
EXTANT

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#5

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THE JUNE PACKING TRIP

Six packers gathered in Milan, at the familiar Blu Inn: veterans Thomas Rydbeck, Jurriaan Kalkman and myself, plus the Dutch Bouwmeester sisters, Phia and Wilma (the latter resident of England) and one of Thomas' countrymen: Misi (pronounced: 'Mishy') Mladoniczky (pronounced . . . as best you can).

I met with Stefania Zacco, our production manager, Sunday night (June 26) to discuss the Torriani situation, which continued to be poor. We also discussed some exciting future VIE related plans, soon to be announced, involving Andreas Irlé. A meeting of the Torriani workers was scheduled for Monday; there would be no work that day. Some of the packers had already reported seeing signs around Cognio Monsese that a town meeting with the mayor would be held on Tuesday about the Torriani situation, and indeed there were no books ready for us that day either. On Monday we went to the factory anyway, and saw the unbound but sewn volumes stacked on about 8 palettes. The Torriani people invited us to have lunch with them, which we did, though the atmosphere is not as gay as the old days.

Stefania, Biffi, Nicola and I visited a small bindery called Rigoldi, to which Torriani had farmed out Reader cover stamping. Torriani had even lent them the necessary stamping machines. At Rigoldi they were hard at work, producing about 3 volumes worth of covers per day. Some of our 'bronzes' (the magnesium stamps used to print the covers) are wearing out. One of the deluxe cover stamps needs to be replaced, and the Readers back cover catalogue stamp probably ought to be. Still, the quality of Rigoldi stamping is excellent.

On Tuesday, with no work to do, we indulged in tourism. Most went to Milan. I went out into the Lombard countryside, the vast, bright, misty plain of the Po, planted

in corn and marked by picturesque lines of poplars, and ruined churches and barns of moldering orange brick. It was extremely hot but one can keep cool by jumping into the abundant canals and rivers which criss-cross the area. There are wonderful trattorias to be discovered in the villages dotting the area.

On Wednesday there was still no work, much to the frustration of Jurriaan in particular. Meanwhile, however, 8 Reader's volumes were being 'cased' (the book block glued into the cover) at another small shop, so we were able to work with these books on Thursday. Biffi was enthusiastic about them. He says are even higher quality than those bound by Torriani. The most visible improvements are more accentuated rounding of the spines, and cleaner over-all work.

The books are being processed in order of thickness, fattest first. For those who have not received a VIE crate, VIE book sets are packed in two large cardboard crates, lined with Styrofoam, each containing four inner boxes. Normally we would have liked to pack 2d printing books in an identical manner as the wave 1 and 2 books. The volume of wave two books being slightly smaller than wave 1, the wave two inner boxes and crate are slightly smaller. The volumes being many different widths, packing order is carefully calculated. However sticking to our past scheme would have meant distributing our eight volumes in many boxes which we would have had to leave open until all the books are ready, rather than filling and closing a few inner boxes. Thomas, Biffi and I reorganized our packing scheme to accord with the new situation, and we were able to fill and close two of the eight inner boxes. Not counting the 2d printing Deluxe sets, of which there are about twelve, this is almost 25% of 2d printing inner box packing accomplished.

There are ninety 2d printing Readers sets to pack, so we had ninety of each of the eight titles. The first job of a packer, of course, is checking the books. The flaws which revealed themselves for these hand-cased volumes were both fewer and characteristic of hand-work rather than machine work. Of the eight volumes we packed there was a total of five actual rejects, all of which Biffi repaired. Rather than problems of scrunched pages and skin glue (hard glue) on the covers (machine type errors), there tended to be finger smudges and dabs of white (flexible) glue on the edges of the block. We erased, plucked or scraped these away.

As for the Deluxe, Biffi, once more, is doing them himself, with Alexandra, though the stamping will have to be done at Rigoldi. They are well under-way; the books are all printed and gilt; the covers are made though not

stamped. As for the problems at Toriani, they continue but are slowly being moderated.

Stefania and Sr. Biffi agreed that having maintained the June trip helped advance, or force forward, the work. Our books were clearly getting preferential treatment among the meager work going forward at the factory, with most of the other clients' material waiting in vast stacks.

The latest 2d printing information is that the rest of the volumes will be ready by September. The provisional plan is to have a team of eight for five days, starting September 5. Biffi and Stefania think they can confirm this date by mid-July. European volunteers, naturally, will have preference because of lower travel subsidies. The delays are, of course, costing us extra money but the dropping Euro is a great help.



THE PLOT OF BLUE WORLD

PREFACE: LITERARY JUDGEMENT

Commenting on the value of the work of Stephen King, Scott Benenati* wrote:

We all read to be entertained, and good storytelling is a given, essential to any story, but some of us read also to see life and/or people through a new perspective, or to study aspects of human nature that are submerged below our conscious understanding, or to ponder the paradoxes of existence. It seems to me that the depth of the story being told and how it resonates in our psyches is what makes Literature. Most people who read those books on the bestseller lists don't care about all this. . . they just want a good story that entertains, passes the time, helps them escape from the horrors of the world. Which seems a fine thing to do in my opinion. But some writers, whether they are setting out to do it or not, reach something deeper, and I'd say Shakespeare and Dickens are two of them. Maybe King's stories will last, but as entertaining as they might be, how many of them will stick with us over the years or bleed into how we perceive or live daily?

Scott Benenati, who makes no pretension to literary expertise, does not hesitate to expose his first principle: 'we read to be entertained'. I am not sure about contemporary expert opinion on this point but surely it would include a skeptically raised eyebrow, if not a blatant sneer. How the experts account for the place in our lives of literature, and art generally, is best judged by the evaporation of what used to be designated by the word 'art' in favor of what is sometimes designated by the term 'mass culture'. To cut to the heart of a debate which almost always founders on the rocks of ideological hostility to the Western past, I will hint at the essence of this difference

in a formula: publisher's of the 17th century hoped to make money by selling excellent books, while their contemporary counterparts hope to make money by selling books. I don't suppose any writer intends to produce anything less than excellent, but that most of them do is not particularly troubling to contemporary publishers. It's not that we are now artistically inept (Jack Vance proves the contrary) or that we have lost our sense of judgment (witness discriminating readers of COSMOPOLIS and EXTANT) but somewhere the notion of honor and glory was lost. In the past folks still dreamed of eternal glory and longed for communion with the Muses. When mass culture replaces the Arts, money takes their place. To put this another way: what have malignantly been labeled petit bourgeois values drown-out so called aristocratic* values.

As for entertainment, in the background of this concept, behind 'divertissement', behind 'pleasure', looms 'happiness'. Greek philosophers and Christian theologians agree that happiness is not merely an occasional state but the goal of life. If the Greeks understand happiness as self-mastery, and the Christians as eternal beatitude, the experience of happiness still has something in common with pleasure and even divertissement. For though it may or may not be that pleasure, to say nothing of happiness, is the contemporary goal of life, even if entertainment is merely the reception of pleasure it is also, like happiness, a sensation of joy. There is, therefore, a common denominator between Scott Benenati's first principle and the thinking at the root of Western culture. The experts have cut themselves off from the latter source. I dare say this because their first principles are either inexplicable or non-existent.

If Benenati's definition of literary value may fairly be restated as 'making happy', it may be then be taken for the natural definition of literary value.

