Sr. Biffi showed us the process of Deluxe cover making. The stamps seem to be made of zinc, or some such white metal, and the stamping is done by hand in a machine apparently manufactured in the 19th century. The operator positions the leather, lays a film of black, green or gold leaf, and actions a long manual lever, bringing the stamp to bear. The most delicate aspects of the operation are registration of the various stamps and pressure—a question of manual dexterity and experience.

We had long discussions about packing. At Torriani, which is located in Cologna Monsese, they will store our books, order the packing material, and give us work space.

Torriani is the oldest binder in Milan. Global Print, located in near-by Gorgonzola, is a start-up. They specialize in small runs where digital technology is an advantage (any job under 1000 pieces). Claudio explained to us that he buys his machines from Xerox, with a maintenance contract, and Xerox also gets a percentage for each page printed!

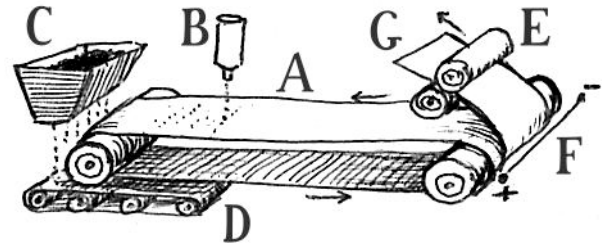
A few subscribers to the SFV pointed out some printing problems which I brought to Claudio's attention. He explained that the problem, illustrated in the example below printed before our eyes, is a result of humidity in the paper.

black flowing hair and l
fingernails and wore bla
deserted inhospitable l

Humidity related printing problem.

The paper can have zones of humidity, he explained, because it may have been recently manufactured and still not had time to fully dry—another effect of the low-inventory industrial policy of recent years. Discussion of this problem led to an explanation of the digital printing process, a glorified form of photocopying.

The machine is run, of course, by digital information based on our PDF files, but the printer fools with the digital information adding, for example, marks to guide the binders for signature creation. Inside the machine is a wide belt (A) of some sort of shiny blue substance. A laser (B) writes the pages on the belt in specks of electronic charge, 600 of them per inch. The belt then



Digital laser printing.

continues over a bed of black powder, dropped from hopper C onto belt D, which is picked up onto belt A by the charged areas, forming the letters on the page. A piece of paper (G) is then introduced below, against the blue belt (A) where the letters have been formed, and passed close to wire F which, charged with some other kind of electricity, pulls the black powder from the blue belt onto the paper. Go figure! Then, to fix the powder, to transform it into 'ink on the page' it must pass between two rollers (E) which both squeeze and heat the page, melting, or otherwise fixing, the powder onto the page. Here is where the trouble happens. The least smudge of humidity is driven back along the paper by the rollers, and if sufficiently large can block the adhesion of the powder near the bottom of the sheet (and since there are several 'pages' printed onto one sheet, this may occur at the top of a 'page').

To counter this problem they have opened the pallets of paper to allow them to dry, and conduct tests before using any lot of paper to make sure its hygrometry is even and proper.

Claudio took us to visit the Wave 1 paper. Shock! 16 pallets; enough volume to fill a small kitchen from floor to ceiling.

I wish to thank Errico, in particular, for the great help he provided translating and thinking things through, as well as upgrading a 'business trip' to a 'reunion of friends'. I want also to thank Thomas for helping to keep my fantasies under control and for making sure no important points were left aside. Stefania, *égale à elle-même*, was as warm, amusing and efficacious as ever. We also enjoyed getting to know Walter, experienced in both printing and binding, and 'au fait' with our work.

Over the years I have been so impressed by the flowering of the VIE that my consciousness of it has been dominated by the quality of expansiveness. But I have come to see that this sense of the project is not the only one possible. There are indeed a great many volunteers, with a central mass of several dozens responsible for the bulk of the work; but this mass, though great, from another point of view is quite small; we are, I suddenly realize, a finite, or even 'extremely small', group. It is this crew of determined shovel wielders who are *doing this thing—a hardy band marching*

across deserts with Alexandrian fortitude as the man put it. I salute my fellow band members! We are marching into history.



Reactions to the SFV

For those who may not visit the VIE message board I have gathered some reactions to our latest publication:

Mike Shulver:

"Just finished reading *Languages of Pao* in my SF volume. It arrived from Chinon on Wednesday. Even after about the fifth reading—v. v. enjoyable. But the physical volume itself—superb. The thicker boards really make a big difference. Thanks also to Paul for the 'bomb proof' packaging. Very well done to all concerned."

Mike Berro:

"Wow, the Deluxe edition is gorgeous. I have about a half-dozen books I purchased merely for the fine binding, and this is as nice as any of them. The fact that it is a Vance book makes it about as perfect as one could want. I'm afraid I might swoon after shelving 44 volumes like these. (I have the shelf space already reserved.) I can't wait until I retire so I can read them all, and yes, I'll be reading my Deluxe set. Luxury!"

William Bird (at least I presume it is he . . .):

"The SFV deluxe edition is truly a work of art. I ordered the 'Readers' edition as well to allow for direct comparison. My original idea was to use this comparison in determining which VIE format to buy. That plan got scuppered by tight schedules, so I took a chance on the 'Readers' edition. I am extremely happy, even surprised, with the quality of the 'Readers' edition. It comes off very well in comparison with the Deluxe . . . These are tough books ready for decades of hard use. The material choice and quality is such that I believe their appearance will be accentuated by aging and normal handling, rather than diminished.

"Congratulations to all involved on a fine achievement."

Bob Lacovara:

"I have just received from our printer the Science Fiction Volumes. By some curious twist of fate, the first book which I pulled out was my own . . . the signed and numbered Super Deluxe edition. It is simply a pleasure to see and hold. Better still, colleagues and students in my office were gratifyingly impressed. The Readers' editions are no less impressive, given that they are not full leather. When you receive your book of either type, you will be very pleased."



Vance Versus Vance

There is a small category of texts where the basic problem, extricating Vance from typographical and editorial corruptions, is complicated by the text existing in two versions for both of which Vance himself is responsible—the result of a later rewrite. In some cases the difference between the versions is so important it is felt we are dealing with two distinct works. Vance's early style verged on the purple. As the decades passed he became less lavish with adjectives, impatient with straining efforts to achieve odd or minor effects. His later work is characterized by a famous 'restrained' or 'formal' dialogue style but often in the early work there is a prevalence of a less original 'colloquial', or 'vulgar', style, popular at the time.

