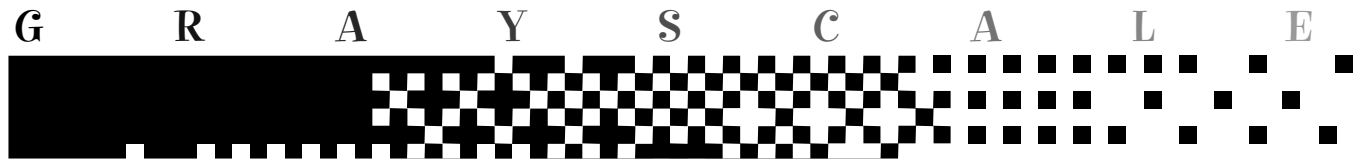


The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #29, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #269, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

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The calendar hurtles us toward the end of the year. I just hope it doesn't end with a "splat."

Scott's and my enthusiasm for home-improvement continued unabated through the fall. In addition to the new roof and the refurbished bathroom which we did in the spring and summer, we decided to replace our old garage doors before the season of freezing and heaving, which in the past few years has made it impossible to park our car in the garage. (The doors opened outward rather than up, and when the ground beneath the driveway froze, the driveway bulged and blocked the doors.) Now we have garage doors that roll upward. Protecting our car from the elements and pushing the snow blower out of the garage will be a lot easier this winter.

We had some junk trees (mostly box elders) along our fence line cut down. They had grown beyond our tools' capability of dealing with them. Now that I know how much it costs to hire people to cut trees down, we'll do a better job keeping an eye out for new shoots.

And a few weeks ago I decided to tackle the bookshelf project. An embarrassing number of months ago I bought two unfinished bookshelves (7 feet tall, oak) and they've been languishing on our porch ever since, waiting for me to find time to sand, stain and varnish them. I took a few Fridays off in November, and finally got the work done. They look great. But after I moved the cookbooks out of boxes (where they've been stored ever since the new refrigerator eliminated the cookbook shelves in the kitchen), rearranged and alphabetized our books on the existing and new shelves, and thinned the collection ... it turned out that we now have *just enough* space to accommodate them all in single rows. And I swear, I really did thin out my collection. My general rule is that books get thinned if I can't remember what they were about, have no interest in reading them again to find out, and do not think I will ever recommend them to anyone. Out it goes, to the used book store, donated to various groups, or simply given away. I accumulated three boxes of books to get rid of, but it turned out we still weren't able to leave as much "growing room" on shelves as I'd hoped. I should probably think about ordering another bookshelf fairly soon considering how long it took me to actually sand/stain/varnish these new shelves. But still, it all looks great now and I feel pleased whenever I look at the shelves.

And finally, yesterday, I did some painting in the kitchen that I'd been meaning to do for several months. Picture me dusting off my hands, looking very pleased with myself. This flush of pride lasts only a moment until I remember the very long list of things I've got on my list to do before the end of the year....

I promised my friend Tracy that I'd be free in November to do some design work on a special publication project for next year's Corflu 20, which will be held in Madison. And of course I need to start working on our holiday cards/New Year's invitation soon. Unfortunately, the red phosphors in my monitor have gone on strike, so it's impossible right now for me to design anything in color using my home computer. I'm looking around for some other solution than buying a brand new monitor, and hoping I won't actually have to buy a new computer too. My monitor is the old kind that used to be the only kind to which Macs could connect (with its Red, Blue, and Green video cables). And my computer, a

Mac G3 is apparently the last Mac model that required that kind of monitor. I doubt that they're making these monitors anymore and even if they do, I really don't want to buy one that I'll have to replace again when I eventually upgrade my computer. On the other hand, I'm not ready to lay out cash for a whole new system right now. I can get a fairly cheap, good used monitor from my brother, so I'm hoping there's such a thing as an adapter that will allow me to connect it to my G3. In the meantime, I'm probably going to have to work on my color design projects at work. (UPDATE: I just discovered that there IS just such an adaptor, and I will pick it up today or tomorrow.)

