
COSMOPOLIS

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It Really Happened!

Report from Marcon 38

by David B. Williams

I never believed it could really happen. No way was Jack Vance, my literary idol for 40 years, actually going to show up, at the age of 86, as scheduled, at a public event only 180 miles from my home.

During the week before Marcon 38 in Columbus, Ohio, May 23-25, I checked the convention's webpage every day, waiting to see what would happen to thwart my chance to meet Jack Vance. One of the other guests of honor had already cancelled. Jack would catch a bad cold, the Big One would buckle the runways in Oakland, something would divert the path of destiny.

But the day arrived. An unavoidable appointment trapped me at the office until 5 p.m. The Marcon opening ceremonies were scheduled for 8:30 that evening, and it's a three and a half hour drive from Indianapolis to Columbus. The guests of honor would be introduced at the opening ceremonies, so that would be the first chance to see Jack Vance. You can imagine how difficult it was to keep from exceeding the speed limit—but it was the eve of Memorial Day weekend and the state troopers were out in force.

I pulled into the parking lot at 8:29 and rushed into the hotel, seeking the convention registration area because I would need a badge to get into the session. But I actually didn't need a badge to see Jack Vance. As I crossed the lounge area toward the function rooms, I recognized Jack and Norma sitting at a small table enjoying drinks with just one other person.

I had forgotten the time change between Indianapolis and Columbus. Indy stays on Eastern Standard Time all year while the rest of the zone goes on Daylight Saving Time. It wasn't 8:30 in Columbus, it was 9:30, and the opening ceremonies were over. At least that meant there was no line at registration. I got my badge in about 90 seconds and hurried back to the lounge. There were Jack and Norma and their one-man entourage, sitting all by their lonesome.

This was an unsurpassed opportunity. I'm a rather diffident fellow, but at the risk of being branded a

schmeltzer*, I strode to the table and asked, "May I introduce myself?"

I was welcomed and urged to sit down as if they had been waiting for me. Jack and Norma's companion turned out to be Bill Schultz, old friend of the Vances from his California days who's now at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. He was on hand in the role of guide dog, he later explained.

Jack opened the conversation with "David Williams, that's a Welsh name, isn't it?" and it progressed from there, ricocheting from naming conventions in various cultures to historic highways to astronomy when I mentioned that I was an amateur astronomer. Jack proved to be informed on stellar interferometry, adaptive optics, and other topics in contemporary astronomy. He said later that he reads (that is, listens to) mostly non-fiction—science, geography, history.

I mentioned that my specialty is eclipsing binary stars, and Bill asked whether there was anything new in that field, which led to the calibration of the Cepheid distance scale and the expansion of the universe. I said something about some new concept in cosmology and Bill leaned back with a look of dismay. "Have I stepped in it?" I asked.

It turns out that Jack Vance is a skeptic regarding current thinking in cosmology, and he was off and running, questioning the reality or implications of red shifts, dark matter, and the cosmic background radiation. Bill valiantly defended physics as we know it; red-shifted photons can't be 'tired light' because photons would have to interact with something in order to lose energy, and we haven't detected anything like that. But finally I deflected the entire discussion when I said to Jack: "I endorse the theory you put forward in *Morreion*, where the magicians traveled to the edge of the universe and found a planet being shaved off as it passed the edge." This tickled Jack, who laughingly declaimed, "Nothing threatens *Morreion*!"

Jack Vance likes good food and drink and sports a goodly paunch. During the conversation an amusing situation developed. Jack tends to lean back in his chair, and the front of his shirt pulled loose from his waistband, exposing an inch or two of tummy. Norma noticed this and coaxed him to tuck the shirt back in. I had to smile. Jack was drinking a Heineken. At such a moment, what true Vancean wouldn't recall Cugel's encounter with the mermelants, who asked: "Do you carry beer? We are beer drinkers of noble repute and show our bellies to all!"

Our chat went on for an hour. I was surprised that no one came up to shake hands or ask for an autograph. But the average conventioner is in the 15-25 age range and mostly oriented to visual media and gaming, too young

and too oblivious to literary SF to realize what an honor it is to have Jack Vance as a guest of honor. Well, I wasn't complaining.

About 10:30 we said good night and parted. As I made my way through the late-evening convention crowd, I had to reflect that there was one benefit to Jack's loss of sight. He couldn't see all the Imperial Troopers and Klingons who were sporting about the hotel, the sort of sci-fi thing for which he has expressed disdain. About 30 feet from where we had been seated, I passed a couple clad in black leather. She was bent over, and he was flailing her broad rump with a lash.

The next morning, I was inspecting the convention schedule, a large matrix of panel topics and participants. I couldn't find a mention of Jack Vance anywhere, until I noticed a line at the bottom announcing an autographing session that afternoon. Surely that couldn't be all. I searched again, and finally noticed 'Kaffeeklatsches with Jack Vance' as the fourth footnote at the bottom of the Friday schedule, amid listings of hours for the art show, dealers room, etc. I was jolted upright when I read that the first session began at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, and it was now 11:20. Signups for these events were required, so I raced to the registration area. Seven of the eight slots had been taken, I signed in as number 8 and hurried away in search of the hotel restaurant, this kaffeeklatsch actually being a lunch.

I arrived just a minute or two late. Most seats at the long table were filled. Jack was seated on the corner at one end, Norma and Bill on the corners at the other end, the chairs at the head and foot of the table remained empty. I nobly went down to the far end to sit with Norma and Bill. I had enjoyed my moment with Jack and could give someone else the chance to take the seat next to him (wouldn't you do the same?). But nobody else came in, and the waiter suggested that I move to the open place at the other end. Okay, I thought, and accepted the suggestion. For the next two hours I sat at Jack's right hand, wondering whether I should buy a lottery ticket that day; it seemed that luck refused to fail me that weekend.

During lunch I interjected an occasional comment, but I didn't need to ask questions, what with the other Vance fans taking turns. Here's what I learned:

— The mystery novels *Isle of Peril* as by 'Alan Wade' and *Take My Face* as by 'Peter Held', published by Mystery House in 1957, were unsold manuscripts that were finally taken by this publisher as a package for a trifling payment, \$100 each (Jack said there were three manuscripts, but I only find these two in his bibliography).

— Jack believes that Jack Gaughan's illustrations for *The Dragon Masters* in *Galaxy* really caught the readers' attention. "I take my hat off to Jack Gaughan for his magnificent illustrations," he said. He thinks the illos made the difference for his first Hugo Award winner.

*Schmeltzer: one who attempts to ingratiate himself, or mingle, with individuals of a social class superior to his own.—*Night Lamp*

— During this and later encounters, I noted how Jack pronounced names from his stories. Unspiek, Baron Bodissey, is pronounced UN-speek, BAH-di-see. The emphasis in Morreion is on the middle syllable: more-EYE-un. Pao is pronounced PAY-oh, two syllables with emphasis on the first. Jack pronounces Tschai as 'shay' but accepts 'chy' as a reasonable choice. Ridolph is RY-dolf. Cugel of course rhymes with bugle, and the emphasis in Lurulu is on the first syllable, LOO-roo-loo.

— Jack is fond of the *Cugel* books, kind of likes the *Cadwal* trilogy, thinks the *Lyonesse* set is pretty well done, and likes *Ports of Call*.

— *Lurulu* is "just about ready" to go to Tor, his publisher.

— Jack sees himself as a frustrated musician. "Music means a great deal to me," he said. But he couldn't make it as a musician, one reason being his fingers, which aren't agile enough.

— Favorite places from his world travels are Ireland, the Dordogne region in France, Positano in Italy before it became a big resort area, and Tahiti was great until he and Norma contracted a tropical fever and had to scuttle their plan to continue around the world.

— Jack met Norma in late 1945 or early 1946. He had left the Merchant Marine and was working as a carpenter. He was standing around a building site one day when he chanced to look over the fence. On the porch next door, he saw a young woman, 18-19 years old, who was petting a little cat. He thought she looked wonderful, the prettiest girl he'd ever seen. So "I made her acquaintance, one thing led to another, and we got married" in August 1946.

— Jack concedes that he doesn't write for the lowest common denominator. "I don't have any stupid fans."

— Jack is as fond of the epigraphs he wrote before each chapter of the *Demon Princes* novels as his fans are. *Galaxy* editor Fred Pohl, however, didn't want to include them in the magazine's serial installments.

When everyone else had taken their turn, I took a shot. Would you do something for me? I asked. In all your books the heroines are these waifs who are mistaken for boys until more closely examined. If you write another book (and here he interjected, "I am"), how about a heroine or hero's special other who's tall, buxom, with broad hips and voluptuous thighs? This suggestion was emphatically rejected. "I don't like fat-ass Marilyn Monroe types!" he said very forcefully. I thought he might thump the table with his fist. So much for my one attempt at influencing the works of Jack Vance.

When most of the guests left, Jack wanted to stay for a beer. So two or three of us joined him. In this relaxed setting, I essayed an arcane question, a little apprehensively because I know he often dislikes discussing his stories in detail (and, in fairness, he often can't recall what he intended when he was writing a story 30 or 40

years ago). The question had come up a couple of times on the Jack Vance discussion board: What was the relationship between Pnume, Phung, and nighthounds?

The Pnume and Phung resemble each other physically. Nighthound eggs were deposited on the walls of a Phung cave. Did he intend these three creatures to be different phases in the life cycle of the same species? Or are the Phung 'boisterous Pnume'? No, he replied, they are different indigenous species, the Phung a subspecies of Pnume perhaps, but not different forms of the same species. (Perhaps a parallel example would be humans, chimps, and gorillas or African wild dogs, jackals, and hyenas, all similar in form but different species.)

The autograph session was well attended, with a long line of Vance fans toting satchels of books, including at least one VIE set. I saw some nice specimens, the Avalon editions of *Big Planet* and *Languages of Pao*, the Doubleday hardcover *Emphyrio*, etc. Jack signed and signed, the half-hour session was extended to an hour and finally had to be terminated so he could get to the next kaffeeklatsch (where yet more books were signed).

At the second kaffeeklatsch, Jack talked a bit about his writing style, his quest to construct rhythmically pleasing "or not unpleasing" sentences. "The secret is not to stop the reader's eye in the middle of a sentence. The reader should not be aware he is reading."

A participant raised the issue of Jack's gift for creating neologisms. Everyone liked 'chife'. But Jack was rather shocked when I informed him that 'nuncupatory' is in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (unabridged). Its obsolete meaning is to name or declare. Jack thought he had made it up and certainly uses it differently.

There was more discourse about his travels and his favorite places. That got Jack into another of his favorite topics, ocean sailing. When John II was 19 or 20, they acquired a 45-foot ketch, the plan being to sail the South Pacific. But Jack wasn't able to raise the cash reserve needed to finance the expedition, John needed to start college, and the static costs of owning the boat were high. They managed to sail up to Oregon and back, but Jack saw that this was one dream that wasn't going to happen and finally sold the boat (to Norma's relief).

While the topic was sailing, I noted that many of Jack's book-jacket bios have stated that he was torpedoed twice in the Merchant Marine, and I asked if these had been serious incidents. But Jack said no, he had never been torpedoed and didn't know how the story got started. He began to say something about other threatening situations but abruptly closed the topic: "Well, I don't want to tell any war stories."

There was also some discussion of his friends Poul Anderson and Frank Herbert. Jack seemed to recall Anderson with particular fondness. He also told how one day Frank Herbert enthusiastically described a story idea about a planet that was all sand and had giant worms and

things, and asked Jack what he thought. Jack wasn't particularly impressed but nodded and made polite noises. Later, after *Dune* was published and became a huge success, Jack was surprised and amused when Frank told interviewers that it was all thanks to Jack Vance's encouragement.

Jack said that he had never really cared for Frank Herbert's stories because so many of them contained an element of mysticism. He noted that in his own stories he is always sardonic about priests and religions in general. (His own religion seems to be single-malt Scotch, to which he is devoted and reverential.)

The last kaffeeklatsch convened Sunday morning at 11:30. Talk of food, drink, and travel led Jack to state his philosophy of life: "The only basic reason for being alive is pursuit of romance—I don't know a better term—the ambition to do all the wonderful things" life has to offer.

Someone asked him how or why he started writing science fiction, and Jack began describing his childhood, when he was an omnivorous reader and very bright. He entered high school at age 11 and knew more about almost everything than anyone around him. Among the many things he read were *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, so his interest in fantastic literature began in childhood.

Later, after working for several years at any job he could find, he was able to enroll at the University of California with a small scholarship. He took an English class to fulfill course requirements. Each week the students had to turn in a composition, and one week Jack decided to write a science fiction story. After the teacher had read the submissions, he told the class that there were some excellent stories in the batch but added "we also have a *piece* of science fiction" in a scornful tone. This would have been circa 1937-38 and represents Jack's first SF manuscript rejection.

Jack also discussed the interest he and Norma developed in ceramics (this would have been around 1948-49). They opened a shop called 'Ceramic Center' to do firing and sell supplies. They didn't do very well, however, and closed the business. But ceramics remained one of Jack's enduring interests. Later, when they had room at their home in the Oakland hills, he installed a gas kiln and wheel and continued to pursue "this absolutely fascinating set of crafts."

The Vances acquired the Oakland hills home as "three lots and a little shack" very cheaply in 1954. As a qualified carpenter, Jack remodeled and expanded the house over the next 30 years, "throwing the old house out the windows" as he replaced old with new. Ultimately, one wall in the bathroom was all that remained of the original cottage. Today, after almost 50 years of residency, the Vances no longer live in the celebrated Oakland hills house; son John had a family

and a small house, while Jack and Norma were living alone in the big house, so not long ago they traded.

Jack was asked about his world travels again. At least in the early years, he and Norma traveled cheaply. When Jack managed to get a couple of thousand dollars ahead, they would set off and vagabond around Europe, Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific, returning home with an empty bank account. He knew his career had turned a corner when, after the third or fourth trip, he arrived home to discover that he had more money in the bank than when he started.

