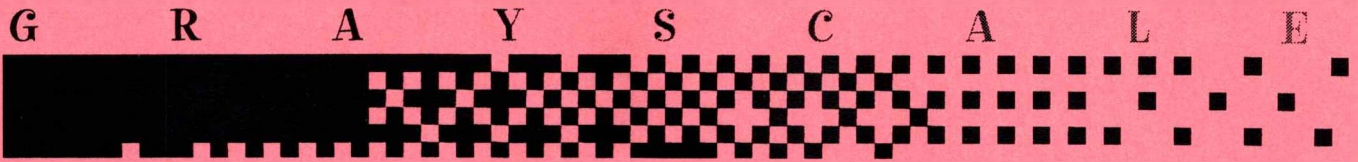


The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #17, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #233, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

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© Jim Hudson

Peter's loss of insurance sounds like a Really Bad Thing, in spite of the balancing, spectacularly Good Health News. Are there any tatters of a governmental safety net left to help him? Or is his family it?

I laughed when you said that Diane wasn't interested in dedicating 60 hours per week, every week to a job ... so she went to work for an Internet Startup. (It sounds like a classic joke. "Did you hear about the [Martian, blond, etc. fill in ethnic group of your choice] who wanted to reduce their workload? They took a job with an Internet Startup, ho, ho.) I hope Diane manages to hold onto her life if she ends up dropping her contractor status and becomes an employee at Guild.com.

I don't do a whole lot of conversation blocking for Scott in the Madison community. People in our group have gotten used to Scott's style, but more I think, they've learned to appreciate his relatively infrequent comments and so pay more attention to him than people who don't know him as well. I remember doing a lot of conversation blocking early in our relationship, when I was introducing him to long-time fannish friends at conventions.

Interesting idea that a future *Nova* might do an ancient engineering show about manual document production methods. It would be fun to do a parody of a *Nova* show, as if from the perspective of a group of future scientists, several of whom would of course maintain that no one could possibly have created full color magazines by hand. Scott and I have seen a couple of the *Nova* shows (most recently, the one in which they built a Roman-style bathhouse) and there always seems to be one skeptic in the bunch providing suspense and conflict with their verbal attacks on the main scientist's theories. The skeptic is always proven wrong by the idealist, of course; either that, or *Nova* doesn't broadcast the shows in which the ancient engineering method fails.

Your comment to Deb about 65 mph busy times *vs.* 40 mph times resonated with Karen Summerly's description of her Bernoulli Breakdown, when life gets constricted and fast with too much stuff scheduled in too little space. ("Bernoulli Breakdown because Bernoulli's equation says (approximately) that if a fluid is flowing through an enclosed passage at a constant pressure, if the passage narrows, the fluid has to speed up," wrote Karen.) I really like Karen's metaphor. It led me off on a mental digression considering the possibility of a private, virtual Army Corps of Engineers digging more time out of those constricted points in my time stream. At that point, my daydream turned into a nightmare as I recalled the environmental and aesthetic damage caused by so many of the Corps' projects. I think you're right: life is probably more interesting for its irregular and unpredictable periods of intensity and calm, like seasons for the soul.

I can understand your attraction to some sort of world government, but I have huge doubts that the WTO could ever evolve into any kind of humane world organization. Its roots, after all, are not found in any kind of representational government or even in a humane philosophy. The roots of the WTO and its basic goals spring from corporate business and industrial values — short term profit,

monopoly, nurturing of wealth, and reliance on virtual slave labor—which is bad news for the rights of individuals, unions, liberty, justice and long-range environmental concerns. Wars between nations might become a thing of the past if the WTO evolved into a world power, but battles against unions, the poor, human rights and environmentalists would continue I think; and places of sanctuary would become hard to find for rebels against such a government. I don't think that the WTO as it defines itself now can ever be re-fitted in such a way so that it considers, as you say: "issues beyond the pure economic." This is just too much a basic part of its nature. Issues beyond the purely economic will always be subsidiary to the main economic ones in a government evolved from the WTO. It seems to me that if there are goals we want to achieve through world government, that such an organization needs to be grown organically from an idea or existing organization whose methods and goals more closely resemble the kind of world we are working toward. So, for me, the value of the Seattle action was of a warning to stand against world domination by the powers gathered together in the WTO. It was a call to arms that there are more important values having to do with people and the environment to which economic powers must be forced to be accountable.