Scott and I spent a day in Chicago last week. Well actually we spent half of the day traveling to and from Chicago through terrible traffic, and it wasn't even rush hour. We drove down on Thursday morning, got into town only an hour before curtain time at the Lyric Opera to see a matinee showing of *Sweeney Todd* (with Bryn Terfel, as Sweeney and Judith Christin as Mrs. Lovett), and then took a walk and had dinner in the theater district. We had a lovely time. The music was great, the singing extraordinary, and anyway, I love Sondheim.

© CWD Update

According to a very small article in the newspaper recently, the three deer hunters who died of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, did NOT get it from eating deer meat. But it was a very small article and it did not explain how this conclusion was reached. I am skeptical.

The Wisconsin two-week open gun deer hunting season just closed, and more hunters registered than expected. So that was good. But there were way fewer deer heads collected than were requested. Hunters mostly didn't want to give up their deer heads (which is the only part of the deer from which tissues can be extracted that give the most reliable data for CWD). Nevertheless, we got enough for a statistical sampling, and we're waiting for the results to come in from the laboratories now. It should be a few weeks, possibly a few months, before we get much information.

© Jane Hawkins

I sure am glad to hear that your mysterious illness has gone away. Here's hoping it stays away. I think I asked you on the phone about whether your blood iron levels had sunk and you said no. Iron deficiency has been my major experience with unexplained fa-

tigue. About 30 years ago, right after I'd graduated from college, I began to feel tired all the time and also my joints began aching. My doctor suspected rheumatoid arthritis, but after the blood tests came back, he said I had abnormally low amounts of iron in my blood and suggested that I start taking a vitamin supplement with extra iron. That eliminated all my symptoms almost immediately and my doctor speculated that my body wasn't very good at extracting iron from food. I wasn't covered by insurance at the time and decided that my curiosity about what had happened wasn't worth the expense of satisfying it. Since then I've repeated this story to a couple other doctors and have gotten the distinct impression that they don't think it is a credible possibility for a body to be unable to process iron from vitamin pills but not from food. Nevertheless, I've stopped taking daily vitamin pills once or twice and the symptoms returned, so I've stuck with the regimen. There are some things that I don't mind staying mysterious, as long as they're not causing problems.

Congratulations on the new abs!

Has Phyllis noticed that you've started calling her by name? I'm glad that you're feeling good about calling Barbara mother, that you have someone in your life that can give you this kind of relationship. I described your solution to my sister Julie, who is having her own problems separating the mother-that-is from the mother-she-wants, and Julie says she's going to try it when she's talking *about* (as opposed to situations in which she's talking *to*) mom.

It was lovely to see you shine with joy as you stood up on that podium and we all gave you a standing ovation! And I'm very glad that the puzzle that was/is WisCon programming is such fun for you!

Sounds like Sam is investigating the possibilities of playing you and Judy off one another. Perhaps your confrontations on some matters gave him the idea, on the other hand don't all kids eventually try it with their parents? It seems like a good idea not to let him think he can get away with being rude to either one of you in front of the other. I hope Judy is equally firm when and if the situation is reversed.

© Janet Lafler

It must have been excruciatingly painful to record all the details and your reactions to the end-stage of your pregnancy. I have no doubt that it's an incredibly good thing for you to have done this work — recording and examining and finding your balance. But I wonder if you weren't tempted to hide from it all for a while. Thank you for sharing it with us. And again, I'm so sorry for your loss.

© Ian Hagemann

Wow! Good for you for doing all that bicycling! Your actual accomplishments are more impressive than some people's goals (mine for instance) and you should give yourself more than a few pats on the back for your achievements and maybe fewer self-criticisms for having failed to do more.