Benenati makes no technical distinctions; his measure and judgements are broad and comprehensible. Bad literature is boring, middle level literature is merely entertaining, and great literature is both pleasurable and spiritually profitable. Benenati recognizes this profitability by the following measures: a story remains in our memories and enhances our capacities of perception, and thus our experience of life. Such ideas may seem obvious to the point of banality. Dave Reitsema made a similar distinction in COSMOPOLIS #53.† Expert opinion uses totally different measures. If it might not disagree that impact upon the memory is a sign of literary quality it would, or should, reject life-enhancement because elitist thinking is now based on Relativism, which has driven out value judgements. Since each reader will have a personal reaction to a literary work generalized judgements about what constitutes 'enhancement', to say nothing about trying to define what is being enhanced, become nuncupatory. This leaves only 'artistic' or technical qualities.

There is indeed a personal aspect in reactions to anything. But elevating such legitimate relativism to a general principle is illogical. If humans don't all like the

* from the Greek: *aristos*: best.

† see page 4. Great art: '[enables] the reader to more fully understand and experience life'.

*Scott Benenati is a VIE subscriber and sometime Message-board poster.

same food or have the same rest needs or patterns, they have basic physical needs in common. Likewise there are mental and emotional aspects which are also in common, however modified by personality or circumstance (age, sex, health, nationality, profession and etc.).

There may be truth in the adage; 'there is no accounting for taste', but preferring Stephen King or Dan Brown to Jane Austen or Jack Vance is the sure sign of undeveloped taste. For taste must develop. As Vance insists* art is a language of symbols, and languages must be learned. The difference between Frazetta and Giotto† is blatant to those versed in the symbolic language of visual art, and invisible, or worse, to those who are not. The nescience of the latter does not invalidate the perception, or capacity for 'fine discriminations', of the former. The Modernist egalitarian passion which advocates invalidation of this principle flies into the teeth of reality. The nescient are not an equivalent other, they are what they are: unknowing. This state may be 'inferior' — in at least one sense it obviously is —, and its source may be anything from native obtuseness to organized cultural deprivation. Whatever the cause, and in particular whether or not the fact is to be deplored, it is a fact.

The new French translation of *Blue World*, by Patrick Dusoulrier,†† includes a preface by Gérard Klein.‡ It is a wide-ranging essay about serious literature versus genre literature, a distinction Klein, who may be classed among literary experts, finds unsatisfactory. Klein evaluates Vance's work and, among various judgements, finds it has plot weakness. This is an expert opinion because it treats technique, and it is by no means the first time this particular judgement has been passed upon Vance. Yves Klein writes:

The work of Jack Vance is, to me, a gallery of paintings, or travel sketches . . . his series novels are composed of episodes, like a pearl necklace. His plots are minimal, repetitive, often stereotyped and lack surprising or labyrinthine developments. His stories have a tendency to bog down, as if he progressively lost interest in them, as if the plot served only as a pretext for something else. We almost always see where he is going. . . . ‡‡

And what does Klein like about Vance?

*It is in the details that Vance is best, and maybe unequalled; as Dan Simmons [notes]: Vance, being a poet, the conventions of his stories . . . are without importance given the subtlety of his evocations and his writing. Simmons insists that Vance should not be read for plot, anecdote or adventure, but profoundly, with intensity, for the wordsmithery, as one reads Homer whose story we know by heart, for the splendor of his epithets . . . [as well as, Klein adds at the end of his essay:] the decor of his planets, the strange customs of the societies he describes — or constructs — with the amused detachment of an etomologist.***

* see, *Green Magic* and *The Languages of Pao*.

† Vance's favorite painter.

†† See COSMOPOLIS 62.

‡director of Robert Lafont Press, Pocket Science Fiction.

‡‡ *Un Monde d'Azur*, Robert Lafont, 2005; passage translated by Paul Rhoads.

** Ibid.

Here we have a typical example of expert opinion. I assume Klein means us to enjoy Vance's wordsmithery, splendid epithets, his amused, detached, etymological point of view. But how extensive can a happiness afforded by such technicalities be? Is savoring an epithet the ultimate literary pleasure? Such literary aspects certainly do not enhance, or affect in any manner, how we perceive or live daily. Were we inspired by Vance (if that is indeed what he inspires) to use the perspective of an entomologist in our view of humanity, this would not be an enhancement of our perceptions but a mere change of them (assuming we do not already use such a view). It could only enhance our perceptions if the entomological view were superior to the normal view, which may be doubted, and which Klein does not attempt to demonstrate.

Expert opinion, however, is not simply to be dismissed. Fundamentally Klein and Simmons are saying that Vance is a poet, an artist of words. This is both true, and not something natural opinion bothers about.

PLOT

The quality of a story may be a function of many factors but it must be damaged if the plot is minimal, repetitive, stereotyped, without surprising or labyrinthine development, if it bogs down, if the writer progressively loses interest in it or if we see where he is going. But such an assertion must be based on a definition of plot, a demonstration of its function, and a proof of its necessity.

Klein's remarks suggest that 'plot' is a technical word for 'story'. The natural meaning of the word story, as suggested in Benenati's remarks, englobes plot because it would be the essence of 'story-telling', or the art of relating a series of things in such a way that they are not a mere list but form an attention-holding 'narrative'. If a storyteller were to recount a series of disconnected episodes he might hold our attention if each episode held our attention in its own right. We would then say that he had told us many stories, not just one story. A story is a whole. Its beginning, one is tempted to say, is related to its end, so that it is a recognizable unity. This unity is not created by the quality of the epithets or an entomological view. It is created by a disposition whereby the first thing which happens is connected to the second thing, and so on. The nature of these connections is that each part generates or resolves tensions of other parts, creating web-like interrelations, or the labyrinth mentioned by Klein. The development and resolutions must be surprising, as Klein suggests. If not, seeing the end before it came, the reader need not continue reading to complete his picture of the whole, at which point the effort becomes laborious, or boring, or unpleasurable, rather than compelling. In order to be surprising the storyteller must, as Klein explains, avoid stereotyped, repetitious and minimalist forms.* In the presence of such flaws the story must be

* The proscription against minimalism may seem doubtful, but to be strongly engaging a story cannot be sketchy. A sketchy story could only be somewhat intriguing.

ranked in the lowest echelon of literary quality.

From the above my disagreement with Klein and Simmons should be clear: to me a story with a weak plot cannot be good. It is not enough that each sentence be well made or that the point of view be unusual. A story that is like a gallery of paintings, which is to say composed of disconnected episodes, cannot, in my opinion, hold a reader's attention as a story, and thus does not entertain, and thus cannot cause pleasure or joy. Contrary to Klein I think Vance's work in general, and *Blue World* in particular, is not limited to linguistic necromancy or even, it might be added, messages of universal and eternal import, but is characterized by labyrinthine and surprising plots.

How can it be that my opinion differs so radically from that of experts like Klein and Simmons? Who is right?

To responsibly challenge the experts we should first sympathetically understand their point.

