

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



This is Grayscale #7, a zine for
Intercourse, and an Obsessive
Press Publication #200 (a
milestone!), from Jeanne Gomoll,
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© Berni Phillips

I was raised Catholic too, though in my case I went straight from that to atheism. Once—before I decided that religions were elaborate fairy tales, while I was still a staunch believer—I temporarily converted some cousins to Catholicism. My family was visiting their family and while the adults played cards upstairs, us kids crowded into one of the cousins' basement bedrooms and talked. Amazingly we talked about religion, and I managed to convince three cousins (all within a couple years of myself in age) that it was blasphemy to believe that God would establish the wrong church by mistake. When Jesus said to Peter: Upon this rock I will build my church, he meant it, I said. If he thought Lutheranism was a better religion, he would have founded *that* instead, and not Catholicism. The next day my cousins told their mom and dad that they were thinking of converting and, perhaps coincidentally, we didn't go back to visit them for quite a long time afterwards... Happily, I lost my urge to proselytize along with my belief in God. The nuns had me quite a bit longer than just through age 6, but they lost me anyway. I see no chance that I will ever return to the church.

Being a nun never tempted me, though I remember attending at least one "recruitment" film each year in grade school with the girls in my class, while the boys went to a different room and watched the priest recruitment films. These films resembled government advertisements for the armed forces (which we also saw a few times), and as we got more cynical about the army and the U.S. government in general, we also started getting skeptical about the religious recruitment films. (It just occurred to me: No wonder the Religious Right is paranoid about gays recruiting kids in the schools; they probably assume that homosexuals have their own recruitment films.)

I'm a little skeptical about what your sister told you about the Catholic church's rule changes regarding the definition of sin. There are lots of Catholics who use birth control, and quite a few priests who are sympathetic to this practice, but as far as I know, the Pope still says it's a sin and according the Catholic Doctrine, what the Pope says is God's truth. One of the most liberal bishops in the whole United States is Milwaukee's Archbishop Weakland, and he gets in trouble all the time by making public, sympathetic statements about birth control and abortion. I expect he will eventually get fired. Why would anyone want to be a Catholic if they didn't accept its major tenets? Why not just get together with others who share one's idea of a good religion and call it something else? Do you think the local San Francisco Catholic community is really a different religion?

© Jim Hudson

Welcome to the apa, Jim? Lists are a "male trait"? I hope not. I write essays using lists once in a while, and the essayist who I copied it from is Gloria Steinem. I very much liked how you used lists to outline your life. Even though I'm more familiar than most people in this apa with how you

and Diane are doing and the process of combining households, I was really interested to hear about some of the difficulties entailed in that process. Mostly what I hear from you in face-to-face conversations is the happy stuff.

Before seeing it referred to all over this apa, I'd never heard of the Myers-Briggs categories. I've done various kinds of training that involved taking tests and locating myself on various XY axis, but the terms you're all using for this particular categorize aren't familiar to me. This is not a request for a short course; I think I've figured it out in context, but I'd appreciate it if folks would spell out the initials for a while until I get the hang of it.

The method that Scott and I use for dealing with money stuff works pretty well for us, and even though we aren't that far apart in income, it's flexible enough, I think, that it would work in any case. We both have a certain sum of money deposited bi-weekly into a joint account from our paychecks. We review the amount needed in the joint account about once a year, because it has to cover our mortgage and all other expenses we define as "joint," i.e., house taxes, utilities, car loan, some subscriptions, Internet provider, cable, the household emergency fund, etc, and those costs change from year to year. The rest of our checks get deposited in our private accounts to be spent as we individually see fit. Right now we pay an equal amount into our joint account. However, if there was enough disparity in our incomes, we could divide it proportional to our incomes.

You wrote *"The award ceremony seems to me to be a big part of doing what they want to do with the awards."* Or am I misunderstanding your point? No, you rephrased it perfectly. That's exactly what I mean. It seems to me that there are some experiences which are not appropriately celebrated by the standard sorts of ceremony we always tend to produce, but at this point, it feels to me like the Tiptree ceremony is still very much part of the Tiptree Award, not an irrelevant capstone.