The snow season is upon us here in Wisconsin, and I refuse to commute to work by bike when there's ice on the roads and the streets narrow between snowdrifts. It's just too scary. The first shovel-worthy snows have fallen and I've started riding a stationary bicycle a friend gave me years ago. I've got it up in my bedroom and I've been riding for a half hour right after I get up. It's been feeling really good. Unfortunately it's not a very good bike (Huffy brand) and I just stripped a bolt essential to the friction mechanism. The bike isn't worth fixing; it's a really cheap model, but now that I know I will use it regularly, I've decided to go shopping for a better one. I hope to pick one up this week, maybe a used model, and continue biking through the winter. That should make it much easier when I start biking again next spring; I'm crossing my fingers that I'll avoid those annual spring saddle sores.

I hope your new relationship with Patience works out well. (Is her name apt?) It's interesting how your roles have come to resemble traditional male/breadwinner — female/housekeeper roles. It's certainly a good thing that you stay nervous about it. ... It seems to me there are worrisome pitfalls implicit in the situation as you describe it. You are trying to be egalitarian in spite of the difference in your incomes, but Patience will nevertheless risk much more economically than you if the relationship ends. She may come to feel that she needs to give in on issues to you rather than risk losing an affordable place to live. Whether you play that trump card or not, you may find that you are in a position of power and that politics will follow.

© Karen Summerly

Maybe a better metaphor than eating/excretion for your work is quilt-making: You take beautiful scraps from other people's work and stitch them together into a whole that is more beautiful/useful than the pieces alone, and more coherent for your organization of them.

How embarrassing. I've been riding past that strip of prairie for years and, no, I've never learned the name of the individual plants, not even my favorite ones. I have a plan though. Next spring when things warm

up and the prairie stewards plant a new propagation patch, I'll stop on one of my rides home and make a notes from the labels on the hand-lettered wooden paddles besides each of the new plantings. I will report to you next spring!

You wondered what might have happened with my mom and the family photo if I had clearly described to her the work involved right from the start. Well, I suspect she wouldn't have heard me. On the other hand, I also suspect that I would have recognized that familiar blank, irritated look of hers as I tried to explain, and that would have prevented me from assuming that she understood and of later feeling upset if she dismissed the work's value.

© Christina Lake

I'm finding your tales of management melodrama fascinating. But like you, I also much prefer doing the work rather over delegating it. And sometimes that's a definite problem when I can't in fact do all the work I've accepted. At the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), my fellow artists and I make up a "self-directed team" and the way we cope with this problem (which we all share, actually), is to get together for short meetings every couple weeks and lay out our workload for one another. If there are obvious imbalances, the less overburdened one or two artists gang up against the overloaded artist(s) in a very friendly way and make them give up some work. This seems to work out pretty well. The fact that we all have acknowledged "favorite" kinds of work and that those areas don't overlap much, helps too.

All of us have been offered various kinds of promotions over the years into supervisory positions, but none of us has followed up on those offers, because the promotions essentially would have meant not making art anymore. Instead, we would be supervising people who did the actual work, or advising others in the Department on how to get art created, put on the web, or printed. This didn't sound like fun to any of us. But in an institution in which the normal way of improving one's position and increasing one's wages is to promote into jobs supervising people doing work one has never done, our attitude has mystified more than a few of our bosses.

I'm waiting for *Six Feet Under* to start again too and hoping there won't be too much of a gap between the end of *The Sopranos* (next Sunday) and the start of *Six Feet Under*.

Home repair is expensive, that's for sure. I'm crossing my fingers that nothing big needed repair for a couple

years, but we're going to have to replace our car next year, and would like to do some minor things upstairs (patching and re-painting some walls, refinishing floors). Nevertheless I can't easily afford repairs like the big ticket items we did this year.

Broad Universe is a fairly new group, organized first at WisCon 5 in 2000. Here's their description of themselves:

Broad Universe is a group intended to celebrate women's writing and art within science fiction, fantasy, horror, and speculative fiction. We want to do the same as Women Writing the West (WWW) and Sisters in Crime (SinC): to help women writers and artists better promote their work, and let the world know that a lot of great stuff in the genre is written and illustrated by women.