We have also noted that, generally speaking, while Vance's revisions of his early work generally result in improvements, they can also have other, less happy, effects. Two sorts of problems crop up: changes of style, and introduction of a confusion. Though hardly a major problem, Vance seems to have done some of his revisions with less than absolute care. A result of his famous contempt for his early work? Impatience with treading old ground? As far as I know Vance only revised work at the request of an editor, never by his own desire to improve or rework old stories. It is quite understandable that, in the context of a stand-alone publication like *Eight Fantasms and Magics*, Vance wished his best foot put forward, that even early stories should represent him in a favorable light, or according to his evolved standards; he did not, in other words, care to be shamed by what, in some cases justly, he regarded as what might be characterized as 'juvenile bumbblings'.

The circumstance of the VIE is different. Vance's early work will not stand out like a sore thumb; in the manner of raisins baked into a large cake, they will be presented in the context of a life's work, dominated by middle and late period masterpieces. This does not mean we wish to brutally present early Vance in its pure form, ignoring his revisions! Alun Hughes' important principle: 'authentic, but not painfully authentic', is our guide. Also—an equally important VIE principle—we seek to present Vance's work as he wants it presented, which also points to using revised versions when they exist.

But the question cannot be left there. Take *Çuyal of Sfere*. It was published in *Eight Fantasms and Magics*, out of its original context of *Mazirian*, in a revised version prepared in the late 1960s, some quarter century after it was originally written. This revised version, perhaps interesting in itself, is so different in mood from the early version that, replaced in context, it is out of character. In this case the VIE will use the original version for the *Mazirian* volume but include the revised version in volume 44; in other words we will treat them

as two different texts. There are a few other such examples. But in the case of most of the revised texts—of which there are about a dozen—we are not faced with such dramatic differences. Take *Noise*, a story originally written in 1952, and, like *Çuyal of Sfere*, revised for *Eight Fantasms and Magics* for publication in 1969. The majority of Vance's revisions of this story are improvements of a sometimes awkward and wordy but very moody and colorful early story, and will be retained in the VIE version. However, some of his changes are not simply 'stylistic improvements'—making the mood more pungent, the story more compelling—but what I call 'stylistic changes'. While bringing the story into conformity with Vance's latter, more assured, poised and classic manner, they sometimes harm the original by altering, diluting or breaking the mood. Exceptionally they even deprive us of some early literary gestures which, while perhaps not fully successful, it seems too bad to lose in the VIE context where they can be appropriately savored as aspects of the overall richness of the oeuvre.

Let's look at some samples from *Noise*. First an example of an excellent stylistic improvement, the narrator has just reached the crest of a hill and a valley opens before him, then:

Original publication:

Across, rose a range of great mountains, rearing above me into the dark sky.

As revised (and VIE):

Far away a range of great mountains stood into the dark sky.

The sense is the same but where the original version has the merely indicative 'across' and the banal 'rearing above me into', the revised version has the even more descriptive and also appropriately moody 'far away' and the Vancian 'stood into', which is both not a cliché and even more visually suggestive than what it replaces. However, the revisions are not always so successful. Here is a passage near the beginning:

Original publication:

Hess said tentatively, "I suppose—you've always thought of Evans as, well, rather a strange chap?"

"Howard Evans? No, not at all. He's been a very valuable man to us." He considered Captain Hess reflectively. "Exactly how do you mean 'strange'?"

Hess frowned, searching for the precise picture of Evans' behavior. "I guess you might say erratic, or maybe emotional."

Çalispell was genuinely startled. "Howard Evans?"

As revised:

Hess asked tentatively, "What's been your opinion of Evans? Rather a strange chap?"

"Howard Evans? No, not at all. He's been a very valuable man to us. Why do you ask?"

Hess frowned, searching for the precise picture of Evans's behavior. "I considered him erratic, or maybe emotional."

Çalispell was genuinely startled. "Howard Evans?"

Both versions suffer from an editorial change of Evans'/Evans's, which the VIE will correct.

VIE version:

Hess said tentatively, "What's been your opinion of Evans? Rather a strange chap?"

"Howard Evans? No, not at all. He's been a very valuable man to us." He considered Captain Hess reflectively. "Exactly how do you mean 'strange'?"

Hess frowned, searching for the precise picture of Evans' behavior. "I guess you might say erratic, or maybe emotional."

Çalispell was genuinely startled. "Howard Evans?"

This passage comes from the short introductory section and, though difficult to discuss out of context, here are the changes, and our choices and reasoning:

Original (and VIE): *said*

Revision: *asked*

This choice is based partly on considerations concerning phrases not quoted so I will not discuss it here.

Original: *"I suppose—you've always thought of Evans as, well, rather a strange chap?"*

Revision (and VIE): *"What's been your opinion of Evans? Rather a strange chap?"*

The two phrases are essentially equivalent. The older version, with its dash and 'well', strains for an expression of hesitancy on the part of the speaker which, however, seems exaggerated even in context and, though softened, is not obliterated by the revision, with its double question; an overall improvement of style.

Original publication (and VIE): *He considered Captain Hess reflectively. "Exactly how do you mean 'strange'?"*

Revision: *Why do you ask?"*

This pare-down is decidedly in Vance's later, more discrete manner, and deprives us of the picture of Galispell 'considering reflectively'. This aspect is perhaps made superfluous by 'why do you ask', which, in the laconic, subtle and powerful Vancian classic manner provokes an image of Hess raising his head, looking quizzically at Galispell. However, overall, the change does not square with the style and mood of the original, of which Vance has retained the majority. Having this sort of 'complete' Vancian phrase in the early work makes the later more allusive style easier to decrypt; in other words, having the original phrase here makes phrases like the revised version even clearer in the later texts.

To make this change stick, Vance should have made his revision deeper and more complete as the following parts of the example will help demonstrate.

Original publication (and VIE): *"I guess you might say erratic, or maybe emotional."*

Revision: *"I considered him erratic, or maybe emotional."*

This is an alteration of an 'early style' colloquial characterization to the classic Vancian 'formal style' but, dropped into this context it breaks up the less original, but consistent early style. Note how, in the next line, Galispell does not 'turn to the window', but is 'genuinely startled'. He does not respond with some middle-period type phrase like 'Are we speaking of the same Evans?' but blurts out: "Howard Evans?" Vance let this stand.

The changes are as follows:

Original:

I suppose — you've always thought of Evans as, well, Exactly how do you mean 'strange'? I guess you might say

Revised:

What's been your opinion of Evans? Why do you ask?" I considered him

The changes are always toward simpler, sparer, more allusive classic Vancian style, but have some unhappy side effects.* The revised dialogue would be preferable, because more Vancian, thus both more characteristic and original—better in the absolute—were it not for characterization changes that are not complete enough, so that they introduce awkward inconsistencies of tone and mood. Finally, it should be noted that once 'Why do you ask?' is rejected, 'I considered him' must be as well, because it does not respond to 'Exactly how do you mean 'strange'?'. The VIE solution is, admittedly, a compromise; we retain that part of the revision which does not disrupt.