© Janet Lafler

I'm so sorry to hear about your further health problems. This has been a bad year for you altogether.

When I read your zine in October I got nervous because I was facing what might have been a fairly serious medical problem, too. Fibroids had been mentioned in fact, but my doctor didn't think they were likely in my case. Luckily he was wrong and

that's exactly what it turned out to be, but at the time it was scary.

Early in October, after a mammogram, a lump was discovered in my left breast. (This was, if you recall, "Breast Cancer Awareness Month." There were pink ribbons everywhere. Murphy Brown mimicked my life for a few weeks.) The ultrasound didn't provide good news and so the next step was a biopsy. But because the tumor was so deep, it was decided to remove it completely; so basically I had a lumpectomy. This turned out to be good news: the lump was identified as a fibroid etynoma (which I don't think I am spelling correctly, but I can't find it in the dictionary, so this is what you get.). I stayed in fairly good spirits all through the time of uncertainty. I decided that if it turned out I had cancer, then I'd probably wish I could go back to the time before I knew for sure, and so I was damned well going to enjoy that time. And if it turned out I didn't have cancer, well then, it would be a waste to spend it worrying. The self-hypnosis seemed to work; in fact I was almost entirely convinced that the lump was going to turn out to be benign, so much so that on the day before my surgery, Scott and I went to a party and I had a great time. But I didn't tell anyone except Scott and a co-worker, who I thought deserved some warning in case I ended up dumping a whole lot of unexpected work on her. I didn't want people to worry; but more importantly, I didn't want their worry to infect *me*. So I was determined not to say anything until I knew for sure what was what.

Anyway, the surgery was easy, even though Scott and I had to get up before dawn to get to the hospital on time. I've got a mild allergy to latex and so my surgery was scheduled first because they had to set up a "latex-free" operating room. Local anesthesia was used and I was given a sedative intravenously. The sedative turned out to have an amnesiac factor, and so as the day wore on, I progressively forgot most of the earlier bits. I do recall the doctor telling me the good news while I was still on the operating table, however, and my saying in response, "Oh, you already started?" And I remember asking to see the lump before they rolled me out of the room. It was about the size of my thumb above the last joint. Then it gets very blurry; but apparently Scott and I left the hospital by 10:30 am. My breast pinched a bit when I got home and I took a couple of extra-strength Tylenol, but the mild discomfort didn't seem to call for the percaden the doctor had prescribed. And in fact I never even took another Tylenol. Not a bad experience.

Do you think that your feeling of guilt is connected to the strength you gain by working toward control of your body? Sort of an unfortunate side-effect? I hope you can find a way to keep believing that you are capable of controlling part of your body's processes, but still not beat yourself up over the parts you can't control.

I had a sometimes-difficult time dealing with a similar conundrum around my brother's death. Rick (my brother) and his partner, Danny were both HIV positive. Rick died in 1989 and Danny has lived until just a few months ago without any symptoms. He believes that his positive attitude, and his refusal to think of himself as a sick person has protected him. Maybe it has. If it has, I hope he will be able to hold onto this attitude for many decades. (When Danny developed AIDS this summer, they put him on a cocktail, and he's doing well.) Especially after Rick died, I wrestled with the corollary of this idea: that maybe Rick's *lack* of positive thinking contributed to his death, since he succumbed only a year after he was diagnosed as being HIV positive. I can't believe that. I'm very glad that Danny survives, and I'm even willing to believe that Danny contributes to his own survival by his positive attitude, but I won't believe that Rick *failed* at staying alive. It's a contradiction, I suppose, but I want it both ways. And I think you should be able to have it both ways too: to both believe you can affect your own health for the better, and for some things to be not your fault.

© Kimberly A. Cline

I know what you mean about not doing much writing about a relationship that is going really really well, especially one that features lots of in-depth conversations about the relationship. Looking back on some of the journals I kept in my 20s, I find that I wrote on and on and on when things were not going well. Writing in my journal was obviously a form of self-therapy for me, partially a way to explore unhappy feelings, but mostly a way to work out things to do to change my situation. But there are huge gaps in the records matching the times I got involved with someone with whom I spent a lot of time in deep discussions. Up to now, I haven't written all that much here about Scott and I, though I am eventually going to try to answer Debbie's question about the promises Scott and I have made to one another. I also intend to write a little bit about my feelings about monogamy, but these essays will probably wait for a future zine, because I'm writing this rather late.