© Debbie Notkin

It was good to see Sheila doing so well at Potlatch. How long has the Advanced Placement program been operating in the US? I was enrolled in the History AP program in my senior year in high school — back in 1968-69. As it turned out, it didn't do me any good in terms of degree credits in college. The University of Wisconsin didn't recognize the program at the time, but it was a good experience for me, nevertheless. My AP readings and exams paralleled the course outline of my history class, and deepened my understanding of those lessons. But, more importantly, the AP program gave me some experience with college-level research methods and sparked the beginning of my awareness of the relative accuracy of historical judgements. I had an excellent high school history teacher; I can't imagine that I would have gotten much out of the program without him. As you say, the teacher is key in this kind of program.

It is interesting how ones passions and interests at different times in ones life often come together for a career one couldn't possibly have predicted (or requested) earlier. You now find yourself combining

your professional editor self's skills with your younger desire to be a teacher. It's great when this sort of thing happens. You could never have aimed for this specific opportunity, and yet here you are with the "prerequisites" almost miraculously in place. I have felt that way a number of times in my life when hobbies, formal education, passions, and informal training came together in a perfect fit for some project or job that was offered to me.

© Ian Hageman

The idea that relationships work best when the parties agree to a set of "rules" makes me uncomfortable. (Or amused in the case of *Seinfeld*.) Rules, to me, suggest a constitutional metaphor — in which, once agreed upon, the rules become more important than any specific circumstance or individual. The two or three or whatever number of people involved in a relationship may sit down together and agree upon a set of rules against which all future relationship behavior will be judged. To me, that's a set-up for conflict. It only guarantees an endless series of debates, amendments and negotiations around the original set of rules throughout the course of the relationship. A rule violation requires that someone will first be accused of having "broken" the rule and found at fault, before discussion can go to a less judgmental place and a consideration of the question of whether the rule actually works any longer. Maybe conditions in the relationship have changed significantly; maybe individuals have changed significantly, and the rule needs to be amended to respect those changes. If the partners are reasonable and calm, perhaps they can work through this process every time a rule is violated. Perhaps not. Perhaps the constant accusations of rule breaking will create an atmosphere of confrontation that will poison the relationship.

To me, a better model, and one I aspire to in my relationship with Scott, is for the partners to agree upon some fairly simple and general goals, and to commit to a continuous process of "tuning up" their behavior to best achieve those goals. Furthermore they should always be open to a reexamination of the original goals. Things change. Everything changes. That's the only rule. (It seems I should quote here from Butler's *Parable of the Talents*.) In this way, every time the partners need to discuss some change in their relationship, it doesn't necessarily have to start with an accusation that someone is at fault.

If a relationship has "fine print," i.e., unstated

rules that are nevertheless enforced by one or several partners, it's worse I think, than out-in-the-open rules. The fine print rules don't get discussed but are simply assumed by one or all partners. Unspoken assumptions are never examined until times of crisis, at which time they metamorphose into weapons and shields. The worst part of these unexamined rules, I suppose, is that they're probably impossible to avoid altogether. We've probably all adopted some of them in our relationships. But in my mind, they're things to dig up, uncover, and bring into the light of discussion. For me, the process of learning how to live in relationships has been a series of discoveries of my own buried assumptions and those of my partners'. It seems that each major relationship in my life has led to at least one important personal discovery that has made my behavior in that relationship and subsequent ones more honorable and honest.

I sympathize with your desire to own a house. It seems like you might need to pursue some alternate form of house ownership. Here in Madison there are several ongoing experiments in co-op home ownership. I'm not very familiar with the details but know there are several houses on Williamson Street that are part of a program which has enabled low-income people to buy condos. Are there similar experiments in the Seattle area?

Your description of your bicycle training methods inspired an image in my mind that made me laugh. Someone comes upon your parked bike. Your water bottle has developed a leak and sand is spilling out of it. "Aliens among us! I knew it!" says the witness.