The group grew out of a panel discussion at WisCon 2000 entitled World Domination 101, led by Amy Hanson, Pat Murphy, and Kathleen Massie-Ferch. At this panel, we discussed WWW and SinC and the many incredible things they do for their members — quarterly newsletters, twice-a-year books in print catalogs, staffing tables at bookseller conventions, listserves and chat rooms, yearly conventions (WWW) or breakfasts at conventions (SinC), the Willa Award (WWW), chapbooks on self-promotion and book signings and breaking into the genre (SinC), outreach to writers of color (SinC), outreach to new writers in the genre (SinC), and local chapters (SinC).

Women writers of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and speculative fiction have, by contrast, nothing. One could handwave that WisCon is our yearly convention (although BU is not specifically feminist or anything else), and that the Tiptree is "our" (i.e. "women's") award — but other than that, women writers and artists have...

nothing.

We aim to change that.

We aim to do exactly what these other groups do, only differently. Instead of paper catalogs and newsletters, we plan to stay web-based. It's cheaper, less hassle, and lots more fun.

Right now, our efforts are focused on three areas: a books catalog, a newsletter thingy, and a PR database.

Since that description was written a year ago, this group has become a major presence at WisCon. They manage the book signing table for us; Amy Hanson of BU is spearheading the planning and organization of the Friday "Gathering," and they all do serious work on the professional writing tracks. In addition they've

set up promotional tables at other conventions and organized "Speed Readings" by BU members at WisCon and several other conventions.

Check out their table at WisCon next year if you attend, or look for their table at other cons! Here's their URL: <http://www.broaduniverse.org>

Scott and I will definitely be going to England for Eastercon, though I doubt that we'll be able to travel much further than London. Eastercon's dates are just a little more than a month before WisCon and since Scott is chairing the convention this year, I doubt that we'll be able to stay much longer than a week. In addition, about a week after Eastercon Jane will finish up the program schedule and I want to be back in time to lay out the pocket program book. Maureen Kincaid Speller and Paul Kincaid have invited us to stay with them. I'm hoping to catch up with lots of people in England. It would be great to see you too!

© Arthur Hlavaty

Congratulations on ten years drug free. Re your comments to Lisa on Columbine and the various "explanations" you expected to hear afterwards — did you see Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*? I was pretty impressed by how Moore organized his film — hypothesizing reasons for the huge number of U.S. gun-related killings compared to any other country and checking out his theories in a very entertaining way through the course of the film. He didn't merely assume that gun violence can be predicted by more guns per capita (which turns out not to be true and surprised the hell out of me); he showed that Canadians have a comparable number of guns per person and a far lower gun-murder rate. In fact he used Canadian experiences to cast doubt on several other traditionally liberal assumptions around the issue, like those blaming violent movies and video games. I'm fairly convinced that his conclusion is close to the mark, at least in terms of identifying a major component of the problem. Moore suggests that American TV news — which is how most Americans get their news nowadays — sells itself by selling fear. "If it bleeds it leads." He compares a typical US news show with a Canadian one that typically covers far more news, in a far more comprehensive way, in a much less sensational fashion. The connection between the way US network news and the US political establishment each sells their programs in much the same way is easy to see. They both feed us scary snippets of information that mislead more than enlighten, and are chosen foremost for their ability to make us fearful of the world around

us and more likely to compromise our checkbooks and freedoms to protect ourselves.

Did you see it? What did you think?

I liked Faludi's *Stiffed* too, though in the end I felt that she had captured an accurate interpretation of just a *slice* of the broken process of becoming a man in our culture. I wasn't as impressed as I was with *Backlash*, which I thought was brilliant in how it seemed to encompass such a broad swathe of the 1980s culture. *Stiffed* felt like a *good start*. I do like the fact that her ideas are not simply a set of theories that parallel feminist theory.

© Kerry Ellis

What an adventure you had! A bit scary though! The experience must have increased your self-confidence quite a bit: if you could handle yourself lost in Hong Kong without a translator, late for your ship and without an accurate map, you should be able to handle yourself *anywhere*.

