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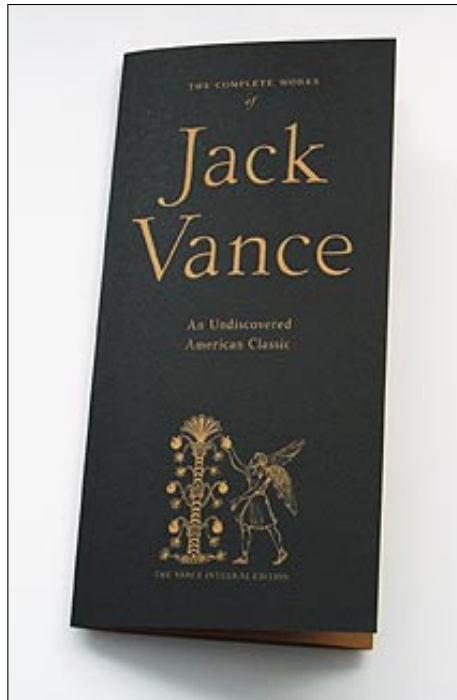


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HELP PUBLICIZE JACK VANCE and the VIE



The new VIE promotional brochure, designed by Joel Anderson, is available for distribution. Give it to friends, bookstores, libraries. Show it to co-workers. The brochure includes a catalogue of VIE books, information about Vance, the project, VIE books and subscriptions, and features testimonials from A.E. Cunningham of the British Library and Howard Gotlieb, Director

of Special Collections at the Boston University Library (The Mugar). Brochures are available in the USA and Asia from Bob Lacovara (Lacovara@vanceintegral.com), and in Europe from Paul Rhoads (prhoads@club-internet.fr). They are free of charge. Send your address. Tell us how many flyers you think you can place. Participate in promoting the work of Jack Vance! Several volunteers are already distributing brochures, including Volunteer Coordinator and Ombudsman Hans van der Veeke, Suan Yong, Joel Anderson, Dave Reitsema, Mary Palmer, Mike Berro, Anton Sherwood, Marcel ven Genderen, and Koen Vyverman the Laughing Mathematician. Join this exclusive group!

Vance in the Classroom

Richard Chandler

In 1985 Professor Jack Rawlins of California State University – Chico had a personal interview with Jack which he published in a small book of Vancean essays entitled *Demon Prince—The Dissonant Worlds of Jack Vance*, Borgo Press, 1986. A small quote from that interview made its way to the Yahoo listserv for the VIE wallahs. This generated enough interest that I volunteered to try to get Professor Rawlins' permission to reprint the interview in *Cosmopolis*.

Professor Rawlins has now retired from the English Department at CSU – Chico but eventually I was able to contact him by email. He graciously gave us permission to reprint the interview but indicated we should obtain permission from the publisher of Borgo Press, Robert Reginald, warning that "Reginald made it clear on several occasions that he was violently opposed to anyone reprinting stuff from his books." I have tried to contact Reginald but my email has gone unanswered.

On a more positive note: When I contacted Professor Rawlins I asked him about his relationship with Jack. Here is the relevant portion of my first email to him:

I am writing to ask if we could reprint that interview in its entirety in our monthly newsletter *Cosmopolis*. (You can see back issues of *Cosmopolis* at the above WWW site.) We would certainly give full bibliographic information and would also be interested in including a short biographical note about you. How did you, an academician, get sufficiently interested in a science fiction author to write a book about him? Do you include Vance in classroom instruction? Etc., etc.

I thought you would be interested in his response to the last two questions:

How did I get interested in Vance? Nothing unusual there. I was a passionate reader of SF from the age of 8 or so. While I was pursuing a degree in English Lit from Berkeley, my roommate gave me a copy of *The Star King* by some guy neither of us had ever heard of. I fell madly in love and started reading everything I could find. I became a devotee, partly because Vance was great, partly because he was largely unknown, partly because the books were so hard to find, and partly because his lack

of reputation was so inexplicable and unreasonable. To this day I don't know why he isn't a titan in the field. "The Moon Moth" alone should have made him a legend.

So Vance was just one of my private loves, along with Sherlock Holmes and Modesty Blaise, when I went to a literary conference, met Borgo Press, and was asked to write a book on anything in SF that interested me. I picked Vance, and the rest is history.

Have I taught Vance in classes? A time or two. I taught a course in SF ten or twenty times at my college, but I found that Vance was largely hated by students. I didn't know why then, and I don't know why now. In fact I've had bad luck interesting anyone but the odd duck in Vance's work. There's a missing gene in there somewhere.

If I might answer the implied question here, I've never been one of those academicians that thought that my job was to worship Milton and despise everything else. I've always loved pulp, movies, cartoons, all the great populist art forms, and I've always taught them freely in my classes. I was teaching lit lessons around episodes of ST-TNG [*Star Trek—The Next Generation*] long before it was fashionable. It was less a political agenda and more just a matter of wanting to teach what I loved.

I suspect his third paragraph finds a resonance in most of us. We have not, for the most part, had the experience of trying to teach Jack to a classroom of students whose ideas about science fiction were defined by Star Trek. But almost certainly we have all tried to get a friend, a spouse, someone, interested in our favorite author and, after a dutiful effort on their part, received the book back with a polite "Thank you" but no plea to borrow another one.



About Liars and Story Tellers

Till Noever

Pop-quiz: What do the items in the following list—presented with cheerful, and indeed deliberate, disregard to category or importance—have in common?

Communism, Love, Justice, God, Liberty, Honor, The

Law, Fairness, Faith, Devil, Loyalty, Race, Art, Good, Atheism, Truth, Freedom, Evil, Jinn, Decency, Human Rights, Angels, Success, Service, Happiness, Peace, Fatherland.

Hint #1: All items are Capitalized.

Hint #2: People have been motivated into many different kinds of actions by every single one of them.

Don't read on, please, until you have at least *thought* about it for a moment.

Think this is a trick-question? It's not. It's just that the answer is so simple that it is almost laughable—though I must admit that my willful mixing of categories might mean that some of you will have trouble figuring it out; but it is this very fact that actually demonstrates the point I will be trying to make.

Thought enough?

Thought at all?

Here is the answer: None of the 'things' in this list actually exist. Not in the sense that we think of something as 'existing'; objects of the world, if you will.

Ahh, you object, but this is just playing with words. Of *course* they are 'objects'; it's just that one has to accept a somewhat broader definition of what constitutes objectness.

Fair enough, and I'll get to all that in a moment—but first of all could we please agree that, as far as our main five senses are concerned we can look forever and a day and we will never find any evidence of the existence of Fairness, Freedom, or Peace—though I can see some folks objecting that, yes, of course they have seen God, Angels, or Jinns (or Little Green Men or Pink Elephants); or even if they haven't actually 'seen' them, they have 'experienced' them in some existentially validating manner either firsthand or through the inspection of evidentiary materials. The rest of us will probably acknowledge that such evidence is sparse to non-existent, and probability favors the non-existence of such entities—excepting maybe Pink Elephants.

Most people reading this will probably now proceed to castigate me for my apparent oversimplification of what is patently much more complex, especially since I've lumped objects of metaphysical speculation together with concepts of a more abstract nature, and therefore have committed that gravest of all philosophical sins: The Category Mistake.

Reminder: 'concept' means something conceived, made up, fabricated in the mind. In that sense at least it must be obvious that I have *not* made a Category Mistake, though canny philosophers will see through my ruse immediately. I know Plato would.

Ahh, Plato. I have a thing about Plato—or maybe I should say I have a few things *against* him. Far from being the ancient-and-therefore-wise philosopher he's normally considered to be, he has a lot to answer for. Probably his most heinous offense was the popularization of the notion that not only should the world of the 'Ideal' be considered to be as real as that of the physical, but that indeed it might be more so, and that, in a way, we should consider the physical as being systematized by the Ideal.

If I could go back in time and dispatch Plato with a merciful shot in the back of the head, I'd seriously consider it—if only I didn't have the grim suspicion that someone else in the philosophical climate extant then would have come up with the same stupid notion.

Plato himself is evidence, if any such were needed, that a) 'ancient' doesn't imply 'wise', and b) philosophical speculation conducted in ignorance about the realities of the physical universe is probably crappy philosophy.

Plato, *inter alia*, made the perfectly correct observation that concepts appear to have the power to determine our actions. But he knew diddly-squat about the brain, and he certainly had not a shred of an idea of the physiology of cognition, or what we now call the 'scientific method'. Within this ignorance-filled context it appeared perfectly sensible to deduce that if concepts or ideas exert the power they appear to over our actions, then maybe they have not only 'reality' but are at a 'higher level' of said reality. The next step was almost inevitable: the proposition that maybe everything is patterned or systematized by some 'higher' kind of order. This train of philosophical reasoning was partially responsible for the development of that calamitous philosophy known as 'Idealism', which gave, and still gives, philosophical respectability to the infinite variety of extant *isms which infest our world. Being called an 'Idealist' is almost universally a considered a compliment.

It shouldn't be.

I don't know if Plato—who probably wasn't stupid; just ignorant and woefully unaware of it—had he known a bit more about the results of present-day cognition research, would have reconsidered his conclusions. I'd like to think he might have, and especially so if he'd known about the phenomenon of 'cognition inflation', which can now, after many decades of the evil practice of 'scientism' as applied to the human mind, be considered a 'scientific fact', though it seems to be having a hard time making its way to public consciousness.

'Cognition inflation'—often called 'imagination inflation'—is probably one of the most unpalatable notions

ever to emerge from cognitive research. It may be summarized thus:

1) Unless aided by external-world feedback and validation, human beings are unable to tell fact from fiction.

2) Any mental construct not subject to the feedback from, and limitations imposed by, such input, will tend to inflate until it fills up the available mental resources, making it impossible, or at least very difficult, for the mind to accept reality-conformant inputs and adjust itself accordingly.

The evidence that this represents an accurate description of the processes inside the human mind is overwhelming. In the light of this, a lot of more anecdotal, everyday and less systematic observation begins to make a lot of sense; and, indeed, once we start looking for it, it's literally everywhere.

[Sidebar: Yes, I am aware that one has to be wary of this apparent ubiquity. The dangers of becoming a victim of a nifty new paradigm are real. But evidence is evidence. That's the difference between the scientific and the superstitious approach to determining what is factual.]

Our built-in inability to tell fact from fiction has always been with us. It's a hangover from pre-human evolution. Animals can not even tell that they can not tell fact from fiction. Animals, however, also live in a universe of constant sensory feedback and reality-checks on whatever mental constructs they have. The development of a brain capable of constructing complex fictions that may or may not survive a reality-check apparently has obviously not provided sufficient evolutionary pressure to change this situation. People survive and breed despite living with the constant threat of cognition inflation.

The 'reality value' of a fictional 'experience' can be the same as that of an actual experience. Extended exposure to fiction with essentially the same content will imbue said content with a reality value that may exceed that of non-fictional experiences. This often results in the search for yet more validation material, which reinforces what's already established, and so on.