Most of Jack's stories from the 1950s to 1970s were written entirely or in part in foreign lands. I asked whether he found it difficult to write in strange surroundings. No, he said, he began in the Merchant Marine, sitting on deck with a clipboard on his knee, and that's what he continued to do—whether camping in South Africa, living on a houseboat in Kashmir, or sitting under palm trees in Tahiti.

I also asked why so many characters in Jack Vance stories are such penny pinchers and tightwads. Rhialto complains about the extravagant compensation he must provide to the Minuscules who are repairing his waypost—two ounces of honey and similar quantities of other provender for a single week's work! After *The Killing Machine*, Gersen has an income of about 1 million SVU per day. But on the planet Moudervelt, he declines to pay the initially requested sum for the landing fee, the hotel room, even a piddling 2 SVU for a local travel guide. The way Jack smiled, you could tell he enjoys writing these bargaining scenes. They may be a form of wish fulfillment, because he conceded that he isn't an adept bargainer himself.

While talking about travel, Jack admitted to utilitarian familiarity with French, German, and Spanish, knowledge that renewed itself each time he and Norma stayed awhile in one of these language areas. I pointed out that he also had some knowledge of Japanese, which he had studied in an Army Intelligence program at the university in the first year or two of the war. Jack said that at one time he knew a thousand characters of Japanese and was very good at writing it, but the language was too idiomatic and he never became fluent in spoken Japanese.

The subject of languages also led me to point out that, while Jack's stories are premised on the infinite mutability of human cultures, he doesn't allow it for languages. Jack said that he adopts several conventions in order to make his stories possible. One is a universal language, since it would be impractical to tell planetary or interstellar stories if language was handled realistically. Another convention is to ignore the fact that alien proteins would be highly poisonous. He allows for adjustment of atmospheric pressure when landing on a new planet, and taking medications to thwart native pathogens, but ignores the protein problem.

We could no longer ignore the time problem. The session had lasted almost two hours, and it was just about time to go. Jack signed several more stacks of books, and departing guests took the opportunity to tell him how much pleasure his work had given them. I shook the hand that wrote *The Dying Earth* and *Emphyrio* (literally — Jack is right handed and wrote all his manuscripts longhand until his eyes failed). Then I turned to Norma. “I hope I’m not the first Jack Vance fan to say thank you for everything you’ve done over the years as enabler and unindicted co-conspirator, typing all those manuscripts and making trips like this possible,” and Jack agreed, saying that no one realized the true scope of Norma’s contributions to his work.

Then it was hail and farewell. During the three and a half hour drive back to Indianapolis, I mentally relived the whole experience. I also thought of all the questions I forgot to ask. Oh well. Finuka had smiled, the rite had not been scamped, I had met Jack Vance. It really happened!



VIE Pagination Errors

by Susan Yong

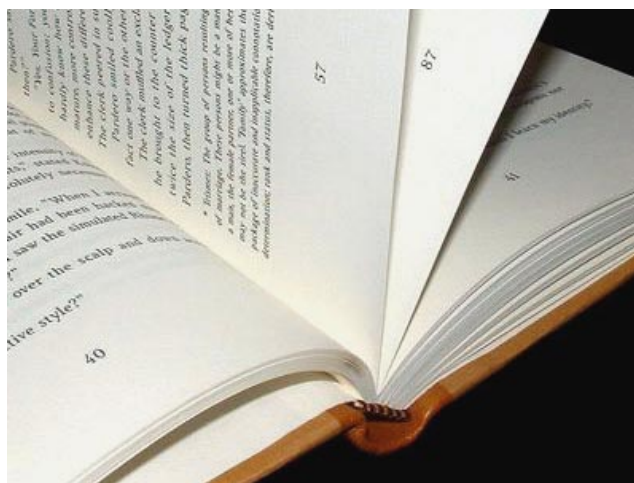
A few weeks after the first Wave One crates were delivered, a number of pagination errors were reported. When it was concluded that this problem may be widespread, an e-mail message was sent to all subscribers asking them “to flip through the pages in ALL your books to see if all is in order.”

This procedure has, unfortunately but expectedly, turned up more pagination errors. But it has also resulted in some e-mails from subscribers questioning the need for the procedure, most asking if we could supply them with a list of known errors to check?

Well, here is a partial list of errors reported to date:

- Vol 1: . . . 39/40 <57/58,87/88> 41/42 . . . **
- Vol 4: . . . 3/4 <21/22,51/52> 5/6 . . . **
- . . . 195/196 <213/214,243/244> 197/198 . . . **
- . . . 547/548 <565/566,blank/blank> 549/550 . . . **
- Vol 6: . . . 5/6 <23/24,53/54> 7/8 . . . **
- . . . 133/134 <151/152,181/182> 135/136 . . . **
- . . . 165/166 <183/184,213/214> 167/168 . . . **
- Vol 9: . . . 99/100 <117/118,147/148> 101/102 . . . **
- . . . 131/132 <149/150,179/180> 133/134 . . . **
- . . . 163/164 <181/182,211/212> 165/166 . . . **
- Vol 12: . . . 195/196 <213/214,243/244> 197/198 . . . **
- Vol 30: . . . 39/40 <57/58,87/88> 41/42 . . . **

The **s indicate that the <inserted> pages are missing where they belong.



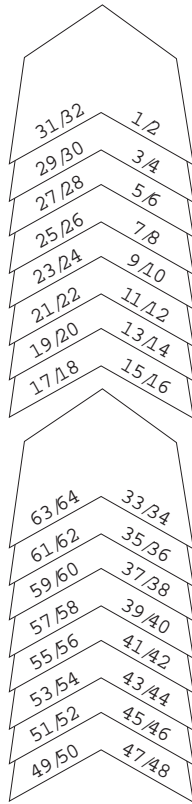
However, I post this list with some reservations: subscribers should not misinterpret this as a list of specific places to check. Rather, the observation to take away from this list is that the errors occur sporadically across many different volumes. Therefore, there is no way to guarantee detection of these errors short of flipping through all pages of all volumes, with eyes focused on the page numbers to make sure they are all in order.

The astute reader will discern a pattern to the page displacements: there is always a 17-page differential between the last ‘good’ page number and the first ‘bad’ page number, and a 31-page differential between the two ‘middle’ bad pages. One might wonder how this came about. With some knowledge of book binding techniques, and a careful inspection of the volumes at these locations, a diagnosis of the problem becomes apparent.

The ‘block’ of the book comprises stacks of sewn signatures, each signature containing (up to) eight sheets folded into 16 flaps or 32 pages of text. The illustration (see page 6) shows stacks of paper making up two consecutive signatures, the first signature folding into pages 1-32, and the second 33-64. Notice that if the top sheet of the lower stack is erroneously sewn into the top stack, you’ll get the following page pattern: 15/16 <33/34,63/64> 17/18, which precisely matches the pattern of errors reported!

So, it is a systematic but sporadic error: it happens the same way, but not always at the same place. This happens because the VIE is printed using Print-on-Demand technology, which allows for our small print run. While we have spoken to the printers about this problem, the total number of errors reported (relative to the number of books printed) is still miniscule, and below our expected error rate (we have a small print overrun sufficient to replace the defective books reported). The problem is, therefore, not of frequency, but of error-detection.

In conclusion: while we fully recognize that checking every page of every volume is time consuming, it is the



only practical way to winkle out these errors (as effective a slave-driver as Patrick may be, I doubt he'll be able to get his slaves to flip through 11,000 volumes in Milan). We therefore ask for your cooperation.

P.S. From the book collectors' perspective, some of these defects may in fact be more valuable than 'perfect' copies. So if you do find an error, you naturally have an option to not have it replaced.



Work Tsar Status Report

as of May 25, 2003
by Joel Riedesel

WAVE 1

Need any more be said. 22 volumes of the VIE are in subscribers' hands.

WAVE 2

Time lingers toward summer. Is Alun H. out there? Please contact me with a valid e-mail address if so! We still have *The Stark* in special handling. We continue to

need to clarify the front matter that has some incomplete pictures.

DD-ing work is complete. We have *The Stark* in special handling for artwork and then we have six texts in Techno-Proof.

There are 27 texts in TI, 8 of which are not assigned. Only one text is in Board Review. Eight texts are in Implementation and six texts are in Security Check.

Composition has been doing an amazing job in Wave 2. Texts undergo far fewer revisions this time around. There are currently three texts in initial composition while nine texts are in various stages of Composition Review.

We are either keeping the pipeline moving smoothly or post-proofers are still in somewhat of a lull. There are three texts in Post-proof and nine texts in Post-proof composition updating and review.

Last month there were seven texts that were ready for volume composition. This month there are ten. At the rate of three a month we should be completed by May of 2005. Certainly we will begin accelerating soon!

Last month:

- + Pre-TI: 7 texts
- + In-TI: 27 texts
- + Post-TI: 41 texts
- + Volume Ready: 7 texts

This month:

- + Pre-TI: 6 texts (732%)
- + In-TI: 27 texts (32.93%)
- + Post-TI: 39 texts (47.56%)
- + Volume Ready: 10 texts (12.2%)

From Chuck King:

On May 21, the VIE reached another milestone as the first full volume in Wave 2 achieved the status 'ready for volume composition'. With the completion of the final RTF-DIFF pass on *Maske:Thaery*, Volume 33 becomes the first of Wave 2 to have had its entire contents successfully get all the way through TI, Composition, CRT, Post-Proofing, and RTF-DIFF.

Congratulations to all involved! One down, 21 more to go.

(Note: I assume Vol. 33's 'done' status will have to be confirmed by others, but the final diff pass was completed with no issues remaining, and my understanding is, that means it's GM ready.)

Chuck King

RTF-DIFF team manager



From the E-i-C

by Paul Rhoads

Wave 1 VIE Volunteer Inoculation

Now that we have 22 VIE books in our hands the time has come to recover a pre-‘VIE Textual Integrity’ view of, and pleasure in, the stories of Jack Vance. For the texts in these 22 volumes, the process of correction, the search for and eradication of errors, is at an end. The battles about how best to present Vance, in what font, with what flourishes or lack thereof, illustrated or not, with indent on first paragraph or no, covers that are flexible or hard, and so on and on, and the passions they occasionally sparked, are now behind us, as such. Looking over the books I am constantly tempted to be unsatisfied with this or that detail; such and such should have, could have been better! But now that this collective work is done, now that the books have taken on an independent reality no longer subject to our will-to-their-existence, it must be admitted, even by such compulsive perfectionists as myself, that the time has come to change our mode of thinking in regard to them.

Of course already some errata have come to light. Eventually these will be published in an errata sheet, and will probably be made public in *COSMOPOLIS* before that. Suan Yong has even set up a special e-mail address for errata notes.

Nonetheless, and although work on Wave 2 continues, we should inoculate ourselves against lingering symptoms of that disease known as TI-itus, including that potent strain which might be called CRT-itus. In particular it is important to note that among the ‘errors’ treated by TI many in fact should only be qualified as ‘adjustments’. Jack Vance is famously contemptuous of homogeneity, in fact he seems an avid practitioner of diversity. Sometimes he likes to spell certain words one way, sometimes another (e.g.: ‘grey’ and ‘gray’). Sometimes he prefers single quotes for non-speech quoted material, sometimes double. This is not sloppiness, it is just how he does things. There are occasions when he enjoys the use of capitalization where other writers, more attentive to certain so called ‘rules’, would only use lower case letters. In some circumstances he uses periods or exclamation points where others would never dare anything but a question mark, or question marks where others would use only the comma, or he might put commas despite screaming when anything but the semi-colon is employed. He hyphenates with insouciance and gusto, but sometimes with system, and the results can be confusing to any who limit their horizons to methodicalness. Furthermore, while VIE Composition standards are carefully defined, sometimes our own rules have to be bent in order to make things work. The space above or below a section number,

the centering of a given element, may not, in all cases, be in conformity with such uses elsewhere in the books. In the great majority of cases this is for some non-obvious reason. In the remaining cases, it is too late now, and no big deal.

For the most part, and particularly where the evidence is very good, and per guidelines provided by the author himself, the VIE translates Vance’s intentions with as much exactitude as possible. In other cases, usually in the absence of absolute evidence, certain adjustments have been made, in accordance with guidelines, usually in the direction of homogenization of spellings and hyphenations. There may be occasional things that can look like errors but which, in fact, are either correct, or ‘not incorrect’ in the vancian context. The eagle-eyed Patrick Dusoulier and Chuck King have already spotted several genuine errata. Among them: on page 175 of volume 11 an open quote is missing; there is an issue with the spelling of a proper name in a table of contents. There will certainly be others. However, even these two errata are not, to my mind, very serious. A real problem would be something that actually interferes with reading or understanding the writer’s intentions; something missing, something changed, something which impedes transmission of the story to the reader. These errata, while less than optimum, introduce no confusion.* In the case of the missing open-quote, context makes plain where the speech begins. In the case of the name, one can only adjudge it ‘misspelled’ until after it is seen spelled in another style in the story, since this particular misspelling does not interfere with pronunciation; from a defensible point of view (say Mark Twain’s), it is not a ‘misspelling’, just an ‘alternate spelling’. Typotheosis? Perhaps, but we must philosophically accept all consolations available! It would seem that the following assertion cannot be creditably disputed: the VIE volumes are Vance as he has never been published before; his work as he wrote it and as he wants it to be known, or as close thereto and as error free as it is humanly possible to get. Any remaining problems will be swept up in an errata sheet. Think of a great dinner for 1000 persons in a magnificent hall: everything is prepared to perfection, and just before the guests arrive, a butler passes by with a small feather duster, occasionally

*Unfortunately such errors have turned up in *Madouc*, apparently caused by faulty procedures at a certain point prior to GMI. The needed fixes are changes of one word, and subscribers will be urged to make these changes by hand, in a specified manner.

We currently have several safety nets in place. Rob Friefield recently wrote to Imp Joel Hedlund: “The comments are plenty clear. That’s the problem. How did we miss such things? We will be removing the period after ‘monotone’ and the comma at ‘Farr, jumped’. Thanks very much for working thoughtfully and saving our bacon.” (Editor’s Note: for the sake of exactitude and correctness I will mention that these two problems were also reported by the other Imp on this text, VIE Volunteer no. 142.—D. Benson)

removing a speck of dust from a well waxed surface. Such will be the errata sheet.

