



## Rhialto the Marvellous

*Jack Vance*

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**Rhialto the Marvellous** Jack Vance

Contents:

The Murthe (1984)

Fader's Waft (1984)

Morreion (1973)

## Rhialto the Marvellous Details

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## From Reader Review Rhialto the Marvellous for online ebook

### Algernon says

Rhialto the Marvellous closes the initial collection of Dying Earth stories, as chronicled by Jack Vance, a master of invention who took me on an incredible journey through eons of history, hundreds of lost civilizations and quirky cultures, multicolored vistas of exotic lands, weird trees and chimaeric wildlife, magic invocations and last, but not least : **deeds of daring, craft and cunning to tax credibility** . Even if none of the later books quite recaptured the lyrical, melancholic atmosphere of the first one, preferring instead a more humorous, adventure oriented approach, the series kept me glued to the pages until the very last morsel. And then I wished I could spend more time in the company of the characteristic amoral, arrogant, opportunistic and unreliable scoundrels that usually lead the way around the Dying Earth landscape.

Rhialto is not a simple reincarnation of Cugel the Clever: he is a fussy dresser and a cad where women are concerned, but as a wizard he is quite proficient in the art, and as a trickster he is less easily fooled by other magicians, demons or villagers he meets on his quests. Both heroes have supersized egos, but where Cugel ended mostly on the losing side in every intellectual endeavour and got by only through brawns and a lot of luck, Rhialto is deviously planning ahead and outsmarting his adversaries in a Sherlock Holmes manner. It took a good portion of the book to get me interested in Rhialto, and finally it was his sarcastic wit and elaborate form of polite expression that conquered me:

*Always disposed to create a favorable impression before members of the female sex, so long as they were of an age and degree of vitality to notice, Rhialto leaned an arm against a stump, disposed his cloak so that it hung in a casual yet dramatic style.*

*The girls, preoccupied with their chatter, failed to notice his presence. Rhialto spoke in melodious tones: "Young creatures, allow me to intrude upon your attention, at least for a moment. I am surprised to find so much fresh young beauty wasted upon work so dull, and among brambles so sharp."*

I have already accepted the fact that the series abandoned almost all the science-fiction elements after the first book and developed as a magic intensive sword & sorcery adventure. If Cugel was more adept with a sword than with a spell, Rhialto relies very little on physical exertions and deploys almost exclusively his magic-fu. The magic theory of the Dying Earth is succinctly presented in the introduction of the novel ( *Magic is a practical science, or, more properly, a craft, since emphasis is placed primarily upon utility, rather than basic understanding.* ), with a few choice examples of spells that had me chuckling in anticipation of seeing them deployed later in the book:

*Looking into (for instance) Chapter Four of Killiclaw's Primer of Practical Magic, Interpersonal Effectuations, one notices, indited in bright purple ink, such terminology as:*

*Xarfaggio's Physical Malepsy*

*Arnhoult's Sequestrious Digitalia*

*Lutar Brassnose's Twelve-fold Bounty*

*The Spell of Forlorn Encystment*

*Tinkler's Old-fashioned Froust*

*Clambard's Rein of Long Nerves*

*The Green and Purple Postponement of Joy*

*Panguire's Triumphs of Discomfort*

*Lugwiler's Dismal Itch*

*Khulip's Nasal Enhancement*

*Radl's Pervasion of the Incorrect Chord.*

Actually, very few on the list made it into the proper adventure, but it was fun to imagine them in action. The one spell that is put to repeated use is one that I believe every one of us imagined at one point in his life being in control of: the power to stop time for everybody else, and move freely about the frozen population. Here it is used primarily for mischief or for getting the heor out of tight corners.

Coming back to the book, there are only three novellas in it, but the middle one is quite extensive, and I didn't feel shortchanged in any way by the limitation. Having the same set of protagonists (a conclave of wizards that are constantly quarrelling among themselves, reminding me fondly of the masters of the Unseen University on Discworld) in all three parts of the book helps with the continuity and with the character development.