Another example:

Original publication:

I went down to the lake, as blue as a ball of that cobalt dye so aptly known as bluing.

The music came louder; I could catch snatches of melody — sprightly quick-step phrases carried on a flowing legato like colored tinsel on a flow of cream.

I put my hands to my ears; if I were experiencing auditory hallucinations, the music would continue. The sound — if it were music — diminished, but did not fade entirely; my test was not definitive.

Revised version:

I went down to the lake, as blue as a ball of that cobalt dye so aptly known as bluing.

The music came louder; I could catch snatches of melody — sprightly, quick-step phrases.

I put my hands to my ears; if I were experiencing hallucinations, the music would continue. The sound diminished, but did not fade entirely; my test was not definitive.

*Note also the resultant over-concentration of Howard Evanses, (# indicates intervening words):

Orgnl: Evans-6-Howard Evans?31-Evans'-14-Howard Evans?

Rvssn: Evans?-4-Howard Evans?24-Evans'-12-Howard Evans?

VIE: Evans?2-4-Howard Evans?31-Evans'-14-Howard Evans?

The paragraph suppression seems to be editorial and will not be retained.

VIE version:

I went down to the lake, as blue as a ball of that cobalt dye so aptly known as bluing.

The music came louder; I could catch snatches of melody — sprightly quick-step phrases carried like colored tinsel on a flow of cream.

I put my hands to my ears; if I were experiencing hallucinations, the music would continue. The sound diminished, but did not fade entirely; my test was not definitive.

Several of the revisions are clear improvements: the lopping away of such redundancies as 'auditory' and '—if it were music—' strengthen the text by making it more pungent. But what about the loss of: 'phrases carried on a flowing legato like colored tinsel on a flow of cream.'? With its very awkward 'on a flowing—on a flow' the phrase is problematic in itself, and Vance, his powers fully developed, most certainly considered superfluous the sense it communicated. On the other hand, though perhaps we are seeing the young Vance straining too hard for an effect, the image of a flow of cream carrying colored tinsel is an original and *fantastique* image. The VIE will be the authoritative version of the totality of Vance's work; its texts will be considered 'definitive' and it will present the oeuvre in a coherent chronological and thematic context. It is not our ambition to present each early story in some theoretical 'best' version, but to present Vance's work in all its truth and richness. In a few more decades, without VIE intervention, the phrase 'colored tinsel on a flow of cream' would have faded out of existence as the last sci-fi pulp disintegrates into brown flakes. But the phrase cannot stand as written. 'Legato', like 'allegro' though evocative in their own ways, are in fact technical terms which Vance persistently, and beneficially, weeded out of the text, as well as many other references linked to what was clearly a burst of musical enthusiasm at the time of writing. Very cautiously we have restored a very few of these, to give back to the story a hint of that flavor, but the majority of the removals, including this one, are neutral or positive for the style and mood of the story itself. The basic error of the phrase being removed with the excision of 'on a flowing legato', we took this editorial step—a rare partial restoration, audacious in the context of the VIE!—to arrive at our version.

A final example:

Original publication (and VIE):

She went her way, but the music is strong and triumphant: the voice of cornets, the shoulder of resonant bass below.

Revised version:

She went her way, but the music is strong and triumphant: the voice of cornets, the resonant bass below.

Though, generally speaking, Vance's adjectival removals are retained, a few, like this and the previous example, are so unusual and appealing that we cannot resist restoring them. This may, at first, seem an odd or even incomprehensible turn of phrase, and it is certainly another example of the young Vance striving, and perhaps failing, to achieve an effect but it is a wonderful and logical idea. This sentence uses a human metaphor for music, the cornets are 'voice', the bass is the inarticulate but supportive 'shoulder'. 'Shoulder' is used in a similar sense in reference to roads. This is a trace of Vance's early efforts to master his art in a direction many writers never attempt.

Though arrived at by the laborious and collegial Board Review process, not all will agree with these choices. It is in the nature of such things to be mathematically undemonstrable but we have, no doubt, made mistakes, and later may not agree with ourselves! We are confident, however, in our basic approach, which has been developed over a long time, beginning with *The Languages of Pao*. The Vance of the VIE should be the richest, most complete and most representative. Finally, in a text like *Noise*, it should be kept in mind that the difference between the two versions touches less than 1% of the text.



Thought of the Month

Offered by Steve Sherman and Anton Sherwood, respectively:

I don't give a damn for a man that can only spell a word one way.

—Mark Twain

It's a damn poor mind indeed which can't think of at least two ways to spell any word. — Andrew Jackson



Purple Magic: the Realm of Incarnate Symbols

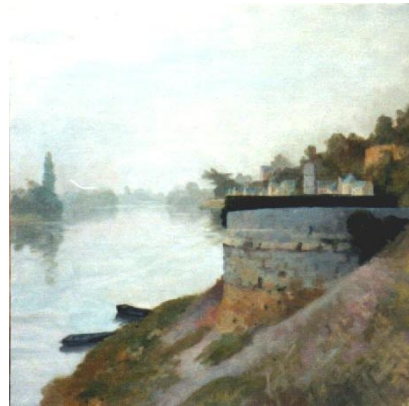
Vance has several times mentioned that art is a matter of communication through symbols. This statement, which might be termed a 'profound banality', may not be perfectly clear to everyone in all its Vancian nuance. The original meaning of 'symbol' is a shard of broken pottery used as a sign of recognition. By the fitting of two such shards together, two people, each previously given one of these shards by a third person of confidence, could achieve mutual recognition and trust. This system was used by the early Christians for which reason the *Apostolic Creed* (the Credo, or list of basic Christian beliefs: "I believe in one God", etc.) is also called the *Symbol of the Apostles*, because it is a sign of recognition—in this case of Christian orthodoxy.

All writing is, obviously, a matter of symbols, because, first of all, letters are symbols for sounds, and written words are symbols for words, which themselves are symbols for objects, concepts and qualities. Take the following 12 letters/symbols:

T H E S K Y I S B L U E

Together, in this order, with spaces correctly inserted—a task I leave to my discerning and symbolically literate audience—they communicate a message. This message may not be one of astonishing import but as an example it will do as well as another. To be absolutely specific, the three letters 's', 'k' and 'y' form what is called a word, which is, in turn, a 'verbal designator', familiar to all who know the English language, for a certain object which is familiar to everyone irrespective of language. The letter 'i' followed by the letter 's' symbolize another English word, this one designating the concept of *being*, a concept at once childishly apparent and infinitely mysterious. 'Blue' is another symbolic representation, this time of a quality of which the sky sometimes partakes. At other times, as all Vance readers have been informed, the sky may have other qualities, such as 'green', 'red', 'pink' 'yellow', 'grey', (or 'gray*') 'orange', 'brown', etc. This much is so obvious one might wonder why Vance bothers to enunciate such a basic verity. But the matter is more subtle than it seems at first.