Now, to the books, and Enjoy!



The Man from Zodiac

Once again Jack Vance proves a prophetic teacher in matters moral and political. A story, probably written in 1957, sheds an unexpected light on a situation causing cathode tubes to flicker planetwide 50 years later. America, in the persons first of General Jay Garner, retired, and now special envoy Paul Bremer, predecessors or followers to Milton Hack as you prefer, is busy setting up a government for Iraq. It is my opinion that, unlike the Afghans, apparently a passel of Phrones and Sabols, tribal groups intent on pillage and vengeance, the Iraqis are a developed people in the majority gentle of temperament, wide of view, notable for their subtlety and finesse. If the squawks of a few loud-mouthed militants encouraged by Iranian hot-heads, and used by certain television producers of dubious intentions to fill up the entirety of 21-inch screens, Iraqi religious diversity seems to pose them no more difficulty now than it has for the greater part of the last several millennia. The Kurds in particular, who have benefited from 10 years of security thanks to their own militia and Anglo-US air-interdiction over the northern no-fly zone (financed by Anglo-US taxpayers), have used this time to excellent effect, building schools and generally improving their lot. However, just as Russia and the Eastern European countries are having trouble pulling themselves together after decades of government by thugs and gangsters, making a good government for Iraq is no job for amateurs.

Can American administrators learn anything from that professional creator of governments, known to Vance readers as Milton Hack, the man from Zodiac?

This story, like so much of Vance, is a rollicking comedy, full of that vancian mix of whimsy, keen observation of the human animal, paradox and common sense. It is not so allusive however that it cannot be filtered for a few nuggets of principle. First, what of the pre-governmental situation of the tribes requiring government? Lord Festus of Gangali puts it this way:

We don't want an equitable outcome! . . . We want revenge, and Opal Mountain as well.

The Phrones are primitives, intent not on development, prosperity and comfort, but the satisfaction of primitive passions: greed, murder, domination. In fact such people do not want government at all and they only contracted with Zodiac because of the machinations of clever and ambitious people working toward their own ends, which happen to be cynically indifferent to the real good of the

Phrones and Sabols. In like manner it is not exactly as if Iraq invited the coalition to come in and supply it with a new government! So, what we have are people who know what they want, but do not necessarily know what is good for them, surrounded by neighbors and containing elements who will use ruse to destroy them.

Let us look at the European Union. In many European countries people are maintained in a state of confusion and ignorance about their own good, while foreign elements (al Qaeda for one, certain African and Middle Eastern countries for another, and America also some would claim) work to hamper and confound them. But an elite of mostly anonymous operatives (popularly known as 'technocrats') are molding the nations of the European peninsula into a political entity the exact, or even the approximate, nature of which is understood by few. In each European nation where the people are being given a say in the matter, referendums are preceded by highly organized campaigns in favor of a 'yes' vote, government financed with fancy full color brochures printed with taxpayers money and delivered by the national postal service. Proponents of 'no' or even 'wait a minute; what the heck is going on?' are left to fend for themselves. When, in spite of all, the vote comes up 'no', a year or two is allowed to go by and the referendum is run all over again with redoubled bells and whistles. Once the 'yes' is obtained—be it only by 50.1% of a negligible voter turnout—all talk of further referendums cease. When certain European countries sided with the U.S. concerning Iraq policy the president of France complained they ought to have been silent, or ought to have consulted with 'their European partners' before 'striking out on their own' (read: 'not following orders'). But did the president of France consult with anyone before publicly opposing the U.S.? The secret would-be masters of an ever greater and more powerful Euro-land brook no meddling from underlings. As Lord Drecke bluntly puts it:

Only the nobility is of consequence. The others do as they are told.

From this perspective Lord Drecke himself turns out to be one of 'the others', and the harried, apparently ineffectual Milton Hack turns out to be the true 'nobility'.

It is elites who make history, individuals of vision and persistence who won't take 'no' for an answer and deploy all possible forces, spiritual and material, to their goal. Whether that goal is noble or ignoble, whether the forces deployed stray far, or only slightly, from the norms to which 'the others' are held, is another matter. For those who doubt of American capacities and intentions, when they have finished their work in Iraq their competence can be estimated in retrospect. But just as the Americans have announced their intentions and their estimation of

the Iraqi situation, Zodiac makes certain statements of outlook, principle, and method:

We are not philosophers or moralists. We make no judgments . . .

The Phrones are a whole-hearted, whole-souled people, possibly somewhat vehement. It is necessary to enforce public order and compliance with . . . rules tactfully.

For . . . a government to function it must command respect.

[A] government is essentially a thing of the people it serves. [It is] a judicious, efficient, expert and economical management of . . . public functions.

In addition Vance's hero shows typically vancian sensitivity to symbols of collective identity:

[Milton Hack] crossed the central plaza—Seprissa's single concession to a civic identity . . .

The Phrones and Sabols have more tribal than civic identity, and this is reflected in their activities and outlook. Hack, who is a civilized man, has different priorities:

" . . . I recommend a cessation of piracy, raids, looting, and most notably thieving . . . money . . . must be reserved . . . for . . . staff salaries, tools, school supplies, and above all, a new sewer."

His elitist perspective, which he hopes, at first, to practice openly, is expressed, for example, in this statement:

The Argus superintendent and I, talking calmly together, can work out a fair settlement of the quarrel. This is the only sensible way to handle the situation.

When this approach is rejected by the Phrones in favor of militarism and blood-thirstiness, Hack attempts the following argument:

[The] first step should be to recognize that all of us are basically men of good will.

This approach suffers from a serious flaw: the Phrones and Sabols are not men of good will. With men who are not of good will nothing may be done, before their ill-will, by some means or another, is broken. In this regard Hack neglects no avenue; he uses ruse, force and argument. After all, as he observes:

These people aren't totally irrational.

And indeed, when their horizons are expanded their minds open to new ideas:

The maiden . . . led the group into a cool garden, where other maidens served fragrant cakes and a soft sweet wine.

The nobles of Phronus and Sabo, Hack noted, after grunts of disgust for 'effete delicacy' and 'moony estheticism', enjoyed the comfort of the chairs, cakes and wine no less than the attendance of the beautiful maidens. Hack nudged Drecke. "This is how we will do it in the new city!"

Drecke hawked, cleared his nose and throat. "Sometimes old ways are better." He spat under the table. "Sometimes not."

After clever maneuvers Hack manages to blow up the sewerless 'cities' of the Phrones and Sabols. The American bombardment of Iraq was, relatively speaking, nothing at all. This shock does much to change Phrone and Sabol cultural perspectives in both the short and long term, and facilitates the treatment of more delicate problems. For example, after the cities are destroyed, Lord Drecke is first of all perturbed on religious grounds:

" . . . what of our memorials, our fetishes, our regalia?"

Though it provokes Lord Drecke to only heave *a great sigh*, Hack proposes an argument which I doubt would satisfy many Iraqi Shiites:

"All gone," said Hack. "However—if I may interpose an outsider's point of view—it was largely obsolete. In the new city, which Zodiac Control will help you build, these would be considered little more than barbaric survivals, mementoes of a rather grotesque period in your development."

I suspect that when it comes to Shia Islam at least, many of the Americans directing the rebuilding of Iraq have feelings similar to Hack's, though it would be impolitic to publicly admit as much. While I am convinced that, in Iraq, radical Islam will not be a fundamental obstacle to the creation of a proper government where the rule of law is preeminent, dismissiveness with regard to religion would be naive, both practically and philosophically. Still, we cannot expect a humorous story, written 50 years ago for a readership of adolescents to provide a complete guide for international policy making in 2003 . . . or can we? On his BBS Mike Berro provided a link to an article in *Pravda*, in which a certain Dimitry Slobodanuk complains that Vance is the formative influence of the men currently running America. This, at minimum, must be an exaggeration. But it may be true that ideas in vogue in Vance's youth, and which Vance shares in large measure, are more influential than ever in the world today.

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The French Position

The opinion expressed by almost all politicians, journalists and intellectuals in France is this: the 'neo-conservative regime of George Bush' is running amok across the world in a *unilateral crusade of preventive war*. Meanwhile France is still congratulating itself on their new status of world leader of an alleged 'loyal opposition' struggling to control a rampaging America, to defend 'human rights' (presumably the same ones presided over currently in the U.N. under the presidency of Libya) the 'rule of law' or the sudden insistence upon the U.N. as sole source of legitimacy, as well as other internationalist bodies and dispositions such as Belgium's new 'universally competent' criminal court or the absurd Kyoto accords according to which we are supposed to drive walking speeds and heat our homes in winter to a temperature only somewhat above the temperature at which water turns to ice, and which no country is applying any more than the U.S. is. France seems to see America as a sort of Phampoun, with itself in the role of *Pulsifer, desperately gripping* [Phampoun's] *tusks*, [attempting] *to steer the maddened demon, who, ignoring all restraint*, [plunges on its way], *bursting through* [countries] *as if they failed to exist*.

Marginally more lucid Frenchmen, while they agree that cowboy-George and the U.S. cavalry are running amok, note that heading a pro-human rights coalition the major partners of which are Russia and China is a situation that might not be an unalloyed cause for self-congratulation.

The 'logic' of the French position, though there seems not a speck of Franco-awareness of the fact, is relativistic. Relativists cannot appeal to the law of God—the way the Muslims and George W. Bush do—because they claim God does not exist. They likewise reject natural law, because it also, like God himself, having a source other than Man, cramps Man's style. This limits the content of so-called 'universal values' at what men say they are. But men don't agree about such things.

So who gets to decide? Since 'authority' (whether God's, Nature's or that of your favorite sage) is rejected, the only choice that seems to be left is consent. But 'consent' means majority rule. Or it seems to. In fact majority rule is just one form of rule by the strong. And since men are often stupid, credulous, or ill-intentioned, majority rule can easily mean rule by loud-mouths, fools or tricksters.

Be this as it may, for the confused French 'thinkers' in question, popular will defines the good and is the only legitimizing force.

Without realizing, the French thinking endorses a philosophy of power which, stripped of its confused trappings, comes to this: the strongest is always right. But in this case France must be 'wrong' because America

is more powerful than France. This is no fun! The French prefer pretending, on the basis of dupes carrying anti-Bush signs on the streets, that America is acting contrary to the majority will of the people of the world, and leave it at that.

But even if it is true that a majority of people think America is doing bad, a majority opinion, as Leo Strauss remarked, is only an opinion with a long tail. The French are suffering a collective illusion that their position requires no demonstration, that it is enough to point to the non-cooperation of the U.N. and the protestors and then shout the word 'unilateralist'.

The actual pros and cons of what amounts to a battle in the war on Islamic-Arabic-anti-Westernism, ridding the world of a bloody tyrant the American government believes was cooperating with terrorists and maintaining an arsenal of chemical and germ weapons which risked to fall into the hands of the 9/11 perps, are not evoked. The French seem blissfully unaware that, *rather than believing George Bush about Saddam Hussein, they prefer to believe Saddam Hussein about George Bush*. It can be noted at this point that George Bush is the Constitutionally elected president of the freest people on earth, and Saddam Hussein one of the most dangerous thugs who ever lived, who came to power in the most illegitimate way possible: at gun-point. How does majority rule fit in there?

On the radio today (May 10) I heard an intellectual give a conference in which he condemned the allegedly uncivilized behavior of Lincoln and Roosevelt in demanding 'unconditional surrender'. He spoke of these two American presidents, Lincoln being one of the greatest statesmen in history and Roosevelt being one of the most prominent and best loved world leaders of the 20th century, as if the sort of unfettered will to power which motivated Genghis Khan also motivated them. Lincoln's victory over the South was evoked only to claim that the result for blacks was hardly perceptible, that they remained 'colonized', and no word was spoken regarding the 'unconditional surrender' of Germany and Japan—namely quickly restored rank as leading countries with a subsequent record of civilized behavior contrasting favorably to their whole previous history.

Likewise the wonderful success of the coalition in Iraq, the joy of the overwhelming majority of Iraqis at their liberation, the obviously improved world situation since the roto-rootering of Afghanistan and Iraq, continue to go almost unmentioned by the French. They prefer to remain hypnotized by their specter of American 'unilateralism', to leap upon any opportunity allowing them to pretend that the situation of the Iraqis is every day worse and worse, than to note the emerging desire for peace between India and Pakistan, the visible shifting of the Palestinian Authority toward a less unrelentingly bellicose attitude, the lower profiles displayed by Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Before the war

these results were predicted by the 'neo-conservative regime' in Washington, and now that they are being proved right... I am sorry to see even such serious French politicians as ex-prime minister Edward Balladur unable to shake off his fixation with 'the danger of American unilateralism'. France has acute internal problems; this blindness to the world situation is not a promising sign to those of us who have French interests at heart.

Some say that nostalgia for her past greatness motivates French opposition to America, but such nostalgia did not impede France from cooperating in a proportional and cooperative manner with America in the first Gulf war or the Balkan war. It is also pretended that France is secretly motivated by economic ties to Saddam's regime, but other European countries and America are by far France's biggest trading partners; trade deals with Iraq, however fabulous or guilty, can be nothing compared with French economic interdependence with America. French oil company executives are likewise fully aware that the aftermath, even of the exclusive American victory, will have no incidence at all on the world oil market except, eventually perhaps, to drive prices down by increasing supply; they have no fear of being excluded from Iraq because all the big oil companies work together to share the high economic and political risks rife in their profession. Furthermore French businessmen are among the best in the world and do not fail to realize that a democratic Iraq will be incalculably more interesting economically than a continued tyranny.

In fact the French position has a single ingredient: post-cold-war anti-Americanism, lovingly nurtured by a century of Communist propaganda and still operative like a lingering stink. The deep problem in France, as it is everywhere else, is the eternal desire to blame one's problems on others. At one level above it is the ongoing heritage of Marxist doctrine. France is like a motor that is 'seized up'. It cannot resolve its internal problems because it remains in the grip of the Marxist mentality. The French as a group seem unable to take responsibility for themselves, and continue to take pathological refuge in blaming someone else, and this someone else always turns out to be 'the rich'. Many of 'the rich' have already left France for this reason. The present government is struggling to rectify the situation but the outcome remains in doubt. Of course French internal problems, in and of themselves, have nothing to do with France's present international policy vis-à-vis America, except that Marxism is the source of both. In a confused sort of way it may be that governmental French anti-Americanism is a sop to the dominant Marxized mentality of the population while the pill of internal reforms is forced down. This is not the sort of frank and brave approach that leads to success, and it seems to me that those of us

who have France's welfare at heart are justified in remaining concerned.