**The Murthe** is a hilarious farce about the wizards phobia towards womenfolk. Their 'boys only' club falls prey to a spectre from a terrible past, when women had ascendancy:

*The Murthe is at large among you, with squalms and ensqualmations.*

The series had its less savoury moments, especially when Cugel was involved, with women treated as sex objects and as fickle creatures. The panic of the wizards as they contemplate serving under women is a refreshing reversal, and their bafflement regarding their true nature is illustrated in the following extract:

*Calanctus likens a woman to the Ciaeic Ocean which absorbs the long and full thrust of the Antipodal Current as it sweeps around Cape Spang, but only while the weather holds fair. If the wind shifts but a trifle, this apparently placid ocean hurls an abrupt flood ten or even twenty feet high back around the cape, engulfing all before it. When stasis is restored and the pressure relieved, the Ciaeic is as before, placidly accepting the current. Do you concur with this interpretation of the female geist?*

**Fader's Waft** follows the quest of Rhialto to recover the Blue Perciplex: a precious prism containing the rule of law governing the Wizard Conclave. The prism is hidden in the past, and Rhialto must time-travel back accompanied by a couple of recalcitrant indentured demons. He meets twenty footed blue aliens from Canopus, witnesses epic battles between long lost empires, damzells in distress, venal construction workers, villagers with peculiar eating habits:

*Must your disgust be so blatant? True: we are anthropophages. True: we put strangers to succulent use. Is this truly good cause for hostility? The world is as it is and each of us must hope in some fashion to be of service to his fellows, even if only in the form of a soup.*

The humour mixed with the rich history of the past/future Earth and with the flowery prose made for a very pleasant pastime indeed, and too quick I arrived at the last story:

**Morreion** has the wizards travelling in a floating palace to the edge of the Universe searching for 'nothing' (aka : the nonregion beyond the end of the cosmos). There they hope to rescue one of their colleagues who left ages ago in search of precious, magic infused IOUN stones (and relieve him of this treasure, if possible). Some of the passages describing the journey came very close to the marvellous prose that first attracted me to Jack Vance:

*Through clouds and constellations they moved, past bursting galaxies and meandering star-streams; through a region where the stars showed a peculiar soft violet and hung in clouds of pale green gas; across a desolation where nothing whatever was seen save a few far luminous clouds.*

*Then presently they came to a new region, where blazing white giants seemed to control whirlpools of pink, blue and white gas, and the magicians lined the balustrade looking out at the spectacle.*

But every ship or floating castle eventually reaches harbour and the weary traveller must disembark, wave goodbye to his companions and go his own way. Morreion, the lost wizard, remarks at one time to his colleagues:

**Before you came my life was placid; you have brought me doubt and wonder.**

The same applies to me, and I know I will come back to sail once more with Jack Vance on the boundless oceans of his imagination.

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### **Olethros says**

-Fin de la serie.-

Género. Ciencia-Ficción.

Lo que nos cuenta. En el vigésimo tercer eón y al Oeste del Muro desmoronado, viven unos magos que se han asociado para proteger sus intereses. Uno de ellos, Rhialto, está teniendo una época inquieta, cree que la Murthe está rondando su domicilio y trata de mantener el orden entre las actividades de sus vecinos magos. Cuarto y último volumen de la tetralogía La Saga de la Tierra Moribunda.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

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### **Tom Meade says**

Stronger than *The Dying Earth*, but weaker than the Cugel novels. Rhialto the Marvelous is a fascinating character - one of Vance's many takes on the Maal Dweb-like Clark Ashton Smith class of sorcerers, and seemingly the only spell-caster in all of Amery with more than half a brain in his head. Given that the various run-ins with magicians were often some of the best parts of the Cugel books, it was a great deal of fun to be presented with an entire novel from the perspective of one of those officious, capricious pricks.

While I liked many things about this book, I found myself enjoying the dialogue most of all. Vance has a wonderful way with irony, subtle and not-so-subtle, and every single exchange between the magicians is a masterpiece of sarcasm, braggadocio and cowardly pussy-footing. I have always had a weakness for the deadpan comedy of manners, and I'm glad to see my fondness shared by a writer of such ability.

Unfortunately, at the same time these exchanges between the magicians do become somewhat repetitious - the novel is divided into three sections, each following roughly the same structure, and after three hundred

pages of barbed tongues and bickering over IOUN stones I started to get a little bit weary of it. And that's why I'm giving it three stars (well, that and the fact that if I were to give every book I liked four stars, and every book that I loved five stars, I would very soon run out of places to put the occasional masterpiece - although I would have a great deal more shelf-room for the storage of my disappointments).

Well, the Tales of the Dying Earth were an absolute joy to read. I can only pray that I have not yet crested the pinnacle of Vance.

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### **Liz Baessler says**

What completely weird little book.

This was our latest sci-fi book club selection, chosen because one of our members was actually friends with Jack Vance. Who'd have thought?

