

# Dither

For Apa-V 38  
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For the concept of "Local Culture," forgive me if I let a mental picture of a big petri dish with the Stratosphere Tower protruding from its center linger in my mind. I'd've drawn it, but I only have a couple of hours left to write and run this edition of *Dither* off and the image does not resolve itself in my mind beyond something that looks an awful lot like a finger-spin top—one of those that are constructed of a pointed dowel stick and a flat disc like a checker. Only the bottom part is missing. Anyway, trust me, it wasn't working as an executable image, with or without whatever time I have.

Besides, I'm way past due on at least two other pieces of art, maybe three—I just got an e-mail from Alyson L. Abramowitz whom I apparently promised something for Corflu. Yes, yes I did promise, I'm just ... never mind. No rest for the incurably lazy. The spirit is willing but the mind is weak.

Really, though, the uses of the term "culture" are varied enough that while I suppose it would be possible to play with them a while, its use in relation to a kind of community intellectual spirit is awkward for me to discuss at any length, since I'm relatively little involved with anything outside of our little fan enclave and, even more peripherally, with some of Joy-Lynd's

associates, an ever-mutating group about whom I'm not prepared to wax loquacious.

My larger picture of "Local Culture" is jaundiced and still severely prejudicial in terms of one of the widely held uses of the word "culture." Ads on TV for the local "Nutcracker" performances, at least a couple of years ago, when some reference was made that I recall as "*this year, a real live orchestra!*" struck me as embarrassing. The appearances of road-show versions of Big Broadway Hits at the Aladdin Theatre of the Arts (or whatever it's called) pull me very little. There is a definite snobbery about this that I'm ashamed of, especially as I was hardly a theatre-goer in my years living in New York.

Yes, I did get to a couple of Broadway shows in all my years there, one of which was "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern," which I think I saw with Joy-Lynd. And I got to some Off-Broadway ("Fantasticks" among them) and Off-Off-Broadway things that nobody ever heard of. And some Shakespeare-in-the-Park performances. But all of these were rare and in my earlier years there. I have no justification for thinking myself too sophisticated for "local culture."

And it's not as though I've avoided it, exactly. Joy-Lynd and I went to "King Arthur's Tournament" at the Excalibur fairly early on, and she "treated" me to "Jesus Christ Superstar" at the Aladdin for my birthday a couple of years ago. Both were too loud for me... But I'm fond of the latter, and it starred both Ted Neely and Carl—um, I forget his last name—who respectively played Jesus and Judas in the film. Cool.

Yes, I'm prejudiced by the plaster statues and the gilded picture frames (not to mention the gilded statues and plaster picture frames) and all the other superficial trappings of a "culture" that is essentially first cousin to the carnival sideshow. But Lord knows, who am I to complain? Do I help support any of the genuine stuff?

Nah.

The place where I'm currently working part-time as a seasonal employee, Williams-Sonoma, has a kind of artificial culture of its own. Artificial because induced. There is a dress code they call "business casual," in which the employees (pardon me, associates) are expected to dress "as you would to Sunday dinner at your parents." No jeans, tee-shirts, sneakers, shorts; they warn of associates being sent home to change on second offenses in this area.

However, there are the occasional "casual days" that are announced ahead of time, or "fun" days when associates are asked to come in with nightwear—pajamas, slippers and the like (discretion was encouraged)—or, as today, Country Western wear. Now, on Halloween, many did show up in costume and there were prizes and things for the best, but the nightwear thing a week or so ago was sparsely participated in, and today I saw maybe three people who did the country-western bit.

(I wore my cowboy hat in, but didn't count myself in the few).

I'm sorry. There's just no real appreciation for that kind of social togetherness any more... especially when it's promulgated by the Company Ethic.

### **Jsut Kiddnig**

Lately, as I enter item numbers into the computer terminals at Williams-Sonoma (may their paycheck coffers be ever full), I find myself transposing numbers with increasing frequency. I joke about it with customers (the ones who sound like they can accept it as a joke). "Coming down with dyslexia," I say. "This is not a good thing in this job," I add, laughing.

Today I got topped. "Good thing you're not a concert pianist," my customer responded with no discernable pause.

I'm afraid I laughed loudly in her ear. The image was just too striking. It still tickles me. The idea gives new meaning to the concept of transposing music.

### **Sly Ply**

I'm not, basically, into bathroom humor, but occasionally things come to mind, there in the hall of the echoing tiles, that I feel need somehow to be shared. This notion came to me particularly the other day at Williams-Sonoma, where the bathrooms are kept immaculate; no one would dare to besmirch the stalls there with graffiti. It occurred to me that whenever a public rest room is stocked with double-ply paper (as they are at W-S), some wag will always separate the plies and bring one around so that the ends will not match. I find this too often for it to be coincidence.

I don't find it as funny as I once did, either—once upon a time, in my salad days, when I was young and green and foolish and inclined, on occasion, to indulge in the mild practical joke. Sorry.