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## CUGEL'S PEDIGREE

## FOUR EXPRESSIONS OF THE ARCHETYPAL PERIPATETIC SCAMP, AN ANTIC OVERVIEW

Cugel the Clever, many feel, is Vance's most characteristic and even notable invention. It might be argued, however, that this character is not particularly original, for it bears a long pedigree, extending back even into pre-history. I do not know how, by which detours, or even if, Cugel's ancestor's influenced Vance's creation. There are any number of scamps, scoundrels and gentleman thieves in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century literature which may also have had a direct effect; Peck's Bad Boy, Arsen Lupin, Tom Sawyer — many others. The purpose of the present reflection is not to trace a lineage but to compare Cugel with the most illustrious variations of this venerable theme: Odysseus, Renart the Fox, and Robin Hood. We hope such a reflection will help underscore the originality and force of Vance's creation.

Odysseus was one of the Greek champions of the 10 year siege of Troy. He is even the author of the strategy which brought that city low: the Trojan horse. Though a high-ranking Greek hero, king of the island of Ithaca, and a favorite of the goddess Athena, Odysseus used an attitude as

flexible as Cugel's. He did not hesitate to deceive or disguise.

To the extent Odysseus was a literary creation, when was he invented? Current historiography claims his existence jelled in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, as Athenian scribes regularized the Homeric fragments.

*The Odyssey*, of which Odysseus (also called Ulysses) is the principal character, recounts his return from Troy to Ithaca, where his wife, Penelope, was besieged by dozens of suitors. The story covers 10 years. It includes the picaresque adventures of Odysseus himself, but also the perils of Penelope, as well as Telemachus, their son, now grown to young manhood. In the dénouement Penelope's suitors, camped in Odysseus' palace, are done to death by the hero, with the help of his son, his faithful swineherd Emaeus, and a few other allies. Odysseus' adventures, prior to his return to Ithaca, are a tale of travel by sea and fabulous encounters, including the magical nymphs Calypso and Circe and various monsters (the Cyclops, the sirens, Scylla). His crewmen are eaten and turned into pigs, and Odysseus even visits the underworld where he interviews celebrated personages. The story also include non-magical episodes, such as Telemachus' trip to Pylos for news of his father, and Odysseus' stay with the Phaeacians, where he is helped by the princess Nausicaa, a name familiar to Vance readers. Athena, and other gods, also appear in the story.

Renart is an animal hero, certainly influenced by Aesop's greek fox but just as much by observations of the wily



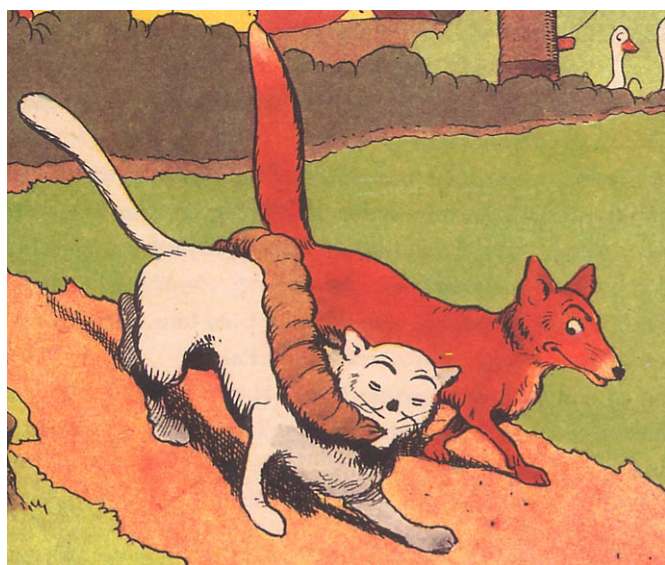
Odysseus and Telemachus after their triumph over the suitors.  
 Greek vase painting.



animal itself, so prevalent in pre-industrial Europe. The popularity of *Le Roman de Renart* was such that the old generic French word for fox, 'goupil', was replaced by this proper name—later transposed slightly to *Renard*. This name seems to be of mérovingienne origin, meaning 'sharp counselor'. *Le Roman de Renart* is a set of more or less related adventures, written in verse by some 20 mostly anonymous authors of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The original texts are lost. They exist only in later versions, the one I know being an excellent prose rendition from 1909, by Leroy-Allais, illustrated by the wonderful Benjamin Rabier.

Renart's adventures feature no magic. He is a sort of baron, or bandit, a proto-aristocrat whose seat is Maupertuis. His zone of operations, however, is large. Maupertuis is usually described as a fine mansion, but sometimes in terms of a fox hole. Renart relates with other animals—mice, chickens, rabbits, badgers, bears, wolves, crows, sheep, stags, lions—all reflections of familiar characters of feudal society. The human world, however, exists at the same time, and the effect of the parallel animal and human societies is very fine. Renart's adventures mostly concern comestibles, and how he gets the better of his fellows by playing on their greed, pride or other weaknesses. On some occasions his adversaries get the better of him—such as when Tybert the cat get tricks him out of a sausage—but Renart's triumphs often include physical harm to his victims. Ysengrin the wolf and Tybert lose their tails. Lampe the rabbit, who threw acorns at Renart when he was brought to trial, gets eaten by the fox family. After scandalizing society with his depredations, the latter chapters recount how the court, ruled by Noble the lion, tries to bring Renart to justice. At his first trial Renart is exonerated after an amazing plea, delivered from the gallows ladder. At his second trial—when he escapes the death penalty by playing on Noble's magnanimity—his arch enemy, Ysengrin, demands combat which, in medieval fashion, cannot be refused. Renart ends his days diminished by the resultant wounds.

Robin Hood first comes to light as a popular legend in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. At that time he was not a redressor of wrongs



Renart being tricked by Tybert the cat. Illustration by Benjamin Rabier.



Illustration by Howard Pyle.

but a mere trickster whose jolly adventures developed from chance encounters in the forest. His implication in the Norman-Saxon struggle (due to Walter Scott), and eventually his characteristic role as righter of wrongs—and equalizer of incomes—seems to have developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the winds of the new 'social conscience' which blew though 19<sup>th</sup> century western society from many sources, such as the encyclicals of Leon XIII or the manifestos of Carl Marx.

## SOCIAL STANDING

At first glance, it is Odysseus and his world, rather than Renart or Robin Hood, and theirs, which seem to have most in common with Cugel. Both protagonists suffer, rather than choose, peripatetic adventures. Both inhabit worlds fraught with magic and monsters. Both travel by sea. And, while Cugel does not return to a faithful wife, he does end his adventures where he began them (Pergolo), helped by friends in a final vindictive battle.

But Odysseus is a king, while Cugel is a mere tramp. Renart also enjoys a fairly high social standing—in chapter 13 he goes hunting with Noble and Ysengrin.\*

Robin Hood is an outlaw but also, as leader of his troop of merry men, a chief among bandits. Cugel is on his own, the lowest of the four on the social ladder. He has nothing to go back to. Unlike Odysseus and Renart he has no home, with wife and children. Unlike Robin Hood in Sherwood forest, he enjoys no base of operations. With respect to social

\* On which occasion Renart demonstrates his superior prudence by 'dividing' the catch 'justly'—that is, everything is for king, the famous 'lion's share'. Ysengrin had foolishly apportioned a small lot to himself, and was cuffed brutally by Noble.



standing Cugel takes a logical place in the steady process of 'democratization' our peripatetic scamp has suffered over the ages: from king, to a person of good standing, to a well-connected outsider, to an unattached and solitary individual whose only pretension to status better than 'junior executive'\* is sheer chutzpah. In social status, therefore, Cugel is closest Robin Hood.

Odysseus, it may be mentioned, though a king and a Homeric hero, was indeed understood by the Greeks as a scamp. Unlike Achilles or the other noblest heroes, he did not triumph in acts of frank confrontation but with gambit and subterfuge. The Greeks found this amusing, and even admirable in its way but, per classical hierarchic morality, they did not admire *it in the highest degree*. It was this distinction that made them regard *The Odyssey* itself as inferior to *The Iliad*, an attitude incomprehensible to the modern sensibility.

## MOTIVATION

But when Cugel is considered from another angle, the perspective of his goal, once again he most resembles Odysseus. Robin Hood's goals are not personal. He is a social benefactor. Renart also has a motivation larger than himself, if not by much—the wife and children whom he must feed, and to whom he is devoted. Renart and Robin Hood are not picaresque adventurers, while Odysseus and Cugel are mostly far from home. Odysseus, furthermore, is not faithful like Renart. He dallies with Calypso, as Cugel would dally with Derwe Corne, or does dally with the 17 virgins. After Odysseus' men meet their colorful dooms Odysseus is often, like Cugel, on his own, far from home or obligation of any sort, motivated only by a desire to return.

It might be said that Cugel's motivation is revenge, but this needs instant qualification. The revenge theme in Cugel is largely formal; it plays no role in most of the adventures. Vengeance, in fact, is more characteristic of Odysseus, Renart and Robin Hood. Robin Hood seeks to change society through a process of redressment, mirroring the social outlook popular at the time his story took its modern form. Though many of his adventures have nothing to do with righting wrongs—such as the comical meetings with Little John and Friar Tuck, the medieval root of the saga—his most characteristic activity is robbing the rich to redistribute their

unjust accumulations to the poor. This is a sort of social revenge. As an example, here is a passage from chapter 13 of Howard Pyle's famous text, where Robin has the Bishop of Hereford at his mercy—note the heavy-handed moralizing undertones:

"I prythee, give me that golden chain that hangeth about thy neck as a wedding present for this fair bride."

Then the Bishop's cheeks grew red with rage and his eyes flashed. He looked at Robin with a fell look, but saw that in the yeoman's face which bade him pause. Then slowly he took the chain from about his neck and handed it to Robin, who flung it over Ellen's head so that it hung glittering about her shoulders.

Then said merry Robin, "I thank thee, on the bride's part, for thy handsome gift, and truly thou thyself art more seemly without it."

Robin is all goodwill and generosity—with other people's money. The 'other people', of course, are both rich and undeserving. As for Renart, his mean tricks, his apparently gratuitous crimes, are sometimes retribution for injuries he has suffered, as he explains at his trial:

When I was only a little cub, living on my mother's milk, I didn't know what it was to be mean. But, hardly was I weaned when fate brought Ysengrin into my path. It was then I learned evil. Ysengrin revealed to me the delicious taste of live meat, and, bit by bit, I grew used to killing. Little animals first—moles, mice, birds—then capons, lambs and kids. Not only did I kill, I felt pleasure in killing; with delight I licked up the blood I spilled. This was a bad school, but worse was to come. When I hunted with Ysengrin, the sharing was far from equitable. He first took his own part, then the part of Giremonde, his wife, than that of his band of cubs which always followed him about; I saw as many as seven. And when it was my turn, there was nothing left but a few gnawed bones. I was lucky if I did not get more than my share of insults and blows! If ever I could snatch a bit of game I did so without scruples, and so I became wily, hypocrite and thief. The tricks I later played on Ysengrin are but a bit of revenge for the wrong he did me when my youth made me unable to defend myself.

If my badness lead me on to do evil to others of whom I had no complaint, I very humbly beg their pardon. At this moment, when I am about to die, I curse Ysengrin for the evil lessons which I received from him, and I urge all father's of families who hear me, to prudently supervise their children's relations.\*

Odysseus, before reaching Ithaca, is motivated only by desire to return. But the problem of the suitors has a large place in the story over-all. Of the 24 books, Odysseus is

\* This speech is followed by a Renart classic; having deflected the court's attention from himself to Ysengrin he collapses in tears and makes a final appeal to Noble, claiming a desire to prove his "devotion and fidelity" by showing Noble the way to a marvelous treasure. Renart befuddles Noble through avarice, and a new round of adventures begins.

When Renart is brought to trial a second time his new attempts to elude punishment has an amusing contemporary echo. Grimbert, the badger, acting as Renart's advocate, suggests that rather than be hung Renart should be sent on a pilgrimage—i.e. to the crusades—to atone for his sins. Noble disagrees: "Ha!", said the king, "he'll come back worse. They all do. They add to their own badness the badness of the Saracens which they learn over there, and which is considerable."

\* Than which, per *Dodkin's Job*, no status is lower.

absent from 1 through 5, where Athena motivates Telemachus against the suitors, and in book 13 Odysseus finally arrives in Ithaca, and the problem of the suitors is central from there to the end. Books 6 through 13, only seven in twenty four, involve Odysseus' peripatetic adventures.

## VENGEANCE

Vengeance is an important motivation for all our scamps. Each practices it in his own manner. These types of vengeance reflect the cultural concerns of the authors, which define its various justifications. Odysseus suffers insult to his marriage and wealth. Renart suffers insult to his personhood. Robin Hood is scandalized by inequality and social injustice.

In the classical age social connections and material possessions were extensions of the self. Their violation was an insult punishable by death. In the middle ages, under Christian influence, the essence of personhood became understood as the intimate and inward. The self did not extend to wives and property; it was contained in the soul. This difference is highlighted by the contrast of the Greek and Christian after-life. Hades is a place of shadow and vagueness. The disembodied spirits of the dead wander purposely, regretting their lost lives in feeble and ineffectual moans. Heaven, by contrast, is full of light and vitality. Its denizens are clothed in 'spiritual' or 'glorified' bodies, often with vigorous wings for sky sport. They play marvelous music on harps, trumpets and cymbals. They enjoy contentment, old and new friendships, and are delighted by contemplation of Divine Splendor. Heaven is not a loss of life but its fulfillment, a joyful and eternal reward. Hades is a pathetic collapse into semi-existence. Without those essential extensions of the soul, first the physical body but also houses, chattels, herds and weapons, all so crucial to living, classical man's life was seen as decisively diminished. In the Christian world, by contrast, monastic abnegation was seen as a high path to the ultimate joys and fulfillments.<sup>†</sup> The suitors, by eating up his herds and stealing his wife are violating Odysseus' body. Renart's complaint about Ysengrin's evil influence is not that it deprived him of food but that it corrupted his soul. Marxian thinking, whereby personal reality is a function of social reality, generates a situation where Robin Hood can be perpetually merry (because he has no personal problems), enjoy a clear conscience (because he is on the right side of history) and still practice vengeance (upon social ills).

Cugel's case is dramatically different. The punishment Lucounu metes out to Cugel may be too harsh but it is Lucounu who is the offended party. Inucunu's harshness may justify Cugel's vengeance, but the situation is ambiguous. Cugel has certainly forfeited something by attempting robbery upon Pergolo; his vengeance may be gratuitous. If Cugel manages to come across as a sympathetic character while appearing to be devoid of decency (except towards the end of the second

book where his ineluctable vicissitudes seem to have taught him a larger perspective), unlike Renart he never seeks to excuse himself. This is because, like Robin Hood, he feels no guilt. But the cause of this guiltlessness is different.

Cugel lives in a harsh world. It is worse than Renart's, Robin Hoods or Odysseus. This harshness, analyzed fully, is a reflection of 20<sup>th</sup> century Heideggerian relativism—that philosophical perspective which opens out into fascism on the one hand and multi-culturalism on the other (and thus islamo-fascism as well, with its overtly religious aspect). The triumph of Heideggerian relativism has had a crippling effect on the Western ego through elimination of the difference between right and wrong (as opposed to merely relativising them to some degree). All that is left are particular perspectives; because there is ultimately no larger perspective than the personal, Cugel has no need to justify himself. Justification is only operative in terms of a higher law englobing the parties to a dispute. When all higher perspectives collapse, 'vengeance' neither requires justification nor can it be anything other than gratuitous. Vance illustrates this in a remarkable manner.

## SELF-JUSTIFICATION IN THE HEIDEGGERIAN CULTURAL DISPENSATION

In a memorable episode Cugel is confronted with a deodand. The cool authorial detachment of the presentation, unparalleled in literature, is like glossy polish on the marble of the scene. The needs and desires of Cugel, on one hand, and the deodand on the other, with their resultant proposals and counter proposals, ploys and counter ploys, are exposed by these two characters with utter frankness.

The passage must be quoted *in extenso*, and each phrase merits an analysis. I will leave this to the reader, only pointing the way in a few comments on the first exchange.

Cugel, tracked by the feral creature, gets the better of him:

"Hold your stroke," it said. "You gain nothing by my death."  
 "Only the satisfaction of killing one who planned to devour me."  
 "A sterile pleasure!"  
 "Few pleasures are otherwise," said Cugel. "But while you live, inform me regarding the Mountains of Magnatz."

Where to begin?! The word 'satisfaction' is ambiguous. It can relate to pleasure, as in; *the meal was a great satisfaction*, or it can be coldly functional, as in; *the exigencies of the plan were satisfied*. In fact Cugel would gain something more than 'satisfaction' by the deodand's death: freedom from menace. Still, with the deodand wounded, the threat appears not to exist. Later, however, the deodand recovers. So if 'satisfaction' is understood to mean a more propitious situation for Cugel—rather than a pleasure—the word is justified. The deodand, however, chooses to interpret the word in terms of pleasure. This shift points to the heideggerian situation of moral relativity; what were once moral choices become a smorgasbord of competing pleasures. When the Christian moral context of marriage collapses, a marriage partner is no longer confronted by an obligation to be faithful, but by a choice: traditional marriage or *union libre*. Both choices are viable. The later may introduce complication (sneaking, lying), but loyalty also involves

<sup>†</sup> Vance offers an amusing echo of these contrasting views in the epigraph of chapter 14 of *The Face*: "... stalwart societies think of poverty as a measure of the man himself. . . I am poor; I admit it! Am I then a churl or a noddy? I deny it with all the vehemence of my soul! I take my bite of seed-cake and my sip of tea with the same relish as any paunchy plutocrat with bulging eyes and grease running from his mouth as he engulfs ortolans in brandy, Krokinole oysters, filet of Darango Five-Horn! My wealth is my shelf of books! My privileges are my dreams!"

complication (resisting temptation). The only measure by which the choice can be made are factors relevant to a given individual's psychic health, so to speak. Morality, a higher code which applies to everyone, is thus insidiously reduced to a self-referential matter of personal preference. It is within this self-referential context that Cugel easily accepts the deodand's formulation, and makes the interesting parry that no better 'satisfaction' can be looked for. This is a sad implication. If, as the Greek philosophers claimed, the goal of life is happiness, and if, as we moderns believe, happiness is pleasure, there is not much to be looked for in life! Cugel then shifts the emphasis from pleasure to practicality by trying to exploit the deodand for information, to extract an advantage from him. This is morally equivalent to armed robbery; the victim is both murdered and exploited. But the heideggerian context make this 'normal'; each individual's 'pleasure' is equivalent to their 'need' (here, Cugel's need for information), and this pleasure-need forms the individual's total moral horizon. The pleasure-need of the other is invisible, or even non-existent.

Here is the whole passage:

. . .he lifted a heavy stone and, as the deodand came skulking below, threw it down upon the creature's back. It toppled and lay kicking, and Cugel jumped down to deliver the death-stroke.

The deodand had pulled himself against the rock and hissed in horror at the sight of Cugel's naked blade. "Hold your stroke," it said. "You gain nothing by my death."

"Only the satisfaction of killing one who planned to devour me."

"A sterile pleasure!"

"Few pleasures are otherwise," said Cugel. "But while you live, inform me regarding the Mountains of Magnatz."

"They are as you see: stern mountains of ancient black rock."

"And what of Magnatz?"

"I have no knowledge of any such entity."

"What? The men to the north shudder at the very word!"

The deodand pulled himself slightly more erect. "This well may be. I have heard the name, and consider it no more than a legend of old."

"Why do travelers go south and none go north?"

"Why should anyone seek to travel north? As for those coming south, they have provided food for myself and my fellows." And the deodand inched himself up. Cugel picked up a great stone, held it aloft and dashed it down upon the black creature, which fell back, kicking feebly. Cugel picked up another stone.

"Hold!" called the deodand in a faint voice. "Spare me, and I will aid you to life."

"How is this?" asked Cugel.

"You seek to travel south; others like me inhabit caves along the way: how can you escape them unless I guide you by ways they do not frequent?"

"You can do this?"

"If you undertake to spare my life."

"Excellent. But I must take safeguards; in your lust for blood you might ignore the agreement."

"You have maimed me; what further security do you need?" cried the deodand. Cugel nevertheless bound the creature's arms and arranged a halter around the thick black neck.

In such fashion they proceeded, the deodand limping and hopping, and directing Cugel by a circuitous route above certain caves.

The mountains lifted higher; winds boomed and echoed down the stone canyons. Cugel continued to question the deodand regarding Magnatz, but elicited only the opinion that Magnatz was a creature of fable.

At last they came to a sandy flat high above the lowlands, which

the deodand declared beyond the zone of his particular sept.

"What lies beyond?" asked Cugel.

"I have no knowledge; this is the limit of my wandering. Now release me and go your way, and I will return to my people."

Cugel shook his head. "Night is not too far distant. What is to prevent you from following to attack me once again? Best that I kill you."

The deodand laughed sadly. "Three others follow us. They have kept their distance only because I waved them back. Kill me and you will never wake to see the morning sun."

"We will travel further together," said Cugel.

"As you wish."

Cugel led the way south, the deodand limping to the rear. The valley became a chasm floored with giant boulders, and looking back Cugel saw black shapes moving among the shadows. The deodand grinned meaningfully at Cugel. "You would do well to halt at once; why wait until dark? Death comes with less horror while the light shines."

Cugel made no response, but pressed forward with all speed. The trail left the valley, climbing to a high meadow where the air blew cool. Larch, kaobab and balm-cedar grew to either side, and a stream ran among grasses and herbs. The deodand began to evince uneasiness, jerking at its halter, limping with exaggerated debility. Cugel could see no reason for the display: the countryside, except for the presence of the deodands, seemed without threat. Cugel became impatient. "Why do you delay? I hope to find a mountain hospice before the coming of dark. Your lagging and limping discommoded me."

"You should have considered this before you maimed me with a rock," said the deodand. "After all, I do not accompany you of my own choice."

Cugel looked behind. The three deodands who previously had skulked among the rocks now followed quite casually. "You have no control over the grisly appetites of your fellows?" Cugel demanded.

"I have no control over my own," responded the deodand. "Only the fact of my broken limbs prevents me from leaping at your throat."

"Do you wish to live?" asked Cugel, putting his hand significantly to sword-hilt.

"To a certain extent, though with not so fervent a yearning as do true men."

"If you value life even an iota, order your fellows to turn back, to give over their sinister pursuit."

"It would be a futile exercise. And in any event what is life to you? Look, before you tower the Mountains of Magnatz!"

"Ha!" muttered Cugel. "Did you not claim the repute of the region to be purely fabulous?"

"Exactly; but I did not enlarge upon the nature of the fable."

As they spoke there came a swift sigh in the air; looking about, Cugel saw that the three deodands had fallen, transfixed by arrows. From a nearby grove stepped four young men in brown hunting costume. They were of a fair, fresh complexion, brown hair, good stature, and seemed of good disposition.

The foremost called out, "How is it that you come from the uninhabited north? And why do you walk with this dire creature of the night?"

"There is no mystery to either of your questions," said Cugel. "First, the north is not uninhabited; some hundreds of men yet remain alive. As to this black hybrid of demon and cannibal, I employed it to lead me safely through the mountains, but I am dissatisfied with its services."

"I did all expected of me," declared the deodand. "Release me in accordance with our pact."

"As you will," said Cugel. He released the halter which secured the creature's throat, and it limped away glaring over its shoulder. Cugel made a sign to the leader of the huntsmen; he spoke a word to his fellows; they raised their bows and shot the deodand with arrows.



The outstanding quality of this passage is not its flowery language, for the language is not flowery. There are a few archaic words or expressions—"Hold your stroke", "one who"—but these are not 'flowery' or 'baroque' such. Vance maintains a distinct linguistic color with perfect taste throughout; the reader is never perturbed by 'style'. The characteristic courteousness of the dialogue seems an amusing, and to some a stilted, contrast with the situation; this is not a stylistic feature but a dramatic necessity. With this device Vance generates the heideggerian ambiance in which the *metaphysical affect* of each being is revealed, where each statement can become an expose of a fundamental thought or feeling. This quality is sometimes described as 'cynical', but in the heideggerian context it is only frank, and this frankness is not stilted because the characters have no reason not to be frank.

Cugel's world is pitiless, so cynicism seems to triumph, but even in the exchange with the deodand it is neither callousness nor treachery which are the leading characteristics. The deodand is essentially a wolf. 'It' (Vance does not say 'he') has only a vague conscience. It knows that men are bound by their word and are susceptible to theoretical considerations (such as the questionable status of pleasure), and because it can talk it gives the impression it can be dealt with rationally, but, being a wolf, this is not the case. In fact it's animal nature obliges the deodand to be both lucid and honest regarding his condition. It admits having no control over its appetite, and also that its attachment to life is less than that of 'true men'. It bargains in ways that would be disloyal in a man, but it cannot be held to that standard. Cugel is therefore not unjust in treating it as an animal, and not cruel when he dispassionately considers whether or not to kill it. Still, his sign to the huntsmen seems a cynically gratuitous act. We may imagine him, erect and aloof, lifting an idly indicative finger. But that image abuses the narrative. Cugel has had a hard day. He has fought for his life. He is in a dangerous situation with no allies. Indeed, the nice looking huntsmen later betray him, and the deodand, by its own admission, continues to represent mortal danger. So his deadly signal is morally no different than spreading rat poison—though Vance, in his piquant way, throws on it a glamour of moral disapprobation.

As for Cugel's murder of the shell creatures, it was not cynical either. Cugel acted in anger. The anger was exaggerated, but he had been provoked, made uncomfortable and mocked. Cugel may be somewhat callous, but he would be a fool not to be; indeed, each time he trusts someone he is betrayed.

The bumbling improvising Cugel is not like Renart, who is a perfect student of his brutal and hypocritical society. He is certainly not like Robin Hood, a champion of the poor, spreading both justice and joy in a world oppressed by selfish and lords of Church and State. He is more like Odysseus: cast into a situation where he is confronted with magicians and monsters, societies and individuals both good and bad. Where Renart is constantly self-serving, where Robin Hood is constantly selfless, Odysseus and Cugel are voyagers in a dangerous world where their only shield is their wits. The great difference between Odysseus and Cugel is this: Odysseus operates in a world where moral

distinctions between good and evil apply to everyone equally, and where the issues are passion-driven interpretations of these distinctions. The right of Odysseus to return home and reclaim what is his is clear—even if his twenty year absence subjects Penelope and Telemachus to understandable doubts and pressures, provoking a certain conflict between them and giving some justification to the suitors. In Cugel's world morality is a local code at best. More often it is collapsed into the individual, so that morality and personal preference are indistinguishable. This anarchic situation gives his adventures their special color. Cugel responds to the constraints he encounters with a flexibility which should be shocking, but ultimately is not, because Vance maintains the heideggerian context with faithful grace.