I warmed to this book more and more as I read it. The first story was my least favorite, but whether this is because it's the weakest or because I hadn't yet gotten my bearings, I'm not sure. The second story felt interminable, but once I came to terms with the fact that the interminability was deliberate and meant to be charming and even funny, I was totally on board. The final story flew by and was all kinds of fun.

My problem to begin with was one of perspective. I thought I was getting into some gnarly, weird old fantasy. And, to a certain extent I still think was. What it took me a while to realize, though, is that this gnarly old fantasy is surprisingly self-aware and subtle. Every other sentence is esoteric and obtuse, but as far as I can tell there's nothing behind it. This is a book about some absolute weirdos doing some inscrutable stuff to solve mostly superficial problems, and as soon as you embrace that fact this book becomes the funniest thing in the world.

The poor sandestins were a particular favorite in the club, particularly because they're so inscrutable to the magicians. They completely have their own thing going on, and while somehow the magicians have managed to enslave them, communication and cooperation with them is convoluted at best. This is perfectly demonstrated by Osherl who at one point was, "by reason of some obscure whim, wearing a fox's mask."

This book was just so charming and weird, and the more I think about it the more impressed I am. I'm sorry that I misjudged it.

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### **Stephen says**

4.0 to 4.5 stars. I have now finished reading all of the Dying Earth novels and can now say that this is one of the best series EVER WRITTEN. The world created by Jack Vance is as good as anything I have ever read and the possibility for storites set in this venue are limitless. I plan on reading Songs of the Dying Earth Stories in Honor of Jack Vance in the near future and can't wait to see what some of the genre's best writers do with this setting. HIGHEST POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!!

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## **prcardi says**

Storyline: 2/5

Characters: 2/5

Writing Style: 4/5

World: 2/5

The Dying Earth's charm wore thin here. Vance is still Vance - capable of witticisms aplenty and delightful absurdity - but Rhialto is no Cugel, and these three novellas could not sustain the flair of the episodic tellings elsewhere in the series.

Rhialto's replacement of Cugel should have been a welcome change for me. I was always a little uncomfortable with the latter's depravity, and I was eager to meet another Vance creation whom I might be able to identify. Rhialto is unremarkable, however, and largely forgettable. His blandness, in fact, demonstrates just how much the earlier Dying Earth stories were carried by the suspense of waiting for the next Cugel shenanigan.

Because of my disinterest in short stories, the three longer-length tales here should also have proved an improvement. The first two tales in this collection, Murthe and Fader's Waft, did indeed begin with the same ingenious madcap that marked The Eyes of the Overworld and Cugel's Saga. Both carried with them more than a hint of fable, but the middle and conclusion of the novellas lacked any sort of ironic moral statement or farcical appeal. Vance was much better with the short, segmented format in numbers two and three of the series.

If I had read this as my introduction to Jack Vance, I doubt I would have followed up on the rest of the series. Because I did read all the other Dying Earth works, however, Rhialto the Marvelous was always tinctured with the colors and ambience of the previous works. Most of the magic here was probably leftover goodwill from the early volumes.

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## **Timothy Boyd says**

Great last book in the series. Vance does an excellent job blending SiFi and fantasy elements in his Dying Earth stories. Very recommended

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## **Eric says**

**At the sight of Rhialto and Osherl, certain of the men called out in pleasure, and taking up long-handled nets advanced upon the two with sinister purpose.**

**Rhialto called out: " Stand back! We are magicians! Your first sneer of menace will bring down a spell of great distress; be warned!"**

**The men refused to heed and raised high their nets. Rhialto made a sign to Osherl. The nets folded over backwards to enclose and clench into tight balls those who had thought use them. Osherl jerked his thumb to whisk these balls way, into the northern sky, through the overcast and out of sight.**

Rhialto looked around the group and spoke to a flat-faced woman: "Who is the chieftain of this repulsive group?"

The woman pointed. "There is Doulka who is butcher and trundleman. We need no chieftain; such folk eat more than their share."

A big-bellied old man with gray wattles sidled a few steps forward. He spoke in a wheedling nasal voice: "Must your disgust be so blatant? True: we are anthropophages. True: we put strangers to succulent use. Is this truly good cause for hostility? The world is as it is and each of us must hope in some fashion to be of service to his fellows, even if only in the form of a soup."

"Our talents lie elsewhere," said Rhialto. "If I see any more nets, you will be first to fly the sky."

"No fear, now that we know your preferences," declared Doulka. "What are your needs? Are you hungry?"

