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VIE REPORT

The *Ellery Queen* volume has been printed, and delivered in Europe. I assume it will be arriving in America very soon, for trans-shipment to American and Asian subscribers.

This final phase of the project, rather than a happy celebration, turned quite sour for some of us, but thanks to FOREVERNESS all should come right yet. Meanwhile Stefania Zacco, our gal in Milan, has taken care of production, checking and packing. She sent this report on May 26:

Ciao Paul, come stai?

life is never easy and relaxed. We found quite a number of books with printing problems (the girls have been really good in spotting them), so good old Visintini had to reprint them and Rigoldi to re-bind them. This has slowed things down a bit.

Yesterday all the 100 EU copies went individually by Air Express courier — alleluja, as we had to re-write by hand all documents, considering that FedEx increased their cost so much that I could not afford to use them again.

The other 300 will go mid-next week, when finally signor Rigoldi receives the famous fumigated pallet for the US and puts all boxes onto it. He is a bit of a whimp, I must say. Biffi was a real hammer drill, but now we have gone to the other extreme, whining all day. Oh well, at least the books are beautiful!

*Take care,
Stefania*

Having received my copy I can only say that, whimper or not, Rigoldi has done a marvelous job with the binding, and Visintini with the printing; despite the new round of errors caught by Stefania, the pages have never been better printed: dark and even. The EQ volume is the most beautifully

crafted of them all, profiting as it does from 6 years of accumulated experience, and being the smallest run.

Bob Lacovara will be handling the trans-shipment of volumes being sent to the USA.

Happy reading.



FOREVERNESS

Legendary Locator HANS VAN DER VEEKE, with untiring help from tardy VIE volunteer GREG HANSEN, has created a post-VIE cyber place: *Foreverness*, the VIE Resource site. The initiative to create *Foreverness* was GREG HANSEN'S; delighted by the VIE, troubled by the disappearance of its site a few months ago, his generous impulse (including purchase of the domain) eventually matured into a proposal strongly endorsed not only by Hans and myself, but also JOHN FOLEY, JOEL ANDERSEN, TIM STRETTON, STEVE SHERMAN, ROB FRIEFELD, KOEN VYVERMAN, TILL NOEVER, BRIAN GHARST and others. MIKE BERRO also welcomed the idea.

Foreverness makes available project materials from volume 44, as well as the VIE newsletters: 63 issues of COSMOPOLIS and 14 issues of EXTANT. A lucid set of subject indexes transforms this previously opaque mass into a dynamic and legible resource. *Foreverness* also points to such now

independent post-VIE resources as EDITIONS ANDREAS IRLE, where VIE volumes are being individually published in paperback, and a public version of the Laughing Mathematician's ultimate non-nullity: TOTALITY. The TOTALITY site is effectuated by another magician, VIE volunteer MENNO VAN DER LEDEN, and is destined to become a major resource for all Vancians, from the most scholarly to the merest enthusiast.



Since all's well that end's well, and in honor of this happy event, I am postponing an ineluctable account of the dark prelude which, like the Pnume tunnels under Tschai, led to *Foreverness*. For the guilty this is but temporary reprieve; our motto, from *Marune*, is stated by the irascible Skogel: *Revenge, there's the word; too many wrong-doers escape with whole skins and profit!* Meanwhile, early stages of the drama are alluded to in EXTANT#13, access to which has, until now, been complicated by the events in question.

But seriously; *Foreverness* is not merely a good thing in itself. Not only the reputation of the VIE project, including a true perception of the VIE books and the closely related fate of their corrected texts, but even, thereby and to a certain

degree, the general perception of Jack Vance, depends upon the VIE project, as a dynamic enterprise, coming to an end on a positive note. Its transformation into the nec plus ultra vancian resource is the best imaginable way to effect this. *Foreverness* not only prolongs the project logic of honoring the work of Jack Vance, it is a tribute to the uncounted hours, and even years, of volunteer work which generated the treasures hoarded there.

The actuality of my concern for the VIE's reputation may be gauged by the situation on the Jack Vance wikipedia page‡, which should be rectified if our work is not to be wasted.

Like a torch held up to dispel darkness, *Foreverness* not only honors the unprecedented achievement of the VIE and its volunteers—the effectuation of a literary honor unique in form, and unprecedented in sheer mass of honorific essence—but is the way forward against obscurity.



TEXTPORT AND FRENCH PUBLICATIONS

The plan to publish a 'Vance Treasury' (see elsewhere in this issue of EXTANT) brought up anew the question of Textport, the VIE process which retro-fits our final word files (the famous cor-bf.docs, or "correct-board reviewed-final" documents) with all errata generated by CRT (composition review) and PP (post proofing), as embodied ultimately in the 'g-bis' files (errata files, collated per volume, generated by volume (not merely text) post-proofing). Textport also strips away VIE work notes and otherwise tailors the texts to the needs of non-VIE publishers. Since some of the stories contemplated for the Treasury have not yet been Textported, conversations ensued, including this letter from Patrick Dusoulrier, first Textport Team leader, which contains information of general interest:

. . . in November 2004, I handed over the Textport activity to Chuck [King], who was experienced with the job. Suan is also very experienced; he did quite a few jobs. The textporting process involves necessarily John Schwab and Koen, both to provide archives (pdf file, latest cor-bf version, gbis files) and to generate technical files used for extra checking (rtf-diff and VCR* . . . All Wave 1 volumes had been textported, There remained 9 volumes to do in Wave 2 (including vol 44) . . .

John Schwab holds the completed textport files in the Archives . . . [as well as some pre-textport files] with the full set of endnotes . . . suffixed "txp-v2" (txp-v1 is an intermediary stage before final check using Koen's special files).

Before sending a textport file to a publisher, one must :

a/ remove all endnotes . . .

b/ remove all highlightings . . .

When sending file to a publisher, one must STRESS, repeat STRESS the VIE convention for "bottom of page" notes†. . . I am really pleased to hear that [a Treasury volume] is going to be published . . .

‡ See WIKIPEDIA APPENDIX, page 27

*What is a VCR? See Cosmopolis 68, page 6.

† I believe it was the post-VIE commercial publication of *Emphyrio* which sloppily left the footnotes in the text body, much to our disgust.

Since his incredible work for the VIE project, Patrick has become an important translator of Vance into French—contributing to the strong flow of Vance being republished in that language—but not only of Vance. Patrick's translations already include *The Wind from Nowhere* and *The Birthday of the World* by Le Guin (French titles: *Le Vent d'ailleurs*, and *L'Anniversaire du monde*) as well fiction by Richard Paul Russo, and Charles Stross, and also non-fiction.

Patrick's recent Vance translations include *Blue World* and *Lurulu*. ('Un monde d'azur', April 2005, Livre de Poche, and 'Lurulu', June 2006, Fleuve Noir Rendez-vous ailleurs.)

This summer the French science magazine *Ciel et Espace* will feature three of Patrick's translations of non-Vance short stories: *Lune inconstante* (Inconstant Moon), by Larry Niven, *Prise de contrôle* (Taking Control), by Greg Benford, and *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*, by James Alan Gardner. This fall a collection of Vance stories, to be published by Le Bélial, will contain four of his new translations: *La Planète de cendre* (Planet of the Black Dust), *Joe Trois-pattes* (Three-legged Joe), *Le Robot désinhibé* (The Uninhibited Robot), *Parapsyche* (Parapsyche...). In addition to several other non-Vance texts, including works by Vinge and Pohl, Patrick is currently working on the *Durdane* Trilogy, for Denoël, scheduled to be published in 2007.



VIE VOLUNTEER GREG HANSEN

Greg earned no credit in volume 44, but with his notable contribution to *Foreverness* he must now be counted not merely as an honorary, but as a full-fledged volunteer, deserving of our close attention. Greg recently sent me a letter which included the following passages:

"Four years ago I was browsing through a bookstore and came across a book with intriguing cover art and a strange title: *Alastor*. "One of the treasures of science fiction," claimed the Washington Post on the book's cover. Curious, I opened it and read the fateful words:

Out toward the rim of the galaxy hangs Alastor Cluster, a whorl of thirty thousand live stars in an irregular volume twenty to thirty light-years in diameter. . .

"I'd never heard of Jack Vance before but by the time I finished the first page I was heading toward the check-out counter. I knew immediately that this author was special, the writing was like nothing I'd seen in a book of science fiction. I devoured the book and haven't looked back since.

"I first heard of the VIE



a few years later. I believe I was still in time to have subscribed but I lacked the means to do so. Subscriptions to the VIE had been closed by the time my financial situation stabilized, and I was casting about for a set (Ebay? Second-hand? A partial set?) when a financially strapped subscriber's offer to sell was kindly

pointed out to me by Brian Gharst, a VIE volunteer I'd come to know through e-mail. I'll never forget the day the set arrived, I was so overwhelmed that I could scarcely look at a single volume for more than thirty seconds. It was days before I could resist the urge to pick up another book long enough to actually read the one I was holding.

"Aside from their remarkable beauty, the VIE books are so precious to me because of what went into creating them. I see the VIE as a tremendous achievement of imagination and persistence, and this on the part of the common man. With a few exceptions the VIE volunteers were not academics or intellectuals but simply everyday people like me, and working together they created something incredibly special. The story of the VIE is as inspiring and empowering as any human story I've ever come across. I realize this may sound idealistic and naive—and I know there has been contention and controversy along the way—but I truly feel this way, and I hold all those who worked to create the VIE in the highest regard.

"In some ways, given my short history with Vance's writing and my complete absence from the VIE effort, I don't feel qualified to have helped [. . .] with Foreverness. But on the other hand, the fact that I am an outsider and newcomer allows me to celebrate your accomplishments without any hint of self-interest. Its been a lot of fun to be involved [. . .] I hope the website allows many, many others to appreciate what the volunteers have accomplished."

Greg's enthusiasm for Vance seems rooted in a certain literary talent of his own. He has 4 children to whom he tells bed-time stories—often inspired by his reading. He recounts the following:

One morning, after having told the kids about Frodo, Gollum and the ring of power, I was standing on the front porch with my son Lowden when a turkey vulture (Cathartes aura) came swooping down and landed not fifteen feet from us. Seen up close these birds are shockingly large and ugly; Lowden began to scream—quietly at first, building to a shriek of elemental terror—then pointed his five year-old finger and wailed: "It's one of the Dark Lord's creatures!"

This event inspired the father with amusement, guilt, and gratification; an understandable harmony of contradiction. What will eventuate in the Hansen household as the influence of the VIE book set takes hold? When Lowden starts writing his own 'book of dreams' let us all beware!

REREADING VANCE

A recent comment on the VanceBBS, by a certain 'Infinite Chun', confirms my contention that, with each fresh reading we enjoy Vance more:

. . . I'm working my way through all the Demon Princes books for the second time. I last read them years and years ago; and, I think, didn't really realize their quality at the time.

Chun claims to be getting 'much more' from the books this time thanks, in part, to discussions with such Vancians as Patrick Dusoulier, who replied:

Just been rereading the Durdane trilogy over the past months, in the course of my translation work. I must say I enjoyed that tremendously, and my appreciation of the second and third volumes rose significantly. Although I still rank the first volume quite above the two others, I found more merit in #2 and #3 than I used to..

David B. Williams, commenting on Vance's method, offers a clue to this delectability:

I want to call attention to how craftily Vance eases into the story in the first few pages of Star King. He is beginning a five-volume series with a vast background—the Oikumene, the Beyond, Gersen's mission, and all that. For writers, this is the Great Problem in SF, how to provide the reader with gobs of information the reader wouldn't need in a mundane novel.

Vance starts by introducing us to Smade and gives us a look around Smade's Tavern and Smade's planet, thus providing a very small peek at the Oikumene-Beyond setting. We meet Gersen without any backstory, we meet a Star King without explanation, and we meet a locator. But no info-dumps. In each paragraph, Vance gives us just enough information to get to the next paragraph. We enter the story step by dainty step, never stumbling over a big long paragraph of narrative explanation.

I'm [also] dipping into Chasch, and that's a much easier set-up for the writer: Like the reader, Adam Reith knows nothing about Tschai, so after the excitement of his crash landing and capture, the reader can learn about the planet and its rival species while Reith learns about them.

THE GAEAN REACH SETTING

Elsewhere on the VanceBBS Williams invokes the ever popular question of the evolution of the Gaeen Reach:

I believe that the first mention of the Gaeen Reach occurs in 1973 in Trullion. . . But it seems to me that Vance had the concept in mind somewhat earlier. Emphyrio (1969) includes the Historical Institute without explicitly mentioned the Gaeen Reach. . . and the Durdane trilogy (1973), presents Durdane as a kind of "lost world". . . [It] also features the Historical Institute but [does not] mention of the Reach. ('Durdane' also features a means of interstellar communication that does not appear in the explicitly Gaeen Reach novels.) ALL of Vance's SF novels after that were Gaeen Reach stories, except 'Showboat World', of course, and the last two Demon Princes novels, which date back to earlier venues.

David's emphasis on terms has lead him astray. The 'Oikumene' is the Gaeen Reach. Not only is this self evident, the author has explicitly informed me that, after briefly trying the former term to designate his concept, he rejected it for the latter. But the Gaeen Reach, as named in certain stories, is neither absolutely consistent, nor should it be radically distinguished from the settings of most of Vance's SF stories.

The Star King, where this concept is first named,* was written in 1960. After this date, and prior to *Cadwal*, the SF stories not explicitly placed there are: *Moon Moth*, *Dragon Masters*, *Sail 25*, *Kragen-Blue World*, *Space Opera*, *Nopalgarth*, *Last Castle*, *Sulwen's Planet*, *Tchai*, *Commander Tynnot* and *Showboats*. During this same period—with or without consistent terminology—stories placed explicitly in the setting are *Demon Prince*, *Alastor*, *Emphyrio*, *Durdane*, *Domains of Koryphon*, *Maske:Thaery*, and the Hetzel stories.

* 'Oikumene': a greek word meaning literally 'inhabited land', but later, particularly as used by French savants, designating, in the adjective 'oikumenal', a geographical-cultural view of a central civilized area with less civilized tribes at its periphery.

The compatibility of these two groups, with respect to geographical, cultural and historical setting, vary. *The Last Castle*, like *The World Between*, is set on an Old Earth become a lost world; to find compatibility with the Reach we must postulate a bleak and distant future in which its characteristic tranquility and easy commerce has been shattered, but this is not an unreasonable postulate.

Sail 25, like *Gold and Iron* or *Nopalgarth*, predates the Reach in terms of its own history, being set at the inception of the space age, prior to any possible flowering of the Reach situation. But this, likewise, does not make it intrinsically incompatible. *Blue World*, like *Sulwen's Planet* and *Commander Tynnot*, are so compatible with the classic Reach they lack only use of the term. Might not the initial population of the Blue World be convicts destined for Skylark, the prison planet of *Space Opera*?

The Gaeen Reach has two histories: its own, and that of Vance's evolving conceptions. *Gold and Iron* describes an infant space age, occurring under the aegis of an alien culture, which is an unlikely beginning for a Gaeen reach. A story like *The Stark*, which incompatibly features destruction of the Earth and failure to solve the faster-than-light problem, has the interesting Reach-compatibility of elucidating 'parallel evolution', a mystery pondered by baron Bodissey and Adam Reith. The multi-dimensional physics of *Nopalgarth* is alien to the prosaic Reach, but *Space Opera* and *Big Planet* are set in its first era, of which Vance's early work gives many pictures. *The Rapparee*, from 1949, with its myriad of populated planets, active commerce and faster than light travel, is very Reach-like, except for the extreme metamorphic influence of planets on the human body. At the other end of the Reach's history, *Son of the Tree* (1950) hints at the situation of Halma (*Emphyrio*) or *Last Castle*, because, in the far sector where Smith finds Kyril, Mangtse and Ballenkarch, Earth is considered mythical.

The Gaeen Reach is characterized by institutions of a certain character. *The New Prime* (1950) is the only story where Vance suggests a full-fledged galactic government, which is inconsistent with the *laissez faire* Reach, but in *Big Planet*, written two years earlier, Vance invents 'Earth-Central', and *Big Planet* is itself a classic Reach-type planet: a repository of 'misanthropic vagabonds'. In *Showboats* we read: *Big Planet lies beyond the frontier of terrestrial law*; this designates a zone equivalent to the *Beyond*. On the model of 'Earth-Central' type colonial administrations—the 'District Treaty Administrator', of *Iszm*, or the 'trade and administrative outpost' on Sirius planet, of *Space Opera*—Vance's characteristic federating agencies, Alastor-Centrality, the IPCC, the Historical Society, are avatars of an inevitably weakening organizing principal in an ineluctably growing Reach. In *Emphyrio* and *Durdane*, set in the *Beyond* of a Reach grown old and huge, the IPCC is absent and the authority of any Earth-Central, even in the diffuse form of the Historical Society, has become tenuous. In this situation the mission of the Institute is achieved by geographical expansion alone. In *The Domains of Koryphon* we read:

"History describes the destruction of a long series of urban civilizations because the citizens preferred intellectualism and abstraction to competence in basic skills. . . . "Your theory has its obverse," said Elvo Glissam. "From this viewpoint, history becomes a succession of cases in which barbarians, renouncing crassness, develop a brilliant civilization."

The center will be renewed from the periphery—as in today's attempt by African missionaries to re-Christianize Europe—or, if it is multi-centered, the Reach will pulse with waves of civilization like the surface of stormy sea.

In the early work the proto-Reach setting is redolent of unabashed pre-war romance with exploration and colonization. This is the case in *The Man from Zodiac*, *Masquerade on Dicantropus*, *Sjambak*, *The Houses of Iszm*, *Moon Moth* or the Ridolph stories. The protagonists are colonial officials or members of its elite.

At the other end of the Reach's historical scale, Aerlith (*Dragon Masters*), a lost planet populated by refugees of a galactic war, recalls the situation of planets like Tschai, Durdane or Maz (*Dogtown*), where man faces more or less dormant galactic challenges.