© Donya Hazard White

I'm glad to hear that things continue to go well for Amber. Are you worried that Jay may resort to violence if he continues to be frustrated by the legal system? Or do you expect him to gradually accept the new situation?

I do think travel is a good way to get perspective on life, especially after difficult times in life. Do you remember Joni Mitchell's song, "Amelia"? I always think of that song in terms of traveling and healing/changing.

*The drone of flying engines
Us a song so wild and blue
It scrambles time and seasons
if it gets through to you*

© Douglas Barbour

The bathtub looked that way AFTER the carpenter had started banging on it. The cracks are the products of many hours of very loud, very strenuous destruction. Although it was not up to code, our bathtub looked fine ... until the banging started.

Hiroshi told me over and over how much fun she was having (and had, later in emails). But I've lost track of her now. She moved to Vancouver and changed her email address several times, and didn't send me the latest one. You wouldn't happen to have it would you Doug? I'd like to urge her to come to WisCon.

The Gwyneth Jones books I was talking about were published in England. I don't think they're available in the US yet. But you can easily get UK books, can't you?

© Lyn Paleo

I sympathize with you about your body's treasons and frustrating interactions with medical institutions. What with that and the seemingly endless stream of bad world news, I can see why you are feeling cranky about it all. You want your body to be well. You want your doctors to offer reliable help. You want your country to act responsibly. All these seem like reasonable desires.

The news alone is enough to make us all cranky. Yesterday I stopped in the cafeteria and looked at the newspaper display while I stood in line. Bush was warning us (again) that things didn't look good for resolving things peacefully in Iraq because it was only a week before the deadline and Saddam had not yet submitted his weapons report. "Great!" I snorted to the person next to me, without looking to see who it was. "Good idea! The Internal Revenue Department should start threatening the lives of taxpayers who still haven't submitted their taxes as by April 8." Luckily the person standing next to me agreed.

I hope you're feeling a little less cranky these days, or at least that you can find some relief by sharing your frustrations and anger with your friends.

I've found more evidence to support Lisa's theory that moving objects helps to eliminate clutter. A few weeks ago, my bookcase finishing project morphed into a book collection reorganization project. Scott moved the new bookcases into the house. Books had to be removed from some other bookcases in order to rearrange the furniture. Then I had to move ALL the books in order to use the new shelf space and retain the alphabetical flow of books around the rooms, from bookcase to bookcase. So, of course, I dusted the shelves and books while I was at it. I also started thinning books since I hadn't done a major thinning in more than 10 years.... One thing led to another; the moving part of the process catalyzed everything else.

© Elizabeth Fox

I'm glad to hear that Pat's dad is doing better. Hope the trend has continued.

And good for you for finding a new hobby and group with whom to enjoy it! The knitting guild sounds like great fun. Another flavor of fandom, hmm?

Yeah, I agree with you, the use of 9/11 references in advertising got positively repulsive, though I think it's ebbing a bit now. Sadly, advertising has turned it into something of a cliché. A friend, (Cynthia) and I realized last summer that we had birth dates that straddle 9/11. She was born on 9/12 and I was born on 9/10, so we decided to throw a small not-9/11 birthday dinner party for ourselves. (There were just 10 guests, so this was also not-a-Cronecon party!) I made a Photoshop collage invitation for the event and included some sarcastic text saying that the day we couldn't eat cake and ice cream, wear funny hats, and blow those little paper roll-up noise-makers, would be the day terrorists had won. Our dinner guests seemed to enjoy that.

True, the word geek has evolved in surprising ways over the years. But that's what happens with language, right? I think our culture has needed a word to describe the sort of person who gets fixated or obsessed with a narrow subject. I like how the word used to have a rather negative connotation (someone whose life is out of balance because they focus so much of their energy on a subject that is of little interest to anyone else). But then people gradually realized that it's all a matter of perspective depending on the subject, and that many of us have our geekish tendencies. Once you see yourself reflected in a term, it's hard to keep its negative meaning. Geekishness is, I think, a kind of behavior that has been made more common by the availability of all sorts of information on the Internet. There are simply more subjects about which one can easily accumulate a lot of arcane information. Anyway, the need for the word created a sort of linguistic vacuum, I think, and the meaning of "geek" expanded and warped to fit the space.