## SOME AMUSING COMPARISONS OF THE ODYSSEY WITH VANCE

A number of interesting comparisons can be made between the various adventures of Cugel and those of his predecessors. I do not know how far, if at all, Vance exploited these sources. The peripatetic scamp, in himself, implies a set of human situations which, as such, are eternal. Even more striking, however, at least to my mind, are certain Homeric passages rife with vancian echoes. I submit a few for the consideration of my amiable readers:

### THE ULTIMATE PLEASURE

*... to my mind the acme of intelligent delight is when a company sits feasting in a hall, at tables garnished with bread and meat, while a musician charms their ears, and a cup-bearer draws them wine and carries it round ready for their drinking. Surely this is the best thing in the world.*

The Odyssey, book IX

*Cugel performed an extravagant gesture. "That thought must be banished from our minds! Tonight we sit here drinking purple wine! Let tonight last forever!"*

*"This is my own sentiment!" said Archimbaust. "Now is now! There is never more to experience than this single 'now', which recurs at an interval exactly one second in length."*

*Bazzard knit his brows. "What of the first 'now', and the last 'now'? Are these to be regarded as the same entity?"*

*Archimbaust spoke somewhat severely: "Bazzard, your questions are too profound for the occasion. The songs of your musical fish would be more appropriate."*

*"Their progress is slow," said Bazzard. "I have appointed a cantor and a contralto choir, but the harmony is not yet steady."*

*"No matter," said Cugel. "Tonight we will do without. Lucounu, wherever you are, in underworld, overworld or no world whatever: we drink to your memory in your own wine! This is the final joke, and, feeble though it may be, it is at your expense, and hence, enjoyed by the company! Sylphs, make play with the decanters! Once again to the goblets! Bazzard, have you tried this excellent cheese? Vasker: another anchovy? Let the feast proceed!"*

Cugel: the Skybreak Spatterlight

### AFFLICTION BY THE BELLY

*Yet it is deplorable there is no hiding humanity's chief curse, this clamorous belly which launches so many proud ships to the affliction of enemies beyond the sterile seas.*

The Odyssey, Book XVII

*Clasping his abdomen, Cugel took himself aside and while the Chief Chade watched in perplexity, argued heatedly with Firx. "How may I proceed without sustenance?" Firx's response was an incisive motion of the barbs. "Impossible!" exclaimed Cugel. "The amulet of Lucounu theoretically suffices, but I can stomach no more spurge; remember, if I fall dead in the trail, you will never rejoin your comrade in Lucounu's vats!"*

Cugel the Clever

## THE GODLIKE ANOME

*The Gods are always disguising themselves as travelers from abroad and roaming our settlement to note human good or ill.*

The Odyssey, Book XVII

*The Connatic conceives his function to be the identification and relief of social stresses. Sometimes he ameliorates, sometimes he employs techniques of distraction. When harshness becomes unavoidable he deploys his military agency, the 'Whelm'. Oman Urshl winces to see an insect injured; the Connatic without compunction orders a million persons to their doom. In many cases, believing that each condition generates its own counter-condition, he stands aloof, fearing to introduce a confusing third factor. When in doubt, do nothing: this is one of the Connatic's favorite credos.*

Trullion

Here, again, is a fine example of the Greek moral attitude, to contrast with Vance's heideggerian attitude; the Connatic's concern, like the Anome's, is not good and evil, but morally neutral 'social stresses'.

## GLAMOURS

*Athena came down, to enhance the stature and build of this shepherd of the people, so dignifying his limbs that the figure which issued from the bath was like an immortal.*

The Odyssey, Book XXIV

*I will cast a glamour upon you, so that folk will be enthralled, and mistake you for a creature of allure.*

Madouc

## TREE ARCHITECTURE

*The bed's design was a marvelous devise of my own conniving. Within our court had sprung a stem of olive, bushy, long in the leaf, vigorous; the bole of it column-thick. Round it I planted my bed-chamber, walled entire with fine-jointed ashlar and soundly roofed. After adding close-fitted doors, I polled the olive's spreading top and trimmed its stump from the root up, dressing it smooth with my tools, to serve as bed-post. With this for main member (boring it with my auger wherever required) I framed the bed, inlaying it with gold, silver and ivory and lacing it across with ox-hide thongs, died blood-purple.*

The Odyssey, Book XXIII

*He walked to the wall, stroked the green fiber. "This floss we inject a liquid into an organ of the rudimentary pod. The liquid comprises substances such as powdered ammonite nerve, ash of the frunz bush, sodium isochromyl acetate, powder from the Phanodano meteorite. The liquid undergoes six critical operations, and must be injected through the proboscis of a sea-lympid. Tell me," he glanced at Farr through his viewer, "how long before your Earth researchers could grow green floss into a pod?"*

The Houses of Iszm



## ADVERSE SELECTION

### A ROLICKING TALE OF INTERSTELLAR INSURANCE SALES

By Greg Hansen

Orin grimaced at the foreclosure notice on the desk in front of him. Sighing, he leaned back in the creaky desk chair and looked around the office: shelves of dusty books, stacks of obsolete sales brochures, and everywhere filing cabinets: dented, scratched, mismatched, oppressive.

Bennett Insurance had been a thriving agency when Orin inherited it from his father, legendary insurance salesman Otto Bennett. So prosperous in fact that Orin, a mediocre salesman of two years' experience, suddenly had the means to pursue his real passion: spaceboat racing.

Orin poured his soul (and much of Otto's money) into building the fastest vessel in the quadrant. He was in the running for a sector championship when a navigational error left him drifting near the Boundary Zone.

A week later, safe at home after an astronomically improbable rescue, Orin was a changed man. He took up the flickering family torch, determined to help others avoid the fate he'd so narrowly escaped, or, that failing, to make sure their beneficiaries were well provided for.

He arrived at work early, skipped lunch, stayed late. He spread the gospel of insurance to all he met and always asked for referrals.

Orin's new-found enthusiasm for the insurance business lasted for three weeks. Then, one night at the theater, he found his true calling. In a flash of cathartic self-discovery he glimpsed a clear vision of his future: the stage! The next morning he enrolled in the intersectionally famous Grumpkin School of the Dramatic Arts. At last, Orin felt, he had found his place in the universe, his traction on the slippery roads of life.

Orin's efforts (and large tuition checks) eventually won him a part in Grumpkin's production of *The Tyrant of Tym*. As Messenger #2 his lines were short but he delivered them with passion and verve; time seemed to all but stop when, on opening night, Orin said, "The Tyrant awaits without, growing evermore impatient and damp!" and later, "It will be done."

Alas, the play was torpedoed by the critics, each of whom had an axe to grind, and the sour economy—or perhaps the unseasonably warm weather?—kept all but friends and family of the cast away from the ticket office. The production was cancelled after two performances.

When Orin arrived for lessons the next morning he found the school's doors locked and the faculty gone, along with a substantial amount of his pre-paid tuition. Heartbroken and with a negative balance in his bank account, Orin returned to Bennett Insurance.

He found that in his absence much had changed. The salesmen had left and had taken the clients with them. Also gone were the underwriters, the clericals and the janitor. In fact the only familiar face present to welcome him back to the empty office was Gerta Griswold, "Grizzly Gerta," Otto's loyal and longsuffering secretary.

Slumped disconsolately at his desk, Orin shuddered at the thought of her. She'd been tough, old and furrowed as long as he could remember, a hard-nosed woman without a shred of tact or sensitivity. Her only redeeming quality, as far as Orin could see, was an uncanny understanding of the insurance business. Otto had loved her. Orin hated and feared her in equal measures.

Perhaps, Orin mused as he stared at the office ceiling with hands clasped behind his head, the time had come to let her go. Gerta had her uses—putting off creditors, for one—but the office needed a fresh start. He ought to replace her with someone else, someone younger, prettier, perhaps a blonde or a red-head . . .

Orin's reverie was broken by the beep-beep of his intercom and the growl of Gerta's voice: "Mr. Bennett, a Mr. Stapleford here to see you."

"Gerta!" Orin hissed, shooting a fearful glance at the foreclosure notice on the desktop, "I'm not in the office for strangers!"

"Mr. Stapleford was referred to us and would like to discuss a line of coverage," said Gerta, ignoring his outburst.

Orin froze for a surprised instant, then sprang into action. He whisked empty bottles and food wrappers into the trash. Opening a desk drawer to sweep in a pile of papers, he found it already full and dumped them in the trash as well. He shoved piles of scripts, unopened mail and several moldering client files into the coat closet, then threw on his jacket, straightened his tie and stood behind the desk to catch his breath.

Satisfied, he keyed the intercom. "Very well Miss Griswold, show him in."

A few seconds later the door opened and a well-dressed, middle-aged man carrying a leather valise entered the office, followed by Gerta.

"Mr. Stapleford!" Orin greeted the man like a long-lost friend, coming 'round the corner of his desk to proffer a firm handshake. "I'm Orin Bennett. Please, sit down . . . can I get you a beverage?"

"Soda, thank you."

Orin snapped his fingers at Gerta, who returned moments later with two opened bottles of Vitro. On her way out of the office she shot Orin a look whose message was clear: "lose this one and I'll tear your ears off."

Orin settled into his chair and asked the obvious question: "What brings you to see us today?"

"Well," Stapleford began, fixing Orin with a pair of strangely lavender-colored eyes, "I've heard good things about your agency and I'm in need of some specialized coverage."

"You've come to the right place," Orin boldly returned. "We represent more lines of insurance than any other agency on Varfleet; our specialty is custom work."

"Yes, of course," Stapleford murmured with a thin smile. "What type of coverage did you have in mind?"

"Abduction insurance," Stapleford said evenly.

"Say no more!" Orin reclined into a position of wisdom and competence. "A very prudent decision; piracy is rampant these days. In fact we recently paid a large claim in behalf of a client who was abducted near Magtar's Reach," Orin lied suavely. "He may be sweltering in a Scyrillian salt mine but his children are enjoying a first-rate college education!"

"I'm glad to hear that," Stapleford replied, also reclining

nonchalantly. "But I don't want to insure against abduction. I need a policy that will compensate me in case an abduction fails to occur."

Orin nodded sagely, then looked up: "Excuse me?"

"A certain cousin of mine is traveling toward Varfleet this week. She's a despicable woman and plans considerable damage to my interests should she arrive in a timely fashion."

Stapleford leaned forward in his chair. "I've arranged for her to travel with a single companion through The Rings, an area notorious for piracy, as, of course, you are aware."

"Of course!" Orin said with a conspiratorial smile.

"Two women traveling alone have slim chance of success; odds are they will be abducted and delayed. I'm convinced of it. But . . . if somehow they manage to slip through . . . I must hedge against such an outcome, improbable as it may be."

Orin simulated an easy smile while his mind raced. Insurance against safe passage? He'd never heard of it, didn't think such coverage existed. "I'm not sure such coverage exists,"

Orin slipped, breaking the cardinal rule of insurance sales, which is: never admit doubt.

Stapleford made a disappointed sound and rose from his chair. "I suppose I'll have to visit Barclay & Clark . . ."

"No! No. No need to do that," Orin exclaimed, hands raised in protest. Barclay & Clark had appeared out of nowhere to become the largest insurer on the planet, its ascension as dramatic as Bennett's collapse. Dozens of former Bennett employees now carried the Barclay & Clark logo on their business cards. "We have relationships with carriers who handle exotic and exceptional cases. I'll get you that coverage." Orin punctuated his words with a confident smile.

"Excellent," said Stapleford, resuming his seat. "Now, as to the premium . . ."

"I'll have that answer for you first thing tomorrow."

Stapleford winced. "Not soon enough, I fear. My cousin departs Onario-4 this evening and will reach the Rings by morning. I was hoping to bind the coverage today." He reached down and retrieved his valise, popped it open on his lap and began pulling out stacks of bills.

"I estimate my potential losses, should she arrive before Friday, at roughly one million dollars, and the odds of her safe passage at approximately one in fifty. But I am willing to pay up to five hundred thousand dollars," Stapleford added two final stacks to the now teetering pile on the desk, "to insure I do not lose the other half. Does that seem a reasonable sum?"

Orin's eyes popped at the money on the desktop. It sat there smugly, radiating security, the answer to all of his problems. He swallowed. "I'm . . . I'm sure the amount will suffice."

"Very good! If this sum exceeds the premium required you may keep the balance." Orin tore his eyes from the currency and smiled gratefully at his visitor. "Perhaps you have some kind of agreement we could sign?" Stapleford suggested.

"Of course!" Orin jumped up, rummaged through a filing cabinet drawer and withdrew a rumpled form. "This should serve." He filled in the details of their agreement and both added their signatures. Orin powered up the dusty notary machine and within a few seconds the wrinkled document bore the holographic seal of Varfleet Commercial Court, with



a duplicate added to the Court's electronic archive.

Orin walked his new client to the door, winking at Gerta as they strode past. He followed Stapleford to the sidewalk and bid him a very sincere good day, then jauntily ran back up the front steps and into the office.

"What's the largest commission my father ever earned?" he asked an expectant Gerta.

"A quarter million dollars," she replied.

"Get out the record book and your eraser my dear, you're going to need them!"

Five minutes later, on the line with Varsys Brokerage, Orin's elation disappeared. "What are you, *nuts*?" asked Philo Farnsworth. "We've worked with you folks for decades. Heaven knows your dad was like a brother to me so I won't report this to the Insurance Commissioner. But Orin this is about the worst I've ever heard!"

"So there's no one who'll issue the coverage?" Orin pleaded.

"Absolutely not! Abduction is a sectional felony, no carrier would risk its license by encouraging it. Stay as far as you can from this one."

"Um, I may have already accepted an initial premium," Orin timidly admitted.

"Stars Orin, give it back! I'm hanging up now, this conversation never happened."

Orin slowly set the handset down and with growing nausea pondered the elusive nature of happiness. He turned the dilemma around in his mind, looked at it frontwards, backwards, upside down. He saw little reason for hope.

. . . But hadn't Stapleford said his cousin's chances of getting through were small? One in fifty? . . . the Rings were teeming with pirates, and she was traveling virtually alone. He began to feel a little better. Still, Orin knew something about beating the odds. He reached for his hat.

"Where are you going?" Greta demanded as he brushed by.

"To celebrate! Hold my calls." Orin got through the door without answering any more questions. He hailed a hovercab and asked to be taken to the spaceport Club. He would find Hartman and ask his opinion. Hartman was a writer and seemed to know everything.

Orin found Hartman where he'd last seen him six months previously, nursing a glass of grapefruit juice at the Club's corner table. After a few pleasantries and good-natured insults Orin ventured a question: "Say, Hartman, when you wrote that novel about space pirates you did a lot of research, right?"

"Sure."

"Were they pretty thick in the Rings?"

"Oh yeah, that was one of their favorite places. Ships leaving any of the inner planets have to clear the belt before jumping to light speed, made 'em sitting ducks. Add about a hundred thousand hideouts in the asteroid belt and you've got yourself space pirate heaven."

Orin brightened. "So a single unarmed ship would be taken for sure these days, right?"

"Not really." Hartman took a microscopic sip from his glass. "Things are pretty quiet out there since the crackdown."

"The crackdown?"

"Yeah, Sector Fleet showed up a few years ago and rooted all the pirates out. It was quite a purge, filled a dozen

prisons. Those poor boys are rotting behind bars now: Laser Jim, One-eyed Bobby Murphy, the Regolith Gang . . . all of 'em." Hartman heaved a sigh and moistened his lips with his juice.

"So there aren't any pirates left?" Orin asked in a small, trembling voice.

"Not as I've heard. Kind of sad, ain't it?—hey are you feeling okay? You look a little pale."

Orin's face was indeed pale; the room seemed to be spinning around him. "Ah yeah, its just something I ate," he managed to mumble, lurching to his feet. "Listen I gotta go . . . I'll see you later."

"Okay, but don't be such a stranger!"

Orin pushed through the Club's front door and stumbled down the steps. Walking numbly across the courtyard, he imagined Stapleford's cousin—her old, wrinkled, disease-pocked face twisted into a malicious sneer—slouching toward Varfleet to ruin him, and not a single pirate left to stop her. By force of habit his steps took him across the spaceport campus to the privately-leased pads where the racing yachts were kept.

Moments later Orin looked up and was surprised to see his spaceboat looming over him. He briefly considered selling it, then ruefully realized the futility of the idea: with half a dozen such vessels to sell he'd still be filing bankruptcy within a week. Suddenly, gazing at the boat's slim, businesslike profile silhouetted against the setting sun, an idea occurred to him. It was a crazy, desperate idea, but he was a desperate man. Pulling his mobile phone from a pocket he dialed a number. Anna answered on the second ring.

"Varfleet Correctional Facility, Sergeant Angstrom speaking."

"Anna its Orin, please don't hang up!"

There was a pause, then: "You never called me. You said you would call me."

"I know and I'm so sorry, darling. I'd have called sooner but you see, I've gotten myself into a bit of trouble."

"What's wrong?" Anna was guardedly concerned.

"I can't explain now, but I need a favor. It's a matter of life and death."

Anna's tone softened. "What is it?"

"I need to know if there's anyone in the Varfleet prisons on piracy charges."

"Piracy! Orin, what's going . . ."

"Anna, please! I'm running out of time!"

"Hold on." Orin heard a keyboard crackling in the background. "Mmm, yes, here's one. Reynold Perry, he's being held at Westside Detention Center." Orin felt a stab of fear and excitement: Westside was just a few blocks from the spaceport.

"Thanks, Anna, you're a doll."

"Orin, I was thinking that . . ." Anna began, but Orin had already hung up.

A few minutes later Orin burst through the doors of Westside Detention and stood panting in front of the watch officer. "I'm here to see Reynold Perry," he managed at last.

"And you are?"

"Orin Benn . . . ifkoffsky. I'm Reynold's cousin."

The officer looked at him skeptically, then turned to a small console. "Alright Mr. Bennikoff . . ."

". . . sky."

"Reynold Perry is in holding cell 13. I'll get a sergeant to escort you back there. You'd best make it quick, visiting hours end in thirty minutes."

Orin waited anxiously for his escort to arrive. He submitted to a brief search and followed the guard through a security gate into the jail. They paused at the door to the cell, and while the sergeant fumbled with his keys Orin peered through a small glass window at the first bona-fide pirate he'd ever laid eyes upon.

The man was wearing a gray prison unisuit. His hair was black, as were the fierce whiskers bristling from his face. He was slim and pale. In spite of being comfortably reclined on his bunk, to Orin he seemed like a jungle cat ready to pounce.

"Incredible!" Orin murmured.

"Yeah, he's a live one," agreed the sergeant.

"How long has he been here?" Orin asked.

"About three days."

"Three days! I thought it would have been much longer."

"Well, as to that," said the guard, "I understand he was a mite hard to catch." Orin grinned: not just a pirate, but an uncommonly elusive one! "You planning to bail him out?" asked the guard, still peering at keys under the dim florescent light.

Bail! Orin hadn't thought of that! Suddenly he saw a world of new possibilities. "Yes, of course," he replied nonchalantly. "What was bail set at again?"

The sergeant consulted his wrist computer. "One hundred thousand dollars. Ah, here it is!" He slipped the key into the lock and opened the cell door, then stepped back and waved Orin inside. "You got five minutes." He locked the door and paced slowly off down the hallway.

The pirate looked up as Orin carefully entered the cell. "Who are you and what are you doing here?" he asked suspiciously.

"I . . . am a friend," Orin said in a soothing tone, palms held out in a pacifying gesture. "I have a proposal for you. I can post your bail, but I have need of your particular . . . skills."

Reynold Perry sat up on his cot and rolled his eyes around the room a couple of times. "Doubtless this proposal of yours would best be discussed outside the jail," he said softly.

Of course! thought Orin. The cell would surely be bugged on the chance Reynold would mumble vital information in his sleep or something. Orin responded with an exaggerated nod.

The pirate on the cot gave a meaningful nod of his own. "Alright then," he purred. "Shall we go?"

"Ah, you wait right here . . . don't go away," said Orin. "I'll be back in twenty minutes!" Reynold shrugged, looking pointedly at the heavy steel door.

The guard in the hallway opened the cell door at Orin's brisk knock. "Done already?"

"Yes, thank you. I'll be returning in a short time to post bail. Please have the prisoner — my cousin, ready to go."

The guard shrugged. "Your money," he grunted, re-bolting the cell door and escorting Orin back to the lobby.

Orin rushed through the jail entrance and caught sight of a vacant hovercab cruising down the street. He sprinted out in front of it, arms waving. Ten minutes later, with the hovercab waiting, Orin let himself into the Bennett Insurance building

and opened the safe. He breathed a sigh of relief to see the money where he'd left it, then raked a double armful into a briefcase.

Five more minutes and he was at his apartment. He he filled a duffel with the supplies they'd need and sprinted back to the hovercab. Then, exactly twenty-seven minutes after having left, a perspiring Orin Bennett walked back through the doors of Westside Detention. He hefted the briefcase onto the counter in front of the taciturn watch officer, popped it open and pulled out a handful of bills.

"Here are one hundred thousand dollars as bond for my cousin," Orin declared. He waited impatiently as another officer was called to the desk. The two officers counted and recorded the payment and carried it away through the security gate. In its place they returned with Reynold Perry. He wore handcuffs on his wrists and a grin on his face.

Some words were said about the terms of Reynold's bond and the date of his next court appearance. Off came the handcuffs. An officer handed Reynold a thick sheaf of pages containing the complete details of his release, then waved him out. As Orin and Reynold left the building, Reynold tossed the folder into a public trash bin with a contemptuous grunt.

Orin was not reassured by this gesture, but said nothing. On account of the driver the two kept their silence in the hovercab, but Orin had decided to keep his plans under wraps in any case until they'd reached their destination. He simply told Reynold they'd be traveling across the sector to a rendezvous. Once Reynold found out he would be leaving the planet, he was satisfied and asked no questions.

At the spaceport Orin had the spaceboat's engines humming in minutes. Grateful he'd thought to top off the vessel's tanks before parking it, he pulled back on the yoke, engaged the throttle, and the powerful vessel leaped into space.

Orin's hands were sure on the controls despite long absence, as were his inputs into the navigation computer; the spaceboat dropped out of relativistic speed by the outermost Ring. Orin set a course for the center of the transit path and deployed his sensors. That done, he reclined in his chair, folded his arms and swiveled to face his passenger.

"Recognize the scenery?" Orin asked smugly.

"No, can't say I do."

Orin laughed. "We're approaching the Onarian Rings!"

"Aha," Reynold replied. "And we're here because..?"

Orin hopped out of his chair and dragged the duffel from a cargo locker. "We're here to intercept another vessel — unarmed and alone, mind you — and kidnap two old women. I brought you along for some pointers about how to conceal our approach, take command of the other ship, and so on." Orin upended the duffel and poured its contents onto the floor of the cabin: a collection of brightly colored clothing and various weapons. "A simple enough task for you, I know, but this is the first time I've done any pirate work."

"Hold on a second," Reynold interjected. "What makes you think I know anything about this?"

Orin looked up sharply. "You were imprisoned for piracy, weren't you?"

"Yeah," Reynold answered, "copyright piracy. I ran an unauthorized duplication and distribution ring. Software, music, children's videos . . . that sort of thing."

Silence filled the cabin. At length, his eyes wide, Orin



stammered, "... So you don't know anything about the Rings, or how to abduct travelers?"

"Of course not!" An incredulous smile slowly spread across Reynold's whiskery face. "Don't tell me you actually thought I was..."

He was interrupted by a klaxon from the sensor array: an incoming spacecraft! Both men turned their heads toward the viewing screen where the approaching vessel's electronic manifest displayed: a privately registered ship carrying two passengers, destination Varfleet spaceport.

"Well well," said Reynold with a chuckle. "It seems we're about to have some company. Could this be our quarry?"

Orin nodded. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Come on, partner! Cheer up! We've come this far, and breaking one law is much like breaking another, the difference being mainly a matter of scale... hey, watch where you're pointing that thing!" Using one finger Reynold redirected the wide-angle stun pistol, inlaid with silver filigree, which Orin was negligently pointing at him.

"Don't worry, its just a stage prop," Orin mumbled. He held a wide-brimmed, feathered hat in one hand and the silver blaster in the other.

Reynold admired the gun with approval. "Very clever, my friend!" he crowed, obviously enjoying himself. "I see no reason why we shouldn't succeed. How much fight can a couple of old ladies put up after all? We have these fine pirate clothes, and your spaceship seems to be equipped with a grappling beam..."

A short time later Orin and Reynold stood at the forward air lock, blasters in hand. They'd hailed the ship and ordered her to stand to and prepare to be boarded; when she'd tried to run they had easily overtaken her and brought her about with the grapppler.

Waiting for the bulkhead door to open, Orin suddenly felt enormous stage fright. His knees trembled and his hands shook. Reynold, however, was grinning easily.

The door irised open; the pirates scrambled through and came face to face with their victims. But instead of wrinkled crones, the two women were young, and quite definitely pretty.

One stood with hands on hips and a hard look on her face. Red hair framed her fiery eyes. The other woman, dark-haired and somewhat more plain in features and dress, stood behind the red-head, flushed with fear and excitement. Orin, yet again, was struck speechless.

The two women were equally surprised. Their assailants were dressed in soft leather boots, brown hose and ragged, brightly colored tunics with wide leather belts. One was unshaven and the other wore an impossibly garish feathered hat. The blasters they carried, however, seemed all business.

The two groups regarded each other with mutual

consternation. The red-head spoke first. "Well?"

"Ah, I hereby inform you that you are our prisoners," Orin said stiffly.

"Such would seem to be the case," the redhead coolly responded.

Orin, warming to his role, doffed his hat with a flourish. "I am Captain Bennikoffsky and this is my first mate, Reynold-the-Black." Reynold nodded, eyes twinkling.

The red-head considered for a moment. "What is this, some kind of joke?"

"I'm afraid not," Orin replied gravely. "Now, if you would be so kind as to board our vessel..." He stood aside and waved his free hand toward the airlock.

The girl glared at Orin, then at the smiling Reynold. With a growl of frustration she stormed between them and crawled into the airlock, her companion close at her heels. Orin and Reynold followed.

The cabin of the racer could ill accommodate four

occupants, and Orin found himself uncomfortably close to his hostages.

"Ahh..." he said. The red-head raised an eyebrow.

"Names!" Reynold exclaimed, looking with keen interest at the blushing brunette. "You have ours; what might yours be?"

"I'm Vivian Delay and she is Daphne Clark," blurted the brunette, much to her companion's dismay.

"Charmed," returned Reynold with a bow of his own. He appraised Vivian favorably for a moment. Vivian, suddenly aware of Reynold's attentions, came to life, self-consciously touching her hair and smiling back at him. The two exchanged appreciative glances.

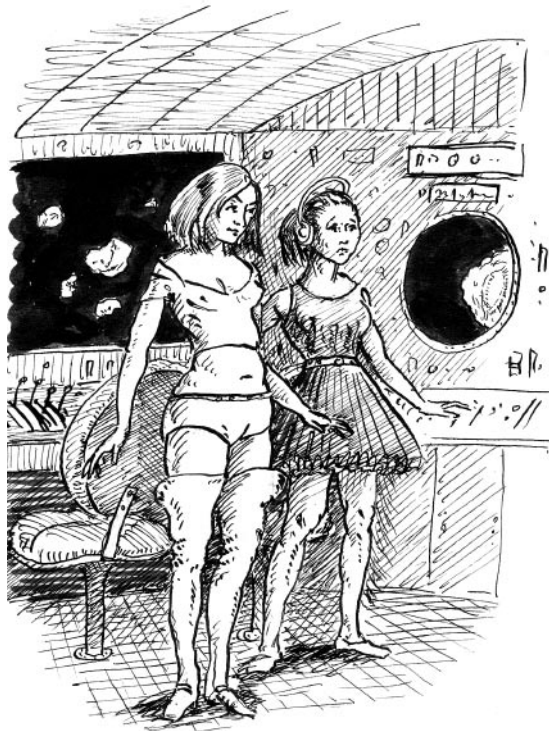
"Okay," announced Orin, "if you girls will cooperate and do what you're told, no one will get hurt."

Daphne brushed a stray wisp of red hair out of her eyes, the better to skewer Orin with her glare. "And what are your plans for us?"

"That I cannot tell you, except that if you behave well your captivity will be relatively short and painless."

Just then the racer's proximity motion alarm sounded. That's strange, thought Orin. He hadn't heard or felt the girls' vessel slip its airlock coupling. If it had and was drifting, even a low speed collision could hole the spaceboat. He took a step to the porthole and peered through, relieved to see the captive vessel in its place. Then he saw it, hulking into view from behind the other ship like a gibbous moon over a steel horizon: the unmistakable, cannon-studded prow of a Starfleet battle cruiser. His jaw dropped. "Ohh," he murmured.

"Perhaps our captivity will be even shorter than you intended," Daphne purred at his shoulder. "As for yours, however..."



*The two women were young, and quite definitely pretty.*

Orin spun around and shouted for Reynold: "A Starfleet cruiser!" Reynold's smile went out like a light. "Blow the coupling! And you girls . . . sit down and buckle in!"