THE EXPERT OPINION

'Novels', or long stories intended for a popular readership, emerged in the 19th century, with some 18th century precursors, such as Richardson's epistolary novel *Clarissa*. The novel corresponded to a new, if hardly unprecedented, emphasis on the individual. Though there are other strains in the genre the psychological aspect is the major one. The novel is characterized, above all, by concentration on the inner development of a protagonist. This does not mean that novelists neglect society. Dickens and Balzac, exemplars of the psychological novel, cannot be said to have done so. Other novelists, Zola or Huxley for example, may have put society at the center of their concerns but, generally speaking, the modern novel is about the adventures and inward evolutions of a protagonist. The Russian novels are a good examples. *Oblamove* may be a metaphor for Russian society, but he is above all a character. *War and Peace* recounts a historical event (the Napolionic invasion) but at the heart of Tolstoi's concerns are the psychological or even spiritual evolutions of his famous characters. As great and unforgettable as Tolstoi's depiction of the battle of Borodino, even more unforgettable is the internal world of Prince Andre during the battle.

Given the failure or collapse of serious literature, genre literature continues this tradition. Readers of murder mysteries, as well as science fiction, would not stand for dry accounts or recitals of problem solving or gadgetry. They demand plot and characters—or a story about people—and this, more or less, is what they get. Celebrated mystery writers like Simenon and John D. MacDonald are famous for their characters, which are even more memorable than their stories.* No science fiction writer offers his readers mere technologic abstracts; they dress them up in human dramas.

Ever since the ancient Greeks, plays have been fully connected stories in the modern sense. But longer story narratives, intended to be read in private, unlike the 19th century novel form with its dependence on mass readership,

were different. Poems like Homer's *Odyssey* or *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Thomas Malory, books like *Çargantua*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Don Quixote*, *Çulliver's Travels*, *Pilgrims Progress* or *The Inferno* may contain unforgettable characters, they may even deal with psychological and spiritual evolutions, but they do not necessarily use a 19th century style plot, which is to say the dramatic structure of a play. *The Canterbury Tales* is a groups of stories, each with its own characters and drama. But it is no mere collection. Each tale is told by a different pilgrims and this is not a sterile literary dodge; each pilgrim represents a different part of society, a different kind of person, a different attitude, which in Chaucer's case serves more than augmenting mere variety, since the meaning of each of his tales is incomplete outside the context of the others. The work resonates with inner connections, and thus surprises, which a disconnected reading of the stories fails to generate. This is not 'plot' in the contemporary or dramatic sense but *The Canterbury Tales* are a whole, and, as with the collection of connected episodes which constitute plot, it is a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

The same is true of *Çargantua*, *Don Quixote*, *Çulliver's Travels*, *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Inferno*. Though structured episodically, they are wholes. The meaning of each episode in, say, *Çulliver's Travels* is not clear until all the episodes are digested. The adventures in Lilliput, in Brobdingnag, in Laputa and among the Houyhnhnms, dramatize phenomena which, in the absence of each other, hardly mean anything at all. The adventures in Lilliput have been amputated and made into a children's story of no import; homunculi capture normal sized human! Gulliver's adventures in Lilliput become, fully, a biting, ribald satire of small-mindedness in contrast to the satire of great-mindedness in Brobdingnag, of the scientific spirit in Laputa, and true nobility among the Houyhnhnms. At an even deeper level Lilliputian feebleness does not merely seem scornful, but is perhaps redeemed, in light of Brobdingnab and Laputa.

Such aspects of Gulliver's Lilliputian adventure is invisible prior to reading the whole book. The book is therefore a whole, constructed in a labyrinthine manner rife with surprises.

Some of Vance's books are constructed episodically. The most notable case is *Cugel*. Each of Cugel's adventures are casually linked by an overarching plotlette (returning to Almerj and the conflict with Lucunu). One can imagine there being more or fewer adventures without this plotlette being damaged. But the Cugel books should be regarded not as a novel but a group of semi-detached stories. The experts cannot fail to understand this point so it is not the episodic structure of Cugel of which they complain. They are referring to such stories as *Big Planet*, which is presented as a connected narrative, or *Ecce and Old Earth*, where Wayness and Glawen, each pursuing their own investigation, have a series of apparently unrelated adventures. The essence of the complaint may be, ironically, that each adventure is so highly colorful it contains the enjoyment value of a whole typical novel. But suspecting this is not enough. In fact the device by

* This hierarchy is respected by Vance, who claims to construct his stories beginning with atmosphere, then characters, then plot.

which Glawen and Wayness adventures are connected—going ‘up and down the ladder’ of the evidence trail—is more legitimate than the experts grant because, like the adventures of Gulliver, or *The Canterbury Tales*, these adventures have inter-relations which the experts neglect.

For example Wayness’ encounter with Bully Buffums (*Ecce and Old Earth*, chapter 4) should be contrasted with Glawen’s adventure with Miss Shoup (chapter 8). Both situations treat sexual politics. Wayness would have had a totally different interaction with Miss Shoup, and Glawen would have had a totally different interaction with Mr. Buffums. Buffums wants to exploit Wayness sexually; Glawen suffers the back-lash of Miss Shoup having been sexually exploited by Julian. The actions of Mr. Buffums and Miss Shoup are gender-specific. Buffums plagues Wayness with a typically male pornographic attitude, while Miss Shoup is an exemplar of outraged feminine spirituality. If such symmetry lacked deeper import it would be meaningless ‘plot arabesque’, empty formalism. But deeper import is not absent; the relationship of Wayness and Glawen, like the relationship of all heterosexual lovers, occurs in the difficult context which Vance thus subtly, and comically, explicates. Glawen’s robust self-restraint and Wayness’ demure modesty, traditional sexual virtues which might otherwise make these characters seem frousty and insipid, cast them, in this context, even for us post-modern readers, in a heroic light. One need not have an expert awareness of the device for its effect to occur. I have never heard Glawen and Wayness accused of froustiness or insipidity; instead readers find these exemplars of traditional sexual virtue appealing.*

Vance, I say, successfully plots some of his stories, or parts of them, by means of out-moded structures which he has revitalized. Perhaps, failing to recognize familiar structures, experts feel they must justify their own enjoyment of Vance on another basis, that they must criticize, as lacking, a structure they cannot perceive.

But there is another aspect of some of Vance’s story structures where expert opinion seems more justified. In stories such as *The Domains of Koryphon*, *The Brave Free Men*, *Throy*, *The Languages of Pao* or indeed *Blue World*, Vance seems to indulge in another sort of episodic structure than the Cugelian one, which may explain why Klein claims Vance progressively loses interest in his stories, or that the plots serve as pretext for something else.

I suggest this only provisionally; I really have no idea why Klein makes such claims. Personally I read Vance, and these books in particular, with a relish which carries me to the end, where my only complaint is that the end has come. I think this is the case with all Vance readers. The experts, I suspect, are only theoretically disappointed, or perhaps annoyed, by Vance’s maverick disregard for their shibboleths.

The plot feature of the books listed above is that Vance

* It might be objected that this device plays no part inoculating Glawen and Wayness against ‘frousty sexual insipidity’, or that the issue simply never arises. But, in the absence of the two episodes in question, and in view of the petit bourgeois ‘nesting’ ending when Glawen and Wayness build a house, would the book not expose itself to the objection of sexual dowdiness? The incident with the Ordene Zaa is, at best, a minor masculine sado-masochist fantasy which does little to up-date Glawen, and nothing to moderate Wayness’ iron-clad modesty.

occasionally leaves his hero to the side to follow other characters, who suddenly take on importance, only to disappear in their turn, or that he sometimes concentrates his attention on social evolution rather than the adventures of an individual. But this interprets Vance according to a concentration on personality, perhaps a 19th century attitude. It fails to perceive Vance’s unusual, but operative, structure as anything but absence of structure.