Speaking of geekish behavior, I recently attended a Madison convention called Filmcon, which is run by Eric Larson, who I've known for years and years since the days when he was a teen and a *Star Wars* geek. He's now a pleasant young man who works for an advertising firm doing high end multi-media art. But his love of *Star Wars* continues, and it informs much of Filmcon, which is primarily an educational forum, surprisingly enough. Eric brings in technicians who have created electronic special effects for Hollywood and independent films. He brings in artists, editors, musicians, prop specialists, and other film-making types not often found at the typical media conventions. He not only brings them in, but sets them up with equipment and lengthy workshop slots, so they can actually demonstrate how they do their work. Eric also works closely with the Madison Area Technical College where he himself got his training, and the

teachers there encourage their film-making students to attend Filmcon and learn from experts in the field. This year, some of the students who attended the first Filmcon workshops brought their own films to show and did their own demos to the attendees of Filmcon 3. I was impressed and not thinking at all about the geek factor here, because doing art for films is close to my own preferred flavor of geekishness.

A lot of *Star Wars* fans also attend Filmcon. They are attracted by Eric's presence and connections and to some of the media panels at the con, and so there are lots of media-related costumers and even a *Star Wars* trivia contest. That's the thing I was thinking about when I mentioned geekish behavior.

My brother Dan is also an avid *Star Wars* fan, in spite of Lucas' most recent two films. (In fact most of these hard core fans have little good to say about *SW* 1 and 2. But you get the feeling that they have immersed themselves so completely in the *Star Wars* world, that they couldn't conceive of *not* following the films and compulsively learning all their details.) So anyway, Dan is a fan, and Dan came to Filmcon, and Dan and a group of his friends entered the trivia contest as a team. Scott and I decided to look in at the con for a few hours and sat in the audience during what was advertised as the first of three trivia contests that weekend. Easy, film-related questions were scheduled for the first contest, much harder questions for the second, and mostly book-related questions were planned for the third. The guy everyone in the room acknowledged as the most knowledgeable *SW* trivia master had researched the questions and sat on the podium along with Eric and another guy who asked the questions in entertaining ways and kept the proceedings fun for the audience.

Right away it was obvious that no team would be eliminated in this first round if only the easy questions were asked. The seasoned trivia players rarely hesitated before shooting back their confident answers. Who was the first owner of the *Millennium Falcon*? That one got answered, bang, before the second syllable of *Millennium* had been uttered. I might have gotten a couple answers if I had been playing, but would never have gotten points for them if speed had decided the winner. The trivia game organizers huddled and then announced that there would only be TWO rounds and that they would open the envelope containing the harder questions immediately. Subsequently, we heard them say several times, "OK, get ready, here comes a REALLY, REALLY hard question!" And the players laughed and answered casually, swatting the questions away like troublesome flies. The game masters started to sweat. No team had missed yet. No team was in danger of being

eliminated, even though they had changed the rules again so that only one missed question would now sink a team. Finally the game masters were forced to open the third envelope, and still the players smirked. One of the players yelled, “some of us LIKE the books, you know!”

Finally one team missed an answer, the round ended, and the organizers scuttled off, promising to come up with some REALLY, REALLY hard questions.

Afterwards I thought about the fact that no matter how detailed a fictional world is made by an author or film-maker, it is in fact a *finite* world. And if someone makes it their mission in life to memorize its parts, they can, simply because its parts were created by one or a few individuals. Maybe that’s the allure of getting geekish over a limited subject area: the possibility that one CAN become an expert and that theoretically one could really learn everything there is to learn about that subject. I remember as a teenager thinking that I might be able to read every science fiction book published. Later I thought I should be able to keep up with every feminist SF book published. That’s all doomed, though, if your chosen field keeps growing and changing. And actually I think I like it that way myself. Like you I don’t see myself as much of a geek (though I suspect that I am perceived as such by non-fans or even people who don’t read much, and don’t realize how very much in my field I am ignorant).