Finding the perfect gift for someone is a rare and satisfying experience. Usually each end-of-the-year holiday season, I manage to find or make one gift that I think is going to be one of those perfectly appropriate presents. I think I enjoy the experience of giving such a gift more than I do receiving one, though I have certainly received a couple "perfect" gifts in my life. But how does one know? I don't think you can. A couple times I have been sure I'd come up with a perfect gift, and it turned out I was weirdly off base. The same has happened to me as a recipient. In the year my brother Steve married, I began a friendship with his wife Betsy. Our friendship has grown through the years. Betsy handed me a gift-wrapped package that first Christmas after she joined our family with an expression I wish I had paid more attention to. She glowed with the conviction that she had chosen a "perfect gift" for me. Instead of being gracious, I did something that still stands as one of the things in my life I wish I could take back and do over. I wasn't

feeling well; cramps and PMS, combined with the usual arguments that my mom and I had at that time of the year had made me extremely grumpy. I thought I was keeping it together, but when I opened up the package that Betsy gave me and saw the Star Trek trivia game, I sighed and blurted out something about not being a Trekie. The disappointed expression on Betsy's face made me suddenly realize that she had put a lot of thought into the gift. She knew that our family all liked games and remembered my frequent comments about SF.... I couldn't take back my stupid remark and for years kicked myself for my blunder. I apologized at the time and again, in longer form, many years later, though it may be that I remember that moment with more clarity than Betsy does. In any case, what I'm trying to say is that it is a gift — for both gift-giver and recipient — to see and be seen in that special way, but probably impossible to orchestrate.

I don't recognize your "default" characteristics of monogamous relationships: avoidance of singles, ditching of long-term friends and interests whenever trouble threatens. Scott and I do tend to socialize as a couple, though I don't see that as necessarily problematic. It seems to me that problematic behavior within and outside a relationship has more to do with the individual(s) in question than with whether they are part of a monogamous or poly relationship.

You made *a really* interesting comment about the (subconscious) tendency to assume that your life should follow the literary model of conflict. I've certainly looked to fiction for models in the course of my life and it's fascinating to consider how many unspoken assumptions derive not only from examples of characters and plot, but from the *form* of fiction. There have been some interesting novels written on the subject of people who adopt a little too wholeheartedly the models of fictional characters. *Don Quixote*, for one.

Good question to me re my comments to Art about reading idiosyncratic spelling. I don't remember having any problem with Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* or Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*. *A Clockwork Orange* was a bit of a challenge, but I liked Burgess' extrapolation of language development and in this case I thought the effort was well worth it. I've got more to say on this subject in my comment to Art.

Thanks for enlarging the type size in your zine, Ian.

© Elizabeth Fox

I'm glad that Pat was so good to you during your

convalescence, and very glad to hear that your foot and ankle pain is gone!

Good point about Midwestern *vs.* East Coast verbal styles being obliterated in print fandom.

Actually, I do *not* think it's the beholders' responsibility to bear in mind that a confederate flag or a swastika might have non-standard meanings to the person who displays them. My sympathies are totally with those who make reasonable assumptions based on predominate usage of those symbols. I think it's up to the person who displays these symbols to deal, however they want, with the fact that the symbols inspire offended reactions.

It seems to me that your rejection of the option to take Pat's name in marriage has a lot in common with people's desire not to bring down confederate flags from their public buildings. Both you and these protestors are saying you want nothing to do with a certain symbol and the things it stands for. Like the confederate flag protestors, you are rejecting a subset of society's attempt to define a relationship based on what you consider an outmoded and offensive concept. In this example, it seems to me that you are using the same (though less extreme) argument that is used by the confederate flag protestors. On the other hand, if changed your mind and decided to take Pat's name, you would have to deal with more people whose assumptions about marriage conflicted with yours and Pat's conception of marriage. Like the situation in which you wore a swastika, you would find yourself in a position of disagreeing with others about what that symbol meant.

© Karen Summerly

As I said to Jim, I like your metaphor, "Bernoulli Breakdown." Thanks for the image. Ever since reading it, I've seen flashes of whitewater rafting scenes whenever life gets hectic.

© Guy Thomas

Congratulations on your house! I can't tell you how strange it has been these last few months to read so many tales of house-hunting in the Bay Area. There's you and Kimberly and Elizabeth, of course, but I've been hearing about a couple others too, outside the apa. It's my impression that the most expensive homes in the Madison area could be purchased for less than that of a Bay Area median house price. Scott and I would never be able to afford our own house if it were priced according to Bay Area

standards. Ian, however, could probably afford a house in a nice neighborhood if he had access to housing priced according to Madison standards. The prices out there just don't seem *real* to me. Do you worry at all that the market will tumble? Is the possibility that prices may fall a frequent subject of conversation out there, or does everyone generally assume that property costs will stay high?