"We are curious in regard to Luid Shug, which at this time should be awakening to the Age of Gold. Instead we find only rubble, slime, and the stink from your village. Why have events gone in this unhappy fashion?"

Doulka had recovered his confidence and blinked at his visitors with torpid complacence. Idly, as if through the force of habit, he began to twist and interweave his fingers with a dexterity which Rhialto found interesting, even fascinating. He spoke in a droning nasal monotone: "The mystery surrounding the ruins is more than real." As Doulka spoke, he wove his fingers slowly back and forth. "Centuries passed by, one upon the other, and the gods stood steadfast, by day and by night. At last they succumbed to the grind of the wind and rain. They became dust and their power was gone."

Doulka worked his fingers in and out. "The land was empty and the ruins lay quiet. The 'Paragons' slept their long sleep in alabaster eggs. Youths and maidens of prime quality ripened out of their silken couches, unknown to all!"

Doulka's fingers created odd patterns. Rhialto began to feel a pleasant lassitude, which he ascribed to his efforts of the day.

"My dear fellow, I see that you are weary!" said Doulka. "I reproach myself!" Three ceremonial chairs of woven withe were brought out, their backs carved to represent contorted human faces.

"Sit," said Doulka in a soothing voice. "Rest yourself."

Doulka ponderously placed his own fat buttocks upon the creaking withe of a chair. Rhialto also seated himself, to ease his tired limbs. He turned to Osherl and spoke in the language of the 21st Aeon: "What is this sly old devil doing to me, that I feel such torpor?"

Osherl responded in an offhand manner: "He commands four sandestins of an inferior sort: the type we call 'madlings.' They are building patterns of lassitude in and out of your eyes, which are now somewhat skewed. Doulka has already given orders to prepare for a feast."

Rhialto spoke indignantly: "Why did you not prevent this trickery? Where is your loyalty?"

**Osherl merely coughed in discomfiture.**

**Rhialto told Osherl: "Order the madlings to pull Doulka's nose out to a length of two feet, to impose an ulcerous cyst at the tip, and also a large painful carbuncle on each buttock."**

**"As you wish."**

**The work was done to his satisfaction. "Now," he told Osherl, "and this should go without saying, order the madlings to desist from all further nuisances upon my person."**

**"Yes, true. We would not want Doulka to retaliate in kind."**

**"Then you will accord the madlings their freedom, and send them on their way, with instructions never again to serve Doulka."**

**"A generous thought!" declared Osherl. "Does the same instruction apply to me?"**

**"Osherl, do not distract me. I must question Doulka, despite his new preoccupations."**

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**4 stars**

**Jaro says**

First and second reading in Brilliance audio

Third reading in VIE

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**KostasAt says**

8.5/10

Στο τελευτα?ο βιβλ?ο αυτ?ς της απ?θανης σειρ?ς ο Jack Vance δε?χνει επιτ?λους και μια διαφορετικ? οπτικ? και παρ? ?λο που ?χει μ?νο τρεις ιστορ?ες, δεν πα?ει να εντυπωσι?ζει.

Η πρ?τη ιστορ?α μου θ?μισε αρκετ? το στυλ που ε?χε ο Jack Vance στο πρ?το βιβλ?ο αλλ? εκτ?ς αυτο? την βρ?κα λ?γο μ?τρια και αδι?φορη μιας και ο Ρι?λτο εδ? ?χει ?να πολ? δευτερε?οντα ρ?λο που δεν με εντυπωσ?ασε.

Η δε?τερη ?μως, που παρεμπιπτ?ντως πιστε?ω ε?ναι και η καλ?τερη της συλλογ?ς, ε?ναι αυτ? που βλ?πεις πραγματικ? τον αληθιν? Ρι?λτο και μαζ? με τον Οσ?ρλ αποτελο?ν ?να, απ?στευτα, αχτ?πητο δ?δυμο.

Η αλ?θεια β?βαια, ε?ναι ?τι θυμ?ζει λ?γο τον Κουζ?λ στο ?φος του, που προσωπικ? δεν πε?ραξε ιδια?τερα, αλλ? ε?ναι σ?γουρα ?νας διαφορετικ?ς και ξεχωριστ?ς χαρακτ?ρας που ?ρεσε, και αυτ?ς, επ?σης πολ?.

Και τ?λος, η τρ?τη ε?ναι και αυτ? μια πολ? καλ? ιστορ?α με τους μ?γους να πα?ζουν τις δολοπλοκ?ες τους για να αποκτ?σουν αυτ? που θ?λουν και με τον Jack Vance να μας ταξιδε?ει στο τ?λος του σ?μπαντος σε ?να απ?θανο φιν?λε.