Getting off the Fence

by Till Noever

A few months ago, during the initial phases of the U.S. action in Iraq, I received a correspondence from a man in Germany whom I have known since I was a kid. He was born at a time that would have made him about sixteen at the end of WW2. At the end of the correspondence, which had nothing to do with the U.S.-Iraq situation, he could not refrain from inserting a few of those fashionable European (especially German and French) anti-American snipes.

I replied by pointing out that maybe, before trashing the U.S. and getting on his European high-horse, he would do well to recall that in several places in Europe there are cemeteries, stretching for miles, which contain the fallen Americans that contributed to making sure that my correspondent and much of the rest of Europe weren't now marching in lockstep to *Deutschland über Alles*, didn't have swastikas adorning their national flags, that the men weren't obliged to sport ugly little square moustaches, that German wasn't the compulsory first language, and that the closest thing to Himmler to be found at the moment is probably speaking some Arabian or other Middle Eastern dialect. I also suggested that he go visit such a war-grave cemetery and ponder the implications of its existence.

My comments were not appreciated. Not only did my correspondent write the following memorable sentences (translated from German), '*I don't agree with anything you wrote. We are no heroes, nor do we have any need to be.*', but his son, through whose e-mail system we were corresponding, demanded of me that I desist from sending messages of such political content, which might be seen by others who shouldn't (he was referring to his children, who are at young and impressionable ages and might find such political pornography disturbing).

Let's ignore the parental censorship issue on political matters and all that implies, and instead look at that comment: *I don't agree with anything you wrote. We are no heroes, nor do we have any need to be.*

What did it mean?

I don't agree with anything you wrote.

Eh? Am I mistaken? Are there none of the cemeteries I alluded to? Are they just optical illusions? Can there be the slightest doubt that the U.S. intervention in WW2 changed its course?

We are no heroes...

What did he mean by 'hero'? What makes a 'hero' a 'hero'?

. . . *nor do we have any need to be.*

Why not? What kind of need? Psychological or physical? Did he mean to say 'we have no personal requirement to validate ourselves by behaving heroically', or 'there are others stupid and eager enough to play hero, so why should we'?

I didn't ask for clarification on these issues, because I felt it would be useless. Besides, I had no intention of picking a fight.

End of story. During the subsequent weeks the U.S. sacked Iraq with a minimum of fuss and a comparative dearth of the inevitable military snafus. The war that had been declared on the 'West' by its Islamic foes had been brought right back to their doorstep. No wonder it sent shivers through the region. For people so obsessed with their real and imagined history and its putative grievances against the 'West' it must be an uncomfortable reminder of history repeating itself; only this time the crusaders had air support and a vastly superior technology.

Whatever the putative for-public-consumption reasons for the 'war', the real point, I think, was made: some nations of the evil West have *not* lost their nerve and are willing to play the tit-for-tat game. Violate our national sovereignty and we'll damn well violate yours.

I would add a suggestion for driving the point home a bit more. What, people ask, can you do to defend yourself against those who do not fear, and indeed welcome death—taking into account that almost all of them are male, who hope for a reward in a paradise where one of the main featured attractions are the luscious slave-women who take advantage of and pay homage to these martyrs' apparently interminable states of priapism? What do you do to deter those who have no respect for their own lives, or the lives of those around them? What is it that actually *matters* to such people, and that one could use to deter them from continuing their uncivilized behavior?

Let me put it this way: B1 bombers high up in the sky releasing their payloads of precision guided bombs over some choice 'holy places'. Start small and work your way up the line of 'holiness', in carefully-calibrated retaliation for any further terrorist attacks against Western targets. Maybe someone will get the message—before the Ka'aba becomes a mass of partially-fused stone chips, scattered over several square miles, that will no doubt be scooped up by the faithful in a frenzy of looting even as they clear away the mess.

These and similar thoughts went through my mind during a recent event that should have been a source of joy. But I had just spent several weeks in intense review and reflection and it wouldn't let me go—not even during this wedding of two friends of mine: lovely people whom

I've known for years. The now-wife is 22, and her now-husband 29. The wedding took place in Dunedin's oldest Presbyterian church, a venerable old building, which mixes austerity with muted ornamentation in that way that clearly evidences its Scottish heritage.

The groom is an atheist, the bride a Christian of no particular persuasion, who questions the self-evidence of the existence of God, but who wanted a church wedding anyway; for the family, if nothing else. The groom agreed. He would have done anything to make her happy.

The ceremony was dignified, conducted with a minimum of pomp and pomposity, leaving even a cynic like me, who, at these occasions sees himself displaced into the surreal wonderland of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, strangely touched; possibly because the bride and groom were so genuine about what they were doing; the celebrating priest affected a minimum of that insufferably pious air common to his ilk; and many of his words, which were short and sweet and to the point, had been written by the bride and groom themselves, carefully weighed to strike a balance between the secular and the spiritual. Some priestly words of religious significance were uttered, including a final blessing in the name of the Christian deity.

Sitting there watching this unfold I couldn't avert my cogitations from the issues which were on my mind, and I thought about the millions and millions of people, living in a mindset that makes them into virtual aliens to us, who would consider it right and just and appropriate—and indeed their duty to their deity!—not only to desecrate this church, but to abolish the entire way of life represented by the events around me: the freedom of my friends to choose marriage because they wanted it, the freedom to choose their vows, the freedom to choose the bride's dress, the priest's freedom to focus his benediction on the people before him, and not on the God in whose name he bestowed it, the freedom for people to choose the music they wanted played, the hymns they wanted to sing (or not, as was the case here), how they wanted to hold the subsequent reception and the music they wanted played there and how they wanted to dance and to speak, and . . .

. . . well, above all, the freedom they had to choose what they wanted to believe and, as long as they didn't harm anyone else with their beliefs, to do so without fear of being punished for thinking as they do.

And I sat there and had a vision of this precious way of life of ours falling prey to the same barbarism and brutality which has characterized a significant part of the history of the last 1400 years, and which, for a large part of this world, appears as valid a way of life today as it was in the middle ages.

That evening at the wedding reception I ran into a couple from Ireland, relatives of the groom, whom my wife and I had met some years ago in another context.

The woman, puzzled by my accent (which is a mish-mash of the accents I picked up over my years of living in various English-speaking countries), wondered if I were an American. I replied: "No, but I'd be proud to be one."

For several seconds she was unable to grasp the meaning of the sentence, which must have been so incomprehensible as to defy analysis. Then she caught on to it and laughed. "Ach, you're jokin'!" (Like, "Haha! I get it: you're being funny!—haha!")

"Actually, no," I replied. "I consider it a compliment."

Another moment of total silence, while my wife tried deftly to save the moment by some suitable conversational ploy. (She did. She's good at it.)

That evening, as the festivities proceeded (and here we're coming back to 'heroes') I finally understood what my German correspondent had meant—though I'm not sure that he was aware of *what* he'd said.

You see, heroes—all heroes—are people who have come off the fence. No matter what shape or context they appear in, every 'hero' that ever was, real or legendary, has made *some* kind of commitment to *something*.

We can now re-write the statement '*we are no heroes, nor do we have any need to be*' to mean '*we sit on the fence and have no need to get off it*'.

No need, in other words, to commit themselves to the support of someone who has once saved their collective butts from becoming permanently brown. With 'allies' like this, enemies are superfluous. No wonder the British public recently, despite its opposition to the Iraq action, voted overwhelmingly in a recent poll that they'd rather have the U.S. as allies than, say, France.

Of course, 'commitment' in itself does not confer nobility or virtue. Your average zealot definitely qualifies as 'committed'—and to his own warped mind he's certainly a hero of sorts as well.

But when the secular humanist scum of the West—those whom Islam fears and loathes more than it fears and despises Christians—speak of 'commitment' in association with 'heroism' they usually mean something else. It has to do with free-willed choosing between the options of being, say, cowardly or brave, selfish or responsible, traitorous or loyal, hateful or loving, that kind of thing.

Seen in that light, a large part of Europe—and also, to my dismay, New Zealand and particularly its foot-in-mouth prime minister—qualify as having behaved decidedly un-heroic on most counts. Some of these countries did so for reasons of economic self-interest (France and Germany leading the way, side by side with Russia—how much irony can you bear?), the rest because they thought and still think that appeasement works—forgetting Churchill's dictum that 'an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last'—or because they are simply so wrapped up in themselves and

their historical insignificance that they don't even have the energy to make decisions about anything.

And indeed, they had no need to behave heroically. The job was done without them—and without the U.N., which now, after the fact, had to eat some serious humble pie. The sight of everybody pretending it all hadn't been 'so' and trying to get a piece of the post-war pie in Iraq is too ludicrous for words.

A word to the peace-protesters in the U.S., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and all other countries who enjoy life under a political system known as 'representative democracy':

In a recent interview the 'Dixie Chicks'—those paragons of American pulchritude and patriotism, now shunned by a lot of people who previously adulated them—were asked about their foot-in-mouth behavior with regards to the war in Iraq and George W.

One of the girls made the interesting statement (and I paraphrase) that she felt her voice needed to be 'heard' and that it wasn't. She was against the war, nobody listened and so, petulantly and basically from sheer childish spite, she felt the need to use her public profile to make sure she *was* being heard—a sentiment apparently shared by many of high profile, though none of them have been elected to any public office and distinguish themselves from your average ignoramus only by having better access to the media because their job is to act in movies.

I suspect that this sentiment is probably shared by the majority of protesting peaceniks, young and old, public or private. This notion of the powerlessness of the 'small voice' was, of course, vigorously fostered by those whose purpose it served, from Islamic agitators to the venal politicians in, especially, France and Germany.

It is interesting to see just how profoundly people insist on misunderstanding 'representative democracy'!

Politics, as Roger Scruton noted in *The West and the Rest* (and I paraphrase and inadequately summarize very briefly what took Scruton a whole book), is what we, the people of the 'West', invented to be able to lead our lives with a maximum amount of freedom. We do this by delegating the administration of affairs dealing with our welfare and security to people whom we consider qualified to do so—and who are prepared to do it. In this way we, as individuals, do not have to concern ourselves with such affairs, but we can be 'private' and as free as is possible within the context of our physical and social needs.

This is the essence of 'representative government'. It is a property of this system that we choose those whom we delegate on a periodic basis, and that we *delegate*. We are freed from having to attend to the duties of administration and instead allowed to pursue our goals of happiness, riches, or whatever turns us on, within the

limitations of the necessities and exigencies of our social context as it exists and changes from time to time.

We pay for the freedom that we gain in this way by surrendering the power that we invest in those to whom we delegate the administration. If we don't like what they do, we may vote them out of office on the next occasion, in favor of someone who pleases us better. But in the meantime *they* have been invested with the power they have—by *us*—and the price we pay for the freedoms we thus gain is that *we* lose the freedom to make those decisions we have empowered *them* to make.

'Representative democracy' thus does not imply a continuous availability of a plebiscite on the decision-making process. If it did, it would thereby involve everybody in a continuous decision-making process, which is *not* something we really want, and would indeed defeat the purpose of the whole exercise: hence the delegation of authority to 'politicians'. Therefore the peaceniks screeching hysterically in the streets, claiming they are not 'being heard', do so for a large part because they don't understand the political system that sustains them and their freedoms. There's always a price, but they don't want to know that, because then they might have to consider paying it.

This system of 'politics' we have inherited from a venerable tradition, which reaches back in time to the Greeks and Romans, and which, as Scruton points out, *defines* us: who we are and what we stand for. The 'political' systems which govern other parts of the planet—those ruled by theocracies, mostly Islamic; the rest by various other totalitarian systems and ideologies—they do not merit the term 'politics', since that appellation refers to a system of government that is uniquely 'Western'. The brutal dictatorship of the now-defunct Saddam Hussein, the theocratic obscenities in much of the African, Arab and Middle and Far-Eastern world (e.g. Iran, Saudi-Arabia, Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan), the tyrannical monstrosities of, for example, Mainland China, Cuba, Libya, Syria, as well as a whole host of other not-currently-in-the-news nations, plus several nations well on the way toward Islamist theocracy (like Turkey, which, I fear, is already lost to us; or maybe it always has been, and that nation's brief secular interlude was but a brief historical aberration)—none of these merit being described as 'political systems'. We only call them that because we don't have a convenient alternative term to describe them, and so honor them with a wholly undeserved appellation. And in pinning that label on them we conveniently forget that, whilst we are wrapped up in our concerns about our individual freedoms and especially our freedom of expression, those freedoms we hold self-evident not only do not exist in those places, but that there it is indeed considered a religious-moral imperative to make sure that this un-freedom spreads to

us as well, no matter what the cost, no matter what the means.

Accuse me of being simplistic here, but I have this bottom line which reads: 'Do I want the world to become like this? Is that the world I want for my children?'

The answer is a definite 'no'.

Next question: 'What kind of actions are appropriate to make sure this doesn't happen?'

Well, I think we've wasted enough effort on those that didn't work. Time to consider the grim alternatives, distasteful as that may be—especially if we have to look back into history to see how it was done, for history appears so barbarian and uncivilized sometimes.

Mike Moore, producer/director/superstar of that flatulent, self-important—and ultimately shallow and dishonest—vanity-movie *Bowling for Columbine*, probably would claim that I am acting out of a spirit of 'fear'. Others may scream 'xenophobia' or similar invectives.

Well, they're talking about someone else. I have spent significant parts of my life in places that qualify for the prefix 'xeno', and I have absorbed more of their cultures than I know. My religious and philosophical development was profoundly influenced by the 'East'—and folks like Paul would probably say 'lamentably so'. But always I have instinctively reeled back from Islam and everything it stands for—and now, many years and many deaths later, I finally understand why.