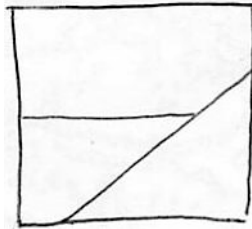
Art, in the primary sense of painting and the other plastic 'arts', is also a matter of communication through symbols. In this case the symbols are less formalized and systematic than the crude signs, or simple figures, that constitute letters, numbers and the other components of writing—a set including a few hundred, though most of us get by for our whole lives with less than one hundred. But the primary matter of the artist—whether painter or sculptor—are symbols none the less. Note Sample 1, which can be defined as a flat square area marked with various colors.



Sample 1

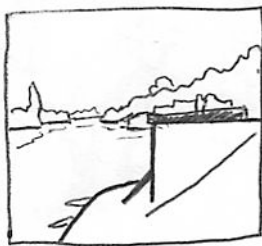
*Thanks to Patrick D. for indicating this important nuance.

This sample is an 'image', or a symbol, which communicates a perfectly clear but comparatively complex message, the 'import' of which could not be suggested in less than about 5000 letters or 1000 words—according to the famous formula. A single aspect of the message of Sample 1 is: 'the sky is blue'. Among other meanings Sample 1 communicates symbolically is: 'the sky is pale pink'. If it is not clear in what way the membranes of pigmented oil spread upon 900 square inches of canvas, that constitute Sample 1, are symbols and not some other kind of thing, consider Samples 2 and 3.



Sample 2

Sample 2 is Sample 1 reduced to its essential elements. By 'essential element' I mean that if deprived of them Sample 1, as a coherent message, would collapse. On such a basis only can a secondary message, such as 'the sky is blue', be made or changed, for example, to: 'the sky is green'. In order to make the nature of pictorial symbols clear, Sample 2 sacrifices the message: 'the sky is blue', but even in Sample 2 part of this message can be divined, namely: 'the sky is'. Those who lack sufficient symbolical literacy to discover this basic message in Sample 2 will have less difficulty finding it in Sample 3, a very slightly elaborated form of Sample 2.



Sample 3

Sample 2, though it has reached the outer limit of what is sometimes, and somewhat misleadingly, referred to as 'abstraction', contains the pictorially crucial message: 'one thing is nearer than another thing'. Without this basic message the poetry inherent in Sample 1 could not develop because, for example, it is only by contrast with the foreground—the remains of a once fortified quay—that the vaporous background can be expressed.

Had he not suggested it to me himself, it is clear from his work alone that Vance is, in a certain manner, a

'frustrated painter'*—and if any writer has turned such a frustration to good effect it is Vance! I am a fairly well-read person but I know of no other writer in literary history who communicates image and atmosphere better than Vance. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but there are many pages of Vance that are worth a thousand pictures. The charm of Serjeuz with its water-veils on the desert planet Dar Sai, the foggy evenings of Aloysius, star-spangled nights on the boulevard at Avente on Alphanor—to mention only these—how many painters have produced effects as potent and memorable? But woe to other writers! Vance achieves these memorable effects not in long paragraphs of patient description but by touches so delicate and fleeting the reader's mind is caught in the swirl of import without even realizing it. Go back to your favorite Vancian evocations; you will be astonished to discover the actual words and phrases which inspired the images and atmospheres still haunting your mind's eye—gossamer coruscations which evaporate into nothing when looked at directly.

But Vance, it might be said, is also a 'frustrated musician', and this is another key to his work. Vance is a real-life musician: he sings and plays several instruments. But he is too great a musical connoisseur not to feel that his amateur hummings, blowings and strummings, however much charm they achieve—a remarkable degree in fact; I have witnessed him entrance several audiences of strangers—limit him to the lower spheres of musical expression. It is generally thought that music is 'abstract', but this is true of music in exactly the same way as it is of painting. The symbols of painting are built up from a basic language, exemplified by Sample 2**, which is elaborated to the point where great breath and subtlety of meaning can be expressed. So with music. Musical notes are like letters, and musical phrases are like words, or sentences, which symbolize specific emotional states. Take Sample 4, the famous 'five-one' resolution, which expresses triumph.

*Patrick reminds me of the following from Jérôme Dutel's article in COSMOPOLIS 31: From Jean-François Jamoul: "[If Vance] evokes Tiepolo, he's not very far either from an orientalist painter such as Gabriel Decamps [...]; which in no way prevents Vance from using, in other instances, the classic composition of Dutch and Flemish paintings [...]. Yet again elsewhere, he will use the transparent delicacy of English water-colour painters, or the simplicity of Japanese prints."

**The painter Mondrian, who best exemplifies the Modernist drive toward the alleged essence of art—a mistake similar to confusing the essence of a person with his skeleton, rather than his spirit, his mind and heart—ended his career with a series of works which, rather than elaborating 'incarnate symbols', present elegant statements of some of the basic, or underlying, or skeletal, pictorial symbols. The Minimalist movement, which grew out of this, could hardly go further, and quickly lost touch with the symbolic language of art.



Sample 4

Or Sample 5, the *duo d'amour*, which might be defined as an 'evocation of erotic expectation', or 'joyous longing'.



Sample 5

In themselves these are mere fragments, like the word 'sky' or the overlapping lines of Sample 2; but out of such elements Mozart communicates the élan of spiritual love in his *Ave Maria*, and Haydn, in his *Creation*, paints the ecstatic opening of the heavens before the divine creative puissance.

Vance evokes the contrast between masterworks, and the basic symbols from which they are elaborated, in several notable passages, for example from *The Wannek*:

. . . He taught me to recognize a few chimes, and showed me where the shadings matched intensity vibrations, where sonority equated with shape, where the various chord components matched texture and gradation. . . I myself am resourceful and perceptive; still, in twenty-five years, I learned only pidgin chords for 'yes', 'no', 'stop', 'go', 'right', 'wrong', 'good', 'bad'.

Or from *Green Magic*:

. . . the meaning patterns of the green realm, where a hundred symbol-flakes (each a flitting spot of delicate iridescence) might be displayed in a single swirl of import. . . observing the singing joy of an improvised manifestation by one of the sprites, and contrasting it to his own labored constructions, [Howard Fair] felt futility and shame.

These passages are written by a man fascinated and amazed by the communicative power of the masters and expressive possibilities of the arts. This fascination finds a superficial expression in Vance's frequent evocation of music itself but, at a deeper level, it is his understanding of symbols as the essence of communication, and of communication itself as the *sine qua non* of art, that makes him the artist he is.

