

MOS ON THE NORTH SIDE

MOS ON THE NORTH SIDE (note the title change!) #12 is published for CRAPA mailing #15 by Eli Cohen, 86-04 Grand Ave., Apt. 4D., Elmhurst, N.Y. 11373. June 1, 1980.

As you can see above, after much thought and research I came up with a completely new title for this apazine. The MOS is, of course, an acronym for "metal oxide semiconductor" (frankly, I have no idea whether my computer actually uses MOS chips -- I've never been much on hardware; but it sounds more plausible than, say, "Avocados on the North Side").

This issue is more of an experiment than a fanzine. I'm typing it with my new Word Processor Pac, which arrived a few weeks ago. It's quite wonderful, though I have some problems because what I have access to at work is so different. (There are some things I like a whole lot better about this package, and then there are the odd gaps where I can't do something I'm used to being able to do.)

Anyway, this has most of the normal features: I can insert and delete text, move paragraphs around, change margins, print with justified margins, search for and replace words and phrases, etc. In addition, I can set up enormously complicated sequences of commands to be done automatically (the manual gives, as an example, instructions for producing your own obnoxious "personalized" form letters from a mailing list -- you know, the "Dear Mr. /Rockies Apa" type). Specifically, I'm supposed to be able to do multi-column printing, which I intend to try out below.

An aside on electronic fanzines: When I visualized using a word processor, I always thought about things like how it would simplify editing and multiple drafts. It wasn't until John Douglas came over last week and did a one-shot (limited edition, 2 copies) that some of the implications sunk in. What we have here is a whole new art form when it's applied to formerly first-draft work, especially group first drafts. Now, you know very well that if things are revised and re-written, you (as reader) can't tell when a specific paragraph was written. But with first draft (especially first draft on stencil) productions, all is nice and linear. Interpolations, and interpolations

in the midst of interpolations, occur in the order in which you read them.

Enter the home computer. When your second smashed fan gets up to take a turn at the typewriter, s/he can insert remarks anywhere. (I'm assuming that fannish ethics would prevent changing anyone else's material.) Furthermore, the entire result can be saved on some form of magnetic media (e.g. cassette), and hauled out again at the next party some months later for additional annotations. Can you see the 100th edition of a venerable one-shot, encrusted with decades of addenda by prominent fans? Talk about time-binding! The mind boggles!

Gee, wasn't that fun? Better do some mailing comments, though -- as my friends will testify, I can go on forever talking about my computer.

PAULINE: On the other hand, this is certainly no HAL. I can't even find an italic 10-pitch Selectric type-ball.

ALAN: I found your story of the instruction manuals horrifying, but entirely believable. I have expended enormous amounts of energy producing user manuals, but sometimes I feel that they will only be read by the maintenance programmers who come after me. My current belief is that interactive computer systems should be self-documenting, so that at any point a user can type "Help" or some such and get some specific instructions (even if only "call the systems department for assistance"). It will probably turn out that people don't like asking a machine for help, and thus never get to see the help messages ...

As to job advancement, you make some good points. The only avenues for promotion that I see for data entry clerks are to computer operator (which happened at least once at VGH), or to something like data entry manager. On the other hand, "data entry clerk", as a job, may disappear, as we move away from batch processes and as computer terminals drop in price. If the desk terminal becomes as ubiquitous as the telephone, it would hardly make sense for people to fill out forms for keypunching when they could more easily fill out a form on the screen; thus, where I'm working now, the Letter of Credit Dept. clerks type stuff directly into the computer as needed, and that's only a small part of their jobs. I assume their career paths are whatever they were when they still used quill pens ...

PAUL: re censorship and government grants -- is this an argument for governments getting out of supporting artists altogether? It has to be hard for even the best-intentioned civil servants to support a way-out project when there's a Proxmire waiting to give them the finger. On the other hand, whenever there's a scarce resource (money), there are going to be problems allocating it to non-conformists (see LeGuin's DISPOSSESSED, for instance).

Your point about white males being the proponents of anarchism was quite telling (OOF!). I guess what turns me off about most revolutionary rhetoric is my conviction that you're almost always substituting one dictatorship for another. My ideal society is very big on civil liberties, and very light on government power -- I see the main purpose of government (ideally) as stopping people from beating up on other people, not contributing to it. A mob is a mob, whether it's cops or Red Guards (and the image I retain of China's Cultural Revolution is of that pianist whose fingers were smashed by the Red Guards). Anarchism is tempting, but you're probably right -- it would only lead to the same people running gangs, but without the niceties of a legal system.

Re synthesizers: Have you ever heard of the Lyricon Wind Driver? Freff demonstrated one for me -- it looks like a silver

clarinet, and plugs into a Moog. Since you control the volume with your breath you can be far more expressive than with the keyboard; plus, as he pointed out, it gives access to synthesizers to a whole new class of musicians.

RICH: I've been quoting your IBM line to people ("...any noun can be verbed"). Love it. This sentence no verb?

NANCY: Re the accuracy of the Bible, and modern scholarship -- I am willing to concede that there is psychological truth in the Bible; I'm sure that its history is more accurate and more useful to archaeologists than, say, the Iliad. But I'm afraid that I can't accept as "fact" such items as the sun, moon, and stars being created after trees and grass. Yes, a lot of scientific theories contradict the Bible; so does the extremely plausible theory that the whole Universe was created ten minutes ago, as is. To say that the latter is ridiculous is to maintain that (to paraphrase Einstein) God may be subtle, but not malicious. It's for that reason that I can't see how you can cavalierly dismiss all the evidence, from fossil records to the background microwave radiation, from plate tectonics to pulsars, that shows the universe is far more complex than a 2,000 year old document can explain.

I'm not arguing about the existence or non-existence of a historic Jesus, or even of a historic Moses. I just can't see how, in 1980, you can defend the literal truth of Genesis.

As to modern scholarship, I've only read one book (Hebrew Mythology, by Robert Graves and somebody else), which dealt only with Genesis. One fascinating "coincidence" pointed out was that if you line up the days of creation and the Babylonian gods associated with each day of the week, you get an exact parallel -- so that, for example, the Babylonian god of astronomy corresponds to the fourth day, when God created the sun, moon and stars. What is happening, says Graves, is that Jehovah is symbolically assuming the powers of each of the Babylonian pantheon in turn.

Now, to me, this is far more meaningful, sensible, and poetic than maintaining that the world was really created that way. Since people of the time would doubtless have been familiar with Babylon, it also gives Genesis a metaphorical force that is lacking if you pretend it's just another theory of creation.

DENYS: Comments on the Guardian reprint -- obviously, I find Avery's position very reasonable, and disagree with Reif. If I may paraphrase, the latter seems to be saying that the end (substituting tyranny of the majority for the current tyranny of a minority) justifies the means (suppression of free speech). I find it ironic that he can state in print that the current level of free speech in this country is so low that preserving it is irrelevant; there is also the minor discrepancy of "...every /case/ involving progressives resulted in upholding the conviction.... This is not to say progressives have never won First Amendment cases...." My impression of Supreme Court cases is not so one-sided, and I'd like to see some specific cases cited. For all I know, Reif considers the FALN bombings of New York banks a progressive exercise in free speech (there's a group that's not real open to free debate). "Fire in a crowded theatre" is not an unreasonable dividing line (it's application will change with the perception of danger). Arrest people for murder, not speaking. Re Asian semi-conductors: Are you saying that a) they could be sold at 1/10th their current cost, and/or b) wages could go up 10-fold without affecting their current price?