If you had been here in Wisconsin these past few weeks, you would have seen lots of dead deer tied onto vehicle roofs. Unusually, you wouldn’t have seen the animal rights protesters as often as you might have in previous years. They used to tie human dummies, dressed in blaze orange hunting garb onto the tops of their cars and ride around town with them.

Re your comment to Debbie about “strong women characters” in mystery fiction, what did you think about Nicola Griffith’s character in *The Blue Place* and *Stay*? Did you read those? I hardly ever read mystery fiction, but I did read those because of their author. I thought Nicola was purposely dealing with the false value of purely physical strength in those novels, possibly because she is so focused on her own ebbing strength in real life.

Nope, I don’t think it would have been possible for Tolkien to live a totally male-insular life nowadays. He was married, had children, and that alone would, I think, have provided him with a very different experience for him nowadays. In addition, a modern university experience would no longer be a monastic one: he would have to deal with female colleagues, assistants, staff, and students. The fiction and critical works in

his field would include many more works authored by women. Even in everyday life, store clerks, police officers, his children’s teachers, and famous people would all tend to change the gendered flavor of his world. Everything would be different, even if he did all in his power to isolate himself.

© Vicki Rosenzweig

I’m glad to see you arguing against the idea that the families of WTA victims “own” the site’s memorial. I agree with you.

So I’m intrigued by your mysterious hints about your research work and the non-disclosure agreement. Will you tell us more eventually?

Thanks for the online “snapshots.” I really enjoyed them, especially the story about you and Velma and the woman who was robbed in the park.

© Michael Sturza

Though I agree with your understanding of many of the problems of our society, I don’t think I agree with you entirely that the solution is to adopt a socialist political system. I also see decay. But more and more I think that any and all political systems create bureaucracies whose members’ major concern is to preserve their part in it. Thus many Catholic Church clergy are more concerned with covering up scandal and preserving the power of their archdioceses. Corporate CEOs care more about their retirement prospects than the survival of their company. Candidates and politicians are more concerned with collecting money from lobby groups to shore up their job security than they are in the civil service they have sworn to do. Managers and supervisors are more concerned with retaining staff and funding than they are of actually doing the work for which they are responsible. And world leaders are more concerned with grabbing and accumulating power than solving critical problems. I think similar things would happen even if we switched from monopolistic capitalism to some flavor of socialism. (Though I agree with you that there are lots of aspects of socialism that are intrinsically more humane.) But I think greed would still tend to warp the idealism of any system so that individuals and groups pay more attention to protecting a structure that benefits them the most, regardless of how it harms others, or in fact collides with the purpose of their job. It seems to me that the bigger our society gets, the less well its parts work because of all the ways the system enables only the entrenched, scared or greedy to survive. It seems

to me that most of the useful solutions to the decay around us get thought up at a grass-roots level. Individual companies changing the way they do business, groups of individuals organizing new institutions to deal with specific, local problems of poverty, infrastructure and injustice. I sometimes despair when I think of how many huge problems — war, the environment, genocide — really need to be dealt by national and international institutions. And I wonder if it's possible to create institutions that are not doomed to fail.

Sigh Like Lyn, I've been getting really grumpy lately.

So here I am disagreeing with you again. I don't see smoking as an individual rights issue. If people sucked up the smoke and absorbed it all into their tissues or mainlined it into their bloodstream with a hypodermic, then smoking would be an individual rights issue. But that's not the case, no more than the owners of a factory that spews toxic fumes through its smokestacks should be able to claim a "right" to do that.

Have you seen *Bowling for Columbine* yet? I wrote about it in a comment to Arthur above.

It IS amazing news how Christopher Reeve is beginning to feel sensations! I would really like to know if the stem cell research that looked so promising for exactly this kind of work is responsible for Reeve's progress. It will be interesting to see how the religious right deals with popular icons like Reeves, and later others, who endorse this science.