In the last story mentioned Vance makes reference to *purple magic*, which he defines as 'the realm of Incarnate Symbols'. Symbols, normally, are not 'living'. Like Samples 2 through 5, we think of them as simple, basic, elemental units of 'meaning', like the elemental atoms that make up larger bodies — such as our own body in which our spirits

are incarnate. Vance is aware, and this is his great theoretical insight, that even the most elaborated work of art remains symbolic. It is knowledge of symbols and mastery of the art of their juxtaposition, that is the stock in trade of the true artist, the power whereby he evokes a 'singing joy' in a 'swirl of import'. Great works of art seem to 'live'; the incarnate symbol is the symbol that is made to live, the successful, or *effective*, work of art.



Erratum

My article on 'tolerance' last month was not written with all the care that should have been used, and at least one phrase was quite a mess. It should have read: *This is my reading but, however it may be, the antidote Vance seems to prefer against what are, objectively, illusory — not to say dishonest — political positions, is irony.*



Nectar of the Gods

The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation

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

Vance fans are a disparate bunch—a fact my recent experiences at the GM2 conference drove home to me. Still, aside from an appreciation of Vance, I did notice one trait that most of the attendees seemed to share: an appreciation of fine whiskey. In his column a few issues back Paul Rhoads shared a few of the e-mails that flew back and forth in the weeks leading up to the conference, wherein we discussed the virtues of various brands; many of the participants did, indeed, bring a bottle or three of a favorite dram or an interesting local product. At the conference, our common interest manifested itself in a nightly ritual: after a tough day of rigorous textual review (followed by a fine dinner) we would repair to the salon where the various whiskeys were sampled and shared, to the accompaniment of pleasant conversation and, occasionally, music.

But it should, I suppose, come as no surprise that Vance fans seem to share an appreciation of whiskey. There are a number of references in his stories suggesting that Vance himself has more than a passing familiarity with the Water of Life. I leave it to someone with better credentials in the field of psychology to explain the connection, but since it apparently exists, it occurred to me that the rest of you might be interested in learning more about the wondrous elixir.



Linnéa Anglemark at ÇM2, Chuck King in green. Photo by Koen Vyverman.

WHAT IS WHISKEY?

" . . . there's nothing more romantic than to sit on the back porch in the moonlight with a bottle of whisky, while the riddles of the universe unravel before your eyes." — The View from Chickweed's Window

The word 'whiskey' is derived from Gaelic: *uisge beatha*, which means 'water of life'. It can also be spelled 'whisky', and indeed, Vance spells it both ways, sometimes in the same text. Generally North American distillers spell it with the 'e' and European distillers spell it without, but there are exceptions.

Whiskey is a spirit distilled from fermented grain. This distinguishes it from brandy, rum, and tequila, which are distilled from fruit, sugar cane or molasses, and agave. A lot of vodka is also distilled from grain, but whiskey undergoes a barrel aging process that gives it its distinctive character. Differences in the production process also contribute to the differing characters of whiskey and vodka.

HOW WHISKEY IS MADE

"Sulfur, honey, and a little drop of whiskey. Drink it and you'll feel a new woman." — Space Opera

The whiskey-making process starts with grain; different kinds are used to make different styles of whiskey. Some portion of the grain used is malted. Single malt Scotch is made from 100% malted barley, but malted barley makes up only 8-12% of the grain used to make bourbon, for instance. In malting, the grain is soaked with water and then allowed to sprout. As it begins to grow, starch in the grain kernel is converted to sugar. After several days, when sugar content has been maximized but before too much has been used up making roots and stems, the sprouting grain is heated in a kiln to stop growth.

The grain is introduced to the next important ingredient in the whiskey, water, in the mashing process. In mashing, the water and grain are heated, extracting sugars, starches and enzymes from the grain. Mashing

takes place in a vessel called a mash tun. Where multiple grains are used, mashing may occur in several stages, since different grains are mashed at different temperatures. Corn, for instance, is mashed at much higher temperatures than malted barley, so first the corn is added to the mash and heated; rye or wheat might be added at a lower temperature; after the solution has cooled some more, the malt is added. The spent grains are then filtered out and often used for livestock feed; the remaining solution, called wort, goes into a fermenter (in distiller parlance, a washback) for fermentation.

In fermentation, yeast is added to the wort. The yeast metabolizes the sugars and starches in the wort, producing carbon dioxide and alcohol. Fermentation is one of the more dramatic steps in whiskey-making, as the wort bubbles and foams. Up to this point, the process for making whiskey is the same as the process for making beer. Beer is the product of fermentation of grain, and that's what you'd have if you bottled the result of this step. The 'beer' produced in whiskey-making bears little resemblance to the stuff you can buy at the local supermarket, however; it is made with different yeast, is higher in alcohol content and is produced for different characteristics than beer meant to be directly consumed.

The fermentation product is then distilled. There are two types of stills used in the production of whiskey: the pot still and the continuous still. Pot stills are the more photogenic of the two: a pot still will have a bulbous body with a thin neck, from which an arm runs off at the top. The fermentation product goes into the main body of the vessel, where it is heated to boil off the alcohol. The vapor condenses at the head of the still and runs off down the arm. Pot stills are not very efficient, so the product of the initial distillation is run through again (actually, usually through another pot still designed for the purpose) to raise the concentration of alcohol. All pot still whiskeys are distilled at least twice; some are distilled three times. Multiple distillation results in a lighter-bodied whiskey. Most pot stills are made from copper; conventional wisdom is that contact with copper during distillation results in a better-tasting whiskey.

Continuous stills (also called Coffey stills, beer stills, or column stills) operate on a different principle. A continuous still is a tall column full of plates with holes. The fermentation product is poured into the top; the plates slow its descent down the column. Steam is pumped in from the bottom, and as it encounters the wash coming down it strips out the alcohol. A condenser cools the vapor and it is collected. The output from a continuous still is much higher in alcohol content than that from a pot still. In some cases it is redistilled again; many American distilleries use a form of pot still called a doubler for the second pass.

Finally the distillate is filled into barrels for maturation. By law, almost all forms of whiskey (except corn whiskey—the clear ‘white lightning’ often sold in jars) must be aged in oak barrels for some period. American ‘straight’ whiskeys must be aged in new charred oak barrels for at least two years. Scotch whiskeys must be aged at least three years, but Scottish law does not require new barrels. Consequently, Scotch distillers buy used bourbon barrels from American distillers and use them to age their products. Some Scottish malts are aged in other barrels, including sherry casks, port pipes, wine barrels and rum casks. Most whiskey requires more than the legal minimum maturation time to really come into its own. Bourbons generally hit their stride around six years or so; Scotch malt whiskey may require eight, ten, twelve, or even more years to reach its prime.