No, it is not fear. Understanding and appreciation of a threat and a desire to avert its potential effects have nothing to do with 'fear'. My heart isn't pounding, my adrenaline not surging, my intestines not turning to jelly, I'm not swept up in the giddy throes of mass-hysteria. I don't *hate* anybody for who and what they are, though terrorists come close to breaking through that equanimity.

I think the operative term to describe my state of mind is 'self-preservation'—in this instance 'self' extending to all of those who are, ultimately, 'my people'. This starts with family and expands through friends and acquaintances to all of those strangers who share with me a belief in the value of this 'way of life', imperfect as it may be—for it is still preferable to the alternatives. We have struggled hard to get through to this point, which I think is a better place to be than humanity has ever been at, all the problems notwithstanding. Indeed, the problems indicate just how far we have come; for this is the way of the world: that the greater the potential for good, the greater it will also be for evil and disaster. Are we to surrender all of this to those who would annul everything and reset the clock by a millennium or more; all in the name of some obsolete desert-cult run rampant?

I think not.

What are we to do?

Whatever it takes.

I didn't used to think that way, you know . . .

I was born a German and I've been an outspoken anti-militarist for most of my life. There's never been a country for whose defence I've been willing to go to any war. Apart from my wife and children there hasn't been anybody for whom I'd consider risking, and if necessary losing, my life (which to me, a secular humanist, is the most precious thing there is).

I don't quite know what's changed, but something has. The process was gradual, and, looking back, I can trace it through my writing; which, though I didn't fully realize it until recently, has always revolved about the pivotal issues of 'love' and 'choice'.

'Choice' means coming off the fence: for that's what we do when we choose. Which is probably why people are so scared of making choices. They think sitting on the fence will keep them above the fray—never realizing until it's too late that the fray will come to them, sooner, rather than later.

Of course, if we were all guaranteed hero-status for making choices: that would be nice. But, alas, usually it's just simple 'choice' and no glory comes attached to it, and so why should we bother? Does it actually matter?

I think it does, even if only for ourselves. For our choices ultimately define who we are and what if anything can be said to be our 'character'. Our unwillingness to make choices, of course, also do this. In some instances that unwillingness is cogent: the issues at hand may be too complex to allow us to choose between the offered alternatives. But too easily does that argument become an excuse for personal cowardice and a cover for venal self-interest—as Europe and a large part of the world have in recent months demonstrated. Not that there's anything new about this. 'Political expediency' usually seems to rule events on the grand and smaller scale.

Occasionally, I detect a ray of hope. It is faint, but it gives me reason to think that the clouds aren't as thick and impenetrable as they appear to be.



Science and the Science Fiction of Jack Vance

by Paul Rhoads

Introduction

The 21st century, at least for the 'first world', is living the triumph of technology. A mere half century ago many people in Europe, Japan, and even America, were

still living as they had since time immemorial: as small farmers whose food and shelter depended more on the clemency of nature, the sweat of their brows and their local situation, than a salary or the 'global economy'. But now, in the first world, technological industry dominates everything, including farming and construction. I live in a house in France which was built with materials all of which were procured within a stones throw of the house itself and which, even 12 years ago, still housed a small farmer. 'Small farms' do exist today; they are mostly specialty enterprises dependent on group commercial strategies or State subsidies. Gone is the true 'family farm' of three cows, a pigsty, a chicken house, a plough horse, a bit of pasture, a few acres of grain, a kitchen garden, some fruit trees. In the same way all hand-crafts, while remaining prestigious, have become rare as technological processes and new materials replace them at less cost. We are fed, clothed and housed by industry, sometimes even by robots, and new technological domains have greater and greater importance in our lives: transportation, medicine, communication, computing.

With typically human plasticity we accept this brave new world as if we had never known any other, as if nothing has changed. And in fact this plethora of winking blinking technology overwhelming society, indeed fails to touch the essence of our humanity. The major preoccupation of young people, despite MTV and video games, remains romance. Older people remain preoccupied with personal fulfillment, security, integrity. Yet it cannot be said that our humanity remains utterly unaffected. There is much chatter about our new social problems but little serious conversation. The hand-wringing over divorce, single parenting, abortion, pornography, the progress of 'new forms of sexuality' and consequent rise of pedophilia, are cases in point. Such phenomena, basic realities of the new world, are protected by the rampart of 'mass communication' and 'popular arts', dominated by militantly materialist ideologies. 'Rock and roll', now one of the most important markets in the world economy, after half a century continues to celebrate unchained eroticism and a 'personal liberation' of masses swaying in a mindless 'harmony'. But there are counter forces, and the electoral victory of a George W. Bush would seem to indicate their existence. But these forces, which are not necessarily majority, are denied center stage by those who manage the stage. Both in America and Europe the present duly elected President of the United States of America—the oldest democracy in the world and arguably the freest society in the history of humanity—is daily reviled from the most public podiums as a moron, a fanatic, a dictator, the leader of an 'extremist right wing regime'. His predecessor who had himself serviced in the oval office by young female trainees, whose lust for historical status was arguably the trigger of the 2nd Intifada and who

used his last day in office to pardon international billionaire scoundrels, was, and rightly so, treated with common respect.

We are in the midst of wars of culture, wars of civilization and even, though this is not yet generally admitted, wars of religion. For those of us trying to pay attention it is often hard to see the forest for the trees. Philosophy and history offer important guides, but Art is also one of the great guides. Jack Vance, a great poet, one of the rare great artists of our time, is immensely useful in this regard.

The War of the Clones

With the immanence of real human cloning this process, once a mere science fiction notion, is now, in the year 2003, upon us in all reality. In 1954 Jack Vance wrote *Clarges*. Here is my note (to be published in volume 44) on this story:

Begun in late '54, and published as: *To Live Forever*. The plot for this story was worked out jointly with Frank Herbert. The two friends then flipped a coin for who would write the book. (The plot was changed significantly from the joint original.)

That the *Clarges* concept, like *Dune*, was a joint effort of Herbert and Vance in the 1950s emphasizes its science fiction origin. It is science fiction because, according to the 'Tonio Loewald test', it asks a 'what if' question: *what if humans, thanks to medical science, could be immortal?* Over half a century ago Jack Vance provided humanity with a comprehensive explication of the social and psychological consequences of a scientific development that is now grinning at us from test-tubes around the world. In this early masterpiece* Vance, in his usual manner, set up a situation designed to explicate the social and political problems posed by human immortality:

Clarges, the last metropolis of the world, stretched thirty miles along the north shore of the Chant River.

Clarges is the single center of civilization and technology, a 'Reach', on a future Earth the rest of which is covered in lawless wildlands inhabited by uncivilized tribes.

...she departed the Reach for the barbarian outlands, where her life would be in continual danger.

Clarges has walled itself off from the barbarian wilds where anthropologists and musicologists, who do not prefer to explore far planets, may collect source material. It

*In addition to the other aspects of the VIE restoration of this text, we must particularly thank Suan Yong for locating a missing passage which Vance has graciously restored. See VIE vol.7 p348.

is also a place of exile, imposed or chosen. The vancian distinction between a civilized 'reach' and the 'beyond' is already present in 1954. It is a distinction not surprisingly emphasized by a seaman from California, the son of American pioneers who achieved the logical goal of the American pioneer adventure, and an observer of cultures all over the globe. The reach/beyond distinction indicates a universal situation: our 'world', whatever it may be, is a limited section of what, for us, remains an infinity. The universe will always offer humanity new frontiers. When we have exhausted the polar regions, the sea and the sea floors, the subterranean layers of crust and the floating world of the stratosphere, outer space, which we are already prospecting, awaits us—to say nothing of the various microcosms, macrocosms and, as I suspect Jack Vance himself might suggest, the so far neglected realms of psionics. Meanwhile Western culture, for all its recent multicultural pretensions, remains an oasis in the sea of the human community. A man may have universal sympathies but he cannot hold the hands of more than two of his fellows for the simple reason that he was born with an average of only two hands. The human past, and by all indications its future, will correspond to the unbounded vancian universe where a reach, a civilization, a culture, no matter how far it extends itself, has a border beyond which is a more or less hostile 'other' and in which it discovers fresh resources. The IPPC can never keep pace with the beyond, it can only protect the Reach, making local and temporary excursions beyond as prudence dictates. We, or our civilization and its advantages, is limited in what it can englobe. Meanwhile, the beyond offers its own advantages, principally contact with nature unmediated by civilization.

So the situation of *Clarges* is not gratuitous. It emphasizes how an advanced technology, like cloning, exclusively benefits the mandators of such technology, who are inevitably the organized, the powerful, the rich. All others, the denizens of the 'third world'—the weak, the poor the 'underdeveloped'—will be left out. They must carry on with no more than the support of harsh nature itself. But why must there be a camp of the unlucky who are excluded from the benefits of technology? Are the rich not rich enough to universally propagate the benefits of technology? This may be possible in the case of certain technologies—like radio broadcasts and receivers—but as *Clarges* makes clear, even if the technocrats were infinitely charitable they could not universally extend the benefit of cloning because, in the last analysis, it would mean universal immortality; and unrestricted universal immortality would lead to catastrophic overpopulation. Even if immortality was extended to all people who exist, restrictions would quickly have to come into play regarding those who do not; a war of life and death between the born and the unborn. This war, for obvious reasons, would inevitably be won by the

great-great-great grandfathers against their not-yet extant posterity. The only new beings allowed existence on an Earth populated to the ultimate limit of survivability by immortals, or more likely limited by law to some number consonant with a gracious life, would be replacement bodies for already existing 'Amaranths'*

But what is wrong with a world of Amaranths? What is fundamentally objectionable about the victory of the great-grandfathers and grandmothers over their posterity? Is it not a 'war' in a theoretical sense only because, though it would condemn uncounted millions to non-existence, it could be won without bloodshed? And why would the merely hypothetical, and perhaps 'worthless', lives of the unborn be more precious than the clearly worthy lives of the Amaranths, beings who have proven their social utility? Who are the unborn to require the deaths of their progenitors? Have the unborn not always been dependent on the living for their existence, and why can the gift of life not be legitimately withheld?

With typically vancian penetration *Clarges* presents these problems. The issue is in fact not cloning itself, it is immortality and, in particular, who gets to be an Amaranth or, to rephrase it for our own situation: 'in favor of whom will cloning be exercised?' Because Amaranths never die, because the technology of *Clarges* can transform mortals into immortals, and because *Clarges*, though large, is limited in its *lebensraum*, the status of Amaranth must be limited to an elite. If this elite were based on non-democratic criteria it would be clearly tyrannical; the givers of immortality would, in flagrant selfishness, be restricting the prize of immortality to *their own*. But *Clarges* is a mirror of our democratic society—the only society that has proven capable of great technological progress. Achieving that infinite good, immortality, must be the reward of society to its most worthy members. In *Clarges*, unless you opt-out of the system to become a *glark*, there are only three ways of dying: suffering a mortal accident or illness, murder or, if ultimately judged unworthy of becoming an Amaranth (necessarily the fate of a majority), 'assassination'.

The end-product of the Grand-Union techniques was eternal life.

The citizens of *Clarges* erupted with anger when the fact was made public. [...] There was passionate protest [...] Eventually the Fair-Play Act was drafted, and won a grudging approval. In

*Those who would see in science fiction, or in Vance's 'science fiction', a realm of liberated exploration of an open-ended infinity may be surprised to learn that, as in many similar cases, the word 'Amaranth' is no vancian neologism, no product of pure imagination, some invented name corresponding to an imaginary future state. Instead it is an old word, the name of an imaginary flower that never fades, whose etymology is Greek roots for 'un-withering'.

essence, the system rewarded public service with years of extended life. [...] The Fair-Play Act carefully defined the conditions of advance. [...] At any time after the age of sixteen [a person] might register in Brood, thus submitting to the provisions of the Fair-Play Act. [...]

The Fair-Play Act established the life span of the Brood equal to the average life span of a non-participator—roughly eighty-two years. Attaining Wedge, a man underwent the Grand-Union process halting bodily degeneration, and was allowed an added ten years of life. Reaching Third, he won sixteen more years; Verge, another twenty years. Breaking through into Amaranth brought the ultimate reward.

Regarding the problem of limits:

At this time, the people of the Reach numbered twenty million, with the maximum desirable population estimated at twenty-five million. The population would reach this maximum very rapidly. The ugly dilemma had to be faced: when a member of a phyle lived out his years, what then? Emigration was a dubious solution. *Clarges* was hated throughout the world; setting foot beyond the border was inviting sudden death. Nevertheless, an Emigration Officer was appointed to study the problem.

The Emigration Officer made his report in an uncomfortable session of the Prytanean.

Five areas of the world maintained a semblance of civilized, if barbaric, order within their boundaries: Kypre, Sous-Ventre, the Gondwanese Empire, Singhalien, Nova Roma. None of these would allow immigration, except on a reciprocal basis, which made the project impractical.

The Reach might extend its boundaries by force of arms, until, at the logical limit of the process, the Reach of *Clarges* included the entire world, with the fundamental problem only postponed.

The Prytanean listened glumly, and amended the Fair-Play Act. The Emigration Officer was ordered to implement the basic intent of the Act. In short, he was empowered to remove from life any citizen who reached the authorized limit of his years.

Science fiction? Medical science already confronts the world with such dilemmas. From a medical point of view Westerners are vastly more fortunate than third-worlders, and we are sometimes envied and hated for it. I myself, not once but twice, have suffered illnesses which, had I been a typical African or Asian, would have killed me. This Western advantage, though leftists might insist otherwise, is no mere matter of 'unjust distribution'. First of all, why should we not benefit first from the

civilization that we and our fathers have created and sustained? My father, among other things, is the first Origami Master from the West, and my childhood was blessed by the proximity of his creations and the privilege of observing him create folds. In the same manner my grandfather was a celebrated doctor and I benefited from his special attentions. Though the vast majority of other persons world-wide were excluded from these benefits, no injustice was committed; it is the natural order of things that we first take care of our family and friends, and this natural order cannot be qualified as 'unjust' without stretching the limits of logic and intellectual honesty beyond their breaking points. When a cat kills and eats a mouse it is not 'unjust', because it is part of the natural order of things. But this 'natural order of things' is not a moral injunction; there is no moral law against extending our beneficence to as many others as we like or are able to reach. My grandfather, though successful economically, spent most of his time treating people without charge. He spent his retirement teaching, both interns and continuing education for practising doctors, creating a free clinic in a small city in Indiana, as well as a hospice, and treating gratis all the non-paying patients of his fellow doctors. He spent his weekends making house visits. Injustice is not withholding something good from others, it is denying to others what is rightfully theirs. The special medical attentions I received from my grandfather, and the special 'cultural advantages' (if that's what they are) of being my father's son, did not belong rightfully to anyone else, though while I received them they were simultaneously 'denied to others', to use leftist parlance. These benefits were accorded by the free choice of my progenitors, who were under no obligation, that I know about, to provide them to others instead.