Furthermore, the brain has no built-in notion of 'category'. It only knows 'experience', either from its interface with the world, or from its interaction with itself. The only way in which it knows that, say, Angels and Fairness are somehow 'different' from each other is because we can form a mental picture of Angels, but not of Fairness. But this difference is not the result of some profound understanding by the brain of a difference in 'category', but comes about because 'Angel' will invoke some activity in the visual cortex, while 'Fairness' won't. Some years ago I started to toy with the notion that maybe what philoso-

phers label 'category' is one of those Idealist fictions, and that what we are really talking about is really 'context'. This is certainly more in line with what we now know about cognition, from extensive inter-disciplinary research conducted during the last two decades between psychology, and computer- and neuro-science. It is also consistent with cognitive inflation research, which has demonstrated that the phenomenon is largely independent of category. The idea that Angels watch over you is as much subject to inflation as, for example, the concept of Evil, or the fantasy that you were abducted by aliens. The main difference is that constructs like Angels tend to be less variable than Evil. This is a consequence of context: Angels—like 'aliens'—wherever they are found, have similar imaginative and mythological origins, and have changed remarkably little since they were invented, except maybe for some aspects of fashion and anatomy; while Evil is more of a mental chameleon, adapting closely and rapidly to time, culture, religion, politics, and so on. But it matters little. *All concepts are imaginary.* None are subject to reality-check type verification, and so all have basically unlimited capacity for inflating to fill the available mind-space.

At some point during our evolution, proto-humans started to tell stories, making up things that were, at the very least, fanciful. At some point there must also have come upon them a definite awareness that these things weren't 'true'. That must have come as a bit of a shock to the system. It's a bit like a child realizing that Santa Claus isn't real—and doing so without an adult telling him.

[Sidebar: There is also evidence that fiction predates complex language, and that the first fiction came in the form of images, which many trendy people call 'Art', but which is, let's face it, just the prehistoric equivalent of cartoons. Is this why cartoons with cavemanlike utterances of 'Ugh!' and 'Grrr!' still have such widespread appeal? The matter may be worth investigating.]

Given the structure of the human mind, it was inevitable that confusion of fact and imagined-fact would arise, but who could have predicted that this stuff would end up determining the course of human thought and history? I'm not just referring to the usual suspects: the great 'traditional' religious fictions that have dogged us for millennia; New Age gibberish, from Angel-lore to Quantum Healing; or just plain old journalism. I'm speaking of 'honest' fiction that never really pretended to be anything but what it is, but was contrived by story-tellers for the purpose of entertainment—and preferably making a living from it, too.

To consider just one latter-day example, there's a whole community of computer cognoscenti out there trying to do

their best to raise the world's awareness about the dangers of the up-and-coming threat of 'hostile A.I.' There are good reasons to suggest that the very notion in principle doesn't make any sense (see some more comments of mine regarding this at <http://www.emortalists.com/assets/html/emortalism%20103-1.html>); and certainly not a shred of *any* evidence exists to suggest that such a thing would ever eventuate. Nor, by the way, is there any evidence that something like 'A.I.' exists to begin with—especially since there's such a limited supply of 'I.I.' in the people trying to create it.

The last time I griped about the ludicrousness of the 'hostile A.I.' scenario to computer-related geek-dom, someone suggested that maybe I hadn't seen the *Terminator* movies. Or how about *Matrix*? Or *13th Floor*? And there was the whole 'problem' of someone like 'Data' (from *Star Trek*, in case I've lost you). How could I not see the inevitable results from current computer R&D, and where things are going? Toward a world of cybernetic Frankenstein-Monsters (a well-known historical character): that's where things are going.

Right?

Right.

The use of fiction as evidence for anything but the inventiveness and story-telling skills of its author is so common that we hardly notice it. This is even more true for writings that *should* be classified as 'fiction' but misrepresent themselves as non-fiction, sometimes for self-serving purposes, or maybe because the writers are just plain deluded—or both.

The civilizations on planet Earth are ruled by fictions. Ancient stories that may or may not have a foundation in historical events, but which have undoubtedly taken excessive artistic license with whatever facts they purport to represent, are taken to be, if not always literally, but still substantially 'true'. Their 'ancient'-ness is often taken to be an indication of their essential veracity; neglecting that, if anything, that very attribute should make us doubt it; as 'ancient' usually means 'created in an epoch of scientific ignorance'—and, despite the tirades against 'scientism', let's face it: today's knowledge about the physical world, accumulated by research or observation grounded in verifiable fact (i.e. 'science' by any name)—and this needs to include the empirical elements of, for example, the practice of acupuncture and so on—exceeds anything that ever was. There is not a shred of evidence to suggest otherwise. Idealists may deride this knowledge as inferior to 'higher' forms of knowledge—whatever that is—but facts are facts.

A lot of the contemporary spate of dishonest fiction supplements the long-entrenched fabrications, or is in active competition with them for the philosophical shelf-space in our heads. Its success provides continued evidence for the inability of the human mind to, without reference to or the grounding in actual experience, distinguish the real from the imaginary.

This has insidious, and occasionally malignant, consequences for human societies and the way we see ourselves—and our technology-aided power to disseminate Ideas across a wide audience, and in less time than it used to take people to prepare their dinner makes it positively dangerous. The global nature of information-distribution mirrors the 'global' philosophical nature of the Capitalizations that are being spread, with more of them being added by the day. We are drowning in a bog of Capitalizations.

[Sidebar: The worst offenders in this game? It's a toss-up. My vote goes to journalists, followed by—in approximate order of offensiveness—Chopras, Oprahs, politicians, theologians, philosophers and advertisers. The latter are the least noxious, since they, though they do lie, at least do so with everybody but the most innocent or stupid aware that they are.]

Why do journalists lead the field? Probably because they're the most deviously hypocritical; because most of them have sold out a long time ago and are deliberately avoiding doing their jobs; and because the remainder don't even seem to understand what their job should be.]

9/11 and the sight of a bunch of deluded Idealist morons flying planes full of innocent people into buildings holding yet more innocent people, and all that in the name of God—and never mind the details of the name: it's all tomato, tomato; and puree at that—should have woken us to the realization that something is not as it should be in the space between our ears. It didn't of course, and in hindsight I appreciate that it was silly to think it would. It just helped a whole batch of Capitalizations, old and new, to inflate or re-inflate themselves through our already-crammed heads, engaging resources we should be using for productive thought, but aren't.

The West. Terrorism. Culture Wars. Zionism. Trauma. Pluralism. Multiculturalism. Islamism. Bin Laden. Patriotism. Religious Tolerance. Peace. War.

I'll spare you the full litany. It is moderately-to-severely nauseating.

As a consequence of 9/11, and claiming to be taking into account the public's 'sensibilities' or 'sensitivity'—meaning it was thought that there was no money in it—a whole lot of films were pulled from Hollywood's to-be-released

schedule; films that had terrorism as a central or peripheral theme. Most of those films were trash, of course — as exemplified by the Schwarzenegger flick *Collateral Damage*. But that's not the point. Even *Collateral Damage* would have been a better offering than the journalistic, therapeutic, political and general 'opinion' logorrhea which took its place. All *that* did was to saturate our minds with Capitalizations. Nary a decent thought came out of it, and it helped the coping with trauma not a whit. People were shaken up at a very basic and personal level, but all they got to help them to deal with it was Trauma Therapy and Ideologies. Their refuge into the personalized escapisms provided by stories was denied to them. Instead, Hollywood released a flood of material that had as little to do with their recent shock as possible.

This was, I believe, a grave mistake. There is a reason why humans take to stories to deal with shock, grief, and trauma; and why they do this *knowing* that these are stories and not 'real'. It's because stories personalize Issues and thus provide the listener/watcher with a kind of emotional substance to hold onto. Capitalizations cannot provide that, no matter how inflated they may have become — unless we're talking about pathological cases: those who have lost all touch with reality and what 'is'. (I leave it as an exercise to the reader to figure out what kind of people I would include in the list of 'pathological cases'.)

Personalization happens through identification or association and is mediated through the substitution of personal by imaginary action, which gives rise to a kind of catharsis, because it gives us at least *some* clue as to how — realistically or not, it doesn't matter — to deal with disasters on a personal level, as instantiated by the person who effectively represents us in the story. In the post-9/11 period people were denied this release, and I don't think that was a good thing.

The most successful fiction is that in which people *do* things; as opposed to that in which they remain inert: pondering, pontificating, inactive lumps of boredom.

Action doesn't have to be the 'action' of an Action Film. It just has to be 'doing', making the implicit express itself in its effect on the world.

Of recent I've been thinking about that more than ever: how action may be the only evidence we'll *ever* have of the implicit — of, if there is such a thing, 'reality'. This is not a novel notion, of course. Indeed, it is lies at the core of the philosophy of Taoism, which bears some looking into.

I, too, once believed that being called an 'Idealist' was a compliment, and that the world needed more Idealists to be a better place. Not any more. I now think that the world needs to be de-Idealized. We need Ideal-Exterminators: the philosophical equivalent of Arnie's 'Terminator' blasting his way across the philosophical landscape.

[Sidebar: Actually, we need fewer liars and hypocrites and more honest story-tellers; but I'll come back to that in a moment.]

Now, before you start jumping up and down and calling me a Godless Immoral Atheist, Communist, or Whatever-ist . . .

I'm not advocating the promotion of a Value-free or Relativistic Culture. I hate this trashy post-modernist crap as much as the next man — hoping that the 'next man' actually *does* hate it as much as I do! But it may be much healthier for everybody to think of values as only having any reality at all when they are *instantiated*. What I mean is that they need to be considered as being *implicit*, rather than *explicit*. That is, they cannot be named, described or given attributes — as if they were entities in themselves (i.e. Values). Values never 'are': they can only be shown.

That means that we have to give up to try and explain what is, for example, Good or Evil. Let's face it, that can only be an improvement on the current situation, as we are demonstrably unable to do this anyway. As soon as we try to pin down just *what* they are, out comes garbage, usually of the metaphysical kind. The thing is, deep down we *do* know, and so we keep on trying to say what we know, but we can't, because . . . well, because we just *can't*! The implicit cannot be 'said'. It just *is*.

But we have this brain and it *needs* to express, to systematize, to find patterns, if for no other reason but that it thinks that this will allow it to generate appropriate responses to whatever comes about as a result of whatever circumstances arise through the agency of the implicit. This is a biological reflex so profound that it cannot be suppressed. So the brain invents something that represents the unrepresentable, gives it a name, probably a Capitalized one, and presto! Then follows the inevitable: inflation without reality checks.

[Sidebar: Recently this quirk of ours has found new, bizarre dimensions of expression. A bunch of people who label themselves 'rational' — or maybe that should be 'Rational' — have taken to congregate in a movement called the 'Brights'. I must confess that when I first learned about it I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. In the end laughter won the day. You gotta laugh at this kind of lunacy or you'll go mad. . .]

It's a grim picture. And, let's face it, it isn't going to change anytime soon, and certainly not this week, month,

year, century, millennium. The job of my—entirely fictional!—Ideal-Exterminator is beginning to make the War Against Terrorism look like child's play. It is an un-winnable fight with no end in sight. Which is no reason not to fight it. Just don't expect to win. Sometimes that's just the way it is.

[Sidebar: I am a practitioner of kenjitsu, Samurai sword craft. We have a saying in our philosophical universe, which roughly states that a determination to win is doomed to failure, because you can't. All victory is temporary. So you have to replace the desire to win with an implacable determination not to lose.

I know that doesn't sound very 'positive'—and 'positive' is all the rage these days—but in an un-winnable or never-ending battle it actually becomes the only valid positive force.]

The battle-lines are drawn—always have been, actually, only we didn't know it.

On one side stands arrayed a heavily-armed phalanx of Idealists, hypocrites and liars—and, yes, I am mentioning all three in the same breath, and offer no apologies for it—united, for reasons ranging from folly to venality, in the desire to impress their idea of how things should be according to the gospel-of-whomever upon everybody else.