The age of a whiskey is determined by the time it spends in the barrel. A whiskey eight years old spent eight years in the barrel before it was bottled; if it sits in the bottle for another twenty years, it’s still considered eight-year-old whiskey. Whiskey does not continue to develop after bottling the way wine does. There does come a point at which the whiskey peaks, and additional time in the barrel can be detrimental, but that time varies from whiskey to whiskey. Most single malt Scotches, for instance, can reach twenty or twenty-five years without ill effects. After that, some continue to improve, reaching ambrosial levels of depth and complexity, while others become woody and harsh. So, one would be well advised to approach buying very old whiskeys warily.

VARIETIES OF WHISKEY

Teehalt threw up his hands in an excited extravagant gesture, reflecting either emotional turmoil or the effects of Smade's whiskey. — The Star King

The various species of whiskey are differentiated generally by the type or types of grain used in their production. Of course, where the whiskey is made also factors in (Irish whiskey is by definition made in Ireland, just as Scotch whiskey is by definition made in Scotland), but whiskeys in the styles of Irish or Scotch could be made in the United States, just as whiskey in the style of Kentucky straight bourbon could be made in the Scottish highlands. The regional differences arise out of tradition rather than necessity. Indeed, several Irish distillers produce malt whiskeys on par with fine single malts from Scotland.

Tradition also governs the varieties of whiskey available. American whiskeys are generally made from combinations of four grains: corn, rye, wheat, and malted barley. Some rare whiskeys are made from malted rye, but they are the rare exception. And those ingredients are used to make, generally, only two varieties of whiskey: bourbon and rye. Bourbon by law must have at least fifty-one percent corn in the mash; rye must have

at least fifty-one percent rye. Generally a bourbon will be closer to 75 or 80 percent corn, a small percentage of rye or wheat and a small percentage of malted barley. (Malted barley is added to catalyze fermentation.) Rye whiskey is generally 51 to 60 percent rye, a small percentage of malted barley, and the rest corn.

It is easy to see that there are a host of combinations that are not available. No one makes a whiskey from predominantly wheat, for instance, much less malted wheat. No one makes a whiskey that is not predominantly either corn or rye (i.e., something that was, say, one-third each rye, malt and wheat, for example). I don’t believe anyone living even knows what such a product would taste like. By tradition, only bourbon and rye are available. (Not, of course, that there’s anything wrong with bourbon or rye!) Similarly, Scottish distillers produce oceans of ‘grain whiskey’ (whiskey made from anything other than pure malted barley) for use in blended Scotch, but it is almost impossible to find a bottle of it. It’s not a matter of quality; whiskey writers who have tried straight Scotch grain whiskey have extolled its virtues. But by tradition, ‘Scotch’ is either malt whiskey or blends characterized by malt whiskey.

But I digress. Suffice to say, the grain used in making the whiskey is the single biggest contributor to its flavor. As noted, bourbon is made predominantly from corn, with the secondary grain (rye or wheat) also adding some character; rye is (obviously) made from predominantly rye. Scotch is made from malted barley—solely in the case of single malts; combined with whiskey made from wheat or corn in blends. Irish whiskey is also made from malted barley, but the distinctive character of Irish whisky, as opposed to Scotch, comes from unmalted barley in the mash. (Categorical statements about Irish whiskey are tough to make, since Irish distillers are more and more adopting Scottish styles, and some of the products are indistinguishable from fine Scotch.)

You can find other varieties on the liquor store shelves. A notable variety with which I have little experience is Canadian whiskey. The parameters regarding what can and cannot go into Canadian whiskey are broader than they are in the United States, and Canadians do not generally sub-categorize their whiskey (i.e., bourbon vs. rye). Conventional wisdom is that Canadians use more rye in their mash than bourbon producers; I don’t know if that is actually true. While I acknowledge its existence and significance in the world of whiskey, I simply don’t know enough about Canadian whiskey to write about it with any authority. Perhaps some tipping denizen of the Great White North will enlighten us.

There are also ‘American’ whiskeys (e.g., Early Times, which is aged in used barrels and thus cannot be called bourbon) and ‘blended’ whiskeys: at best, blends of various styles of whiskey to obtain unique characteristics (e.g.,

Seagram's Seven Crown); at worst, whiskey cut with grain alcohol.

HOW TO TASTE WHISKEY

"Maybe a drink of whiskey would fix you up."—When the Five Moons Rise

In the next two installments of this series, I will discuss American, Scottish and Irish whiskeys in more detail. To conclude this installment, I think it would be salubrious to present an effective technique for tasting whiskey.

Most of the methods by which whiskey is consumed are ill-suited to savoring the full flavor of the spirit. Most people have whiskey one of two ways: either mixed with other flavored components (cola, ginger ale, sour mix, vermouth) and ice, or in a shot glass, to be knocked back in a single throat-searing slug. In the former instance, the subtleties of flavor of the whiskey are obscured by the mixer. The latter procedure, I've heard, was developed to get the whiskey from the glass into the gut with as little dallying along the way as possible, and the shot glass is designed to minimize the impact of the whiskey's aroma. Knocking back shots is a practice for the desperate, those reduced to drinking lowly rot-gut whiskeys. I am always bemused and saddened to see young people in bars knocking back shots of Jack Daniel's, or Wild Turkey, or Maker's Mark: fine whiskeys all, suitable for sipping and savoring. Aside from being a waste of good whiskey, it is a waste of money: the perceptible difference between Wild Turkey and Old Life Insurance when slammed as a shot is negligible; if one must do shots, one should do shots of the cheapest well whiskey the bar offers. Or vodka.



Suitable whiskey glasses photographed and probably sampled by Chuck King.

To taste a whiskey to the best effect, one must start with an appropriate glass. The preferred glass is a small tulip-shaped glass or perhaps a small snifter: something that will allow the aroma of the whiskey to collect. The aroma is a very important part of the whiskey experience, and contributes immeasurably to the taste.

Thus, I advise against smoking while tasting whiskey; cigars and cigarettes will dull the sense of smell and reduce the effect. I've been told that a fine malt and a fine cigar complement each other (I wouldn't know, since I don't smoke myself) but for a qualitative evaluation of a whiskey, eschew the tobacco.

You don't need a lot of whiskey to get the effect of the aroma and flavor. When I taste whiskeys I usually have less than half a shot in the glass. It is quite possible to taste and enjoy a number of whiskeys in an evening without becoming plastered.