Let it not be complained I am pretending that anything and everything is structure! The adventures in *Big Planet* are indeed somewhat episodic in the pejorative sense used by the experts. Even if the same cannot be said of *Ecce and old Earth* the interest of *Big Planet* is, in some measure, maintained by a sheer pageant of splendid grotesquerie, somewhat in the Cugelian manner. Such a structure, even if in *Big Planet* there are overarching or surprise plot elements (the presence of a spy in the group for example) is indeed, as Klein complains, minimalist, and may explain why this highly enjoyable early story is less enjoyable than later ones. In *The Domains of Koryphon* Elvo Glissam drops out of a story which culminates in battles and governmental reorganization. In *The Brave Free Men* totally new characters (Aun Shara, Mialabra Octagon, San Sein) are introduced and, though developed only somewhat, take up much of a story which shifts focus from Etwane’s doings to progress in the Roguskoi war and the reorganization of Shant. In another early work, *The Languages of Pao*, Beran is never developed to a point which would satisfy the 19th century model, and the story ends with a more or less depersonalized description of cultural upheavals on Pao. In *Blue World*, though Sklar Hast is a 19th century type hero, he is occasionally set aside that the story might follow the adventures of minor characters, such as the spy-martyr Henry Bastaff, or the scientist Roger Kelso. The story abounds with brief eruptions of new minor characters, like Gian Recargo or Emacho Feroxibus. Robin Magram is named only six times from chapter 13 to 18, and Arrel Sincere is named only twice in chapters 13 and 14. Other passages abandon characters altogether to simply describe social developments.

Such procedures, per the academic view, constitute poor plotting. But are the structures of Vance’s intensely enjoyable books, if atypical or even unprecedented, truly faulty by the measures which count? Do they, as a plot should, carrying us forward, offer surprises, keep us interested and engaged?

THE STRUCTURE OF BLUE WORLD

Simply stating that *Blue World* has its own type of structure and, per Relativism, proclaiming this structure as valid as any other, will not do. If the structure is different from the norm it ought to be described, its qualities should be defined and defended.

Unlike *The Canterbury Tales*, *Blue World* is a connected narrative which does not use an episodic structure. Is it a throwback to pre-19th century models like *Gulliver’s Travels* or *Don Quixote*? In these books the protagonist, even

reduced to a mere linking device, never leaves center stage, but there are whole chapters of *Blue World* where the central figure, Sklar Hast, is absent, or reduced to a secondary role. The pre-19th century books are not structured like the psychological novel, around the personal development of the protagonist. Dante, the main character in his own book [*The Inferno*], may learn something, or develop in the 19th century sense, over the course of his adventures in hell, but that aspect, however captivating, would be secondary to the main thrust of the story which concerns, one might say, the relation of earthly life to the divine economy. Don Quixote's and Gulliver's personal development, if any, is likewise less important than satiric commentary on contemporary morals.

In *Blue World* the sub-story of the adventures of Henry Bastaff, taken in itself, has its own little 19th century-like structure. Bastaff begins with a spy mission, then heroically takes more risks necessary to the safety of the new floats but eventually is caught and punished with death. This sub-story is both an integral part of the crises of the float society and a mirror of the larger story exemplified by the principal hero. Like Bastaff, Sklar Hast takes risks; unlike him he survives. Bastaff and Sklar Hast together complete the image of float society. Many sacrifices were made, some paid the ultimate price, in the end there was triumph and life.

Is the society of the floats like Spanish society for Cervantes; the principal object of interest? Is *Blue World* a pre-19th century kind of book? If, unlike Don Quixote, Sklar Hast were not a modern type hero this might be. So the essence of the new structure would be a combination of a pre-19th century subject of large or social import, with a modern-style hero/protagonist who appeals to the reader in the manner of the psychological novel. This structure, I say, is successful because the reader has a fully satisfying 'entertainment experience'. It is therefore not a bastard structure, an unnatural marriage of incompatible elements forced into cohabitation. That Vance uses this structure successfully in almost all his major work underlines its natural grace, and it is not unprecedented; Tolstoi's *War and Peace* is a 19th century example.

Before the hero is mentioned, *Blue World* begins with 6 paragraphs (635 words taking up two and a half pages) describing float society. The first sentence is:

Among the people of the Floats caste distinctions were fast losing their old-time importance.

This signals the basic theme: a change in float society. The opening passage goes on to describe float society in more and more detail until, in the seventh paragraph, the narrative becomes specific about places and people:

On Traque Float, at the extreme east of the group, the Master Hoodwink was one Zander Rohan, a rigorous and exacting old man with a mastery of over seven thousand configurations. His first assistant, Sklar Hast, had well over five thousand configurations at his disposal precisely how many more he had never publicized.

Here, once again, a basic theme, as always with Vance, is suggested with the greatest possible delicacy. Vance does not club his reader over the head announcing a 'conflict of generations', or 'a struggle of the future against the past'.

Instead he describes Rohan as 'old', 'rigorous', 'exacting', with a publicized mastery. His assistant, by contrast, does not publish his mastery. A word to the wise is sufficient. Experts may complain they almost always see where [Vance] is going, and it is fair to assume that, in vancian terms, the hint that Sklar Hast's mastery equals or surpasses Rohan's may be clear enough, but that is only the most obvious of the hints. The fundamental hint, one which all readers must feel but which the experts fail to understand and articulate,* is the suggestion of a link between the initial statement (caste distinctions are losing importance) and the first psychological information we receive about Sklar Hast (that he had never publicized how many more than five thousand configurations were at his disposal). Float society is changing, yes, but this change is driven by new men, men with a different attitude, out of harmony with the old ways. Why have new men arisen? On the one hand there is the traditional ease and the comfort of established ways. On the other hand . . . but Vance introduces the problem with the greatest delicately:

Sklar Hast knew himself for a fortunate man. There was, unfortunately, an obverse to the picture, for those qualities which had won him prestige, position, a private float were not those calculated to ease him through the careful routines of float society. Only this afternoon he had become involved in a dispute involving a whole a complex of basic float principles.

* This is not a suggestion that I am a superior expert to the experts. My way of reading is ordinary. I do not analyze, I delectate. The thoughts I am expressing here would never have occurred to me, as thoughts, had I not been pricked by the remarks of Yves Klein. I felt, rather than thought, that he is wrong in certain ways to the detriment of Vance's reputation; I therefore go back to the text to find out why I feel that. It is only then, guided by something like indignation on the one hand, and mute intuition on the other, that such an analysis as this comes into being.

Brian Gharst who, unlike some, admires my analyses, has complained that he would never see the sort of thing I point out. But neither do I, until a circumstance as I describe here. My mode of analysis is reactive and circumstantial. When reading I have no interest in analyzing. What would I analyze for? I have no theoretical axe to grind. Yves Klein's analysis is in the service of a literary theory about, for example, literary structure. But I have no such theory, and I don't care to have one. It is enough for me, not being an expert, to enjoy what is enjoyable—in the absence of provocation.

Analysis depends on theory because a judgment must be based on a principle. Prompted by what seems to me Yves Klein's error I am driven to discover the principles which underlie ideas I only at first intuit. Not being an expert I go no farther in that direction than needed to make a given case. My analysis of *Blue World* may be superior to Yves Klein's but that does not make me an expert. I have no formal literary education and, if I am 'fairly well read', I simply cannot be nearly as well read as someone like Yves Klein. He therefore must have more analytical resources than I do, even if he misuses them.