On the other side mills about a motley mob of story-tellers, mixing with a straggle of Idealist castaways, who eschew preaching in favor of action, because, though their minds are cluttered with over-inflated Idealist trash, they have enough inherent nobility to understand, somewhere deep down, that without 'doing' their Ideals are empty.

Jack Vance, whose work we're celebrating and honoring by issuing the VIE, exemplifies the story-teller. His writing is remarkably free of Issues. Like all good story-tellers he focuses on people living their lives in the complicated minefield of human existence. Any Ideals, if such there are, are implied in the *actions* of these people—protagonists and antagonists alike—but very rarely does one find an explicit holding-forth on 'Principles', or be it from those clearly depicted as either overly self-possessed or pompous or venal or all of those. People are defined by what they *do*, not by the fantasies they believe in. Yet, almost always, there is a framework of 'larger' issues, verging on becoming 'Issues', but not quite.

Indeed, and contrary to the way some would like to interpret it, I see Jack's work not so much as containing an implied, or sometimes explicit, polemic for or against certain Issues, Political Systems, Ideologies, and so on, but as being against the very notion of Capitalizing *anything*. Maybe we should call him a 'decapitalizer' (lower-case 'd').

While Jack tells stories exceptionally well, most other folks on *this* side of the battle-lines should be considered warriors fighting the good fight as well—even those who write . . . well, 'trash'. As long as it's a 'story' and clearly labeled as such. Then people can decide whether they want to hear it or not; and once they've heard it, they can decide whether they liked the characters or the story, or not, and what, if anything, it means to them. Nobody's entreating anybody to 'believe this' or 'believe that', or '*this* is the Truth and *that* is a Lie'. Stories make no such claims. The moment they do, they cease to be stories and become Lies.

Nowadays, the written story has acquired significant competition in the medium of 'film'. The context and mechanism of the cinematographic experience is different from the written word. We tend to watch movies in the company of others: either in theatres, in the company of strangers, united only in their agreement to 'experience' whatever they are being presented with for the duration of the film; or maybe in the home, where family, friends and/or acquaintances are providing the social environment. We may also watch movies by ourselves, of course; but this is not the norm.

The context of movie-watching parallels the process of movie-creation. A novel, despite the interference from editors and the sales-efforts associated with marketing, is still basically a solitary effort. Writing is usually anti-social. A movie, on the other hand, always involves other people; and this is true even for the smallest-budget efforts. Producing or directing a movie is an incredibly 'socializing' process; though the original screenplay, the story-skeleton, may well have been produced in essential solitude.

Film also provides an emotionally more enveloping environment than books. Cinematography and musical scoring add to the impact of the mere 'story', as it may be written down in the original- or shooting-screenplay.

Another aspect of film is that it locks the spectator into a definite time-frame, which is very difficult to evade. Though it is possible to pause a video or DVD—something which, of course, you can't do in a theatre—this is not the same as the putting-down-for-a-time of a book. No matter how exciting a book, there is seldom the same urgency attending the temporary suspension of the watching of a gripping movie. 'Paper is patient' goes a German saying, and there's a profound truth in that. Movies, on the other hand, tend to be very impatient.

Some people actually don't like movies and are scath-

ing of them, proclaiming that they require less mental effort to digest than books, and that the provision of imagery—movies *are* a visual medium, though that's only part of the story—implies that something's gone 'missing' from the experience; that watching a movie is somehow more passive than reading a book.

I am sure that the same people, had they had the opportunity and the time, would also have bemoaned the demise of the hand-written book when the process of 'printing' was introduced. Something disappeared from the experience of reading a book when suddenly there were a gazillion of them, all printed with these look-alike letters, and without any of the effort of all those busy scribes putting their scratchy quills to parchment.

It's a bit like that today—especially today: much more so than, say, even a decade ago. The advent of widespread, cheap and ever more sophisticated digital image making and processing means that the latter-day equivalent of the printing press has finally arrived *en masse* and that it is here to stay.

It looks a bit like what happened after the advent of the printing process: slowly at first, but then with the inevitability of an avalanche, written stories were added to orally transmitted ones, until they almost completely supplanted them. Is it going to be the same with movies? Are they going to displace the dominance of writing for the telling of stories? I have no idea. But I know that movies are powerful stuff. They are also big business—as was the enterprise called 'publishing' that eventually followed the advent of printing—and, though movies are by their nature confined to telling stories of 'novelette' size—with some exceptions, such as Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* adaptation, which definitely has reached novel-equivalence—brevity need not imply lack of content. Let's not forget that Jack has told some very good and complete stories in remarkably few words. The best example is maybe *The Last Castle*, which is crying out to be adapted into a film!

The visual elements of movies can provide the equivalent of many pages of written text. The picture and a thousand words and all that. Indeed, movies can carry content which the written word is unlikely to capture, and especially not with the same impact. Even Jack, with his skills, only occasionally manages to evoke the implicit with the power that I've seen it done in film. That's because he is using a medium that doesn't *allow* him to. We are visual creatures, and images have direct access to places in our psyche that words, and especially written ones, never will.

I can understand that many writers of conventional fiction—apart from enviously ogling the money that scriptwriters can make for what must appear like a pathetic output of a few thousand words—are reluctant to accept this reality. But a reality it is. The dimensions and media of story-telling are expanding, as does their influence on how people perceive the world. When they leave a cinema, they take with them between 90 and 180 minutes' worth of imagery, sound and story. Potent stuff.

Therefore, when we're talking about 'telling stories' we must see beyond 'books'. When it comes to affecting large numbers of people, movies arguably have a definite edge. The sums of money involved in production and the resulting profits are astronomical, and the promotion is commensurably intense. Of course, the newest John Grisham novel is also heavily promoted, but compared to the moneys invested in advertising, say, *Lord of the Rings* (the movie), that expenditure pales into insignificance. Indeed, the profits from, or awareness of, the written version of *Lord of the Rings* aren't anywhere close to matching those of the film.

[Sidebar: This may not just be the result of promotion and hype, but because in this instance the movie-versions actually tell the story better.]

Like is true for books, there are bad movies that are watched by a lot of people; good ones that aren't; those that garner praise from critics but bomb with the public. Ultimately the measure of 'success' of a story however is how many people it is being told to it and how it affects them. This may not please 'critics' and cognoscenti, but it's the truth. Who really cares about critics anyway? Who ever has? The only relevance of their opinions lies in their potential influence on promotion. Most of them know this. Therefore most of them can be, and probably are, bought. And I've yet to find a 'critic', paid-off or not, who doesn't have *some* 'agenda', self-serving or rooted in some woolly Ideal.

To a first approximation the 'success' of a story may be quantified by the amount of individuals to whom it has been told; though a second approximation may factor in the re-telling or influence-on-the-opinions-of-others associated with these people. In any case, it behooves story-tellers to do their best to ensure that their stories are widely told. That dove-tails neatly with the requirement that the effort should be commercially viable. Don't knock 'commercialism'. It's an indication that you're getting your story 'out there'.

I'm beginning to think that movies may be a better way to do this than the written word. They take much more

effort to produce, but their impact can be like a blow. They also have an extremely attractive feature, which distinguishes them from books: in order to be 'successful', they *must* tell stories, no matter how crappy or trite. Non-fiction or pseudo-fiction movies tend to have limited audience-appeal; as do those marinated in proselytization. This is why I predict that Mel Gibson's *Passion*, despite the gratuitous publicity engendered by its 'controversial' nature, will barely recoup the financial investment—if that; and then only because of Monica Bellucci, who'll be the sexiest Mary Magdalene in the history of cinema.

War movies have always had significant appeal, coming in right after cop-shows. War movies may be the best for achieving what I've been talking about above: contrasting pie-in-the-sky Ideals with what-is-true-made-visible-through-action. In war movies, like in real wars, there's almost always the Large Conflict on one hand and the people fighting in it in the trenches on the other. There's been a spate of war films recently, some of them remarkably good. A few were inspired by 'fact' (*Black Hawk Down*, *We Were Soldiers*, *Tears of the Sun*), others only remotely so (*The Lord of the Rings*). All of them focus on what 'happens' in the trenches, not the Ideals around which the conflict ostensibly revolves. This is as it should be. Nobody really gives a damn about the Evil of Sauron, Communism, Tribal Hatred, or 'Oil'—another trendy Capitalization. But what happens to the Hobbits, the soldiers on the ground in Mogadishu or Vietnam, the SEALs dropped into the jungle to face the reality of genocide: them we *do* care about.

Here we have the essence of story-telling; showing us what is by what we can experience and understand at a pre-verbal level: facial expressions, gestures, actions. We can't read people's minds, but we *are* visual creatures and we'll pick up the subtlest nuance of a facial twitch without even thinking about it. You cannot do that from a description in a book.

Admittedly, a book is much more 'personal'; more than just 'content'; something you can hold in your hand, like the volumes of the VIE, and access with minimum fuss by just opening it and reading. Nobody is ever going to feel the same way about a DVD—despite the niftiest of packaging it'll just remain a piece of shiny plastic requiring sophisticated technology to release its content into our minds. But then again, there was time when printing books was as much of a high-tech affair as the fabrication of electronics and DVDs is now. Also, remember that this happened at a period in history when significant numbers of people didn't actually have the tools to benefit from the printed word—because they were illiterate. The devel-

opment of those tools—literacy—required social effort through the process of education. The tools required to 'interface' human beings to the new story-telling media are technological, but that's a detail. Again, it is an effort which requires human *society*. If this teaches us anything it is that, indeed, no man, woman or child is an island. But the way in which we are a society, a civilization, will change over time, as will the way we tell our stories.

Story-tellers will have to live with that. Every medium needs to be exploited to counter the sickening tedium of Ideal-Merchandizing gaining strength by the day. Give people stories and reveal what is implicitly true, and which we know to be true—and maybe even good and right and wrong and evil—by *showing*, instead of pontificating about, it. Movies, unlike books, force us to do this.

One day we may discover, if literati will ever be so discerning, that Jack may have been one of the last, if not *the* last and possibly one of the greatest, of the grand old-school story-tellers working in a 'literary' medium. And we may also realize that he was so 'great' because he was both behind and ahead of his time. He was rooted in a tradition that emphasized 'showing' over 'telling', and perfected it with his inimitable style—which should be 'styles', because he is a man of many—into something that, paradoxically enough, foreshadowed the imminent demise of literature as the dominant story-telling medium. There are, of course, others who tell good stories—there will always be—but as far as 'literature' is concerned, the days of the 'great ones', the ones producing a consistent and life-long output of unadulterated 'story' in the medium of the written word, are numbered. The Robert Jordans of the world with their endless, boring tomes won't survive for much longer. Already I see the fashion waning as they run out of steam and their audience out of patience. It won't happen tomorrow, but give it a few more years.

To moan the passing of the dominance of literature is futile and ultimately counterproductive. It's like a Star Trek fan harking after the days of the 'Original Series'. That was then, and now is now. Let's appreciate what we had and then proceed to make the best use of what is about to come and already mostly here.

To end:

You never know when and where an image is going to trigger off a whole avalanche of emotions and meaning. Here, however, are two that did it for me: one from literature, and another from film. Though both appear unrelated in just about every aspect, they are not. I leave it as an

exercise to the reader to figure out how and why.

1) The description of Suldrun's suicide in *Suldrun's Garden*.