Well, I hope you are enjoying yourself and that things are working out well for you and Zed.

Hmm, RSI. . . I've never heard of that. There are all too many strange syndromes and maladies that I'm getting familiar with lately, and I don't much like it. I hope you are making progress in fighting it.

© Elizabeth Fox

Your writing about the first stages of house-buying brings back memories. It wasn't that long ago that Scott and I bought our house and we had the experience you say that you are worried about — of being approved for a bigger loan than we thought we could afford. Since then, we've talked to other home owners and all have had that same experience. The bank pretty much assumes you will use practically your entire income to support a mortgage. We're very glad that we stuck with our own estimate of what we could afford rather than the bank's. Are the house prices in the Bay Area such that you are afraid you'll have to spend up to the limit of what the bank is willing to give you?

Your experiences with your family and loans is familiar too. Scott and I thought we'd have to go to our families for help to make the down payment for our house, although in the end we chose a lower down payment rather than do that, even though it would have saved us quite a bit in the long run. Scott's family couldn't have afforded to help us, and I really dreaded asking my folks for money. In my family, money means power, not love. This is more my mom than my dad, but he doesn't argue much when she wields that club. Mom gets angry when asked for money, lectures follow, and she never lets the borrower forget that they are in debt. It gets pretty ugly. I remember my mom saying sternly to my sister or brother, "As long as we're paying for your college education, you will abide by our rules..." It's always something for which we kids have had to ask and negotiate; its never offered. A couple years after I'd graduated from college, but before I'd found a good job, I was living month-to-month on temp work income. I had to have an operation and ended up missing a couple weeks of work. Not only could I not afford the hospital bill, but I was in danger of missing a rent payment. My folks came to see me at the hospital and asked about my finances. I told them I had gone to welfare and gotten help to pay the hospital bill. They gave me a blistering lecture on the evils of depending on welfare and then stood there waiting for me to ask for help, but never offered. I watched them get ready to take control of

the situation and decided I did not want to get into that. The next day I asked a friend for a loan to pay my rent and subsisted on oatmeal and popcorn for the next month until I paid it off. So, I was fairly certain I didn't want to ask for help from my folks on our mortgage either. The weird thing was that after Scott and I sounded them out on the possibilities of a loan and then went back to them with the news that we wouldn't need help after all, they tried to convince us to take the money anyway. In my family, things seem to work opposite to the ways they work in yours: I get more love and respect if I do not ask for money, whereas your family shows love by offering. Maybe Pat's family dynamics involve some power plays too, which he was attempting to avoid by not asking for financial assistance?

I'm glad people here are beginning to discuss *The Sparrow*. I've talked to lots of friends about it and even gone to a formal book discussion, but I continue to find this book fascinating to discuss. Your remarks about the big deal Russell made of celibacy, for instance, is certainly a point of view I haven't encountered before. I was raised a Catholic (as was Russell) and remember celibacy being very much a central aspect of my opinion of all the priests and nuns — at least after I'd figured out what celibacy meant. (Before that, I thought of them as sort of a different species.) I think you can gauge the importance that practicing Catholics put on celibacy by the anger so many express when a priest or nun is discovered in or chooses a sexual life with another person. Catholics, I think, give their priests and nuns a huge amount of respect and authority because of their sacrifice of physical intimacy; Catholics feel they have been "cheated" if the priest or nun fails to make good on the bargain struck. I have been impressed by the TV show, *Nothing Sacred's* take on this issue. It feels very familiar to me. Perhaps you never felt a priest's celibacy was important because, as a Protestant, you had never granted a priest implicit authority over you, *just because he was a priest, which he could only be by promising to be celibate*. Which is a healthy thing, I must say; I'm not suggesting you go out and try it. But in any case, I thought Sandoz's struggle with his celibacy and faith made his horror at what happened to him on Rakhat plausible and powerful.