Daphne took a step to the center of the cabin where she stood between Orin and the controls, hands back on her hips. "Why should we make it easy for you?" she challenged. Orin muttered a curse, squeezed past her to the pilot's seat and frantically began pushing buttons. The racer shuddered as the airlock coupling blew and sent the empty prize into the path of the oncoming cruiser. Heart pounding, Orin looked from Daphne to the controls and back again. "Will you please sit down and buckle in!" he exclaimed.

"Please?" Daphne shot back. "What kind of pirate says 'please'? And what self-respecting pirate would wear that ridiculous hat?!" she demanded, pointing an accusing finger at the feathered monstrosity on Orin's head.

Orin's mouth went dry. "If you don't sit down right now your life is in grave danger," he said, trying in vain to sound commanding. Daphne gave him a calculating look, then leaned forward to peer at him more closely. "I don't think you're a pirate at all," she whispered. Turning, she eased into the co-pilot's seat with the air of an amused spectator.

Orin shot a glance toward the rear of the cabin. The auxiliary acceleration couch was barely large enough for one, but somehow Reynold and Vivian had managed.

Just then the communicator chattered angrily: "This is Galactic Starfleet. Do not move or you will be destroyed. Prepare to be boarded . . ."

Orin flicked off the communicator, mashed the throttle and the chase was on. Escape looked doubtful in the early moments, as the battle cruiser was already making headway when Orin lit his thrusters. But soon the racer's power and agility began to tell and Orin opened up a lead. Two additional cruisers, however, suddenly appeared and forced him back toward the heart of the asteroid belt.

Evading the battle cruisers took every ounce of Orin's skill, all the power in his engines and a deal of luck besides. Twice the cruisers got close enough to launch grappling beams, but a pilot doesn't survive long in the wild world of spaceboat racing if he is vulnerable to such tactics. Both times the beams skittered off the specially treated, composite graphite hull.

Finally Orin swung around a large asteroid and shot the racer through a gap in his pursuers' formation. He hurtled out of the Rings, engaged the mass-energy drive and vanished in a flare of blue light.

Safe in an isolated corner of the Sector, Orin throttled down and slumped in his chair.

"Very impressive," Daphne said with grudging respect. "Now, exactly who and what are you?"

Exhausted, Orin looked at her and surrendered. "You're right, I'm no pirate," he moaned. "I'm not even good at playing one."

"Then why . . .?" Daphne's eyes narrowed. "My uncle put you up to this, didn't he?"

"Your uncle?"

"Bosphorous Clark."

"No, the fellow's name was Stapleford. Pretty ordinary guy, except for his eyes," Orin said, remembering. "They were the strangest shade of . . ."

"Purple?"

"Yes! How'd you know?"

"His name isn't Stapleford, it's Avaniel Clark and he's my pathetic excuse for a first cousin." Daphne was angry again, but this time it was an older, premeditated emotion and Orin was glad not to be the focus of it.

"The arrogant, intergalactic scoundrel!" she snapped. "How many people has he swindled and ruined . . . his own family among them. And now this!" She waved a hand at her surroundings. "Ah well, what more can I expect from an insurance salesman."

Orin felt the blow and groaned. "Is it that obvious?" he asked miserably.

"What?"

"That I'm an insurance salesman."

"I never said you were an insurance salesman, I said my uncle was."

Orin blinked a few times. "Your uncle is an insurance salesman?"

"He is the founder and sole owner of Barclay & Clark Insurance, a fairly big agency on Varfleet. Avaniel is his son and second-in-command."

"But if he owns Barclay & Clark, then why . . ." Orin struggled to make order of these pieces of information. He blinked and grimaced, a half-formed word on his tongue. Then, suddenly and with an almost audible clunk, it came to him.

"Hey!" he shouted and jumped out of his chair. "Stapleford didn't need an abduction policy! He gave me that money so I'd . . . so I'd fly out to the Rings and kidnap you girls!"

"Doubtless he tipped off the Fleet, too," said Reynold from the auxiliary couch, which he was still occupying with Vivian. "You don't see three Fleet cruisers in one place by mere chance." Orin gaped at the truth of it.

"We'd have been transported to Fleet HQ for processing," added Vivian, "which would have taken days, weeks maybe. And you two would have been locked away forever," she added wistfully, admiring Reynold from close range.

"Right," Reynold concluded, returning Vivian's embrace. "Old man Clark gets rid of a pesky niece and a competitor in one easy stroke."

Daphne shook her head. "The dirty, rotten . . ."

". . . scoundrel," Orin finished. The four paused in the wake of realization.

Reynold broke the silence. "Why is he so anxious to keep you away from Varfleet?"

Daphne grinned mischievously. "Because if I reach the planet before ten o'clock tomorrow morning I can ruin him entirely."

Orin leaned forward, eyes wide. "Really? How?"

"Years ago my mother loaned Uncle Bosphorous ten thousand dollars to start his company. As security he gave her a one million-dollar option to purchase Barclay & Clark shares should they ever come up for sale."

"How many shares?" Orin asked.

"All of them."

Orin gasped. "All of them! Those shares must be worth thirty, forty million dollars!"

"Barclay & Clark is worth a little more than that," Daphne said knowingly. "Bosphorous has arranged to sell the company to off-world investors for seven hundred sixty-three million dollars, give or take a few hundred thousand. The



purchase agreement is to be ratified tomorrow morning."

Silence again in the cabin, then a low whistle from Reynold.

"What about the option certificate?" Orin asked. "Last I saw your spaceship it was headed straight for that battle cruiser. Chances are they blasted it to bits to avoid a collision."

"Oh, we girls have been hiding things from pirates for centuries," Daphne said coyly, reaching into her bodice and withdrawing a folded, yellowed piece of paper. She opened it and the dim cabin light glinted off a faded holographic Commercial Court seal. "Why don't you turn this ship toward Varfleet. We'll teach my uncle a lesson he'll never forget!"

Orin beamed for a few moments, then his face fell. "Oh, I can't do that," he said. "If you reach Varfleet tomorrow morning I'll owe your cousin a million dollars. Contract's been signed and registered with the Commercial Court."

Daphne arched an eyebrow. "Captain Bennikoff . . ."

"Orin."

"Orin, what name did my cousin sign on that contract?"

"William Stapleford . . . hey, there is no William Stapleford, is there?" Orin said, brightening. "So the contract isn't valid!"

"You catch on quickly for an insurance salesman," Daphne replied drily.

Orin's face clouded again. "Then there's the matter of the Galactic Starfleet."

"No problem," Daphne declared. "It's only abduction if you've taken us against our will, right?"

"That's right!" Vivian agreed, blushing but tightening her grip on Reynold all the same.

"But what about the high-speed pursuit?" Orin asked, unconvinced.

"Let me handle it," replied Daphne.

Orin relaxed, brightened again, found and displayed his best insurance agent smile. Reynold objected to the return trip on grounds that his crimes were a bit more extensive than the local authorities realized, and that his former colleagues would be discreet only up to a point. Daphne countered by offering to buy the racer from Orin and turn it over to Reynold once the party had disembarked on Varfleet. Orin agreed in principle, but his efforts to negotiate a better price were interrupted by the arrival of two well-armed Starfleet patrol boats. Daphne reminded Orin that with one word from her he'd rot in prison forever, and a deal was struck.

As the patrol boats approached, Daphne quickly manufactured some tears and sat down in front of the video communicator. She turned it on to reveal an angry, agitated Starfleet Lieutenant.

"Oh officer!" she sobbed, "we were attacked by pirates in the Rings . . ."—Orin and Reynold exchanged nervous glances—" . . . and they chased us for *hours*, but we finally escaped, and . . . and . . . I'm just so glad you've come!"

The officer's face went from anger to confusion, then settled into irritated understanding. "Those weren't pirate ships chasing you," he spat, "they were Fleet battle cruisers! They were there to rescue you from pirates! Didn't you hear them hailing you?"

Daphne's eyes widened beautifully and her red lips parted to take in a surprised breath. "No!" she exclaimed. "We didn't hear . . . oh! The hailing frequency has been

switched off!" She reached across the console to adjust the communicator setting, leaning over and affording a view of her décolleté. "I'm so sorry!" she said, straightening, her still-moist eyes glistening with sincerity.

"So you weren't abducted?" the officer asked, still suspicious.

"Well, yes, I mean no, not really . . ." Daphne blushed and gave her eyes a sensual roll. "See, Viv and I find pirates so exciting," she said breathily, "which is why we had Orin and Reynold meet us in the Rings . . ."

The officer grimaced and peered past Daphne to where Reynold and Vivian were coiled on the auxiliary couch. They waved. The officer harrumphed and grumbled; Daphne gushed apologies. After a few minutes he beamed over a citation for reckless flying and closed the vidcom link with a disgusted shake of his head.

Orin burst into applause when the screen went blank, joined by Reynold and Vivian. Daphne nodded and smiled until the cheering subsided.

"Alright then!" she said brightly. "Let's go buy an insurance company! Now if I could just find someone to run it for me . . ." She regarded Orin. "I don't suppose you're better at insurance sales than you are at piracy?"

"No, not really," he glumly admitted, "I could never run Barclay & Clark." Orin paused for a few moments. "But I know someone who can!"

Later that morning, Orin and Daphne sat in the last row of the Commercial Court gallery. Vivian had opted to stay aboard the racer when they'd touched down at the spaceport. She and Reynold were on their way back to the Rings and, presumably, a life of romance and petty crime.

Just then the judge asked for objections to the scheduled sale of Barclay & Clark. Gerta Griswold sprang from her chair and marched down the courtroom aisle. She'd proved a tougher negotiator than Orin, securing for herself a fat, incentive-laden contract along with a small equity stake in the company.

Orin suddenly saw Gerta with new eyes. She looked every inch the CEO that she soon would be: trim business suit, salt-and-pepper hair, eyes flashing with determination as she waved the faded option certificate over her head. He wondered why he'd never seen it in her before.

The haggling was impassioned but fruitless; in a few minutes an ashen-faced Bosphorous Clark left the courtroom with a cheque for one million dollars and no clear idea of what to do next.

In the months and years that followed, Daphne and Gerta turned Barclay & Clark from a prosperous backwater business into the largest insurer of women in the Galaxy. Eventually they sold the company for an undisclosed sum and Gerta built an opulent villa on the site of the old Bennett Insurance building.

As for Orin, the sale of the spaceboat paid some of his debts and the balance of Stapleford's fraudulent premium took care of the rest. Thus relieved of his creditors, he resolved to stop working altogether and take up writing instead.

He spent several months turning Hartman's as yet unsold space-pirate novel into a screenplay, and the two were pleasantly surprised when it was optioned by a small Onarian film company. The option fee, however, wasn't quite enough

to cover the cost of their celebration party.

Flushed with success (if not currency), Orin and Hartman hired a literary agent and promptly ignored her advice by starting a novel with the working title *Reynoldo Bennikoffsky: Swashbuckling Interstellar Insurance Agent*.

"You're wasting your time!" the agent complained. "No one wants to read about an insurance salesman!" But Orin pressed on. It was, he had learned, a big Galaxy out there, and you never knew what might happen.



## ECHOES IN THE ETHER

### THE INFLUENCE THREAD: VANCE AND STAR TREK

Last May on the VanceBS a certain Elthem Jones speculated about the possible influence of Vance on *Star Trek*. Elthem makes these points: *Star King*, published a year or two before *Star Trek* went into production, uses the name 'Mr. Spock' (Hildemar Dasce' cover); Spock's landlord, a Kroinole Imp, has pointy ears; *Clarges* has a space ship named 'Star Enterprise'; some episodes of *Star Trek* (e.g. *The Gamesters of Triskelion*) use baroquely ornate settings, feature gaming and use skin tone; the *Star Trek* mission of "seeking out new civilizations" is propitious for vancian "anthropological imaginings". Elthem also felt that a similarity existed between Kirth Gersen and James T. Kirk, captain of the *Enterprise*. All this, concluded Elthem, "positively reeks" of Vance influence.

Russell Letson discounted Elthem's points:

...The name "Spock" had been floating around public culture since 1946 thanks to Dr. Benjamin Spock's famous baby book, and

the image of the pointy-eared dwarf is too common to require any particular source. The *Enterprise*, the first nuclear-powered carrier, was launched in 1960—and there was a famous WW II carrier of the same name. As for anthropology, one could as easily suggest Chad Oliver (a working anthropologist) as a *Star Trek* inspiration [and] the character of Captain Kirk doesn't strike me as even faintly Vancean.

But a certain 'Holkerwoyd' seconded Elthem's thesis:

...Vance never wrote for *Star Trek*—and he probably never even watched it. I think, however, he had an indirect and powerful influence though some of the writers, such as Norman Spinrad. Spinrad is not much of a writer (one of the worst *Star Trek* episodes is Spinrad's, about a planet eating machine, a proto-PC story of anti-nuclear intent) but he is greatly influenced by Vance. A certain Stephen Kandel wrote the very vancian 'Harry Mudd' episodes. I don't know anything about Kandel but I would not be surprised to learn that he, like so many, is under Vance's spell.

There is indeed a strong anthropological bent to many of the *Star Trek* episodes. I do not know but I believe this is largely due to Vance, both directly (through writers like Spinrad) and indirectly, through what I believe was Vance's general influence on science fiction, pushing it towards the soft-sciences.

I agree with Russell that such elements as the names 'Spock' or 'Enterprise' probably have nothing to do with Vance, and as for Kirk's personality, if it is vancian, the vancian hero is, after all, only a version of the generic adventure hero, basically a cowboy—a laconic loner with troubled past and without attachments. The dramatic usefulness of such a character is too evident for it not to be widely used. Vance makes very particular use of it, as he makes such particular use of other aspects of genre literature. One could say 'he transforms them into something totally personal'—but it takes nothing away from Vance to note such connections.

These comments generated reactions from VanceBS notables Jojo and Winskill, the latter of which responded to the Holkerwoyd's cowboy remark in these terms:

I think this [being cowboy-like] is so about Vance's laconic loners; except for the "troubled past" part, which is often found in Westerns and mystery/suspense. Vance's are more the spotless-knight kind, in a way; the omniscient John Carter type.

Holkerwoyd responded:

Jojo feels I 'severely overestimate' Vance's influence on SF. Ed Winskill agrees, never having seen any 'big influence' either. Jojo calls such influence at best 'minimal'. I claim no expertise but I do see a shift in science fiction, clearly noticeable by the 1970s, away from hard science to soft-science themes. This tendency becomes flagrant by the 1990s, and especially in the new century, where pop-science fiction is largely devoted, of all things, to existential questions. I believe that the impulsion for this new direction came from Vance. It was stories like "The Languages of Pao" and "The Dragon Masters" which, though never popular successes, had a profound influence on writers in a genre which had worn out its traditional themes and was entering a period where uncritical delight in technology could no longer be sustained by serious minds.

I do not think that Heinlien, despite his importance in the 1960s, was influential in this regard because his non-technological bent was mystical rather than sociological. Vance's influence also operated though Frank Herbert. A much lesser artist, Herbert was greatly influenced by Vance. "Dune", for example, was thoroughly discussed with Vance before it was written.

That Vance never had popular success (for reasons which I believe have more to do with marketing than anything else) by no means excludes having the sort of large and deep influence I believe he



had. Today, for example, I don't think there is any science fiction writer who is more cited as an influence by other writers than Vance.

Regarding a troubled past, Gersen certainly had one. He witnessed the murder of his family and the destruction of his home, and his relationship to his 'mission' was constantly ambiguous. Gastel Etzwane suffered similar childhood trauma. Gersen's trauma mirrors the trauma of his villain-opponents, Vogle Filchner and Howard Hardoa, which is an original vancian use of this genre device (making villains mirrors of the heroes). One might also mention murder traumas in the past of such heroes as Glawen Clattuc and Jaro Fath.

Winskill responded:

Holkerwoyd [certainly makes] a good point about Gersen and some of the others. . . I was probably thinking more of the troubled background that carries over into the troubled character, which is often found in mystery and western.

Adam Reith would be one without even the fraught background.

Gersen had the big trauma of the destruction of his family [but there is] the ambiguous [aspect of his mission, being a] task set him by his grandfather, but he seems otherwise not to be a troubled character himself; very much like Reith.

As for the 'influence' question, I just don't know enough about SF trends and waves and the like to really have a strong opinion. I don't think of Vance as "soft science" though; I see him as indifferent to the "science" of SF; using only the SF backdrop, and keeping the technology totally in the background, to nearly the vanishing point.

Many writers talk about his influence, and much SF may bear the marks of that influence, but I haven't personally seen it in my restricted orbit. But an author taking "Dragon Masters", as an example, as having "soft science themes" would in my view be taking something from Vance that Vance never had in mind at all. Of course, I see that this doesn't mean that it's not influence.

"Pecooper" offered his thoughts:

I [also] question Jack Vance's influence in pushing SF towards the soft-sciences. One could make exactly the same statement about Cordwainer Smith, and probably with more justification, since a number of the New Wave authors listed him as an influence. Russell Letson has already mentioned Chad Oliver about whom the same could be said.

Then, quoting Holkerwoyd's contention that 'no science fiction writer is more cited as an influence by other writers than Vance', Pecooper requested citations and added:

It's certainly an interesting statement, if true.

While there was always a hard-science trend in SF, there have always been authors writing stories that dealt with other things, some of them quite popular. Just off the top of my head, Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, Edmund Hamilton, Jack Williamson, Damon Knight, Frederick Pohl, Clifford D. Simak, the list goes on and on.

I think what you are seeing in the 1960s was the decline in influence John W. Campbell and Analog. He had set the standard since 1938, and he was all for hard-SF. It was the founding of Galaxy by H. L. Gold and Fantasy & Science Fiction by Anthony Boucher in the 1950s that created respectable places where the softer stories were welcome. If you want people who influenced science fiction, I think either of them deserve more credit than Jack Vance.

Love him though I do, I think Vance was just part of a broader trend. He wrote great fiction. That should be enough. Let's not make him one of Secret Masters of Lit'rachoor, too.

Axo remarked:

I would like to mention another author whom I particularly worship, and whom I would put in the "anthropological/sociological" seminal influence category: Ursula K. Le Guin.

Letson then wrote:

We here share a minority view: that Jack is a terrific, maybe even a central writer in the SF tradition. And while there are a number of significant writers who have cited him as a friend or an influence (Silverberg, Ellison, Herbert, Poul Anderson, for starters), Jack has had very little impact on the field as a whole. If you want a writer who is cited much more often as a model and hero, look at Heinlein, the Chun the Unavoidable of SF.

About anthropology and the soft sciences in general: As pecooper points out, one crucial element there is the availability of markets where non-Campbellian SF could be published. Galaxy and its sibling If were hugely important in this respect, particularly by offering writers such as Pohl (with and without Kornbluth) and Robert Sheckley—and later Vance and Farmer. ("Dune", by the way, first appeared as a serial in Analog.) The 1960s also saw the first books by Ursula Le Guin and Samuel R. Delany—from pulp-roots paperback house Ace. Both of these writers had much more impact on the next generation of writers than Jack did.

As for popularity, I noted in my review of "The Vance Treasury" that Jack's books are almost completely unavailable in the US. He was much more visible in the 1960s and 70s, thanks to markets such as Galaxy and publishers such as Ace and Berkley, then for the latter part of his career, despite the success of the Lyonesse books, the work was more or less lost in the rise of cyberpunk, New Space Opera, military SF, and commercial fantasy.

Jack's not the only one to suffer this sort of partial eclipse—ask an under-30 reader about Poul Anderson. Or Phil Farmer.

Hal Gedoux, however, was inclined to see things the other way:

Although exact parallels are difficult to draw, a few hints of vancian influence [in Star Trek] would seem to exist, the most obvious being the grand swindler Harry Mudd. I have, I don't know, maybe 38 episodes of the original series on tape. Several indeed were poorly written, however it was an entertaining show. A closer look might reveal more influences hidden underneath the surface, who knows? I tend to look for Vance's influence in all current fantasy/SF.

Holkerwoyd then weighed in:

Respecting the troubled hero:

Yes, Rieth is essentially untroubled, though he does suffer a mild conflict: his goal, to return to earth, will deprive him of the rich life of danger and struggle on Tschai. But that conflict hardly qualifies as trauma. Gersen's 'troubled' aspect, though it can not be said to dip into the Freudian zone, includes a more or less constant tension, similar to that of Rieth; he longs for the joys of a normal life of which his mission deprives him. There is a question of degree. Vance's heroes are not Mad Max; tortured, neurotic, even psychotic. On a scale of hero-types they must be placed well towards the tranquil and sane end. Still, they are not neuters lacking all color to their inner lives. Joe Bain is made sympathetic and real by the tensions, however mild, of his inner-self. Vance's capacity to make palpable such a nuanced state of 'trauma' is important. Compare Tubb's ineffective histrionics.

The Marketing problem:

The problem I am referring to is not about title availability or publisher prejudice, but market structure. Vance is sold as SF. This

is justified because the stories take place on other planets and so on. And if they were not sold as SF, what would they be sold as? But it is my opinion that the majority of the SF public is not satisfied by Vance, and that he therefore has not existed commercially, except as a minor. (His contribution to the mystery genre is so minor that even the word 'minor' is too large). This minority genre status, however, does not accord with the reaction of certain readers, such as Ed Winskill who, though willing to read SF, are not your basic SF marketing target. A broader non-SF readership, I believe, would appreciate Vance as much as Ed Winskill does, if they could discover him, but they cannot because of the SF marketing barrier. Meanwhile Vance seems to be an influence on other writers far out of proportion with his modest commercial success. Vance hardly exists commercially next to Heinlein or Ellison. If these proportions are entered into the calculation, I believe it becomes clear that Vance's influence is far greater than Heinlein's, for example, which I believe to be close to nil. What current aspect of SF owes anything to Heinlein, or even Clark? The religious strain in such pop-SF as "Battlestar Galactica" seems to me to owe everything to Vance (if indirectly) and nothing to Heinlein/Clark, because it is about history, cultural relations and politics, not goopy personal mysticism, the cult for which has died out with the rest of the whole psychedelic 60s moment.

Regarding "The Dragon Masters" and soft science:

It is true that "Dragon Masters", like "Languages of Pao", takes place on a far planet. It is true that there are spaceships and problems of astronomy—and I am not concerned about what Jack may or may not have 'had in mind' but with what he did.

The hard-science essence in the plot of "Dragon Masters" is genetics, but the soft-science aspect, cultural relativism, is much more important, to such an extent that the former is englobed in the latter. Likewise in "Languages of Pao", the language theory at its core (with its commercial, military and cultural aspects) is a high-water-mark of both cultural relativism and the ongoing attempt of a secular positivist culture to reduce human phenomena to biology and chemistry (I do not say this in a polemical spirit, it is a simple observation). Of course other SF writers have treated soft-science themes, but none, that I know of, come close to doing what Vance does, namely re-centering science fiction as a genre around what might be called "positivist anthropology", and even politics, rather than technology. His concerns with tourism and ecology are cases in point. These two phenomena are recognized today as central to a cultural-technical-political problem of survival. Treating the world as a toy (tourism) and as an infinite resource (economic development and its ecological reaction) were, already in the 1950s, recognized and treated by Vance as major themes. I don't see any parallel to this, and I remain convinced that it has been an important influence on the field. One can look at such titles from the 1950s as "The World Between", "Noplegarth", "The Narrow Land", "The Gift of Gab", or even "The Rapparee", to see this basic direction.

Jojo reminded Holkerwoyd of Pecooper's request:

If, as you say, you can find no other SF writers following Vance's example, what exactly is his alleged important influence supposed to consist in?

All you are saying is that you yourself find Vance more interesting, and more important, than other SF authors. But this is, of course, completely unrelated to the issue of whether Vance exerted any influence on the field or not.

Holkerwoyd replied:

I did not say "no other SF writers follow Vance's example"; I was responding to peccooper who said: "there have always been authors writing stories that dealt with other things [than hard science]". My point is that no writers in the 1950s redefine SF like Vance, changing the focus from engineering to, say,

sociology. The important factor in this change is that, with Vance, 'science'—by which I do not mean the study of nature as such but the epistemological/cultural heritage of rationalism and positivism—remains at the core. This redefinition is a decisive influence on the development of SF which has nothing to do with style. But Vance also influenced many writers directly. Herbert's conceptions are all under the vancian aegis. Writers like Tubb and Wolf are outright Vance imitators. Larry Niven, for all his interest in hard engineering, seems even more captivated by moody vancian journeys undertaken by disparate vancian bands.

I do indeed find Vance more interesting, and more important, than other SF authors. That preeminence is a fact, and it imposes itself, willy-nilly, on the field. His actual preeminence (which has nothing to do with commercial success) is by no means unrelated to whether Vance exerts influence; a mountain defines, and casts its shadow upon, the low plain in which it stands.

Who are the literary descendants of Heinlein and Clark? Where are the heirs of Farmer, Simak, Asimov, Bradbury, Aldiss or Dick? The biggest commercial successes in the field today, Dan Simmons and R.R. Martin, are both declared Vance disciples. Rising stars such as Mathew Hughes are likewise under his spell.

I do not mean to say that nothing else exists. Buck Rogers type space opera continues to hold a place—as a sort of post moon-shot cowboy yarn for the cyber generation. There is much ado about robotics in today's SF, and Vance took no interest in robots, but today's fictional robotics (the Cylons of Battlestar Galactica are a case in point) owe more to a vancian perspective—of which the author's themselves may be unaware—than to Asimov's celebrated laws.

One might also cite Vance's preeminent place in the development of D&D, a movement with which he had no sympathy. Vance is a giant, unavoidable.

Letson then questioned Holkerwoyd's methodology:

I wonder about methodological challenges of establishing "influence": What kind of data signals the influence? How is it gathered and evaluated? In fact, what do we mean by "influence"? The last question is actually the first—apart from testimonials ("I try to write like X") or overt homages (explicitly or implicitly adopting unique or characteristic elements of the original's work), how do we detect "influence", even in a field that borrows from itself continuously?

The assertion that Vance has more imitators/admirers than Heinlein does not match my recollection of authorial statements about heroes, models, and influences—and since I've written a bit about both writers, I've paid attention to such statements and been alert to possible transmission of motifs, ideas, and memes from their work into the general body of SF. On the hard-SF side especially, Heinlein is probably the most-cited writer-of-influence—I'm not going to do a search of the literature right now, but that's my impression after more than three decades of writing, interviewing, and reviewing in the field. Jack is indeed a (or sometimes the) favorite writer—the litany of admirers has already been sung here. But he remains a minority taste, a "writer's writer", which usually means someone relatively undervalued by the readership at large. And what is most often cited in such statements are his writerly qualities, followed by the intensity and uniqueness of his imaginative worlds. (The best single account of Jack's social imagination comes from an academic—who has also co-written a few novels—Tom Shippey, in his "People Are Plastic: Jack Vance and the Dilemma of Cultural Relativism" in the Cunningham volume.)

The assertions about "influence" that hang on the current importance of now-important motif X or Y that is also present in Vance seems to find causality in what may only be synchronicity. Some of Holkerwoyd's examples seem to attribute to Vance the spread of tropes and tendencies that do not originate with Vance and were in use by other writers. The "anthropological" side of

SF (some of which we used to call "social SF") was an important part of the field at least from the founding of *Galaxy*, and arguably has roots in Campbell's Astounding (Asimov's "Foundation" series and E. B. Cole's "Philosophical Corps" stories, for example). A focus on political and social matters (often in a satirical mode) is a hallmark of H.L. Gold's editorial regime at *Galaxy*, and this strain was important enough through the 1950s that Kingsley Amis identified it as central to American SF in the 1959 lectures that were published as "New Maps of Hell". "The Space Merchants" (serialized in 1952), with its strong themes of ecology, economics, and the role of advertising, is a standard example of this strain of SF. In 1952, Vance was writing "Big Planet" and "Gold and Iron", in which "social" or anthropological matters are framed as tales of exotic adventure. At about the same time, we have Farmer's "The Lovers", Blish's "A Case of Conscience", and earlier there had been Heinlein's "Beyond this Horizon" (1942!). One of Jack's gifts was (and remains) to work this thematic material into exotic adventures—space operas, planetary romances, revenge sagas, SF-setting thrillers and murder mysteries. But he was not the only writer working these veins, and it oversimplifies the history of the genre to minimize the contributions of writers such as Pohl & Kornbluth, Robert Sheckley, Chad Oliver, Ursula Le Guin, and Theodore Sturgeon, to name a near-random handful.