The sort of reactive analysis I practice is like a conversation. There would be no conversation, and thus I would have nothing to say, if Yves Klein did not say something first. At the same time the thoughts I am expressing, assuming they are true, even if I can only dig them out into conscious expression in a reactive mode, are prior to conscious expression in mute feeling. In the absence of conversation this mute feeling is enough. Experience of, for example, a mood is totally different than talk about a mood which, at best, is a second hand experience. So reading about, or thinking about *Blue World* is totally different than reading *Blue World*. This article is not intended to enhance anyone's experience of *Blue World*. It is intended to substitute Yves Klein's theory of literary structure, particularly as it applies to Vance, and *Blue World* in particular, with a theory more adequately reflecting this reader's experience of that story.

Even Sklar Hast, the emblematic new man, fails to perceive the basic problem. But the complex of basic float principles into conflict with which he is drawn have their ultimate source in an element still in the background:

There was little to disturb the easy flow of life, nothing harsh or unpleasant — except, perhaps, King Kragen.

Perhaps indeed. Was it really no surprise to Yves Klein, the first time he read *Blue World*, when this perhaps unpleasant disturbance to the easy flow of float life devastates Tranque float in chapter 3? How surprising must a plot be before it gains his approval?

And how labyrinthine must it be? In the first section of *Blue World* a matrix of historical, social and personal tensions is developed. Sklar Hast loves Meril Rohan, the daughter of his Guild Master, one of the leading men of Tranque float. Another leading man is Semm Voiderveg, Sklar Hast's rival for Meril. Semm Voiderveg is priest to King Kragen, a monster whom, by convenience and fear, the float society has deified.

With this situation established the action begins when a lesser Kragen marauds in the Tranque lagoon destroying the communal net and Sklar Hast's personal sponge arbors. This stimulates Sklar Hast to a natural reaction of self-defence which, in context, becomes a rebellion against orthodoxy. Against the interdictions of Semm Voiderveg and other guardians of orthodoxy he defends his sponges and wounds the kragen. The conflict begins to open up. Sklar Hast chafes under an orthodoxy which has melded into servitude to priests of a fish god. His actions lead to recrimination, but when the Guild Master, Meril's father, attempts to divest Sklar Hast of his rank, Sklar Hast has recourse to a tradition allowing him challenge; by demonstrating greater skill, he may dethrone the Guild Master and become Guild Master himself. This contest is the old civilized way. But we are in a new era.

The contest is engaged, and though Sklar Hast wins, the evil Voiderveg trumps up charges of cheating. Before the situation can be resolved the lesser kragen reappears. Ignoring all restraint Sklar Hast, with a group inspired by his example, kills it. King Kragen, meanwhile, has appeared on the scene. How? Is he indeed a god? King Kragen takes revenge for Sklar Hast's human assertiveness by devastating Tranque, and Meril's father is killed.

Meril, not convinced that Sklar Hast's attitude is correct, is legitimately suspicious that he may be rash. Sklar Hast is a positive, even brusque person. Meril Rohan is sensitive, subtle and delicate. She even has a dark and perverse streak; though attracted to Sklar Hast she rejects him, and even punishes him by leading him to think she favors Voiderveg. Given the death of her father, and her own independent character (too proud to submit to a traditional marriage testing period, favored by Sklar Hast) her rejection is understandable. Will she ally herself to orthodoxy?

Meril eventually becomes a revolutionary but she begins as an antiquarian. Sklar Hast may thrust intuitively toward the future but Meril searches in the past. Both approaches turn out to be crucial, and are interrelated in interesting ways.

The next section of the story recounts the conclave at Apprise float, a dialogue between Sklar Hast and the spokesmen of orthodoxy. But Sklar Hast is no wild-eyed revolutionary. He also appeals to tradition. The question is not whether or not to abandon the old ways but how to interpret them:

Most of you know in your hearts I speak truth. King Kragen is a crafty beast with an insatiable appetite, and we are his slaves. You know this truth but you fear to acknowledge it. Those who spoke before me have mentioned our forefathers: the men who captured a ship from the tyrants who sought to immure them on a penal planet. What would our forefathers have done? Would they have submitted to this gluttonous ogre? Of course not.

The forces of orthodoxy fail to suppress Sklar Hast; tension is at a peak, the social divide, hinted so delicately at the beginning of chapter 1, becomes a brutal reality when the appearance of King Kragen off Aprise float sparks a murderous riot.

Society is now in dangerous disequilibrium. Orthodoxy is suspicious and on the defensive. The proponents of freedom, led by Sklar Hast, surreptitiously seek to kill King Kragen. Their stratagem fails. In retribution King Kragen savages three more floats. Society must now resolve to devote itself to war against tyranny, or accept submission. Hesitation and compromise are no longer possible. At a second conclave both parties appeal to their interpretation of tradition. The conflict, in appearance, is resolved by the resolution that the freedom party will quit the floats.

But the challenge to orthodoxy is too profound to be tolerated, and mere departure can not protect the freedom party from the threat of subjugation, or the orthodox against the destruction of their system. King Kragen looms over them all. Freedom can never triumph while King Kragen lives, for at any time he may seek them out and destroy them, and the security of submission will never be whole while the freedom party menaces the life of King Kragen.*

Both parties, therefore, resorts to secret strategies. As the freedom party prepares to depart the orthodox party plans to destroy the flotilla by alerting King Kragen. They are forestalled when the freedom party takes the orthodox leaders hostage.

The freedom party establishes itself on far floats. Was this also no surprise to Klein? By searching their mysterious past they begin not only to develop tools they need to defeat tyranny but to understand who they really are and where they really came from. The sub-conflicts which separated Meril Rohan and Sklar Hast dissipate in a deeper and now mutual understanding of tradition. Meanwhile the orthodox party, resorting to naked tyranny, takes control of the home floats and creates an army of vulgarians dedicated to intimidating the population and destroying freedom. The freedom party, now fully understanding that distance alone will not assure their survival, realize they must defeat tyranny.

* It is like the global war on Terror; there is no third way between submission and triumph.

With growing assurance and growing knowledge comes growing strength; they meet the challenge from tyranny with superior tactics. In the final battle a special weapon, a gift of their new knowledge of their past, provides a tactical advantage, but in the end King Kragen is only killed by the obdurate personal resolution of Sklar Hast, the same force which set the rebellion for freedom in motion.

In what way is this plot not excellent from any point of view?

THE STORY OF KING ARTHUR

The most enduring and popular of all stories in the western literary tradition is the Arthur legend. The experts inform us that this story is a collection, or even an accretion, of legends. As such it should not have any particular coherence, and perhaps indeed we must thank Thomas Malory for our conception of it as a singular, whole, and engaging story. Its structure differs from the Tolstoy-Vance hybrid discussed above in that, rather than centered on both the actors of a social or historical event (real or imagined) and that event itself, it is related to history in an oblique manner. It is centered on events generated by the actors themselves, or their personal and group adventures. Arthur may wield Excalibur because he is the rightful king but whatever historical importance such an event, in a possibly non-mythological form, may have actually had, is now purely metaphorical.

After Arthur's own adventures, like his encounter with the questing beast, he gathers his round table of knights and they pursue adventures in which Arthur often has a minor role, but one which unifies the stories. For example, it is Arthur's kitchen boy whom the feisty Linet takes to save her sister, the Lady Lyonesse of castle Perilous. Sir Gareth (for so he really is) defeats the black, green and red knights, and the wedding of Sir Gareth and Lady Lyonesse takes place back at King Arthur's court.