This sort of straightforward reasoning is all very well, but what of the horrific commerce that goes on in kidneys and eyeballs? Indians and Rumanians, for a handful of dollars, are selling off their body parts to first-worlders. Even worse; there is troubling evidence that murders are committed to maintain a fresh supply. Chaotic tyrannical areas are convenient for the dire deeds necessary while life expectancy in the West continues to progress. It is one thing for us, individually or collectively, to live longer; it is quite another thing to do so at the expense of others. No more need be said about this aspect of the problem other than to note that our technological progress is putting unprecedented pressure on poor non-Westerners to sell body parts, and the expansion of cloning will certainly create an important market for human ova which will weigh disproportionately on poor non-Western women. Just as it is a grotesque rape of logic to call suicide bombers 'freedom fighters', and to pretend that deliberately killing innocent people is a legitimate act of war, so violating the

integrity of peoples' bodies, upon which their lives depend, is no realm for contracts and commerce.

The Fair-Play act, on the other hand, though it creates a logic of murder, is a genuine contract, freely entered upon. In *The Killing Machine* Vance looks at another kind of immortality, that of the hormagaunt. The hormagaunt, like the vampire, gains immortality by robbing the vitality of others; his immortality depends directly on depriving others of life. The Amaranth is not a horror like the hormagaunt, but the phyle system, which legitimates the privileges of the Amaranths, creates a perverted social order by introducing psychologically unsupportable and dehumanizing stress. The story recounted in *Clarges* is driven by this stress, and cloning is one of several forces moving our society, step by step, in such a direction. The obsession with eternal youth has become a gigantic commerce in hormones, diet and exercise products and publications. Few people aspire to death, and being young, apart from the sting of stupidity, is an obvious good. But death has always been the fate of us mortals. This mysterious fact has been met in many ways: the comforts of religion and the consolations of philosophy, the warmth of home and family, the simple satisfaction of a life honestly lived. But now not only is technology dangling before us the promise of simply eradicating the mystery of death in technological immortality, these traditional comforts, consolations and buffers are more and more out of reach. Our society is more and more atheist. Philosophy has been degraded to politics so that its true expression becomes ever more esoteric. Families are exploded and the 'senior citizen', a monad whose closest links are not familial but to the State, after having, to a greater and greater extent, devoted himself to personal gratification, is parked in a 'retirement home', there to await the curtain-fall on a life ill-spent; grumpy, regretful, lacking jolly rollicking grandchildren or the balm of prayer.

Aside from the growing number of groups dedicated to a fantasy of personal immortality in the manner of the Raelians, and apart from the popular mania of youth prolongation, even if today's medical science is not capable of offering us immortality the problems it poses are essentially the same as those faced by the city of Clarges. I have mentioned life prolonging organ transplants. Dialysis and tri-therapy are other such life-saving technologies, difficult to obtain outside the West. In the West we find ways to extend many such benefits to people of modest means, just as the Fair-Play Act offers a chance at immortality to all citizens of Clarges. But what of Africans, Asians and South Americans? They are flooding into first world countries and part of the reason is their understandable eagerness to 'share' our good things. But the social system that permits our good things to be shared among 'us' is put under dangerous pressure by these 'interlopers'. For many reasons, only

one of which, and it is hardly the most important, is the growing population of non-paying 'interlopers', the French State medical system is coming apart at the seams. To give one example: doctors, no longer willing to make State mandated house-visits for ridiculously low fixed fees, are being requisitioned by the police who burst into their houses and drag them off to their duty. I know this because I have several doctor friends, and it is also sometimes even mentioned in the news. The problems related to growing medical insurance costs in America are a less acute version of this same problem.

Underneath such problems lurks a hard fact: it is impossible to share good things one does not have, and many of our medical resources are not infinitely abundant. For example, there currently exist in the whole world a finite number of heart specialists. These specialists can only treat a limited number of patients each month. More specialists could be trained, enough to treat the people of the entire world, but who would pay for this training, to say nothing of the eventual livelihood of the specialists, if the people they treat cannot pay? Leftists would insist that this is strictly a matter of the greed and callousness of the rich who refuse to share their profits—supposedly extorted from the poor in the first place—with these very poor; but this is not true. It might be possible to create hospitals all over the world filled with specialists and all the latest modern gadgets, at the price of denying everyone in the first world all their 'extra' income. One result of such confiscation would be that stamp collectors, for example, could no longer buy stamps, or that no one could afford a ticket to a baseball game. Well, it might be asked, what of that? What are numismatics and the *American game* when our brothers and sisters are dying of clogged arteries in Timbuktu? Apart from the discouragement and frustration of stamp collectors and baseball fans, dealers in collectible stamps and first basemen would lose their jobs, and with them the 'extra income' needed to finance the world medical system—to say nothing of their non-extra income. Many European economies, and the French economy in particular, suffer a degree of such confiscatory taxes. In France the not surprising result is that few businesses get created, that people leave the country to live elsewhere—rich and inventive people in particular—and that the economy as a whole stagnates, with such consequences as the French not being able to afford an army.

So, with the greatest good will in the world, it is, as things stand today, impossible to offer the benefits of modern medical technology to all the inhabitants of the globe. Just as Clarges closes its borders to the barbarians and restricts access to the upper phyle by legally assassinating members of the lower phyle as they reach their 'appointed time' so the first world 'restricts', willy nilly, access to modern technology, with the inevitable

consequence that many people in other places, or at the bottom of the social ladder, die sooner than they might have, having lacked the foresight to be born in the first world.

Vance is acutely conscious of the real life consequences of these pressures. Here, in a passage reminiscent of *The Stark* outline—which I believe dates from the same year—Vance brings out the effects of immortality on the law and the lives of people:

As the years passed the Fair-Play Act was modified. The life grants of each phyle were given a variable definition, through a formula based on the annual production, the population of each phyle, the proportion of glarks*, and similar considerations.

To apply this formula to the record of each individual, an enormous calculating machine called the Actuarian was constructed. Besides calculating and recording, the Actuarian printed individual life charts on demand, revealing to the applicant the slope of his lifeline, its proximity either to the horizontal boundary of the next phyle, or the vertical terminator.

If the lifeline crossed the terminator, the Emigration Officer and his assassins carried out the grim duties required of them by the Act. It was ruthless, but it was orderly—and starkly necessary.

The system was not without its shortcomings. Creative thinkers tended to work in proved fields, to shun areas which might prove barren of career-points. The arts became dominated by academic standards; nonconformity, fantasy and nonsense were produced only by the glarks—also much that was macabre and morose.

Anxiety and disappointment were obvious partners to the climb through phyle; the palliatives were crowded with those who had chosen unreality rather than continued struggle.

As the generations passed, emotional necessity for slope dominated the life of the Reach. Every working hour was devoted either to work, to planning for work, or to the study of techniques for success. Hobbies and sport became rare; social functions were poorly attended.

The Amaranths gain immortality by special injections. However, simply being an Amaranth does not insure immortality because the risk of death by accident or non-State sanctioned murder remains. To insure against these dangers each Amaranth has five clones, called 'surrogates'. The clones are maintained in a state of suspended animation, as well as 'empathy' with the Amaranth. If the

*The nimps of *Night Lamp* are opt-outers, like the glarks.

Amaranth is killed a surrogate is awakened and perpetuates the consciousness of the Amaranth, continuing its life. I have always wondered whether the dead Amaranth has not in fact suffered a permanent end:

I could not leave my surrogates; our empathy would fail; our souls would diverge; there would be no identification, no continuity.

Is empathy, or 'identification', even 'non-divergence' of the 'soul', equivalent to complete identity? Is the death of an Amaranth not a true death, even if the surrogate has the same memories, carrying forward the Amaranth's 'life', at least to all appearances, from the moment of its end? The Clargesque concept of 'empathy' carries little conviction, at least to me; more convincing might be brain transplant into a cloned body. Head transplants of monkeys have been attempted. In one such case the head was kept alive on the new body for a matter of days. Certain surgeons insist that such an operation is viable and there are quadriplegic human candidates. A Frenchman who has two grafted donor hands has, after several years, gained partial use of them. The creation of human clones coupled with successful brain transplant, or transplant of whatever part of the brain carries the consciousness—if any—coupled with some sort of anti-degeneration treatment of brain tissue such as used in certain cases of Parkinson's, would mean the possibility of creating Amaranths. Given the vast cost of such techniques only the richest could hope to afford them, and such a situation would doubtlessly provoke serious civil and even international disorder unless the Fair-Play Act were adopted.

The Fair-Play Act eventually results in a population of Amaranths only, stabilized at an ideal number, or the total victory of the great-great-great grandfathers. This is in the same moral league with legalized abortion, and the draconian population controls in China including enforced sterilization, is another form of this victory. Is it immoral? It may be, but only if morality exists.*

*In *The Palace of Love* Vance shows another side of cloning. When Violen Falushe is frustrated in his desire for Jheral Tinzy he uses her to produce duplicates upon which he practices various techniques to gain what he never could from the original. Not only are his ambitions and desires regarding Jheral grotesque because they ignore her humanity and exalt only his own solipsistic fantasy of being adored by this particular being, but each clone turns out to be a person in her own right. We meet at least three of these clones; Drusilla Wayles, or Zan Zu the girl from Eridu, is a soulful, somewhat sullen creature with a smoldering spark of openness to life; the portrait of an ordinary girl subject both to the capricious upbringing provided by Navarth and the mysterious pressure of her secret destiny. Her 'sister', the priestess to Arodin, is more positive and audacious, as befits her situation of celebrity and authority, which she rejects with the very spiritual tools her environment helped her develop. The real lives of these girls are so distant from anything corresponding to Violen Falushe's hopes that the situation at the end of the story would be anticlimactic if the reality of it all were not so compelling.

Parents who dream of clones of themselves as children are doomed to the same disappointment. Children are distinct individuals. To taste the joy of parenthood parents must be open to the individuality of their offspring.

Dear reader; are you precious to yourself? Are your loved ones precious to you? If so, why? On what basis? Mere love of what is your own? What are your ideals made of? If your love and your ideals are mere biological quirks, why accept such a constraint upon the *grand freedom* which must be the only destiny awaiting an *enlightened spirit*? Why lose one instant of liberation for the sake of weak-minded superstition? Why choose love over indifference? Why choose loyalty when it could be personally inconvenient, unpleasurable or even deadly? If the universe is a senseless mechanism, if the greatest insight is consciousness of the universal void, why encumber oneself with loves, or even hates? All impulses must be instinctive atavisms shorting out the circuits of our rationality. Why imitate the behaviors of angels, or even devils, if all prizes are illusory? Atheist activism is suspect; what good is being pursued when both good and evil are illusions? Epicurius saw most deeply into the question and recommended stoic indifference, a life of tranquil contemplation of the *great truth*. Mere codes of good conduct must be insipid to those who have tasted the greatest thrill of which a man is allegedly capable, the glory of the *final insight*.

The Mecca of Scientism

Charles Darwin is the Mohammed of Scientism, and the Galapagos Islands are its Mecca.

The Galapagos Islands are the ultimate nature reserve and current events there are reminiscent of conditions on the planet Cadwal. The population of the Galapagos Islands, like the Agents of Araminta Station, are entirely devoted to preserving the natural habitat and the rare and multifarious species, favoring scientific research and managing tourists. The population of the Islands keeps growing, and the number of tourists as well. One of their most pressing problems is that oviparous rats have invaded some of the islands menacing certain turtle species.

As for Darwin, whose famous observation of the beaks of sparrows on the Galapagos is the ur-moment in the elaboration of the theory of evolution, he remains the prophet of Scientism. It is both revealing and unfortunate that one of Darwin's early influences was Malthus. Malthus was obsessed by an idea which, after a period of eclipse, has come back in force. According to Malthus population growth, and human population growth in particular, is constrained by limits of food supply which engenders a struggle in which only the fittest survive. The Malthusian concern is often falsely limited to alarm about mere population growth; in fact it is a fateful and materialist view of Man as *animal species in specialized niche*—the latter being the whole planet. Neo-Darwinists like to pretend that Darwin's thinking was limited to the mechanisms of evolution but Darwin did not confine himself to this aspect. He considered the human brain as

a merely augmented sort of animal brain and meditated upon the moral consequences of this. If Men are just animals whose brains, in addition to the animal qualities of 'curiosity', 'memory' and 'imagination', encompass 'compassion' and 'theoretical reasoning'—Darwin also seems to have mentioned 'sense of the divine'—one wonders why he insisted on collapsing the horizons opened by the expanded capacities of this special brain back to those accessed by the limited animal organ? Because eyeless microbes cannot contemplate the stars does not mean the firmament does not exist. Because a fish cannot fly does not mean there is no air. Because a sparrow cannot do long division does not mean that mathematics are not an amazing tool of manipulation and penetration of reality. By the same token, because a monkey has no idea about God does not mean the latter is a mere figment of the human imagination.