From 1960, as if inhabited by the drives he attributes to humanity, Vance sets his stories in ever farther flung sectors. The Alastor Cluster appears first as an autonomous gland bordering the Reach, but though gigantic it is eventually surrounded, to become just another feature within the Reach's multifarious geography. Referring to this expansive quality in *Domains of Koryphon* Vance writes: *The outward surge has been anything but regular or even. Men have come and gone in waves and fluctuations, responding to wars, to religious impetus, to compulsions totally mysterious*; he reports that the night sky of Koryphon includes: *the blazing miracle which was Alastor Cluster*. It is easy to imagine situations such as we encounter in *The Dragon Masters* developing in such a context.

Moving ever outward, Vance writes in *Maske:Thaery*:

The eastern fringe of the Gaeen Reach is bounded by a remarkable pocket of emptiness: the Great Hole. The region is virtually untraveled: spacemen find no inducement to enter, while beyond hangs Zangwill Reef, a flowing band of stars with a baleful reputation.

In this wider situation places such as Halma (*Emphyrio*) become more common. Like Aerlith, Thamber (and even Earth, in *Son of the Tree*), it is a lost world, almost forgotten by the Historical Society itself. Heroes like Gyl Tarvoc or Gastel Etzwane, in contrast to the protagonists drawn from a colonial elite characteristic of the early work, suffer oppression in a lawless *Beyond*. When we come to *Cadwal*, *Night Lamp* and *Ports of Call*, though they are set more comfortably in its central parts, the Reach has come to feel almost enervatingly vast.

It is bootless to seek a consistent conception. The classic Reach, as seen from *Star King* to *Ports of Call*, or as glimpsed in early stories, is a growing sector of the Milky Way, comprising hundreds, then thousands, then uncountable inhabited worlds. Inter-stellar transport is convenient. Though diverse culturally, it is nonetheless peaceable and well irrigated by commerce. But the frontiers are not always clear. The pirate infested starments of Alastor, the savage condition of certain planets, suggest the Reach lacks a neat ellipsoidal shape; it is more or less dense, more or less riddled with pockets of beyondness.

In the *Demon Prince* books, the Reach is dominated by merely three stars (Sol, Rigel, Vega); despite depredation from *Beyond* it feels manageable and comfortably livable. In *Cadwal* or *Ports of Call* it feels much larger and correspondingly less

coherent. In the late stories IPCC cohesion and effectiveness is correspondingly hesitant and sporadic.

The early colonial Reach is a natural prelude to Gaean galactic hegemony. The alien empires of *Tschai* contradict this, and represent a false start, like *Rapparee* morphology. The early atmosphere lingers in *Star King*, where Teehalt locates a world. But some early stories are dark hints at a fragmented, self-forgetting post-Reach, where isolated and degenerated groups subsist in lonely struggle against hostile forces (*The Secret*, *The Narrow Land*, *The Miracle Workers*).

Resonance with essential Reach characteristics is found in many non-Reach stories. While the over-crowded earth of *Ullward's Retreat*, *Dodkin's Job*, or *Rumfuddle* is inconsistent, and the physical thesis underlying *Rumfuddle*, like the absence of outer-space in *Dodkin's Job*, excludes them from the Reach, the multiplicity of accessible worlds in *Ullward's Retreat* smacks of the Reach.

It is also bootless to try to establish a Reach chronology, calibrated either to the clearly casual system of the Demon Prince books or following bibliographic precedence. A story like *Son of the Tree*, though rife with the early colonial atmosphere, and though written almost 30 years earlier than *The Book of Dreams*, is posterior to the latter in terms of Reach history.

Of broader interest is how this vancian setting, despite its dark sides, is so optimistic a contrast to the horrific future promulgated by almost all other SF, which eagerly terrifies us with nightmares of technological and cultural devastation, obscurantist tyranny, cataclysmic imperial clashes, or drug-induced, cyber, bionic or psionic manipulations and dominations. Above all, Vance's characteristic setting is an amazingly prescient announcement of 21st century globalization and multi-culturalism, as optimistic and accurate a prophesy as exists in literature.*



A VANCE TREASURY

Australian writer and Vance friend Terry Dowling, and Jonathan Strahan—memorable to VIE volunteers as author of a Locus review of the VIE gift volume—are publishing a 'Vance Treasury', a fat volume of 200,000 words, intended, as Strahan puts it, to be a *completely definitive selection of Jack's short fiction, a single volume argument for why he is an important and fascinating writer, the book that will always be the first stop for new Vance readers in years to come*.

This book will not only use VIE texts, but Strahan, wishing to solicit feedback,† used VIE resources to provide a list of shorter works with word counts, so that others might make proposals of the books contents. To stimulate discussion Strahan published a list of favored candidates:

* For related reflections, see:

Cosmopolis#32: p 16, *A Syncretic Phylology of the Vancian Locale*.

Cosmopolis#45: p 12, *Empire, Colonization, Globalization and the Gaean Reach*.

Cosmopolis#48: p 10, *Sinister Old Men in Institute Black Versus Breakness Dominies*.

Cosmopolis#53: p 9, *The Development of Vancian Cosmological Sociology*.

† See his site, 'Notes from Coode Street':

jonathanstrahan.com.au/wp/category/the-jack-vance-treasury/

as well as Asimov's Message board:

asimovs.com/discuss/messages/5/5407.html?1147484593

A BAGFUL OF DREAMS
ASSAULT ON A CITY
COUP DE GRACE
GIFT OF GAB
GREEN MAGIC
GUYAL OF SFERE
LIANE THE WAYFARER
MORREION
NOISE
RUMFUDDLE
SAIL 25
SHAPE-UP

THE DRAGON MASTERS
THE KOKOD WARRIORS
THE LAST CASTLE
THE MEN RETURN
THE MIRACLE WORKERS
THE MITR
THE MOON MOTH
THE NARROW LAND
THE NEW PRIME
THE SEVENTEEN VIRGINS
THE SORCERER PHARESM
WHEN THE FIVE MOONS RISE

I criticized this list for imbalance. It can be argued, I wrote, that these are Vance's best short works, but the selection seems too narrow for 'a single volume argument for why Vance is an important and fascinating writer'. I pointed out that of 25 texts two are from Vance's very first book, and four others are also in the 'fantasy' category, that the whole contents of VIE volume #9 is included (*Miracle Workers*, *Dragon Masters*, *Last Castle*), all very similar stories and, while four famous short classics are proposed, (*Moon Moth*, *Green Magic*, *Men Return*, *Sail 25*), there are fully six 'science fiction novellas' (*Gift of Gab*, *Narrow Land*, *Shape-Up*, *Man from Zodiac*, *Rumfuddle*, *Assault on a City*) plus four very early stories (*Noise*, *The Mitr*, *The New Prime*, *When Five Moons Rise*) plus the 2 'later' Magnus Ridolph stories (*Coup de Grace*, *The Kokod Warriors*). I have no complaints about any of these stories as such, and the volume, is not intended for me (who needs no introduction to Vance, who owns a VIE, and wants no argument for Vance being an 'important and fascinating writer'! But the list seems repetitive and to leave out so much!

The conundrum of a treasury volume is an occasion to make some 'nice discriminations', as well as to reflect upon the structure of Vance's oeuvre. TIM STRETTON posted a contents proposal, rigorously respecting the space constraints (which Strahan's talking-point list overpasses). He proposed:

THE DRAGON MASTERS
THE MIRACLE WORKERS
CHATEAU D'IF
THE LAST CASTLE
GUYAL OF SFERE
FLUTIC
DODKIN'S JOB
THE MOON MOTH

SAIL 25
THE NARROW LAND
THE NEW PRIME
LAUSICAA
SHAPE-UP
GREEN MAGIC
THE MEN RETURN
THE MITR

I found this list better but noted how, to the extent choices are limited to shorter works, the book is inevitably driven into Vance's early period which, though wonderful, lacks the supreme qualities of the mature periods. I posted a reflection about this on Strahan's blog:

"Vance's oeuvre has three periods, three moods, three modes and several major themes. The periods break down as follows: the early period extends from *Mizirian the Magician* (published as *The Dying Earth*), written in 1944, to about 1960, which saw the writing of *The Star King*, the first Demon Prince novel, as well as the masterful *Moon Moth*. The middle period extends to about 1980, so that the late period begins with *Cugel: The Skybreak Spatterlight* (*Cugel's Saga*), and includes the major trilogies *Lyonesse* and *Cadwal*, as well as the substantial novels *Night Lamp* and *Ports of Call — Lurulu*.

"Though wonderful masterpieces swarm in all these periods, one cannot ignore that Vance's work progresses though time; the early period, for all its delights, is therefore not the strongest. But it is there, with few exceptions, that the shorter works are to be found. The middle period is composed mostly

of shorter novels, or series of shorter novels, but the late period, with the exception of the *Cugel* episodes, is composed exclusively of massive texts. We may look to the late period, however, for a clear exposition of the major vancian themes, which, casting a light back on the early work, may provide some guidance.

"The three modes of Vance's work are well known: fantasy, science fiction, and mystery. It is not generally realized that Vance wrote no less than 14 of the latter, 5 of which fall into the middle period. But the 'mystery' aspect of Vance overlaps his fantasy and his science fiction. Many of the fantasy stores, rather than being primarily concerned with magic or demons, are essentially episodes of theft, while many of the science fiction stories are crime investigations. In *Fader's Waft* Rhialto seeks to recover the stolen Perciplex in order to restore the 'Blue Principles'. In *Flutic* Cugel discovers Waymish's stolen scales and effects his own theft of Masters Twango and Soldinck. Magnus Ridolph, Miro Hetzel, and even Kirth Gersen, though protagonists of science fiction stories, are basically investigators.

The 3 vancian moods may be labeled 1) 'dark' or 'moody', 2) 'pragmatic' or 'straight forward' or 'philosophical' and 3) 'comic' or 'antic'. These moods, in various combinations, lend distinctive colors to each text. The mysteries tend to be largely 'straight forward' in tone, while stories like *Tschai* and *Durdane* are a mixture of 'dark' and 'pragmatic', though all contain lighter episodes. The *Magnus Ridolph* stories are exclusively 'antic', while the *Cugel* stories, though largely comic, are sprinkled with 'darkness'. Vance's comedy, however, has a 'pragmatic' character, as exemplified in the famous passage where Cugel counterbalances and cancels accumulated maledictions:

What were the terms of the bandit's curse? '—immediate onset of cankerous death.' Sheer viciousness. The ghost-king's curse was no less oppressive: how had it gone? '—everlasting tedium.'

Cugel rubbed his chin and nodded gravely. Raising his voice, he called, "Lord ghost, I may not stay to do your bidding: I have killed the bandits and now I depart. Farewell and may the eons pass with dispatch."

From the depths of the fort came a moan, and Cugel felt the pressure of the unknown. "I activate my curse!" came a whisper to Cugel's brain.

Cugel strode quickly away to the southeast. "Excellent; all is well. The 'everlasting tedium' exactly countervenes the 'immediate onset of death' and I am left only with the 'canker' which, in the person of Firx, already afflicts me. . ."

"But this 'pragmatic' attitude, which Vance so often turns to comic use, has a sober aspect which we see in his political thinking. In *Cadwal*, for example, where human passion confronts law, Vance's penchant for examining tangled and contradictory situations, from perspectives which are both indulgent and coldly analytical, lends his work a smiling philosophical cast."

Having made these points I presented my own set of ideal contents (respecting the space constraints), which I placed under three headings, and added an argument in favor of the solution.

Short Stories	Mazirian / Cugel / Rhialto	SF Novellas or Short Novels
THE MEN RETURN	GUYAL OF SFERE	THE HOUSES OF ISZM
DODKIN'S JOB	FLUTIC	SON OF THE TREE
GREEN MAGIC	THE MURTHE	THE LAST CASTLE
SULWEN'S PLANET		DOMAINS OF KORYPHON
THE MOON MOTH		

"This list includes the 'simply best' short stories. *The Men Return* is Vance's unforgettable comi-tragic evocation of chaos. *Dodkin's Job* is one of his classic statements on the human condition, in which technocracy and 'Organization', or the modern political structures, tend to crush the individual. *Green Magic* is Vance's classic evocation of an 'otherwhere'. Other such evocations occur in *Bagful of Dreams*, or in *Lyonesse*, in the Ierly or Tanjecterly episodes. *Sulwen's Planet* is a masterly classic exposition of one of Vance's favorite themes: squabbling academics. He treats this theme in many other places, such as *Night Lamp* and the *Demon Prince* books. *The Moon Moth*, certainly Vance's most beloved short story, is one of many vancian treatments of cultural discontinuity.

"*Guyal of Sfere*, though such an early story, remains greatly beloved and is always rewarding to read. It is certainly the most important of the *Mazirian* stories, and has an evocation of Vance's musical theme.

"*Flutic*, in my opinion the most perfect of the universally marvellous *Cugel* episodes, is choiceworthy in the context of a treasury collection because of its concentration on the most important cugelian aspect: wrangling, conniving thievery. However, no *Cugel* episode choice can be wrong. Among those which have been discussed, *The Sorcerer Pharesm* features the famous stoneworks and the search for Totality; *Aboard the Galante* features Vance's best exposition of sexual chicanery (in which the women come off triumphant), *Bagful of Dreams* features the famous haggling with Iolo and an incursion into an otherwhere (a theme already covered by *Green Magic*), *The Seventeen Virgins* includes some sexual chicanery, and the card game with Phampoun—another incursion into an otherwhere. My own second choice would be *The Inn of Blue Lamps*, which includes the bladder contest between champions selected by Cugel and Bunderwal. *Liane the Wayfarer* is not first rate Vance, being somewhat derivative and thus 'perfervid' in a non-vancian manner, it is in any case a redundantly proto-Cugel episode.

The Murthe is both the best and the shortest Rhialto episode. It is also one of Vance's most astonishing sociological statements.

"*The Houses of Iszm* is the best example, in novella form, of a major vancian theme, the interplay of ecology, economy, politics and tourism, which finds its ultimate expression in *Cadwal*—though many of the middle period novels touch on these themes, notably *Maske:Thaery*. A great story which includes tourism, sailing, a better treatment of cultural discontinuity than *The Dragon Masters*, it is structured as an inter-planetary who-done-it.

"*Son of the Tree*, a beautifully evoked wandering chase from world to world across the galaxy, is a proto-version of *Ports of Call*, embodying a major statement of Vance's religion theme. It includes the most important treatment of his trademark druids, and features the famous 'world tree'—also evoked in *The Palace of Love*. It includes nicely handled political intrigue and one of the clearest expositions of Vance's sentimental pragmatism, or ambiguity, whereby, at the end of a titanic ordeal, the hero finds that his romantic motivation is absurd, that his enemy is his friend, and that the woman he thought he loved does not interest him as much as another he recently met. Finally, in the battle against the Son, subdued with herbicide, is a presciently refreshing post-modernist treatment of a hackneyed sci-fi theme.

"*The Last Castle*, like *Miracle Workers* and *Dragon Masters*, is a story of a lost aristocratic society in a colonial struggle with alien beings—obviously metaphorical for aspects of

the contemporary western situation. All three are first rate masterpieces, though the second, being the earliest, is probably the least. It deals less richly with the colonial aspect. *The Dragon Masters* deals less richly with the aristocratic and the 'lost culture' aspect. Both *Miracle Workers*, with the jinxmen and the 'first folk', and *Dragon Masters*, with the sacerdots and 'basics', include fantastical and 'cultural discontinuity' aspects. The fantasy element is not present in *The Last Castle*, but the other elements are treated more richly, and the fantasy aspect is represented elsewhere among my proposed texts. *The Last Castle* is probably the actual best, because it is the most atmospheric and deals so fully with the aristocratic-colonial element, which is such an important vancian theme.

"*The Domains of Koryphon*, though both neglected and often denigrated, is one of my own favorite novels. In many respects it is a dry run for *Cadwal*. It is extremely moody, and is one of Vance's most successful treatments of an intensely political situation which invites the reader to a reconsideration of many contemporary prejudices. It includes the marvellous episode of the voyage in the wind-runner landboat, one of the highpoints in Vance's work.

"If space permitted I would propose *The Dogtown Tourist Agency*, which is basically a Ridolph story. (NB, *The Kokod Warriors*, though still emphasizing tourism, adds the Tschai-ish situation of a stand-off of alien empires.) *Dogtown* is also in the 'mystery' vein, otherwise neglected by the proposed lists, and a return to the lighthearted manner of so many of the early works but with Vance's mature power.

"As for *Gift of Gab*, *The Narrow Land* and *Sail 25*, as good as these stories are in themselves, and also as popular with readers who dig Vance's SF side best, they are not, in my opinion, in the very first rank, and the sort of delight they offer are already, found in *The Men Return*, with its potent evocation of an exiguous environment, *The Last Castle* or *Sulwen's Planet*, with their treatments of alien biology and culture, or *Son of the Tree*, *The Houses of Iszm* and *The Moon Moth*, with their context of alien culture and interplanetary economics. It would be nice to also include some of the early 'fluff', such as *Coup de Grace* or *Alfred's Ark*, but the antic aspect of *Flutic*, or any *Cugel* episode, as well as the inconsequent mood of *Sulwen's Planet*, offers a taste of this.

"So, presented in chronological order, which is how I would do it, the contents would then be:

1. GUYAL OF SFERE
2. SON OF THE TREE
3. THE MEN RETURN
4. THE HOUSES OF ISZM
5. GREEN MAGIC
6. DODKIN'S JOB
7. THE MOON MOTH
8. THE LAST CASTLE
9. SULWEN'S PLANET
10. DOMAINS OF KORYPHON
11. THE MURTHE
12. FLUTIC

"All of these stories, in my opinion, are the best, or not inferior to others in their categories, and, in the space allotted, would offer the richest possible vancian feast.

"A great cry will instantly go up because my proposition neglects this or that favorite. I can only say that, in the allotted space, this is how I would solve the problem of a

Vance Treasury which aims to be *a single volume argument for why he is an important and fascinating writer, the book that will always be the first stop for new Vance readers in years to come.*"

TIM STRETTON offered this comment:

"Paul makes an important point. There is so much good stuff that just picking 'the best', however you measure it, is not necessarily the best answer (and would surely give you all three *Rhialto* stories, for instance). With 200,000 words to play with there is scope to pick from Vance's various 'flavours' and still have a Treasury comprising only first-rate work.