I remember exactly what Jack's reputation was like from the 1960s onward (my pre-1960 focus was very much Heinlein, Asimov, Bradbury, del Rey, and the writers available in our local library), since that was when I started reading the magazines. He was one of the names on the cover of *Galaxy*, with the "Demon Princes" serials, "The Dragon Masters", "The Last Castle", and "The Moon Moth"—all featured stories that were quite well-received at the time. But he was just part of a field of writers exploring the social possibilities of SF—as his friend and neighbor Poul Anderson had already been doing for a decade.

Holkerwoyd responded:

Regarding 'methodological challenges of establishing "influence"', I won't get into sociological research, and particularly into the definition and defense of categories in the framework of which my thesis could be 'proven'. To me this a matter of 'nose'. I may be somewhat under-qualified to make sweeping, unorthodox assertions, but I won't apologize. If I'm wrong, I'm wrong, and no harm is done!

I will add that I am under-impressed with Tom Shippey's statement on Vance. He is on to something, but he takes it nowhere. Another commentator has tackled this question more fully, and drawn useful conclusions.

It is true that other writers tackle non-techno stuff, even prior to the 1950s. An obvious example is Huxley. But what influence did Huxley exert on SF, or Orwell? I say: none. Because, as I suggest in my previous post, the non-hard science aspects of "Brave New World" and "1984" were not non-hard science but non-science (politics in fact). "Ivanhoe", "The Grapes of Wrath", or "Catcher in the Rye" also deal with non-science themes but none of them are influences in post 1950 SF.

My point is this: Vance is a great artist, which none of the other science fiction writers are, and a seminal influence in science fiction both because his artistry is so striking to other writers, and because his 'soft-science' approach is unique and transformative. A clear example of how it is unique is "Parapsyche" and "Nopalgarth". In these stories a drama transpires in the context of a 'spiritual' phenomenon which is presented, or conceived, as a material phenomenon. Heinlein and Clark do not do this. Their 'spirituality' is mystical. It has nothing scientific or materialist about it. It appeals to something that simply has nothing to do with anything that science fiction can be about qua 'science fiction', and therefore it had no consequences for the field.

These examples are clear, but they are not ideal because they do not deal with works which were particularly influential, like

"Dragon Masters" and "Languages of Pao". But the dynamic is the same. Vance deals with cultural phenomenon in the context of science. He does not reduce culture to chemistry, but deals within the positivist tradition, which by his time had developed into Hiedeggerianism, or that special brand of cultural relativism which gives rise to both fascism and multi-culturalism. Again, I do not see other writers doing this. They may deal with 'cultural' or 'social' questions, but only in an ordinary way, the way a non-science fiction writer would. These other writers are injecting a foreign ingredient into science fiction. Their work is conceptually hybrid. Vance transforms the genre. The distinction may be subtle but it is crucial. I am not talking about an essentially political story on a far planet or in a rocket ship. 'Social' themes have been 'present' in the genre since H.G. Wells, well before any author mentioned by Letson. I am talking about how a TV show, whose theme is a struggle between monotheism and paganism and existential identity ("Battlestar Galactica") can be produced by the 'sci-fi channel' in the 21st century, and no one raises an eyebrow. "Battlestar Galactica" may be a stinking oleaginous gallimaufry, as J.S. Perleman might have quipped, but it reflects a development of the genre which needs an explanation, and which I think to find in the influence of Jack Vance.

Letson, underlining his methodological objection, replied:

"Influence" indicates some sort of causation: a clearly identifiable attribute of Work A or of the practice of Artist A is responsible for some corresponding attribute of Work B or the practice of Artist B.

That's what I mean by "influence", and while "nose" might be one early-warning system, other instrumentalities are needed to check the reliability of initial nasal hints. In my experience, nailing down "influence" means finding explicit statements from B indicating he thinks he's somehow following A or conducting a careful examination of texts, tropes, and their historical contexts to make a case—preferably both (writers lie or kid themselves at least as much as everyone else does). And given the way writers in general and SF writers in particular pass around themes and memes (Phil Klass compares it to the way jazz players pass around licks), tracing influence is usually an inexact science.

It's not good enough to wave the hands and declare the authority of the untestable nose, any more than it's good enough to merely assert great-artist stature (and uniquely great-artist at that) as an argument, or to engage in serial non sequiturs.

Erik Halsey, recalling Holkerwoyd's remark that "The Languages of Pao" is "a high-water-mark of both cultural relativism and the ongoing attempt of a secular positivist culture to reduce human phenomena to biology and chemistry", wrote:

One of the posts higher up in this wonderful thread lists (early) Samuel Delaney as a more influential writer of SF than Jack Vance, and I have to agree. "The Languages of Pao" provides a good case study of why.

Published in 1958, "The Languages of Pao" is loosely based on the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis from anthropological linguistics ("our world-view is profoundly affected by, if not wholly based on, the language we speak"). Jack deals with this in typical Vancean fashion, cleverly using the linguistics as a take-off point for yet another Vancian excursion into the brilliantly limned societies and delightfully off-center characters that we are all so addicted to. But that was his whole point—to have a basis for yet another Vancian story, and not to really explore the W-S hypothesis. This he treats in an entirely superficial way, exploring only the most obvious and simplistic aspects of the theory.

Eight years later (1966) Delaney published "Babel 17", also based on the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, but an entirely different sort of book—and one which, if it was widely influential, certainly



deserved to be. It explored the theory in a way that was astonishing and mind-expanding, revealing wholly new possibilities of what it could mean to be human.

So, two novels based on the same "soft science" theme. The first, just another Vancean tale, no matter how tasty it is to us fans. The other a great science fiction novel. There lies part of the distinction we are talking about in this thread.

I personally believe that when serious SF authors mention Jack Vance as an influence, they are referring to what affects us all—his imagination and his narrative voice, and not his themes.

Letson responded to Halsey:

Oddly enough, I find myself disagreeing with Halsey as well as Holkerwoyd, though for different reasons. While "Languages of Pao" is not a rigorous investigation of Sapir-Whorf (which is, in any case, not highly regarded among the linguists who taught me decades ago), that does not necessarily make it inferior to the Delany (which I have not read since its original publication). Jack uses Sapir-Whorf to construct a familiar combination of bildungsroman and fable of personal and political liberation. A long time ago, I described the book this way:

Pao certainly does work out some of the practical implications of Sapir-Whorf, but I would argue that Vance is less interested in demonstrating the validity of the theory than in using it to explore fundamental matters of individual and cultural identity and of cultural survival and change. The novel is a drama of points of view, of visions of reality in conflict, and while for the characters socio-linguistic manipulation is a technology (that is, a variety of Campbellian symbol-engineering), for the author it is a rhetorical and literary device that allows him to pursue questions about the roots of cultural style and intercultural conflict. To put it a bit more stuffily, language synecdochically represents a complex of environmental, genetic, evolutionary, and cultural predispositions toward particular views and actions.

I suppose the real nub of my problem with Halsey's comparison is that I don't see the books as competing with each other. I would agree that Jack does not generally proceed in a classically hard-SF manner (as often as he essayed the puzzle/problem story); instead, all the machineries of SF are just enabling devices to allow him to construct the particular kind of fable we call "vancean". And in that sense, I suppose he isn't "really" a science fiction writer in the narrow, techno-dweeb, it's-all-about-the-science sense, after all. But then, neither are Heinlein and Asimov, let alone Delany, Ken MacLeod, or William Gibson. So we're back to the notion that SF is defined by its furniture, without reference to the uses it's put to.

Holkerwoyd, before tacking these points, returned to the methodology problem:

My 'nose' remark was a reaction to the methodological remarks of Russell Letson, which I here resume:

What kind of data signals influence? How is such data gathered and evaluated? What do we mean by "influence"? How do we detect it in a field which continuously borrows from itself?

On this basis Russell Letson then claimed that my assertion, to the effect that Vance has more imitators/admirers than Heinlein, does not match his recollection of authorial statements, that on the basis of his "impressions" (which he shores up by asserting that they are based on "more than three decades of writing, interviewing, and reviewing in the field"). He confirmed, however, that "Jack is indeed a (or sometimes the) favorite writer [of many SF writers]," and that, therefore, the fact of Vance's minority status in the genre suggests he is "relatively undervalued by the readership at large". i.e. he appears to agree with me that Vance's influence on the genre is out of proportion with his popular success.

Now all that is fine, but I don't see how Russell Letson's standards of evidence are any higher than my 'nose' standard, since he is "not going to do a search of the literature right now" any

more than I am. And since my 'impressions' may be just as useful as his, Russell Letson would seem to be 'nosing' it to much the same extent. My 'nosage', however, is not sheer vapor. It includes concrete examples. I give a list of writers whose work I consider to be totally under the influence of Vance, including Herbert and Tubb, and also aspects of the work of Niven. I then pointed to two extremely popular writers of today, Simmons and Martin, who both advertise a great debt to Vance. Furthermore, I point to aspects of contemporary SF which, I argue, have their source in a transformation of the genre which I argue to be due to Vance. My 'nose' remark, therefore, is not "grandiloquent lack of logic and meaningless buzz-words", as some person, who might be more kind and gentle, has suggested.

Russell Letson then pointed out that 'Influence' "indicates some sort of causation: a clearly identifiable attribute of Work A, or of the practice of Artist A, responsible for a corresponding attribute of Work B or the practice of Artist B." This is clean and logical, but if it is going to be the standard, as if the problem were counting beans, we are not going to get anywhere. There must be some room for appreciation. As Russell Letson himself admits; "explicit statements from B indicating he thinks he's somehow following A" are all well and good, but we must not forget that; "writers lie or kid themselves at least as much as everyone else".

Russell Letson seems to suggest that I "declare the authority of the nose" and then "merely assert" the "great-artist stature" of Vance. In this I do not think he is being fair to my presentation.

Emphyrio (aka Tim Stretton), added this thunder to Holkerwoyd's guns:

A number of well-known SF authors admit to Vancean influence—although the extent to which this is reflected in their fiction varies: Gene Wolfe, Ursula Le Guin, Dan Simmons, George RR Martin, John C Wright.

It might be remarked that, in the case of Ursula Le Guin, Axo, rather than speaking of her influence, might better have spoken of Vance's influence through her.

Along the same line David B. Williams then quoted Barry N. Malzberg, from in the introduction to "The Best of Jack Vance":

"Jack Vance is eventually going to be perceived as one of the foundation blocks of the field. He has already influenced two generations of writers: those like Larry Niven and Terry Carr who came up in the sixties doing alien landscapes with rigor and integrity, and younger writers like Gardner Dozois who, thanks to Vance, are now able to take the alienness for granted and work with it comfortably for an audience that has been educated to understand it."

Elthem Jones then rejoined the discussion:

My feeling, sadly unverifiable since he has been dead for many years, is that Gene Roddenberry (who was known to be an avid reader of science-fiction/space opera) had Vance very high on his reading list...

I don't see much evidence of Vance's influence in modern literature, although reading "The Algebraist" recently I was constantly reminded of some of his more capricious characters in the behaviour of the Dwellers.

Holkerwoyd then made a larger statement, which he entitled: "The Languages of Pao and Vance's influence on SF genre":

Halsey argues that Samuel Delaney is more influential in SF than Vance. He says that Vance deals with the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis by using it "as a take-off point for a vancean excursion", treating the hypothesis itself in "an entirely superficial way". Delaney's "Babel 17", by contrast, is said to explore the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis in

a way which is "astonishing and mind-expanding". So, while both "Languages of Pao" and "Bable 17" are based on the same soft-science theme, one is "just another vancean tale", while the other is "a great science fiction novel".

Halsey concludes by arguing that claiming Vance as an influence, on the part of serious writers, is not about themes but about imagination and narrative voice.

Have I correctly understood?

I would like to know more about Delaney's use of Whorf-Sapir towards something "astonishing and mind-expanding", and how Halsey defines science fiction, or how he understands the difference between a "vancian tale" and "science fiction".

As for Russell Letson's objection to Halsey's point, that the books do not compete with each other—presumably on the level of science fiction—I don't see its relevance to the influence question.

Now, I can't comment on Delaney, whom I have never read, but I am willing to accept Halsey's contention that Delaney really uses Whorf-Sapir whereas Vance just riffs on it. But I think this does not address my point, which I have no doubt failed to articulate.

I am not saying, merely, that Vance's influence is the introduction of 'soft-science' themes where hard-science themes prevailed previously. As I, and others, have pointed out, other themes are present in SF in the 1950s and even before—I myself noted the blatantly political and anthropological themes in H.G. Wells' science fiction, which takes us back a whole century. It is, I admit, shorthand to say that Vance's influence on SF consists of a reorientation from hard to soft-science. Still, I persist in my idea that this is the essence of it. It must, however, be more deeply understood.

First we must agree that what makes science fiction itself is science content. It is not interesting, in the context of a discussion of the SF genre, to point out that such and such a SF writer is influenced by Flaubert or Faulkner. That might be true, but that would address a larger literary problem, of which science fiction would be a mere sub-class. By the same token, and as I have already tried to point out, when a SF writer introduces into his science fiction aspects which fall outside the boundaries of the genre, to the extent such aspects are influential they do not transform the genre, they dilute or destroy it. Halsey's qualification of "Languages of Pao" as a "vancean tale", in contradistinction to "science fiction" veers toward agreement with certain commentators who, following some of Vance's own declarations, claim that Vance is simply not a science fiction writer.

This position is certainly defensible. Vance's work is large. It has aspects which seem to be science fiction in only the most superficial sense, and many which clearly escape the genre completely. But some of the work, particularly such stories as "Languages of Pao", I regard as having transformed the genre.

I have already tried to explain the nature of this transformatory influence, with the example of "Noplegarth". A materialist spirituality, also found in his fantasy—the demon Jeldred, for example, is generated and operates materially—has defined the non-mystical D&D magic systems, and continues to be an influence—in of movies like "Final Fantasy". The formless mysticism of Clark, Herbert, Bradbury or Heinlein could never had led us there, any more than the cultural-symbolic magic of Tolkien.

I will now try to show how Vance's 'positivist treatment' of the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is transformatory of the SF genre.

Vance could have written a book in which the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis is simply worked out neatly, and in fact he does. The plot of "Languages of Pao", stripped down to the dry bone, is that a change of language alters the cultural dynamic of a society. But this is a work of art which cannot be reduced to such a low denominator. Right at the beginning Vance seizes upon consequences of the Whorf-Sapir concept which its author's themselves may not have considered. If Whorf-Sapir is correct then it should be possible to create languages optimized towards certain ends. I don't know anything about Whorf-Sapir but I assume their thinking never went that far. Probably they only thought that the mental universe of an individual is largely defined by the language practiced by the individual. The Whorf-Sapir idea may be discredited as linguistics,

but it is still a vital sub-type of the Heideggerian idea, which continues to hold the West in its cold grip. According to this idea, of which multi-culturalism is the vulgar expression, our *Being* (which englobes our mental universe) is generated by Culture. This idea is terrifying because it robs the individual of Free Will. Free Will becomes an aspect, in the Whorf-Sapir perspective, of the language-defined Cultural horizon, so that the subject—the individual—cannot conceive his ontological reality (his *Being*) outside this perspective; he is incapable of comprehending his Self in terms outside the realm of Culture. Eternity, timelessness, Truth, Beauty, are not concepts which might enlarge our horizons but culturally generated illusions, at best. Man is a hive insect whose 'personal choices' are inconsequential distinctions between 'A' and 'A prime'. He is determined by his language/culture. From here it is a short step to the creation of new culture/languages to serve given ends—ends which will not be the ends presently served by the society, but new ends, ends perhaps desired in the context of the society as it is but which the society as constituted is unable to pursue. This strains the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis for how, if language limits our mental horizon, can we conceive of an end which falls outside the range of imaginable possibilities allowed by the language? Or how can we be unable to pursue something we can imagine?

But this is a secondary consideration. Heidegger does not envision the deliberate creation of new cultures, but he does believe they arise. This is his idea of the new god, the god who will arise. Vance, however, takes it down to the level of engineering, social engineering; not gods, but scientists and technocrats will create the new society by means of agencies within human control. This distinction between God's and technocrats, or mysticism and science, can be traced in Hienline, Clark, Tolkien and etc. on the one hand, and Vance on the other. Vance imagines a center of learning with its special class of savants who master and manipulate this order of Cultural phenomena. This is both comical and alarming, perhaps ridiculously impossible but certainly in accord with the contemporary pretences of militant secularists who claim that man is a flesh-machine, and that all human things can eventually be understood and manipulated.

Today we are claiming that man can control the terrestrial ecology. Tomorrow we will claim that the evolution of the sun (towards red-giantness) can also be controlled. This may be silly, but it points to the rooted quality of such thinking in our culture, even if it is not the only thinking.

The dominies of Breekness are the Positivist equivalent of Heideggerian new gods. They are the realization of the most radical claims of atheistic science. Vance makes drama out of the transposition of Heideggerian existentialism to the level of technocratic pretence, to which it neatly lends itself. But the dominies are not mere silly figments. How, for example, did Heidegger manage to get so far out of his own cultural conditioning that he was able to perceive that he (since he also is a human being) is culturally conditioned?

Vance's dominies are more than recycled mad scientists. They control a Cultural dynamic which, if Heidegger's ontology is good, should be controlling them. This is a vertiginous paradox, but Vance resolves the equation. His savants, these heideggerian quasi-gods who so dominate Cultural reality that they can actually manipulate it, are themselves driven like dry leaves in the wind of the cultural logic of their own divine status! They lust for immortality. Since their body-enhancing techniques turn out to be impotent to effect the evolution of their minds—thus the descent into 'emeritus'—they turn (back) to a more traditional sort of immortality; progeniture—a technique they harness with all the brutality of their technical pride, practicing it with all the force and folly of mad gods. It is not surprising they treat women as objects, because they treat the whole universe as an object. The result is a grotesque obsession to create a world of genetically identical sons. But the sons themselves become so disgusted by this sterile, solipsistic obsession that they themselves destroy the emeritus, who thus comes to the most ignominious of ends; slaughtered like a dangerous animal by his own off-spring, than which no more confused and terrible cultural result can be imagined.

*Nota Bene:* this grotesque result is not some 'vancian tale', it is a consequence of Whorf-Sapir. If the nature of language determines human nature, it will be possible to create languages favoring different human types, and there will be a cast of language makers, who will be like gods because they determine the ontological reality of their fellow human beings. This cast will be burdened with the psychic pressure of god-status.

The point of this little expose is to show how, in works like "Languages of Pao", Vance plunges into the core of, not science as such, but the metaphysics of science, and then remains there, parsing its consequences, technical, human and cultural. I don't know what Delaney did with Whorf-Sapir; I would be interested to learn it was anywhere near as exhilarating. I don't see any writer, in or out of SF, who has done anything like this, excepting Swift in "Gulliver's Travels", but that book is an allegory, and the Laputa episode is a deliberate critique of science. "Languages of Pao" is a drama which unfolds in the context of an extremely important world-view, the one which dominates our epistemological environment; it does not critique or analyze this view, it simply reveals it. Vance's stories remain drama, and thus fiction in the pure sense. What other writer does anything similar? The emphasis of contemporary SF on metaphysical questions, is, I say, a consequence of this transformation of SF, even if the heredity is not always direct.

At this point Holkerwoyd was forbidden further participation, and it petered out into chit-chat about who had invented mechanical roadways (not Vance), but David B. Williams quoted a somewhat apropos passage from Strahan's blog:

"Had a long interesting conversation with Gary Wolfe today. We touched on what, if any, influence Robert Heinlein continues to have on the science fiction field today. My own thought is that his last influential novel (not good, just influential) was Starship Troopers. That puppy smacked the field around, and the amount of stuff written because of it is phenomenal. I also think the reason that he looks like he isn't influential any longer is that his influence has been absorbed into the very fabric of the field itself.

That lead on to thinking about writers who are proving to be surprisingly influential today, like Jack Vance and Philip Jose Farmer. . .

Strahan's "absorbed into the fabric" theory is what Letson, with his demands for evidence of A on B, would not accept. Still, Strahan seems to understand 'influence' in terms of specific content, and not underlying attitude. This is influence, of course, but of a lower order.



## DEFENDING AMIANTE

*Never gratuitously, maliciously, or unfairly personally attack anyone—and never let a serious attack against yourself go unanswered.*

Victor Hanson Davis (on cyber interaction)

VIE subscriber 'Frans' recently posted a statement on Foreverness which endorses a management style, always criticized and still in ill repute. Frans was reacting to yet another expression of that doubt, yet another call to 'silent dignity', (i.e. inaction) under mud-ballage, which has such a wide and ultimately vulgar appeal. The true aristocrat fights his battles, though nothing is so scandalous as spilled guts—and certainly not sharp words. Going down fighting is noble. Going down holding ones nose is the act of a prig. The VIE, as it turns out, did not go down.

*Years ago when I came upon the website of the VIE I became very interested in the project. I decided to proceed with caution, before making any financial or other commitment. For all I knew, it might be just another internet scam.*

*When I found out there was something going in the project at that time which I will refer to as the "Amiante font controversy", I decided, yep, at the very best this is just another bunch of ill humored amateurs (amateur not intended as a compliment in this context) who no doubt will crash and burn to ashes this project. Apity.*

*However I did continue to follow the project on an irregular basis. The publications in COSMOPOLIS in particular struck me as being of a level that transcended ill humored amateurism. Further, I found at that each criticism of the Amiante font was countered in a way that made clear to me that it wasn't said and done that Amiante was a bad font, simply because some people chose to believe so.*

*Third, I had the benefit that someone on the volunteer list worked for the same company I did, and I polled him in an e-mail about the VIE. He had already done some proofreading and thus being directly exposed to VIE management could assure me that yes, I could safely bet my money on a VIE set.*

*I am sure that had the countering of the Amiante criticism been one of more restraint, forbearance and humility, I guess I would never have taken my third step which in the end led me to invest in a VIE set.*

*There are now 45 volumes of hard evidence sitting on my bookshelf that the Amiante font is at the very least well suited for the VIE set and I sometimes shudder at the thought of how close I was to not owning a VIE set, just because some people decided to create fear, doubt and uncertainty about the Amiante font. I now know from first hand experience that they never had a case to begin with.*

*Furthermore it angers me when I think of the people who in the end opted out of owning a VIE-set because they had no one to turn to for getting things like the Amiante font in perspective. I believe it is a small personal tragedy for each of them.*



## PRO BOUND COSMOPOLIS

Cosmopolis, printed and bound in three folio volumes, an idea launched by Brian Gharst and pursued by a group of volunteers organized from the Foreverness message board, has provoked an enthusiastic response. The Legendary Locator, Hans van der Veeke, sent me this report in early June:

*Some time ago we informed the former VIE volunteers and subscribers about the Bound Cosmopolis Project. Although a lot of the email addresses were no longer valid (that's how quickly we move in Internet-country), we also received many subscriptions.*

*Total subscribers, at the moment, is around 85. Here are some of the reactions:*

Hans/Cx3 Team: Attached is the info for my subscription to Cx3. Will look forward to getting the price and delivery update. Great idea! (Although you could probably reduce production costs by just asking Murgén to get a couple sandestins to transmute the finished volumes from the nearest tree. . .)

Regards,  
Carl Goldman

Thanks, Hans. I look forward to it. I had been intending to print out all the Cosmopolis issues from the VIE website months ago, but then they disappeared. I didn't realize you had them archived on this site until I got the email the other day. All things considered, I would prefer to have them professionally printed and bound then just a stack of printed computer pages. Thanks very much for taking on this project.

Best wishes,  
Larry Bigman

Dear Foreverness,  
Great Idea! Please subscribe me,  
Edmond Fernandez

I'm in! Thanks for doing this!  
Karl T. Radtke

I am interested, and attached the document with all my information. It sounds wonderful!  
Sincerely, Linda Escher

Go on!  
Ciao, Nicola

Thank you very much for your great effort!  
Alexander Kandzior

Hi, I would like to subscribe to the Cx3 project. Since I never put any work into the VIE itself, or indeed into Cosmopolis, I would be more than willing to waive a subsidised price in favour of someone with a closer attachment to the project than myself (assuming you have not already had an overwhelming number of responses, and I have no choice in the matter. . .).

I have thoroughly enjoyed every issue of Cosmopolis I have read (I can not claim to have read them all), and look forward to perusing those that I have yet to enjoy, as well as complementing my beautiful VIE collection in a

fitting manner.

Many thanks for the opportunity you have presented here, and I look forward to the finished results.

James Jones

To Hans van der Veeke and the Cx3 team:

Thanks for your email regarding a bound version of Cosmopolis.

I am very interested in obtaining a copy of the three folio volumes, so find attached the completed subscription document.

I am also interested in assisting in the project and will therefore send an email to the address detailed on the website.

Thanks very much.  
Kindest Regards,  
Tony Graham



# CYBER FOLLIES

## ANTI BOUND COSMOPOLIS

The bound Cosmopolis project ("Cx3") is proceeding with all deliberate speed, under the management of VIE stalwart Brian Gharst. In a happy development the VIE board, with some of its remaining funds, decided to subsidize the price of the three folio volume all-Cosmopolis book set. The unsubsidized price will be around \$300. The VIE subsidy of \$15,000 allows an arrangement whereby the first 75 subscribers pay only \$100. That was where matters stood last May, when the Legendary Locator posted a "Cx3" update on the VanceBS:

The work on the indexes is steadily progressing  
Some volunteers have offered their help. More would be welcome  
Over 70 people have subscribed  
We are still open for subscriptions.

Reaction was swift and negative. Jojo had a question:

I have a question. It seems to me I have read somewhere, although I am unable to find it again\* at the moment, that "the VIE" has donated a sum of money to this project. What does this mean? If this sum of money is in fact the private funds of an individual, it is somewhat misleading and, indeed, inappropriate, to refer to this as support from "the VIE". If it is not the private funds of an individual, one is prompted to ask how the VIE, a not-for-profit corporation with the single purpose of producing a set of books, which task is already completed, could have residual funds left at its disposal? Should that money not have been returned to the subscribers?

Ridolph helpfully replied:

Jojo, this is what I found on the Foreverness website: "We were recently contacted by the president of the VIE board, who was responding to a request, with the grant of a subsidy towards the preservation of Cosmopolis, and the history of the VIE project it represents, through publication of a printed version of the monthly VIE newsletter in three volumes—what we are informally calling Cx3."

Jojo was not reassured:

There you have it. This announcement has clearly been carefully formulated to at least give the impression that the VIE has officially granted funds to the project, in which case VIE subscribers have legitimate questions about where those funds come from. But it can also, with some effort, be interpreted to mean that a private individual has decided to support the project using money out of his own pockets, in which case it is deliberately misleading. So which is it?

Vermouliau offered an opinion:

VIE subscribers aren't/weren't shareholders. So, the implication that excess funds should have been returned to them, or that they have some say in how any left-over money gets used, is just wrong. Subscribers were customers. Anyone who thinks otherwise should try this: go to any other company from whom you buy stuff and

\* That clever Jojo! He is too fine a fellow to do more than hint at the shameful 'somewhere' in question.

tell them that, as a customer, you are entitled to a say in how they run their corporate affairs, and see how far you get.

I don't know the exact wording of the VIE corporate charter or whatever, but using any excess money left in the VIE coffers to perpetuate Cosmopolis is probably one of the few things that could be done with such money that could still further the VIE's mission. There was undeniably a lot of good information, about Jack Vance and about the project, published in Cosmopolis over the years, even if opinions differ on the merits of some of the essays and opinion pieces. Having an actual physical repository for that information seems like a good idea.