Scientism is what happens when you insist there is no God, not even any mystery, and that the universe is a mechanism. It may be an almost unimaginably gigantic mechanism of fabulously multifarious ramification from microcosm to macrocosm, but it is a mere mechanism nonetheless. Man is just another part of this mechanism, a bacteria infecting the surface of an unremarkable planet orbiting an unremarkable sun, in an unremarkable sector of an unremarkable galaxy in an unremarkable sector of intergalactic space. He is a phenomenon consisting of a certain configuration of atoms, whose existence—which has no greater or lesser importance than the existence of anything else like, say, a small methane cloud near the 17th planet of Rasalhague—is the result of conditions and processes which have no 'reason' or 'purpose', but which simply 'are'. These conditions have nothing necessary, ordained or desired about them but simply may arise in a situation which cannot be understood any more deeply than as *the existing of what exists*. Though Scientism insists it understands the metaphysical limits of existence, namely that it begins and ends in nothingness and pointlessness—a supposedly magnificent and terrifying insight 'Scientismists' alone have the bravery to face up to—in fact it can give no account of these limits. What is it, this *existence*? Where does it come from? Why and how? Scientism can answer none of these questions or, even if it claims that one day it will be able to, in the ultimate sense it brushes them aside as irrelevant like a fish without interest in the sky or a microbe without interest in the stars. When you know beforehand that there is nothing to know, you lack a motivation even to be curious.

When charity, constance or heroism are invoked, the Scientismists speak of 'cultural characteristics' and class them according to a 'comparative anthropology' which parses virtues and vices as categories of purely relative scope, or they explain them in jungle terms as 'survival strategies'. As for God, he is clearly superstitious

foolishness and Scientism reserves its greatest charge of contempt and aggressiveness for religion. But, according to its own definition of religion—that religion is intellectual nonsense based on an unprovable hypothesis—Scientism is itself a 'religion'; or if you prefer Christianity terminology, Scientism is a heresy because it proclaims the non-existence of God.

Scientism depends on the abasement of Man to the animal level. The expanded capacities of Man's brain apparently do not, as they would for an augmented microbe, fish or dog, open new horizons of reality; the human brain is an organ that perceives the basic animal reality but in kaleidoscopic fashion, multiplying and coloring fundamental impulses for food, copulation and dominance, into forms more fantastical and complex than they appear to other animals. Only men can go mad; the outer limits of his mental capacities are unhealthy, unnatural; he is best off when he drops his eyes to the dirt and follows his lowest impulses, rejecting and forgetting his spiritual flights and agonies.

In *The Narrow Land* the basic egg can produce several types, depending on nest configuration:

"The One-woman lays eggs of alternate sex, in clutches of three. [. . .] If she is careless, she will fail to separate the eggs and will put down a clutch with two eggs in contact. The male breaks into the female shell; there is fusion; a Two is hatched. At the rarest of intervals three eggs are so joined. [. . .] The result is a male Three."

These types are recognized by their overall morphology but most particularly by the number of cranial ridges. There are One-men, Two-men, Three-men, and even Four-men. From the reader's perspective the Threes clearly seem to be the perfected or ideal form of the species. Ones are almost like animals. Twos are more intelligent but narrow minded, superstitious and doctrinaire, as exemplified in their teachings:

"One-men and One-women are incomplete, forever driven by the urge to couple; only fusion yields the true Two [. . .] the opposing principles of Storm and Dark-Chill, being divine, are infinite. Therefore, the Narrow Land, the region of confrontation, likewise is infinite [. . .] STORM-CHAOS is, and dazzles the dark with his lightnings. This is the masculine principle. DARK-CHILL, the female principle, is. She accepts the rage and fire and quells it. We Twos partake of each, we are at equilibrium, and hence excellent."

The Three approach to these same problems is objective and experimental:

We built a raft and sent it to drift under the Wall of Storm. There were three Ones aboard. The raft was tethered with a long cable; when we pulled it

back the Ones had been riven by dazzle and were dead.

They use observation, logic, induction, deduction and are willing to draw, and live with, provisional conclusions:

“The Wall of Storm confronts the Wall of Dark; the Narrow Land extends—how far? Who knows? If to infinity then all possibilities must be realized; then there are other Ones, Twos and Threes. If the Narrow Land terminates at Chaos, then we may be alone.”

“I have traveled sea-right and sea-left until wide rivers stopped me,” said Ern. “The Narrow Land continued without any sign of coming to an end. I believe that it must extend to infinity; in fact it is hard to conceive of a different situation.”

The Fours are ogres, demented and cruel.

Transposing the process of zygote-addition via embryonic battle to evolutionary adaptation and survival of the fittest, Twos are on the evolutionary road to a higher state; they are not yet fully human. The Fours correspond to the insane, or the vancian criminal ‘over-men’ type, *ubermenschen*, power wielders heedless of morality. They have ‘evolved’ too far. So there is a Golden Mean, an optimal point of view or mentality or brain, that corresponds best to reality. The Ones and Twos don’t see far enough; the Fours see ‘too far’. Limited or mad, all are hampered. We recognize ourselves in the Threes. We feel of ourselves that we see more deeply into reality than animals and also see reality more justly than mad tyrants. Those of us who have not ‘benefited’ from ‘higher’ education (though we may have been subject to it) feel that our insights, our finer feelings, are not senseless ravings or an exalted sense of personal, racial, or class superiority.

Darwinian thinking yields another reading. The Darwinian idea is suspicious of the human mental state; the animal view of reality is ‘normal. Thus Threes, as well as Twos, would seem to have evolved too far, as if both, each in its own manner, were a sort of Four. The ‘human quality’ that seizes metaphysical concepts, holds invisible ideals or fabricates art seems to be disqualified by Darwinism because these would seem to be distortions of reality. The Three-man is a One-man with illusions. Indeed, Threes are not subject to mysticism and doctrinaire thinking—one of the most famous ‘Darwinian’ reproaches to the human mind—but they have other qualities as well: love of freedom and knowledge in the abstract and for their own sake. Mazar the Final says to Ern:

... you are free to pursue existence elsewhere. If you choose to stay, I will teach you what I know.

They love beauty:

They entered a courtyard which seemed to Ern a place of unparalleled charm. At the far end boulders and a great overhanging slab created the effect of a grotto. Within were trickling water, growths of feathery black moss, pale cycads, a settle padded with woven reed and sphagnum. The open area was a swamp-garden, exhaling the odors of reed, water-soaked vegetation, resinous wood. Remarkable, thought Ern, as well as enchanting: neither the Ones nor the Twos contrived except for immediately definable purpose.

Darwinism tolerates the artistic sensibility, as a harmless excrescence perhaps, and can hardly quarrel with love of knowledge though it tends to be cynical about any phase of knowledge outside hard science and practical matters. But a key issue for Darwinism is sexuality, and in *The Narrow Land* Vance gives this a most significant place. The Twos are neuter and consider themselves, for this very reason, perfect. This may be a jab at priestly celibacy. It is true that the Catholic Church, while it strongly encourages both marriage and reproduction, does give celibacy a place of particular honor. This is because, in the Church’s view, though man and woman are made for each other and the erotic aspect of love is a divine gift, celibacy is the outward sign of man’s highest calling: whole-hearted devotion to God. To understand this from a non-Christian perspective it can be thought of as single-minded devotion to Truth and Goodness.*

The Ones are like animals. They are the slaves of the Twos because of their weak minds. They are sexed, and therefore erotic, but in the manner of animals, responding to an instinctive impulse operating on the level of biological imperatives. Lacking is the link to imagination, ideals, longing which lies beyond the mere biological itch. This lack is indicated obliquely when Mazar speaks his opinion on the non-availability of Three women:

“Unluckily there are no Three females.”

One-women are attractive physically to Three males, so Mazar cannot mean: ‘unluckily there are no females’. What is unlucky is that there are no females with whom he may share a love that is more than physical.

Another indication is when Ern seems to have discovered a way to hatch female Threes.

“There will be two females,” declared Mazar. “Of this I am certain. I am old—but, well, we shall see.”

*Why should such devotion exclude sexuality? At the very least sex is time consuming and eroticism distracting; a perfect devotion to one thing excludes devotion to other things. Why such compartmentalization? Can a man not love Goodness and love his wife as well? To the extent his wife is not good a man cannot love both goodness and his wife. Is it necessary to make coitus to taste the fullness of one’s humanity?

Mazar cannot here be concerned with procreation, because this can be effected by eggs laid by One-women. He also cannot mean mere erotic activity because this is, again, possible with One-women. He must, therefore, be referring to a communion that is erotico-spiritual.

Putting aside Darwinism's, or Scientism's, ideological insistence upon the ultimate nature of what I am calling the 'animal view'—according to which the limits of moral reality are collapsed into an impoverished ethic of instinct, feeding and breeding—its refusal to venture out into the horizons opened by the human mind mire it in a contradiction. Either there is unplanned, unpredictable, random evolution which, by the process of natural selection, leads to the creation of species better and better adapted to their environment—and this would seem to be the Darwinian view—or there is not. There is no denying that Man has the most evolved brain, or mind, of all species, and yet, in crucial aspects—the aspects which are the most important to humans themselves—Scientism rejects the horizons opened by this mind. It may be thrilled and fascinated by a baboon using a twig to dig a grub out of a crack, but it sneers at conjugal loyalty, regarding promiscuity as normal. It is disinterested in art, so that architecture, in the Darwinian view, is nothing more than mere shelter, with doo-dads added. It is, ultimately, politically cynical because 'moral principles', being non-existent and therefore imaginary and thus relative, is held to be mere hypocritical cover for *real* politics.* As for compassion, it is redefined as a cover for the instinctive desire for self-protection.

These rationalizations function as apologies for corresponding vulgar attitudes: instrumentalization of women's bodies for physical gratification, and a hard-bitten attitude toward the troubles of others (or 'social Darwinism').

Darwin claimed that animals share the human quality of curiosity. But is there no difference between scientific curiosity, to say nothing of poetic curiosity (by which I mean the mental tool by which a writer like Jack Vance explores and apprehends the world) and animal curiosity, which is clearly so limited? Is curiosity a mere brain-lobe secretion?*** Is Archimedes contemplating the stars equivalent to a dog sniffing a turd? Even if curiosity has the same root in both animals and man, does not the vast scope of the human variant add something wholly new to it? Why must the root of a thing be equivalent to its essence? The root of a carrot may be the carrot, but is the root of a tree the tree?

*When *real* politics are themselves covered by leftism, or from the Darwinist view: hypocritical humanism, and leftism is sanctioned by Darwinists, the equation becomes almost impossible to resolve.

**Magnus Ridolph: "My brain, otherwise a sound instrument, has a serious defect—a hypertrophied lobe of curiosity."

As for the pursuit of beauty, what can be said of that? Are artists maladjusted? Sanity, in the animal-horizon view, is indicated by gluttony and lust, and *adaptation*—or as the Darwinians might say, 'intelligence'—is indicated by successful strategies to satisfy these impulses. Gluttony and lust are not sins but natural and normal impulses the satisfaction of which is... what? Certainly not the reason we were put on this earth, because we were not *put* anywhere, and there is no *reason for* anything. Gluttony and lust, then, just *are*. We are free to do as we like with these impulses which have no sense beyond that which we, in the total capriciousness of our vaporous human minds, care to assign them. The Christian view, according to which we should wish to triumph over sin and seek, in the words of the psalmist, *to learn to love the paths of the Lord*, is merely a socially convenient arrangement, judged favorable when its track record of stabilizing human communities and thus favoring the free action of hypertrophied lobes of curiosity, is considered paramount; or judged unfavorable when the limitations it imposes on impulses arising from secretions of other lobes is resented. In the latter case less orderly conditions more favorable to unrestricted satisfactions become 'favorable', or even 'necessary'—though where Scientism finds any impulsion corresponding to the urgency suggested by such words as 'need', let alone 'judge' or even the tepid 'favorable', is a mystery. To state this mystery another way: Scientism is self-contradictory when it introduces a hierarchy of values (one thing is more favorable than another thing) into a view of the universe which depends on radical relativism. A great deal of modern 'philosophy' is devoted to this very problem: the struggle to introduce a sorely missed dose of hierarchical value into a theoretical framework the structural integrity of which depends on the meaningless of everything. This is not the place to comment on this strange enterprise, though only reflection on this problem would shed light on the basic tension which I am trying to describe.

If we abandon Darwinist restriction of 'mind' to the animal level, human intelligence blossoms out upon an augmented view of reality whose existence could hardly be suspected when the dinosaurs ruled the earth. Just as rocks, water and air engage in no competition, no struggle for survival, so animals are untroubled by prospects beyond the satisfaction of their instinctive impulses; moral considerations, to say nothing of the finer sentiments and impulses, do not exist for them.

Man's situation is different. He is aware of himself. He can contemplate the infinite. He can see himself, and infinity, in others. The rocks, the water, the air exist but know nothing of satisfaction. Like a rock, animals exist and, in addition, are caught in a web of desire which in their case extends not much farther than feeding and procreation—unconscious versions of gluttony and lust—

which, luckily for them in the doubtful case they possess eternal souls, dissipate as soon as satisfied (or, in Christian terminology, animals live in a state of grace). If they kill, or are killed, it is all one; the situation may be more or less favorable from the point of view of propagation of their species but they fail even to be aware of the situation in such terms. The rat eaten by the cat may squeak in distress but he lacks any proud sense that his flight from death served the great purpose of rodent survival or any consolation that his ingurgitating by the cat serves the noble finality of feline perpetuation.

Man is just as subject to gravity as a rock, just as caught in a web of desire as a horse. But, beyond this, he is aware that he exists. He has a mind he can cast upon his desires, allowing him to choose to rise above or go counter to his instinctive reactions, to look at himself from the outside, or to put himself in the place of others. Despite the fashionable, and vancian, perplexity before the word 'intelligence', its meaning is clear enough: *choosing* (from the Latin: *inter* between, *legere* choose). Animals make no choices. They are like Adam and Eve before the fall and the expulsion. Everything is given to them. Their every move, each flick of the tail, is less something they 'choose' than something that happens to them.

Existence is an aspect of the universe, it is even its predicate. We don't really know what existence is but we know *that* it is (unless we are Buddhists and deny the reality of reality). Desire is both more and less mysterious than existence. We may not know how things that exist do exist but we can touch and manipulate them. But desire we cannot manipulate so easily, or even at all. We cannot choose it, but we do feel it. Are we not clots of organized dust made from nothing but the material of the world, the *dust of far suns* perhaps, but still local material (from a galactic point of view)? How can desire, a thing we may cultivate or resist but cannot command, be something we generate inside ourselves out of nothing? Desire, like the dust that forms our bodies, must be part of the universe, contained in it, integral to it, and thus part of us, through whom it is expressed, as it is through the other animals and even the plants; desiring, moving toward other extant things; opening to the needed light and sucking at the needed water.