"What sets Vance apart from most others in the field is his philosophical and tonal range. The final version, whichever stories are chosen, should reflect that breadth."

CHUCK KING made a related point:

"I would like to suggest a story that I think is far too often overlooked: *Freitzke's Turn*. It's relatively short and a stand-alone work, notwithstanding that it is generally bundled with *The Dogtown Tourist Agency*. It's a later story and I think shows Jack in the full flower of his skills, plus, it touches on one of the more interesting themes to run through Jack's work, i.e., the megalomaniacal ubermensch villain. The best known version is of course Howard Alan Treesong from *The Book of Dreams*, but Faurence Dacre from *Freitzke's Turn* is in the same vein. I think the story stands on its own as one of Vance's best, but to the extent there is any interest in or goal of touching on the various themes for which Vance is known, *Freitzke's Turn* is the only short work of his that features a Treesong-ian villain. A similar idea showed up in a number of his other works, besides *The Book of Dreams: Bad Ronald*, *The House on Lily Street*, the *Cadwal Chronicles*. But *Freitzke's Turn* presents it in a short (and fascinating) work.

"I'd also like to express the greatest possible support for *The Miracle Workers*, *Alfred's Ark*, and *Assault on a City* (or, as it should now be known, *The Insufferable Red-headed Daughter of Commander Tynnott, O.T.E.*). And for what it's worth, I too would prefer *The Sub-standard Sardines* to *The Gift of Gab*, if you guys feel the need to include a talking-to-fish story."

TIM added a further comment:

". . . the stories which seem likely to occasion the most debate are *Dodkin's Job*, *The Murthe* and *Abercrombie Station*.

"Advocates of *Dodkin's Job* argue that it is a timeless exploration of Man versus Organization (a major theme of *Wyrt*, and to a lesser extent *Emphyrio*); detractors see it as a standard 'Astounding Story' of its time. I am firmly in the former camp: the story stands alone divorced from its heritage, and is related with sufficient wit and deftness to justify its inclusion.

The Murthe attracts some criticism for its take on gender relations. To my mind anyone offended by such material is unlikely to enjoy Vance. Its sheer elan and bathetic humour make it one of Jack's masterpieces.

"As to *Abercrombie Station*, I did not include it in my own 200,000 words but it is a fine corrective to those who argue that Vance doesn't write convincing female characters: Jean Parlier is as engaging as any heroine in the canon, at least until Wayness Tamm.

"The approach [suggested by Strahan] for making the final selection — sitting down, reading the material and then debating with a knowledgeable co-editor — seems to me exactly the right one. I have every confidence you will come up with a 'Treasury' indeed. (But not *When Five Moons Rise*, please . . .)"

On the Asimov board, discussion of the Vance Treasury is the longest thread in its 'books' section. The discourse lacks tone, tending towards bigoted protectiveness of science fiction, but a certain BYRON BAILEY, commented:

"Maybe I haven't read enough Vance. In fact I know I need to read more and when the chance arises, I plan to. However, nothing I've read so far by him (defined for now as in reminding me of the best of the literature I've read in obtaining a BA in English literature) makes me think him greater than the likes of Gene Wolff, Avram Davidson, Harlan Ellison and a few others.

"It's been mentioned by Paul, I believe, that Vance might be using a more ancient narrative strategy such as the epic or romance. The way I see it from what I've read, Vance may be the writer that takes the "romance" part in the old "scientific romance" the most serious. (I'm not talking modern romance here but the more ancient romance as exemplified by Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*). If so, depending on perspective, that might not necessarily be a good thing. Jack Vance: Literary Genius or Literary Throwback?

"Whatever the case, Jack Vance is without a doubt one of the more unique voices within speculative fiction and is extremely enjoyable reading, well worth preserving and cherishing. It's just that when you start talking of him as the best, I have to scratch my head and wonder what the hell else you've been reading."

To which I responded:

"Byron; I do not have the distinction, like you, of having a BA (in English or in anything else) and my high school diploma—I confess, in the interest of full-frontal disclosure—was mostly a consequence of the new lack of academic rigor of the 1970s. That said, there are some people who can't understand why anyone would think that Frank Frazzetta is not just as good a painter as Titian. Some of these people have degrees.

"My point about Vance's 'narrative strategy', as you call it, is not that he uses archaic ones, it is that he does things, which are sometimes like 'archaic narrative strategies', which are wonderful and which are larger than the narrow categories recognized by what I have come call the 'bone-head academy'.

"There seem to be many people who, like you, find Gene Wolf, for example, just as good as Vance. If, indeed, you enjoy Wolff as much as I enjoy Vance, I can only say you are one lucky fellow!"



THE DOMAINS OF KORYPHON

Perceiving Vance, Aesthetically and Ideologically

THE EXPERIMENTAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE PRE-WAR ERA

The pre-war era, which was the period of Vance's youth, was one of genuine artistic experimentation, unlike our own time of academic avant-guardism. The intensity of this experimental fervor has few historic parallels, and its special nature—an escalating rejection of traditional artistic modes and goals, as opposed to their modification—is unique.* Its most famous literary exemplars (Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Arthur Rambeau) were certainly artists of power, but today their reputations suffer a common fate in one respect: even among well educated people their work tends to be known best by reputation. The reason for this is clear. The work, whatever its quality, is not 'easy', and when its difficulties are overcome it is even then not necessarily enjoyable—or 'delectable', the goal of Art according to the painter Poussin.

Having made this remark, I come to my point. In these previous times, and for the people who were artistically and intellectually formed in them, literary experimentation, not counting extreme cases, was considered a refreshing and normal aspect of the general literary experience.

Take the case of a writer who has retained both reputation and readership, Evelyn Waugh. His very first book, *Decline and Fall*, published in 1928, was both a critical and popular success.

Stylistically Waugh may be placed between Aldous Huxley and P.G. Wodehouse. The latter should not be taken for the mere master of merriment which is justly his chief claim to fame; his outlook is more pessimistic than generally realized. Carpers could make a case, for example, that he is a misogynist—though alert persons of the masculine sex gratefully, and silently, take his sharp lessons, craftily sugar-coated, to heart. In short, Wodehouse, like Huxley and Waugh, though not overtly, is also a social critic.†

Few readers these days are familiar with books by Huxley, once read by everyone, such as *Point Counter Point*, *Chrome Yellow* or *Antic Hay*. *Brave New World*, perhaps not Huxley's best work though its reputation has been carried forward by SF readers, is characteristic of his approach: inventive, thoughtful, even serious, though by no means humorless. The tone of Waugh's work, I say, covers the gamut between this and the Wodehousian carnival. Waugh is both overtly serious and blatantly comic. It is possible to read Wodehouse with the feeling one is visiting a circus, and nowhere else. This is not possible with Waugh. He is funny, but we cannot miss that he is also telling us serious things.

Now one of the recurrent charges against Vance is that his stories lack focus; a notion crystallized in specific complaints such as that his plotting is poor, or that he loses interest in his heroes. Such criticisms, however, are only possible to people whose unfamiliarity with modern literature, or even great literature generally, limits them to understanding Vance in terms of the formulaic work with which they are familiar.

* The only notable precedent to our current surreal cultural situation is mentioned by Thucydides, regarding the Corcyran revolution, where writes: '... words, too, had to change their usual meanings.' *The Peloponnesian War*, book 3.

† I by no means wish to imply that only seriousness, pessimism and social criticism save art from being frivolous or trite. I merely point out that, to the extent Huxley and Waugh are taken seriously for such reasons, Wodehouse might also be.

Wauhgh's *Decline and Fall* is the picaresque, even cugelesque, adventures of Paul Pennyfeather. They begin when, as a student at Scone College, he is undressed by drunken members of the Bolliger club who, thanks to their social standing, are safe from official censure; but Paul, obliged to cross the quadrangle 'without trousers', is dismissed with prejudice for 'indecent behavior'. In consequence he must take a miserable post at Llanabba, an obscure and grotesque boarding school. He is saved from Llanabba by a marriage engagement to the millionaire mother of a pupil, Margot Beste-Chetwynde—a member of the Bollinger club is slated to be best man. But Margot's fortune comes from prostitution in South America; just before the wedding Margot sends gentlemanly Paul to resolve a passport problem, and when the United Nations closes in, he takes the fall. In prison Paul unrealistically renews acquaintance with his fellow masters of Llanabba. Margot saves Paul by marrying a member of government, and Paul, like Cugel returning to Almeri, returns to Scone.

The stories' totally unrelated episodes are connected only by the patently artificial recurrence of characters, and the episodes do not add up to anything but a prolonged romp through the strata of English society. What Waugh is doing, however, is absolutely deliberate, as he overtly informs his reader. In Part II, chapter 2, we read:

For an evening at least the shadow that has flitted about this narrative under the name of Paul Pennyfeather materialized into the solid figure of an intelligent, well-educated, well-conducted young man, a man who could be trusted to use his vote at a general election with discretion and proper detachment, whose opinion on a ballet or a critical essay was rather better than most people's, who could order a dinner without embarrassment and in a creditable French accent, who could be trusted to see to luggage at foreign railway-stations and might be expected to acquit himself with decision and decorum in all the emergencies of civilized life. This was the Paul Pennyfeather who had been developing in the placid years which preceded this story. In fact, the whole of this book is really an account of the mysterious disappearance of Paul Pennyfeather, so that readers must not complain if the shadow which took his name does not amply fill the important part of hero for which he was originally cast

... From the point of view of this story Paul's second disappearance is necessary, and because, as the reader will probably have discerned already, Paul Pennyfeather would never have made a hero, and the only interest about him arises from the unusual series of events of which his shadow was witness.

Waugh here anticipates the criticism that his protagonist is without substance. The alert reader will understand Waugh's idea: context (English society) rather than personality determines experience. Though Waugh does not dismiss the force of trans-contextual, or intrinsic, personality, of which various characters—Margot, spunky Captain Grimes, architectural genius Otto Silenus—are exemplars, Paul, being his society's ideal, lacks his own personality. As a natural conformist he is the *raison d'être*, the prime source of the context which manipulates him and reduces him to a rudderless cipher. When he falls into society's cracks, 'he' is doomed—which is to say: offered a chance to exist in his own right. Waugh underlines this on those two occasions when Paul crawls out of cracks (the interlude of which the quotation above is the prelude, and at the end of the book). We see, at those moments, that Paul has learned nothing from his extravagant experiences; he instantly goes

back to being 'himself'. After escaping jail, though a phony fatal operation, he even decides to keep his old name. Paul Pennyfeather is therefore no traditional character. He is a personage who must be what he is in Waugh's story for the point of the story to be made in the way it is made. It is not as if Paul Pennyfeather has no personality at all. He has all sorts of characteristics, and these function properly in the various contexts. We 'recognize' him. He 'exists' in the literary sense. But Waugh is doing something special which depends on a special approach.

Though unusual, it is not without precedents. Don Quixote is not, like Paul, an exemplar of his society, but he is inhabited by a romanesque idea which haunts it and, like Paul, he fails to learn from reality's hard knocks. The confrontation of the knight's naïve, obstinate dream, and the realities of Spanish Renaissance society, are the sparks which light the episodes of Cervantes' famous work. Paul Pennyfeather, to the contrary, is neither naïve nor obstinate, nor yet dreamy; he is the exemplar of a society which is itself a crazy dream; it is not Paul Pennyfeather but English society which is quixotically mad.

Wodehouse is an observer of this same society. I have never seen it mentioned, but he is as much an experimenter, perhaps even more so, than Waugh. Take *Spring Fever*, a novel from 1948; in this book the hero, or principal protagonist—who, incidentally, Wodehouse conceals from the reader as such until around chapter 7 (after an initial appearance in the last paragraph of chapter 5)—seems to be another of Wodehouse's allegedly two dimensional personages. Of course there is little complaint about such things against Wodehouse; perhaps his readers enjoy him so much no one feels like carping. But if carpage there were, this carp, one senses, would be carpage of choice.

Spring Fever's hero, Mike Cardinal, is rich, good-looking, and cheerful. He is also something of a wag. In his wooing of the reluctant Terry we encounter characteristic dialogues, such as in chapter 12 where Mike compares Terry to her less sympathetic sister.

'... Odd how different sisters can be. I can't imagine you scaring anyone. Yours is a beautiful nature; kind, sweet, gentle, dovelike, the very type of nature that one wants to have around the house. Will you marry me?'

'No.'

'I think you're wrong. One of these days, when we are walking down the aisle together, with the choir singing "The Voice that Breathed O'er Eden", I shall remind you of this. "Aha!" I shall say. "Who said she wouldn't marry me?" That'll make you look silly.'

In chapter 13 Terry's father, speaking with Mike and his sarcastic daughter, advises gratitude to the latter:

'Mike's the one you ought to be grateful to.'

'I am. His generosity is princely.'

'Yes,' said Mike. 'What an extraordinarily fine fellow this chap Cardinal is turning out to be.'

This is amusing, but does it mean anything? Structurally at least Wodehouse is doing something strange: he is giving the job of editorial commentary upon a character to the character himself, for Mike proves a worthy (i.e. neutral and insightful) observer of himself, as we shall see. But if Mike can sometimes renounce flippant clowning, Wodehouse himself never does, though the clowning is of another order, basic to his work: ineluctable language play.

Wodehouse's approach is particular to himself. He writes in relentless clichés which, under his pen, become abstract forms manipulated like clay. A notable example, almost an exposé of his method, occurs at the beginning of chapter 16:

'Rollicking', indeed, was the only adjective to describe Augustus Robb's whole deportment at this critical moment in his career. That, or its French equivalent, was the word which would have leaped to the mind of the stylist Flaubert, always so careful in his search for the *mot juste*.

This mention of Flaubert, a major literary hero and model since the on-set of post-romantic modernism, is not haphazard. For Wodehouse is obviously not serious about whether or not 'rollicking'—an anglo-saxonism with no 'French equivalent'—is the *mot juste*, and the context is so flippant it seems to fail to have any substance whatsoever. Wodehouse is like the proverbial abstract painter whose subject is 'painting itself'. Perfect disciple of the highest tenets of modernism, his *writing is about writing*.

A classic example; for a couple of pages in chapter 18 Terry, who is feeling good, resorts to metaphor about her state in conversation with the well-intentioned but clumsy Stanwood:

'Have you ever felt that you were floating on a pink cloud over an ocean of bliss?'
'Sure,' said Stanwood. . .

The narrator, ensconced in his tornado of clichés, appropriates this metaphor:

There was a silence. Terry, floating on that pink cloud, was thinking her own thoughts with a light in her eyes and a smile on her parted lips. . .

Finally Stanwood, speaking of Mike, unconsciously rekindles Terry's fear of Mike's flibertygibbitism, or girl-chasing tendency, giving the narrator the awaited opening:

'Well, you never know what may happen. I had the idea that he was making a play for Eileen.'
The pink cloud failed to support Terry. It shredded away beneath her, and she plunged into the ocean. And it was not, as she has supposed, an ocean of bliss, but a cold, stinging ocean, full of horrible creatures which were driving poisoned darts into her.

We are irresistibly reminded of a poem by Navarh: *Castles in the Clouds and the Anxieties of Those Who Live Directly Below by Reason of Falling Objects and Wastes*,* a vancian exploitation of the tensions within language, particularly conventional language. Terry's plunge is delightful in this vancian way, but also stunning in the strict sense of the word. The reader is so destabilized by the sudden and totally unexpected appearance of horrible creatures driving poisoned darts that he makes no objection, not to their irrelevance, but to their actual destructiveness of that seamless web, that smooth and shiny surface of plot and character upon which the bone-head academician insists.

If the bone-heads, who enjoy Wodehouse as much as the rest of us, were made to explain themselves on this score, doubtlessly they would say that Wodehouse's writing need not conform to their plot-character strictures because it is 'about something else'. But what other thing would that be?

In chapter 17, the scene where Terry explains why she won't marry Mike (she suspects him of being a flibertygibbit

because he is so good looking) we have:

'I wouldn't let you down.'
'I wonder.'
'Terry!' Come on. Take a chance.'
'You speak as if it were a sort of game. I'm afraid I'm rather Victorian and earnest about marriage. I don't look on it as just a lark.'
'Nor do I!'
'You seem to.'
'Why do you say that?'
'Well, don't you think yourself that your attitude all through has been a little on the flippant side?'
Mike beat his breast, like the Wedding Guest.
'There you are! That's it! I felt all along that was the trouble. You think I'm not sincere, because I clown. I knew it. All the time I was saying to myself "Lay off it, you poor sap! Change the record," but I couldn't. I had to clown. It was a kind of protective armour against shyness.'
'You aren't telling me you're shy?'
'Of course I'm shy. Every man's shy when he's really in love. For God's sake don't think I'm not serious. I love you. I've always loved you. I loved you the first time I saw you. Terry, darling, do please believe me. This is life and death.'
Terry's heart gave a leap. Her citadel of defense was crumbling.

Mike, sincere at last, continues to speak in impoverished clichés, but Wodehouse's prose remains sparkling and fresh even though, as Terry experiences her change of heart—the key dramatic moment!—he likewise cleaves to cliché (*leaping hearts* and *crumbling citadels*). Despite such wealth of non-story elements, such gratuitous literary pyromania, the fires thus lit must be fueled; Terry must be on a non-metaphorical cloud in order for Wodehouse to push her off a metaphorical one. If there were only flames there could be no fire. Literary abstraction of the Gertrude Stein type—'Rose is rose is rose'—soon consumes itself. How, then, is the reader carried forward, chapter after chapter, book after book, through the blare, glitter and fog of such relentless clowning, if not by story?

Important prejudices, such as the one against designating 'rollicking' a *mot juste*, are so strong that a defense of the fundamental seriousness of Wodehouse's stories would be a heroic undertaking. Suffice it, then, to ask who can forget such characters as Bertie Wooster or Lady Constance and their travails, or challenge the proposition that the Jeeves, the Blandings or the Ukridge stories have 'mythic' status?

