



Attorneys at Law

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## CONSIDER THIS

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### #35 Objectivity and my Secret Life as Simon Hoggart

What has come to be known as the "blogosphere" has now been in existence long enough to spawn untold millions upon millions of personal Websites, each of which presents the thoughts and observations of its individual author. As one might expect, those thoughts and observations are (to say the least) varied. To enter into the blogosphere is therefore to enter into the very collective consciousness of humanity.

Which can be a rather disorienting experience, especially if as one looks in, one sees one's own self looking back. Or, worse yet, someone looking back that doesn't look like them at all, but who someone else suggests *is* them.

As happened to me a few days ago, as recorded in my blog. Consider this...

\* \* \* \* \*

New Years Day weekend is not a time favored by those publicists that would toss their news into the pond of public awareness (unless they wish their news to disappear quickly, leaving as few public ripples as possible). There being little worthwhile news to report, this post will therefore not deal with the news of the day.

For the same ripple reason, I will instead use this opportunity to reveal a startling personal fact.

I have learned, through a seemingly reliable source, that I am actually [Simon Hoggart](#), London *Guardian* political columnist and BBC Radio 4 personality.

Could this indeed be so, you ask? Yes, although it came as a complete shock to me as well. Although I have lived in England in the past and read the *Guardian* on many occasions, I was heretofore unaware that I had not only read, but written, some of what I had previously enjoyed.

This state of pleasant ignorance ended when an alert reader brought a certain blog post to my attention. That entry was posted by one Jon Levell in his thought provoking blog, [Irregular Verbiage](#), aptly subtitled (the most recent entry is dated November 24th), "Sporadic Musings."

It seems that in that most recent Musing, Jon was disposed to muse over the Massachusetts Open Document saga. But his musing did not stop there. Instead, he culminated with this final, coy muse:

In other news, if you are obsessively reading info on the debate about open standards (and specifically whether public organisations like the government of Massachusetts or the European Commission should mandate that their employees use then) then a key source of info is the Standards Blog. What I find most intriguing is that you never see the Standards Blog's Andy Updegrove and the Guardian's/Radio 4's Simon Hoggart in a room together.



Hmm. He had a point. To the best of my knowledge, I *had* never been seen in the same room as Guardian/Radio 4's Simon Hoggart; at least, to be objective, unless I *was* Simon Hoggart.

While some (Microsoft Office spokesman Alan Yates Microsoft springs to mind) might question my objectivity, in fact I have tried to be scrupulously objective in my reporting of facts and in any analysis of legal language that I offer on line, while preserving the right to express the opinions that I form as a result of what I observe. I strive to maintain a reputation for objectivity not only for its own sake, but in order that my opinions will be given credibility and weight, as well as the facts I report.

I therefore take it as obligatory that I investigate Mr. Levell's disturbing suggestion that I am "Guardian/Radio 4's Simon Hoggart", rather than mild-mannered Massachusetts attorney and standards wonk Andy Updegrove. After all, perhaps the greatest test of objectivity begins when one looks into the mirror. Moreover, I shall do so with as much diligence as I would a contention that Mr. Yates (for example) is in fact Presidential Press Secretary Scott McClellan (perhaps I'll return to that intriguing possibility in a future blog entry).

With this as prelude, here are the significant facts that I have uncovered, as well as my ultimate conclusion on the question, after balancing all ambiguities against my own sense of identity:

1. Mr. Hoggart was born on May 26, 1946. I was born on November 9, 1953. Close enough for government work.
2. Mr. Hoggart has an [entry](#) in the Wikipedia, and I do not. Pure coincidence, or careful research on the part of the Wikipedia staff, notwithstanding the recent challenges to the accuracy of the on-line encyclopedia?
3. According to that same entry, Mr. Hoggart is alleged to have had a brief affair with [Kimberly Quinn](#). I do not recall ever...ahem, being in the same room as Ms. Quinn, but, on the other hand, I have no recollection of ever being in the same room as Mr. Hoggart, so these two pieces of data appear to cancel each other out.
4. Mr. Hoggart chairs BBC 4's weekly show, [The News Quiz](#), a delightfully erudite, humorous and occasionally pedantic show which I have often enjoyed. I have some small pretensions to being both erudite and humorous, while my partners regularly assure me that I am pedantic in the extreme.
5. Mr. Hoggart is the author of, among other works, a compendium of absurd Christmas Letters, titled [The Hamster that Loved Puccini](#). I am forced to admit that I am fully capable of giving (and perhaps have given) such a name to a book, should I ever write/have already written one.
6. I have not been able to contact Mr. Hoggart by telephone to put the question to him/me, but each time I placed the call, *his phone was invariably busy!*

But enough of this.

Clearly, I have been unable to disprove the suggestion of Mr. Levell that I am one and the same with the Guardian's/Radio 4's Simon Hoggart. Therefore, resolving all doubts against my own bias that I am, at least in this regard, unique, and assuming that Mr. Levell is a responsible practitioner of the blogging trade and has some evidence to support his implied allegation, I must, with regret, surrender my identity. So be it.

Finally, a note to Mr. Levell.

I see from the CV that you have posted at your site that you have earned a Ph.D in Theoretical Particle Physics. Having myself (or, as the case may be, Mr. Hoggart's self) at best only a muddled and imperfect knowledge of quantum theory, perhaps you can explain, for Simon's and my benefit and in the manner of the late lamented Douglas Adams, the seeming duality of existence that I/he/we/whoever are currently experiencing. Or, as the question was more succinctly put by the [Firesign Theatre](#), in their 1969 appreciation album, [All Hail Marx \[and\] Lennon](#), "How can you be in two places at once, when you're not anywhere at all?"

Mr. Levell, Simon's and/or my identity are at your mercy. We await your response.

Please muse on that.

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