David B. Williams endorsed Vermouliau's view:

I would even add that it is a sign of good planning and good management for a non-profit project to have some funds remaining when the main objective is completed—too often in these kinds of projects the initial budget is underfunded and the project fails when the money runs out, or someone has to make up the difference to save the day. A \$10K expenditure to the Cx3 project would represent about 1% or a tad more of the VIE's gross revenues. If this represents the bulk of surplus funds, it is a narrow margin indeed.

Jojo did not endorse Vermouliau's views:

Your suggested analogy is incorrect, since the VIE, according to its charter and agreement with subscribers, never actually sold anything to anyone—the VIE collected donations for the specific purpose of creating a corrected, uniform edition of the writings of Jack Vance. A closer analogy is the following: You donate money to a charity that says it will provide food for starving children. Later you find out that some of your money has been used to fund a militant neo-Nazi organization. You may feel that you are the victim of fraud.

Jojo's analogy failed to convince "axolotl":

"Closer" analogy. . .I hope there's a hell of some kind for people who use "analogy" so freely! "Food for starving children" = "Publishing the restored oeuvre of Jack Vance". "Funding a militant neo-Nazi organization" = "Publishing in book form the VIE web-magazine Cosmopolis".

Come on, Jojo... You can do better than that.

'Orin Bennet' offered this clarification:

There is no ambiguity in the statement; the VIE is subsidizing publication of its own newsletter. If you are determined to strain at gnats you will have to look elsewhere.

Jojo was not reassured:

If that is indeed the case, I have to admit I am shocked. As you can tell from what I wrote above, I had assumed that we were dealing with somebody's private folly, being played up as "official".

At this point a certain Hal Gedoux—who is either a victim of paranoid hallucination or a person of above average insight, posed an apparently unrelated question:

If A. Feht is allowed to keep posting here, why not allow "Holkerwoyd" to respond?

A quick call to order came from Axolotl:

Hal. . .Please. . .Don't start.

Whatever else this remark implies, it does not seem to suggest that Hal is hallucinating.

'Orin Bennett' then poked Jojo in the eye:

I fail to see why you should be shocked that the VIE, having published *Cosmopolis* once already, is now subsidizing its publication in book form.

And Jojo, if I might be so bold as to offer a newcomer's perspective, your knee-jerk negative reactions to anything associated with the VIE have ruined your credibility.

Jojo was unphased:

The point of an analogy is its logical structure, not its details. In this case, the point is that an organization promised its sponsors to do one thing, and then apparently did another.

Going to the VIE website, we are informed that the VIE project has been completed. Furthermore, we are told that its goals were to:

1. Create a complete and correct edition, in 44 volumes, a permanent, physical archive of Vance's oeuvre disseminated world wide, doubled by a digital archive (made available to commercial publishers).

2. Promote the universally appealing work of Jack Vance through library donations. Funded by the Paul Allen Foundation, and private individuals, dozens of libraries around the world received V.I.E. book sets.

No mention is made of a goal to subsidize a luxury edition of the writings of Paul Rhoads, nor was, as far as I can tell, such a goal made known at any time to those who funded the operation. I cannot be the only one who finds this new development outrageous.

One labors to understand what Jojo is defending, but it is always a fine thing when a person selflessly defends a noble cause, just trying to make the world a little bit better for everyone.

Kilo Volt then offered a down-to-earth perspective:

I fail to see the relevance of the question where this funding comes from or what form it takes. From my perspective, simple facts are these:

- 1) I paid my subscription fees.
- 2) For my money I got the value I wanted: the books!
- 3) I cannot care less about what happens with any remaining funds, if any. Heck, I'm not even going to bother trying to get some of my expenses back, should there be any remaining funds.

'Orin Bennett' responded to Jojo's exposé:

Points 1 and 2 are VIE board policy. It now appears that publication of *Cx3* is also VIE board policy. Good fortune indeed for Paul Rhoads!—and for David B. Williams, Patrick Dusoulie, Richard Chandler, Chuck King, Suan Yong, David Alexander, Timothy Virkkala, Bob Lacovara, Norma Vance and dozens of others who contributed thoughtful articles to *Cosmopolis*, to say nothing of the 79 people (so far) who will own the books.

Your last post does make one thing clear, though: your objection to *Cx3* amounts to little more than antipathy for Paul Rhoads.

Axolotl also had a few words for Jojo:

Jojo: your indignation and your outrage seem excessive to me. Indeed, methinks thou protesteth too much. . .

A number of people donated (that's how I recall it: a "donation") money to get a full set of Jack's oeuvre, restored etc. The fact that the VIE non-profit corporation managed to deliver what

it had promised (a first miracle) within costs (a second miracle) leaves it with some funds that can be allocated to other worthy pursuits. *Cosmopolis* accompanied the whole project, warts and all. . . Subsidizing the publication in book form of this history of the VIE project appears to be such a worthy pursuit, at least to any unprejudiced eye.

If you have any grievance with this (by the way, were you a subscriber? We know so little of you. . .), take it up with the VIE Board itself. Here's the address :

Vance Integral Edition  
4100-10 Redwood Road, PMB 338  
Oakland, California 94619-2363  
USA

Do not send an anonymous letter, I don't think it would be taken under consideration. For once, have the courage to show your face.

Jojo, responding to Axolotl's miracle peroration, wrote:

I assume, not unreasonably, that not all subscribers consider this to be a worthy pursuit. But that is not the central issue. The central issue is whether it is compatible with how the VIE project was originally presented to those who donated money. It is not clear to me that under the terms on which the VIE corporation collected funding it can simply do whatever it feels like.

To the question of whether or not he was a subscriber, Jojo wrote:

No, I was not. As I have mentioned many times on this board I dropped the idea when I heard about the astonishing typeface decision.

Martin Read now jumped into the act, with a post, entitled "Sense and Sensibility", redolent of his literary culture:

I would class an antipathy to Paul Rhoads as a prerequisite to sensibility. Could anybody without such discernment claim any breeding? Would such a person be received in society? I think not. I once knew a gentleman who, over a rubber of whist at Sir John W's, let slip a aside that he was quite partial to some of Paul Rhoads' writings. Dear me! the silence which followed was quite tangible. The man, which discretion forbids me to name, was never received in any of the better class of drawing rooms again. In fact I did hear rumour that this unfortunate was rusticated by his scandalised family to one of the more dreary parts of Nottinghamshire!

Vermoulian had words for Jojo:

Jojo's lack of involvement in the VIE project itself explains his current confusion: those of us who were involved in the project were reminded on numerous occasions that the VIE was not a democracy, and while everyone could express opinions nobody (outside the board, or the managers within their limited spheres) had any reasonable expectation that his or her opinion would carry any particular weight.

I can see how that sort of organization could present a tough pill for some to swallow, and I think everybody either made their peace with that paradigm, or quit.

So I don't think any of us who were involved, having had no official say in anything else the VIE did, would now have any expectation of influence over the disposition of any remaining VIE funds.

So thanks for looking out for us, Jojo, but it was not really necessary.



Jojo, however, was undaunted:

It would be of interest to hear from VIE board members, former or otherwise, on the issue of the support for the bound Cosmopolis, the VIE's current organization, and any future plans the corporation might be known to have. The general veil of secrecy that shrouds anything to do with the VIE does not inspire confidence.

At that time the composition of the VIE board was changing, but at the moment of the subsidy decision the membership was what it had been for the last two years: John Vance, Mike Berro and Ed Winskill. The latter are both prominent members of the "VanceBS community" and it was no secret to anyone that Jojo was trying to scare up a reaction from them. So Ed Winskill stepped ponderously forth:

While you are not a subscriber, I will make a few comments about the matter, as a former VIE board member.

As axo very rightly points out, one of the outstanding achievements of the VIE was its production and delivery of the sets to subscribers entirely within budget, never requiring more funds than initially subscribed. Moreover, this was so finely calculated and managed, that at the end of the day, only a quite modest balance remained after completion of the project.

By stating this, I want to make it clear that I am not in the slightest myself as a board member claiming any share of credit for this result. Many contributed mightily to it, especially Paul Rhoads, Bob Lacovara, and John Vance. This achievement is of great importance.

John Vance was and continues to be president of the corporation.

As far as a "veil of secrecy" is concerned, it needs only be pointed out that corporations do not, need not, and should not conduct their business in internet discussion groups.

The VIE fulfilled every obligation of its contract with its subscribers. That contract was: payment of a certain sum in exchange for a complete VIE set. The modest remaining funds will be managed in accordance with the corporate powers of the VIE under relevant rules.

The Vance Integral Edition was a landmark accomplishment on a great many levels. I am proud to have had a very tiny part in it. This accomplishment and this pride are unaffected by any unfortunate controversies, personal or otherwise, which have marked the project at various times. These controversies are certainly genuine, and the issues important, but as to the reality of the Vance Integral Edition itself, they are nuncupatory.

David B, Williams offered a further insight:

...a nonprofit corporation has to divest itself of remaining funds before it dissolves. I am aware of cases in which board members got together and granted the funds to their pet causes, unrelated to the corporation's original purpose. In the present case, Cosmopolis was a VIE activity, part of the total effort to achieve the mission. Expending remaining funds on a permanent edition of Cosmopolis is one of the most appropriate uses to which such funds could be directed. I'm not interested in owning a bound set myself, but I was pleasantly startled when I learned that the VIE board was going to help fund the Cx3 project. This is a very reasonable use of surplus funds, which might otherwise have been donated to the National Foot Fetish Museum or some such.

Oh, and anyone who believes that they were overcharged for their VIE set can simply sell their set on e-Bay for a thousand-dollar profit.

Now the other VanceBS VIE board member, Mike Berro, piped up, quoting Jojo's plaint that he could not be the only one who "finds this new development outrageous":

You are not, although I doubt that assuages your anguish. It does not assuage mine. John Vance felt it to be an appropriate use of the funds, presumably with Jack's explicit or implicit consent (several, including myself, suggested the relatively meagre funds revert to him.)

My philosophy at this point: The less said about Cx3, the better. In the grand (or less so) scheme of things, it is an irrelevancy, and will soon pass.

Reacting to Ed's point about corporations not being obliged to reveal their business arrangements on internet discussion forums, Jojo wrote:

That is surely neither here nor there, even if it were true: As a former board member you are now free to spill all.

For instance, I am convinced I am not the only one who would be interested in learning why you are no longer on the board. The lack of concrete information forces us to conjure up the nastiest scenarios we are able to imagine.

Ah, the clever Jojo; always with his nose in the wind! Ed Winskill responded:

I am always glad that I do not have one of those temperaments that forces me to conjure nasty scenarios out of my own ignorance. And after about 35 years of practicing law I am also over-familiar with the technique of erecting straw men, then rallying the torchbearing peasantry to burn them down.

So I am confident that you are not really forced to concoct dire speculations, but that you merely enjoy doing so.

I am a former board member because I resigned a few weeks ago. I did so under neither pressure nor protest, and because there were others available to properly complete the wind-down of the corporate affairs.

And now to "spill all" about the VIE corporation: it received a great deal of subscribers' monies; these funds it carefully husbanded and managed over the years, so as to meet all of its obligations to the subscribers and to the public authorities; it succeeded in this. And so I am happy with my board service, and confident in the present board.

But Jojo ears are too large, and his nose too sharp, to be taken in by this:

My uninformed guess would have been that you resigned over the bound-Cosmopolis decision, but were made to promise to keep quiet about it. Thanks for clearing up the confusion!

So who else resigned under neither pressure nor protest and is confident in the present board?

Kilo Volt took this on:

Jojo, I was never a VIE Board member, but like many others here, to say I was 'heavily involved over a five year span' would be an understatement. Ed already replied in full, and I made my point of view clear in a previous post. The support of the current VIE Board to the bound Cosmo project is a non-issue. . .

David B Williams, responding to Mike Berro's idea that remaining VIE funds "revert" to him Jack Vance—as if they had originated with him, wrote:

I may be confusing charitable foundation law with nonprofit law, and any attorney is free to chime in, but I don't believe that surplus funds can simply be given to an individual. They have to be passed on to other qualified nonprofit recipients. Of course, there is always the ever-popular "consulting fee" gambit.

For some reason Ed Winskill saw fit to challenge this remark:

I don't think anyone need chime in. There's a California corporation, it has a board of directors, and it has good legal advice. It will act accordingly, and the thing will be done.

The 'good legal advice', of course, emanates from himself. Mike Berro sought to underline this point:

Ed downplays his role in the VIE, but setting up and maintaining a non-profit corporation in California (no less) is non-trivial, and Ed's diligence and sagacity was invaluable.

As an ex-VIE-board member myself, and because I could not respond on the VanceBS—being banned—I reacted on Foreverness:

Mike is wrong; Ed cannot downplay his roll. This is because it was nil—unless his effect on the project were expressed by a negative value.

The non-profit corporation was not set up by Ed, because as a Washington state lawyer he was not in a position to do so. It was set up by a California state lawyer—a friend of Ed's, Bob Nelson—who did all the work, gratis. Unlike all the other board members, including Norma Vance and Mike Berro himself, Ed did zero VIE work. As board treasurer Ed most notable act was failure to deposit the project funds in a savings account, costing the project over \$20,000 in lost interest payments. This fiscal gap—revealed in 2004 when the dollar dropped dramatically against the Euro, causing concern for project viability—was partly filled by the willingness of some of us, myself included, to forgo reimbursements of travel and mailing expenses which we could sometimes ill-afford. Furthermore, Ed stonewalled every measure the editor-in-chief esteemed essential to cope with the pressures to which the project was subject.

In fact the board was not a real player in the project. It had to distribute funds, but budgetary requests made by the vital project forces could hardly be refused.

A certain D. Watts, on Foreverness, wondered why I made such a post. I explained:

Is it not clear? Because of what Mike posted on the VanceBS.

These guys are busy helping each other attack Cx3, censure Extant, diabolize Foreverness, and otherwise cleanse the VIE of the 'Paul Rhoads' stain. And in addition they want to tranquilly scratch each other's backs in public!

If you think that no, Ed Winskill favors Cx3, because he has not opposed it recently; I'll tell you this: as a VIE board member he did his best to kill the subsidy. Having been out-maneuvered, he is now making the best of it.

This merits some development, which it will receive below. First, however, two more posts from Mike and Ed complete the Cx3 exchange from the VanceBS, beginning with a remark from Mike Berro, whose strange mix of cynicism and idealism makes my head spin:

It's surprising (to me) what non-profit corps can get away with, including paying its board members and officers enormous (to me) salaries. Even charitable orgs have done so. The corp makes no profit, but the participants do.

In any case, I think the main point is that some of us disagree with the latest decision. No big surprise there.

Ed Winskill hastened to correct the impression this post might have given:

I hasten to add to Mike's post that no board members or officers of the VIE, past or present, made any salaries, much less enormous ones!

It may be useful to add that disagreement with one particular decision or another of any board or corporate officer implies nothing in any way about either the power of the board or officer to make the decision, or its propriety. This applies to all corporate board or officer actions, profit or non-profit corporations, public or private ones; whatever.

Well might Ed point such things out! As I then posted at Foreverness:

It may be useful indeed, particularly if one wishes to explain away having opposed Cx3. But why should this be embarrassing? What is dishonorable about opposing Cx3?

Mike Berro makes no bones about it. He wishes Cosmopolis would "go away". He wishes this because, despite its association with the history of the VIE project, despite the dozens of people who wrote for it, despite the over 1000 subscribers, despite the 63 issues, there is just one darn aspect that out weighs all the rest.

What is one to make of this? A majority of the three member VIE board, present and vocal on the VanceBS, reveals they oppose Cx3—and yet the subsidy occurs. The mysterious Jojo is allowed to conjure the nastiest scenarios he is able to imagine, without any reaction from these board members—beyond coverage of their personal *gluteus maximi*. Finally, Ed Winskill is as eager to suppress interest in 'official' VIE operations as Jojo is eager to awake them.

One point might be highlighted; after discounting his own VIE contribution Ed added that others: *contributed mightily to it, especially Paul Rhoads, Bob Lacovara, and John Vance*. But why toss this bone, and why this list? Where are JOHN SCHWAB, SUAN YONG, JOHN FOLEY, JOEL ANDERSON, TIM STRETTON, STEVE SHERMAN, ROB FRIEFELD, KOEN VYVERMAN, CHRIS CORLEY, ROBIN ROUCHE, JOEL RIDESEL, RICHARD CHANDLER, CHUCK KING, PATRICK DUSOULIER, or even MIKE BERRO himself?

Ed's logic will be clear to noses as keen as Jojo's. Having failed to suppress EXTANT, FOREVERNESS or Cx3, having lost control of the VIE site, and since Bob Lacovara had just been reelected to the VIE board—in other words, since Ed's hold-up of the VIE legacy had flopped but he still wanted to enjoy his ill-gotten reputation as a genial curmudgeon dispensing wise and impartial counsel—though grievously little and hopelessly late, what had he to lose? Some might think it cost him his last shred of "personal dignity", for even thieves and con-men have their code.

The behind-the-scene story follows.

Cx3 was initiated by Brian Gharst. This occurred as a result of Foreverness—firmly denounced, by Ed and Mike, from the VanceBS, as unconnected with the VIE. The 'Proclamations and Explanations' section of the VanceBS leads off with a post from Mike Berro, entitled "No Links to Inflammatory Sites", and dated June 2006, when Mike returned as VanceBS owner following Dan Gunter's abdication:

Messages containing links to "Foreverness" will be edited or deleted. Certain issues of "Extant" contain libelous and defamatory personal attacks, and I do not wish to support (and become

potentially liable for) such statements. Free speech is well and good, but free advertising for such scurrilous nonsense is not. If Extant (a non-VIE publication) was removed, I would rescind this injunction.

To which Ed Winskill added:

I, too, wish to point out that Extant is not a VIE publication. I further would point out that the VIE project has been completed. The Vance Integral Edition, a California non-profit corporation, is not connected with Foreverness, nor any site other than its own.

The VIE site itself, administered by Mike Berro, had been reduced to a single page. It included no reference or link to Foreverness, and thus no mention of any volunteers, access to COSMOPOLIS, or any other project material. But today things are different. The VIE not-for-profit corporation turns out to 'still exist'; it will publish and subsidize Cx3. The VIE website is now administered by the Legendary Locator, and has been adjusted to include a prominent link to FOREVERNESS, including mention of EXTANT, described as: "a project and post-project newsletter edited by VIE editor-in-chief, Paul Rhoads".

How was this point reached? The story is told in an e-mail record, beginning last March, the transcript of which is a no-holds-barred look at high-level VIE negotiations. It is not for the faint of heart.

These letters record evolutions which—as far as I am concerned—are perfectly honorable. I have cut away non-essentials, made trivial adjustments for context, and knocked off the sharpest corners. Nothing, however, is missing or distorted. Ed Winskill's remark about 'disagreement with particular decisions' is to the point; there is indeed nothing shameful in changing a position as discussions and situations develop. Sometimes it is failing to change which is dishonorable. The story begins as Cx3 was being developed on Foreverness. From Bob Lacovara I had just learned that the VIE still held a significant sum of money.

On March 14, 2007 I wrote to John Vance—with copies to Bob, John Foley, Hans van der Veeke, Brian Gharst, Greg Hansen, Deborah Cohen, Joel Andersen, Richard Chaldler, Tim Stretton and Chris Corley:

Several of us are working on various solutions for a printed and bound Cosmopolis, in 3 or 4 folio volumes. Whatever format is chosen the volume-set will be expensive; I guesstimate from \$200 to \$400.

Given that the 63 issues of Cosmopolis are the best history of the VIE project, and that Cosmopolis, in a purely electronic form, is fragile and liable to be lost with time, I cannot see a better project-related use of remaining funds than subsidizing such an edition.

Depending on the subsidy, and the number of interested subscribers, the set cost could be carried by both buyer and the VIE. In this case, also, the set could be published under the aegis of the VIE, using the VIE 'winged being' logo.

Please let us know what you think.

John replied:

This idea sounds fine to me personally but the decision won't be mine alone to make. As you know the money you propose to use does not belong to me, it belongs to the corporation—which means that Mike Berro and Ed Winskill also need to be consulted. If you want I'll bring the idea up to them, or you can present it to them yourself.

You should be able to use the 'winged being' logo regardless, I

can't imagine anyone objecting.

How many sets do you envision? How much of a subsidy do you want? Do you plan to print Cosmopolis only, or the CLS too? What about Extant? I can't help thinking that even without subsidies this idea will stand on its own. I would certainly buy a set, even at \$400.

Remember, there's another use we could put the money to, which is flying you and other stalwarts out here for a few days of scotch tasting and general merrymaking!

I responded:

The idea is for the 63 issues of Cosmopolis only.

There is no point in my bringing up the idea with Mike and Ed, but you, or someone else, might do so. In any case I hope the idea will get a hearing.

It is impossible to tell how many sets we will make without knowing the cost per set (we are working on that). Then, whatever the subsidy is, it can be applied to reducing the subscription price—per cost of set and # of subscribers. I have no idea what the project's current holdings are, but something like \$5000 might be good. It would help to have a provisional number, prior to launching subscriptions because it would help promote the initiative. I agree that the idea is likely to work on its own, but a project subsidy would make it work better, by enlarging the number of subscribers/sets, and by helping legitimize and publicize the initiative.

As for a subsidized party in Oakland; you can count me out. I won't enjoy celebrating the project with people who have done their best to make its achievement as difficult as possible—by various means including personal attacks.

John wrote:

Paul, have had a recent conversation with Ed/Mike and then Bob/Brian. Ed is a no-go on project (not unexpected).

VIE 'brand' won't be available for Cosmo project but Winged Being logo etc I see no reason you shouldn't use. Let the work proceed without presuming subsidy.

We had now reached April 4. I wrote to John as follows:

Dear John,

because of my love and respect for you, I am going to warn you what I am about to do if things don't move.

The VIE is sitting on 20 to 30k of subscriber money. What is the VIE board planning to do with this money? It is also a fact that the VIE board personnel should have been renewed, many times over, by election, per the VIE statutes. A public stink can be made about these matters, and if VIE board policy regarding this money is going to be dominated by Ed and Mike's personal animosities I'm not going to sit still for it.

I would like the VIE board to help out with the project of a bound Cosmopolis, which is an important way to document and secure VIE project history (electronic files are much too fragile) by helping bring down the subscription price of these volumes with a subsidy. This is a fully VIE related use of such remaining assets. The idea is not to make the volumes free but to make them attractive to a larger group.

If not, I would like to know how much VIE money there is, and exactly what the board intends to do with it.

I am very sorry to put you under this pressure, but not so sorry that I won't do it. After all, it is simple for you to satisfy me; support the Cosmopolis subsidy idea and, if Ed and Mike won't play, make public what plans the VIE board majority has for the money. There need be no secret about this. Every penny spent by the VIE thus far—to my knowledge—can be made public without any reason for shame.



John responded that he would “reply to this soon”. I warned him that “It must be quite soon, because I am unwilling to let the ‘surprise value’ of this move drain off”, and soon received a reply, to which I responded in detail. John had written:

Ideas for use of remaining money include giving it to my father, creating a scholarship of some sort, throwing a celebratory party for volunteers, etc etc.

I wrote:

‘etc. etc.’ what does that mean?

- A ‘Vance’ scholarship is nice, but it’s like throwing the money away. It would generate a pathetic few k per year, vaguely attached to the name ‘Vance’, and thrown around by administrators somewhere who will seek to absorb the capital ASAP. This is particularly true since Ed is not a competent lawyer and the situation will be weakly protected. I can’t get excited about this—by contrast to supporting Cosmopolis. Still, why not? But why not be public about it?

- As for a celebratory party; you don’t need 40k\* for that, and the idea is uninteresting to me, given the sort of fun I’d have hobnobbing with Mike and Ed.

- As for giving the money to your father; he has gotten nothing directly from the VIE books, so that would be fine. Still, why should even a good thing like that happen at the expense of continued insult to my ‘personal dignity’?†

John had written:

But the books were successfully published and the subscribers are happy with what they paid for.

I responded:

Yes, but what does that have to do with anything? The VIE is holding 40k of subscriber money. Some of this money I put into the project. The VIE corporation is within its rights to dispose of this money (within its mandate) as it sees fit. Returning the money to the subscribers might be one such use. That would be roughly \$50 per set. I got 4, so it would come to about \$200. I could use that money. Meanwhile, the VIE board is not fully legitimate given that it has never met its statutory obligations. These are just some of the parameters which surround the issue.

John had written:

Do you wish to create embarrassment?

I shot back:

If we are going that route then I might ask why you have allowed so much public embarrassment to be heaped upon *me*, or the damage the heapers are doing to the project itself? Why have you never once raised your voice about this—and what about the months and months of extra work this imposed upon us to achieve the project?

\* By now this figure had emerged.

† This remark has a history. Responding to a plea I made, in 2003, for help from the Vances at the height of Alexander Feht’s anti-VIE activism, Jack, after having received Feht in Oakland, refused to become involved, claiming it was “beneath his personal dignity” and I was advised to use a similar attitude. Prior to this however, thanks to Feht’s harangues that I was misusing the project and Cosmopolis to, of all things, promote Catholicism, Jack actually—though with grudging reluctance—called me on the phone about it. A strange conversation ensued. Jack’s heart, quite clearly, was not in it, and when I objected—the allegation was an absurd fabrication—he preferred to drop the subject than listen to any explanations, and it has never arisen again. Still, the business of “personal dignity” nettled me, since my own had not been considered at all. The statement from Franz (see page 21) is pertinent.

John, who had doubtlessly consulted with Ed, had written:

You won’t get any money this way. And you alone don’t have anything legally actionable; you’d need to rile up enough subscribers to the point that they felt they’d been cheated somehow. Since they weren’t, this seems like a long shot.

I responded:

John, I am not trying to ‘get money’. I am trying, as always, to make things function normally. If the board wants to dictate policy based on personal animosities, let them do it in public. I am not even hinting at lawsuits. I am not even hinting at saying anyone is being cheated. But I am not working a long-shot either.

John had written:

How many [Cx3 sets] are you trying to get out there? 100? 200? I don’t begrudge you the privilege of seeing your work disseminated—and that of other contributors as well—but it is not as clearly cut a legitimate use of subscriber money as you say it is. It is the position of the Board that publishing Cosmopolis is not a proper use of funds.

To this, statement—which will bring laughter of pure joy to the heart of Jojo/Feht, I replied:

John, the idea that publishing bound volumes of Cosmopolis is about any ‘privilege’ or about ‘disseminating the work of Paul Rhoads’ is, first of all, an insult. But, more to the point, that it is even brought up in this context clearly indicates that ‘the position of the Board’ is being determined by personal animosity.

Cosmopolis documents the VIE project, and the initiative to publish Cx3 is not mine. I have long planned—eventually, maybe—to publish my literary articles; I would never dream of turning to the VIE board in this regard, or to anyone else.

As for this: “the position of the Board is that publishing Cosmopolis is not a proper use of funds”; what a fine round phrase! And yet a set of Cosmopolis volumes is the surest way to preserve, celebrate and perpetuate the history and glory of the VIE project! If such volumes are not made, Cosmopolis, and the story it tells, will have disappeared in a few years. In fact what is clear is this: ‘the position of the board’, is that anything connected with ‘Paul Rhoads’ must be shot down. You, however, are in a position to pound your fist on the table, look Ed and Mike in the eye, and tell them that support of this initiative has nothing to do with privilege, or publishing the work of Paul Rhoads, and everything to do with honoring the greatest honor a writer has ever received from his readers. The Cosmopolis set, whether 2 or 3 volumes, will be expensive; probably 150-250\$. The more subscribers we have, the cheaper it will be, and the more the price is subsidized the more subscribers we will have.

I am not going to sit still while Ed and Mike play dog in the manger. You can do one of two things:

1 - Go public with VIE dollar resources, and discuss what the Board is planning to do with them.

2 - Get tough with Ed and Mike.

If not, I’ll make a fuss, and we’ll see what comes of that.