Συνολικ?, μου ?ρεσε π?ρα πολ? και παρ? ?τι θα ?θελα σ?γονρα μ?α-δ?ο ιστορ?ες ακ?μα το βρ?κα αρκετ? «χορταστικ?».

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English review:  
(view spoiler)

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### **Kimm says**

Word candy. All of Vance's book have delicious syntax but for some reason this is my all time favorite.

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### **Joseph says**

And so things end on a bit of a wistful note, in a volume that kind of splits the difference between the original Mazirian the Magician: and the Cugel books. Again, as with Cugel, it's a collection of short stories about the same character (the eponymous Rhialto); in this case, it's three longish stories (one, "Fader's Waft", is long enough that it probably could've been published as a standalone back in the 1960s) and, unlike Cugel, there's no larger narrative connecting the stories.

Rhialto is one of a group of magicians living in the last aeon of Earth's existence. The magicians are all ... well, "eccentric" seems entirely too mild a term. In a lot of ways, they reminded me of the wizards of Pratchett's Unseen University, albeit slightly less ridiculous. Rhialto himself, although a bit of a popinjay, is probably the most normal. (He's also much less of a sociopathic scoundrel than Cugel, at least in what we're shown here.)

Interestingly, much of the book happens in places other than the Dying Earth proper -- in "Fader's Waft", Rhialto spends much of his time several aeons in the past, and in the final story, "Morreion", he and the other wizards end up traveling across space to the very edge of the universe. (To do so, they all gather in one wizard's palace, which he then causes to fly.)

As always, much of the joy is in Vance's prose -- slightly stilted and formal, the dialogue filled with circumlocution, and with not infrequent moments of true beauty:

Through clouds and constellations they moved, past bursting galaxies and meandering star-streams; through a region where the stars showed a peculiar soft violet and hung in clouds of pale green gas; across a desolation where nothing whatever was seen save a few far luminous clouds. Then presently they came to a new region, where blazing white giants seemed to control whirlpools of pink, blue and white gas, and the magicians lined the balustrade looking out at the spectacle.

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### **Randy says**

The fourth installment in the Dying Earth series is a collection of three stories (Morreion: A Tale Of The Dying Earth was previously published in the collection Flashing Swords! #1) featuring the magician Rhialto and his peers. Set millions of years in the future as the sun is near the end of its life, Vance follows his morally ambivalent characters through a series of sometimes comical misadventures. Not as strong as The Eyes of the Overworld or Cugel's Saga but still worth reading for fans of the series.

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### **Stuart says**

Rhialto the Marvellous (1984) is the final book in Jack Vance's Tales of the Dying Earth. The book consists of three stories, "The Murthe", "Fader's Waft", and "Morreion", so in structure it is more like the loosely connected stories of The Dying Earth (1950).

This time around Cugel the Clever is not featured. Instead, we are introduced to the magician Rhialto (the Marvellous), a resourceful, clever, and somewhat vain and flamboyant member of a conclave of loosely-allied magicians in Ascolais and Almery in the 21st Aeon. Overall, I'd rate this as the weakest of the four parts of Tales of the Dying Earth, but still worth reading if you enjoy the wild imagination, high language, and deadpan humor of Jack Vance's baroque tales set in the far-future dying earth.

"Morreion", the last story, is by far the best. It chronicles the journey of Rhialto and his fellow magicians to the edge of the universe to find a missing colleague who sought the source of the much-coveted IOUN stones (which are used in D&D, apparently). This story is filled with humor, wonder, high language, and the colorful imagination Vance is famous for. It could easily have been included in the original Dying Earth book.

"The Murthe" is a very short and humorous story of the havoc that is wreaked by a powerful magic-user from the past, who starts to convert the magicians in Rhialto's conclave into women without them realizing it through a process of "ensqualmation". Their antics as they become more feminine are quite amusing, and her power is not easily vanquished.

"Fader's Waft" is the longest story, and unfortunately the weakest in my opinion. In this story Rhialto is the center of various schemes by his fellow wizards to defame his character and seize his magical possessions. In

order to determine guilt or innocence he must travel back in time to retrieve the *Percifex*, a codex of the Blue Principles that the magicians must abide by. Although some of the situations are fun to read about, overall it gets fairly tedious at times and doesn't measure up to Cugel's stories.