As for why Sandoz didn't just out and out SAY what had happened to him earlier in the book . . . I think that had to do with one of the book's central themes: how we all construct inaccurate pictures of the world based on false assumptions. Jimmy heard Rakhat's music only because he was willing to step

outside the assumptions of radio astronomy. The explorers missed the big picture of predator/herd races because of the assumptions they were making based on Earth ecologies. They showed the Runa how to garden because they assumed it would do no harm. And remember that great scene in the boat with the Father General, with all the "fishing boats" floating nearby? Russell over and over again puts her characters in situations where they and we make assumptions that turn out to be entirely wrong. Sandoz had to struggle through his realization that he'd urged his friends to join him on a expedition that cost all their lives, because he'd assumed the music was angelic, not pornographic. And because he assumed that God was guiding the expedition. At the same time, the priests who questioned Sandoz made assumptions from the information they had about what had happened on Rakhat and were entirely wrong, too.

I agree with you that *The Sparrow* didn't seem to need to be set so far in the future as Russell set it. I understand that the film makers working on the movie feel that way too, and are setting the action in an earlier year than Russell set her novel. Mary says she approves.

Debbie described the Tiptree Award beautifully last issue, but if you want more information, I am can send you a copy of the Tiptree brochure, newsletter and the cumulative list. Just let me know.

That's an interesting question — whether or not belief in God is the operational norm in our culture. I think it is, but have little evidence to back it up. I see parents feeling obliged to provide spiritual training for their children. I never see politicians casually identifying themselves as atheists, though surely some of them are. I notice conversations crumbling to uncomfortable silence when I identify myself as an atheist. And it feels to me that even if most people don't believe in God, that it is still impolitic to admit to it in our culture. Do you think it is regional — e.g., more believers in the South and Midwest than the coasts?

© Tom Whitmore

I surprised myself and found your report on facilitation techniques utterly fascinating. It's funny how, over the years, I've more and more often found myself in situations where knowing how to communicate in formal meetings has become an important skill. That shouldn't be surprising, I know, but somehow it is. Thank you very much.

I'm definitely a task-oriented person. The year I

ran WisCon 20, I tried to make all our meetings productive in some way. ("Getting this DONE," is almost a mantra for me.) Most of the committee work got done in small weekly meetings held at a local brew pub, which was attended by the core of the committee doing the most work. Most of the planning and the hard decisions were made at these meetings. We also had bi-monthly meetings which were attended by more people, including those whose work was more peripheral and those who like to attend meetings because they like meetings — the process orientation folks, I guess. I purposely formalized committee reports at these meetings to such a degree that the reading of these reports took up the biggest portion of the time so that attendees of these meetings couldn't easily micromanage other people's jobs. I tried to make sure that all new business was dealt with first by the individuals who would end up being responsible for it — so that when the business was brought to the general meeting, it already came attached with recommendations from the people who would be working on it.

We put on a fine convention, but . . . One of my goals was also to inspire more local folks to get involved with WisCon, and my style wasn't all that successful in achieving that goal.

© Karen Summerly

Wow, it sounds like you're in an almost impossible situation at work — unable to finish a project to a degree of quality you want without help and getting no help from those around you. Can you force the issue with your co-workers? Could you call a meeting and say, this is the situation... Given the circumstances, I can promise that this part of the work will get done by me. I will need this help and these resources to do the rest. If it is not possible for me to get that help and those resources, I want to give you all a warning as early as possible that this part of the project will not be finished or may be of less than desirable quality. We all need to discuss what that means to all of our work and what we might do as a team to avert a worst case scenario.

Surely some of your co-workers would at least like to have an early warning of problems down the line that they will inevitably have to help solve. And it would help you avert your personal worst-case scenario, i.e., that everyone will blame you not only for problems with the project, but for having failed to warn anyone early enough to do something about it (even if they were purposely ignoring obvious signs of

trouble), thus leaving you with a bad reference....

