

The illusion of gray created  
by an arrangement of  
alternating black and white dots



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I am working on this zine unbelievably late and am tempted to blame it all on Jim Hudson for telling me last weekend that he would be glad to carry my zine with him when he flies out to the Bay Area later in the week. He flies out today. So let's just assume that I won't get many, if any, mailing comments done this issue, but will catch up next time.

Mexico lingers on my mind. It's been three months since Scott, Julie and I traveled down to central Mexico; nevertheless I've been thinking about it. A few weeks after we returned, Scott and I viewed a videotape of the TV show, *60 Minutes*, which we taped weeks before our trip. Thank goodness we didn't watch it before we left! The show was all about the rash of kidnappings of regular folks (as opposed to wealthy folks who pay bodyguards to protect them). A lurid picture was painted by *60 Minutes* of people stopped and kidnapped at traffic lights, and of police officers who were more often than not doing the kidnapping themselves during their off-hours... We'd have been a bit more nervous about our "adventure," if we had been aware of the statistics. As it turned out, however, I never felt we were in danger in the area of Mexico we visited, a sentiment supported by author, Tony Cohan whose book I just finished. *On Mexican Time* just appeared in bookstores a few weeks ago; it takes place in San Miguel de Allende which we visited on one of our day trips out of Guanajuato. Cohan finished writing it just a week or two before Scott, Julie and I arrived in Mexico. (The last chapter describes events that occurred in mid-October 1999.) Here's a summary (cribbed, to save time, from Amazon.com):

*"In the mid-1980s, Tony Cohan and his artist wife, Masako, decided they had had enough of the hectic pace and inherent insecurities of life in Los Angeles and made tracks for the historic town of San Miguel de Allende in central Mexico. At first they rented rooms in a hotel. Then, when the hotel became less appealing, they graduated to renting an apartment. Almost inevitably, they eventually found themselves buying a 250-year-old hacienda on the verge of collapse, with wonderfully elegant Spanish colonial architecture and a garden brimming with papayas, avocados, and custard apples."*

I found Cohen's writing a bit too lyrical at the beginning of the book, but was fascinated by his view of places and feelings, I'd so recently experienced myself. And after he finishes comparing the paranoia of L.A. *v.s.* the relaxed ambiance of San Miguel, I began enjoying his portrait more. In fact, I think I may look for more of his travel writing. I empathize with his and his wife's style of traveling: Scott and I also tend to play "What would it be like to live here?" when we travel. Tony and Masako just took that game a little further than we've ever done.

As a holiday gift, my sister Julie gave me a coffee table book called *The Colors of Mexico*. As soon as I finished *On Mexican Time*, I dipped back into *Colors*, re-visiting images of memory and Cohen's descriptions. Frequently, in these past few days, I have found myself mentally attempting to phrase a sentence in Spanish. Maybe I should have read this stuff *before* rather than after

I re-read Suzy McKee Charnas' Holdfast series (in preparation for a panel at Potlatch). I need to switch moods here. It's almost as bad as the time I read all of Jane Austen's novels over the course of a month and found myself writing elaborately phrased memos at work.

Still, what a treat it's been, diving into such two completely different worlds, and wholly immersing myself in them.

Remembering numbers is not one of my personal strengths. Neither is remembering names. The things I do remember more often than many people are plots. This has come up often enough — when someone is surprised that I can remember a story in so much detail even if it is a novel or movie that I saw a long time ago — that I've accepted the fact that I must have segregated a larger portion of my brain than normal for the filing of stories. (Doesn't it seem that everyone has uniquely divided memory space for certain kinds of information? A friend here in Madison remembers all his friends' phone numbers and addresses. I can only gape in amazement.) Nevertheless, remembering plots is not something that comes in handy a lot. I can go to book group discussions months after I read the book, and am usually able to talk about it in just as much detail as someone who finished the book that day. That's neat, but there aren't many other tangible benefits. Or so I thought. The other day, a memory bubbled up to the top of my consciousness of my first grade school social studies course, and the first time I studied for a test in that class. I remember reviewing the chapters of the textbook on which we would be tested, and thinking, "Oh, this is easy. I just have to remember the chain of what-happens-next." I can see now that my young self was considering the text as a storyline, which she could call up at will and follow the plot line to the correct answer. As it turned out, this method didn't work too well the first time, because the first question on the test summoned several alternate possible "plot lines," and I wasn't sure which one had actually happened. Since then, I've gotten better at anchoring real events in my memory, but I suspect that a lot of my "knowledge" of history and geography is built on an ability to remember plot-like structures. ... Which is why stories are the best way for me to remember names and numbers, too. How do you remember things?

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### © Elise Matthesen

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What a beautiful, lovely piece of art. My first impression was that it was a picture of ice cubes strung together on barbed wire (not an impossible phenomenon on a very cold day in the Midwest). But then there were no drops of water, no frost, and the picture resolved itself to a different image. Nevertheless, I like the metaphoric image — water/ice/life clinging to and around harsh authority. Lovely.

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### © Kerry Ellis

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Good luck if you decide to accept the new job with Scott. I will be interested to see how it affects your friendship with him.

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### © Annette Kindred

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I'm so sorry for your loss. The death of any loved one is painful beyond measure, but to have lost David without being able to have said good-bye or even to have had any warning, is especially hard. Toss that together with the difficult situation between you and his other lover, and to have to start a new job in the midst of mourning, whew. You must be an incredibly strong person. Take care.

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### © Karen Summerly

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Actually, rheumatoid arthritis is more serious than osteoarthritis (re your comment to Art). The rheumatoid variety is *systemic*, whereas the osteo variety (which is what I had that led to my replaced hip) can be a one-shot thing. I may never experience arthritis in any other part of my body. However, if I had the rheumatoid variety, I'd have to assume that I'd eventually experience it in all my joints.