2) *Tears of the Sun*. (DVD users: the scene in question is at timecode 01:05:17 to 01:17:00.) *TotS* is a story about a bunch of Orwell's 'rough men [who] stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm'. The setting: Africa; during the aftermath of an ethnic-cleansing massacre, interrupted by the arrival of a bunch of soldiers, who, though it is none of their business, intervene and make it their business, against very explicit orders from 'above' not to.

The village lies quiet now, surrounded by jungle, between mist-shrouded mountains under a leaden sky. Smoke rises from burning hooches. In the center stands the soldiers' commander; grimy, bloody, silent. The images confronting him: one of his men, heavily armed, patrolling the area; another carrying the limp body of a dead youth; another attending to wounded; corpses littering the ground; a woman pulling the boots off the feet of one of the dead invaders. Hans Zimmer's haunting score, punctuated by the occasional wails and moans of the grieving and the injured.

I suspect most of you won't much like the movie. It has been trashed by everybody and anybody with intellectual pretensions—though can one think of a better reason to see it? It also stars Bruce Willis, who gets up a lot of people's noses, not least because he, like *Tears of the Sun's* director, Antoine Fuqua, who also directed *Training Day*, is not a peacenik.

But, no matter what your political views may be, this is cinematographic story-telling at its best.

Way to go, guys! Tell your stories and tell them well. Get up the intellectualigensia's nose. Fight the good fight.

I'm with you all the way.



You have done it!

VIE work Credits

Compiled by Hans van der Veeke

Another month has passed and more progress is made. Your credits are below, please check them out; but first here is what these articles are all about:

Marc Herant is not 'Mark Herant'.

Karl Kellar is not 'Karl Keller'.

Thanks to Marc and Mr. Kellar (head of the Clam

Muffins) for helping me help them get the recognition they have more than deserved!

Meanwhile, another milestone is reached: The first Wave 2 volumes are 'text ready'!

These are 33 and 41. Below you can find draft lists of volume credits for volumes 33 and 41. If you have worked on these volumes, including non-text jobs such as map-proofing, your name should be there; please verify!

For any corrections, contact Hans van der Veeke at hans@vie.tmfweb.nl.

The credits of all finished (Wave 2) texts can be found on www.vie.tmfweb.nl/index.htm.

In this article I'd like to take the opportunity to put one of our volunteers in the spotlight; not only does he dedicate much of his time to regular VIE work, he is a regular contributor to *Cosmopolis*, is doing splendid work reinvigorating the interest of French publishers in Vance, and has also been giving much effort to the rather tricky matter of proofing the latest maps (for Showboat, Tschai, Durdane and Maske:Thaery). Any one who does at least one job on a text gets a volume credit, but if the number of jobs and quantity of time spent determined the font size of names then this man's name alone would require a whole page. I am talking about Patrick Dusoulrier. Patrick: chapeau! You are hereby granted access to the Nympharium's 'special section'!

* * *

SABOTAGE ON SULFUR PLANET

Finished 15 September 2003

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A PRACTICAL MAN'S GUIDE
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THE PNUME
 Finished 23 September 2003

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 Finished 8 October 2003

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PLANET OF THE BLACK DUST
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Finished 3 November 2003

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Here is the credit list for Volume 33
which contains:

Maske: Thaery

The realization of this volume was
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TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT

AN EFFECTIVE AND INEXPENSIVE WAY TO SAFEGUARD YOUR VIE READERS' EDITION.

by Ian Jackson, Drouin West, Australia

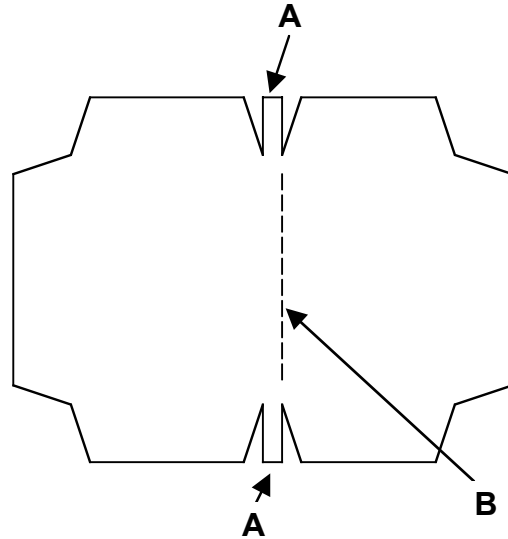
While I was waiting for the first wave of the VIE set to arrive, I received a copy of the *Coup de Grâce and Other Stories* to see how the book set would look. The Readers Edition format is quite attractive and the book was a useful 'hand around' to show others what Jack's work is about. What it also showed was how easy it is for the brown paper exterior to absorb grime and moisture and become rapidly 'spotty'.

This placed me in something of a quandary. Books, and in particular, Jack Vance's books, are made to be read. As spectacularly attractive as they are, I don't want to lock them away just in order to keep them pristine. I also don't want one of the kids to see a bookmarked volume in the lounge become a convenient place-mat for a can of coke. My experience with the preview book tells me that despite my best behaviour a stained cover 'accident' with the final book set will probably occur. When it happens, cries of 'oops' and 'never mind, it's only a book' will be of little consolation.

The logical conclusion - I must cover them. I initially cringed at this thought as I had a mental picture of this nice leather spined set appearing as though it had been bound in cling-wrap. This thought was then linked to the harsh memory of my aunt who drove her then five year old Datsun around with the factory plastic still on the inside of the doors to keep them 'clean'.

I put out a few feelers to see what commercially available cover material could be obtained. During this time I experimented with a cover cut from a plastic A4 sheet holder, designed to preserve documents within a ring binder. The result was surprisingly positive. The plastic was neither too thin, nor too bulky and it had a fine matte sheen, which made it tend to disappear on both the spine and sides of each volume.

Each A4 protective envelope would cover a single volume quite nicely once the ring-binder spine and crimp-sealed base were cut away. The covers I used came in a box of 100 for under \$10 so the experiment was not an expensive one.



Once the side and bottom edges were cut and the sheet opened out, I prepared them as you see on the above diagram. I arranged it so that 'Point B', which is the fold line in the centre of the sheet, coincided with the rear edge of the spine so that a line on the cover would not be evident. Points 'A' are prepared so that they match the width of each spine. Once the cover is secure, the book can be fully opened and these points may then be stuffed down the spine cavity to great effect.

When folding the flaps around the inside cover of each volume, I was careful to ensure that the tape I used did not make contact with the book proper. In effect I have fabricated a tight but removable jacket for each volume.

Our largely throw-away society has made the general populace blasé on the use and treatment of printed matter. A magazine or a paperback holds little intrinsic value once read and the concept that a book can have a value beyond its content just draws odd looks. While I fully intend to take care in keeping a safe distance between my volumes and sticky contaminants, this is at least an adequate solution to the dilemma until something better comes along.

WAVE 2 Czar Report

Joel Riedesel

There are 17 texts assigned and active in TI. One text is in implementation. 5 texts are in initial composition while 5 texts are in stages of composition review (CRT and composition updating).

There are 3 texts in Post Proof and 7 texts in Post Proof composition updating and review (including a special pass on the *Durdane* tasks to check against the associated map).

There are now 44 texts that are volume ready and 5 volumes that are ready for volume composition.

Last month:

- + In-TI: 18 texts (21.95%)
- + Post-TI: 31 texts (37.8%)
- + Volume Ready: 33 texts (40.24%)
- + Volumes Ready: 3 (13.64%)

This month:

- + In-TI: 17 texts (20.73%) (includes *Lurulu* tracking)
- + Post-TI: 21 texts (25.61%)
- + Volume Ready: 44 texts (53.66%)
- + Volumes Ready: 5 (22.73%)



38's Crucible

Vance Review in Locus

Lawrence Pearson reviewed i-Book's recent publication of *Dragon Masters* and *Last Castle*, in VIE texts. After a set of proper remarks about Vance's work in general and these texts in particular, Pearson writes: "A sign of just how many people feel Vance is well worth revisiting is the Vance Integral Edition, a volunteer project dedicated to reprinting all of Vance's work in a uniform edition of 44 hardback books, with all the text corrected to match Vance's original manuscripts. Several hundred fanatical Vance fans (myself included) have already ponied up well over \$1000 for the set, the first 22 volumes of which have already been produced and delivered. Complete, uniform hardback editions of an author's work is an accolade rarely granted to a living SF author. (Discounting White Wolf's incremental and still incomplete Ellison and Moorcock omnibuses, the last one I am aware of is H. G. Wells in 1926-7.) All of which underscores

the fact that Vance, notwithstanding the impressive achievements of Arthur C. Clarke and Jack Williamson, is science fiction's greatest living Grandmaster."



News From Toronto

Lorna Toolis of the Merril Collection, reports: 'The Merril Collection has put up a display of Jack Vance materials, designed to showcase the VIE donation and our other Vance holdings. We are publicizing this display and the VIE donation in Sol Rising, the Newsletter of the Friends of the Merril Collection'.



Tidbits From the Editor's Desk

THE PLANET MACHINE?

The story which will bear the title *The Uninhibited Robot* in the VIE was published under various names, including *The Plagian Siphon*. The latter seems to be a science fiction editor's idea of something techy. The VIE version will closely follow the un-trafficked pulp publication which reads like a Western. Where the SF editor had: 'a roughly humanoid figure', Vance had written: 'a man'. This change is all the more striking because the very next words, unchanged by the editor, are: 'The face of the dead man . . .'

VANCIAN VOCABULARY

This question recently came up: 'Does any one have any evidence that 'accroach' is a real word? Used as 'accroached'. The Laughing Mathematician, having consulted TOTALITY, responded: 'Not in my dictionary, but I can confirm that 'accroached' in *Killing Machine* is the single occurrence in the VIE of anything looking vaguely like it . . .'

Patrick gave details: *Patch began to make restless movements; his prerogatives were ruthlessly being accroached by this so-called partner.* The 'obvious' word that comes to mind is 'encroached' in context, but Jack knows English well, and 'accroach' does indeed exist, with an appropriate meaning: 'To usurp, as jurisdiction or royal prerogatives'. The other meaning of 'to accroach' is the one that comes directly from the Old French verb for 'to hook', and in modern french: *accrocher*.

YOUR PP TEAMS AT WORK

PP caught the following error in *The Wannek*:

"hundredth part offers that."

Should be: "hundredth part of that."

There are very few dramatic typos such as this that sneak through; luckily the PostProofers are hard at work.

A NOTE ON ITALICS

This matter has caused quite a bit of confusion over the years. The following exchange, right out of a 'bis' file, may help put the matter to rest:

PP-QUERY 126/15-16; rap-rap-rap/*rap-rap-rap*
COMMENT; Italicize words used as sounds.

TI-REVIEW 15; The MS did not italicize this. In context, it looks to me like italic emphasis here would be over-doing it a bit. I think it would be OK to leave it as written.

PWR: STET. This practise is early period Vance. It is not valid for middle or late period, unless clearly indicated by evidence.

The history of this matter is as follows: when we were searching for Editorial and compositional standards, studies were made of published texts and manuscripts then at hand. One of the findings was that Vance sometimes used italic emphasis to indicate sound. However Vance had also said that he does not favor italics and would rather not use any at all. This statement turned out to apply mostly to his later work but not necessarily for the early work. Over time we have come to have a pragmatic approach to such questions. Current practice is to expunge use of italic for emphasis of any kind from middle and late period texts, unless clearly based on evidence, but to favor it in early texts, unless contradicted by evidence.