It's funny reading responses to my description of a violent summer storm while big flakes of snow fall gently outside my window. How's the weather now, you ask. It's colder. I'm still riding my bike to work most days, although if this snow sticks around, I'll probably retire my bike till March and start walking home from work to get some exercise. They say that El Niño will bring us a lot of snow this season. We had one freakish snowstorm in October which gave us about 5 inches of wet, heavy snow that piled up everywhere and broke quite a few branches on our lilac bushes in the back yard. But that snow melted away within days and since then it's been mostly dry, and the average temperature has gradually been sinking from the mid-40s to the mid-30s (F of course). It's warmer than usual; by now we would normally have already had a couple spells of zero or subzero weather, but I'm still comfortable outside most of the time without a hat or gloves. On my bike it's a different story with the wind chill my speed creates. I bundle up with a warm jacket, snowmobile gloves, wool scarf around my neck and a wool band over my forehead and ears. It sounds masochistic, I suppose, but I actually enjoy riding in cold weather quite a lot; it gets me feeling very energized.

I liked your fantasy for a personally meaningful ceremony of congratulations at a workplace. There was a certain Dilbertish quality about your description. But yes, I think you're referring to the same thing I was trying to get to in my complaint about how ceremonies and the accomplishments they celebrate seldom have much real inter-relevance. At work, when I've done good, I have most appreciated it when the person or persons I did the work for acknowledges me and lets me know how they valued my contribution. (The fact that this informal thank-you is often accompanied by chocolate has nothing to do with my preference, I assure you.) I understand the reason behind such bureaucratic formalizations of this process, like "Employee of the Month" awards, but here is the way I translate those formal recognition ceremonies: My clients told their bosses who told our mutual bosses that I did a good job. The mutual bosses tells someone who doesn't know me or my work to create a plaque which is presented to me by a boss who has to be reminded of my name before he gives it to me in front of a photographer who puts a picture of me receiving the plaque in the DNR's newsletter so that lots of people who have no idea of who I am or what I did will know that our boss gave me an award. I'd rather hear about why a particular

infographic I created was effective in getting the message across, or how my efficiency surprised everyone and got the job done on deadline and below budget. The chocolate doesn't hurt either. I *also* want my bosses and my bosses' bosses to know what I do and appreciate me as a valuable member of the team, but the plaque doesn't do it for me.

© Donya Hazard White

I liked what you wrote about going off with Allen on trips and finding that time to be especially valuable to help keep you connected. I think this works with Scott and I, too. Our trips together have always been very Good Things in terms of the unfamiliar physical terrain that catalyzed talk which explores unfamiliar mental terrains.

I am in awe of your capacity to care and be there for your family and friends. How do you deal with feeling over-extended or feeling as if your privacy is too much invaded?

© Lise Eisenberg

You have my sympathy for being under Disciplinary Action at work, though I had to laugh at your evaluation of the possible discipline of a month's suspension . . . "Oh please not the comfy pillows!" If you could choose any job in the world what would your ideal job be? It sounds as if you would like to put your energy into actively pursuing a fulfilling job, if you knew what that was for yourself. Good luck with the interview. I hope you already have the new job and are out from under the thumb of the evil Assistant Commissioner.

© Douglas Barbour

We noticed the headline in a newspaper stand when Princess Diane died. Scott and I were on the road, between campgrounds. We were surprised to learn of Diana's accident; we talked about it a bit, but we were completely stunned, a week later, to return to a continuing world-wide furor over her death. It got me thinking about why so many people claim to feel a personal connection to Diana. I remembered my own reaction to her death: "Oh, how sad. Now we'll never find out what would have happened in her life." Her death will actually change the lives of few people, yet everyone seems to feel some degree of loss. I think the connection many people feel is very much like the one millions of

people feel toward an actor on a popular TV series. It's as if we all saw the cliffhanger, finale episode of the show, Diana's Life, and have been anxiously waiting for the new season to begin to find out what happens next. We've been hearing rumors that she would become engaged to a new prince, a "new" character, and possibly a sleazier prince than her last one. In any case, the possibilities for a riveting new season full of more ups and downs for our heroine, Diana, were promising. And suddenly this. She died . . . off camera, at that. The season has been canceled, and unlike TV actors, Diana won't reincarnate into a different sitcom. We knew Diana no better than we know sitcom actors, and like most people, our sense of story is what hurts, and probably what will make some writers lots o' money as they compete against one another to write the best, fictional sequel to this hit series. But yes, I agree, it wouldn't surprise me if we start hearing reports of Diana-sightings.