After the death of Merlin and dissipation of his old style magic comes a darker period when the knights quest for the Grail. Their adventures become mysterious, even spiritual, and half of them never return. There follows the tragic war over Guenevere, between Lancelot and Arthur but, when that is resolved at last, Arthur's evil brother, Sir Mordred, provokes a war that destroys them all. Arthur sees that Excalibur is returned to the lake; so it ends as it began, with a hand projecting from a lake grasping a sword.

This story certainly is episodic; but minimalist, lacking surprise, or non-labyrinthine, it certainly is not. Vance taps the vital sources of Western art, from which the experts seem woefully divorced.



A POEM AND TWO ADVERTISEMENTS

BY MATTY PARIS

TATTOOED WOMAN*

*Tattooed woman, when I touch
Your arms and neck I love so much
I can spy your myriad past
A revel with an epic cast.*

*I wonder, darling, where I'll be
On your elbow or your knee?
Near bright flags on which I gaze
From your patriotic days?*

*When like a child I go to bed
I meditate on what I've read;
Who was Ralph, Jamal and John?
Where have Ted and Tyrone gone?*

*When I kiss your tapered fingers
Where your list of lovers lingers
Your old hubby's there of course
He left his name with the divorce.*

*What's with Howard, Mike and Phil?
Where the hell is Boozer Bill
The animal who spiced your teens?
Where's cockeyed Mike from the Marines?*

*Smiling on your lovely seat
Cotton-Eyed Joe and Sneaky Pete.
Ruling spirits in your skin
Are also grinning ghosts within.*

THE FABULOUS ORDINAIRES

The Fabulous Ordinaries are offering their latest hit CD: *Shopping Mall Blah* with the hit single: *Milkshake*, along with a soporific remix of their legendary novelty number: *Double Cheeseburger Limbo*. Their salsa hit *Nacho Piccu* is very blandly spiced with a few surprise guest stars from Bolivia. You can maybe find the release at your record stores — or can you?

The Fabulous Ordinaires are silent humanists; they make Music to Live By. They never distract you from your banal existence and insufferably puerile hungers with their exotic warbling, never stand between you and embracing some cause or lover or whatever. They accompany your slumbers with music whose plastic lack of design reflects the lack of anything even trivial happening while you take a quiet snooze.

*For Rob Sheehe

The Fabulous Ordinaires have been known to do Las Vegas and Yankee Stadium; yet nobody can remember them even though they were cheering the band at their concerts. Their fans sometimes are not aware they are listening to *The Fabulous Ordinaires* while present at such very forgettable fetes. When asked why they are present at all their groupies usually say in a haze drawl they showed up to take in the opening act.

The Fabulous Ordinaires have been known for their invisibility even as pure packaged merchandise by everyone in the music business. They are the serenaders you hear in clearance sales in furniture stores, the pallid siren-like music in anonymous fast food delis, the nearly unnoticeable traces of bland sonic at the margins of your ears as you shop for a package of nails at a hardware store, they are vaporous clouds of pure sounds between station as you fumble with the slippery dials on your car radio.

The publicists of *The Ordinaires*, accustomed to attributing all sort of kinky tastes—marriages with statesmen and poodles, divorces from the dead, Gorgonzola orgies and gorging on whipped cream in porcine feasts—as the saintly lives of their clientele, since the public likes to hear such things about those provincial divinities they like and admire, have been totally at a loss how to represent *The Fabulous Ordinaires*.

They can't find their lead singer, Joe Shallot; they don't know what to say about drummer Ghip Surface, who seems to have the effect on all of one who can generate a terrible case of sleeping sickness on even passing rats.

What can they make of Vinny de Veneer, the bassist and occasional kazoo player, so he says, whose past is only, he grunts, being a stalwart since birth and even before birth in the audience at daytime television game shows?

Yet the profits roll in because *The Fabulous Ordinaires* are nearly silent defenders of life itself. They never interfere with the most boring passing of time, including multi-maximal prison sentence and immortal death row vigils, by offering anyone anything like coarse continuous amusement; they in fact produce no entertainment at all. They do not have anything about them worth talking about; they don't even embrace a scant and vagrant memory.

They are somewhere deep in the background of reality itself like a faint scent of rotten eggs coming out of the kitchen of a shabby diner set off a shadowy federal highway.

Shopping Mall Blah can be found, or not found, at any shopping mall record store. *The Fabulous Ordinaires* will be appearing, in masks, at one in Patchogue signing the covers of *Shopping Mall Blah* with invisible ink.

Don't miss it. But if you did, baby, would you know you did?

THE NEW ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Nobody ever thought there could be a new Italian Renaissance; we are holding one in Palermo at fabled Zephyro Stadium near the huge cheese market.

Featured at the rock concert will be the famous *I Solipisisti di Roma* and the equally notorious *I Nihilisti di Venezia*. They are in our judgment two bands which have all by themselves brought the Italian Renaissance back to Italy where it belongs.

Do we mean Raphael, Boccaccio, Botticelli, Leonardo, all those others we honor like some pilgrims on a jihad to the sweet scented tombs of dead saints, or six days and five nights eating double cheeseburgers, easy on the pickles, at an imaginary mausoleum of Hellenic Art?

Of course not. No, our Italian Renaissance is a Renaissance for the times, an age which has nothing to do with these ashes and now dusty old codgers. *I Solipisisti di Roma* with their massive hit *Io Sono Mio* and their cult film, *Mangia, Mangia, Mangia* are merely the opening act for the legendary now Idaho based *I Nihilisti di Venezia* with their hit songs *Così Fan Nulla*, *Il Secondo Divorce di Figaro*, *La Cloaca di La Bell Morte*, *Latte Nera di La Strega Vera* and the interminable *Dolorosamente, Cara Mia, Ma Per Suposto Sempre con Amore*.

Then there is for the old folks their oldies but goodies single, *Moglie di Fuoco*, and of course the rock comedy opera *La Forza di Niente*. For Americans there is the English language hit that topped the media charts in downtown Indianapolis: the silent and awesome *La Verita Bianca*, also called *Confessions of the Unborn*.

As we all know the *Solipisisti* live on separate islands, mined by Krupp, with shores set to blow up all visitors, lovers and allies, a set of von Klotz designed fortresses a few miles at the lip of the horizon beyond the Lido. Each isle is festooned with walls, towers, moats, private legions of uniformed infantry and perfumed priests, all celibates sacrificing rancid raw lamb chops. On the door of their lead guitarist, sinister yet charismatic Dante Algeciras, is the hermetic credo: *Liberta per tutti oggi!* Below this one can read in flaming letters: *Ma Schiavi e Cani? Basta!*

Led by Gabriel di Nocci, the dreaded *Nihilisti* live underground, an astral underground nobody knows. Since Venice has become waterlogged they have moved to red hot caves deep beneath the American state of Idaho.

Everybody's flying down to Palermo for the Italian Renaissance!

Well, not quite everybody. Europeans know they are crypt keepers in a cemetery. It's the only graveyard on Earth in which corpses make war on each other. Americans are ignorant of this zombie holocaust. That's why we are only selling tickets to Americans for the Italian Renaissance. Nobody else is buying.



