

## MOSS ON THE NORTH SIDE

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I really should do a Seacon report ... But if I do, I'll never get around to mailing comments ... Not that there's that much to tell about the convention itself. I mean, who wants to hear about Cas Skelton sliding down the Metropole stairs on a tray? Or a hysterically funny BBC radio series called "A Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy" ("Going into hyperspace is an awful feeling -- like being drunk." "What's so awful about being drunk?" "Ask a glass of water.")? Or Dave Langford trying to teach me how to pronounce "Twyll Ddu"? Or Janet and Ricky Kagan dropping half-a-bottle of Rémy-Martin cognac in my lap at a party the night before they left ("You don't expect us to take it back to the U.S., do you? Enjoy.")?

And the rest of the trip ... well, there was the engine falling out of the train to Bristol, and the 500 year old haunted hotel we stayed at in Glastonbury, and having a volleyball thrown at me from the stage during Tom Stoppard's "Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth", and the ancient Roman Q-tips in Glastonbury Abbey, and the "Do Not Feed the Cats" sign at the British Museum, not to mention the doubtless historically important graffitti and initials carved in the Coronation Throne in Westminster Abbey ... But this is all very mundane stuff compared to Russian and Chinese trips.

If I do a trip report, either as a one-shot (dubious), or in KRATOPHANY (more likely, but far in the future), I'll put it through CRAPA. Meanwhile, on to mailing comments.

COVER (Jeanne): I love it. I looked at this strange picture for a minute, and suddenly it hit me what they were doing (apropos our discussion of art), and I burst out laughing. Terrific. Worth a thousand words, for sure.

DENYS: (Rules and Regs) I'm not sure I agree with rule 4, that material for minac should have to be specifically created for CRAPA. It ought to be written by the member, but I see no reason why a trip report, say, or a personalzine shouldn't count; on the one hand, the lack of mailing comments reduces the cohesiveness of the apa, but on the other hand, such things can be good for provoking comments and introducing new topics, so long as everybody doesn't give up mc's.

PAULINE: On computerization and the job market -- I'm not convinced that putting in computers reduces staff, but it certainly changes people's jobs, and may cause some people to be replaced by others. In my experience, new computer systems (regardless of their original justification), where they are successful, allow for more to be done with existing staff; where they are not successful, they end up employing lots of data processing types while still requiring all the other personnel to keep things going. That laser camera sounds super -- I wonder if one could be hooked up to a home computer ...

DENYS: "Expanding the audience for propoganda" is all very well, but I still think of propaganda as being too bound to current events. I suppose one of my intuitive feelings about good art is that it should "work" for people far removed in time and space from where it was created. To the extent that we can be moved by Bach, Danté, Michaelangelo, Euclid, or Rembrandt, ~~despite~~ despite their having lived hundreds of years ago, you can say that they produced great art. Propaganda like "Guernica" is not necessarily tied to particular events in Spain. Phil Ochs' "Draft Dodger Rag" is, for all I know, totally incomprehensible to anyone under 20. (Though it might come back in style if certain Selective rumours seeping over the border are true.)

Still DENYS: Re your comments to Debbie, I still don't understand what you mean by "class" -- do you mean it purely economically? If so, are you talking about class as determined by how people relate to the means of production, or is it a fuzzier concept related to income levels, or what? I know my father thinks of himself as middle class, despite having worked in a factory all his life.

On coveting your neighbor's ass -- I have the strong feeling it's a Heinlein line, something Jubal Harshaw or a similar character says, possibly in the context of Mike's initiation ceremony.

On your comment to Pauline (Denys, why do I have so many checkmarks in your zine?), re which came first, ~~the chicken or the egg~~ the concept or the language -- (I will refrain from saying "In the beginning was the Word", as this could be misconstrued) A book like Lennenberg's BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE is very convincing in its thesis that language and people evolved together (he points to numerous physical features from tongue to brain to breathing mechanisms, plus comparisons between physical and mental development in children, to show how much physical adaptation has taken place in humans to accomodate language). But the language we've evolved is adept at expressing new concepts, and all human languages allow for the coining of new words (the French Academy notwithstanding). Half the problem in doing new mathematics is setting up the right notation (coining the right vocabulary), but after this creative act, the new concepts and their words can be passed on together to others. My current feelings on the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis (that language determines your world-view) are that language predisposes you toward certain thoughts and thought-patterns, but that with more or less work you can break out of these ruts.

On bilingual dubbing: One of my more disconcerting experiences was listening to the Chinese waiters at the Gran Asia (near Columbia University) shouting back and forth to each other in rapid-fire Spanish. Really shakes up your stereotypes. They were all Cuban Chinese, you see, and the restaurant featured Fried Rice and platanos. It was the inspiration for The House of Kugel, a Jewish-Chinese restaurant that "combined the best features of two great culinary traditions". I always thought the Kung Po Kasha Varnishkas had great potential, and I really liked the pot of Manischewitz wine that came with your meal. But I was proudest of the fortune kichels you got at the end.

Denys, I find, somewhat to my surprise, that I have very strong feelings about censorship. You say "there is nothing at all wrong with using weapons in one's self-defense." Just like that, huh? No qualifications about politically correct weapons? Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice? I mean, genocide, murder, nuclear bombs, bacteriological warfare are all just weapons -- it's OK so long as the good guys use them? In any case: I absolutely cannot see any use for censorship other than keeping the dominant group in power. And that includes especially dominant majorities, whether those who believe in heterosexuality, or those who believe in Allah, or Science, or the proper way for young ladies to dress. I do not believe your vast, overwhelming majority has any right to tell me what to read or think, and very little right to tell me what I can say, no matter what benefit they (you) think will thereby accrue to them. I don't even consider majority rule as a particularly sacred concept -- it may simply be the most expedient way to decide certain things. I do firmly believe in minority rights, and civil liberties -- things which are not any safer under majority rule than under oligarchies. "Night and Day", which is a Tom Stoppard play I saw in London, has quite a stirring defense of the free press, including all the sleazy tabloids and notwithstanding the millionaires who own the newspaper chains. Though everything he says is certainly debatable (by definition), he makes some excellent points. I wish I had a copy of the play. Oh well, out of room anyway.

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