There are very many types of italic use, and the VIE even uses two different italic fonts. The sort of italic use that Vance now frowns upon is the italicized word for emphasis. However, Italics are used throughout his work, though not necessarily in a consistent manner, for such things as titles and foreign words.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Recently we published a chart showing all VIE volunteers in their various teams. This month we present a chart showing the VIE management structure, as it relates to project work.

The diagram on the following page makes some attempt to account for project history but is basically a picture of *now*. Blue lines indicate pre-Composition work. Green Lines are Composition associated. Red lines are 'out-puts'. Grey lines symbolize the traffic of jobs and files to and from the Archive; communications between teams occurs though the Archive; this shuttling is performed on a twice daily basis by John Schwab, justly known throughout the project as *Hercules*, and more affectionately as 'Herc'. The

ring-band shows managers who are not team leaders, or whose work is not directly connected with text work. Digitization work of all sorts being over, I have grouped it together. Pre-Proofing gets no mention but can be understood as aspect of digitization or TI; Tim Stretton and Steve Sherman, who managed Pre-Proofing, are mentioned as TI team leaders (Tim was administrative head of TI until Steve took over).

Robin Rouch is no longer a manager but her contribution to the project being larger than her leadership of three teams (now led by Marcel van Genderen, Bob Luckin and Karl Keller) merits mention in the 'ring-band'. Debbie Cohen who, likewise, holds no currently active managerial position, has served both as 'doorkeeper' (a post now held by Hans van der Veeke under the title 'Volunteer Ombudsman' with considerably expanded duties) and *Cosmopolis* editor.

Ian Davis is a key contributor to Techno Proofing thanks to custom input from his WordPick program. Koen Vyverman, the 'Laughing Mathematician', also contributes to Technoproofing but Totality has become crucial to other phases of work, thus its independent status.

Were this diagram an astrological chart Joel Riedesel, 'Work Tsar', is placed on the 'cusp of the 4th house'. This is the astrological position of interiority and symbolizes Joel's detailed tracking of work, some 4000 jobs so far. Joel provides weekly reports to management and a monthly public accounting in *Cosmopolis*.

Managers not mentioned are the PP sub-team leaders. These are:

ERIK ARENDSE (*Dragon Masters*)

JEFFERY RUSZCZYK (*Sandestins*)

ROBERT MELSON (*King Kragen's Exemplary Corp*)

DAVE REITSEMA (*Tanchinaros*)

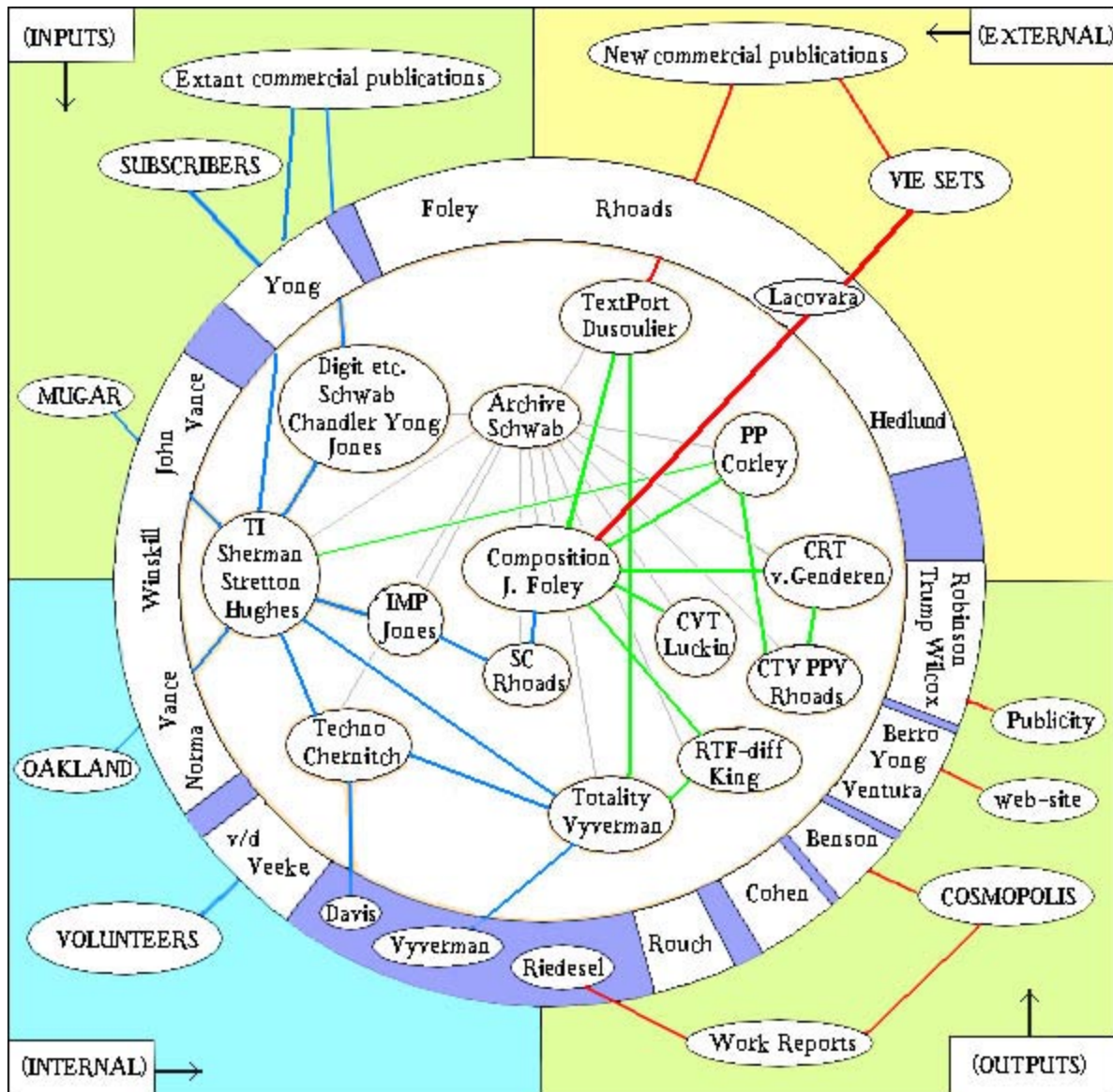
TILL NOEVER (*Spellers of Forlorn Encystment*)

ROB FRIEFELD (*Penwipers*)

KARL KELLAR (replacing Robin Rouch as head of the *Clam Muffins*)

and Chris Corley himself, who heads the *Funambulist Evangels*.

Many people do many things, and many responsibilities are shared in various ways, but it can be said that Bob Lacovara is responsible for our financial planning and is our official link with Sfera. Suan Yong and John Vance are most responsible for our link with Subscribers and for managing the actual getting of books to folks. John Foley, 'VIE mystery man', not only designed the basic structures



VIE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

of the project and heads the Composition team (though John Schwab, assistant head, does most of the actual administrative work) but is constantly active behind the scenes. As for myself, I am 'front man'; whip-wielder, and sluice gate operator when honor and glory need to be channeled out to appropriate areas.

The Vancian Cage

With characteristically light French touch Patrick Dusoulrier's trivial pursuits are rarely as trivial as he pretends. His cage exposé suggests how captivity, real or metaphorical or spiritual, is an essential vancian concept. Here are a few examples of non-physical vancian cages.

Poor Dundine is not only enslaved in the Sabra tapestry works; she is also stuck in the habits her exploiters have imposed upon her:

"There's my bonuses I haven't taken. It's three recreation half-periods. I'd like to give them to Almerina."

"That can't be done, as you know. We never allow transfer or bartering of bonus units. If you wish, you may use them now, before your departure."

Dundine looked uncertainly toward Çersen. "Do we have time? It seems a shame to let them go to waste — but I suppose it makes no difference now . . ."

Roy Barch cowers in a cave on Magarak but is also a prisoner of his feeling of racial inferiority:

Perhaps she, in her turn, had learned that superiority and inferiority were subject to the reference. Perhaps he, by proving the point — at least to his own satisfaction — had divested part of her most urgent attraction.

Gersen is imprisoned at Interchange but his passions are also entangled in chains he does not know how to undo:

This unknown woman, by any logical processes, should mean nothing to him. . . Such was not the case. Gersen puzzled over himself and his motives. How and why had he become fascinated? Because of Alusz Iphigenia's self-appraised value of ten billion SVU? The fact that Kokor Hekkus, in all his egotism and arrogance, was about to possess her? (The thought awoke a peculiar fury in him.)

Gersen is trapped in his function or obsession. As for Alusz Iphigenia, as with Aillas' obsession with Tatzel, this passion turns out to be based on nothing real and fizzles out.

Glawen is held in a dungeon in Tassadoro but the Monomantics are imprisoned in their ideology:

Zaa gave a sad laugh. "I see that I must explain. The Monomantics espouse Unity as their goal. The Polymantics accepted Duality, but they were dominated by masculines. The Monomantic rebellion was led by heroic females, who insisted upon sexual equality, and thought to create a race in which sexuality was not a coercive force. In the biological workshops at Strock, many roads were tried, but the efforts always fell short. The Zubenites of Lutwiler Country were at first considered a glorious success, because they proved at least partially intra-fertile. To this degree Duality has been conquered; we have perfected Monomantics in many phases. The doctrine asserts that 'man' and 'woman' are archaic and essentially incidental words. Mutis is a man; Funo is a woman. They may not even be aware of their differences, which are not functional. Mutis is impotent; Funo produces no eggs. So it is among the Zubenites. Their survival as a people is barely tentative. . . Still, our efforts have been at least theoretically successful. Duality has been discredited and sent reeling; it can no longer be considered an inspirational philosophy. . . Unity is now the rule. Men and women are equal in all respects. Women have been freed from the ancient curse of childbearing. In their turn, men no longer suffer the glandular pressures which distracted their energies. . .

A list of such vancian thralldoms, outer and inner, could be carried on and on: Garlet in his dungeon and Jaro's

inner voice; the social inferiority of Jubal Droad, both real and imagined; Reith marooned on the planet Tschai; the Flower of Cath or Anacho, trapped in their cultural heritage; Dame Hester obsessed with fading youth; Pardo-Efriam lost in a maze of amnesia, like Cugel searching for a way out of Lucounu's trap.

I do not mean to suggest that the thrust of Vance's work is some psycho-metaphorical thesis such as: *we are all trapped*, or that other writers do not treat such themes. Still, we recognize something peculiarly vancian. Vancian cagings, physical and spiritual, are neither melodramatic nor exemplary. Instead they are quietly ubiquitous. Monomanticism, a dead-end obsession, an ideological trap, is a response, however inadequate and perverse, to the permanent fact of our imprisonment in our sexual natures. Glawen informs the Ordeen Zaa that he has *no difficulties with [his] glands*. This may be 'true', but the fact remains; one way and another, socially, physically or psychologically, we are enthralled to our sexuality. We must, as Glawen does with apparent success, cope with it. And not only sexually but in many ways our bodies are prisons for our minds. Our minds are also more or less imprisoned in our culture, our time, the limits of our imaginations. To put this in the largest possible way; we are caged in our mortal nature.

A real writer does not set out to 'make points'. The building blocks of fictional art are not theoretical or ideological understandings of the human animal but true observations of life. These may overlap; in fact they ought to for any true observation will necessarily fit into a true theory. I am not relegating theory to a lower rank than fiction, for true theory is also based on true observation. But even if fiction and theory share this starting point they are different things. Fiction that attempts to work down from theory, rather than up from observation, cannot succeed because fiction is a mirror of life and life is rich and contradictory. But theory is as purified and lean as possible, and is destroyed by contradiction; theory must defeat contradiction by rising above the level at which it occurs, the level of life as lived, at which point it leaves the sphere of fiction.