THE PLOT-CHARACTER PARADIGM

Decline and Fall, though burlesque, is less so than *Cugel*, which may explain the relative infrequency of bone-head academic complaint about the latter's structure.* But of Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, a book arguably less 'focused' than, say, *The Domains of Koryphon*, such a complaint was not made. This once super-famous book is a series of disconnected accounts of characters whose paths occasionally cross in apparently gratuitous ways. Read today, by the hollow eye of our accademical bone-head, it might appear formless. But its leading characteristic, recognized by its popular following for many decades, is an unusual constructive dynamic. This recognition was perhaps easier in the now-evaporated context of literary experiment then prevailing—which lends

* I mean that the quantity of perceived froth seems to be in inverse proportion to the compulsion to justify and validate. *Domains of Koryphon*, a 'serious' story, is fingered mercilessly as flawed, while complaint that the *Cugel* plot is weak, though made, is not adamant.

* *The Palace of Love*, chapter 7.

conviction to Waugh's context thesis.

Virginia Woolf is a writer who continues to be read by many with real pleasure. Inspired by the vogue for Freudianism, she used her 'stream of consciousness' technique to make non-events, such as a walk to a lighthouse, into drama, of sorts, by dilating upon intimate impulses nourished by a lifetime of triumphs, disappointments and neurosis. Reading Woolf can also be the prop of snobbery characteristic of so much 'interest' in modernist art. Her work, however, whatever its real quality, is characteristic of the theoretical and experimental aura of an older age, in which interesting formal experimentation and popular success were often allied. Woolf's and Huxley's stories would be 'poorly plotted' for the boneheads; Waugh's heroes would unacceptably fail to retain center stage, and Wodehouse would be centrally valued for the aerodynamics of his verbal fluff.

In Vance the formal qualities are less apparent. The older writers were certainly more than mere formal jugglers, but Vance has none of their reputation for theory and experimentation; he has no air of the *avant garde*.^{*} If he, like they, quits the beaten formal paths, he does it covertly; certainly not to partake of a movement, or to experiment for the sake of experimentation. He has not the least intention of conjuring a literary version of psychology or modern painting, as Huxley might be taxed, or crowned, with literary Cezanne-ism.[†] Vance's forms have the best motive; a given story demands a certain form. That form may be unfamiliar or unique; if it is the one called for, it is the one to use. Virginia Woolf, by contrast, seems to choose stories to fit her pet form. Joyce seems to relish creation of new types of story and form for their own sake, as Huxley seemed to enjoy experimentation. Waugh seems to seek a form suitable to a fundamentally non-literary goal: social commentary.

Wodehouse is more like Vance; his innovation remains invisible. In Vance's case it is because the forms are so wedded to the content—being originally a function of them—that they are imperceptible, and thus imperceptible as innovation. As for Wodehouse, his stature being on a par with Vance's, I hesitate to reduce his approach to a phrase, but one might say he discovered a form at once as modern as it was possible to be without suffering the modernist collapse into non-delectability, yet suited to the highly artistic intention of offering something delectably nourishing.

Unlike the pre-war type reader, today's readers, particularly genre readers, though pretending to unpretentiousness, are uncomfortable with the unfamiliar. They are unequipped by training, and disadvantaged by context, when it comes to Vance. I state this positively because the negative views of Vance of which I am complaining are shared even by those who should know better, including his most illustrious and, ironically, enthusiastic commentators.

Dan Simmons, obviously a Vance lover, in an impassioned discussion of Vance stylistic power, writes:

Many critics have suggested that Jack Vance. . . has trouble with his plots. I would suggest that this is true only in the sense that Vance's plots are always incidental to the core of this poetry. . . Jack Vance's work is not—as most SF—guided and goaded on by plot. In a real sense, Vance's writing is best analyzed as a combination of poetic structure and the best travel writing.*

By 'poetic structure' Simmons seems to mean that Vance's words:

. . . whether common or Vance-coined, modern or archaic, strike with full force. . .

and he develops a passionate argument for the remarkable quality of Vance's word-smithery.

In a similar argument, 20 years older, Norman Spinrad writes:

For Vance, plot and even character are skeletons upon which to hang his overriding concern for place and time, for a sense of history always imbued with a mordant irony. . . ‡

Spinrad goes on to state that:

Vance has produced no truly outstanding characters that are remembered long after the stories that contain them are forgotten, nor has he produced tales that live on as epic sagas, as instant myths. . . To enjoy Vance, you have to enjoy words as sculptures on paper, reality as a baroque landscape, and sardonicism for its own elegance. You are offered this as the main course, *hor d'oeuvres* raised to smorgasbord. ‡

Simmons and Spinrad should know better. Each in his own way sees him as a 'special taste', a writer whose force is a trick of limited appeal. Simmons regrets that today's juveniles—unlike his own adolescent self—read novelizations of *Star Trek* and don't even know Vance exists, while Spinrad ends his essay with these words:

This is not the sort of fiction with the widest mass appeal. . . but it is the sort of fiction which in the long run continues to be read by generations of cognoscenti, and thus endures.**

What, then, of the 'mass appeal' of Waugh, or Huxley, 60 years ago? Would Spinrad suggest that 'mass readership' used to be mass-cognoscenti? Or have we suffered a collapse of intelligence, a general cultural decay, per Simmons?

If I am right, if Vance's natural readership (of general readers) has not yet found him, when this encounter does take place Vance will be raised to the giddy status of timeless classic. His 'plots' and 'characters' will then be seen in a different light. I am not, of course, perversely arguing that Vance's plots and characters are successful per the bone-head academic scheme; constant complaint from that sector proves the opposite. I am arguing that what Vance does, though different from the 'traditional' approach, is not merely as good but superior because it realizes even more triumphantly the very story-telling goals which the plot-character analysis shrunkly seeks to codify. Vance, I say, is more enjoyable, more exciting, more nourishing, as a story-teller in the most basic sense, than writers who earn the bone-head good housekeeping seal of approval. Vance's plots and characters, I say, are not less but, *pax* Spinrad, more compelling and memorable than those of other writers.

At the end of this essay I will discuss an important but non-literary reason negative views of Vance persist. First, however, I want to demonstrate Vance's method. The fundamental axiom of my argument, however, cannot be argued, it must be felt:

* *Jack Vance: Dragon Master*; Jack Vance, Critical Appreciations and a Bibliography, The British Library, 2000.

† *Jack Vance and "The Dragon Masters"*; Writers of the 21st Century: Jack Vance; Taplinger, 1980.

‡ Ibid. ** Ibid.

* This is well hidden in Wodehouse's case but, as demonstrated above, and except for the essentially silly if nonetheless knotty problem of seriousness, can be made clear.

† By this I mean that as Cezanne progressively decomposed form to generate a new kind of 'painting space' (as opposed to the traditional illusory space of painting), so Huxley decomposed the traditional linear 'story' to generate a new more purely literary 'narrative logic'. This sort of analysis of Cezanne, and thus of Huxley, though not without a certain truth, is, in my opinion, not as good as the *avant garde* academy thinks, but to illustrate the point at hand it will serve.

it is that Vance's stories (or 'plots') and his characters, to reverse Spinrad, are indeed 'instant myths'. If 'Vancians', that vanguard of Vance's natural readership, do not already see this, they should have no trouble coming to that point; they know by personal experience how, unlike almost everything else they read—barring the universal classics—a favorite Vance story cannot be too often reread, because each reading is even more rewarding than the previous. And while it may be easy to say, for example, that Gersen and Reith are essentially the same character, a rather flat one too—which is to complain they are unsatisfactory per bone-head standards—no Vancian mistakes one for the other and, crucially, the subtle qualities of each had gained a mythic status in our minds, so that the story of which they are the focusing element exists, unforgettably, at an almost archetypal level, etched upon our souls.

Do I wax absurd? How many times, dear fellow Vancian, have you read *The Palace of Love*, or *The Dirdir*? Or, given that you have read *Durdane* several times, was the last time in any respect disappointing, or did you, rather, enjoy it more than ever? How many other writers do you re-read in this way, or when you take up some Vance you have never read, one you figured you would not particularly enjoy, are you not consistently surprised to find yourself liking it so much?

And yet, though you enjoy Vance that much, as do Simmons and Spinrad, you acquiesce to the complaints of the bone-head academics who argue, like those critics, that it is other qualities which make the magic happen: word-smithery—'poetry' as Simmons has it—or atmosphere, vividness—Spinrad's 'reality'—or the delicious irony. These qualities are real enough, but the core of a story must be *story*. There are famous writers of mood pieces, famous phrase spinners; it is absurd to put Vance among them not because, as such, he fails to make their grade but because he is so much more.

Vance is no special taste. He is compelling, overwhelming, irresistible. Those who reject him are either Simmons' pitiable Star Trek novelization readers—and there may indeed be little grounds for hope in that quarter—or soldiers in the vast battalions of science fiction rejecters. But Vancians are not an elite of cognoscenti—as each of us will recognize. We are no 'special group' because we are so diverse. In common we have only the luck, or lack of prejudice, which favored our discovery.

Just as Vancians themselves have trouble crossing the final hump separating 'beloved personal entertainer' from 'eternal classic', so these others struggle at an initial hump separating 'science fiction' from 'literature'.*

STRUCTURE OR CHAOS?

The Domains of Koryphon was written in 1972, smack in the middle of Vance's most beloved period—just after *Durdane*, just before *Alastor* and *Showboats*. It happens to be a particular favorite of mine, but stagnates as one of the least popular. In discussions of Vance's flaws it is regularly fingered. It is my view, to the contrary, that *Domains* is exceptionally strong formally. How is it possible for views to diverge so dramatically?

* The proper argument against, or for, science fiction with respect to this problem, is given in the introduction to the VIE Science Fiction volume, an expanded version of which I will try to publish in a future number of Extant. A first draft of this essay, which in part covers quite different ground, is in *Cosmopolis*#22. The argument which follows, regarding the structure of *The Domains of Koryphon*, is an expanded form of a section in these essays.

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Critics complain the story lacks focus. The book is written in the 3d person but the narrative focus is centered on a series of characters. In the first two chapters Schaine Madduc is the protagonist. In chapter II we are introduced to a handsome young love interest, Elvo Glissam, whose point of view takes on importance in chapter III. In chapter VII Schaine drops out of sight, and Elvo becomes central. Schaine does not reappear until chapter XI. Though Elvo does interesting things at the beginning of this section, his point of view is progressively used to show the actions of a third character, Gerd Jemasze, introduced unsympathetically in chapter I, from Schaine's point of view:

...she had never liked Gerd Jemasze, whom she considered surly.

This is reiterated with emphasis in chapter II:

...all her life she had disliked Gerd Jemasze, for reasons she could never quite define to herself. His conduct was reserved, his manner polite, his features undistinguished. . .His clothes. . . seemed, in the context of Olanje where everyone wore gay colors and exaggerated fashions, almost ostentatiously severe. Schaine suddenly understood why he repelled her: he totally lacked the idiosyncrasies and easy little vices which endowed all her other acquaintances with charm. Gerd Jemasze's physique was not noticeably large or heavy, but when he moved, the clothes tightened to the twist of his muscles; in just such a fashion, thought Schaine, did his quiet appearance mask an innate arrogance. She knew why her father and Kelse liked Gerd Jemasze; he outdid them both in rigidity and resistance to change; his opinions, once formed, became impervious as stone.

Seasoned Vance readers may pick up the delicate contradictory hints, but that is not where the game is, and no one will fail to note how, in chapter X, the narration progressively abandons Elvo's point of view—in the space of 10 pages. The story, continuing for six chapters, is thereafter told from Gerd's view, though important scenes take place without him, and the narrator gradually draws back to recount the dramatic dénouement from a neutral perch. The final scene reunites the three main characters (Schaine, Gerd Jemasze and Kelse Madduc, Schaine's brother), where the story began.

Explained in this manner the formal oddity of shifting views may seem intriguing, but the story seems like a mess. The shifts confuse and annoy, particularly because the good guys turn out to be bad guys, disturbing the great bone-head law of vicariousness; readers who make the understandable mistake of identifying with Elvo, or who fail to profit from his fate, get stung.

The story has another structure, of voyages. The first is Schaine's voyage, back home to Koryphon. The second is the disastrous trip from Olanje to Morningswake, when their air-car is shot down over the Dramalfo and the four young people (Schaine, Kelse, Elvo, Gerd) must cross a hundred miles of waste harried by wild erjins and Hunge tribesmen. The third, beginning at chapter VII, takes Gerd, the Ao tribesman Kurgech, and Elvo to the palga. Tricked by sly windrunners and pursued by Stenki, they elucidate Uther Madduc's joke, but are attacked and besieged by erjins. In this crisis Elvo's point of view is abandoned. As the first chapters map ideological battles, so the final chapters, racing all over Koryphon, recount actual battles.

The voyages have an inner structure. In the first Schaine travels from innocence to sophistication. In the second her new sophistication challenges the previously un-examined precepts of her old innocence. In the third these precepts, under examination, take on life and prove themselves superior. In the fourth the now articulated force of the old precepts must prove itself in action.

But how do such structures, however neat, make up for the protagonists being abandoned, one after the other, and love interest being transferred, suddenly at the end, to a man of opposite and odious character? Besides confusion and annoyance at violated vicariousness, the bone-head expert can complain that the love-triangle has not been properly exploited. These are infractions of the rule whereby readers identify with a protagonist and enjoy a roundly conducted drama—not a lot of abortive milling around, leading nowhere, since the famous joke has no impact on

the outcome. If the author has not been sloppy, he has been irresponsible.

There is another obstacle, the published title: *The Gray Prince*. This title confuses the story by suggesting that the named personage (a.k.a. Jorjol or Muffin) will be central. But it was unnecessary to mention him a single time to outline the structure. The true title is also not *Schaine Madduc*, or *Gerd Jemasze*, nor yet, anticipating the ideological aspect of the editorial title, *The Mull* or *The Land Baron*, none of which would be better. Let us try, therefore, to see the story's form beginning with the true title, which suggests that its center is not a character, not a particular place, but land itself; the domains of the planet Koryphon.

The civilized Outker population of Olanje, supporting the Uldra 'Redemptionists', is anxious to delegitimize land-baron possession of certain domains, once Uldra tribal lands, boldly



stolen a few generations previously by ancestors of the current land-barons—though great areas of Uaia remain in Uldra hands: the so called ‘retent’. ‘Treaty tribes’ are more gentle, or more civilized, or more domesticated (as you like) than the wilder retent Uldras. Some of the same people in Olanje concerned with ‘redemption’ are also concerned about erjin enslavement. The erjins, imposing, apparently semi-intelligent animals, are said to be trained by the windrunners on the palga. Erjins are used as cheap domestic labor in Szintarre—despite protests from the anti-slavery movement and labor guilds, dismayed at lost jobs and wages. The phenomenon of tame erjins is strange in itself; the retent Uldras, who use them as mounts, must control their savagery with electric spurs.

Into this situation returns Schaine Madduc, daughter of Uther Maddoc, land-baron of Morningswake. Gerd Jemasze is a young land-baron whose father was recently killed by sky-shark attack from the retent. Elvo Glissam is an Olanjite; he supports the Redemptionist Alliance. He is also chairman of ‘SEE’, the Society for Emancipation of the Erjins. In Uaia Gerd Jemasze kills erjins on sight. Elvo and Gerd represent two polls in the ideological debate dividing Koryphon. Schaine, under the influence of her sophisticated off-world education, is intellectually sympathetic to Elvo, but sentimentally and instinctively attached to the home where she grew up—described, when they reach it after their trek across the waste, as: *a place forever precious*. Schaine’s conflict is given explicit expression on several occasions, as when she asks herself how she can:

...reconcile her love for Morningswake
with the guilty suspicion that she had no
right to the property?

Eventually she is able to resolve this conflict, a resolution simultaneous with, and fundamentally identical to, her rejection of Elvo Glissam for Gerd Jemasze. These three characters constitute a love-triangle, but its sentimental aspect is not the heart of the story—which is the domains. The love aspect is therefore exploited relative to that.

In chapter VI there occurs what might be called the Schaine moment’:

...four persons only sat at the
umberwood table in the Great Hall: those
four who had shared the march across
a hundred miles of wasteland. As they
sipped wine, Schaine leaned back and
looked at the men through half-closed
eyelids, pretending they were strangers so
that she might appraise them objectively.

This is the nexus of the story: Elvo and Gerd represent the ideological polls of the problem of the domains, between which Schaine must choose,

and at the heart, so to speak, of her problem is Jorjol. An Uldra orphan, familiarly and affectionately called ‘Muffin’, Jorjol grew up with Schaine and Kelse at Morningswake. He suffered an ambiguous beginning: a sort of brother to them, sharing their lessons and play, he was excluded from the great hall and had to take his meals with the Uldra servants. When Jorjol became a hero for saving Kelse, he thereby became the lover to grateful and ardent young Schaine. When Uther learns of these improper doings he sends Schaine off planet, and Jorjol runs away to become the Gray Prince, leader of the Redemptionist Alliance, and icon of *radical chic** at Olanje.

Though Jorjol makes several dramatic eruptions into the story, and though his personal history is exemplary of the human drama at the core of the subject, he himself is a



Preparatory drawing for frontispiece of VIE volume 28.

* Coined, I believe, by Tom Wolfe, this term, fallen into disuse, was current in the 1960s when New York high society took to inviting Black Panthers to 5th avenue parties. Valtrina’s party, in Chapter, I is modeled on these doings, of which I have personal memories.

secondary character. He still lusts for Schaine—as he longed to be her brother as a child, and now lusts to destroy the domains, symbol of his perceived humiliation—but Schaine is done with him. Her love-puzzle is a triangle, with Elvo and Gerd at the two angles—though this shape does not come dramatically to light. In any case it is not a square, with Jorjol brooding in one corner. Schaine's dilemma is between two ideologies, two educations, two souls. It is dramatized not as a triangle but as a line, along which a voyage takes place. There is no struggle between rivals but passage from one to the other, a progress from illusion to reality.