THE SPECTACULAR ISLAMO-NATIONALIST STRATEGY

BY LUCIEN-SAMIR OULAHBIB*

The French media, but also the American media and certain American politicians, fail to see beyond the latest suicide bomb, each one intended to create exactly the impression of growing instability in Iraq and Afghanistan these commentators are so eager to see. Thus the helicopter shot-down by Taliban on June 28 with 17 Americans on board obscured the loss of several hundred Talibani combatants in recent weeks—killed principally by Afghan Army regulars. If we fail to be aware of the latter information, if journalists scamp their duty, the helicopter story is the whole story.

And yet, as Fared Zakaria wrote in his Newsweek editorial (of the week of June 28), the war in Iraq is far from resembling the Vietnam war since over 80% of the population (the Shia, Kurds and moderate Sunni) support the war-initiated democratic political process.

Where, one might ask, is North Vietnam in the Iraq-Vietnam analogy? The North was supported by China and the USSR, and the south was led by a corrupt regime. The situation in Iraq is totally different. There is no independent or 'liberated' region in the hands of 'islamist patriots'—as they were called by the Iraqi chauffeur of a recently liberated French journalist.†

The other argument, untiringly repeated in France, but also in America, is that the intervention in Iraq is what created Islamism—when this is not blamed on Israel. Would these people have said such a thing when, in the 1960s, it was pretended that Algerian pan arabo-islamism was created by French support for the mafiosi ex-FLN generals then running that country? Those who have never stopped accusing the USA (and Israel) of creating Islamism would forcefully reject the accusation that French policy was ever its root cause. And they would be right . . . even if they were wrong if they failed to note that French policy has indeed encouraged it.

In Saddam's Iraq conditions were ripe for Islamism to emerge. Jacques Chirac's 'friend of 30 years' created an army which called itself 'Fedayeen' and he financed Palestinian kamikazes. The American presence in Iraq was the opportunity for pan arabo-islamism to show itself. Its forces were already assembled, awaiting the moment when 'classical', or not overtly religious, pan-Arabism wore itself out.

What explains the almost total incomprehension of French experts regarding the 'Arab world'? French president Jacques Chirac shed tears in New York in 2001. But they were for Islamist methods (mass murder) not its

* June 29, 05; translated and adapted by Paul Rhoads. See original at: <http://laminitedusablier.free.fr/telegramme0000049.html>

† Florence Aubenas and Hussein Hanoun, held captive by terrorists for several months in Iraq, and called 'Florence' and 'Hussein' in the French press as if everyone struggling against George Bush's America is one great sniveling family.

objectives (defeat of what they think of as Christendom). For Chriac, and the experts, these objectives are the result of colonialism, American arrogance, or even, to be *à la mode*, neoliberalism.

To be properly understood Islamism's political objectives must be traced to the 1930s and the rise of German, Japanese and Italian nationalism, to say nothing of the USSR's nationalistic communism. The principal leaders of pan-arabo Islamism were disciples of Hitler himself.* Expert failure to explain how this period is key to pan-arabo Islamism's refusal to accept a Jewish political presence (Israel) amounts to deliberately misleading the public. In Algeria today the influence of 1930s nationalism is clear: ethnic cleansing used against those, such as the Kabile, who do not submit to pan arabo-islamism.

Such an analysis remains unacceptable to the experts† because it calls into question a century of conceptual errors‡ hardened by long belief, and thus nourished by fanatisms, since this faith rejects the critical work of reason. Thus, on French Raidio‡‡, after qualifying Bush's Iraq speech as 'defensive', and hiding behind the alleged 'skepticism' of an American opinion in fact more nuanced than a simple desire to retreat, the commentator repeated rumors of 'floating Guantanos', secret torture boats which, we are given to understand, are the cause of Bin Laden's war! Setting aside the irrational hostility which motivate such commentaries—even granting their accuracy!—in light of the nature of the struggle against Islamo-fascism with its eager murderousness and polyform mendaciousness, such alleged American departures from civilized norms are not necessarily reprehensible.

It will instantly be objected that Democracies should not conduct themselves by the standards of their barbaric and totalitarian enemies. But what if, during the second world war, we had learned with certitude, thanks to 'muscular interrogations', the existence of extermination camps which bombardments might have hampered or destroyed; would our anti-American moralists have risen up to condemn the interrogation methods or demand investigations and sanctions?††

* Translator's note: Arafats mentor and predecessor, the Grand Mufti, Haj Muhammed Amin al-Husseini, spent the war years in Berlin with his hero. See: http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate_grand_mufti.php. On a related topic, Arab attitudes toward residence in Israel, see: <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/2737>.

† Edgar Morin or Pascal Boniface, or politicians such as Michael Barnier and Douste de Blazy.

‡ errors concerning not only pan-arabo Islamism, but also private property, capitalism, or the abuse of power—that it is unique to the occident, etc.)

‡‡ RTL, morning of June 29.

†† This question is put in *La Grande Méprise*, by Chantal Delsol (La Table Ronde, 2004). It may be objected that the existence of the camps was indeed known, without interrogations, and that bombing did not occur. But not only is this contention highly controversial, nourished by hind-sight and ignorant of a whole set of complications endemic to real situations, it is irrelevant to Delsol's question of principle. In matters of life and death, particularly when dozens and hundreds, or even thousands and millions of lives are at stake, the comfort of one or two murderers or would be murderers, who might avoid all inconvenience were they only to cooperate with us, would seem to carry very little weight.

We are seeing a formalistic use of Law and the notion of Rights, designed to hamper clear vision; that world poverty is less due to multi-national corporations than the corruption of certain governments, or lack of freedom to think and create, and the absence of separation of powers, are principal causes of terrorism, not occidental arrogance or aberrant G8 policy. But with such an analysis our true believers will have no truck. They prefer to continue fooling us, and themselves.*



A COMMENT ON THE LONDON ATTACK

BY PAUL RHOADS

The bomb flashes in London on June 30 casts Lucien Oulahbib's remarks in dramatic relief. The terror and blood of this sneak attack, for anyone with a memory or an education, must recall the terror and blood of Hitler's infernal machines—V1s, V2s, Henkels Dorniers, Junkers, Stukas—which rained terror upon London, within living memory, to the toll of 60,500 civilian deaths. Does this parallel occur to the appeasers fingered by Lucien? And will, as a result, Hitler's apprentices have better success than their mentor against the heirs of Winston Churchill? Churchill, let it never be forgotten, was the man who, alone in the world, from the collapse of the French army in June 1940 until Pearl Harbor and the German declaration of war against the U.S.A. in December 1941, for 18 eternal months stood firm against the master of Europe, an all-powerful monster supplied and encouraged by the tyrant of soviet Russia† and allied to the rampaging Japanese hegemonists.

The blindness of the appeasers, exacerbated by a grotesquely visceral anti-Western hostility—alien to such as Neville Chamberlain whom Churchill considered an honorable man—is called 'self-loathing' by Victor Davis Hanson. I am not sure the qualification is justified. These people seem desolidarized from the West. Their lives bathe in the material and spiritual beatitude of Western Civilization so their attitude cannot escape the qualification 'traitorous', yet their spiritual allegiance, their spiritual home, is elsewhere; the utopia generated by the Western Civilization they decry, but which, like a growing child, has come into independent existence. These folk, I suspect, though structurally

* Translator's note: for recent commentary: *The Same Old, Same Old... An anatomy of the London bombing*, July 8, 2005, by Victor Davis Hanson, or: *Jihad Is Knocking: Another Episode in the War between Christendom and Islam*, July 9, 2005, by Bruce Thornton, both at: <http://victorhanson.com/>

† Not only was Stalin then Hitler's ally—until Germany's preventive strike against Stalin's treacherous forces massed on Germany's eastern border, also in December of 1941, but Stalin had both constructed Hitler's war machines and provided training grounds for his illegal armies at a time, and until Hitler dared to openly flout the treaty of Versailles in 1939, when neither could be accomplished openly in Germany. Stalin's cooperation was essential to Hitler's actions.