In his Locus review Pearson makes the point that Vance's villains have a '*deadly penchant for self-delusion, for seeing the world not as it is, but as they wish it were.*' He says that: '*Vance's protagonists. . . always seem to see the world more clearly, peering past the veils of taboo and custom to the heart of the matter. It is this clarity, both rational and moral, that allows them to triumph. . .*' Pearson has hit not only on the nature of the Vancian hero but the nature of the evil he combats, for

the essence of evil is a disproportionate passion to bend reality to our desires. In Christian terms this is Pride. But whether or not we theorize that God is the ultimate reality, it comes to the same thing; we turn away from reality to make our selves the center of the universe and our desires the ultimate law and force.

The crucial fact about reality is that it imposes limits. It is a four or five dimensional cage of space, time, information. Reality is the rule of the game of life. We may not like the rules but there is no other game to play. Perhaps we can enlarge our cage; be stronger, go farther, live longer, know more. But in the end our strength, travels, knowledge and life will know a final limit, a limit that will surely fall short of infinite. Glawen can, more or less, arrange things so as to have no difficulty with his glands but reaching this state of non-difficulty comes at a price, whatever it may be. We can ignore the rules of the game, the limits of reality, we can perhaps even cheat some of them for a time; in the end mortality wins. Our passions and pretensions beat up against the walls of the cage of reality, and fall back into the dust of which they were born.

This might seem a pessimistic view. But the fact is our mortal limitation has never stopped happy laughter around a sturdy table supporting enough glasses of beer to quench the thirst of all present, much less the march of history. Vance's work has a sober side but it is certainly neither tragic nor pessimistic. It faces up to reality, but no more than necessary; just enough to keep a man reasonable. Meanwhile it offers hope. Not only does it provide recipes for innocent enjoyment, it shows life's beautiful side. To say nothing of the charm of things such as landscapes and music, generally speaking vancian friends are true and vancian love is serene. The strong are virtuous and steadfast. Life can be gay with fantasy. Shimrod's love for Melancthe may be hopeless, or worse, but Aillas' marriage with the surpassingly charming Glyneth is tranquil bliss. Jaro may have lost his mother in a horrific manner but is reunited with his father in a transcendent bond. The Anome's government may be inept and corrupt but that established by Gastel Etwane is prudent and virtuous. The Carnivals of Clarges and Arrabus or the fetes of Halma may have a dark side but they have gaiety as well. The waters of the Fens may lurk with merling but the stars-gazings are memorably joyful. When we are realistic we take the good with the bad. Death is only awful because of the wonder of life. Without life death hath no sting. Here, one might say, is the classical meaning of 'relativism'; the value of things may not be contained in

their relation to other things, but it is certainly discovered in it. Frustration, disaster, death; the other sides of these coins are satisfaction, triumph, life.

THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Pearson's *deadly penchant for self-delusion* is 'deadly' for a reason. It is no innocent dream. Its starting point may be the futile attempt to eradicate unhappy things, the seductive dream of a rose-tinted earthly existence, the defeat of frustration and tears, the eradication of disaster and eventually of death itself. So it may seem paradoxical that the Children of Light, those who would usher themselves, or even all humanity, into a new-world of unadulterated joy, by their ambition make themselves the servants of evil.

Does this incitement go too far? Are the Children of Light not simply well-meaning folk of praiseworthy if impractical goals? Let us address a fundamental question which is hardly ever raised: can our mortal fate, in some or all its aspects, be undone for the 'better'? To put this question in its most uncompromising form: can reality be mastered? The answer of history and serious reflection is: no. Life will go on as it has, since the beginning of time, until the end of the world. Good and bad, joy and sorrow, these will be the permanent lot of humanity. The world will remain a 'vale of tears'.

This statement is no apology for cynical or jaded inaction. It is our sacred duty to make the best of each situation and to practice active benevolence toward our fellow shufflers upon this mortal coil. But if we allow ourselves to think that the coil itself can be straightened, then, to put it as blandly as possible, we become guilty of a futile ignorance of reality the consequences of which are disastrous.

Are the Children of Light indeed so exalted in their ambition? Do they not merely seek pragmatic improvements here and there, temporary ameliorations of an aspect of the lot of small segments of suffering humanity? Do they actually seek to undo reality? The give-away is the chant for 'change', 'progress', a 'better world', a 'new society'; here is the first sign of their denial of reality. The famous tyrants of the 20th century talked this way; on a vast scale they attempted to found happiness on managerial calculation and man-made justice. Their 'golden era' of moral progress was such a horror that the feats of historic monsters like Attila the Hun have been reduced to permanent secondary status. But the unprecedented catastrophe of the 20th century discomfits the Children of Light not at all! They are as indifferent to the lessons of History as they are to the dictates of common sense.

Floating in a stratosphere of dream, they are a fantastical troop of bedizened revelers, *some singing and playing lutes, others drinking from goblets*, all blandly indifferent to reality. Utopia! Immortals in perfect health, breathing pure air, drinking pure water, seeing only beautiful views in all directions, enjoying an infinite supply of amusements!

But are we not half-way there? Do the Children of Light not even take the credit for our epoch of technological thaumaturgy? Have each of us not become a Visbhume, clutching his stolen bag of strange devices? Cell-phones, computers, DNA drugs, Teflon? With 500 TV channels in digital broadcast from satellites do we not have an infinite supply of amusement? But, to say nothing of such extreme results of infinite amusement as Columbine, is not reality rendered gray by contrast to sparking Technicolor? Do not real world frustrations become intolerable compared to the satisfaction brought by mastery of virtual worlds? Is our capacity to taste the subtle tastes and savor the real pleasures of genuine experience not dulled by over familiarity with the dramatic passions and virtual caresses of ghosts?

On the other hand, has not medical technology doubled our life-span? Life is indeed a great good, but at what price? Do not some of us sink into idolatry of material well-being and even choose to ruin the happiness of the days of our lives by chosen slavery to 'employee health benefits'? Whatever the advantage, whatever the pleasure, there is always a price. If a man wants a tranquil family life he must forsake the charms of other women. If he wants to live forever he must resign himself to doing so as a naked brain, perhaps with a withered eyeball attached, floating in a nutritive solution. Our bodies are not forever. Unless we are very lucky we will have accidents and sicknesses, and eventually death over-takes us no matter what. It is good to parry the thrusts of fate, if we can. There is no need to rush to open the door when Death knocks upon it with his scythe. But life is not about its mere perpetuation; to be worth anything it must be 'lived'.

The Children of Light not only prophesy a world without troubles, they do so in the name of love of humanity. But this pretence, in its insinuating and blameworthy denial that others share their benevolence, is a sure sign of wickedness.* Stopping the crooks, keeping foreign armies at bay, the Children of Light are not content with

such limited goods. And yet accomplishing them should make any honest man feel he has done his duty! The strong, brave and wise men have failed at such work—to say nothing of delivering personal fulfillment to every creature on the planet. Reality will not be denied. The Children of Light, therefore, must fail. To make up for this inevitability they take refuge in ideology. Since they cannot undo the real in reality, they undo it in theory. Such attempts take two directions. The first is designation of the guilty, those who hold back progress, elimination of whom will solve everything. Certainly there are guilty folk out there, and eliminating them as groups, or individuals—who knows?—might result in a more or less temporary or more or less local improvement, from some point of view or another. But the impulse to evil is part of our humanity. It has no color, no sex, no faith. It cannot be rooted out like vermin or inoculated against like germs. It is as perennial and as inherent as the stink which will accompany the inevitable decay of our mortal bodies. The Christian formula to explain this situation is the celebrated: 'all men are sinners'. Accuse and condemn, exterminate and 're-educate' as you will: evil is protean. Only when the last man dies will it finally evaporate back into the nothingness from whence it came.

The second theoretical attempt to defeat reality is changing the metaphysical rules. This is a more sophisticated method but just as venerable. The reality-rules invented by the Children of Light take many forms. When reality is not pressing upon you, when the hard-working and wise have made you comfortable, provided you with leisure, it is possible, sometimes for a whole lifetime, to play at god-like heroism, savoring a delicious sensation of superior knowledge, delighting in possession of a magic formula of miraculous change for the good of all humanity. With the strategic failure of the Children of Light, this game is losing its charm, but we have yet to crawl out from under the ideological detritus of the 20th century. That the weak, ignorant and lumpen might live a fantasy of strength, wisdom and grace, that the unfortunate might wallow in the vengeful delights of victimhood, that the foolish and nasty might live a dream of up-rightness and virtue, reality has been redefined. This game of recreating the corners of reality can be played for a time; in the end it is futility. Reality wins. The stupid really are stupid.

* Some will instantly pretend that the Church has exactly this pretension of moral superiority. The work of the Church is not to affix a stamp of 'moral approval' on its obedient slaves but to remind all men of their sinfulness, to try to hold them back from excesses of evil. As for the Church itself, it is 'a body'; the head of this body is God, and God is indeed absolutely good. But the rest of the body, made up of earthly members, is as sinning and corruptible as all earthly things, a fact the Church could not deny if it wished, from the luxurious cardinals of the Renaissance to the violent Mafia of today. This body includes the whole of humanity, as actual or potential members.

The competent really are competent. What is beautiful and true, really is beautiful and true. To push back the inevitable reckoning the Children of Light re-define reality ever more radically until they reach the limit reality has imposed even on this game; they deny that reality is real. 'Truth' and 'morality' are then thrown down from off their 'transcendental' or 'universal' pedestals, and broken up on the pavement of individual desires.

This all too familiar vandalism, carried on in the name of justice and peace, is the ruin of the very possibility of agreement, the destruction of the last hope of peace! If truth is not unique there can be no approach to genuine harmony, only armed truce. As I have had more than one occasion to point out in the pages of *Cosmopolis*, radical relativism is so silly that very few people swallow it whole for more than a few years of their lives. Still, it has made so much progress in people's minds that it is now hard for many to conceive of reality as real. Therefore relativism remains a fundamental premise of much contemporary thinking. The consequence is Positivism.

POSITIVISM

Positivism, essentially, is the notion that more or less 'universal' standards do exist but not because they are somehow inherent in reality. For Positivism 'standards' arise from the more or less collective will of Man. It is embodied in codes of law or local moralities. But Positivism has a crippling consequence: when morality is man-made it can be modified by, or in favor of, whoever controls its definition. When the law comes from 'heaven' it is not only difficult to alter but inconvenient for everyone. Murder, sodomy, adultery, blasphemy, covetousness, even if labeled 'abortion', 'gay rights', 'divorce', 'free speech' or 'redistribution'; only heaven proclaims a ban eternal on these human delights—to the frustration of more more or less everyone. Also, while Positivism pretends to explain the fact of contradiction between conflicting codes and moralities, it is incapable of coping with this phenomenon—a phenomenon which is a leit-motif of Vance's work. How to reconcile jihad, the sacred duty to defend Islam by force and war, or in its radical form to propagate it, and Western or Christian freedom of conscience?

When cultures clash, when moralities and laws radically oppose each other, Positivism offers no solution. It denies a higher standard that might be appealed to by moderate men of wisdom and good will on both sides. The only path left is force. The Positivists you and I know may personally prefer freedom of conscience, but Positivism itself cannot choose between jihad and freedom

of conscience. It is therefore, ultimately, a defense of the vulgar idea that 'might makes right'.