In a comment to Lyn, you asked to hear more about the class-related programming at WisCon. If you're going to Potlatch, you will have a chance to hear and see what I suspect will be a continuation of that programming.

You wrote to Lisa that you liked her idea of "individual couples getting to define their marriages to suit themselves. I would think that societal expectations would often leak in..." Yes, I also think they'd leak in, and not without a bit of reason. Weddings are, after all, (no matter how non-traditional), statements

of vows in front of a community. In the more traditional weddings, those vows are enforced by church or governmental rules. But even the most un-traditional public vows are taken in front of a group of people important to the partners. Members of that community often feel that the vows have been said not only *in front of them, but partially to them*. One of the reasons I've never been interested in making public vows to Scott is that I do not want to even offer a subtle invitation to others to participate in Scott's and my commitment to one another.

Interesting comments about happiness *v.s.* joy, gladness, pleasure. Like you, I think happiness is a more relaxed and peaceful thing than joy. I think that's because, for me, happiness is a long-term state of feeling. Joy, gladness, and pleasure are momentary — and can happen during a period of happiness in my life, or during a period of unhappiness.

And as for Kimberly's "admiration (often idealization)" bearing a flavor of inequality and so being inappropriate to an ongoing, healthy relationship: what do you think of admiring a partner's actions (rather than themselves)?

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### © Ian Hagemann

**F**ascinating stuff on identity and the Seattle conference, Ian. Thank you! As the hands zip around the clock, I am beginning to triage the comments I have time to type up, and I'm afraid these discussions of your's are going to have to be dealt with another time. Sorry,

I would like to make one comment about your format, though. The size of your font is really really tiny. I can read it (and can certainly understand your use of it for economic reasons), but I would sure appreciate it if you used two columns with small type.

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### © Doug Barbour

**K**aren Summerly made a comment to you about "Avant-guard poetry means not to have meaning?????" which reminded me of one of the thoughts I had of these same comments of your's when I saw *Cradle Will Rock*. I'm curious about what you might think about the ideas in this film, and of the film itself. The movie portrays a very political view of art's function in society, and it definitely sides with the idea that the best art is about ideas. Set in the early 1940s in New York City, just before WWII, an amazing cast of characters, some of them based on real artists (Diego Rivera, Orson Welles) and business people

(Nelson Rockefeller, John Houseman) play out a subtle (well I thought so anyway) conspiracy theory of how modern, abstract art gained support of the wealthy because representative art (especially drama and painting) were potentially revolutionary and difficult to control.

I loved the movie. It has some of the best visualizations of the creative process — in which the playwright creates his play, especially. And the dramatization of artistic integrity in the production of the play despite the official shutdown was brilliant. Not to mention Susan Sarendon, one of my favorite actors and activists. And Diego and Frida — whose work was everpresent in my Mexican trip and thoughts afterward.

Anyway, I am wondering what you might have thought of that scene in which Cusack as Rockefeller conspires with a bunch of other millionaires to support abstract art and to try to douse the popularity of representative art.....

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### © Lyn Paleo

**E**xcellent questions. I think I'll copy them off and tack them up onto my bulletin board for the next time I need to communicate with a doctor and experience cognitive dissonance. Thanks.

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### © Debbie Notkin

**C**ongratulations on the new full-time job. It seems that not having to worry about finding the next job will decrease your stress level a bit, at a time when there are all too many things competing to add stress in your life. Hope you enjoy and profit from it.

I agree with you that unexplained pain is stressful way out of proportion to the actual difference between it and understood pain. Boy do I understand that.

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### Donya White

**I** met Scott at an SF convention, but he was there to meet his cousin (Spike Parsons), not really to attend an SF con. Since then, he's come to appreciate cons, I think, but it's not one of the main shared interests that binds us together. I lucked out completely that this stranger I met by accident had so many beliefs and ideas that overlapped and/or meshed with mine. It's unlikely that we would have met at all if I hadn't attended ICon (the first and only time I've ever gone to that convention) or if Scott hadn't ac-

cepted Spike's invitation to meet her there for a drink, and hadn't invited me along too. It's sheerest coincidence. So my advice about trying to meet new friends at activities one enjoys turns out to be a bit bogus, I guess.

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© Michael Sturza

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I'm glad your effort to help your dad had such a good outcome. I'm dreading that discussion with my folks, either of them, and it's good to have in mind a model of a good outcome.

For a month or so after getting rid of my crutches I was extremely aware of others who used them. I noticed a guy at a sandwich shop hesitating by the counter. He had his sandwich and an empty cup in one hand. I suddenly recognized that he could get to his seat with his food, but not if he filled his cup first. So I jumped up and said I know just how you feel, grabbed his cup, asked him what he wanted to drink, and told him to go sit down. I don't think I'd have recognized his dilemma before my own experience, at least not at a glance.

Why do I prefer stoicism? Why do I not have enough time, damn it. The short answer (and I'll enlarge on this next time maybe) is that there are some things — some painful, but others fairly joyful — that I prefer not to dwell on or that I prefer to be relatively private about. And I find (or fear) that telling people about what hurts me or what delights me at the moment will result in those very topics being the things that everyone focuses upon. Once someone knows that you've got some serious disease, it's hard to avoid that as the first (and sometimes only topic of conversation), and for every "how are you" being delivered in a meaningful, personal way. Since one of the main ways I have of coping with painful things is to distract myself from them and to think or act intensely in some other area, the constant reminders of the thing I'm trying to avoid temporarily is difficult.

That's all the time I have for now. There are comments I'd like to go back to make next time. We'll see. But Jim is waiting... I appologize for all the typos. And I hope to see you at Potlatch in a couple weeks!

— Jeanne Gomoll