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### **Mohammed says**

Stories of the wizard Rhialto the Marvellous and his friends who are also wizards in 21st Aeon of Dying Earth. I was worried Rhialto as a main character, the book would pale in comparison to the dominating force of Dying Earth series that is Cugel. Rhialto was so amoral in his ways, so arrogant grandee to rival Cugel that I enjoyed his stories in similar. His friends were comical at times that they would all talk pleasantly while in the next second they would use most terrible spells against each other to get more powerful than the others.

The last two stories were specially fun, imaginative. I'm not keen on wizards, magic in any fantasy really but Vance managed to create a magical system that would make role-play fans thrill with every weird spell that was used in the stories.

Magic was mostly hinted at in the earlier parts of DE but in this collection there were much more use, more important to the story. This book is second only to the two Cugel books and better written, better stories than the first Dying Earth book.

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### **Kat Hooper says**

ORIGINALLY POSTED AT Fantasy Literature.

If you're a fan of Jack Vance, of course you've read, or plan to read, *Rhialto the Marvellous*, last of the Dying Earth books. If you've not read any of Mr. Vance's work, you can start here — it isn't necessary to have read the previous installments.

Rhialto, who has earned the cognomen "Marvellous" (this has something to do with him being a bit of a dandy) is one of the last of Earth's magicians, a small group of selfish and unscrupulous men who sometimes work together and sometimes oppose each other as it suits their individual inglorious purposes. The other magicians don't care too much for Rhialto because he is aloof, popular with women, arrogant, and generally unflappable. *Rhialto the Marvellous* contains three stories which feature Rhialto working with and against his colleagues.

Rhialto is more passive than Cugel the Clever and not as dastardly, so he doesn't drive the plot or leave a swath of destruction in his wake like Cugel does. Plus, he has to share the stage with several other strong personalities, making him not as vibrant as we've come to expect from Vance's main characters.

Nonetheless, this novel is still chock full of the ludicrous circumstances and strange humor that Jack Vance fans love. The first story, "The Murthe," introduces my favorite made-up Vance word: "ensqualm" — which means to turn a man into a woman. That story was hilarious as it seemed to poke fun of feminine behavior while actually ridiculing men. Arthur Morey, who narrates Brilliance Audio's production and has become one of my favorite audiobook readers, is at top form here as he narrates Vermoulian's dream (AXR-11 GG7,

Volume Seven of the Index) in which Vermoulian meets a group of ensqualmed men and describes their behavior:

*I found myself in a landscape of great charm, where I encountered a group of men, all cultured, artistic, and exquisitely refined of manner... 'We dine upon nutritious nuts and seeds and ripe juicy fruit; we drink only the purest and most natural water from the springs. At night we sit around the campfire and sing merry little ballads. On special occasions we make a punch called opo, from pure fruits, natural honey, and sweet sessamy, and everyone is allowed a good sip... Ah, the women, whom we revere for their kindness, strength, wisdom and patience, as well as for the delicacy of their judgments!...'*

He had me laughing out loud already, but when he read their answer to Vermoulian's questions about how they procreate, I nearly spit my Starbucks onto the steering wheel. I went back and read this in my print copy — it was funny, yes, but Arthur Morey made it even better.

Rhialto the Marvellous is the last of Brilliance Audio's Vance collection so far, and that makes me sad. I sincerely hope they'll soon be adding more Vance titles to their catalog and that Arthur Morey will be reading them. If so, I promise that I'll be reviewing them!

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### **Profundus Librum says**

A Haldokló Föld regények nem függenek szorosan össze, hiszen az els? rész egy novella-gy?jtemény, teljesen külön történetekkel, míg két folytatása – ezek már összefüggenek – Ravasz Cugel, a gátlástan, nagykép? tolvaj kalandjairól szólnak. A Rhialto visszatérve az eredeti formához három novellát tartalmaz, amit a f?szerepl? alakja köt egybe és id?rendben jóval a Cugel-történetek el?tt játszódnak. A klasszikus, kalandos fantasztikus történeteket jegyz? szerz?k – Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert W. Chambers, Frank Baum vagy Clark Aston Smith – nagy hatással voltak Vance-re, ami bizony meg is látszik m?vein. A Haldokló Földhöz kapcsolódó írások ugyanis egy leheletnyit régiesnek hathatnak a szabatos, ékes nyelvezet miatt és gyakran használják a humort eszközöként, f?leg a szerepl?k erkölcsstelenségének kifigurázására. Ezekben a könyvekben ugyanis nem lehet szépíteni, mindenki egy morális nulla.