Before tasting, many whiskey aficionados consider evaluating the appearance of the whiskey part of the process. There is something alluring about the appearance of whiskey in a glass, and undeniably there are variations in appearance. Some malt whiskeys are pale as white wine, while some American whiskeys, fresh out of heavily charred oak barrels, are a rich dark gold. Single malt Scotches aged in sherry casks or port pipes show a reddish hue. There is another school of thought that holds that the appearance of the whiskey can prejudice the taster, and advocates using opaque cobalt tasting glasses so as not to be swayed by anything but the actual flavor. In theory I can appreciate that approach, but in practice I have never found cobalt glasses at anything resembling a reasonable price, so I perforce fall into the camp that evaluates the appearance of the whiskey as part of the tasting process.

Now, on to the actual tasting: Begin with the glass a foot or so away from your face, and slowly bring it towards you until you begin to smell the components of the whiskey. As you move the glass closer to your nose, new and different components will become apparent. A word of caution, particularly in connection with high proof whiskeys: at some point, evaporating alcohol may go up your nose, producing an unpleasant burning sensation. The trick to enjoying the aroma of whiskey is to keep the glass just outside the range where this alcohol effect becomes prominent. Sometimes, adding just a drop or two of water to the whiskey will unlock new aroma components.

Now, to taste the whiskey. A word of caution, to those unaccustomed to strong drink: whiskey is a spirit; there is a substantial percentage of alcohol in it. All whiskeys are at least 40% alcohol, and some 'cask strength' whiskeys can be over 60% alcohol. Consequently, with even the smoothest whiskey, there will still be a brief alcohol burn, often felt in the back of the mouth as the whiskey slides down the throat. Until you get used to it (which does not take too long), steel yourself; expect it, and approach the tasting process with the knowledge that, while there will be a brief period of unpleasantness, there will be a rich panorama of flavors to explore both before and after the alcohol burn occurs. And, it is perfectly acceptable to add a small amount of water to

the whiskey, but of course adding much water will dilute the flavor. Any whiskey bottled at less than cask strength has been diluted already; cask strength whiskeys, although much higher in alcohol content, are also the richest in flavor.

Take a sip of the whiskey and let it flow over your tongue. In a good whiskey, different elements will be apparent on first tasting and as the whiskey develops. The best whiskeys continue to develop for up to several minutes. When the initial burst of flavor dies down, inhale through your mouth; the air will awaken new flavors from the whiskey still on your tongue. Some writers advocate the big mouthful of whiskey, but I have never noticed any advantage to that method when it comes to evaluating and appreciating flavor. It merely hastens intoxication.

Finally, if it seems like a whiskey is losing its savor, try sticking your nose into a pitcher or glass of water and inhaling deeply. The water vapor will clean the odor receptors in your nose, and you will be able to taste more components in your whiskey.

So: there are the basic tools for whiskey appreciation. In future installments I will examine specific styles of whiskey in more detail. Until then, why not pull out that bottle of Old Particular in the cabinet and see if you can find heretofore unsuspected subtleties in it?

Many thanks to Koen Vyverman (a whiskey connoisseur himself) and TOTALITY for finding lots of great quotes about whiskey from Vance's work!



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

Awesome job!! For all of you who have efforted for so long, this is a little note of appreciation. I keep getting more and more excited about actually having the books to read and enjoy, and cannot thank you enough for the *great* job you have all done bringing them to us.

*Thank you,
Karl Radtke*



To the Editor,

I waited with this letter until after COSMOPOLIS 32 to see if anyone noticed . . . No one did so it seems I'll have to write my letter anyhow, dang. I was hoping I could remain lazy and have someone else do the talking this time.

Alright, the topic is the SF Volume. Let's get to the point, page 1: "Forward" . . . Okay so excuse me, pardon my French (and believe me, my French stinks) but last time I checked the English dictionary it said

"Foreword" . . . I can still live with this as some ingenious invention to be creative, however on page 7 "infinity" is seriously getting on my system as being one hell of a typo which I don't see how even found its way to the final version of the print. I can only assume one thing and that the "forward" wasn't PP-ed . . . Which stinks . . . Just sharing my infinite forwards . . .

*Cheers,
Luk Schoonaert*

Editor's note: The above letter was also posted to Mike Berro's Vance BBS. I find it appropriate to publish a response from Patrick Dusoulier which addresses Luk's concern:

The "Forward" error was detected within two seconds of my opening the book . . . I was in Chinon at the time, Paul was standing next to me, and he shuddered when I pointed it out to him, just as I did and as you did. Too bad.

Now don't get carried away. A tremendous set of digitizers, proofers, TI workers, post-proofers and tools were mobilised to try and expunge errors from Jack's texts. *Jack's texts* . . . You'll understand (I hope you will) that the same amount of effort may not have been devoted to extraneous matter (and the actual VIE books don't contain introductions anyway). And if you found only one typo in the introduction, this is rather nice to hear. My notes on this introduction went as high as 137, and there were many drafts and rewritings for this foreword, requiring a complete re-proofing each time . . . The "infinity" typo seems to have come up because of a last minute change. Those things happen, unfortunately. The GM2 operation has been undertaken precisely to reduce this risk as much as humanly possible.

Note that you have to be realistic: in spite of all our efforts, and the legions of people who have reviewed Jack's texts, we have no illusion: there will still be at least *one* genuine 'silly' typo in the whole of the VIE. I'm ready to take bets . . . The major point is: there will be considerably *less* typos than in the previously published versions (I'm prepared to take astronomical bets on this one, because I'm sure to win: I have all the evidence needed already!) and much more important than anything, the texts will have been cleared out of myriads of editorial interventions, restored to original wording, completed with lost material, in a word, as close as humanly possible (again) to Jack's original artistic intent. If you prefer to count typos in the VIE, you will miss the forest for looking too close at the bark of the trees!

Patrick Dusoulier



To the Editor,

I noted a letter from Paul Rhoads in *COSMOPOLIS* 32 (p.23) in which he referred to "the annoyance to which Bruce Downing subjected me in *COSMOPOLIS* 31". Clearly he was reacting to my letter in that issue but I was puzzled as to how the expression of my opinion constituted subjecting him to annoyance. I decided to review the possibilities:

1. Was it my mention that he had elected not to publish my letter in the days of his editorship? From his comments, he seems to have mistaken my letter for a personal communication. This makes some sense to me since it has recently been pointed out to me that Paul was not, in fact, *COSMOPOLIS* Editor when I sent him my e-mail letter of 18 Feb 2002. I certainly intended that letter for publication in *COSMOPOLIS* and indeed the e-mail subject line reads, "Letter to the *COSMOPOLIS* Editor". Nonetheless, sending this note to the wrong person was my error and I apologize fully to Paul for this mix-up probably caused by my misinterpretation of the 'Editor in Chief' title next to Paul's name on the Contacts List. But I doubt this minor confusion 'subjected Paul to annoyance'. Especially since he actually apologized to me conditionally. How many letter writers to *COSMOPOLIS* have received an apology of any sort from him? So that cannot be it.