I was being very tough on John, and I knew he was getting heat from the other end also. I was not happy about it. So I wrote another letter suggesting that, if he was not going to go my way, it would be best, for him, that it be he, not I, who broke the thing open:

Some VIE volunteers I know about will not be content to learn that the VIE is holding \$40k and doing nothing with it. If you are

resigned to confrontation the smart policy is to go public before I do. The use of VIE resources should be project related, and not simply Vance related [like subsidizing a chair]. Whatever it is, it should be properly and publicly defensible.

Several uses come to mind—but nobody is asking me. If you have no plans, you should at least say that plans are being worked on. Best of all is that we cooperate in this. This would leave the greatest margin for maneuver among wise and benevolent managers.

At the same time I was eager to make clear to John that he was lending his ear to slander, so I sent him a special table of Cosmopolis contents, which I cobbled together from the Foreverness Index. The idea that publishing COSMOPOLIS would be some sort of privilege for me personally is not only twisted, it is an insult to those who contributed so much. My list did not include most of the letters—which were numerous, sometimes lengthy, and often on literary or political subjects—or the long sections of subscriber reaction, or many work-related articles, such as Hans' YOU HAVE DONE IT sections, which were about getting our credit lists right. There are, no doubt, many other lacunae:

#### ALUN HUGHES

Cosmopolis #01: Response to 'VIE Vision'  
Cosmopolis#02: The New Textual Integrity Principles  
Cosmopolis#05: Textual Integrity, Will Anyone Notice the Difference?  
Cosmopolis#07: Textual Criticism & the VIE (approaches to textual restoration)  
Cosmopolis#17: The Mugar Library

#### CHRIS CORLEY

Cosmopolis#15: Post-Proofing Guidelines  
Cosmopolis#08: OCR Errors  
Double Digitization  
Cosmopolis#61: A Salute to Post-Proofers  
Cosmopolis#31: Vance Titles Acrostic

#### JOEL RIEDESEL

Cosmopolis#22: The VIE Text Flow

#### TIM STRETTON

Cosmopolis#26: GM2: What Did We Achieve?  
Cosmopolis#09: European TI Conference  
Cosmopolis#52: How Your Contribution is Helping the VIE into Being  
Cosmopolis#54: GM3.2 Report  
Cosmopolis#11: News from the Ivory Tower: Textual Integrity on the March!  
Cosmopolis#14: Monkey News (Wyst)  
Cosmopolis#14: TI Trivia Quiz

#### PATRICK DUSOULIER

Cosmopolis#33: C'est la VIE (Translations, Space Opera, 3 Legged Joe)  
Cosmopolis#36: The Milan Packing Caper  
Cosmopolis#49: Some News from the French Publishing Front  
Cosmopolis#41: Jack's Punch Line  
Cosmopolis#42: Jack's Name-Recycling  
Cosmopolis#43: Jack in the Cage (Cage theme in—Vance)  
Cosmopolis#11: Crushing the Lemon: Practical Use of the VDAE  
Cosmopolis#12: The Book of Dreams  
Cosmopolis#15: Correcting 'The Book of Dreams'  
Cosmopolis#41: Letters from Valdamar Kutte and Aanton Ferschmuss  
Cosmopolis#42: Jack's Name-Recycling  
Cosmopolis#43: The Nitpicker's Corner (the Planet Pao)  
Cosmopolis#37: The Palace of Statistics (Palace of Love)

#### LUKE MCMATH

Cosmopolis#37: A Week in the Life of Packing Scum

#### RICHARD CHANDLER

Cosmopolis#37: The Case of the Missing Vance (Ellery Queen)  
Cosmopolis#38: Vance on Vance  
Cosmopolis#09: Double Digitization  
Cosmopolis#36: A Note on The Narrow Land  
Cosmopolis#22: The Mathematical Vance I (Morreion, Ecce-Old Earth, Rumfuddle)  
Cosmopolis#40: A Brief History of DD: From Scannos to TI  
Cosmopolis#42: Anticipating TI (Blue World, Kragen, Fleers and Flaunts)  
Cosmopolis#40: A Brief History of DD: From Scannos to TI

Cosmopolis#31: The Mathematical Vance II (Cadwal, Domains of Koryphon)  
Cosmopolis#46: The Mathematical Vance, IV (Logarithms in Clarges)  
Cosmopolis#47: The Mathematical Vance, V (the first 11 primes)  
Cosmopolis#48: The Mathematical Vance, VI (Star King)  
Cosmopolis#49: The Mathematical Vance, VII (locating Thamber)  
Cosmopolis#50: The Mathematical Vance, VIII (planetary masses)  
Cosmopolis#55: The Mathematical Vance, IX (Squared Circle of Thanet, Night Lamp)

#### WILLIAM TAHIL

Cosmopolis#58: The Mathematical Vance (Rogol Domedonfors, Mazirian)

#### JOHN EDWARDS

Cosmopolis#38: Milan Packing

#### SUAN YONG

Cosmopolis#39: Wave 1 Pagination Errors  
Cosmopolis#41: Book Repair for Fun and Profit  
Cosmopolis#28: The Man in the Cage  
Cosmopolis#35: The Case of the Missing Hyphens: The Moon Moth Experiment  
Cosmopolis#26: The Durdane Cycle  
Cosmopolis#40: Resolved at Last? That Pesky Durdane Geography

#### JACK VANCE

Cosmopolis#43: Remarks in Connection with the VIE

#### KOEN VYVERMAN

Cosmopolis#43: Wave 2 Progress: A Totalitarian Perspective  
Cosmopolis#06: VIE Statistics (vocabulary analysis)  
Cosmopolis#11: Vocabulary/Dictionary Analysis Engine  
Cosmopolis#17: Supreme Warlord of Fruit Ices (The Stochastic Vancifyier)  
Cosmopolis#18: VIE Statistics Part II: Scaling the Purple Peaks of Pulp  
Cosmopolis#62: The Sas® System (Totality revealed)

#### IAN JACKSON

Cosmopolis#44: To Preserve and Protect (Home made slip-covers for VIE volumes)

#### LINNÉA ANGLEMARK

Cosmopolis#51: Talking About the VIE

#### ANDREAS IRLE

Cosmopolis#54: First Lurulu Publication

#### DAVID B. WILLIAMS

Cosmopolis#55: VIE titles  
Cosmopolis#58: VIE titles, influence of C.A. Smith  
Cosmopolis#32: How Jack Vance Crushed My Dreams (Moon Moth, Miracle Workers)  
Cosmopolis#39: It Really Happened! (Macron 38)  
Cosmopolis#60: Jack and Frank  
Cosmopolis#56: Another Vancean Convocation  
Cosmopolis#49: Don't Look Now! Jack Vance's Dire Beasts and Ghostly Fiends  
Cosmopolis#55: Star King, Magazine Printing and Publication Procedures  
Cosmopolis#57: Heroes and Villains: Jack Vance's Early Editors

#### DAVID REITSEMA

Cosmopolis#58: Celebrating the VIE  
Cosmopolis#53: Jack Vance as Artist

#### NORMA VANCE

Cosmopolis#25: A Glimpse of Norwescon 25  
Cosmopolis#40: A Jack Vance Biography  
Cosmopolis#41: A Different View of Jack Vance  
Cosmopolis#31: Quotation Marks

#### DAVID ALEXANDER

Cosmopolis#28: How to Kill Dogs, and Other Jack Vance Reminiscences

#### CHUCK KING

Cosmopolis#33: Nectar of the Gods: The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation #1  
Cosmopolis#34: Nectar of the Gods: The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation #2  
Cosmopolis#35: Nectar of the Gods: The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation #3  
Cosmopolis#50: The Vancian Pursuit of Whiskey Appreciation, Revisited  
Cosmopolis#27: The Logan Square Book Club vs. Jack Vance (Night Lamp)  
Cosmopolis#31: Editorial Mangling: A Monkey's Tale  
Cosmopolis#62: EQ Volume Update  
Cosmopolis#41: Fun at the Mugar (Treasure on the Verso)  
Cosmopolis#32: Vance Women (puzzle)  
Cosmopolis#46: The Uninhibited Robot

#### ANDREAS IRLE

Cosmopolis#06: The Question of Format

JOHN AVELIS JR.  
Cosmopolis#29: Reaction to The Logan Square Book Club vs. Jack Vance

JOHN VANCE  
Cosmopolis#35: Lurulu Completed

MAX VENTURA  
Cosmopolis#40: J.V. and the Appreciation of Good Food and Wine  
Cosmopolis#42: Vancean Recipes: Steamed Mussels from Lyonesse

GUY H. LILLIAN III  
Cosmopolis#58: A Visit With Jack Vance: 1967

CHARLES PLATT  
Cosmopolis#61: Jack Vance, An Ad Hoc Individual

DEREK W. BENSON  
Cosmopolis#18: Gift Volume at Frankfort  
Cosmopolis#23: Reactions to In Favor of Science Fiction

JEREMY CAVATERRA  
Cosmopolis#30: Plot, Schplot!

JÉRÔME DUTEL  
Cosmopolis#31: A Thesis

ANDY GILHAM  
Cosmopolis#06: Is Jack Vance a Science Fiction Writer?

DAVID HECHT  
Cosmopolis#06: The Trouble with Science Fiction comments

IAN JACKSON  
Cosmopolis#40: Where Have All the Radios Gone?

JAMES JORDAN  
Cosmopolis#23: In Favor of Science Fiction? Reaction

BOB LACOVARA  
Cosmopolis#05: What is Science Fiction?  
Cosmopolis#06 The Trouble with Science Fiction  
Cosmopolis#25: Frankfurt VIE Brochure  
Cosmopolis#26: Microsoft buys Afghanistan  
Cosmopolis#50: Cosmopolis: 50 Issues Down the Road

LEE LEWIS  
Cosmopolis#06: The Trouble with Science Fiction

TONIO LOEWALD  
Cosmopolis#12: Is Vance a (Insert Genre Here) Writer?

BYRON MARSHALL  
Cosmopolis#28: More about Vance and Science Fiction  
Cosmopolis#29 Depth and Character Development

MATTHEW PARIS  
Cosmopolis#55: Several Ways of Looking at Jack Vance

MIKE RALSTON  
Cosmopolis#23: In Favor of Science Fiction?

BILL SHERMAN  
Cosmopolis#15: Reaction to Reflections on Contemporary Literature, Part 1

STEVE SHERMAN  
Cosmopolis#47 The Blue World  
Cosmopolis#08: Reading Versus Proofreading  
Cosmopolis#21: One Year of TI, pl  
Cosmopolis#36: Why Do We Review? (The Pleasant Grove Murders)  
Cosmopolis#41: Uncle vs. Grandfather (Demon Princes)  
Cosmopolis#49: The End of TI  
Cosmopolis#42: Vance, Religion, Sex, and the Emasculation of Parapsyche,

WILLIAM TAHIL  
Cosmopolis#27: An Antidote to the Modern Educational Malaise

TIMOTHY VERKKALA  
Cosmopolis#07: A Studied Whimsy pl  
Cosmopolis#16: Reaction to Reflections on Contemporary Literature, Part 1  
Cosmopolis#26: Vance and Politics: Locus Review Reviewed Redux  
Cosmopolis#28: More about Vance and Science Fiction

IAN DAVIS  
Cosmopolis#11: WordPick  
WordPick (TechnoProofing)

JOEL ANDERSON  
Cosmopolis#06: Tract: On Typography  
Cosmopolis#07: VIE Format Introduction (early sample)

JOHN FOLEY  
Cosmopolis#06: Quoins, Typman & Frisket  
Cosmopolis#16: Composition

RICHARD ANDERSON  
Cosmopolis#07: Anti-Amiante

ROB FRIEFELD  
Cosmopolis#22: Response to: In Favor of Science Fiction?  
Cosmopolis#36 A Note on The Houses of Iszm  
Cosmopolis#40: The Sacred Hills of Erevan, The Fruits of Conduce  
Cosmopolis#47: Tidbits ('Mowing')  
Cosmopolis#60: TI Revealed

GEORGE RHOADS  
Cosmopolis#04: Planet of Retribution (story)  
Cosmopolis#06: The Gastric Imperative (poem)  
Cosmopolis#27: 'Is is' and Jack Vance's Colons

Charles Ashford  
Cosmopolis#44: comment on Nitpicker's Corner in Cosmopolis#43

ROB GERRAND  
Cosmopolis#46: Jack Vance On (Fame, Family, Logic)  
Cosmopolis#47: Jack Vance On (dogmatism, faith, morality)  
Cosmopolis#48: Jack Vance On (aspiration, men and women, etc.)  
Cosmopolis#49: Jack Vance On (food, empathy)  
Cosmopolis#23: In Favor of Science Fiction? Reaction

John responded — again I present his letter with my interjected replies. He had written:

We divorced the VIE site from Cosmopolis when Gunter threatened a lawsuit.

I wrote:

Gunter threatened no lawsuit. He claimed that Feht and Yurgil had grounds for one. But Feht has been threatening lawsuits for years. In fact, and according to Ed himself, Gunter was alerted by Ed that Extant had 'slandered' him. But is Extant Cosmopolis? If you will take the trouble to read Extant 19 you can see the proof, in Ed's own words, of the *ad hominem* hostility which motivates him.

John had written:

The divorce did come about largely due to pressure from Ed; but consider that as an attorney, being sued (regardless the merits of the case against him) would affect him professionally, and I really think this is what made the action imperative for him. There's no reason, for being part of the VIE project, that anyone should stand to lose their livelihood (I know you appreciate this †). But it's a fallacy that there is "animosity" or "hostility" in the persons of Mike or Ed, or me. . .

This was fantastic. I wrote:

As for losing livelihoods, the situation is this: Dan Gunter is currently under investigation by the Washington State Bar Association for his actions regarding me and the VIE. This investigation is outstanding since last October, when I instigated it.\* If Ed is concerned about such things he's facing the wrong direction.

† John here makes reference to charges of artistic incompetence against myself which so enlivened the early years of the project.

\* Later, in July, I finally recieved notice from the Washington State Bar Association



John had written:

Ed and Mike are good guys, and probably remain fond of you. . .

I could 'hardly believe my eyes', as they say. I wrote:

You're kidding, right?\*

John went on:

. . .still, we share a sense that sooner or later the politics should tone down and the 'trouble' associated with the project should end.

I wrote:

Who is 'we'? And what 'politics' are you referring to? This question is perfectly serious. Since you never follow either the VanceBS, or Cosmopolis, or Extant, I'm not sure you are qualified to have an opinion on the subject. Here is what Mike had to say on the VanceBS the day before yesterday regarding publication of Cosmopolis:

"[. . .] people considering the purchase should first read the articles they might normally have skipped, and decide for themselves if they want it on their shelves [. . .] I would like Cosmopolis the newsletter to go away [. . .] If copyright issues impede it, so much the better [. . .] a publication under the proposed auspices will bring publicity to the original newsletter, more so than to the works of Vance. The reason I do not want this is that there are personal insults and slanders of the worst sort in the newsletter, and besides being personally repugnant, I feel this will lessen the stature of Vance's fans in the eyes of many [. . .] authors have been judged before on who they appeal to [. . .]"

This is the 'good guy' who 'probably' remains 'fond' of me. Also he answers none of my letters. But then it's a notorious fact that I am an international criminal.

John continued:

Another solution is to replace Mike and Ed (and me too, probably) with new people [on the VIE board] but it's not clear that this is sensible when we're so close to shutting the whole thing down. It's not fun taking care of taxes and bookkeeping, and that's what someone needs to do if they replace me. And Ed's replacement needs to deal with the corporation and see that shut down properly (although Ed would probably be perfectly happy to advise from the sidelines).

I replied:

If this is possible, let us do it ASAP.

---

that my complaint has been rejected. I informed Greg Hansen, who commented: *"Rejected or no, your complaint was the silver bullet for Gunter. Its amazing how he's dropped off the face of the world since you registered it."* I am less amazed. Dan seems to have found greener fields somewhere, but he still has time for the occasional snark, even on the VanceBS, and his Lovely Malice blog, though dead, stands firm.

\* Such a statement is only possible because John Vance never looks at the VanceBS, and never reads COSMOPOLIS or EXTANT. He is too busy doing his sacred duty by his children and parents. Also, he is the kind of person who looks to the good in everyone, even if it is not there. This, in a sense, does him credit, but it also tends to mask him from aspects of reality. At the same time, and with a certain justice, John feels he is in an exposed position. These factors makes him a manipulation target for unscrupulous people who do not hesitate to employ nasty-minded bluster about lawsuits. If anyone is interested: I am particularly fond of John Vance, and—as these remarks do not contradict—I have a very high opinion of him. If everyone on earth were like John Vance we would be living in paradise. As things are, however, our planet is over-populated with devils, and to cope with them one has to understand devilishness. That is not a gentlemanly sort of knowledge, and John Vance is a gentleman.

John terminated:

We may be able to make things happen your way, but it's going to take a few days to find out. So you need to be patient. I'll contact you mid-next week.

I wrote:

If so, you have my profound thanks. However, I must tell you that I will not be patient. It takes no time to say 'yes'.

On April 6<sup>th</sup> I got this letter from John:

As it turns out we won't need to wait. Mike and Ed have both authorized me to operate at my own discretion. So, I authorize to you—in principle—some subsidy of the project. Try to come up with a projected figure by end of next week, and let me know. I'm happy this worked out.

This was fine! There was an exchange of friendly congratulations, some discussion of detail, and then the issue of customer service came up. Hans van der Veeke, Bob and I—and Foreverness in general—were then dealing with several subscribers with volume problems. We had gotten at least one volume repaired in Milan, and we wanted some support—like a notice on the VIE site to help needy VIE subscribers find us. This, once again, was obstructed by Mike and Ed, who refused to have anything to do with Hans.

I wrote to John:

First of all, thank you for the 15k subsidy. It is the right thing to do. As for the rest of the VIE's holdings, and to the extent my opinion counts, and except for one small proviso, I think the best thing is that it should go to Jack Vance. To this no volunteer or subscriber can properly object.

The proviso is the matter of customer service. A few k should be set aside, for at least a given period (say 3 years), to finance a web presence and book replacement—in cases where the extra volumes (mostly seconds) rescued from Milan will not cover the situation. These expenses could perhaps also be covered by a programed exedent from the Cx3 operation—but only on condition that Cx3 is published by the VIE.

As you are aware I am long out of patience with Ed and Mike. I look forward to a speedy dissolution of the VIE corporation so that these matters can be correctly and expeditiously adjusted, particularly the transfer of vanceintegral.com to the control of Hans van der Veeke or Greg Hansen, or a prominent link from vanceintegral.com to integralarchive.com.

There were further blockages from Mike and Ed, so I wrote:

Here you have Hans and Greg, and several other people, who are giving themselves a lot of trouble to:

- a) Build and maintain a proper and complete VIE website,
- b) Promote the VIE project though publication of Cosmopolis,
- c) Provide customer service to VIE subscribers.

While on the other hand you have Mike and Ed who are:

- a) Maintaining an empty VIE site, confusing and discouraging to everyone, in the unique hope of denying legitimacy to Foreverness, and,
- b) More concerned about striking a brave blow against that famous enemy of human kind, 'Paul Rhoads' (in total objective agreement with A. Feht, B. Yurgil & co.), than doing anything for the VIE and the work of Jack Vance.

It is time, and over-time, to pull this thorn out of our collective foot. Personally, and until these dogs (in-the-manger) are thrown

away, I will direct any customer service quires I receive to the VIE board.

Soon after Mike and Ed were gone, replaced by Hans and Greg Hansen. Greg contacted Rob Nelson, the VIE California lawyer, and began the complicated process of dissolving the VIE—which continues currently. It turned out that there are several unexpected issues, including outstanding taxes. In the 2 years since the VIE books were delivered Ed Winskill, to the best of my information, failed to deal with any of this.

As for Ed Winskill's pretention that his actions have been about protecting himself from lawsuits likely to be generated by things I have said or done, no commentary is needed.



## HOLKERWOYD UNMASKED

Puppet master Holkerwoyd has come and gone.

He first appeared in an application for membership to the VanceBS, where posting is by invitation only; but invitations are difficult to secure. Holkerwoyd presented his request around the time of the Cx3 subsidy controversy, detailed above.

On Foreverness I mentioned Holkerwoyd's difficulties getting invited to the VanceBS, in approximately these terms:

Holkerwoyd has applied for membership to the VanceBS, but apparently they are now frisking postulants at the portal. After several days of waiting he has still received no reply. A vancian case of one extreme generating it's opposite? Six years ago Mike Berro, then VanceBS administrator, would not censor Feht & co. by reason of dogmatic free-speechism, which provoked a crisis within the VIE board. And now, with the VanceBS piloted once again by Mike's unsteady hand, the place has become a nest of rules, restrictions and exclusions, which seem to have become rooted, reflexive and even arbitrary.

Eventually Holkerwoyd was allowed ingress, where he participated in the 'Influence Thread'. But the transcript of that thread, as given in Echoes in the Ether, is by no means

complete! Several alert wanhkers doubted Holkerwoyd's bone-fides from the first, and made no secret of their suspicions. Who else but Jojo cast the first stone? He noted Holkerwoyd's phrase: *Vance's general influence on science fiction, pushing it towards the soft-sciences*, and smelled a rat:

Tycho Pansif, the industrialist, once made a similar point. Or was it Frolitz? It also turns up in the latest Extant. In any case, I feel it severely overestimates Vance's influence on SF, which I think is minimal or nonexistent.

One must marvel at Jojo's pan-optically encyclopedic mastery of VIE para-historical detail! That he is even aware of Tycho Pansif—who enjoyed a brief celebrity on the Gaeon Reach—let alone familiar with his opinions, is astonishing since this personage, now five years gone, dates from an epoch when Jojo himself failed yet to exist.

In fact the Influence Thread was not confined to literary discussion. For example, after Holkerwoyd's famous 'nose' post, "pecooper" made this sour remark:

I had written up a fairly detailed response to your previous post, Holkerwoyd. Then I read this one and decided not to waste my time. . . I wish you and your nose all the best. . . Be sure to wish The Walrus and The Carpenter a good day for me when you have tea with them.

Jojo widened this slur to an indictment:

My nose is telling me something—or, to be precise, my ear for prose and logic is. But I'll wait to see if anyone else detects the same signals.

He then added this warning to Holkerwoyd:

Be careful, lest you end up on the list of officially condemned people that is regularly published in Extant! It does irreparable damage to one's reputation, I imagine.

Encouraged, "pecooper" added:

I noticed the grandiloquent lack of logic and meaningless buzz-words and thought the same thing.

This is no way to treat an earnest participant in a conversation on scholarly matters—unless we credit the vision of scholarly behavior presented in *Sulwin's Planet*, which we do not. Holkerwoyd, therefore, wishing to maintain discussion on a dignified and amicable plane, responded to these jabs—which earned no opprobrium from the normally active VanceBS police—in a separate thread entitled 'Not Nice':

My post of yesterday began with a reaction [the Nose post] to what I consider overly high standards of procedure and evidence which Russell Letson proposed. My reaction is based on a fact, namely that this posting board is not a colloquium at a university where only published scholars are invited to speak, and only well-informed people seriously interested in the subject are invited to listen. It is, like any other Internet posting forum, a raggle-taggle collection of volunteer participants, roughly dividable into categories such as 'regular', 'casual visitor', 'lurker', 'self-appointed authority' and 'peanut-gallery tomato heaver'. Russell Letson and myself, whatever our real-life qualities, can have no status in a place like this higher than 'self-appointed authority', because where,

oh where, is the licensing agency which will confirm our legitimacy? Russell Letson's suggested standards, in this context, might uncharitably be interpreted as an attempt to disqualify a divergent point of view. I would be willing to try to meet such standards however, even in the context of this posting board, if everyone, including Jojo, were held to them. But how would that be possible? Letson even excuses himself from their application.

Russell Letson may have studied Vance for years, and published on the subject. This does not prove his time was not wasted or that his writings augment the value of the paper it may have been printed upon. I mean no barb at poor Russell Letson! A parallel remarks applies to myself, and I take him at his word. I extend to him the regard he implicitly claims to deserve (on a personal level), and I intend only to discuss our common interests in a spirit of open-minded camaraderie. Such discussion, particularly in the internet context, depends on the absolute and free willingness of participants to participate, which imposes (to my mind) a certain obligation of courtesy and even real respect.

So it is with a certain disappointment that I read the derogatory post of "pecooper". Apparently "pecooper" will not "waste his time" with my ideas, but he considers it profitability spent in making sardonic and scornful remarks! By the way, it is the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, not the Walrus and the Carpenter, who run the mad tea party, and they, unlike "pecooper" are willing to converse:

*The time has come, the Walrus said,  
To speak of many things;  
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax,  
Of cabbages and kings,  
Of why the sea is boiling hot, and whether pigs have wings. . .*

But before anyone starts to get huffy, please note that Jojo made another of his totally mysterious, but clearly hostile posts, including ominous phrases like: "officially condemned people" and "irreparable damage to reputation", and then "pecooper" chose to qualify my posts as: "grandiloquent lack of logic and meaningless buzz-words".

To "pecooper" I would quote father William: "Do you think, at your age, this is right?"

To anyone else reading this post, I say: are Jojo's and pecooper's reactions the sort of thing you want injected into loyal discussion about Vance on this board? Am I wrong that this board is famous, not for the quickness of its fast speed, but indignation and horror at breaches of etiquette or indulgence in any sort of sourpussiness?

This new thread was quickly filled with nastiness—mitigated only by a certain sophomoric wit—from Wewalwala, Russell Letson and "pecooper", but a mighty frog leapt down into the mud, and with a great splash banned. . . not Jojo, "pecooper", Letson, nor Wewalwala, who were the ones not being nice, but guess who? Axo wrote:

I do hope Holkerwoyd will at least understand this: I have had enough already. My "nose" is as good as any, and my sense of smell is enhanced by modern technology. I also have eyes to see, both here (textual analysis can go a long way) and on the Foreverness Board. By banning him (which I will do in a minute), I am in fact doing him a kindness. Surely, a person of his sensitivity should not frequent the "unsavory VanceBS" where "a minority group, thanks to majority silence stained with collaboration, guilty indifference, or guilty cowardice, has been running an operation of slander and opprobrium". Of course, I am not quoting from Holkerwoyd himself, who must have been unaware of the den of iniquity and cowardice he was entering, otherwise he would never have applied for membership, surely. No, it's just something I read. I read a number of other things too, but that's enough.

Axo was cleverly quoting remarks I had made on

Foreverness, of which more below. There was some reaction to Axo's act. Orin Bennett disapproved:

. . . I was enjoying the discourse between Holkerwoyd, Halsey and Russell Letson. They each presented ambitious opinions and supported them well, their insights were thought-provoking and had interesting implications, the exchange was civil—even courteous—in tone, a sharp contrast to other posts on that thread. Holkerwoyd's 'not nice' post, above, may be over-zealous but he's right: posters were taking pot-shots at him, not the other way around.

Mike Berro developed the strange thesis that the ban was necessary:

. . . I do not allow banning lightly (I was removed from ownership here for refusing to ban people H himself wanted banned), but in order to prevent the subsequent owner from deleting this entire board, I had to promise to keep H banned (under whatever subterfuge he employed.) As it happens, I think it is best for the health of this board that he remain so, as well as a few others. Several of them had very interesting points of view, but the price of their participation was too high.

The price of Holkerwoyd's participation on the VanceBS is too high because certain people cannot resist being nasty to him? It is wonderful to hear Mike say this. In the old days he would not allow no banning, no matter how nasty things got—and they got *far* nastier than this! He did not, then, see any problem with the worst sorts of slanders, in great heaps—perhaps because they were, as today, mostly aimed at myself. He was only budged from his radical free-speechism by arguments of a desperate character, and he was certainly not, as he now pretends, 'removed' from ownership. He preferred to renounce it rather than quit the VIE board of directors; but nothing kept him from holding both posts—other than his own preference I remain active in the VIE project, which I was not willing to do when a VanceBS, owned by a VIE board member, tolerated such slander.