A könyvek bolygónk távoli jöv?jébe kalauzolnak el minket. Az id?beni ugrás azonban nem évszázadokban vagy holmi évezredekben mérhet?, hanem egész világkorszaknyi id?kben, milliárd években. A Nap élete végén jár, szinte bármelyik pillanatban kihunyhat, ezzel egy csapásra kiirtva a földi életet is. A dekadencia és az önzés – mint életforma – felé fordult kicsinyes lakók asszisztálása mellett a civilizáció is már eónok (év százmilliók) óta csak hanyatlak. A földet benépesít? szerzetek – mágusok, szerencsevadászok, istenek és szörnyek – már csak a dics?ségesebb korok régi, elfeledett reliktiáit és tudásanyagát gy?jtögetik, igaz, mindenki szigorúan csak a maga számára, hiszen úgysincs jelent?sége már semminek. Néhol fellelhet? még egy-két titokzatos szerkezet, aminek a m?ködését vagy célját már senki nem érti. Ráadásul még a mágia is hanyatlóban van. A kor varázslói már tanoncnak sem volnának jók az egy-két eónnal hamarabb élt mágusok mellé.

B?vebben a blogon:

<http://profunduslibrum.blogspot.hu/20...>

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### **Simon says**

It's taken me nearly three years but I've finally finished reading the quartet of books that make up Jack Vance's classic fantasy series The Dying Earth. Perhaps I might have been better off reading the omnibus but I like breaking up series rather than reading them all in one go. Especially with a series like this in which the stories are only loosely connected.

The series in all comprises of numerous short stories, a novella and two novels. This final book contains the novella and two of the short stories, all relating to "Rhialto The Marvellous" and his cabal of weasley, conniving fellow magicians who are always trying to further their own ends at each other's expense.

Like the other books in the series, the best thing about these stories is the dry humour of the narrative, Vance's clever turn of phrase and the dialogue of the characters. Don't come to these books expecting extensive world building, character development or fast paced action, you'll go away disappointed. But in reading these books, it is easy to see why it has been so influential on the genre.

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### **Jakk Makk says**

I must understand the printed version before I seriously review it. After the second listen, I still can't follow what happens in the final story, so I can't recommend it. However, I did grow fond of the reader.

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### **TJ says**

Rhialto the Marvellous (with two l's) is the fourth and last novel in the Dying Earth series. It was first published in 1984 and can be read as a stand alone novel. My copy is 158 pages. It consists of three stories, each involving Rhialto a magician or sorcerer. These stories are: The Murthe, Fader's Waft and Morreion. The first two stories were written for the novel. The last story, Morreion, was previously published as a novella in the 1973 Flashing Swords! This is the second time I've read the novel recently and I continue to find it to be comparatively frivolous and the least interesting of the Dying Earth series. I rated it a 3 or "Liked it."

Rhialto the Marvellous begins with a four page forward that informs us that "these are tales of the 21st Aeon, when Earth is old and the sun is about to go out. In Ascolais and Almery, lands to the west of the Falling Wall, live a groups of magicians who have formed an association the better to protect their interests." Twenty four magicians are then listed with a brief description of most. Magic is described as a practical science or craft where effectiveness is most important and understanding is of lesser value. Spells are simply commands the magician makes to impel an entity to perform a duty. "These entities are not necessarily intelligent, nor even sentient and their conduct, from the tyro's point of view, is unpredictable, capricious and dangerous." The entities range from frail elements to very powerful creatures called sandestins. "More fractious entities are known by the Temuchin as daihak, which include demons and gods. A magician's power derives from the abilities of the entities he is able to control." But the current magicians pale in comparison to the powerful magicians of the past. "The magicians of the 21st Aeon were, in comparison, a disparate and uncertain group, lacking both grandeur and consistency."

The first story, 23 pages long, is titled The Murthe and begins with the introduction of our main character, Rhialto the Magnificent. Rhialto is at home and decides to take a walk in the forest with Malfezar's Woe, his magical baton. Soon he faintly hears strange music and then finds a pond and notices a woman's reflection in

it. When he looks up, however, there is no woman corresponding to the reflection in the water. He asks the reflection if it called him there but receives no response except a cool smile from the woman's reflection. As he bows courteously to leave something shoves him into the pond. The reflection of the woman disappears, and he climbs out of the water and returns home. But Rhialto soon begins feeling feverish and has a ringing in his ears. He later learns that a spell had been cast on him but he learns how to undo the spell.