Schaine's adolescent love for Jorjol is like her love for Morningswake: an aspect of the inevitably messy nature of a particular context. Having loved Jorjol, like possessing Morningswake, is part of her history, and so part of her being. As a child of Uaia it was a danger, an adventure, an enrichment, a fate, to which she was exposed. But, as at the end of the story she assumes possession of Morningswake, so at the beginning she had already assumed rejection of Jorjol. This is not calculated, it is felt. We may sympathize with Jorjol but we understand Schaine; Jorjol is not a good man, and Schaine is not a flibertygibbet. She may not have inherited her father's stern out-look but she did inherit his seriousness.

Building tensions on Koryphon erupt when the erjins, far more intelligent than suspected, revolt world-wide, murdering their masters in Olanje, as well as their retent tribe riders. Redemptionist Uldras attack the land-barons in Uaia. The land-barons defend themselves in air cars, with the help of their domain tribes who fight on criptids—placid animals disdained by the prouder and more flamboyant retent tribes, now without erjin mounts. But the air cars do not assure military superiority; sky-sharks inflict losses in the first battle.

THE PUNCH-LINE

In chapter I Uther Maddoc had completed a voyage to elucidate the mystery of erjin training, and discovered a 'wonderful joke'. His murder conceals it—and, serindipitously, his killers have the most to gain by this concealment. Gerd decides to duplicate Uther Maddoc's trip to dissolve the mystery. Elvo, interested in erjin training, but also anxious to measure himself against Gerd, joins him. Elvo's motivation is neither jealousy nor ideological; Gerd represents a personal challenge to his manner of being. Elvo seeks to test himself, by Gerd's standards which he has come not to share but to respect. Initially Gerd seemed a boor, but once out of the civilized environment of Olanje, in wild Uaia, Gerd's qualities and talents shine. Elvo, a fundamentally honest person, cannot help but note his own previously unsuspected weaknesses. The confrontation, in Schaine's heart, of two irreconcilable views, and the passage from one to the other, is dramatized though this self-reflective contemplation, which also resolves the mystery of the joke.

Elucidation of the joke, however, only resolves an abstract problem; it does nothing to curb the erjin and Redemptionist wars. When the dust settles it is the parochial land-barons, against whose attitudes Elvo has tested himself, who win the day. The Redemptionist Alliance is defeated, and erjin slavery is ended. But the erjins were never slaves! They were a terrorist army, intent on recapturing the domains of

Koryphon, domains they, in their turn, had stolen from the true natives, the universally despised morphotes.

The doctrine liquidated by the joke is stated by Adelys Lam, of the Mull:

...all ethical systems, all morality, are based upon doctrines and abstract principles by which we test specific cases. If we adopt a pragmatic attitude, we are lost and civilization is lost; morality becomes a matter of expedience or brute force. The edicts of the Mull therefore rest not so much upon exigencies of the moment as upon fundamental theorems. One of these is that title to pre-empted, stolen or sequestered property never becomes valid, whether the lapse of time be two minutes or two hundred years. The flaw in title remains, and reparation, no matter how dilatory, must be made.

The essence of the Redemptionist argument, however, is not that land-baron possession of the domains is illegitimate because of theft, or because the Uldras were the *previous* owners, but that Uldra ownership is intrinsically rightful by reason of *originality*. The joke reveals that, by this very argument, neither windrunners nor even erjins, much less Uldras, ever had rightful possession.

When the pretense to originality is swept away, the Redemptionist claim is revealed as a cover for exactly what it pretends to deplore; naked force. The Uldra thieves are hypocritical when they complain of theft; they denounce a violence of which they are equally guilty and will not renounce.

The ideological battle, however, has another phase. When Gerd Jemasze accuses the Mull of 'hypocrisy', and the impassioned Adelys Lam protests, Gerd replies:

"My remarks were not invective. . .I refer to demonstrable fact. You legislate against our imaginary crimes, and meanwhile you tolerate in Szintarre and across the Retent an offense proscribed everywhere in the Gaeen Reach: slavery. In fact, I suspect that at least several of you are slave-keepers."

Sammatzen pursed his lips. "You refer to the erjins, no doubt. The facts of the matter are unclear."

Adelys Lam declared: "The erjins are not intelligent beings, by the legal definition of the term or by any other. They are clever animals, no more."

"We can demonstrate the opposite, beyond any argument," said Gerd Jemasze. "Before you reproach us for abstract transgressions, you should abate your own very real offenses."

The slave-owning Redemptionists are now ideologically hamstrung, but they were already on unsure ground for they could never argue that things were worse for the treaty tribes, in terms of cosmopolitan values, than on the retent. In Chapter III, arriving at Galligong on the coast of Uaia, Elvo, Schaine, Gerd and Kelse witness a Hilgad 'karoo'. The horrific activities are explained to Elvo by a carefully dead-pan Kelse:

Schaine was displeased by the flavor of the conversation; she did not want Kelse and Gerd Jemasze impinging their prejudices upon Elvo Glissam's still open mind. She said: "The Hilgad aren't representative Uldras; in fact they're pariahs."

Gerd Jemasze said: "They're pariahs because they lack traditional lands and kachembas, not because their customs are unusual."

Schaine started to point out that the remark applied only to the Retent tribes, that Treaty Uldras, such as the Morningswake Aos, were considerably less savage and ruthless; then noticing the sardonic gleam in Gerd Jemasze's eyes, she held her tongue.

In the end Schaine is reconciled to that sardonic gleam, and also able to enjoy possession of the childhood home she loves without compunction.

A STRUCTURE OF STRUCTURES

This title-centered version of the story may be more satisfying, but the story now looks like a row of neatly tumbling dominoes. It also leaves important ideological questions in suspense. What Vance has really done emerges only when we superimpose the readings: the shifting views, the voyages, the personal and political conflicts, the ideologies.

Schaine Madduc, meanwhile grown into a young woman, returns home to find herself embroiled in anti-colonial tensions. We slowly learn that her own childhood actions, an amorous adventure with the future Gray Prince, have helped shaped the new situation. During her years off-planet she has learned cosmopolitan attitudes but retains her natural affections for the things of her childhood; though intellectually a cosmopolitan she is viscerally inhabited by another attitude.

In the cosmopolitan, progressive milieu of geographically insignificant Szintarre, an elite minority pretends to regulate law and morality world-wide. Here Schaine meets Elvo, a cosmopolitan such as she has become. She brings this anti-slavery, anti-colonial militant to her home, Morningswake. This is a metaphor of her inner state; a tension between a lofty and abstract morality (which imposes renunciation) and her natural feelings. The reader can sympathize; unless a special experience has spaired or changed him, he is also a cosmopolitan, and he cannot help appreciating Schaine's love for her wonderful home.

The reader's cosmopolitanism is likely to have been as strong as possible in the 1970s when the book was published. 30 years later this ideological stance has begun to stale. For example, allegations, once absolute, such as that post-colonial failure is a function of colonialism, are no longer obvious. In 1970 any defense of colonialism was extremely rare, but anti-colonial fervor is now blunted. Many of the old colonies are looking to their old colonizers for developmental partnerships. Regimes steeped in anti-colonial ideology are patently the least effective. We have not yet become a society Gerd Jemaszes but we are no longer so uniformly a society of Elvo Glissams.

Schaine is repelled by the brutal, obtuse Gerd, and Vance does nothing to help the reader correct his own impression; he gives us Gerd as Schaine sees him and our attitudes contribute to accepting her view: Gerd is a 'self-serving cynic' who favors unapologetic defense of private property no matter how ignobly obtained. Such a characterization of Gerd's attitude is perhaps extreme, but it is arguable; even if the Uldras did steal the domains from the windrunners, that does not justify theft, particularly land-barons' theft of Uldra domains.

The tension between Elvo and Gerd is most complex and acute in Schaine's heart. But the narrative point of view does not stay with Schaine because Jack Vance is like Virginia Woolf and Evelyn Waugh. Vance offers the reader an experience which he can offer in no other way than through an unprecedented structure. This will be neither 'stream of

consciousness' nor Waugh's tricky transformation of society itself into a sort of *dramatis persona*, though it is reminiscent of both.

Vance begins by showing the reader Gerd through Schaine's eyes. Then, putting the reader in Elvo's place, which is to say that part of Schaine's heart where her mind is, and in fact where we all are—caught between theory and practice, thought and action, spirit and body—he shows us Gerd again; it is though Elvo's own eyes that Vance leads the reader, for himself, to choose Gerd over Elvo, as Schaine does for herself in chapter XI.

This process begins at full intensity in chapter VII when Schaine is left behind at Morningswake and Elvo parts with Gerd for the palga:

Elvo Glissam looked across the car. He was perhaps an inch taller than Gerd Jemasze [. . .] who used no unnecessary flourishes nor any of those idiosyncratic gestures which gave flavor to a personality [. . .] his personality was spare, drab, grim and colorless; he evinced neither dash nor flair nor pungency. Elvo Glissam's own attitude toward the world was optimistic, positive, constructive: Koryphon, indeed the whole of the Gaeen Reach, needed improvement and only through the efforts of well-meaning folk could these changes be effected.

Gerd Jemasze, while sufficiently courteous and considerate, could never be called a sympathetic individual and he certainly viewed the cosmos through a lens of egocentricity. By this same token, Gerd Jemasze was superbly self-assured; the possibility of failure in any undertaking whatever obviously had never crossed his mind, and Elvo felt a twinge of envy or irritation, or even a faint sense of dislike—which he instantly realized to be petty and unworthy. If only Gerd were less arrogant in his unconscious assumptions, less innocent—for Gerd Jemasze's impervious self-confidence after all could be nothing less than naïveté. In hundreds of capabilities he would show to poor advantage indeed. He knew next to nothing of human achievement in the realms of music, mathematics, literature, optics, philosophy. By any ordinary consideration, Gerd Jemasze should feel uneasy and resentful in regard to Elvo Glissam, not the reverse.

By this analytical and self-conscious process Elvo progressively calls into question his attitudes, which eventually collapse. A paragraph on page 142 (*Elvo awoke to find dawn-light burning the upper crags of the Volwodes*) is the last mark of his predominant view. Though his inner states are described on a few further occasions (*Elvo, watching; Elvo suspected; to Elvo's mystification*, etc.), the narrative has abandoned him and we are now shown the world from where we ourselves have migrated: Gerd's perspective. This new position is explicit for the first time on page 144:

. . . the erjin came forward: a magnificent creature as large as any Jemasze had ever seen. . .

Further accounts of Elvo show him deflated. On page 150 we have: *Elvo stood paralyzed*. On page 155 we have:

Jemasze aimed the gun carefully and killed another erjin, but behind came a dozen more, and Elvo cried out in frustration: "Run! It's our only chance! Run!"

Jemasze and Kurgech ignored him. Elvo looked frantically around the landscape, hoping for some miraculous succor.

The apotheosis, or nadir, of this collapse occurs at the end of chapter X:

The three men scrambled up the loose scree to the top, finding an almost flat area fifty feet in diameter. Jemasze and Kurgech immediately threw themselves flat and crawling to the edge began to shoot at the erjins on the plateau below. Elvo crouched low and, bringing forth his own weapon, aimed it but could not bring himself to fire. Who was right and who was wrong? The men had come as interlopers; did they have the right to punish those whose rights they had invaded?

Jemasze noted Elvo's indecision. "What's wrong with your gun?"

"Nothing. Just futility. That's all that's wrong. We're trapped up here; we can't escape. What's one dead erjin more or less?"

"If thirty erjins attack and we kill thirty, then we go free," explained Jemasze. "If we only kill twenty-five, then we are, as you point out, trapped."

"We can't hope to kill all thirty," Elvo muttered.

"I hope to do so."

"Suppose there are more than thirty?"

"I'm not interested in hypotheses," said Jemasze. "I merely want to survive." Meanwhile he aimed and fired his gun to such good effect that the erjins retreated.

'Suppose there are more than thirty?! Elvo's despair and futility is a function of having lost his way in a maze of abstraction. Gerd, as *surly, ostentatiously severe, innately arrogant*, and *rigidly resistant to change* as ever, is in the moment. He, and men like him, stem erjin and Redemptionist aggression, unmask cosmopolitan hypocrisy, and restore

order to the world. To choose, with Schaine, Gerd over Elvo, is to dirty one's hands and come to grips with reality.

It is thanks to Elvo's capacity to learn that we have learned about Gerd. But Gerd, for all his *gaucherie*, is also capable of learning:

Kurgech started to leave the house; Gerd called him back.

"Where are you going?"

Kurgech said soberly: "This is Morningswake Manor and the traditions of your people are strong."

Gerd said, "You and I have been through too much together; if it weren't for you we'd all be dead. What's good enough for me is good enough for you."

Schaine, looking at Gerd Jemasze, felt an almost overwhelming suffusion of warmth; she wanted to laugh and she wanted to cry. Of course, of course! She loved Gerd Jemasze! Through prejudice and incomprehension she had not allowed herself to recognize the fact. Gerd Jemasze was a man of the Alouan; she was Schaine Madduc of Morningswake. Elvo Glissam? No.

Schaine's choice is not forced on the reader. Vance has structured the story so that he lives her growth not vicariously, by identification in her travails, but, if he will, for himself. If Schaine had been kept at center stage the book would have been a sentimental yarn. But it is about larger issues, issues of a particular nature which demand that a reader retain his emotional, and thus his intellectual freedom.

The main issue is not who Schaine loves but the nature of her happiness, and her path to self-reconciliation. Despite the unusual structure we may now see that the focus of the story is sharp. The book's essential adventure is for the reader himself—living that adventure to the full remains impossible for those who will not allow themselves to be led though a formal innovation to a spiritual renewal.

THE IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE

Certain reactions to some of Vance's stories are odd. I am thinking of *The Domains of Koryphon* but also *The Murthe or Throy*. The latter seems to me a typically excellent book,* with more than its share of special delights; why then is it pointedly regarded by several otherwise capable readers as so obviously inferior? Such reactions, I say, are ideologically motivated. Though Vance's attitudes are suave, some of them do not pass. People of a certain ideological temper, nonetheless seduced by Vance, are tempted to regard such stories as *The Domains of Koryphon* as *artistically* unsatisfactory, since the other options are to condemn Vance ideologically, or question their own attitudes—a violation of the prime directive.

Again and again it has been suggested by French readers that *The Domains of Koryphon* was inspired by the war in Algeria. Given the obligatory pro-Algerian, or anti-colonialist view, this eagerness arises from anxiety to stigmatize any pro-colonialist view. Americans likewise persistently claim it is inspired by the history of the American Indian.† Given obligatory disapproval of white domination, this implies anxiety to stigmatize racist views. Vance has repeatedly denied these sources—not by anxiety to escape stigma, but because it is simply a fact that *Domains* is neither a wishful pro-colonialist retelling of French



Preparatory Counter-proof for frontispiece etching of *VIE* volume 28.

* See *Thoughts on Throy*: Cosmopolis#42, page 25

† See Extant 13, page 9, for one example.

history, nor a racist approbation of American history.

In 1998 Damien Dhont asked Vance if the Algerian war inspired the story. Vance replied:

No, it's an abstract idea. I just realized that legal ownership of even the tiniest bit of land—except in the extreme north or completely inhospitable places—stems from an act of violence. You just have to go back far enough. The American Indians complain they were expelled from their land, but they did the same thing to other tribes, and so on, going back to the first settlers who came through the Bering Strait, [who stole it from the saber-toothed tigers!]*

Some of Dhont's other questions were:

"How do you position yourself: left wing or right wing?" "The Domains of Koryphon and Cadwal seem to approve of colonialism. Is this correct?"

"The Murthe seems to be a condemnation of feminism. Is this a correct impression?"

"Can you explain why you were in favor of American intervention in Vietnam?"

Such ideological thought is also rife in Jonathan Strahan's review of *Coup de Grace and Other Stories*;†

"While firmly in Vance's tradition of conservative social commentary—in many of his stories he seems far from impressed with his fellow man. . ."

"The sexual politics underlying *The Murthe* are, like the politics underlying most of the stories collected here, disturbingly conservative and even reactionary."‡

The essential thing about ideological, or activist literary critique is not that it brings to the fore the crusade of light against darkness—its self-perception—but that, being ideological, it is not literary. The painter Caravaggio was a detestable person: a bully, a pedophile, a murderer. He was nonetheless an artistic genius, before whose works lovers of painting as such must perforce incline. But Vance's case is not comparable!

Ideological condemnation of Vance is characteristic of the 20th century situation, a function of our socio-cultural development. Previously the majority was not 'educated', but the knowledge it had was real, consisting of important skills and informations, about, for example, ploughing, sowing and hoeing on a particular terrain, in a particular climate and with a particular tool set. People restricted to knowledge of this type cannot be considered sophisticated, but they can be relied upon, when the situation calls for it, to formulate satisfactory opinions on socially or politically important subjects, guided by healthy attitudes garnered in encounters with reality. The 'educated' folk which society now generates *en masse* are contrastingly unreliable when it comes to such things, despite sophistication. Here I am echoing an idea met frequently in Vance: the Spenglerian, neo-Rousseauian, or Bodissian lament that 'urbanites', for all their special virtues and charms, are notoriously unable to cope with reality when it gets hard. This attitude reflects the message of *Domains*,

* *Slash* #17; October 1998. This interview was conducted by myself, in English, from questions in French devised by Damien Dhont, then translated into French by me, which Dhont corrected. The published English translation is by Patrick Dusoulie. The English version given here is altered by me per my memories; the changes are stylistic only. The saber-toothed tiger part of the reply is from the reply to the following question.

FOR A RELATED IDEOLOGICAL READING, SEE WIKIPEDIA APPENDIX, PAGE 27.

† This review may be read at:

jonathanstrahan.com.au/wp/category/the-jack-vance-treasury/
see thread: 'Coup de Grace reviewed'.

‡ For further examples of politically motivated readings of Vance, see: *Towards Western Unity*, EXTANT#6 (page 5), and: *The Dynamic of Modern Democracy*, EXTANT #13 (page 9).

and it is no mere prejudice in the mind of Jack Vance, or the 'extremist, hard-line right-wing' to which he is assimilated by ideologues—as the following passage from *Commander Tynnot* demonstrates, beyond cavil, to the intelligent:

His last probation officer had been an urbanite, whose instinctive tactic was empathy. Bo found it a simple matter to explain his lapses. The probation officer in turn was cheered by Bo's ability to distinguish between right and wrong, at least verbally.