Westerners, are not spiritual* Westerners. They do not loath themselves. They may loath their origins, their cultural parents, but a child is not his parents.

They are worms in the fruit. Blind, they do not see their reflection in the dark mirror of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the other utopian follies of Modern times; wriggling, they are unashamed of their cowardly and traitorous attitude; solipsistic, they choose to ensconce themselves upon a thunderous crag of contempt for all who refuse to share their disdain for what they have stuffed into the trash-bin of history. Choosing, one way and another, to submit to the monster-god of Islamo-fascism, usually by pretending to be pro-Western while doing everything imaginable to weaken real efforts to defeat the murderous enemy, they have emasculated themselves. It is not Zapatero, Schroder, Kerry, Hilary or Kofi Annan who will emerge as politically relevant leaders; they are not the Sklar Hasts of our time. If they win, we lose—and they are forgotten. If we win—they are likewise forgotten. They may or may not loath themselves, they do lust for personal oblivion.

Such they appear on the stage of our world-drama. But how are they in person? Holding the past and all its works in contempt they mock at honor, fidelity and veneration in everyday things. They are the sneerers, the wiser-than-thou chucklers, those who inform their adversaries, with smug assurance, of their status as garbage in history's trash-bin. Or, changing their tone to a warbling plaint, they wring their hands over alleged Western guilt—when normal folk elsewhere seek to emulate or escape to this guilt-ridden entity. In sage tones they recommend firmness but tolerance, justice but generosity; the net effect is zero. It is no road to victory. Like Sklar Hast we must identify the enemy, understand him, and inflict decisive defeat.

This enemy, I say, is Islam. It may not be the majority of Muslims—upon whom I recommend no murderous reprisals!—but it is their so called religion, and the culture and society built upon it. It is a fact that this religion has never ceased to advocate and practice expansionist hegemony by the sword. Anti-Christians, anti-Westerners and Leftists, will quickly cry that Christianity is no better. But even if the claim were historically true, which it is not, the argument is absurd. We may be evil but our present existance ought to be precious to us. Like some German in 1943, with one jewish grandfather he never met, designated 'enemy of the Aryan Race', so we have been designated 'Christendom' by our jihadist foe. The accusation may not be justified and this holy war may be their holy war; that does not exempt us from the obligation to fight it.

Again the anti-Westerners will scoff: 'a war against a rag-tag group of vagabond malcontents?' Stalin once laughed at the pope in these terms: 'where are his divisions?' Where indeed. Today the Communist tyrants are gone and the papacy glows with an unprecedented prestige. Stalin was wrong to underestimate the pope's

* I use the word 'spiritual' in the larger sense. I do not mean that these people are not religious but that their minds and emotions are no longer structured along Western lines. They do not, for example, value personal freedom in the old way, or understand it in the Western manner; in relation to personal virtue and rule of law.

divisions. We would be wrong to underestimate Bin Ladin's. The soldiers of the jihadist armies may be few; they trade their lives at 1 to 100 and their sympathizers and supporters (read 'logistic network') are many. Too many members of Muslim societies — *this must be faced* — are glad to see Western women and children tremble, bleed and die, in London, Madrid and New York. They would be glad to see the same in Paris and Rome. When the bombs go off and lives are snuffed out they cheer and celebrate. They crowd in the public square to chant such things as: 'death to America'.

Let them tremble in their turn. Let the Muslim citizens of Europe isolate their armed brothers and cooperate actively with the West, with more than timely and pro-forma 'condemnations' of 'terrorism', but active and fruitful cooperation with police. If not, I say, close the madrassas and mosques and throw the imams into the sea. As for jihadi sympathizers in Teheran, Damascus, Cairo and Riyadh glad to see Western capitals deconstructed block by block, how would they like to see Mecca, a city which Christians are forbidden entry, deconstructed in the same way, including that block of blocks: the Kaaba?

Cultural insensitivity? Provocation of racial hatred? Wild-eyed extremism? What would Winston Churchill, the man who saved the West, have done in our place? In May of 1940, with Mussolini about to enter the war, the president of France visited London. Churchill writes: 'Reynaud was under strong pressure at home, and we on our side wished to give full consideration to our Ally, whose one vital weapon, her Army, was breaking in her hand. . . Reynaud dwelt not obscurely upon the possible French withdrawal from the war.' The French wished to make concessions to Mussolini; '. . . it did not seem worth while at this moment to pay a heavy price to keep Italy out of the war. My own feeling was that at the pitch in which our affairs lay, we had nothing to offer which Mussolini could not take for himself or be given by Hitler if we were defeated. One cannot easily make a bargain at the last gasp. Once we started negotiating for the friendly mediation of the Duce, we should destroy our power of fighting on. I found my colleagues very stiff and tough. *All our minds ran much more on bombing Milan and Turin the moment Mussolini declared war, and seeing how he like that.*'*

Our situation today may not yet be like May 1940, but is it unlike September 1938? At that time, defending the Munich Accords, which 'accommodated' Hitler's territorial demands, Neville Chamberlain said:

The Czech Government, through the wisdom and courage of President Benes, accepted the advice of the French Government and ourselves. It was a hard decision for anyone who loved his country to take, but to accuse us of having by that advice betrayed the Czechoslovakian State is simply preposterous. What we did was to save her from annihilation and give her a chance of new life as a new State, which involves the loss of territory and fortifications, but may perhaps enable her to enjoy in the future and develop a national existence under a neutrality and security comparable to that which we see in Switzerland to-day. Therefore, I think the Government deserve the approval of this House for their conduct of affairs in this recent crisis which has saved Czechoslovakia from destruction and Europe from Armageddon.

* Their Finest Hour, Winston S. Churchill, Houghton Mifflin, 1949, pages 123-124. Emphasis added.

Today it may be easy to see that such ideas and sentiments were a supreme folly, leading directly to 'the most merciless of all the wars of which record has been kept'* but at the time such as Churchill already saw it clearly.

The ultimate question is personal; at this juncture of our contemporary crises, would we play the roll of Semm Voiderveg or Sklar Hast?



BITS AND PIECES

A special bound edition of Rhoadsian vancification has prompted too little interest to be presently pursued. Perhaps the idea can be revived at a later date.

I am struggling to create extra sets for subscribers who were too late. You can help by contacting me directly if such a set would interest you.

An exciting project is afoot to, perhaps, publish certain VIE texts in paperback editions. Note: these volumes would cost more than VIE volumes purchased with the set and the totality of the volumes would probably never be made available in this form. Still, it is an exciting prospect and, should it work out, will help keep Vance in print and prolong the efforts of the VIE volunteers.

We are still studying the possibility of a bound edition of Cosmopolis, in 3 or 4 hard-bound volumes. The cost would depend greatly on the number of subscribers.



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* Ibid, page 3.