It is an amazing paradox. Given Berro's opinion of me today, he must believe he erred in this preference then. How much better, he must now think, the VIE would have been had I been encouraged to leave early on, and had the VanceBS remained under his radically 'pro-free-speech' control! Berro's claim to have been forcibly removed is both a blatant falsehood and an insidious defense of a position which would be indefensible were he obliged to defend it anywhere but behind the VanceBS wall of bannery.

Ed Winskill, a master of disguise always glad to see others do his dirty work, posted a melancholic ramble of literary trend which began: "I have found the 'influence' discussion very interesting." Not so interesting, however, that he cared whether or not it continued. As for Dan Gunter, Ed's friend and colleague, he lobbed in a stink-bomb from his personal gun-platform: "In case anyone has forgotten; Paul Rhoads is an admitted liar. He slandered Alex Feht, and he slandered me and my wife. His excuse for slandering my wife? He thought that he needed to do so." Dan's platform was also used by "pecooper" to empty his venom sack in a gush of self-congratulatory and mean-spirited distortions:

It wasn't long before we started getting the grandiose sweeping statements about how Jack Vance single-handedly changed SF, without facts to back them up, accompanied by buzz-words meant



to sound deep and insightful. Those who ventured to disagree got progressively more arch and insulting replies. I'm afraid I gave up on answering a couple of his posts and baited him before I realized who he was. Mea Culpa.

Anyway, most people tried to maintain a level of civility, despite Mr. Holkerwoyd's growing rancor. Public complaints hadn't even started yet, when axolotl posted that he was banning Holkerwoyd this morning. Poor guy only lasted 45 hours. That has to be a record.

Meanwhile, on Foreverness, a parallel discussion proceeded, in a thread entitled "The VanceBS, a prognostic". I wrote:

I can't help getting the impression that the VanceBS is committing suicide. Postings occur only in fits and starts, among a select group which never seems to change or grow. Mentions of the VIE, which must be only natural given the history and nature of the board, are sniped at not only by sourpusses like Gunter, Jojo and Ried, but, alarmingly, by members of the VIE board itself—who are also responsible for having either banned fellow board members or driven them away with unpleasantness.

If David B. Williams, for reasons best known to himself, did not choose to honor that strange local with his good-humored presence, I have the impression its activity would drop off dramatically from even its current torpid pace.

This comment is no effort to hurry the process of VanceBS decline. As I have said before I would like to see it become again what it once was—or something like it, and better.

David B. Williams engaged these remarks in a cordial exchange where he defended what he regarded as a evenhanded attitude. He eventually stated that he did not care to "choose sides" and that he chose to "deal with all in a courteous and good-hearted manner." I replied:

I am not saying, in essence or otherwise, that you should "choose sides". I am urging you to discernment and responsibility. I am pointing out that you are consorting with nasty people. When you say that I see you as 'fraternizing with the enemy', and that 'they' (why the quotation marks?) also see you as fraternizing with the enemy (me), you are standing on the shifting sands of relativism. You distance yourself from what you regard as a set of alien 'problems', allegedly personal, which have no relation to you, or your interests.

But these problems are a) not personal, and b) not without relation to you and your interests. Those people you are so kind to are mendacious slanderers, indifferent to any larger harms they might commit as long as they can perpetuate their program. You are animating a board which has not only persecuted me personally—with the result that the VIE was that much harder to achieve (by at least a year), but more recently has even gone so far as to make it the major anti-VIE force—by promoting, for example, interference with Cx3.

Yet I do not exclude you, or them.

Does all this truly mean nothing to you?

Gregory Hansen made this comment:

Internet forums, like anything else, are what the participants make of them. Its clear that certain folks on the Vance EZboard are anti-VIE and a somewhat larger percentage seem to be anti-Paul Rhoads; short-sighted positions at the least, in my view. But certainly not all of them fit one or the other of these descriptions. How is it any better to condemn the entire VanceBBS community than to reject everything printed in Extant because of a few issues' pointed language?

To which I replied:

No better, if that were the case. But I, at least, do not condemn the VanceBS, or even DBW for posting there. I simply point out that he is fraternizing with some very unpalatable characters who practice exclusion and slander without restraint.

To which David B. Williams responded:

Well, not "without restraint." They have restrained from slandering or excluding me, among others.

I agree that some of the original discussions on the Vance BBS, and developments which followed from them, had some negative impact on the VIE project. But I don't think that anything on the current Vance BBS is having a real impact on the Cx3 project. The issues of Cosmopolis exist. Those who desire a bound set and can afford one will subscribe. No calumnies or distortions can change this simple situation.

There may be one or two "anti-VIE" individuals still posting on the Vance BBS, but the VIE project has been successfully completed. If they truly do wish the VIE project harm, they have failed and can make no difference now. I happen to be very "Pro-VIE" but I don't believe I have to separate myself from this Vancean community because one or two other participants hold a different view.

I responded:

If your goal [regarding my modifier "without restraint"] is to be cute, then 'touché'. If you want to engage what I am saying then acknowledge that Ed, Mike, Dan and Patrick, with the voluble and visible support of Jojo, Martin and a hand-full of others, have banned, rebanned, lied, slandered and done their best, at various times and in various directions, to hurt the VIE, and to stigmatize me personally—the guy who engages your ideas more deeply than anyone else, and who publishes you in Extant, giving, with the help of Foreverness, a wider and more permanent exposure of your ideas than the VanceBS possibly can. All this while the VanceBS rank and file look on in silence.

As for the VanceBS having an impact on the Cx3 project; that's not the issue. Of course there was an anti-Cx3 rush, and it pretty much fizzled—and will be renewed if possible—and once again most of the VanceBS personnel stood by in silence and just let it happen. If the situation were a serious one—and not just a cyber-folly—these people would justly be called 'collaborators'.

To my claim that I do not 'condemn' the VanceBS, David wrote:

Paul, every time you refer to the Vance BBS as the "VanceBS" you are disparaging it. This may not rise to the level of "condemn," but come on, you are clearly discouraging current participants from continuing and newcomers from getting involved with that discussion list.

I responded:

Really? Where and how? I thought what I was doing was pointing out to you that you are keeping poor company, and by your powerful support helping to maintain a moribund tendency which, I repeat, I would like to see cured so that the VanceBS can be renewed. As for my 'little joke', it is neither disparagement nor discouragement. It is a reflection of a reality. It is flatly factual that there is a lot of ugly bulls—t on the VanceBS; lies, slanders and condemnations. They continue to be featured, for example, in the rules section, to say nothing of various famous threads. To you, however, this seems unproblematic! Getting along famously with these destructive people seems to be ok with you!

David, there is no one else I would say this sort of thing to, because no one else brings so much positive energy to the VanceBS. Far be it from me to interfere with your positive energy, which is all in the service of your interest in Vance, but it is not so simple. I don't want to exaggerate, but it is my opinion that your implication in the VanceBS, and thus your collaboration with the leading persons there, is—guarding proper proportions and a proper perspective—unhealthy and wrong. It confuses the cyber-vancian situation, slows its normalization, and may even, eventually, be something you will come to regret.

D. Watts reacted to the situation on the VanceBS:

With all the subtlety of a rhinoceros [Feht] appears to have been trying to unmask "poor Holkerwoyd". You wisely did not rise to the bait, however this post pretty much gives the game away, I'm afraid.

I asked:

...what 'game' are we talking about?

D. Watts replied:

I refer to the 'game' of your recent infiltration of the Vance 'BS' under yet another alias. It appears that all but the deranged Mr. F were willing to accept it, as the posts were on topic and reasonably insightful. The irony is that you are doing the very thing that you just assailed DW for: associating with that rogue's gallery of 'unsavory' characters.

I responded, in the post to which Axo had made reference:

Mr. Watts,

I don't understand your attitude. The appearance of Holkerwoyd on the VanceBS is no 'infiltration'. He applied for membership, and about 2 weeks later received it. Then he made an occasional post. What is the 'game'? Jojo-Feht used this term, saying that it is 'up', but I have no idea what he means, and I doubt Holkerwoyd does either. Does Jojo-Feht mean that the game is up for himself, and those who wish to continue to hold certain persons in a state of unjust opprobrium for unavowable reasons? If so, this is not clear.

Regarding Holkerwoyd's appearance, you claim that "*all but the deranged Mr. F were willing to accept it, as the posts were on topic and reasonably insightful.*" Do you mean that if the posts were less insightful they would more easily ban poor Holkerwoyd? If so, should they not get busy banning each other in retribution for the trivial blather most of them keep stuttering out, and will you not inform them of this innovative obligation?

You seem to reproach me for not rebuking Holkerwoyd as I have rebuked David B. Williams, for 'associating with that rogue's gallery of unsavoury characters'. But here you miss the nub. I do not reproach the VanceBS regulars for some essential turpitude. If I go down that road who is left to consort with? All of us creepers upon this mortal coil are struggling under the weight of original sin. What makes the VanceBS unsavory is how a minority, thanks to majority silence stained with collaboration, guilty indifference or cowardice, has been running an operation of slander and opprobrium. It is exactly this operation, however, which is compromised when Holkerwoyd (if your suspicions about his identity are accurate) manages to post on the VanceBS. The actual eradication of VanceBS rot is not effectuated by this half measure, but it is better than nothing. The presence of Holkerwoyd at least renders DBW's actions less culpable.

I maintain that he bares a certain responsibility. It is born by all who tolerate the intolerable in silence, but even more by those who actually, like DBW, breath life into it.

D. Watts wrote:

I think you overstate the level of slander on the JVMB. I have browsed almost every page on the site, including the archives, and have found very little of it. Apparently most of the vitriol was consigned to the "Robles", which is no longer accessible. The most recent hint of any anti-Rhoadsism was the response to Hans' inquiry regarding interest in the Cx3. I fail to see how a few negative comments there amount to an active effort to torpedo the project.

I certainly have seen no evidence of DBW expressing, instigating, or encouraging any sort of negativity towards you. You appear to fault him, and indeed everyone else there, for not rallying to your defence at the slightest whiff of anti-VIE or anti-Rhoads sentiment. Is this reasonable?

At about this point Holkerwoyd was banned.

I replied to D. Watts:

Dear Mr. Watts,

clearly you do not appreciate the situation. It is true that most of the worst stuff has been deleted from the VanceBS, but that is not the problem. The problem is that the VanceBS is a bastion of slander. It has even, ever since last fall, become the nerve center of anti-VIE militancy. The most recent manifestation was the fizzled attack on Cx3. This was not impressive in itself, but it is the discoloration of the skin that signals the malignancy below.

Furthermore, your remark is odd. Where have I ever suggested that DBW has expressed instigated, or encouraged negativity towards myself? My point is this: by giving his positive energy to the VanceBS DBW gives good strength to something which not only does not deserve it, but which has perversely come to stand for the opposite of what he is for: promoting Jack Vance.

As for this being all about me; people have been trying that tactic for years. How do you explain the barbs shot at Cx3? But, when it comes to me, the VanceBS for many years has been a constant force seeking to maintain me in opprobrium, and does not hesitate to attack anyone or anything connected with me, including Foreverness, the board we are posting on now! Again: it is a handful of people only who do this, but that handful includes the past and present moderators, and the most influential VanceBS regulars. Meanwhile, the lesser regulars either silently approve, or cravenly acquiesce. If this situation seems normal to you, I wish you the joy of it.

The famous "pecooper", for example, has contributed to Gunter's recent attack, adding this comment:

*'Sigh' And now he seems to have wiggled back onto the Jack Vance board under name of "Holkerwoyd". If it isn't him, it is somebody who uses all the same lack of logic and meaningless buzz-words.*

*Any bets on how long it is before he gets banned?*

As for the bets, pecooper himself is doing his best to hasten that happy result.

Poor Holkerwoyd. I would not want to be in his shoes.

As for DBW, after they strangled Holkerwoyd, he added the following insight to the 'discussion' which followed, and from which its whole tenor may be judged: *My own choice has long been Roy Orbison—a performer who developed a unique style and who is cited as an influence by many far-more-successful singers and musical groups.*

Holkerwoyd, of course, is unable to respond, but I doubt he has anything to say along those lines.

D. Watts proposed a toast:

A raised glass for a valiant, if perhaps misguided sally. One is tempted to view the unfortunate result through the narrow lens of ineluctability. This nonaligned spectator, however, cannot help but lament the lost chance of a happier outcome had M. Holkerwoyd properly armored himself before riding forth. The darts were not

unforeseen, and might have bounced harmlessly away instead of prompting the reaction which, justified or not, exposed him to the fatal blow.

I expressed interest:

You interest me Mr. Watts.

Why was the sally misguided?

How is the 'result' unfortunate?

In what armor was M. Holkerwoyd to have dressed himself?

And, above all, what 'chance' was lost?

I cannot speak for M. Holkerwoyd, but somehow I doubts he sees the matter in such terms.

D. Watts replied:

I believe that a more tentative or cautious approach might have been more efficacious than H's barrage of posts, especially after it was clear that his cover had been blown. More restraint, certainly, could have been used, especially in the final thread, which contained what were apparently viewed as thinly-veiled jabs at RL, pecooper, and Jojo (who has all but revealed himself as Jabba the Feht).

The result is unfortunate in that it amounts to censorship: the silencing of a possibly 'divergent' or unpopular viewpoint. I obviously disagree with the decision, which, for what it is worth, appears to have been made somewhat reluctantly. As a new member, however, I have no say in the matter.

I believe that the armour of restraint, forbearance, humility, polished to a low lustre, might have served M. Holkerwoyd well. A foray into 'enemy' territory, even while bearing the white flag, is not without risk. In this case the risks were very well known. Any aggression, real or imagined, was certain to doom the venture.

What was lost has been conveyed already by Mr. Bennett, but I will elaborate. Diversity of ideas, palliation of old grievances, the ability of everyone to gather under the same roof to discuss our favorite writer.

Perhaps it is too late for all this, or too soon. Or perhaps I have this all wrong and H's motives were simply to cause turmoil, in which case I suppose nothing was lost.

I wrote:

Ah ha! Now I understand you.

Again, I cannot speak for Holkerwoyd, but I will offer my own reading of the situation. Holkerwoyd seems to me to be a philanthropist, as you suggest, rather than an anarchist, as you fear. But I do not think his goal was to promote diversity of opinion on the VanceBS, or to palliate old grievances, or even to gather everyone under the same roof to discuss a favorite writer. I doubt he has any objection to nice things like that but I don't think he wants them at any price. I may be too bold here, but given his trajectory, and his obstinate cleavage to it, I calculate that Holkerwoyd believes such goals to be secondary benefits which may, or may not, accrue when more basic necessities are satisfied. How can there be diversity of ideas when certain idea-generators are stigmatized as international criminals? How can there be adjustment of what you generously call "old grievances" while current injustice is rampant—namely the stubborn maintenance of the said stigmatization, and its rabid generalization to anyone and anything associated with the said international criminal? Finally, how can everyone be gathered together when certain of the ones maniacally insist that another of the ones is an international criminal, association with whom is excluded on principle?

Holkerwoyd, no more than any of us, does not require the VanceBS to express his opinions. 'Diversity' can be satisfied here, or on another board, or Holkerwoyd could just discuss his ideas with his real-life friends over a beer rather than a keyboard. He does not seem the sort of person who, in order to enjoy the dubious

pleasures of conversation in a den of iniquity would stoop to skulking maneuvers and, above all, to silent acquiescence in flagrant meanness maintained by mindlessly repeated slanders and lies, the way everyone else on the VanceBS does. Holkerwoyd seems to be made of sterner stuff.

Frankly, and here I speak only for myself, I simply cannot understand why folk, such as yourself, do not protest, until the meanies on the VanceBS swallow their rancor and allow sanity to prevail, or until they, in turn, get themselves banned. After a few such heroics it may be clear to even the most obtuse how deep and dark is the venom. Even I was amazed to see the recent parade of badness. I did not think, for example, that pecooper was such a collaborating pill, or that Letson (a wikipedia pill) would permit himself to go as far as he did on the VanceBS. This was the first time Wewalwala (another wikipedia pill) has spilled bile on the VanceBS. Both these characters take exuberant advantage of the unhealthy situation of the VanceBS to liberate their pathology. No surprise, of course, regarding Jojo, axolotl or Mike, nor, once again, to watch Ed suavely standing back while others do his dirty work. And then, naturally, Dan Gunter lobbed in his usual caliber zero slander, from behind the ban protected walls of his stronghold.

Badness must be swallowed by the bad ones, or they must go away, or be sent away. This is how good behavior and nice possibilities are promoted. One might also lose oneself in frothy idealism, hoping for repentance and requests for forgiveness, but I do not so lose myself.

The Silent Critic then addressed D. Watts:

If I could offer my own perspective, and perhaps fill in a few gaps, I would say that Paul does not prefer peace to the truth. Whatever anyone thinks of him, he did not start the fighting, though he refused to compromise or pretend that he somehow did anything wrong when the fight came to him. This latest episode is a standard illustration of the pattern, and if I can guess, was initiated only for the purpose of demonstration.

Paul's unapologetic manner is what irked Dan Gunter, Ed Winskill and Mike Berro from the beginning. If JVMB is going to continue to exist as it does today it is essential that Paul is not allowed. I'm not sure what this says about Paul except that he can be highly irritating to those who have, over the years, picked fights with him, tried to wrangle him into submission, or abandoned him to various sharks.

The irony in Dan Gunter's case is that he eventually came to see Paul as his own shark. Then he, in a miraculous change of heart, experienced enlightenment and decided there was no benefit in that lofty Christian perspective he demanded of Paul with respect to the Great White Feht. If you were not around during the VIE wars, I can only report that Feht's attacks were remarkably awful. Dan and Ed's almost relieved latching onto and subsequent milking of the "swingers" non-issue is an insult and a travesty, given their cool unmovable indifference to Paul's long and serious plight. Their basic attitude during that extended circumstance was essentially that Paul either deserved it, or if not, that the most honorable thing to do was to ignore it or succumb to it.

There is no accounting for the power of pride and rationalization, or maybe "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery" à la Dan, who noisily failed the test he contrived for Paul, and under considerably less pressure. And I might add: he brought it on himself by meddling, where Paul "brought it on himself" by living in a world filled with sharks.

On another forum our friend, Dan Gunter, Washington state lawyer, reacted to this turn of events using his favorite turn of phrase, which he fails, and continues to fail, to use on a less numbingly frequent basis:

I'm not surprised by this turn of events. I think, though, that a



number of people failed and continue to fail to speak up and thus encourage Rhoads. And then there is Hans van der Veeke, who seems to be under some spell.

I commented:

The silent ones fingered by the lawyer may include, and continue to include, DBW, who has shamefully failed to condemn Rhoads.

As for Hans; I don't know if he has been charmed, but I can personally certify that he is charming.

David B. Williams remarked:

My shame is worse, I have failed to condemn anyone! When it comes to disagreements, I prefer to address the arguments, not the arguees. I may believe that someone is a schmeltzer and a nimp, but that doesn't make the someone in question right or wrong on a specific issue.

Bemused at DBW's obtuseness, I responded:

Well David, why do you then not even address the arguments?

Gunter's argument is that I am a liar, a slanderer, an 'out of control' ego-maniac whom the VIE board let off his leash to the detriment of Jack Vance, the VIE project, and the whole known universe. The usual suspects are in agreement with this indictment to which I am not allowed to reply and for which I have been condemned without trial.

So: what do you say?

David B. Williams replied:

These are ad hominem attacks, not arguments. I deplore them, from anyone regarding anyone. And even if all these descriptions are true, they do not detract from the validity or non-validity of your interpretations of Vance's works, etc.

The only glancing argument here is the claim that your actions, decisions, or behavior have in some way detracted from Jack Vance or the VIE. I can't support this conclusion. Nothing done by any fan can detract from Vance's stature, which he earned long ago; the VIE is composed exclusively of Vance's writing, and therefore it also is impervious to anyone else's actions. His work speaks for itself. Any antics revolving around the VIE project only diminished the stature of the individuals involved.

I complained:

You are changing the subject. This has nothing to do with whether or not anyone is denouncing my disgusting person as opposed to deploring my disgusting ideas. It also has nothing to do with claims for or against the thesis that any "actions, decisions, or behavior have or have not detracted from Jack Vance or the VIE.

No. The issue is this: The VanceBS, for the past several years, in the name of arguments which are patently untrue, and against which no explanations are permitted, has excluded and diabolized 'Paul Rhoads', the initiator and editor-in-chief of the VIE and a close personal friend of Jack Vance. In the name of this deliberate, organized and persistent policy of diabolization, the VanceBS has been instrumentalized by several people to such ends as excluding news letters (in which you have been published) from web-sites, and to being the authority for diabolization of 'Paul Rhoads' on other forums. By doing such things it has contributed directly to serious delays in the completion of the VIE project, and made various work, and personal, relationships between project people pointlessly difficult. It has also promulgated and supported threats of legal action that amount to sheer bullying, causing real heartaches to many, including people none of us should want hurt or upset.

If our places were reversed with respect to the VanceBS, or any

other organ, I know what I would be doing and saying.

D. Watts explained himself further:

My call for restraint applied only to the recent foray of Holkerwoyd to the Vance BBS. The earlier actions by Mr. Rhoads, in my estimation, if not especially dignified were at least reasonably justifiable and appeared to be reactions to direct attacks upon him.

I was not a VIE subscriber for reasons financial. I did purchase the Editions AI Lyonesse trilogy, and apart from some damage apparently caused by shipping was pleased with it. I had no problem with the font. Over the past years I have occasionally browsed the Vance BBS and Foreverness and noted some of the objections to the VIE, Cosmopolis, etc.

In my opinion, the only remotely valid criticism is the "Wannek" travesty. However even this is minor in the grand scheme, and in the end it was JV himself who made the decision.

Responding to my phrase: "the lesser regulars either silently approve, or cravenly acquiesce", Kingsley complained:

Paul, this one sentence is really very offensive, since you ignore a third possibility in this brazen accusation: is it not possible that the 'lesser' ezboard members, like myself, have decided to ignore the entire situation for lack of relevance?

I wrote:

It is indeed, and I have by no means ignored this possibility! In fact I am even sure it is how most of the 'lesser' posters, and probably most of the 'greater', justify the situation to themselves.

Kingsley challenged me:

Wouldn't it be more appropriate to just ignore the VanceBS (that's two b's) if you have such low regard for the views, observations and thoughts expressed there?

I countered:

Appropriate to what? And since when do I have 'low regard' for any 'views' and 'observations', expressed on the VanceBS? (And that'll be 1 'B', until it earns back the other.) Am I not on a crusade to reform the dear old place? Am I not motivated exactly by the quality of David's contributions?

David B. Williams seconded Kingsley's approach:

Kingsley offers a "third way" explanation, which I will elaborate, to this extent: Silence does not necessarily equal approval or acquiescence. Many of the vituperative exchanges were so distasteful that in some cases, even those who agreed with one side or the other chose not to involve themselves because their self-respect prevented them from associating with such behavior.

I responded:

I fail to see what this has to do with it. Where have I suggested that you should compromise your magnificent personal dignity by throwing yourself into distasteful and sophomoric squabbles? Where have I suggested that any "silence" of yours equals 'approval or acquiescence'?

Have I not been clear? I am disappointed that you support the VanceBS with your good energy—by initiating many discussions, and participating so interestingly in them (this is the opposite of silence)—when by doing so you are both fraternizing with people who are doing something absolutely disgusting to me (with

whom, after all, you would seem to have an even more fruitful relationship with respect to the work of Jack Vance, or who, in any case, has never done you any wrong), as well as causing heart-ache and trouble to other people, and interfering with the normal and fraternal functioning of the VIE) and thus you are thoughtlessly and implicitly proclaiming that these are normal people, running a normal situation, with whom normal relations are possible.

In other words, by being who you are (an important figure in cyber-vancedom) and by posting on the VanceBS as if it were a normal sort of place, you are reinforcing the grotesque idea that it is a normal place, and thereby interfering with its reformation.

David B. Williams responded to this requisition:

On the limited subject of my personal participation on the Vance BBS:

Your expressed goal is to "improve the health" of the Vance BBS. Your program seems to require me and other Vance fans to withhold our participation on the board. But in my estimate this approach will not achieve the result you desire. If I, and others, cease to post, the Vance BBS will suffer anemia and shrivel away. I recommend a more positive program. I encourage even more Vance fans to join the discussions. This will further dilute any residual toxins from old feuds and stale contentions, making the Vance BBS even more wholesome and enjoyable.

I insisted:

"More wholesome and enjoyable", while the people who run the VanceBS maintain their perverse rules, stand by their hypocritical and aggressive stance, their attempt to squash Extant, their support of bullying and probably illegal threats of lawsuits, and a whole slue of lies and slanders, including attacks on the VIE?

I confess to a certain amazement at your apparent incapacity to take any of this seriously, as if it has nothing to do with you, as if associating normally with people who do such things poses no problem.

To me the reform of the VanceBS passes by the correction of these matters, and I predict that it will continue to vegetate until they are, for the following reasons:

1 - It is currently almost impossible for the VanceBS to recruit new members. They are in such a tizzy of paranoid suspicion that an innocent and curious newbie, (such as, say, Holkerwoyd) must wait for 2 weeks, and do some pestering, before having an application approved.

2 - The current, quite limited, set of posters live in a state of anxiety lest they even inadvertently step on the sensitive toes of the VanceBS honchos with regard to subjects which might naturally arise on a Vance board whose history is closely tied to the VIE. This cramps everyone's style.

3 - Given the intellectual terrorism that glowers over the place, if anything does occur (say, for example, certain of Holkerwoyd's posts—but: today Holkerwoyd, tomorrow DBW) a certain over-large set of posters pull off their 'normal-Joe' mask, and get nasty. I'm not talking about house-trolls like Jojo or Ried, but anti-Rhoads sleepers like pecooper, Letson and Wewala. This happens in a vacuum of protest. Nobody dares make a move; they stand silent while the gnashers creep out and do their lynching.

Events like this leave marks.

4 - The forced cheeriness of Axo fools no one. People, including myself, wish the VanceBS would return to what it once was (long, long ago, before Feht waded in there), a place where people could discuss the work of Jack Vance, or whatever they felt like discussing with each other. But, having allowed itself to become, above all, an instrument of persecution, a weapon in the hands of Dan Gunter and Ed Winskill dedicated to harming their designated enemy—and seconded by people who ought to know better, while allowing Feht-mouthpiece Jojo the run of the place while rules get promulgated against that designated enemy—there is a problem which will be persistent.

Your blind support, David, does not contribute to reform; it puts off the happy day when reform might occur.



## NICKNIKE AND THE MYSTERIOUS MILANESE SETS

Alert to all things vancian, Mike Berro noted the presence of yet another VIE Readers set for auction on eBay. A certain 'Westfield' found aspects of the offer peculiar:

What I don't understand is why it is the Italian printer of the VIE who seems to be selling these sets—about one a month—and using a Dutch member of the VIE team as an intermediary. Who gets the cash? Usually, the 'overs' in a print run—the excess sets almost invariably run off in any printing—belong to the publisher. Where is the money going? How many more sets will appear? It seems a very queer business.

Mike Berro suggested:

I was told a subscriber who did not take delivery is selling them. I would suggest asking the seller what's going on.

Westfield insisted:

I could believe that, if it was just one set—this is about the 7th to be sold this way. Some one has some sweet deal set up—I know not who... And why is it the printer who is selling these sets? It just doesn't add up. I did ask the Dutch intermediary some questions when about the second set was offered but got some fairly vitriolic abuse for querying what set this was, and how come it was being offered for sale...

'Bud', who posts elsewhere as 'The Silent Critic', an illustrious VIE volunteer with several Milan packing stints to his credit, wrote:

I did some querying and puzzling with a friend and our best wild guess given the limited information available was that there were about 10 or 11 spare sets in existence as of spring 2006. I have no idea who owns them but if it was the VIE and I had any speculator sense and the money, I would have tried to buy them up and resell them myself. Jantiff would have approved.