What is an "in-law unit"? I don't think I've ever heard that term before.

He actually speculated out loud to you that you might have some sort of bone eating infection!? God, some doctors have the worst communication skills. I believe that whatever happens to doctors in medical school must actually impair their communication skills. Besides my most recent experience of having a doctor trying to scare me to death and threatening to let me bleed to death on the operating table, I've had another brush with medical tactlessness. Shortly after I graduated from college, I received an invitation to have my thyroid gland examined at the hospital where, as a 4-year-old in the 1950s, I had been treated by what was then cutting-edge therapy for enlarged tonsils — massive x-ray treatments. Not surprisingly, it turns out that a lot of kids so treated went on to develop thyroid cancer. Well, I went in and right in front of me, the doctor who had examined my neck circled the left side of a neck on a drawing on his clipboard, and wrote in large, block letters, "MASSIVE TUMOR." Maybe he didn't think I could read upside down. (Anyway, to make a longish story short, the initial diagnosis was Hodgkins disease, but upon biopsy, it turned out that all I had was something called a "nerval cyst." My left larynx was disconnected in the process of removing this cyst which changed my voice somewhat, but everything turned out fine.) Still, you've got to wonder if doctors really think about the fact that there is a human being sitting in front of them when they speculate out loud. I'm sorry you were subjected to that on top of the incompetent and tactless treatment by the staff that wasn't adequately prepared to assist you on and off the x-ray table.

I know what you mean when you commented to Ian that the Seattle protest, "gives a burned out lefty hope." I became irrationally giddy when students at the University of Wisconsin occupied the Chancellor's office last month. The UW protest was concerned with University clothing (t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.) purchased from companies that use sweatshop labor. It looks like the protest may have actually pushed the UW into making something more than an empty gesture against these companies.

© Donya Hazard White

Not having read your earlier zines about amusement parks, I nevertheless sympathize with you on having to visit one. Perhaps we share a dislike for amusement park rides. My own dislike of them has only increased over the years. As a kid I didn't enjoy them; as an adult I am positively freaked out by most of them. A few years ago, Scott and I strolled through the Sun Prairie Sweet Corn festival, mostly for sweet corn and the craft exhibits, but we found ourselves eventually looking at the rides. Scott loves rollercoasters and Ferris wheels and all sorts of scary rides. I was feeling bad that he didn't have anyone to accompany him on a ride and so I suggested that I would probably enjoy that little ride over there. The one with the 8 cars that swing around the central pole with a little minor swooping and swinging. From the ground it looked tame. I was sure it wouldn't be scary and though I might not actively enjoy it, I figured I could handle it for the sake of Scott getting to go on at least one ride. We strapped in and our car started moving. I remember very little from the ride, but apparently once we started swooping, my hands clutched the bar in front of me in a death grip. Unfortunately, the part of the bar that my right hand was gripping had a bolt sticking out of it that imprinted a bloody stigmata onto my palm. I lost control completely and as our car twirled and swooped, I screamed continuously and hysterically, punctuated with occasional expletives. Scott didn't have a very good time either. It's amusing to remember that I wanted to be an astronaut when I was a little kid. That experience forever stopped him from trying to convince me to go with him to amusement parks again. Your strategy sounds like a good one: to go with a group of people and decide beforehand what activities you will and won't join. [Please don't anyone point out the anti-morality metaphor embedded in this story.]

© Art Widner

I really don't mean to belabor the subject of non-standard spelling, but you ask some interesting questions and make some comments that have gotten me thinking more about the topic. Feel free to tell me to stop yammering on the subject.