It is possible to read Vance in this way. It is possible, for example (and to simplify), to come away from Cadwal saying: the Agents are no better than the Peefers. But Vance's view seems to be the 'classical' view: truth exists but it is hard to get at, even impossible to get whole. The clash of different ideas can, at least theoretically, be resolved, but only between men of good will who love truth, or the search for truth. The classical view recognizes that men of good will who love money or women or fame, or anything else more than truth, are not cut out for the job. Since most men are of this type the world must remain a place where truth gets as much short shrift as reality permits, but where at least it remains possible to search for it; the hope of reconciliation and commonality is not vain.

It is one thing to discuss such things in the abstract. When one gets down to cases, when passions are unleashed, the picture is harder to puzzle out. Take the war in Iraq. The American position is based on an interpretation of reality; America and the West are under attack by a global cabal of anti-western anti-Judeo-Christian terrorists, sponsored by certain states; vigorous military and diplomatic initiatives must be taken. Opposition to the American position cannot, in my view, be rightly understood without reference to its profound motivation—to be found in the history of propaganda against 'American capitalist imperialism'. But superficially it is this: the Iraq war is wrong because there was no international consensus to give it a legal basis because there was no proof that the WMD were real. The opposition's logic is that legality is conferred by consensus only, and that even facts (the presence or absence of WMD) must also be determined by consensus (a multi-national inspection team, working under UN instruction and to UN standards of evidence). At first glance this can seem merely like a 'legalistic' approach. When it is pointed out what a fine thing it is that Saddam has been chased away, they condescendingly agree; this is a secondary matter. When the link between Al Qaida and Saddam is demonstrated they respond with the non-sequitur that there is no link between Saddam and 9/11. Opposition minds are so tranquil in their Positivist assumptions they feel no need to go farther than an almost smug pronouncement that, WMD having not been found, America has been proven 'wrong'. Above all, opposition opinion, at least in Europe, is dominated by the complaint that Americans believe they possess 'absolute truth'. But what does this complaint have to do with the

practical problem of making sure 3000 more people are not suddenly slaughtered without warning in New York City by an army with training camps in various places in the world, armed and financed by certain countries who boast seats in the UN? Ignoring the invasions of Iran and Kuwait, forgetting the gassing of thousands of Iraqi 'citizens', the opposition insists that *Saddam was no international threat*. The opposition mean to insinuate in their formulations that the Iraq war is a war against Iraq itself, against the Iraqi people, agreeing with Al Qaida that America and Britain are engaging in an 'imperial' war of economic aggrandizement. It will be interesting to see how intellectually honestly members of the opposition react when the WMD are found. Some will insist it is a frame. Others will claim it changes nothing; proper procedures should have been followed (proving WMD existence, followed by international consensus prior to action). Yet others will continue to take refuge in the contention that Saddam was harmless, WMD or no WMD, invasions, massacres and sponsorship of terrorism notwithstanding. To say nothing of the twilight-zonish forgetfulness of the multiple UN resolutions, unanimously voted, summoning Saddam to destroy his WMD, the existence of which no one questioned at the time, opposition strategy is designed to avoid looking the sharp edges of reality in the face. This is easiest to do when they are not looking back, which, thanks in large part to American might, it is not currently doing, at least in most of the West. The Pax Americana, sadly, does not cover Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia as well as it covers France and Germany. The sharp edge of reality being ignored is this: a determined and unscrupulous enemy, with powerful allies, cannot be coped with simply by blinking and cooing at him, and wishing he would just go away. In spite of its messiness, the reformation of Iraq proceeds, to the satisfaction of 85% of Iraqis, that percentage of the population oppressed by the defeated Baathists and uninterested in Al Qaida's fantastical dream of dominion and ideological purity. Soon the Iraqi people themselves will bear the brunt of fighting these tyrannical thugs and terrorists in their country, and then they will stand proudly on the side of the heroes against the villains.

It is hard, when dealing with such a hot issue, to draw out the chords of reality and denial of reality. Whose mind is in a cage?

Another example; the idea that males are by nature egotistical and violent while women are truthful, nurturing and peace-loving. This sexist eyewash has had nothing compared to the success of other blame-a-group utopian

strategies but it has caused a certain amount of mayhem. At the time of the first Gulf War a woman highly placed in the international literary world explained to me that war is caused by a congenital masculine death wish; how would that be as a defining principle for the international policy of a great nation? Janet Reno's anti-man legislation of the 'all men are rapists' stripe is still putting innocents in jail. But when women do get political control, whether it is Margaret Thatcher in the West or the many females who have run such places as Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka or Indonesia, selfishness, cruelty and war continue without abatement. It is then claimed that such women have been 'polluted' by the 'masculine mentality'. Dreams of justification are a secret delight and words are cheap, but reality is a son-of-a-bitch who won't go away.

Likewise the disaster in so many African countries is not the fault of local nastiness; Africans, unpolluted by western-Christian culture, that ultimate evil, are noble savages; goodness incarnate. Has incompetence or enviousness crept into paradise? It is the fault of the colonizers, now half a century gone! Back in Europe the difficulties of the new Eastern European economies has nothing to do with the effect of half a century of Communist thuggery; 'capitalism' is the culprit! The error was to have cast off their chains and chased out their oppressors!

THE VANCIAN VIEW

It cannot be shown in neat examples how Vance goes through, and then beyond, a relativistic or Positivist view to the classical view of a mysterious but monolithic Truth. Again; he is not an ideologue but an artist. He does not deal in theories and he does not solve problems; he is a story teller, and the true finality of his work begins and ends in the stories themselves.

Vance does not start from a theory or a notion and elaborate a tale to illustrate it, he starts from an artistic impulse. He describes this as: an 'atmosphere' that interests him. From this atmosphere he evolves characters and eventually a plot. His way of elaborating such things, out of his impulse or 'atmosphere', is by means of his observations of real life. The elaboration has force because it is structured into a drama which, however superficially different, is in profound conformity with the dynamics of the real. Not many writers do this, which explains why their stories are so much less amusing to read. Most writers merely spin out their phantasms. They are like abstract painters, splashing color on a canvas as the whim takes them. Vance, like the great painter, presents not thunderous decorative beauty but entrancing illustration,

mysteriously combined into a fantasy as entrancing as a dream and compelling as reality.

No 'abstract' painting is more powerful, and probably



less so, in the potency of its sheer disposition of color, than this painting by the 18th century Frenchman, Hubert Robert. And yet reality itself could not be more charged with atmosphere, in this case a piquant contrast of massive, dour spaces grand with history and solemn heroism, and mothers and children busy in homely pursuits. Ghyll Tarvoke at the Twisted Willow Palace? Gersen in the Domus? Glawen visiting the Caglioro? The artist, as Vance put it in the famous passage from *Wyst*, seeks to:

. . . capture [a] moment and maintain it forever! . . . Here in fact was the very essence of his yearnings: he wanted to control that magic linkage between the real and the unreal, the felt and the seen. He wanted to pervade himself with the secret meaning of things and use this lore as the mood took him.

Wyst, p25

The secret meaning of what things? For example, that, indeed, there are a multiplicity of laws and moralities, and behind this multiplicity is a unity of which each specific is

a more or less imperfect reflection. Duality is indeed the stuff of grind and abrasion. For example, is marriage not a trial? Is there not a degree of discord between any two people? Even monks in monasteries, devoted to love and obedience, cannot resist the pressure of annoyance at one another's personalities! On the other hand does not 'Verity' [command] the unity of all things? Do we not feel, to one extent or another, the inner force of the command to love our enemies? If it often goes unheard, is its pressure not sometimes such that it seems a 'Fundamental Verity', even: a node of intellectual force: a substance known as 'sthurre'?

How does this work out in practice? Take our natural sympathy for the traditional easy-going Trill. His beach parties and verandas have appeal but he is admittedly a bit of a sloven. Were the Fanchers absolutely wrong in their dreams of personal and collective discipline, of ambition and knowledge? Most *Cosmopolis* readers have subjected themselves to more education than even the Fanchers planned for themselves. Fulfillment in life is made of both gay repose and disciplined work. If Trullion has a message it may be that the Fanchers were a natural reaction to the sloppy, slothful, even somewhat vulgar Trill ethic, just as the Ugly People were a reaction to:

a world where . . . every aspect, every institution, conduces to . . . health and pleasure [where] the usual detritus of civilization: discord, filth, waste, structural clutter, have been almost expelled from the consciousness of the population . . . a world characterized by excellent management [where optimums] have become the norm, [social] evils are unknown[,] poverty is no more than a curious word.

Human society has an ideal form; such seems to be the natural social law implied by Trullion. What Vance seems to be observing is that individual impulsions are greatly disparate, and society tends to absorb them, because the aggregate of individual impulsions drives society toward a normative compromise, an approximation of a natural-ideal state. When the actual state is too distant from this ideal a pole of opposition gathers; a social counterforce. The counterforce, perhaps after causing upheaval, then subsides back into the mainstream, where it works more tranquilly to push society toward the natural-ideal. An example that is perhaps too pat: is the 1960's ethic a reaction to over rigidity, per the natural social norm? And if 60's excesses are behind us (are they?) has society has been shifted to a different position on this vancian

* *Araminta Station*, p598

social measure? Perhaps it has shifted too far? In this case can we expect a further counter-reaction? Whatever the validity of this example, it a truism that social mores shift back and fourth. The 18th century is supposed to have been libertine, the nineteenth prudish. In any case it would seem impossible for equilibrium to ever be reached, or if reached to be maintained. There is too much variety in human motivation, to say nothing of other pressures; the change of generations, immigration, information lost, recovered or discovered, climactic and geological evolution or natural disaster, war. Society will remain in flux. Relative instability is the rule. The vancian view seems not to be that this volatility indicates absence of underlying forces but that the forces themselves produce a more or less elastic instability.

There are a multiplicity of sexual mores across the vancian universe. Near one end of the scale is the mild hedonism of the Trills and, across a set of more or less 'normal' practices, we reach the stylized or even pathological customs of peoples such as the Khors of Tschai. But Vance does not present this diversity as a mere decorative spectacle. His enthusiasm for cultural variety is by no means the cataloging passion of the descriptive anthropologist. In each case he makes us feel how, behind each particular manifestation, is the underlying unity of a primordial force all men know; in this case sexual attraction. It is almost as if he uses variety to get at essential subjects from many angles in order to liberate their full redolence. The Rhunes must:

. . . quell [their] sebalism . . . "How then do they procreate? . . . Sexual acts, if they occur, will be 'night-deeds' — acts of purported rape. The male participant wears a black garment over his shoulders, arms and upper chest, and boots of black cloth. Over his head he wears a 'man-mask'. His torso is naked. He is purposely grotesque, an abstraction of male sexuality; his costume depersonalizes him and maximizes the 'fantasy' or 'unreal' elements. The man enters the chamber where the woman sleeps, or pretends to sleep; and in utter silence procreation occurs . . ."

At the other end of the scale is this glimmer of a prelude, abortive in the event, to a more familiar style of procreation:

In a booth nearby sat a pair of pretty girls . . . Çersen contemplated them wistfully, aware, not for the first time, of an empty area in his life, and feeling a dissatisfaction not unlike the indefinable emotion he had known at Smade's Planet . . .

One of the girls at the nearby booth had noticed his attention; she

whispered to her friend. Both glanced across the aisle, then ostentatiously ignored him. Çersen smiled ruefully. He felt no confidence in his dealings with women; he had known few intimately. He frowned, turned the two a wary side glance.