Rhialto consults with his good friend Ildefonse about the strange incident at the pond. While talking they encounter a man named Lehuster the Benefer who claims to be from the past and says he is in pursuit of the White Witch Llorio also known as the Murthe. The Murthe is a powerful witch who has fled into the future to the 21st Aeon where she hopes to rise again in power and avoid detection by a powerful magician who defeated and exiled her from the past. He warns the magicians that she will try to put a spell on them called ensqualmation and this will turn them into women who are aligned with the Murthe. The "victim becomes a woman. An early mannerism is the habit of darting the tongue rapidly in and out of the mouth."

Rhialto, Ildefonse and Lehuster eventually find themselves pitted against the powerful Murthe while the other magicians have darting tongues and refuse to assist. The story continues with the introduction of magical IOUN stones and the creation of replicate Calanctus, the magician from the past who defeated the Murthe. It is a mildly interesting, but not memorable, tale.

Fader's Waft, 91 pages long, is the second story. Here Rhialto's best friend Ildefonse is proclaimed the new Preceptor of the magicians and is granted many powers over the other magicians. One of the other magicians named Hache-Moncour becomes jealous and angry toward Rhialto and begins instigating situations where Rhialto seems to be offending or causing harm to the other magicians. Soon all of the magicians except Ildefonse are upset with Rhialto, and Hache-Moncour prompts them to act against Rhialto while he is away by invading his home and stealing all of his items of magic. When Rhialto returns they accuse him of violating the Blue Principles, the code or law that governs the behavior of magicians. But Rhialto claims the codes they are citing are not in the original Principles. He also claims that they have violated the Blue Principle, not he. Neither allegation can be proven because Rhialto's copy of the Principles were badly damaged by the other magicians and nobody else has a copy. They agree to visit the place where the Blue Principles are kept so they can verify if Rhialto is guilty of violating it or if he is correct in maintaining that the other magicians are the ones who have violated the Principles. The original Blue Principles are contained within a wine barrel sized egg like container called the Perciplex that is kept at Fader's Waft. Unfortunately when they arrive at Fader's Waft they find that the original Blue Principles has been replaced by a forgery. Most of the story involves Rhialto's attempt to recover the original Principles by going back in time. His adventures are detailed, intricate, fascinating and often humorous. Here we see sandestins at work and how magicians have a difficult task commanding these creatures to do their work. Sandestins sometimes obey the letter of the command without complying with the spirit or intent of the command. They also frequently attempt to bargain to their own advantage to reduce the time of their indenture. Some readers might find Fader's Waft to be overly complex and detailed. It is not quick and easy reading, but I thought the story was fascinating and ripe with interesting details and imaginative creations. It was my favorite of the three stories in the novel although it is not Vance at his best.

The third and final story, Morreion, was first published in 1973 as a novella in the anthology *Flashing Swords! #1* which had both hardcover and paperback issues. In 1979 Underwood-Miller offered a limited edition hardcover publication that was limited to 1200 copies with 200 of them being signed and numbered. In 1984 Morreion was issued as chapter 3 of the novel Rhialto the Marvellous. (with two l's) Rhialto and a group of other magicians decide embark on a journey to the end of the universe to locate another magician named Morreion who had gone on a trip many years ago seeking the origin of magical IOUN stones. Morreion had never returned. The magicians pretend to be mostly concerned about the welfare and

whereabouts of Morreion but are actually more interested in obtaining more IOUN stones. It is a humorous journey with the odd, eccentric and often verbose magicians traveling on "Vermoulian's wonderful peregrine palace," an ornate, glittering ship that takes them to the edge of the universe. The flying palace has loggias, formal gardens, an entrance pavilion with three acres with a marble balustrade and a center fountain with a hundred jets of water.. "Vermoulian's guests occupied suites in the wings; under the central spire where the various salons, the morning and afternoon rooms, the library, the music chamber , the formal dining room and the lounge." While aboard this flying palace the magicians engage in such odd dialog as, "Enough of this intolerable inanity! I propose that such loquacity passes beyond the scope of nuisance and over the verge of turpitude." It reminded me somewhat of Terry Pratchett's bumbling wizards and was light and humorous to read.

Rhialto the Marvellous comes nowhere near the truly "marvelous" (with one l) heights of The Eyes of the Overworld or Cugel's Saga and is a notch below The Dying Earth. Vance fans will probably still want to read it, but I don't think it is essential reading.

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