Then it was the turn of 'Yollana', aka the Dutch member of the VIE team mentioned above, to weigh in:

I can be vitriolic, but I do my best not too. I cannot really divulge where the money goes, which means it doesn't stay with me. I'm just helping the owner, who I met during my packing trips in Cologno Monzese. She might have done it herself, but I had an active Ebay account, a working Paypal account capable of accepting credit card payments and knowledge of how to use them. If you want character references, or you feel you need to know more, feel free to send me a PM or ask Paul Rhoads. I can't really discuss details here since they're not mine to tell. Sorry about that.

Now Ed Winskill, ex-member of the VIE board, put in a curmudgeonly paternal—if not patronizing—word:

My speculation is that the owner owns them, thus is entitled to sell them as and when he or she wishes. Doesn't sound too complicated.

I won't tell you what I own, and I won't ask you what you own. This, I find, is the way things should be.

Perhaps he was again trying to stave off any consequences of having been VIE treasurer for six years—though he is innocent of any real knowledge of the project. Westfield, however, was not to be put off:

The point I was trying to make, obviously unsuccessfully, was that the VIE was supposed to be a non-profit organization dedicated to promulgating the work of Jack Vance. Many, many people gave up a lot of their free time to make it happen. As I understood it the VIE Corporation owned the project and, presumably, the assets of the Corporation. Now, extra copies of the VIE are being sold by the printer employed by the Corporation. At the very least, this is sloppy management. When a publisher contracts with a printer to print, say, 1000 copies of a book it very much does not mean that, "oh by the way, if you want to print an extra few for yourself, that's fine"! Extra copies (run-ons) are the property of the publisher (in this instance the VIE Corporation). Especially when you're talking about a supposedly 'limited' edition, it is very important, if you're concerned about the ethics of your pitch, to make sure that these run-ons don't find their way to the marketplace.

At this point a mysterious newcomer, calling himself 'Nicknike', who had, by a strange concatenation of circumstances, just managed to secure an invitation to join the VanceBS "community", posted his first comment, which he enticingly titled "Insider information, if you want it".

The message began with an exciting confession:

"Nicknike" is Paul Rhoads.

Now, children, you have a choice; you can get all heated up and ban me for a 5th time, or—why not?—you can stay cool. With the later option you can learn what's what in Milan—in case you are interested.

The message was signed: "Paul".

Nose ever in the wind, Jojo leapt out of his rabbit hole:

Just to be on the safe side, in case something should go wrong, perhaps you should simply let us have the information right away?

But it was too late. Axolotl, pressing the ban-button with continental ease, offered comment and council:

If indeed you are Paul, Nicknike (and why should I doubt you?) then you are banned, yes, again... As for what's what in Milan, this will not buy you a way in. If you really crave to tell the story, why not post it on your Foreverness Board, I'm sure the news will spread out, for anyone who cares.

Westfield, his righteous indignation cooled by perhaps half a degree, and perhaps a trifle nervous, made a request:

Can the moderator, or anyone else, tell me why Paul Rhoads is banned from this site? I don't want to appear naive, but as an occasional lurker on Vance related sites I've never understood the detailed ins and outs of the internecine war that the VIE has so obviously generated. My particular query/concern is to know who is flogging off extra sets of the VIE on Ebay in a way which seems to suggest that the whole VIE thing was a money-making scam from which some dishonest individuals are continuing to profit. I would dearly like to know why VIE 'volunteers' and especially the printer in Italy are continuing to make quite large sums of money from something which was supposed to be a not-for-profit enterprise. Is Jack Vance getting any of this money? Does his agent know of these nefarious dealings? Is any proper royalty being paid, and



accounted for? These are valid questions. If 'Nicknike' or anyone else can throw light on these issues, I would have thought the members of this board would have welcomed that. No?

I do not want to appear naive either but, like Westfield I would like to understand what this internecine war is all about. What, specifically, are Mike and Ed so worked up about, and what is the meaning of Patrick's alliance with them? Jojo, who knows everything about Paul Rhoads, was happy to explain:

It is all quite simple, really, and I shall be happy to explain.

This message board predates the VIE project, and has never had anything to do with the VIE project. When the VIE project started, a special VIE message board was set up to discuss VIE matters. Again, the VIE message board was entirely unrelated to this message board, except, of course, for the fact that there was some natural overlap with regard to the participants.

When controversial decisions started to be made about the VIE, such as that it should be typeset in a special new typeface designed by Paul Rhoads, the Editor-in-Chief of the VIE, and that it should contain illustrations by Paul Rhoads, some people posted complaints about these decisions on the VIE message board. There were also complaints about the contents of the VIE newsletter, *Cosmopolis*, which was largely written by Paul Rhoads. Paul Rhoads therefore decided to shut down the VIE message board.

But the complaints continued here, on Mike Berro's message board, which, I repeat, was formally unrelated to the VIE project. Eventually, Paul Rhoads made it known to the VIE board that if those complaints continued, he would see to it that the VIE project, which was, I believe, by this point half-way completed, would never be finished. Pressure was then put on Mike Berro to ban a number of members from his board, with reference to the importance of having the VIE completed in a timely manner. But Berro was reluctant to do this. After some more pressure, Berro agreed to a solution where he would give up ownership of the board, and hand over the reins to David Pierce and Dan Gunter.

Pierce and Gunter promptly banned from the board the individuals that Rhoads had demanded be banned, along with some others for good measure. After a while Gunter also banned Rhoads himself. And this is where I realize I cannot really answer your question, because the banning of Rhoads seems as paradoxical to me as it must seem to you, if you have followed my story.

Anyway, to bring the story up to the present, eventually Dan Gunter tired of being the owner of this board (Pierce had left long ago), and demanded that somebody else accept ownership of it. Otherwise he would delete all the contents of the board. To show that he meant business, he did delete some parts, if I remember correctly. And that is how ownership of the board came back into Mike Berro's hands again last year. Gunter also made it a condition of the transfer of ownership that the new owner retain the ban on Paul Rhoads, which explains why he continues to be banned.

But this was no help. Westfield insisted again, and this time was more solidly rebuffed by Axoletl, who lectured Westfield about use of terms even stronger than 'scam'. These posts, however, have been deleted, like much of the matter recounted in this issue's *Cyber Follies*. Perhaps my little VanceBS crusade is having a salutary effect?

As for the Nicknike ban, I responded to Axo's comments—on Foreverness:

I am indeed, or was, 'Nicknike'. But, once again Axo, you have not only practiced injustice but failed to understand my motivations. I seek not to buy anything; to the contrary I was offering to give something away, something wanted by your people. It is story I by no means 'crave' to tell for, if I did, could

I not have done so anytime during the last 2 years?

As for telling it here; Foreverness folk do not indulge in the sort of angry, prying and denunciatory condanations-without-trial suavely tolerated on the board you zealously protect. Those who 'care', as you somewhat oddly put it, are confined to your VanceBS.

I also cleared up some of the confusion spread by Jojo—which cannot fool EXTANT readers—though I will mention that the time when Jojo alleges I threatened "to see to it that the VIE project [. . .] would never be finished"—a lie which Axo, Mike and Ed allowed to stand for several weeks without reply or deletion—was not when 'the VIE project was half-way complet' but when wave 1 was half-way complete, in other words when the project was 25% complete.

At this point, however, a certain "Severian", taking up Westfield's banner, and following Axo's suggestion, appeared at Foreverness:

So what, if anything, is going on with these VIE sets for sale, as first asked on the VanceBS? I am not a subscriber, having discovered Vance only about two years ago, but I am interested, being a fan of Vance's work and of anything done to help promote this work.

I quizzed "Severian" about his provenance and motivations; he gave his real name, noted that he is "Opiate Taylor" of the VanceBS, and humbly confessed to sheer curiosity. I replied that I took no exception to curiosity, nor did I see anything untoward in his question. However, I went on;

I am reluctant to discuss this matter anywhere but on the 'VanceBS'—which is getting BSyer by the minute. It was brought up there, and is seeping onto Foreverness only because everyone knows I can elucidate it, while over there they suppress me.

The explanations involved are delicate. They touch on the project and my own actions. Since I am regularly slandered on the VanceBS, and my VanceBS-based enemies will twist any nuance into the usual shapes, with no one to defend me, I would be foolish to discuss it when these enemies are getting a safe haven from my parrys. So I won't say anything about it unless I am allowed to confront them directly.

Axo may again suggest that I am trying to 'buy' my way onto the VanceBS. But why he thinks I am eager to hang out with a bunch of thumb-twiddlers and trolls who think I'm the worst thing since Hitler, or are silently content to let other say so, is beyond me. In fact Axo is amazing. A legitimate question of the highest vancian and VIE interest is posed on the logical place where such a question would be posed, and by a sort of miracle the only person who can answer is on hand, and ready to do so, but he is instantly banned, for reasons which remain opaque—and more opaque than ever thanks to the self-serving and slanderous lies Gunter and 'Jojo' are telling, always without repost. Then the curious are pointed at this very person, persona non-grata with whom decent people are allegedly not to consort. I can't figure out how they justify this to themselves—though probably it is by not bothering. How do they justify it to others? Probably the others don't give a damn.

Meanwhile, like you, I am subject to curiouity. Specifically; what are your opinions regarding Gunter's and Jojo's recent posts, and of Axo's attitude towards the person you are currently solisiting with respect to this delicate extra-set information?

Severian responded politely:

I admit to confusion as to the details of your banning, though like other 'new' members at the JVBBS (I have been a member for almost a year and a half now), I am reluctant to bring up the subject...

That did not amaze me! When strolling among bulls it is prudent to wave no red capes. "Severian" hastened to add:

...I have no wish to ostracize other fans of Vance due to events that took place before I was even aware of the great man and his works. To me, I would be the loser if I chose to take sides. I do thank you for coming up with the VIE concept and all the hard work you and many others put into the project. I believe you should be commended for those things. I have nothing whatsoever against you nor anyone else in the fragmented Vance online 'community'.

Where I had been mollified before, I now became crusty:

Who said anything about taking sides? And I am not curious about the things you mention. What I am curious about is what you think of the recent posts by Dan Gunter and Jojo concerning me, and what you think of Axo banning a persona-non-grata while recommending that folks rush over here to be in communication with him! I am not asking your opinion of them, as people, but your opinion of their posts! I am not asking you to take sides; I am curious as to your reaction, your feeling, your attitude, regarding these flames, which are as tolerated as they were six years ago when they began—and which happen to consist of 100% untruth, a fact of which both Axo and Mike Berro, the principal administrators, are aware, and to which the target (myself) is not allowed to respond.

Also, what are you worried about losing? Surely not your personal reputation for honorable conduct?

That was all from "Severian/Opiate Taylor".

And that is all for this Cyber Folly—except to mention that I have just sold a first edition Reader's set for 4000 Euros. I am, therefore, now putting another on sale, for 5000 Euros. Buyers can make contact through Foreverness.



## PATAPHYSICAL SPAMS

by Matty Paris

### THE JERK ENCYCLOPEDIA

This vast collection of stories about husbands from divorced wives of the late 20th century, an epic of former mates told to drop dead, sued and indentured, is one of the fastest growing archives since Kafft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. We have catalogued these testimonies under the following categories: *The Monster I Married*, *Take That You Rat*, *See You In Court*, and *I Piss On Your Grave*.

These meaty, fantastical stories, all by themselves, would be enough to convince some benign autocrat to nuke the planet. Lawyers use these entries to instruct women what to say about their husbands in court. Charges range from murder to perversion, rape, arson and incest.

The Very Reverend Orville Buck of the Sixth Day Adventist Church of Baptism by Phlegm says about this uncommon trove: "It's doubtlessly veracious picture of males as slaving degenerates, louts, imbeciles, meat-eating predators, lunatics, incest freaks, drug fiends and diversely colorful perverts is enough to make one wonder whether men are made in God's image. If so, God must be some violent and nefarious libertine beyond our ken."

*The Jerk Encyclopedia* is standard reading for compassionate lawyers and reflective prosecutors in the Justice System, thoughtful teachers in our schools and serious professionals working for social agencies. Progressive professors assign it to college students. There is a special legal section, and a sensational glossary of fashionable accusations.

Perhaps the most important chapter in this million-page resource is Anna Freud's *Protozoan Future*: a plan to replace sperm with clean, hygienic laboratory stem cell DNA material found in Albanian-simian hair follicles. The addenda, *Alien Epithets*, includes all known racist slurs of Blacks, Jews, Arabs, Germans, French and our Aztec neighbors, as well as various Hottentot and aborigines few of us even knew existed. *The Jerk Encyclopedia* even has unpleasant things to say about dogs, Santa Claus and God.

This important reference work is free. We only ask that you contribute your personal slanders of others, even women and kids, to our capacious and ever expanding web site. There is never enough liberation in this world.

### THE MUSEUM OF IDEOLOGICAL HISTORY

The Museum of Ideological History, on the corner of Grover St. and Parsons Drive in sylvan Passaic, New Jersey is a trove for retired oldsters whose hobby is collecting fashionable ideas of the past. Each tableau is suitably displayed with appropriate credos, flags and sundry gewgaws. Our museum is open all night. We are a favorite with insomniacs.

The first floor concerns nobility, celery diets, saints, fish liver oil remedies, Eskimo master races, noblesse oblige, demonic possession, fat-free phlogiston, debt, White Man's Burden, The Great Vegetarian Inquisition, the Great Chain

of Being, chivalry, compulsory life insurance, Bolshevism, English civilization, root-gnawing rituals, consumerism, therapy, and suburban gated-communities.

The second floor deals with ancient faith systems such as Kali, Astarte, Zeus and Jango.

Our third floor's exhibition hall, this month offers 1960s Nostalgia. Experience the power of sex, drugs and rock and roll in the Jefferson alcove. Chant classic Buddhist hymns, using the chatdratpuntra nasal style, in the eastern pavilion. Get drafted again and still not go to Vietnam in the anti-Western pavilion. You can be a helter-skelter cokehead and decorate paper-mache dolls with marshmallows and rhinestone sprinkles.

Next month we will feature fossilized ideas of the future. Can you guess which ones?

We have supervised salons to leave your grandchildren while you amble through our halls. The tykes will be watching random loops from digitally remastered Mister Rogers marathons.

It's easy to find; we're right next to the Joyce Kilmer landfill.

## BE CALM AND PLEASURE FREE

We at the Pleasure Free Institute of Kentucky are a research firm designing products that will make America tranquilly pleasure free. We have already marketed tasteless ice cream, women whose amorous gestures are perfectly forgettable, vaporous virtual amusements which are addictive yet have no interest whatsoever, friends, allies, kin, even enemies, whose very existence, or lack of it, often totally escapes one's memory. We offer flavorless lozenges that inspire you, during half an hour, to forget the past, your country, the local landscape, even your favorite lounges and shopping malls.

We are selfless physicians ready to cure people of pleasure much as most doctors are eager to remedy pain. Many of us are licensed European specialists with advanced medical degrees.

Some call us Buddhists; actually we despise religion. We are flesh and spirit architects. Our Temple of Tranquility in the Kentucky hills was originally designed as a hospice for a terminally ill clientele but it took us only a few months to realize that our mildly soporific installation was for everybody!

Today we are expanding beyond provincial Kentucky; we now serve much of Arizona and Iowa. We guarantee a life in which you will have no enjoyment of anybody or anything. You will be mute as a stone. You will bask in the sublimity of the immortal and eternal cosmos.

Being pleasure-free is cheap. We import servants from Mexico and Peru to keep you in a light-filled world beyond mere happiness.

## ANNALS OF RETROGRADE EVOLUTION

Doctor Hyacinth Robinson's book presents what is possibly the most stunning biological theory since *The Origin Of Species*. Robinson began his odyssey of discovery when he

accidentally spotted a microscopic silicon machine, imbedded in a chip of ancient Babylonian amber. It turned out to be a recording device, recounting the reminiscences of the long extinct Mollusca Devonian, in a clicking code. But, as Dr. Robinson soon discovered, many other species had left similar records. Translating the ancient code he learned that, ever since the late Devonian, spiders have preferred to make love at the core of webbed nets, worms have felt cozy in the warm clothing of the soil, and moles enjoy a chilly life in darkness. Turtles and plants were galvanized with ecstasy sitting in the sun. Even more astonishing: pebbles and sand grains were once an animate species of motile minerality, feral, alive and conscious, which had come to favor an existence of crystalline unconsciousness.

In this previously unknown past, all life, including grasses and trees, were not only bi-pedal language users, they were intelligent, some at above-genius level. By degrees, however, once they became adipose and comfortable, they gave up brains or even any degree of intelligence whatsoever.

Doctor Robinson's analysis clearly shows the intermediary stages by which these creatures progressively embraced an unmoving and rapt stasis, lasting sometimes for aeons, before, naturally and quite sensibly, disposing of their brains for good

The only species slothfully lagging behind this universal evolutionary tendency was the miserably restless rodent-like ancestor of the human race. Doctor Robinson is confident that, one day, even we shall evolve to the point of joining our cousins in brainlessness.

What are we to make of Dr. Robinson's startling assertions? Doctor Robinson is no Junior High School dropout; he is a certified biologist with scientific degrees from the University of Manitoba at Calgary and New Zealand A&M. He currently occupies the Henri Poincare Chair at South Dakota Community College. He is either the most important biologist since Charles Darwin, or just one more academic charlatan. Make up your own mind!

## THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

The Justice League of America is more than some cadre of gaudy comic-book type super-heroes; we are organized by the FBI to penetrate radical terrorist groups, just as we once infiltrated the Communist Party. We infected those hapless and defunct Bolsheviks with our operatives to the point where even their pets, house plants and Mexican fast-food caterers were all our agents. Today, however, we are dealing with a less naive group.

To make sure you are up to the standards of the Justice League of America, we will ask some of you to blow yourselves up in our elite training camps. We will ask others to assassinate loved ones and intimates, from tireless bedmates to wise, ancient and beloved kin. Before we pit you against our sinister and paranoid foes, we want to be certain, for your sake, that you have been properly trained for your mission.

Our recruits will be required to lull the wariness of our enemies by blowing up women and babies at weddings, and setting off bombs in animal hospitals and nursing homes. A few may even offer the ultimate sacrifice, destroying



themselves in a cloud of fertilizer powder. These saintly patriots will leave a vast cloaca with a mephitic stench for apparently no reason at all.

As a soldier for the Justice League of America you may even blow up our offices, machine gun our leaders, or kill anyone more overtly part of the FBI than yourself. You can drop an atomic bomb America, leaving our whole country—or even the whole planet, as well as the Moon and Mars—a zone as dead as a New Jersey landfill.

Who would suspect that anyone like you is secretly working for us?

## REPTILE THERAPY

This riveting book, by Melville Thorne Phd., winner of the prestigious Jay Jung Memorial Prize for his best-selling *Insect Therapy*, is acclaimed by experts in developing countries where insects and lizards are ubiquitous. It is the sequel to Thorne's classic on how therapy can cure mosquitoes of giving malaria to humans.

The estimable Doctor Thorne, slandered by many critics because his doctoral degree is in Home Economics from a mail order Cayman Islands college, expands his breakthrough methods for arthropods with an addenda dealing with mental disorders among bacteria.

Therapeutic methods for species that lack language, intelligence, and are palpably ignorant of their neurosis, is one of the revolutionary tools developed for psychiatric profession by Thorne.

Doctor Thorne reaches out to these creatures with electronic devices he whimsically calls the 'Bloom Tube' and the 'Xorgone Box'.

How, asks the prestigious Canadian Psychology Institute of Calgary, does Thorne make a living in the Amazon valley, working with salamanders, crocodiles and iguanas? In response Thorne has added a chapter to *Reptile Therapy* discussing the funding campaign he launched through a Lebanese-affiliated Panamanian multi-national, to salary a staff, very politically correct because it is only ten percent human.

Doctor Thorne is also involved in the Harry Stack Sullivan Mars Project, with prospects of giving therapy to alien species, chemically unimaginable to us.

Thorne, of course, is also the author of *Dirty Rat*, which offers therapy to urban rodents, *Ex-Wife of Frankenstein*—an upper middle class New York divorce polemic—and *Gosh Darn It*, a pithy and cunning monograph on the relation between psychology and religion. Meet the celebrated psychology pioneer at a book-signing, this Thursday at the Central Park Zoo.



## BOOKS

### THE LOST QUEEN

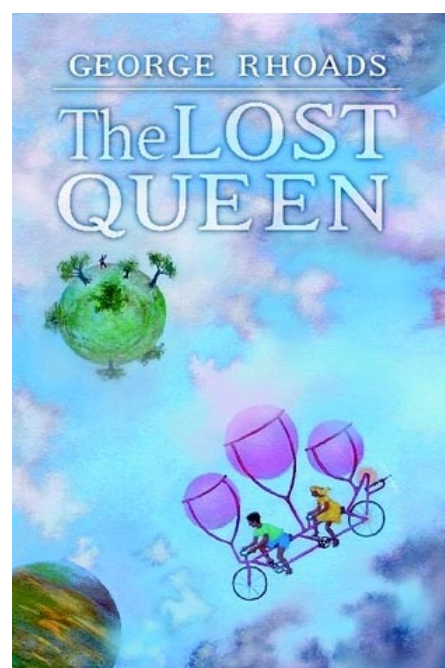
Tad van Meer, and his dog Pam, travel to the end of the New Universe to help the people of destiny recover their stolen queen. Tad's father, Jose van Meer, ex-president of the New Earth, and his mother Muriel, follow after.

Published at last, this marvellous fable by George Rhoads will delight children of all ages.

Available from Lulu.com.

Paperback, \$14.95, set by Joel Anderson in a new font by Paul Rhoads. Cover painting and 30 illustrations by the author.

Limited hardcover edition of 55 volumes: set by Paul Rhoads, printed by ZoneS in Milan (the VIE printer); \$50, +plus \$10 postage for European orders. Contact the author personally, at: [georgerhoads.com](http://georgerhoads.com).



### THE DOG OF THE NORTH

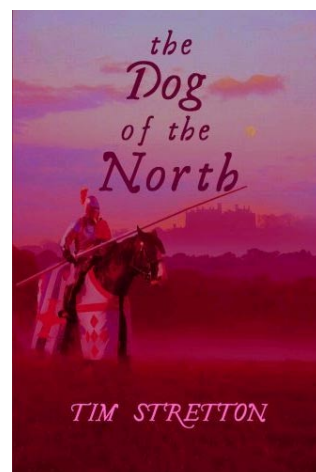
If you liked *The Zael Inheritance*, if you loved *Dragonchaser*, you will adore Stretton's latest.

In the high-toned mode familiar to his readers, Stretton spins a tale of dynastic destiny, passions and rivalries, betrayals and vengeance, plus voyages by land and water, chancery and boudoir intrigue, siege and battle.

Information at:

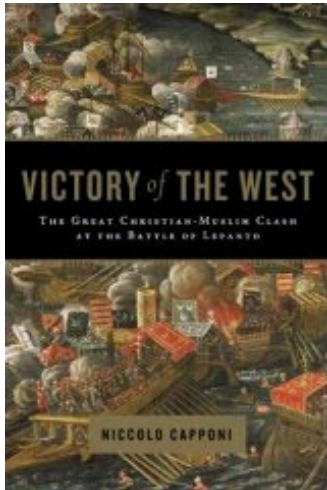
[DRAGONCHASER.NET/DOTN.HTML](http://DRAGONCHASER.NET/DOTN.HTML).

*Dog of the North* will be available in July 2008, from a major mainstream UK fiction publisher.



## VICTORY OF THE WEST

This account of Lepanto, by historian Niccolo Capponi, is a vast canvass of the dynastic, imperial, commercial and religious struggles which structured the 15th and 16th century world, both



East and West, in prelude to the epoch making battle of October 7, 1571.

This reader was less struck by any direct parallel with events of today than the sense that a two century hiatus of technological supremacy and colonization is fading away, leaving us back in the situation which prevailed from the 8th to the 18th century when East and West confronted each other on an equal footing.

Readers of Stretton and Vance will savour Capponi's

circumstantial accounts of diplomacy among the Hapsburg empires, the mighty Venetian republic, the up-start Florentines, the slippery French and, brooding over all, the papacy—in the grip of the reformation and counter-reformation. Much of the pope's political clout depended on control of church revenues, which he could, or not, to local princes.

Looking eastward, Capponi details intrigues among the viziers of the Splendid Portal, court of the Ottoman emperors, where the Sultan's favor was a matter of life and death. The Ottoman world then extended from the walls of Vienna, down the eastern and around the southern shores of the Mediterranean, up into Muslim pockets of Spain, still too populous to be eradicated even after the defeat of Grenada. Rancorous hold-outs conspired with the corsairs of Algiers and Tripoli who dominated the western Mediterranean. They including colorful characters like Barbarossa or Ali Pasha—the latter an enslaved and converted Dominican friar from Calabria. Raiding the Italian coast in galleys rowed by crews of Christian slaves, they terrorized Europe for centuries. From the north and east, however, Hungarians and Persians harassed the Ottomans; a challenging situation for these resourceful expansionists.

Capponi details Pius V's struggle to create the Holy League, a united Christian fleet designed to check Ottoman ambition to the West, and counter the mortal threat a relentlessly militant Islam posed to Christendom itself. But Venetians and Spaniards, whose commercial and political interests diverged, were just as eager to fight each other; even as the pope's fleet sailed to Lepanto actual fighting continued between these elements of the Holy League's forces! Each party suspected the other of negotiating a separate peace, or worse; allying themselves with the infidel. This was not uncommon, and not unthinkable to the papacy itself.

This reader was especially thankful for Capponi's accounts of material matters, shipbuilding, armament and recruitment in all its variety throughout the Mediterranean world. The janissaries were enslaved Christian boys, raised as fighting machines and rewarded with Ottoman fiefs. Janissary religious preference was for Dervishism, described by Capponi as a blend of Islam and Christianity, and the janissaries constantly clamored for booty and fiefs. They were the emperor's most redoubtable force but a constant source of internal trouble. The Venetians, meanwhile, had just invented cannon-laden "galliasse", which fired broadsides

in four directions. These out-size ships were constructed of cured walnut and had to be towed into battle. Muslim vessels, by contrast, were made of fresh cut wood, and the Ottoman 'soldatesque' relished hand to hand combat with swords, the traditional arm of honor.

Capponi's placid use of cliché ('at the drop of a hat', 'nothing to write home about', 'left, right and center') is unfortunate. The addendum, a history of the bibliographic sources, is the best written part of the book so it is a disappointment to see Capponi falling into the very error he rightly denounces; over-earnest efforts at even-handedness, which after all is just another species of prejudice. Though obviously a catholic Capponi is tinged with multi-cultural enthusiasm—a fad few in our time are given to escape. Finally, while Capponi's efforts to elucidate the web of forces subtending the battle must be applauded, clarity is not always achieved—though it must be recognized that the web is particularly dense. Despite these quibbles, I recommend the book with enthusiasm. It is fun to read, a mine of information, and recounts a major episode in the history of civilization of which most of us are guiltily ignorant.

The volume includes maps, a useful glossary of names, and a smattering of historical images: of the protagonist, the ships, the battle itself.



## LAST AND LEAST

Thanks to Greg Hansen and Hans van der Veeke for help publishing EXTANT 21. Among Greg's proofing remarks was this line, which may amuses others than myself: "schmorgasborg/smorgasbord (unless you're going for a home-run neologism!)"

The illustration for *Adverse Selection* is by Paul Rhoads, as are the pen sketches of Jack Vance, made during his trip to France on the occasion of Utopia 98, and recently rediscovered in an old sketch book. Most of these drawing seem to have been made at St. Louand, a local familiar to many VIE volunteers.

Contact EXTANT through the FOREVERNESS Message board. Content of a wide variety is welcome, including promotional; anything of possible interest to Vancians. EXTANT will no longer be published at regular intervals but on an ad-hoc basis.

The quotation font used on pages 38-40, and here, is Babe. It combines Modern Face with the sans-serif style, and is designed for a French newspaper of satire and commentary, "La Poule Dechainée", being developed by Lucien Oulahbib and Paul Rhoads. See: ResilienceTV.fr