If something must actually be accomplished, compromise with reality is out; verbal distinctions in particular are worthless. The consistent and horrific failures—economic, hygienic, technological, social—of socialist regimes during the most terrible century of all human history, is the gargantuan example in human history of ideologically driven failure to face reality. Even if the most damning anti-aristocratic, anti-bourgeois allegations are all true, these horrors would not begin to compare with the abysmal inefficacy, not to mention murderousness, of socialist inspired regimes.* So how is it possible so many, particularly the most educated, have remained in a besotted stupor of seduction for so long? Even now, as the enchanted theories stand condemned by horrific heaps of evidence, why do they cling? The reason is this: man, capable of thought and imagination, is capable of elaborating seductive dreams, and then of being drawn into them and losing his way.

Seduction is towards the happiness men seek. Many confuse happiness with pleasure. Many confuse pleasure with gratification. Lust for gratification is a human fundamental. It exists in two basic styles: *tyrannical* and *auto-congratulatory*. The tyrant, exemplified by the 2 year old, wants his way. He will use *any* means to get it. The auto-congratulator is somewhat more mature. He usually does not need to employ force for he is content with a situation which, at minimum, allows him enjoyment of a positive self-opinion, i.e. undisturbed masturbatory auto-stroking, or collective-stroking, of his inner self. Tyrants eliminate those who disturb them, crassly content in a hollow theater of adulation inspired by fear, and solipsistic gratifications. Auto-congratulators, less stern, more aware, use live victims; set aside, marked and branded as avatars of the dark-side, they justify their innate goodness and publicly prove their superiority.

Let us grant that art has political weight, that it is not a realm unto itself. Let us further grant that Vance does indeed approve colonialism and disapprove feminism. Why, even then, label this 'disturbing', a label conferring duty to promulgate critical fatwas? Reacting to Strahan's characterization of *The Murthe*, in the republished *Coup de Grace* review, Steve Sherman made this sharp comment:

Evidently any depiction of the so-called battle of the sexes that does not result equivocally in female victory is now to be considered pro-male. My understanding of the message of *The Murthe* is that neither sex is complete without the other.

Whether Sherman's understanding of *The Murthe* is correct need not detain us; what my readers ought easily to grant is that this amazing story, even if does satire feminism, cannot be taxed with the only thing that really would be disturbing: misogyny.† Sufficient proof of this is in

* Including, naturally, national socialism.

† Though might there not be degrees and types of literary woman-hate, such that even this might not always require fatwafication?

the depiction of the men, who come off poorly. But, on a much higher level, this story goes to the heart of the matter; sexual relations are depicted unblinkingly, in terms of serious struggle both erotic and political, and even if feminine faults are not spared, the feminine argument against swaggering male arrogance and careless domination is given in full—if suavely. If Lorio's ambition to transform men into women—a metaphor for the feminization of society so advanced in the last 30 years—is checked by Calantus, to the extent she stands for *Women* she suffers neither defeat nor humiliation at his hands, and the story ends on a note of tension, a powerfully realistic approximation of equality. But the story also shows sympathy for women which goes beyond this, in particular its reserved and sober presentation of feminine pride and a sympathetic treatment of the humiliations inherent in the feminine condition. Finding this story disturbing is, as Steve Sherman indicates, tantamount to excluding critique of feminism, however measured or just. It is a totalitarian attitude.

Since Vance's view of colonialism, whatever his final opinion, is similarly rich and broad, branding him a reactionary is likewise no comment on Vance, but mere affirmation of an extremists political position which condemns the least degree of non-anti-colonialism.

The consequence for *Domains*, as for *Throy*, and finally for Vance overall, has been relegation to the shadows of lesser artists, like Gulliver tied down by Lilliputians.

The only aspect of this that is of actual literary interest is how Vance deals artistically with social and political questions. I am not talking about his political attitudes as such. These are clear enough; without doing blatant violence to anyone's ideological vocabulary or even their personal allegiances, we can agree that Vance is 'moderately conservative'. As I have pointed out elsewhere, ideologically he is about where the typical Democratic party voter was in the 1950s. I do not mean to suggest Vance was in fact a Democratic voter. I do not know how he voted in the 1950s. I only mean that his attitudes, as expressed to me personally since 1995, and as I understand them from reading his work, seem like this to me. With the democratic party captive to the 60s anti-Viet Nam generation, this type of Democratic voter has become a Republican voter—of that centrist tendency which used to define so much of the American electorate, and to a certain extent still does. Vance has by no means toppled into any of the positions condemned as 'extremist', unless measured on the scale used by the current Democratic leadership, which brands 50% of the American electorate as extremists—if Vance is in this company, and if it is not good, at least it is numerous! Though he did not vote for Gore or Kerry he is not, for example, part of the infamous Christian right.* But how many artists failed to vote for Gore and Kerry? The attitude of the artistic milieu is

* As the writer of this essay is often accused of being. A few decades ago matters were different. Most Democratic voters were church-goers. A Catholic was elected to the American presidency in the 1960s. Today, for many on the left, anyone who declares themselves Catholic is automatically a right-wing reactionary extremist. There may be short-term benefits to such condemnation, but its long-term consequences will be bad for the mullahs of leftism. Refusal to recognize as respectable any but their own views, will end up hastening the overthrow of all they claim to hold most dear. If, on the other hand, they would debate in good faith, and moderate some of their goals—without sacrificing their ideals—aspects of their program would have a greater chance of persistence or success. The marriage amendment may not have gotten far recently, but the long-term tendency is against the left in such regards. Its advocates should be looking to reasonable fall-back positions, rather than pushing ever deeper into hostile territory with a shrinking army.

unbalanced. The Kerry vote was an issue of hysterical alarm among them.*

I have elsewhere discussed how Vance deals with ideological questions. His strategy is to dramatize issues in a model designed to explicate it, without ducking any aspect or difficulty. *Wyst*, commonly regarded as a critique of egalitarianism, is in fact balanced by a critique of the opposite of egalitarianism: the Hobbesian state of nature. The second critique inevitably softens the first; bad as egalitarianism may be, in some ways it is better than its opposite. In *Cadwal*, accused of being an apology of a police state, Vance not only shows the plight of the Yips sympathetically (without scamping their faults), but dodges nothing which might call into question the Agent's victory, including violence, hypocrisy and nepotism. That victory goes to Araminta Station's victory may justly be regarded as a sign of Vance's approbation. Since the lowest common denominator of difference between Araminta Station and its enemies is government by law, so Vance's approbation is ultimately for that. Such approval, however, is clearly not synonymous with blindness—at least for readers free enough of those ideological blinkers which hamper some from seeing beyond it.

In *Domains* Vance formulates the issues in the most challenging and revealing way, hiding from nothing. In particular he shows the colonial situation in its full human reality. To do this he avoids extremes, so that the flavor of the inherent tensions can develop—a contrast to 'situation is the message' literature which makes facile pictures of virtuous slaves oppressed by terpidinous masters.

The treaty tribes, though by no means abject slaves, are subject to a degree of domination and humiliation. The Outkers provide some schooling and medicine, and offer them menial or farming employments. Uldras are still socially and technologically inferior, and are excluded from the great halls. A path of assimilation into Outker society, probably requiring generations, may be open. Few Uldras choose it, not only because they would have to renounce their own culture (like Schaine renouncing Morningswake), but for another important reason: racism. Jorjol, who hovers near assimilation, motivated by his social ambitions has his nose cropped, a situation eloquent of Olanje attitudes.

But aspects of this racism cannot be simply condemned as mindless prejudice:

...many Uldras resented the simple fact of inferior status. On a subconscious and unacknowledged level but perhaps a source of equal exacerbation was the land-barons' disinclination for the Uldra females. A certain amount of rape or seduction, while resented, might have been accepted as a sordid but inevitable adjunct to the conquest. In point of fact, while the Uldra men, with their tall nervous physiques, gray skins dyed ultramarine blue and aquiline features, were in general personable, the same could not be said for the women. The girls, squat and fat, with their scalps shaved bald against the onslaught of vermin, lacked charm. As they matured, they retained their heavy hips and short legs, but elongated their torsos, arms and faces. The typically long Uldra nose became a drooping icicle; the gray skins became muddy; the hair, verminous or not, was allowed to grow into a heavy orange nimbus. Toward these Uldra girls and women the Outker land-barons maintained a scrupulously correct indifference, which eventually, by a paradoxical reverse effect, came to be regarded by the Uldras as a humiliation and an insult.

* See Extant #9, page 18, 'View from America'; I am a privileged witness to this class, since it happens to be my own.

Erotic disinclination, even based on racial characteristics, is not equivalent to racism even if outwardly identical in some respects, and contributing to the real thing. In the penultimate scene between Schaine and Jorjol, Vance delicately introduces this aspect:

Schaine glanced down at the long blue hand, with the long fingers and black fingernails.

Though gratified by Gerd's broad-mindedness with regard to Kurgech, Schaine herself is not free of certain attitudes—even if they were not operative when she was younger, less worldly, and infatuated with Jorjol's dash. The rejection, here shown to have a racist element, must deepen Jorjol's trauma, and their final scene is impassioned, and violent:

Jorjol spoke with great earnestness. "Listen, Schaine! Come away with me! My dear girl Schaine! You're not one of these pompous tyrants who calls himself a land-baron! You're a free soul, so come with me now and be free! We will live as happy as birds, with the best of everything the world affords! You don't belong here; you know that as well as I do!"

"You're totally and absolutely wrong, Jorjol! This is my home and I love it dearly!"

"But you love me more! Tell me so, my dearest Schaine!"

"I don't love you, not in the slightest. In fact, I love someone else."

"Who? Elvo Glissam?"

"Of course not!"

"Then it must be Gerd Jemasze! Tell me! Is it he?"

Though Jorjol is a minor character, and though, through the larger roll given to Kurgech, we see other aspects of the Uldra personality and situation, in Jorjol Vance gives a sympathetic portrait of a suffering spirit at the agonizing crux of the colonial situation. It is an acute version of what many Uldras must suffer.

Readers must make a certain effort to see this fully, because Vance simultaneously shows another side: Jorjol making himself odious by imposing himself physically, sexually and emotionally. On the other hand Vance smooths Jorjol's path for, at this point, neither Schaine nor the reader knows how Jorjol's alleged brotherly defense of Kelse was a fraud. From yet another perspective we can see how Jorjol justifies his treachery; Kelse, who ought to have been his equal, was destined to become his master.

Being an orphan introduced to the intimacy of Morningswake was no fault of Jorjol's; had his personality been different perhaps Uther Maddoc's acts and attitudes would have proved successful, but Schaine's passion had other ingredients than Jorjol's fraud. That only catalyzed warm feelings built up over years. At the beginning of story, reflecting on her past, Schaine sees it in the monumental forms which childhood has for youth; in this view Jorjol is massive:

Schaine had been the 'ragtag tomboy', nonetheless charming and pretty—so much went without saying—just as Kelse had always been proud and handsome and Muffin always dashing and brave and gay. Such attributes were implicit in the very fabric of existence. . .

This passage is proceeded by a more general reflection, in which Schaine's new maturity recognizes troubling aspects:

Concentric to Uther Madduc had been herself and Kelse; in an orbit less stable, sometimes near, sometimes far, was Muffin. In general the roles were uncomplicated, except again in the case of Muffin whose status was often ambiguous.

Vance does not exonerate Jorjol, but such delicately woven considerations in his favor force themselves upon the alert reader. Whatever his misbehavior and crimes, Jorjol's qualities and virtues are real, and his feelings, even if unjustified, are understandable.

The land-barons are more than fastidious; their attitudes can be blatantly racist. Vance is explicit in chapter 1:

Kelse muttered to Schaine: "Trust Aunt Val to be fashionable; in Olanje no party is complete without an Uldra or two."

Schaine retorted: "Why shouldn't Uldras be invited to parties? They're human."

"Approximately human. Their *weldewiste* is alien to ours. They've drifted quite a distance on the evolutionary floe."

This mirror of famous pseudo-scientific justifications for cruel and hateful attitudes, is not, however, the worst of it, for such elucubrations are little, I say, compared to Jorjol's socio-erotic frustration.

Kurgech, though a more reasonable person, is no less colorful than Jorjol:

Elvo marveled to watch the deftness of his touch. Suddenly he saw Kurgech in a new light: not the semi-barbarian with peculiar customs and odd garments, but a proud man of many talents. With embarrassment Elvo recalled his previously half-condescending attitude toward Kurgech—and this in spite of the fact that he was a member of the Redemptionist League!

The racism to be deplored among the land-barons is alive, in other forms, among the sophisticates. Elvo is honest enough to recognize this in himself, which is greatly to his credit. Uldra culture, which has unpalatable aspects, has others also; Kurgech's self-respect is not unjustified. Kurgech does not need to tear up the submission treaties and bed Outker women to feel at ease with the world, but he did not have Jorjol's fragile beginnings, was not subject to such temptations. Schaine's cosmopolitanism increased her sympathy for Uldra frustration, but cosmopolitanism is a two edged sword, as we see when Elvo, the urban paragon, reveals a sorry side:

"Father meant well. He gave Muffin a great deal, up to a carefully defined limit. Muffin naturally resented the limit more than he appreciated the generosity. And why not? Put yourself in his place: half part of the family, half a Blue ragamuffin who ate his meals in the kitchen. He was allowed to look at the cake and even taste it, but never eat any of it."

Elvo Glissam ventured a facetious quip: "And you were the cake?—I hope not!"

Schaine raised her eyebrows and looked away with pointed coolness.

This crude act condemns Elvo in Schaine's eyes; we can now imagine how she will adopt some of her brother's stiff attitude towards their aunt Valtrina's parties, where such remarks cannot be resented, and where Szintarre style racism goes un-noted as it is condemned in others—except by Elvo, whose eyes were bravely opened in Uaia. But in the great hall of Morningswake, around which the events swirled,

touching not only Schaine's virginity, but tearing off Kelse's arm and leg, killing their father, and biting deep into Jorjol's soul, Elvo is again revealed as spiritually shallow, as on the pyramid of rotten gneiss where Gerd and Kurgech staved off the erjins without his help. But Schaine did not witness that, and Gerd did not tell. Schaine's rejection of Elvo is profound, and the implicit criticism of the urbanized soul is severe. The ideologues of Olanje are not merely illogical and blind, they are spiritually corrupt and weak.

But *The Domains of Koryphon* is not about racism and colonialism. It is about the problem of the legitimacy of ownership of that life-essential: land. Since land has been robbed, this implies (at best) colonialism, and since humans go by tribes, this implies (at worst) racism. But Vance does not treat these things directly; they are not the point of the book. The message seems to be that theft—an act of unprovoked violence—being the ultimate basis of land ownership, this ownership is 'legitimized' only by sheer capacity to maintain it. Put another way: might makes right. This is not a correct interpretation.

Vance, as always, is discreet and allusive. With no emphasis† he shows the treaty tribes fighting on the side of the land-barons. Given the rout of the air-cars, it seems possible the land-barons would have suffered defeat without this cooperation. Despite theft, racism and humiliation, and like the *harki* in the Algerian war (native Algerians who sided with the French, and out-numbered the rebels), and unless we declare that such a class is by definition corrupt or stupid, the very least that can be said is that they see more positive in their situation than negative.

The *harki* engagement was a serious affair; when the French withdrew they were massacred in the thousands, including wives and children—the 20th century's first massive sample of communist facilitated jihadist xheng.* Vance takes explicit note of the Algerian situation in *The Man in the Cage*†, after having toured that country, so it is unlikely he was unfamiliar with the *harki* fate when he wrote *Domains*, but it is only one of many such circumstances alert persons were aware of during the decolonization era.

I make these remarks to emphasize that treaty-tribe contribution to land-baron victory is no gratuitous assumption. Grateful natives may not always line up submissively to guarantee colonial success, though there is no particular lack of such examples in history—i.e. the engagement of colonial troops in the French army of WW1. However, once again, I think it fair to say it indicates approval of land-baron victory, as well as belief in at least the possibility of progressive attitudes among both colonists and locals. But, even if this is an illusion—as the ideologues, at best, would claim—it still does not indicate weak or wishful thinking. The relationship between Uther Maddoc and Jorjol is certainly one aspect of Outker-Uldra relations.

‡ From chapter XV:

The land-barons of the Ulaian domains assembled an expeditionary force of three thousand men, including contingents from the Uldra tribes of the Treaty Lands.
And:

For a second time the sky-army was mobilized and dispatched to the Manganese Cliffs. . . where a party of a hundred Aos mounted on criptids were conducting a cautious holding operation against the xheng-crazed warriors of the Retent.

* Xheng. . . a dark and peculiar emotion. . . most succinctly be translated horror-lust: a generalized desire to inflict torments and agonies, a fervent dedication to the achievement of sadistic excesses.

The Domains of Koryphon

† See COSMOPOLIS #52: The Artist as Engineer; a Meditation on The Man in the Cage.

After her father's death, Schaine, in some amazement herself, informs Elvo that her racist brother has claimed that ". . . *Father's closest friend has been Kurgech!*" (chapter V), and later, to her gratification, Gerd invites Kurgech into the great hall. But these are not the only indication of positive ties between land-barons and treaty-tribesmen. In chapter I Schaine asks Kelse:

"How are all the Aos? Is Zamina still matriarch?"

"Yes, she's still alive. Last week they shifted camp into Dead Rat Gulch. Kurgech dropped by the manor and I told him you were coming home. He said you'd get in less trouble on Tanquil."

"Wretched old creature! What did he mean by that?"

"I don't believe he meant anything. He was merely 'tasting the future'."

Schaine sipped the fruit juice and looked out over the sea.

"Kurgech is a mountebank. He can't foresee or draw fates or cold-eye or transmit thoughts any better than I can."