© D. Potter

I wish you the best of luck in your job search. Yes, I imagine that scientists will soon have quite a few infected deer-meat eaters whose health they can follow. There are lots of hunters who distrust anything and everything the DNR does, and that includes our response to CWD. Of course, the DNR hasn't actually warned anyone NOT to eat infected deer meat. The DNR says only that no one should eat lymph nodes or brains from an infected deer, because no evidence of the disease has been found in the flesh of those deer. The CWC, however has gone further and suggested that people avoid eating any part of an infected deer. I fear that the state's reluctance to issue stronger warnings has to do with potential lost tourist dollars, not to mention pressure from the cattle and poultry industries who don't want people to start worrying about any kind of meat.

Yes, really. Scott volunteered to chair WisCon 27. He really likes China Miéville. Someone suggested that he could have just volunteered to be China's liaison, but

Scott said no, he had to do this. What a guy!

"The Anvil Chorus," would have been a good description of the noise blasting from our house on the days our bathtub was being demolished. I sometimes wonder if our neighbors thought something demonic was going on. No one called the cops though.

No, the typeface Avedon used in her AWazine wasn't Letter Gothic. It started with the letter "A," I think. Artisan? Advocet? Maybe not. But something like that?? I had a Selectric too with a type ball of that kind, and I always thought of it as Avedon's typestyle. Maybe that's why I think it starts with the letter "A."

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I wish the word "politician" had more of the civil service meaning it used to have and, I hope, will have again. But right now, its meaning to me includes most politicians' ever-present temptation to accept huge wealth from lobbyists. Our system tends to play out a version of the old adage — money corrupts; endless supplies of money corrupts endlessly. Our system requires our civil servants to buy their security and then we recoil when those civil servants are caught paying their debts on the installment plan. I think Al Gore was enmeshed in this corrupt system.

It's amusing how I chose the tiny window of time to buy my optical drive. If I'd waited only a few more months, I probably would have decided on something else. Know anyone who wants a used optical drive and a stack of optical disks?

Sure, I'd like to hear your suggestions for herbal remedies for my fear of hip pain. Thank you.

You asked about my alopecia. I first noticed a quarter-sized bald spot on my scalp in the late 70s, though my hair had been getting obviously thinner through my college years in the early 70s. I managed to hide the bald spots for almost ten years. They would go away; others would appear. None were at the edge of my scalp and all tended to be rather small. But around the time of my brother's death in 1989, huge bald patches started developing and I ran out hastily and bought a not very becoming wig. (At the time, the shock of suddenly losing most of my hair was much diminished by the seeming relative innocuousness of my problem as compared with my brother's.) Now, every summer, I get a lot of patchy hair re-growth. Not nearly enough to get rid of the wig, but it's significantly more hair than in the winter. I watch the research and figure it's possible they'll come up with something to cure alopecia eventually, but until then I can deal with it.

Interesting suggestion of PDF version compatibility. Maybe I saved my *Grayscale* file with 5.0 compatibility, but Debbie still uses the 3.0 version of Acrobat Reader. I thought however, that files made with 5.0 were backward compatible. I'll have to check into this.

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I've been meaning to ask you, Debbie: where did the phrase "Our Own True—" originate as title for *Intercourse* members?

The situation with Steph's parents and your and Alan's interactions in Colorado sound tense indeed. But I honor you for diving into it all and enduring it for Steph's sake. I'm so glad you had the chance to go to Italy and, next year, to Cuba!

How did the chance for a trip to Cuba develop? Are you going with a group?

I admire you for how honorably and intensely you keep the focus of your zine's description of Alan's process and therapy on your own feelings and away from any attempt to speak for Alan. It must be hard sometimes to figure out a way to write openly and yet avoid violating Alan's right to share or not share his own life in print. I wish you both strength and happiness.

Yes, I'd like to see that "strong women characters" panel done at WisCon. I've got to remember to go to Jane's program web page and suggest it!

—Jeanne Gomoll
3 December 2002