2. Was it my reference to the concept of 'God' as an invisible, supernatural, all-powerful, all-loving, all-wise entity? Or my mention of the religion of Paul (who seems to be a monotheist of the Christian type and Roman Catholic sub-type)? He commented that his fervor was no business of mine. I agree completely and feel that we have reached an ideal consensus. As he is obviously comfortable in his views, I cannot see how it would have subjected him to annoyance to have me mention them.

3. Was he annoyed due to seeing me as a member of a "vociferous strike force of anti-Christians"? Me? "Vociferous" hardly seems descriptive of one short letter from me. "Strike Force"? I have only my pen and belong to no groups with an activist agenda of any sort. "Anti-Christian"? I think no less of Christianity than I do of any other monotheist form such as Islam or Judaism. Am I intellectually anti-monotheist? Certainly, but this hardly seems sufficient to annoy Paul.

I looked up an article by Derek Benson in *COSMOPOLIS* 28 (p.33) in which he comments that those disagreeing with Paul were consigned by him to categories as Marxists, idiots, dupes, or occultists. Could Paul be opening up a new category for me in the form of this imaginary Strike Force?

4. Is he annoyed that I asked for Jack Vance's views rather than for more of his? His preference seems to be to hold his knowledge of Jack's views close to the vest. In *COSMOPOLIS* 32 (p.10) he admits in a footnote, "I am well

placed to speak of the opinions of the man himself, but will not do so here". It is baffling to me that Paul does not understand how much readers would appreciate such info. We are logged in to www.vanceintegral.com not www.prhoads.com after all. Is he annoyed that I suggest a full disclosure of such knowledge and then he could add his personal views, however unusual they may be? The point is the centrality of Vance. Does this subject Paul to annoyance? Again I do not see how.

Somehow the one-time free expression of my opinions made Paul feel "subjected to annoyance". If he still feels that way, he may wish to ponder the possible effect on the readership of the constant verbose expressions of opinion by one individual over the course of 33 issues of *COSMOPOLIS*.

*KMCIG**,
Bruce Downing

*KMCIG = Kiss My Chateau Invitation Goodbye

- ❁ -

To the Editor,

I just had to comment on *38's Crucible* by Paul Rhoads, regarding quotation marks in *Coup de Grâce* and in general. Single and double quotes, as a rule, are not used in an unconscious or haphazard manner. The conscious reasoning for the double quotes primarily was because Pascoglu had spoken of them before as cottages. The reasons given in the article are more imaginative and happily reach the same conclusion, for which I am grateful to Paul, the artist. Our reasoning is not textbook either, but if the two approaches work to the same end, who's complaining?

Norma Vance

P.S. I just wanted to reassure all and sundry that even if the quotes don't follow the rules, there's probably some abstruse reason.

- ❁ -

To the Editor,

We know Paul Rhoads to be the world's most knowledgeable and articulate exponent and critic of the works of Jack Vance. He has gone beyond mere fandom, but I, his father, have not. In past times we spent many a happy hour together drooling and slobbering over Vancian words and phrases, quoting passages to one another as we shared a bottle of Chinon red. Now he is embarked on an heroic (I no longer say Quixotic) publishing venture, leading an army of Vance loving volunteers in a revolution to bring down the hegemony of ignorance and prejudice in regard to Vance's oeuvre and to reveal him standing in the literary pantheon along with his peers: Swift, Carroll, Twain, Wodehouse, etc. while I remain

doddering along behind leaving a thin trail of drool and slobber.

In my mental photograph of that pantheon, all but Vance are a bit out of focus. None lack merit, yet he alone is the most delectable. I re-read him often because his phrases sing and his sentences dance like Bungle Boys at the behest of their master.

When I was in the grip of middle age and had not yet read *Rhialto the Marvellous* I pondered the character of Kirth Gersen and found parallels to my own. Vance modeled Gersen on an armature of the familiar paladin, then fleshed him out into a man of complexity and conflict. Gersen's compulsion to revenge might be likened to the adolescent impetus to conquer the adult world. Or is that far fetched? In any case, revenge is an ignoble and degrading desire, as Gersen well knew, made loftier in his case by its result of ridding the universe of several oppressive evils. He sacrificed the comforting commitments of home and family to his compulsion, and I disliked his grandfather for fostering that in him and for teaching him the arts of mayhem and murder.

Gersen and I were confused and conflicted by our sexual and romantic longings, as are we all, I suppose. I imagine him in his later life, sitting on the veranda of his rustic cabin on a cliff overlooking some western-facing littoral, sipping Blue Ruin out of a curiously wrought beaker, indulging in vain and painful regret over Jerdian Chanseth and other lost loves and sins of omission as he watches the sun go down (go down how? Choose your favorite Vancian description here) and slips ineluctably into alcoholism. There, but for the grace of God . . .

Now I ponder the character of Rhialto. As with Gersen, I see myself in him, and forgive him and me for our numerous faults and sins. He and his fellows resemble a group of geezers in a geriatric warehouse, brought together out of a need for mutual protection and a desire to soften the phantoms of loneliness and oblivion. Rhialto is vain, mean, neglectful and inept, yet able to forgive, or at least overlook, the mean motives and petty plots of his fellow magicians. Vance clearly delights in Rhialto, and revels, as he causes me to do, in his triumphs and misfortunes. Vance is the ultimate master of the humor of meanness, pettiness and rancor. He makes me smile even at the mistreatment of the virtuous Lehubster and the innocent if ridiculous Boodis even as I am dismayed at the cruelty involved. Not exactly funny, but uniquely and compellingly strange is Vance's amalgam of grandeur, wild invention, violence and petty concerns. He weaves it all into a whole more real than 'reality'. Especially so in *Rhialto's* final scene. Rhialto has accomplished nothing but his own survival, and has learned nothing of importance. So it goes.

What, you ask, is my point? Nuncupatory.

*Yours truly,
George Rhoads*

To the Editor,

After reading Alain Schremmer's letter to the editor in the November issue, I realized that if we continue in our current mode, he and I are doomed to a fate of talking past one another, lobbing our rhetorical bombs and unfazed by the other's crafted jabs.

I do believe there is a worthwhile discussion to be had. However, it deals with more fundamental issues, and to achieve it we have to peel away a few layers of prejudice and examine the cores of our conflicting visions. I hope to have this discussion, but as with any worthwhile pursuit, it will require an investment of time and energy that was not available to me this month. In lieu of either a simplistic counterstrike that is convincing only to myself, or a non-response, I instead choose to wish my friend Alain a happy holiday season.

Brian Çharst



Closing Words

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

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Derek W. Benson, Editor



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