Both you and Ian asked if I feel annoyed by books that use nonstandard speech and spelling. Ian asked about *Clockwork Orange*, but Russell Hoban's *Ridley Walker*, springs to mind as the book I was most

frequently tempted to put aside for its extremely nonstandard text. The novel's first two sentences are: "*On my naming day when I was 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar be parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none agen. He dint make the groun shake nor nothng like that when he come on to my spear he wernt all that big plus he lookit poorly.*" *Ridley Walker* never really does get easy to read. It's set in a post-holocaust England, "long after the end of time, when killer dogs roam England and green rot grows on the rubble of Canterbury, [when] ... people dig for old iron and talk of lost cleverness, of boats in the air and pictures on the wind." [Dust jacket text] I didn't put it aside, though, but read it through and was glad I did. Nevertheless, I did feel relieved that not many other novels seriously attempt to use an extrapolated version of future English.

I've occasionally invested the time — with *Ridley Scott* and *Clockwork Orange*, and books like these — to immerse myself in a different world with alien voices. Usually my reading speed gradually increases (not with *Ridley*, though), and if it's a good book, by the end of the novel, I'm cruising along at a respectable speed. But I'm still reading in a different way than I usually do. Normally, I don't hear each word in my head as I read. I scan whole phrases and sentences in one visual lump. In order to read non-standard English, I need to read each word individually, I have to "hear" each word, one at a time, in my head, because the graphic glyph of the word no longer instantly communicates a meaning to me. I have to listen to the word my mind speaks, translate that sound into the traditionally spelled word, and then go on to the next word. (Your spelling style obviously works that way too: it presumes that the reader is verbalizing each word in their head as they read and is paying attention to what each word sounds like.) For a visual reader like me, reading this way is slow-going. On the other hand, I must confess that slow reading has occasionally provided me with a luxuriously sensual experience. For instance, last year I read *Beloved* and enjoyed the language so much, that I schemed to find time and places where I could read it out loud to myself, rather than zooming fast to the end at my normal reading speed. What a wonderful time I had!

I'm sure that if enough people chose to use phonetically logical spelling in their writing, I would gradually get used to it. My ability to recognize the visual appearance of the differently spelled words would gradually improve so that I could resume my normal speed. But that presumes that the people who

decided to join this revolution would be able to agree upon the same spelling of all words. Your solution, Art, is to “simply write the homogenized English of Walter Cronkhite or Tom Brokaw.” But to someone whose normal dialect is very different from TVNewsIdiom, the contortions of spelling according to that standard would be just as illogical as you currently feel when dealing with words spelled according to historical standards. A person from Iowa who always pronounces the word “wash” as if it were spelled “warsh” would continue to have to remember the arbitrary spelling of TVNewsIdiom. And of course, we can all think of lots of examples of dialects that vary extremely from TVNewsIdiom English. We here in Wisconsin would have to remember that TVNewsIdiom includes an unused “L” in the word, Milwawky. Or perhaps you would decree that place names should be spelled according to local pronunciation. In that case everyone would have to learn to recognize “Norlinz,” etc., despite the fact that these places are pronounced differently non-locally. Basically, what this new, phonetically logical spelling system would become is a new written language. Much of it would feel just as illogical to people with different dialects as the current language does to you. In the end, few would agree that spelling revisions adequately echoed the real pronunciation of most words. In addition, the new version of English would mirror class differences even more starkly than it presently does.

Scott and I had a conversation the other day about this. Scott reads slower than I do. He says he’s never been able to speed read, he thinks, because he “hears” each word in his head as he reads. I wonder if the ability to speed-read relies somewhat on a capacity to read visually rather than verbally and to absorb chunks of text rather than individual words? (On the other hand, he’s much, much better than I am when it comes to absorbing and remembering information delivered out loud.) In school, my main learning method was to take extensive notes. It wasn’t really necessary for me to go back and study those notes. As with Lyn Paleo, it was the act of writing them down and seeing them that helped me to absorb the information. In fact, maybe the reason that traditional spelling ticks you off so much is that you are a verbal reader, and you are constantly noticing the conflict between what you hear in your head and the spelling of the individual words.

You asked about my route to Guanajuato, Mexico. I’m sorry, but I can’t really answer your questions. We traveled through Mexico almost entirely at night and

slept through our ride. A few times I lifted the curtain and peered out into the night and sometimes I thought I could see looming mountains, but it was too dark to be sure. You’re right that according to the map, we must have traveled through some incredibly scenic areas. I wish I could have seen the countryside, but that’s how the Mexican’s have arranged their bus system. Long, direct routes are all run during the night. The route we took between Leon and Guanajuato doesn’t appear on any US maps or atlases that I’ve seen. Our taxi took us on roads through sparsely populated areas, on two-lane highways, but the route was fairly direct.