Çersen watched their retreat, resisting the sudden urge to run after them, to introduce himself, to make them his friends. . . Still, why deceive himself? Living the life of half a man was difficult, a source of dissatisfaction.

Star King

Gersen lives the life of 'half a man' because he subordinates himself to his mission. The procreative forces within him are denied. This may be pushed aside, but it cannot be quelled altogether, for it is us, an aspect to our nature like vision or thought:

Shimrod listed those endearing traits common to all lovable and beloved women. Melancthe lacked them all, including the mysterious and indefinable quality of femininity itself.

The Green Pearl, p143

No one could be more delicate, gallant and reserved than Jantiff Ravenstroke, and yet Vance makes us feel that what will eventually go on behind a closed door between Jantiff and Glisten, Glawen and Wayness, Aillas and Gly-neth, is hardly unrelated to what goes on in the mirk of Marune. The Rhunes dramatize the primordial impulse in its most exaggerated and archetypal form. But just as the Rhunes must cope with tender impulses their culture gives them less scope to express, and even if more gentle peoples throw a veil over their raw impulses, erupt they will, in one guise or another.

Different cultures and different styles of individual, from the Jansenist to the sighing troubadour to the lecher: all are agreed; in manner strict or in style anarchic, they would the impulse let to flow. The Monomantics on the other hand seek not merely to channel, resist or block the flow, they plot to obliterate it. The Trills and Khors, each in their way, accept sexuality; the Monomantics reject it. This is a 'radical' difference, but at an even deeper level Trills and Monomantics are unified in recognition of sexuality's existence, if nothing more. Vance brings this out clearly: the neurosis of the Rhunes is health compared to the fixation of the Monomantics. Obliteration of sexuality is their frantic mission! The Trills may be lascivious, the Khors may be exalted; the drawbacks and charms of each system are evident to anyone of imagination. The Monomantics, however, are perverse; theirs is a desperate and unnatural struggle against human nature. I am not

suggesting that human beings cease to be human if they do not engage in erotic activity! There is room in life for celibacy. Celibacy, an individual choice, is one thing; the surgical, chemical or genetic neutering, or mono-sexualization, of the whole human race is something else.

MELANCHE

Vance treats no erotic relationship, or courtship, at more length or in more detail than Shimrod's pursuit of Melanthe. This exemplary study concerns a failure. It is the possibility of failure—of frustration and disaster—that gives success its savor and rare are those who have not known frustration in love, and most other things. It is lurking failure that makes life an adventure, a force driving each personal odyssey. It is also the salt in the stew of fiction. To say nothing of the joy of his fatherhood, Shimrod's story is eventually a triumph. He escapes his obsession with Melanthe, and in a characteristically vancian manner: seeing its reality.

Melanthe represented the witch Desmëi's . . . final revenge on Man. [Melanthe] was a blankness upon which every man might project his idealized version of ultimate beauty, but when he tried to possess this beauty and make it his own, he would discover a void, and so, according to his capacity, suffer . . .

The Green Pearl, p144

Here is yet another example of vancian fantasy carrying us to the heart of the real. A fairytale of a vengeful witch or a danger that stalks each man (and woman) in real life? The spell of beauty. Glittering worldly things which catch our eye. Chimeras! Lures seducing us from the real, caging us in falsehood.

Is Beauty false? No, but it is not what it seems and it cannot be possessed. It blossoms, fades, reappears, transmutes. The beauty of today, tomorrow we learn was but the prelude to beauties unsuspected. Things are never quite what they seem, and so much depends on our point of view. The sunset looks very different only 10 miles away, and nothing we can see or touch can ever truly be ours. Our only treasure is what we 'store up in heaven'.

We may shake the bars and peer out of our cage; its space, its time, the range of its concepts, hems us in. Though each is caged, we may call from cage to cage. We may, as happens so often in Vance's stories, converse in fellowship. By the force of imagination, sympathy, reason and empathy, we may escape into the cages of our fellow prisoners.

Let us be content with the gifts of life; they are all

that we may have. And let us suffer patiently its blows. So must all men, and so are we all brothers.



The Cosmopolis Literary Supplement

CLS No. 25 is available at the *VIE* download site (www.vanceintegral.com). This month we have Chapters 10–11 of *Finister* by Till Noever, Chapters 25–27 of *Dragonchaser* by Tim Stretton, and more letters.

The Cosmopolis Literary Supplement

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<p>Dragonchaser Chapters 25–27 by Tim Stretton Page 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Finister Chapters 10–11 by Till Noever Page 17</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p>Letters from discerning readers Page 32</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p>	<p>Esteemed Readers:</p> <p>In this issue, more of <i>Dragonchaser</i> and <i>Finister</i>, as well as a thank-you letter from Tim Stretton, and a promissory note from Alain Schremmer.</p> <p>Tim is more voluble in his thanks for those praising us than I was. Good man! Needless to say, I endorse his comments wholeheartedly.</p> <p>As for Alain's epistle: I appreciate the problem with reading printouts in bed. Been there. Avoiding that. However, I'd like to point out to him that it might really be worth the effort to spend more time with the <i>CLS</i>, even if loose leaves slip and slide and fly all over the place, and one never knows where to find the next page. After all, fiction—that is, good fiction, the story-telling kind, not the proselytizing or simply pretentious variety—is honest about its intentions; these being entertainment, and maybe, in the course of this, revelation of what is otherwise hidden behind the curtain of everydayness. And, let's face it, it does so better than 99% of the non-fiction drivel being published in the political, psychological and philosophical/religious areas today. Alas, I suspect that this has always been so.</p> <p>About the future. As the <i>VIE</i> work draws to a close, which it will within the foreseeable future, so the <i>CLS</i>, like <i>Cosmopolis</i>, will become defunct. When <i>Dragonchaser</i> and <i>Finister</i> are over and done with—which will probably happen sometime between February and April 2004—then we are done with realistic long-term instalment type of writings, and I really have no idea where to go for the rest of the <i>CLS</i>'s lifetime. Suggestions are welcome. Story-type submissions for those days will be even more welcome! Don't tell me I didn't give you ample notice. . .</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Happy reading. Till Noever</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—♦—</p>
	
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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I'd like to thank Patrick Dusoulier for his consistently entertaining articles. Cages, punch lines, and the rest, these assemblages of details, occurrences, and connections are most enjoyable. Well done!

If I may be so bold, I'd also like to suggest a topic or two that may be of interest in his continuing researches. One, albeit hard to research, could be the null or non-committal statement in Vance, from a simple "Just so" to more elegant and elaborate evasions. A second could be the easier-to-research topic of hats. From Anacho's soft tasseled cap to Cugel's triple-tiered hat adorned by Spatterlight, it is potentially so vast a subject as to dwarf even a 38's Crucible. It need not be merely, to quote one source, "an extremely clever account of how orange hats are worn in one town and blue hats in the next." One could envisage elaborate diagrams relating the symbolism and subtext of hats and qualities (homburg, bowler, fedora, fez, sombrero; soul, life, truth, heart, strength, beauty) in obscurely mystical ways. On the whole, though, Patrick's usual approach seems likely to be better and more rewarding.

Regards,
Malcolm Bowers
Dunedin,
New Zealand



To the editor:

The Nitpicker's Corner in *Cosmopolis* 43 contains an analysis by Dr. A. S. Axo of physical characteristics of the planet Pao, based on values that appear in the first chapter of Languages of Pao. Although there is nothing incorrect with the basic physics described in this article, the mathematics might benefit from some additional nitpicking.

The basic relationship between surface gravity, diameter and mass is given by the formula:

$$g = G * M / d ** 2$$

where g is the surface gravity, M is the mass of the planet, and d is the diameter. The operator ** represents the first operand to the power of the second, or in this case, the square of the diameter. G is the gravitational constant.

As the values are given in standard units, one would expect that the value of the gravitational constant would be one, so that a standard planet would have the standard

gravity, standard mass and standard diameter. The article states, correctly, that the values for the planet Pao reflect a gravitational constant of 1.1615.

Using the values for the mass and diameter, the equation gives a value of 0.895 not the value of 1.208 as stated in the article. The problem seems to be that the article derives the value for the surface gravity by using the incorrect value of the gravitational constant as a correction factor and multiplying the original surface gravity by this value. The correct result is obtained by division. As the article states, the incorrect gravitational constant implies that the surface gravity is too high, or the mass is too small, or the diameter is too high. The adjusted value is even higher than the original.

The same type of error is made when recalculating the diameter and the mass, although there is another minor problem with the diameter calculation.

Charles Ashford



Cosmopolis Has a New Editor

Readers,

As you know, I edited the last *Cosmopolis* after Derek Benson, the excellent editor of so many editions stepped down. Besides editing duties, I started a search for a permanent editor of *Cosmopolis*. My criteria were straightforward: the VIE management and I wanted someone of proven editorial skills, demonstrated interest in the project, and who could be relied upon to uphold the basic reasons for which I created *Cosmopolis* originally.

Because so many subscribers have joined us since the first volume and number of *Cosmopolis*, those reasons bear repeating. Following the lead of Jack Vance's fictional *Cosmopolis*, I wanted a venue in which articles of general interest to "my" readers might be published. Of course, "my" readers really means the select group of intelligent and discriminating readers of Jack Vance.

I had other goals in mind as well:

- To let subscribers, who had with great trust invested money in the VIE in the hopes of receiving the works of Jack Vance, see that progress was being made.
- To provide a place where volunteers could report their progress, triumphs, and setbacks, and mutually reinforce each others' work and spirit.
- To provide a publication in which thoughtful analysis and comment on the works of Jack Vance might find a home.

I think *Cosmopolis* has, by and large, fulfilled these goals.

In searching for a new editor, we naturally wanted someone who would agree with these goals, and so a dedicated volunteer, of demonstrated value to the VIE, was sought. We found a man who has worked very hard on each of his assignments, with both diligence and insight. Further, he has taken much of his personal time to travel to help insure the printing success of our first Wave of twenty-two books.

If anything was the clincher, it arose in a conversation I had with our new editor the other day. He confessed that when he first saw our web pages, and our solicitation for some \$1250 for a set of books from an invisible group of people ostensibly scattered around the world, who had never printed a page in their life, he thought: what a scam. I almost fell over laughing when he told me this: indeed, the VIE's first months of life might well appear to be an elaborate confidence game in the making. The clincher, though was this: I thought that anyone who had the insight and knowledge of the world to examine something that looked too good to be true very carefully, when taken in conjunction with his other qualities, had to be the right guy for *Cosmopolis*.

Readers, I commend to your attention someone well known to many of the volunteers, Dave Reitsema. Dave has been a valued volunteer for years, and much of the quality which we all find in the first Wave of books is his doing. At some point in a future issue Dave will undoubtedly give us more insight into his philosophy and interests as they pertain to *Cosmopolis*, the VIE, and the works of Jack Vance. Until then, I hope you will join with me in my welcome to him as Editor of *Cosmopolis*.

Bob Lacovara,
(once again) Editor Emeritus



Closing Words

Thanks to proofreaders Steve Sherman, Rob Friefeld and Jim Pattison and to Joel Anderson for his composition work.

COSMOPOLIS SUBMISSIONS: when preparing articles for *Cosmopolis*, please refrain from fancy formatting. Send raw text. For *Cosmopolis* 45, please submit articles and letters-to-the-editor to David Reitsema: Editor@vanceintegral.com.

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