

Jack Vance 1916-2013



I just found out my favorite author of all-time, Jack Vance, passed away May 26th (the day I was throwing my big birthday BBQ).

There is little honor I can bestow upon Mr. Vance that other, more talented people are not already writing. It is the most common and perfidious tragedy of life that we honor most after someone is past the point of enjoying the honor.

I would like to share a passage from an underappreciated (if that can't be applied to all his works) series known as Planet of Adventure. This is from Book #2, "Servants of the Wankh":

Dordolio pulled thoughtfully at his moustache. "The Dirdirman believes you to be an amnesiac. According to the Blue Jade Princess you have implied yourself to be a man from another world. The nomad boy, who knows you best, says nothing. I admit to what may be an obtrusive curiosity."

"The quality signifies an active mind," said Reith.

"Yes, yes. Let me put what I freely acknowledge to be an absurd question." Dordolio examined Reith cautiously sidewise. "Do you consider yourself to be the native of another world?"

Reith laughed and groped for an answer. He said: "Four possible conditions exist. If I were indeed from another world I could answer yes or no. If I were not from another world I could answer yes or no. The first case leads to

inconvenience. The second diminishes my self-respect. The third case is insanity. The fourth represents the only situation you would not consider an abnormality. The question, hence, as you admit, is absurd."

It is quintessential Vance. None of us talk like that. Our minds are too dull, too impatient. We would simply answer or ignore and move on. Vance takes no shortcuts, though. Not in his dialog, not in his building of complex societal and political structures and not in his lush detailing of the surroundings and environment of his stories.

When I first started writing I desperately wanted to emulate Jack Vance's storytelling style. My mimicry of his writing was flawless. My *facility* with his style was awful. The words were bloated, a fetid bog that readers came to and sank, having neither the energy nor interest to pull themselves out. I swiftly abandoned the whole process and went on in search of my own voice.

It came to me that I didn't need to honor Jack Vance by trying to *write* like his work, I simply needed to *like* his work. There is no greater praise and reward an author can receive.

Here is the official website to visit if you want to learn more of this great author:

<http://www.jackvance.com/>