We never planned to go down to Mexico City at all; we spent all our time in the area of Guanajuato. We only had 10 days for our trip and none of us was interested in going to the capital city.

© Lisa Hirsch

I’m sorry to hear about Donna’s car accident. What does “subclinical traumatic brain injury” mean? I hope she’s doing a lot better now.

Congratulations on the General Cleanup and Purge of Everything. We’ve been in our house for 10 years now, and have never done one of those. Like you, I’ve tended to do massive purges whenever I move, but it’s been a long time since we moved and in fact it may never happen again. Our house probably desperately needs to be purged.

The participants of what I think of as competitive conversations may not view them that way, but the result is often the same. I get a distinct sense that participants lose points if they haven’t been able to keep up with the conversation, and are treated with less respect than more competitive talkers.

Well yes, I think I knew that there was only one *real* New Yorker’s View of the World. But having tried out the lens once, it is always available to the imagination from other viewpoints. New Yorkers aren’t the only ones who lose perspective of the world from the closeness of their own.

Yes, you can turn that automatic smiley face maker off in MSWord. Try the Tools/Autocorrect menu.

Thanks very much for providing the text to Janet and Matt’s Wedding Ceremony. I really, really liked the paragraph that read: *“Matt and Janet are about to make some serious promises to each other. They’ve already lived these vows to a greater extent than most couples who wed. They’re not making new promises to each other. They are affirming a bond*

and a commitment that already exists in their lives." Thank you.

It's interesting that you compare learning to appreciate Austen and Wagner. I don't know if I will ever learn to appreciate Wagner; certainly I'm not willing to sit through the dozens of listenings that you recommend. But the first time I felt an emotional reaction to opera did have something in common with the way I finally learned to appreciate Jane Austen. I was recovering from flu at home, still too unsteady to read, and listening to the radio, when I began to listen to the Saturday opera on NPR. This happened at least 25 years ago. Normally, I would have switched it off but I was feeling too weak to get up and do that, so I ended up listening to *Madame Butterfly*. I didn't spend any time worrying about the fact that I couldn't understand the words, and somehow the music got into my head edgewise and I was surprised to find myself caught up in the emotion of the story and the characters. I realized that I had found the trick to listen to the voices as if they were musical instruments and not get tripped up on my frustration at not being able to understand the words. Similarly, I found an appreciation for Austen after reading her again, for the first time, so to speak. I'd tried reading *Pride and Prejudice* when I was in high school. Fixated upon the idea that the main character should be the person who rebels from authority, who does interesting, exciting things outside of society's circle, I ignored Elizabeth and focussed instead upon her rebellious younger sister. I missed the point of the novel entirely and was confused when the younger sister's situation fizzled so miserably and that boring older sister of hers kept getting all the author's attention. I didn't notice Austen's wit either. Reading Austen again only a couple years ago was an entirely different experience, because I let go of my expectations and let Austen's voice speak to me. It seems that for any art of quality, it's important to let go of as many of one's expectations as possible and see or hear what's really being offered.

© Kimberly Cline

Congratulations and what a great way to let people know about your new house! I checked out the web page and took the tour. Thanks. It looks like a great house. Of course I had to brush away my first very Midwestern thought when I saw the picture of your house from the outside on its corner lot: "Oh-oh, corner lot. A lot of snow shoveling." Have you figured out yet what that strange hallway is about? Another

question occurred to me as I read about how you're financing the house with Shannon's parents' help, and how you're going to be technically renting from them. Is your rent payment going to contribute to a cumulative down-payment, when (eventually) you and Shannon are able to buy it from his folks? Are you and Shannon going to draw up some sort of contract to protect each of your investments?

Having opinions and making judgements seem like two very different things to me. I can have an opinion about something that doesn't have anything to do with any individual person or group of people. But I make judgements only about specific cases, specific people or specific groups. I can even have an opinion that is contradicted by my own judgement on the same subject. For instance, I hold the opinion that the world would be a better place if people in the US restricted themselves reproducing only once in their lives. On the other hand, I might know someone who is having their second or third or whatever child and still feel neutral or even happy for that person. Here's an extreme example: I demand that people who have moral objections to abortions for themselves to nevertheless withhold their judgements with respect to other women's choices. I demand that they separate their opinions from their judgements.