Are such implications of friendly relations absurd? They do not, after all, contradict a certain simultaneous distance, even suspicion, frustration and humiliation. These are also rife in racially and economically homogenous societies. Such indications of warmth are therefore no white-wash of colonialism; not only are they balanced by negative indications, they accord with human nature. They echo, for example, relations between the aristocratic plantation owners and their black slaves, notoriously a mix of domestic, and even erotic intimacy, with domineering paternalism, itself running a gamut from helpful kindness to brutality and murder. I am by no means endorsing the sly antebellum apology of slavery, but the light coloring of so many Americans of Negro descent, as well as the more cordial race relations notoriously persistent in the south, indicate something. If unfamiliarity breeds suspicion, and familiarity breeds contempt, the latter is nonetheless familiar.

That certain colonial situations are as bad as slavery does not mean all are, and even if one disapproves colonization as such, and the north African French colonies in particular, aspects of it—advantages now enjoyed by Morocco stemming from its colonial past (such as the Tangers-Fez railroad, built with French money, by my wife's uncle, in the time of Governor General Lyautey), or the ongoing post-colonial Algerian catastrophe—might be considered. But such consideration is disallowed by the ideologues. For them all shades of colonialism are black. Even suggesting there might be some grey is, at best, 'disturbing'.

With such attitudes serious people of good will should have no truck; they contribute to the suffering of post-colonial Algerians, bludgeoned by an ideological hammer constantly pounding reality into funny shapes. A few months ago, and nearly half a century after Algerian independence, a famous French socialist* qualified a group of *harki* as 'sub-men' because they support of the current non-socialist

* This was Georges Frêche, president of a French 'region'. (See video, at: resiliencetv.fr) The French cultural elite continues to celebrate Algerian independence and condemn colonialism in an activist and inquisitorial manner. 'France 2', the main public station, recently broadcast a documentary about the Trotskyites and their anti-colonial efforts for Algerian independence, including manufacture and smuggling of weapons, propaganda and terrorism, and a plot to destabilize the French economy with forged money. The Algerians being mass-murdered today by the same islamists who took over, with this Trotskyite help, half a century ago, may not share France 2's enthusiasm. N.B. This documentary would appear to be part of a re-entry strategy for Lionel Jospin, ex-prime minister and failed socialist presidential candidate in the 2002, to the 2007 campaign. Jospin's clandestine Trotskyism was revealed shortly prior to the election, weakening him in public opinion.

majority. Having committed the error of choosing the French side, and, even now, failing to endorse socialism, in his mind they are fascist *unter-menchen* denunciation targets.

Furthermore—and more to the point given the argument of *Domains*—the French colonials, however bad we imagine them, were sweethearts compared to the 8th century Arab invaders, with their naked imperialism, and shameless slaughters, enslavements and forced conversions. The French were missionaries, as much concentrated on education and medicine as religion, and there were no forced conversions. Muslims were respected—or at least considered to enhance the exotic atmosphere so relished by artists of the time, like Delacroix, Dupark or Dunsany.

Though mingled with disdain, distaste and rivalry, the land-baron attitude towards Uldra culture is not dissimilar. They may regard it with paternalistic fastidiousness but they do not see it as pathetic. Many Uldra customs can be respected, and Uldra sacred places are not to be violated.

"Have you ever explored a kachemba?"

Kelse shook his head. "Never. They'd kill me."

"How would they know?"

"They'd know."

Schaine said: "Since we don't invite them into our drawing rooms, they don't ask us into their kachembas."

"Tit for tat, so to speak."

"And again," said Kelse, "everyone is well pleased."

Granted; this is not the 'mutual respect' of which multicultural relativists dream. Neither is it genocidal hatred. The cooperative relationship between land-barons and treaty tribes is realistic.

This brings us to Vance's deeper and unstated argument: treaty tribe cooperation with the land-barons, which tips the scales in the latter's favor, is a function of land-baron moral justice—or at worst it is a correct interpretation by the treaty tribes of their best interests.

In chapter V Kelse reminds his sister:

... We hold Morningswake not through the forbearance of others, but because we are strong enough to protect what is ours. . .

But the physical aspect of this strength is not enough; its moral aspects are decisive.

The *harkis* were on the losing side not because France was weaker but because it had secretly renounced *l'Algerie Française*. The French national Algerians (the *pieds noirs*, sometimes 3d generation), disgusted and traumatized, had to quit their homes and business, their activities and relations, to cross the Mediterranean. This catastrophe was all the more bewildering in that France had won the battle—in no small part thanks to the *harki*. De Gaulle wanted to 'leave with pride' but French military supremacy—like the American equivalent in Viet Nam—meant nothing once the army left; mass slaughter of 'traitors' began as soon as possible. Algeria, once prosperous and well organized, has not yet stopped sinking into ruin.

The proof that the French, and the land-barons, exceptions apart, were benevolent and progressive is that they earned this allegiance of most of their subjects; here is the fundamental legitimacy of such 'ownership', which thus becomes a stewardship.* The crucial difference between French Algeria and the domains of Koryphon is therefore

* The land-barons make the case for this legitimacy, in chapter XIV, in reply to the requisitory of Erris Sammatzen of the Mull. (Note that they also claim the right of self-determination, a right which has recently created a gaggle of new countries

not that the land-barons were strong where the French were weak, but that the former were determined where the latter were not. The French, unlike the land-barons, no longer believed in their right of possession but, to the extent this loss of faith was based on Redemptionist principles, it was, as *Domains* reveals, illusory.

Vance's point—to analyze it in the manner of Elvo's analysis of Gerd's speech in chapter VII†—is that Algeria was French not only because the French were determined it should be but because their power to maintain possession was based on positive relations with the land and local tribes. ('Algeria' did not exist before France created it.)

It seems to me—quite apart from my personal opinions—that it should be possible to disapprove colonialism on principle, and therefore approve Algerian independence (however obtained and whatever its failures), without falling into an extreme view of French colonizers as brutal slavers addicted to exploitation, torture and murder. Many who actually lived in French Algeria, the *pieds noirs* and the *harki*, tell a different story, which is obliterated to sustain an extreme view.

The French, had they been willing, could have retained Algeria—as the Americans could have maintained South Vietnam free of communism—not merely because they were strong in themselves, but because, to put it in the bluntest terms, rather than hated they were loved. What the French lacked, in the face of both respectable reclamations, but also ideological condemnations and obfuscations, was neither possibility nor legitimacy, but will.

This, in unambiguous terms, is the message of *The Domains of Koryphon*. It may be completed by looking at other situations, such as in Tibet today, where, presently, China's overwhelming strength and iron will hopelessly outweigh all other considerations; the illuminating aspect for us is the feebleness of western elite complaint about the colonial misdeeds of this communist bully.

in the world, most recently Montenegro, which voted separation from Serbia under European Union supervision.):

Erris Sammatzen spoke now in a slow and meaningful voice. "We cannot and will not tolerate the recalcitrance of a few hundred stubborn men and women who wish to retain aristocratic perquisites to which they are not entitled. . ."

Dm. Joris replied. . . : "I point out that the option of self-determination is the inherent right of any community, no matter how small, provided that it conforms to the basic charter of the Çaeon Reach. We adhere to these principles, and we claim this right. I now wish to anticipate your claim that the rights of the domain tribes are curtailed. To the contrary. The factors which contribute to what they consider an optimum life have never been more favorable. Our dams and flood-control projects guarantee them year-round water for themselves and their herds. When they need money to buy imported articles, they are able to take temporary or permanent employment, as they wish. Their freedom of movement is absolute, except upon the few acres immediately contiguous to the domain halls, so that in effect, there is dual occupancy of the land, to our mutual satisfaction and benefit. We exploit no one; we exert authority only in a protective sense. We provide medical assistance; we occasionally exert police powers, though not often, inasmuch as the tribes usually administer their own justice.

†He now reflected that he had never heard Gerd Jemasze voice an opinion one way or another on the matter of erjin enslavement. "What of yourself? What do you feel about the business?"

Gerd Jemasze considered a moment or two. "Personally, I wouldn't care to be a slave." He stopped talking and after a moment Elvo saw that he intended to express no further opinion—perhaps because he had formed none. Then, frowning at his own insensitivity, Elvo corrected this thinking. Gerd Jemasze had a subtle way of implying his point of view, and it would appear that he had expressed something like: "Offhand, the situation seems dirty and disreputable, but since we know so little about the total picture, I am reserving final judgment. As for the anguish of the Olanje Labor Guilds and the hurt feelings of the Society for the Emancipation of the Erjins, I can hardly take them seriously." Elvo grinned. Such, translated into the language of Villa Mirasol, were Gerd Jemasze's opinions.

CODA

It remains only to remind ourselves what a memorable book this is. Famous for atmospheres, Vance never got it better. The voyage of the land-yawl over the sarai, its ill-assorted passengers on their strange missions, is among the most unforgettable of his many voyages, and the land-yawl itself the most wonderful of all his wonderful conveyances.

Like many of the stories, it is also rife with echoes from others:

PORTS OF CALL

The air smelled as Schaine remembered: fragrant with the essence of leaves and flowers. Down from the dark green juba trees hung strands of scarlet blossoms; sunlight seeped through the foliage to spatter patterns of pink and black on Kharanotis Avenue. (chapter I)

CADWAL

"The charter is now circulating around the domains," said Kelse. "If we get general approval, and I believe we shall, then, ipso facto, we become a political unit." (chapter VI)

THE LAST CASTLE

He gave me leave to examine his cannon: a marvellous implement, and I wondered who had crafted so fine a weapon. Filisent could tell me little. The weapon, with its intricate scrolling and amazing engravements, was an heirloom, reached down father to son over years beyond memory; it might well have arrived with that long forgotten first exploration of Koryphon; who knows? (chapter VI)

THE BOOK OF DREAMS

Gerd Jemasze pointed down to where three enormous gray beasts wallowed in a mudhole. One stood erect and shambled ashore, to stare vacuously up at the sky-car. (chapter VII)

It likewise offers a full complement of memorable phrases:

The Srenki are few; in all the Palga they number perhaps only twenty; it can be well understood how ghastly and deep within them runs the cloacal seep. (chapter VI)

. . . the cook darted them a severe glance and seizing a cutlass began to dice a parsnip. (chapter VII)

Into the chamber came a young woman, tall and slender, with a face impassive as that of a somnambulist. Elvo, always on the alert for odd human variants, was instantly fascinated. With any degree of animation this young woman might have manifested a most unusual beauty, comprising the languor of a nenuphar and the elegance of some swift white winter beast. (chapter VII)

Moffamides stared into the fire with eyes like cusps of polished flint. He made no move when Kurgech bound his ankles and wrists, then with Jemasze's help tossed him up onto the deck of the yawl like a sack of beans. (chapter IX)

. . . Moffamides displayed anxiety tantamount to sheer funk. (chapter X)

FROM THE PEN OF...

Former Cosmopolis Literary Supplement contributor TIM STRETTON fills us in on his latest doing: good news for those, numerous among us, who savour his work.

Readers of EXTANT have in the past been treated to Paul Rhoads' enthusiastic reviews of my novels *The Zael Inheritance* and *Dragonchaser*. The sceptical reader may feel that opinions so favourable must be in the nature of hyperbole, or even that an author commits a vulgarity by referring to them. To the first point, I can only respond by suggesting validation through purchase and reading of the novels in question; to the second, that modesty, false or otherwise, is not a quality a writer can afford.

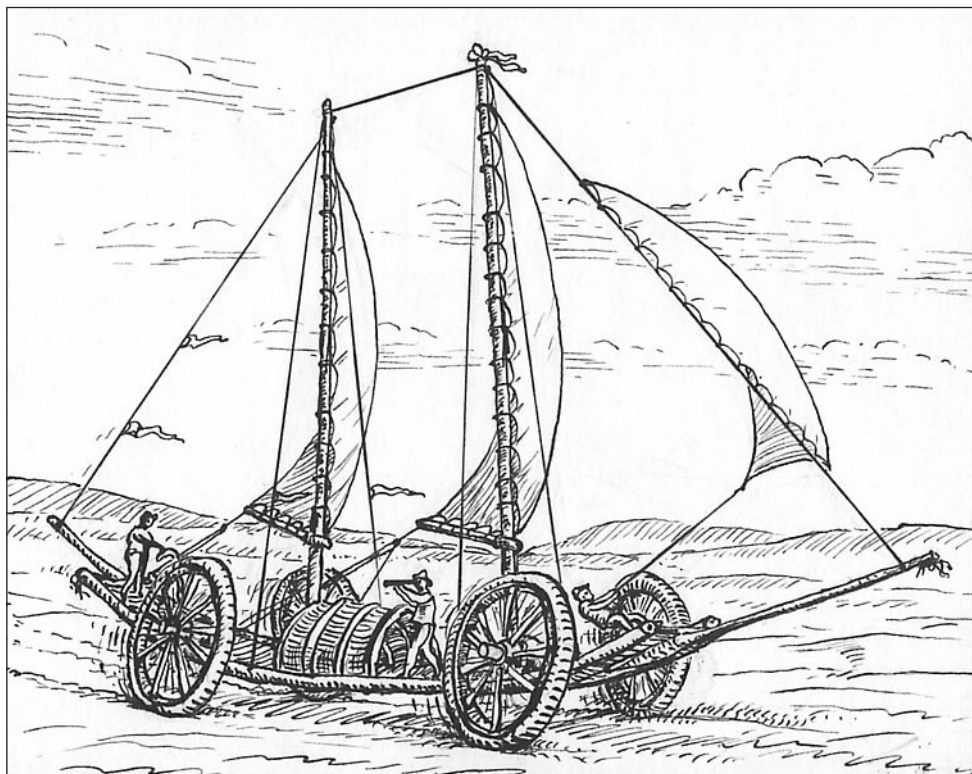
My royalty statements would suggest that there is a small—but clearly discerning—number of readers, some of them EXTANT subscribers, who have read and possibly enjoyed my work. Those who do not fall into this category may skip ahead to the next article, saving themselves both time and scorn.

Readers who do follow my work may be interested to learn that I am at work on a third novel, provisionally entitled *The Dog of the North*. I finished the first draft a few weeks ago; it is now fermenting in my unconscious, ready for the work on a second draft which must soon begin. The story is set in Mondia, the same continent which provided the setting for *Dragonchaser*, but several hundred years earlier, and far to the north. My website:

DRAGONCHASER.NET

has various excerpts of work in progress, but readers of EXTANT may enjoy the following exclusive excerpt.

To place the reader: Arren is a young man of talent and humble birth, Lady Siedra is his patron's daughter, and



Lady Cerisa their well-born but impoverished tutor. In the episode below they set out on a literary heritage trail:

FROM: THE DOG OF THE NORTH

by Tim Stretton

The Molo was a tall lighthouse on the end of the spit which marked one boundary of the Bay of Glount. It was from here that Eleanora had cast herself into the waves at the end of *The Masque of Eleanora and Louison*, on learning that her father had treacherously slain her lover.

"Imagine!" cried Lady Cerisa as they climbed aboard the cariolo which was to take them to the seafront. "We shall see the very spot where the tragedy occurred! We shall all sense the emanations, the very presence of doom—even you, Arren, although by and large you are insensitive to such matters."

"I was under the impression, my lady, that the Masque was a work of fiction."

"Arren, you are so literal-minded," said Cerisa with that air of disappointed melancholy she had made her own. "The bard Noevart has invested the tale with his own imaginings, adding his own exquisite sensibility to events, but who can doubt the eternal verities of his tale?"

Arren was little the wiser. Was the story true or not? Lady Cerisa had been teaching them history and literature for the past three years, but at times her grasp of the distinction between the two seemed imperfect.

"What Lady Cerisa means," said Siedra, "is that in seeing the Molo we will gain a greater appreciation of the story Noevart has given us."

Arren felt that they were likely to see little more than a lighthouse, but decided it was best to keep his own counsel.

The Molo lay outside of the city walls and the cariolo deposited them some way from their destination, still inside the town.

"We are not yet at the Molo," said Lady Cerisa.

"This is as close as a cariolo will take you, my lady," said the coachman. "You would not thank me for juddering your arses over the track between here and the Molo."

Siedra sniggered as Cerisa crew back from the affront. "Come, Cerisa, it will be an adventure. Surely Eleanora herself walked to the Molo."

Cerisa assented with poor grace and the trio alighted from the cariolo. The streets were crowded by the wall-gate. Evidently some kind of market was in progress. Arren was mindful of Coppercake's strictures and resolved to keep the ladies away from the depredations of grasping merchants.

The inhabitants of Glount, with their olive skins and grey eyes, would have been pleasing to look on were it not for a certain superciliousness in their bearing. They bore themselves with a fastidious sense of their own worth in garments which tended towards the luxurious. From a fried food stall came the smell of sausages, reminding Arren that he had skimmed breakfast. Lady Cerisa would clearly regard sausages as beneath her dignity, and since he was in any event disinclined to haggle with the merchants, Arren resolved to go hungry.

Once they left the city through the gate the crowds immediately thinned. The wind whipped in off the sea, leaving perky white wavelets in their train, also finding a route under Arren's cloak and shirt to the skin beneath.

Siedra shivered and leaned into him a little. Such intimacy was unlike her, but it was cold . . .

The road down the spit towards the Molo became increasingly rutted. Neither Siedra nor Cerisa had footwear fully appropriate for the purpose, and Siedra began to grow fretful.

"How much longer?" she complained. "The Masque did not mention this infernal wind, and neither did Eleanora appear to risk turning her ankle with every stride."

Lady Cerisa beamed. "Does this not add to your conception of her tragic destiny? Can you not imagine her rushing to the Molo, desperate to warn Louison he had been betrayed, only to be slowed by the couch grass, grasping with its envious strands?"

"Louison could look to his own rescue were it down to me," grumbled Siedra. "She would have been better advised not to have trusted her father in the first place. It should have been obvious to a child that he would kill Louison."

"You have no poetry," said Lady Cerisa. "Come, step out now! Ouch! Oh! Arren, my ankle is broken!"

Arren slowed his pace and looked to where Lady Cerisa had fallen to the ground amidst the tussocks. He very much doubted that her injury was serious.