Likewise, we know *intelligence* because it is part of our own nature and we recognize it in others. How can it be part of us and not be inherent in the universe when we ourselves are only a part of the universe? How can bones come into being without the prior existence of calcium? How can the desire to eat come into being without the armature of creatures that need to eat? How can creatures arise with such desires if the possibility for the arising of such creatures is not inherent in the universe? Our self-awareness; what is it made of? Out of what

invisible calcium is it built? Why do Darwinists—as if we didn't know!—refuse to see intelligence, to say nothing of beneficence and omnipotence, in the miraculous order of things?

At the end of *Clarges* the clones are all cut off from 'empathy'. The Amaranths from whom they were fabricated are deprived of their immortality insurance. The clones, liberated from their stature of tool, become self-actuated beings. As they emerge blinking into the city they begin independent lives. The great sign of this life is this, that they *choose for themselves*.

On the Galapagos Islands, if the local authorities don't pull themselves together and limit the population and tourists, things will continue to deteriorate and eventually the Islands will be overrun by humans. The lizards will become pets and the turtles will become soup. To avoid this the local authorities will have to give the pre-human condition of the Galapagos Islands unconditionally higher priority than the desires of hundreds of thousands of humans living today, and impose this preference by force, perhaps even expelling certain residents and preventing many tourists, many would-be hadjis of Scientism, from making the sacred pilgrimage—to say nothing of genocidal extermination of irregularity rat, cat and goat populations. A religion that prevents its faithful from making the great pilgrimage? It is an unprecedented situation but each religion reflects a unique apprehension of the universe with specific consequences for all aspects of life; a man who walks on his hands can live without shoes.



More Kudos for Wave One

compiled by Suan Yong

...the books are worthy of Mr. Vance! I am very impressed and will enjoy reading each and every one of them!

—Richard Payne

Thanks so much for your hard work on this. I feel like I got off cheap just paying into the fund! It's great to finally have a complete set of Vance. I think I may stop collecting his books besides first editions and special editions.

—Anthony Towsley

The books are beautiful. My husband was beside himself with joy over this Christmas present.

—Helen Newhard

. . . thank you for a great job.

—Frank Clemente

Half the long wait is over! I feel rich with what I've received, but I still lust for the remainder.

—Wayne Henry

They are absolutely beautiful and they arrived in pristine condition. I would like to thank all of the volunteers whose hard work made this day possible.

—Matthew J. Colburn

Received my set Friday and am so far delighted just to handle the books. I await with great eagerness Wave 2!

—Eric Harrison

P.S. Are there any other subscribers from Arkansas?

. . . thank you all so much for the VIE. What an extraordinary accomplishment, for such an extraordinary body of work.

—Kelly Walker

The volumes are beautiful; the contents are interesting, and significant. Encore!

—Richard Heaps

Congratulations on a magnificent accomplishment. The set is beautiful and a real thrill to own.

Let me also say the wrapping and packing job was the best I've ever seen, and probably harkens back to how things were done generations ago. Not a single crushed corner, creased page or deformed bookboard. The carefully folded shipping wrappers reminded me of origami.

—Mike Gearlds

Congrats go to Paul for AMIANTE, which looks fantastic on the printed page. I'm thrilled about the quality of the Readers' Edition. It's definitely been worth the wait. . .

Thanks so much for what will become a family heirloom.

—Erik Mona

Editor, Polyhedron Magazine

WOW! They look great. Wonderful packing job, too! A real work of love, done with taste and style. Now comes the fun part: reading them!

—John Carr

My deluxe edition set has arrived in pristine condition and my heart is aflutter.

—Stephen Kent

Got the books today by FedEx. My thanks to the folks in N.J. and Suan for sorting through the problems with my shipping address and getting these here ASAP (and

thanks also to the folks in Milan and all the volunteers). Received 22 books, no missubstitutions. Probably won't have a chance to go through each book page by page, but a quick flip-through revealed no major page order anomalies. Covers are all great, except the weird double stamping on the spine of *Night Lamp* reported by others (which isn't a big deal to me).

As for the quality of the books themselves. . . superb!!! Everything looks very classy indeed.

Makes it very hard to resist the temptation to stop working on my thesis (due next Wed. . . argh!!!) to crack open vol. 1. . .

—Chris Yuen

Hi. My set of VIE Wave 1 books arrived on 5/16 and appear to be in great condition. Thank you, and thank you all for the massive work on shipping these to everyone! A truly impressive effort. I hope that there aren't too many problems with the follow-up.

After many years of work, and many more of anticipation that someday I would have these books, it is a wonderful feeling to finally see them. To touch and smell them. And to begin reading them. I am proud to have contributed to this effort and to be a part of this truly impressive world-wide group of volunteers.

Best wishes.

—Dave Reitsema

They look great and the packing was perfect. All pages present and in order. Job well done; thank you very much.

—Greg Laird

I would like to add that the books look great, and that I am grateful for all of the hard work which has been put into the integral edition. I feel guilty for not having pitched in, but the project took place during a very busy time for me (no excuse, I know).

Thanks!

—Travis Mitchell

I'd like to take the opportunity to express my thanks and congratulations to the VIE team and volunteers for the great effort so far. I have already read about 6 volumes and I'm having great fun.

—Hervé Goubin

I also want to express my admiration for the work you've done, the dedication to excellence, and the fine product you've produced.

—Mark Adams



About the CLS

CLS 21 is being published in association with this issue of *Cosmopolis*. Apart from the next installment of Tim Stretton's *Dragonchaser* it also contains a somewhat bawdy short-story by Till.

Again I would like to remind you all that submissions for the CLS are not only welcome but very much desired!

Enjoy.

Cheers,

Till Noever



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

My set of Wave One VIE books has arrived. I am writing this letter to add my voice to the chorus of praise for a job well done.

I initially subscribed to the VIE out of a desire to see Vance's work preserved for posterity, expecting that the actual books themselves would gather dust—after all, I figured I'd already read them many times.

So I'm surprised and delighted to discover in these books a large amount of stuff I'd never seen before, especially the stories collected in Volume 17 (*The Moon Moth*). How did I manage, in twenty-three years of being a Vance fan, to *not* have read *Green Magic*?

My hat is off to Paul Rhoads for the illustrations. I must say he's come closer to capturing the feel of Vance's writing than any other illustrator I've seen attempt it.

Thanks,

James Gary



To the Editor,

I am just a subscriber, not a volunteer or someone who has worked on the VIE project. I wanted to send out an extra big thank you to all the folks whose hard work helped to create these editions. Because I am just a reader, I am distant and unfamiliar with all the conflicts and difficulties that must have transpired during this gigantic undertaking. Perhaps that gives a more pure perspective for my initial reaction to the end product that I have just received? As I wrote when I first received my Wave 1 set: the deluxe volumes are incredibly beautiful; it's a miracle that everything came together so gracefully; what a delight they are to hold in-hand. Now that I have sat down and read one of the volumes, cover to cover, I have something further to add.

After selecting *Emphyrio*, for no particular reason as the first book to read, I have to say:

Reading the text in this version and edition is such a great pleasure!!!

The type, the typesetting, the design, the paper, the printing—it all comes together in a way that makes Vance's words, and the ideas behind the words, come through so much more clearly than any other past reading of the work that I have had. The textual interface between Vance's words and my eye-brain really feels optimal to this reader.

I have probably read *Emphyrio* 3 or 4 times since it came out when I was a kid. I remember reading the magazine version first, during my college years. *Reading the VIE edition—so much more comes through to this reader.* My eyes can better soak up all the content of Jack's words and the pictures in my mind's eye are sharper and both more brightly, and more subtly, colored. WOW! You folks did a great job, not only that these lovely books exist, but that they are such a wonderful experience to read. Thanks so much!

Henry Kaiser, Oakland CA



To the Editor,

It's interesting that... somebody... commented on my notes regarding the AMIANTE font out of context. Anyway, the reply is, so far as I can tell, unattributed. Basically, having a life beyond arcane commentary over design issues with an underqualified respondent, suffice it to say that a worthwhile project has been misserved by incompetent graphics. AMIANTE is illegible. I only used Palatino as an example. At (listen up, amigo) comparable point sizes, AMIANTE is small on the page. That's my story, and I'm stickin' to it.

Cliff Abrams

Editor's Note: I contacted Mr. Abrams pointing out that the letter in question was written by Paul Rhoads, and explained where his signature was to be found. I received the following reply:

Yeah, after I sent this I noticed the signature. But it was in AMIANTE. Italic, no less, and, thus, illegible.

Cliff Abrams



To the Editor,

I started to read Rhoads' latest 'Ramblings' because I was interested by its beginning. However, I was expecting the inevitable and, sure enough, it came. I went through the 'prologue' even though my blood pressure started

rising. But after that it really got bad. By the time he was on Papon's term as 'chief' of police in Paris I was fuming. (These were my student days in Paris.) And then, Sowell's concept! I quit. Actually, I do share his view of many leftists as sanctimonious farts but does he have to give ultra-rightists the automatic benefit of so much doubt? Of course nobody ever thought Le Pen would start killing Jews and/or Arabs but what Le Pen says he *would* do in *other* regards is plenty enough to make him quite undesirable, at least to me.

Given my admiration for Rhoads though, I have long been wondering about how he was able to annoy me so thoroughly. One thing of course is what he decides the 'facts' are. I suppose that he would respond that we all do. Well, yes, but some of us acknowledge that facts sometimes are, at least to an extent, in the eye of the beholder and that others may see them differently. So, we allow for it in that we first make sure that we agree on them, at least minimally. If not, then we discuss the 'facts' themselves. Otherwise, what would be the point? What annoys me then is that Rhoads, by completely ignoring what *I* see as facts, takes me for a completely irrelevant idiot. (I have said that before.) Again, I suppose that he would respond that I don't *know* that he takes me for a complete idiot and, if I feel that he does, then that it is *my* problem.

But consider his "I cannot say how many Frenchmen I know who, even though they have traveled extensively in America, love to watch American films and even drink Coca-Cola, believe that a significant segment of the American population is homeless and dies on the streets of starvation while cigar smoking millionaires tool by in Cadillacs, that there are no retirement pensions, no unemployment relief, and that blacks are systematically repressed." I don't know what implications I am supposed to derive as to what the facts are but I don't think that I see them as he seems to. And I happen to be French and to have lived in what is politely called integrated neighborhoods of Philadelphia since 1965 and to have been teaching (by choice) at the Community College of Philadelphia since 1966. Where does that leave me?

As I have also said before, I am an anarcho-syndicalist and so, presumably, a 'leftist'. How am I then to react to his apparent endorsement of "Sowell's underlying thesis, that leftism is essentially a mechanism to leverage a sense of moral superiority"? Should I retort that Christianity is essentially a mechanism to leverage a sense of moral superiority?

Finally, here is a quote from Noel Weyrich's 'contrarian' piece in Philadelphia Magazine (Feb. 2003), not exactly a leftist publication.

Taxes are low in Upper Merion in part because most residents are so well-off that they need almost nothing from government beyond funding

for the schools. A bigger reason is the mammoth King of Prussia mall, the largest shopping center on the East Coast, which pays the township and the school district millions in taxes each year. To keep these tax rolls flush, however, the mall needs a steady supply of people from outside Upper Merion: customers from affluent suburbs, and inexpensive workers from the area's greatest labor source—Philadelphia. Workers at the King of Prussia mall's 480 or so shops and restaurants don't make much more than \$7.50 per hour.

And, I might add, no fringe benefits and a very long bus ride.

So, yes, Rhoads the 'anti-left' ideologue does annoy me tremendously but that is *only*, and I stress *only*, because I like his other writings and since, otherwise, I could and would ignore him completely as another ultra-rightist on the lunatic fringe. And, again, should he ever come here, then, with the aid of my wife's cooking and enough wine, I might even have a chance to score a few political points and would certainly enjoy his views on un-political matters, including even religion of which I am almost totally ignorant. Here though, I should warn him that my wife, a mathematician, was already an ex-catholic when we got married, some time before Papon's prefecture.

Regards,

Alain Schremmer

P.S. I didn't like AMIANTE too much at first but it *does* grow on you.

- * -

To the Editor,

I was reading Paul Rhoads' Ramblings in COSMOPOLIS 38, and quite enjoying them. Interesting examples of restoring Vancian phrasing from editors who 'corrected' it. TEXTPORT was a fascinating glimpse at the innards of electronic text representation. Next came the colorful description of the printers in Milan. All good stuff so far.

And then, suddenly, the rest is ideology, pure, simple, and didactic: not even a section break to set it off. I know Paul likes to write this sort of thing, I imagine some people like to read it, and the rest of us can skip it. But it's impossible to skip if you don't know it's coming. We're among friends here at the VIE; I don't think a 'rest of article is off-topic' warning is out of place. And it is off-topic; there's a huge difference between explaining the VIE process and criticizing a Thomas Sowell essay while occasionally referring to Vance (I was skimming, hoping things would improve. No such luck.) Since I don't want to miss anything as charming and informative as the first Ramblings, perhaps in future the 'Good Parts' of

these articles could be delimited more clearly (and we're free to disagree about which the good parts are).

On a sunnier subject, my books arrived, and it was a great pleasure to see how beautiful they are.

Mike Schilling



To the Editor,

Paul Rhoads' articles are usually good for a laugh, but this one (COSMOPOLIS 38) was a real thigh-slapper:

"God bless America, Honor to her founding fathers, and good luck to General Jay Garner!"

Sincerely,

Andy Gilham



Closing Words

Thanks to proofreaders Rob Friefeld and Jim Pattison.

COSMOPOLIS Submissions: when preparing articles for COSMOPOLIS, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send plain text. For COSMOPOLIS 40, please submit articles and Letters to the Editor to Derek Benson: benson@online.no Deadline for submissions is June 28.

Derek W. Benson, Editor

The Fine Print

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