In my mind, an opinionated person is very different from a judgmental person. An opinionated person is able to make fast choices in a vast array of areas *for themselves*. They have an opinion about every campaign issue, every TV show, every civic, environmental and social issue. They may also be quite good about listening to opposing opinions without making judgements about the intelligence, reasonableness or morality of the person who expresses those opinions. But a judgmental person is someone who responds to each person that they meet, to their statements and their actions with "You're wrong/right about that," or "You shouldn't/should do that."

There are lots of other people like us — people who feel immediately comfortable with French but find Spanish very difficult to learn. I suspect that part of the reason I was so much more successful in French than Spanish was that Professor Quintana taught Spanish almost exclusively relying upon spoken exercises. Most of my experience in college French was visual — mostly reading. We did some speaking; but I was incredibly bad at that part. My teacher informed me that I had a Spanish-American tourist accent. But visually, the words came very easily. As I said in a comment this issue to Art, I'm definitely visual reader....

Here's an interesting tidbit about how the Con-

federate flag came to fly over South Carolina's Capitol building:

*Not until a century after the Civil War did South Carolina's white leaders feel the need to display the flag above the Capitol, for reasons that had more to do with the 1960s than the 1860s. In March 1961, as the Civil War centennial celebration began in Charleston, a black member of the New Jersey delegation was denied admission to the headquarters hotel. President Kennedy then transferred the meeting to a nearby naval base, whereupon the South Carolina delegation seceded, holding its own "Confederate States Centennial Conference," with the Confederate flag prominently displayed. A year later, the flag was mounted above the state Capitol as a gesture of defiance against the civil rights movement. To the flag's previous association with slavery was now added a connotation of racial segregation. — Eric Foner, *The Nation*, 2/14/2000*

You definitely brought me up short with your question to Lyn about whether there is a written version of the insensitive "Oh yeah, me too!" conversational style. I've certainly heard this sort of thing and have sometimes been offended by someone who barely lets me begin to voice an opinion or describe an experience before they grab the conversational reins and drive the conversation to their own opinions or experiences. I recently went to dinner with a large group of people (including no one in this apa, just to assure you all that I am not referring to a dinner shared with *you* at Potlatch) and finally just gave up trying to talk. This one person responded to anything and everything said at the table, often before the speaker was finished talking; she would then change the subject before anyone else could respond. I was furious.

But I'd never thought of the possibility that this sort of bad manners happens on paper too. Well, in one respect, it can't. Everyone has the time and space to say all of what they want to say. You can't interrupt someone in an apa. But if the other parts of this kind of behavior can happen on paper and if some people are irritated by it, I might be guilty of bad apa manners. Often, maybe even most of the time, my comments to people in this apa take the form of a description of a parallel experience in my own life. Sometimes I try to make a comparison or draw a conclusion or make a suggestion, but sometimes it's just an attempt to say "I've felt that way, too." So I'll be curious as to how people react to your question.

I enjoyed the exercises on class inferences. Funny. But what's a "category X" person?

© Elise Matthesen

Excellent comment to Jane about not making unwarranted generalizations from the fact that certain things failed between Luke and herself!

You surprised me in your compliment about my Mexican trip report by saying that you'd like to hear it read aloud. I've written some things in the past that I tried to orchestrate by ear, reading my writing aloud as I wrote, and trying to get it to read like a story I might tell out loud. But this Mexican trip report wasn't written that way. I'm intrigued since I'd kind of like to read one or two things of mine at WisCon. It never would have occurred to me to consider this.

I seem to have made several people's hair hurt by my rash diagnosis of an "inner child." I never read any of the pop psych books on the subject when they were all the rage, and probably also missed the cultural backlash against the term. Sorry about that; hope your hair feels better soon. After hearing Ellen Klages read a few of her stories out loud, it just seemed to make sense to me.

Thanks very much for sharing the letter you sent to your friend. You're an amazing writer and a totally amazing person. At first, I pitied the poor minister who I imagined was dealing with some fairly mundane expectations when you sat down to talk to him. He probably assumed that you would have any of a number of the usual problems he'd listened to at that desk over the years, and was caught completely off-balance by your piercing honesty and openness. Maybe he was expecting a discussion of family problems, relationship problems, stress, whatever, and instead your pain lashed him with poetry and beautiful/terrible images. I imagine that few people would have been ready to or capable of giving you what you needed at that moment. I think only you were capable of doing what needed to be done and I'm glad you had the strength and courage to let in your BigSelf.