"Oh!" she wailed. "Oh, what misfortune! The pain!"

Arren had no desire to examine her thick ankles at close quarters but saw no other way of assessing her injury. "Lie back," he said curtly. "I will need to scrutinise for myself."

"Siedra! Hold my hand, dear Siedra!"

Siedra removed her look of bored disdain and limply gave her hand to Cerisa as Arren palpated the ankle to sounds of outrage. He rapidly concluded there was no serious damage, although convincing Lady Cerisa might not be straightforward.

He stood up. "You must wait here awhile, my lady. I will take Siedra with me to fetch help."

"No! Siedra must remain with me! What if ruffians approach? Those fishermen look coarse fellows."

"My lady, if ruffians are intent upon mischief, Siedra will not be the most effectual protector. She is Lord Thaum's daughter, and I must protect her at all costs, even at a theoretical risk to your own dignity."

"Siedra! Do not leave me amidst the dunes!"

"Come now," said Arren. "Stout heart is called for. We shall only be an hour, or at most two. Say three to be absolutely safe. In such a romantic locale the time will surely pass quickly."

"I find the pain is beginning to pass," said Cerisa with a doleful wince. "Help me up, and I think I may be able to hobble."

"You surprise me," muttered Siedra.

"If you are truly sure, my lady," said Arren, and with some difficulty levered her to her feet.

From the quay wandered one of the 'coarse fellows' Lady Cerisa had so abominated.

"Sir, Mesdames, may I be of assistance? I am Delbourg."

"Thank you," said Lady Cerisa, bridling. "I stumbled but am now recovered."

"Ah!" said Delbourg with a smile. "The accents of Croad! You are perhaps visiting the Molo?"

Lady Cerisa looked carefully at the man, whose address was rather better than one might expect from a mere fisherman.

"Yes, indeed we are," she said. "How much further?"

Delbourg shrugged. "A few hundred yards only, but the ground is uneven . . ."

Lady Cerisa looked downcast; Arren felt rather more hopeful.

"What if I were to take you on the Glaucicus, my boat?" asked Delbourg. "Even with my crewmen aboard, there would be room for us all to sail out into the bay. You would see the Molo from a most unusual angle, and have a day to remember."

"You are too kind!" exclaimed Lady Cerisa. "Siedra, we are in luck!"

Siedra smiled weakly.

"A moment, sir," said Arren. "What would your tariff be?" He was mindful of Coppercake's warnings.

Delbourg raised his hands. "The amount would be purely nominal. I lose a certain amount of fishing time; shall we say a silver florin?"

Do not part with a single coin. Arren remembered Coppercake's injunction. Delbourg seemed to sense his hesitation.

"The folk of Glount have an undeserved reputation for avarice," he said with a wide smile. "Shall we say that you pay nothing in advance? We will complete our tour on the Glaucicus. If you are satisfied you will pay me a silver florin – and maybe a small gratuity! – but if you are unmoved you need pay nothing. I leave the matter to your own honour. What do you say, sir? I see from your cloak and sword that despite your youth you are a seasoned man of good judgement. Will you not climb aboard?"

"Come, Arren," said Lady Cerisa. "The fellow clearly means well, and we need pay nothing if we are not content; and once again I feel my ankle begin to throb."

Arren was mistrustful but could see no dignified escape. "Very well," he said. "Let us travel on the Glaucicus for one silver florin."

Delbourg's crewmates helped Lady Cerisa aboard with efficiency if little ceremony; Siedra was treated with rather more ostentatious consideration, while Arren was left to clamber over the boards as he might.

"Cast off!" called Delbourg. "Let us make for the Molo!"

To Arren's eye, the Molo seemed no more than a few hundred yards distant, but Delbourg's helmsman set off at a seemingly indirect angle and the destination loomed further away before it hove back into view.

"Must we take such a circuitous route?" he asked.

Delbourg dismissed the objection with an easy gesture. "The currents of the bay are perplexing to the tyro," he said. "Lubo has sailed these waters for twenty years; he can sniff the ebbs and flows as one tomcat sniffs the spray of another. You must all sit back and enjoy the view of Glount from the sea."

Arren had to admit that the city, rising up towards the hills, was a spectacular sight. On top of the walls he could pick out the patrols of the Cavalieres. Lady Cerisa appeared to be enjoying the ride less; to a close scrutiny her complexion revealed a greenish tint. Siedra, meanwhile, showed every sign of enjoying the ride.

Eventually Lubo turned the Glaucicus back towards the Molo, which was certainly an impressive structure, reaching tall and spare into the sky, delineating the location of the city for sailors approaching.

Lady Cerisa struggled to her feet. "Look, Siedra! You can scarcely see to the top, but that is where Eleanora cast herself down onto the rocks below. How cruel, how envious they are! Can you not hear them calling out to her?"

Arren could hear no such thing; he was more concerned that the envious rocks would take a dislike to Glaucicus' hull, although Lubo appeared more than competent in the management of the boat. Siedra, too, evinced little interest in the matter.

"Can we not go closer, good Delbourg?" asked Lady Cerisa. "I would see better the balcony from where Eleanora fell."

Delbourg jerked his head towards Lubo, who ostentatiously swung the tiller, although Glaucicus appeared to move no closer to the rocks. The third crewman pulled on a rope controlling the sail; Glaucicus lurched to the side, and Lady Cerisa sprawled into Siedra with little dignity.

"Tasolle!" called Delbourg. "Work the sail with more finesse!"

Tasolle gave no visible acknowledgement. Lady Cerisa said: "I think we have seen enough. Those of us with sympathetic dispositions will have absorbed the essence of the place. Delbourg, kindly return us to the shore!"

Delbourg nodded. "You have seen the Molo in all the detail you require," he said. "I feel sure that we have earned our fee."

Arren nodded and reached into his pouch and brought forth a silver florin. "Thank you, Delbourg. It seems I was wrong to suspect all the folk of Glount of avarice."

Delbourg looked at the florin with a chagrined expression. "Be that as it may, your humour is poorly defined."

"Humour?"

"You appear to be presenting this single florin as our fee. As a jest it is misconceived."

"That was our arrangement," said Arren with a flush. "One florin. Lady Cerisa, Siedra: you will confirm this."

"Young sir, do not try to make liars of the ladies! Let me present my reckoning: one silver florin each for use of the boat, making three florins. A further florin each for the expert commentary—"

"—what 'commentary'?—"

"—bringing the grand total to six florins. Let us add a further three florins hazard money as a result of Lady Cerisa's demand to bring the Glaucicus imprudently close to the rocks: nine florins. Add in a single florin as a gratuity and we arrive at a round ten florins."

"Monstrous!" stormed Lady Cerisa. "No such sum will be payable: in fact, no sum at all will be payable. You may return us to the shore on the instant!"

"There is much you fail to understand, my lady," said Delbourg with a bland smile. "There is a concept known as 'bargaining position': essentially it states that in any transaction, one party will hold the other at a disadvantage. In this situation, you are on a boat which I control. Your return to the land, put bluntly, is entirely at my whim."

"Not so," said Arren, grim of face but flush with embarrassment at being played for such a fool. "You must reckon with my sword, which wreaks its own kind of advantage."

Delbourg displayed no concern. "Once you have killed not only me but Lubo and Tasolle, how do you propose to return to the shore?"

"You will find the matter of academic interest only," said Arren in a level tone.

"In addition," said Delbourg, "you will observe that Tasolle is up the mast, out of your reach, and has his bow trained on your heart. Both he and I would regret being forced to use it."

Siedra spoke up at last. "All the while we are on your boat,

you cannot go about your business. In a sense, you are as much our prisoners as we are yours."

Arren looked at her in admiration, for the point was well made.

Delbourg smilingly shook his head. "You will notice that we are heading not for the shore, but for the small island ahead. It harbours no noxious beasts, but you will not wish to remain there for too long a period. The most convenient outcome for us all is for you to pay over my ten florins. This is business, and we can all depart content."

Lady Cerisa and Siedra looked at Arren. He shrugged; he could see no alternative. He reached into his pouch and counted out the coins. Delbourg gave an ironic bow. "You will see that Lubo has already set our course for the shore."

"Do something, Arren!" cried Lady Cerisa. "This rogue has made a mock of us! Some escort you have proved to be. Lord Thaumie will hear of this, in full detail!"

Siedra had been sitting quietly on her wooden bench. Now she rose to face Lady Cerisa. "You stupid, prating, selfish ninny! You have dragged us along on your ludicrous errand that was of interest to no-one but yourself. You insisted on coming aboard Glauticus against all sense and advice, and now you have the audacity to blame Arren! Be sure that if you mention this to my father, all aspects of the affair will be laid bare."

"Oh! To be spoken to in such a way! I have nurtured a viper! Viator Sleafch was right: you should all have been compelled to attend the Viatory daily, instead of wasting your time learning mathematics and thaumaturgy." She sat down heavily on her bench and said nothing else until they arrived at the wharf.

"We have reached our destination," said Delbourg. "I hope that, if you are lighter in coin, you are least richer in wisdom and experience. Ten florins is cheap at the price. Tasolle, what are you thinking of? Lay on a plank for the ladies and the boy."

Arren gritted his teeth. Retribution would soon find Delbourg.

The grizzled Lubo assisted Siedra and Lady Cerisa down the gangplank with an exaggerated delicacy which in other circumstances Arren might have found amusing. As he stepped onto the plank he stumbled and fell against Delbourg, who laughed with a patronising bonhomie. "Careful there, lad! Don't let that sword pull you off balance."

Arren shot him a look of detestation and walked slowly towards the ladies. Cerisa pointedly looked away; Siedra gave him a half-smile. Without a backwards glance he led the way back to the city gates.

"Cheer up, Arren," said Siedra. "Events have not gone to plan, but at least I have had not had to spend the day with Trevarre or his brother. It is hard to know which of them is viler. Ten florins of my father's money is not too high a price."

Arren's gaze flicked up to her face. "Keep walking," he said, "in fact, speed up, and do not look back."

"Arren?"

"Lady Cerisa, you too must step out."

"Hmph. Have a care for my ankle, you oaf."

"Bugger your ankle, my lady. Dawdle or step out, the choice is yours."

From behind them came a call. "Hoy! Wait up there!"

"The gate – run!" called Arren, taking Siedra's arm. Lady Cerisa bolted with seemingly no care for the condition of her ankle.

Fortunately they were nearly at the gate, and while Arren spoke to the watchmen, Lady Cerisa and Siedra slipped through. He looked back to see Delbourg slinking away back to the Glauticus.

"Would you care to explain yourself?" asked Lady Cerisa. "And to account for your language."

Arren reached under his cloak and brought forth a purse. "This belonged to Delbourg: I know it contains at least ten florins, and I hope rather more."

"Arren!" cried Siedra in delight.

"A pickpocket as well as a knave!" thundered Lady Cerisa. "I should call the constable, and tell Lord Thaumie."

"Do as you please, my lady. No doubt every listener will give you the attention you merit. Siedra, shall we count what we have?"

And as he tipped the coins out on to her palm he gave thanks for those days in Croad market when he and Eilla had vied to see who could take the most plunder. He was, for today at least, King of the Raiders.*



VDH IN VANCIAN MODE

In his June 28 article, *A Summer Reflection on Why America Works*, on his Private Pages (victorhanson.com), Victor Davis Hanson observes holiday makers at a *crowded central Sierra Nevada lake*, and finds it a *good example of how well the United States works as a cohesive society despite radically different public tastes*. Reading these excerpts others may find his observations as vancian as I do:

... The lake sailors were clearly upscale. In their high-tech accoutrements — stylish wetsuits and blazons, Volvo and Lexus SUVs with sleek boat trailers, bright-colored sails — they gave off a certain air of aristocratic taste. There was not a gas-guzzling Yukon or Winnebago among the bunch.

From the evidence of their license plates, many seemed to have driven from the northern coast rather than from the nearby San Joaquin Valley below. What little I heard of their politics seemed hyper-liberal...

The power-boaters were a different sort altogether. The vast majority was not made up of lawyers, architects, doctors, and financiers. Instead, from their shop talk, they appeared to be more independent businessmen, salesmen, and salaried workers. And if they were in theory less able to invest in their lake craft, they nevertheless somehow spent far more on muscle boats, jet-skis, and motored houseboats that all dwarfed the sailboats on the dock.

I suppose America's easy credit and growing economy mean that often the middle class can enjoy leisure and material things every bit as much as those wealthier — and often in a noisier and more ostentatious manner. Chevy Tahoes and enormous dual-cabbed, 4x4 pick-ups pulled their custom painted trailers that had risqué names emblazoned at angles

* *The Dog of the North* is not yet available to buy, but if this has whetted your appetite, why not hunt down my other works on Amazon, or:

DRAGONCHASER.NET/SHOP.HTML ?

on the sides. From listening to bits and pieces of their shore conversation, I would imagine that most of the gasoline crowd was about as representative of the red-state Central Valley as the yachtsmen were of our blue California coast.

The two disparate groups of bikers offered the same counter-intuitive contrasts . . . there was not one ounce of fat on any of these cyclists that I saw, many of them long in the tooth and graying in their fifties. These admirable riders felt that life was too good not to savor by letting themselves go. Like the sailors — but unlike the power boaters — they looked sleek on their sophisticated toys . . . Their featherweight bikes of carbon fiber were as high-tech as the lightweight composite sailboats on the lake below. Most bike riders wore skin-tight bright green and yellow spandex that reminded me of the sails of the Hobies and Catamarans out on the water.

Not so the Harley riders. All were in jeans with various accoutrements of black leather. Many wore Darth Vader-like black helmets. A few looked even more sinister in headgear and goggles that resembled those of Wehrmacht soldiers. Most had ample guts and tattoos, and their machines were as loud and smoky as the bicycles were quiet and clean. If the hurried cyclists lounged momentarily outside the lodge with sports drinks and mineral water, the bikers lumbered into the log-cabin saloon for a long afternoon . . .

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WIKIPEDIA APPENDIX

Up until the beginning of July the wikipedia page on Jack Vance featured a link to the Gaean Reach slander-board labeled 'Jack Vance discussion board'. As EXTANT readers are surely aware, this board was founded by malcontents banned from the VanceBBS for their patent misdeeds. For over a year it featured a forum devoted to driving the VIE editor-in-chief out of the project, an effort simultaneously carried on by every other means possible, including letters to COSMOPOLIS—which, being published, should say something about the project's exemplary openness. Such 'discussion of Jack Vance' being almost exclusively a cover for slanders of the VIE and its managers, what good it is to users of a wikipedia Jack Vance page is a mystery I cannot penetrate. Until July, however, it had proved impossible to remove this link. The same problem existed for a link to the page of 'Wannek' foolishness, which accuses Alun Hughes, head of Textual Integrity, of manipulating Jack Vance. This matter has been covered fully in COSMOPOLIS. As of this writing both links are being kept off the board, but obscure forces are actively discontent.

Also featured is an entry entitled: 'VIE: Crucial for Properly Appreciating Vance?', in which we read:

. . .I've only read one of the VIE books, that of "Maske: Thaery," and discovered the VIE volunteers restored at least one error that the original editor had corrected prior to publication of the book in the 1970s. It's possible, of course, that the VIE volunteers have instead improved rather than injured other Vance texts. But the claim in Wikipedia, that one needs the VIE to "properly appreciate Vance" is obviously absurd. Most (if not all) of Vance's fans developed an appreciation for his writing long before the VIE was published. Irrespective of the VIE's merits, the works of Vance published by others are still well worth reading. In the case of "Maske: Thaery," the original is superior to the VIE edition.

The VIE may have made a mistake in *Maske:Thaery* but it is impossible to tell since the poster gives no details, reducing his allegation to gratuitous assertion. Furthermore, how does this anonymous poster know anything about the change in question other than that it is one? Does he have access to the VIE sources of correction, which included holograph corrections to a manuscript? The issue, whatever it is, may be as mis-judged by this poster as by the original editor—in many cases we saw editors struggling to 'fix' where there was no problem. It is not the VIE's fault if readers are not literate. Even assuming such a VIE error exists, to show that the VIE version of *Maske:Thaery* is inferior to this 'original', certainly all the problems corrected in this text should be taken into account!

I have no idea where, on the bloated and largely amateurish Jack Vance wikipedia page, a claim about the VIE's importance to understanding Vance is made, but it is clearly correct. Obviously Vance can be enjoyed greatly without the VIE, but to be 'properly appreciated', in the strict sense of the term, one needs to read all his work, as he wrote it. This is impossible, even for the most assiduous collector, without the VIE.

Complaint about the VIE was seconded by another poster, who gave this argument:

Some of Vance's own titles for his works, such as 'Clarges' for 'To Live Forever', and 'Cugel the Clever' for 'Eyes of the Overworld', are, quite frankly, bland and unappealing. Despite popular belief out there, most publishing house editors actually know what they're doing. 'Eyes of the Overworld' is a beautifully evocative title. . .

But whether or not Vance's own titles are 'better' than the published titles is not the question. An author cannot be 'properly appreciated', for good or ill, if the text under consideration is not his. If VIE use of original titles causes certain people to revise their opinion of Vance downward, it is, again, the VIE which offers this otherwise unavailable opportunity for 'proper appreciation'. And since the facing-title page of each VIE volume includes all published titles for each text, it is certainly not the VIE's fault if anyone misses out on these alleged improvements.

Finally, returning to the ideological problem treated in the *Domains* article, we may take note of this reading of that book by a WIKIPEDIA editor:

Vance wrote two novels that can be regarded as "political." . . .The second, *The Gray Prince*, depicts the endless regress of grievances that can come into play in the context of ethnic liberation movements. This book has been accused of political incorrectness, because its villain, apparently based on Vance's fellow Oakland resident, the late Huey Newton of the Black Panthers, is a non-white leader of a tribal people on a planet where white ranchers control the land. But the villain is a nuanced character, the "joke" turns out to be on both settlers and revolutionaries, and the villain lives to fight another day.

After misreading the story this analyst lamely tries to let Vance off, but succeeds only in aggravating his case, as slyly pro-Newton (yay!) or, at worst, ideologically neutral (bad, but not *that* bad).



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