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Like the papers that covered the WTO protests in Seattle, our local press was fairly balanced in its coverage of the students' occupation of the Chancellor's office. I kind of think the reporters are feeling a sort of nostalgia for the days of their youth.

© Jane Hawkins

It was pretty nice seeing all those celebrations on New Year's Eve Day, wasn't it? Maybe I'm paranoid, but I rather think that the TV networks wouldn't have put aside so much airtime to cover the "Changing of the Digits" (excellent phrase!) if it were not for the fact that they expected to fill that time with images of violence and mayhem. But as it turned out, there were no disasters to cover, so they had to show us the parties.

It's a good sign, I think, that you find Steve's world-shifting sad rather than painful. Ironically, the fact that he is obviously not causing you pain anymore is probably one of the things that draws him back to you, not to mention the fact that you pay more attention to Sam than to him.

What a great story about Sam and the Pokemon cards! I think you should take some of the credit as one of the people that is setting Sam such a good example.

© Lyn Paleo

Another stunning zine, Lyn. Thank you. The story of your relationship with your sister/brother really touched me. And your recognition of the family process of praise-slap is a sharp insight. Does knowing this is going on inside you — avoid the slap by avoiding the praise — help you short-circuit the process? It seems to me that you must have continued to get some reinforcement for this process after you left home, or you would have gradually gotten over your fear of praise (no?). Do you think that other institutions and people in your life have slapped/praised you for inappropriate "showing off"?

It seems to me that with Eric, all you can do is assure him that you love him and admire him for his own skills and self. You don't think that he'd be happy if you were somehow able to diminish yourself so as never to threaten him in any comparison, do you? Part of the work ahead for you and Eric, has got to be Eric's work. I really admire you for all the energy you have and continue to put into your relationship with Eric and hope that you can eventually reclaim some of the good feelings you remember from your childhood with Susan. I hope, too, that you succeed in preventing Paula from institutionalizing Eric.

I'm with you on the choice of a border collie for a dog. I just met one a few months ago. A co-worker brought her dog, Annie, to the office to meet us all, and it was love at first sight. What a great, *smart* dog! Linda has brought Annie in a few times now, and I've

gone over to visit once. The other day, Annie was visiting the office at the same time another co-worker had dropped by with her new baby. I was offering to dog-sit Annie if Linda went away for a weekend or something, and the new-mom co-worker snapped at me, "why haven't you ever offered to baby-sit?!" She was joking, I think. I hope. In any case I pretended like I thought she was joking and we all had a good laugh. Ho ho.

Your description of the upper class woman at the WisCon panel caused me to scribble "showing off" in the margin next to your comment. First of all, I agree with you that this person was exhibiting bad manners, but I wonder if you responded with additional anger because she was going so much further over the "showing off" line that you have taught yourself to carefully toe.

You figured out exactly what I meant when I described "conversation blocking" for Scott. This is the way it usually happens. Scott begins to tell a story that I recognize as an amusing or interesting one. He pauses between sentences, or simply fails to keep the floor when some part of what he has already said sparks a comment from someone else. At that point I might interrupt the interrupter and say, "Oh wait, you've got to hear the rest of this story. It's really funny." Alternately I might wait for that person to finish, and then say "You were going to make a point about XXX, weren't you Scott? Wait till you hear this! I couldn't believe it when Scott told me about this thing."

For a paragraph and a few moments I felt like I was reading a science fiction story in your zine.... I'd never before heard about San Francisco "informal car pools." Since reading about it in your zine, I've asked another Bay Area person about them. Peter Hudson was rather stunned, I think, that practically the first thing I asked him about when I saw him here in Madison was about informal car pools. (Peter was visiting Jim and Diane for their cumulative 100th Birthday celebration.) You'll be happy to know that I've decided that you're not pulling my leg, but I'm still fascinated by the idea that it happens. Does the fact that three strangers get into a car driven by another stranger defuse the potential danger of the situation?

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I'd love to see your trip Acapulco and Mexico City trip report.

—Jeanne Gomoll