I very much enjoyed your descriptions of your family visits. Sharon's family, with their tradition of retelling stories, reminded me of the sort of talking my brothers and sister and I often do when we get together. Many of our shared stories are funny ones, even embarrassing stories, that we tell on one another or on ourselves. I've honed a few stories that ended up in fanzines in these reminiscing sessions, and in fact their intimate format—in that all the characters and most of the settings are well known to all the listeners—seems particularly fannish in style.

I was very impressed that you visited both your and Sharon's family in one long visit. I would imagine that gets a bit stressful. Scott's and my family live in opposite directions from Madison and it's impractical for us to visit both families in one marathon visit. Still, sometimes — especially around holidays — a visit to see my family in Milwaukee has been followed almost immediately by a visit to Scott's family in Anamosa, Iowa. We've had some of our most fascinating conversations in the car between those two places, because there's nothing like comparing and contrasting the patterns we fall into at home to shed light on the people we've become. For instance, I never quite realized how competitive I am until I noticed how differently the members of each of our families play games. And Scott never realized how his role as youngest son, silent listener, had affected his conversational style until he had to deal with the unfamiliar situation of my family actively including him in conversation, asking him what he thinks and waiting to hear him out completely.

 © D. Potter

Sorry to accuse you of committing sarcasm. I thought you were making a little joke, that's all, reminding me that I had been talking all last year about pulling back from WisCon. You think of me as a permanent element of WisCon and to be honest, I probably think the same, with no mental sarcastic inflection at all. That's probably why I have such a difficult time reducing my involvement. This stuff has gotten amazingly important to me. It's almost as if I was Obsessed. (There, now *that's* sarcastic.)

 © Jane Hawkins

OK, I'm willing to take your word for it that trying to find out why Sam was hitting you would not have translated as a reward to him for hitting you in the first place. But I'm confused. If Sam really was trying to communicate with you by hitting you, and if you in fact came to understand his message, why don't you think he would have incorporated this successful stratagem of hitting into his repertoire of body language? I guess I thought your strategy of ignoring him when he hit you was meant to encourage him to find a different vocabulary to communicate whatever it was he was trying to communicate. That seemed to be an eminently reasonable strategy. No? As for the crying baby, I still hear child psychologists talking about the need to let the child (not infant) cry during that time they are being trained to sleep in their own bed rather than their parent's bed. What's that all that about?

 © Debbie Notkin

I'm glad to hear you found some local work with the interesting publisher even if it is on stupid math software, and that Allan was able to take on some of it. Do you and Allan work well together? And ooh, a new Kim Stanley Robinson book! It's times like this that I really envy you editor types. . . .

Was that a typo, or did you really mean to write (about Sheila's chemotherapy): "*I'm beginning to wonder whether she hasn't reached the limit of what we can tolerate...*" [my emphasis]

After having mentioned the progressive, photographic diorama of the shaving of Ellen Klages' head, I realized that I wasn't sure that I'd actually developed that role of film. I searched all over, and have not yet found the role or the pictures. I'm beginning to worry

that I may have lost it. *sigh*

You are right. Berni Phillips wasn't at WisCon 21, let alone the Tiptree lunch. I was thinking about the Tiptree lunch at *Potlatch*. Oops, sorry about that.

Re your comment to Douglas, I've heard a couple other technical terms used in the language as metaphor. When one falls into old behavioral habits—the previously saved, corrupted version of oneself. Then it's necessary to boot up the upgrade.

I would certainly be willing to share with you the joke I told to my shocked audience at DGEF. In fact, I would have included it in my story in *Grayscale* if I had been able to remember what it was. The stunned horror on my fellow students' faces must have driven it out of my mind. It's a weird thing, how easy jokes are to forget. I tell the same joke over and over again for a week, and then suddenly I can't remember that joke or any other. On the other hand, when I get into the right frame of mind, they *all* come tumbling out of my mind; I've sat around all *night* trading jokes with friends and never run out.

Your suggestion to me that I "*share some of the stuff about your and Scott's promises . . . in the apa*" has been on my mind all month. I have jotted notes and an essay is coalescing in my mind. It will be a good thing to do, to write down why I think my relationship with Scott works well, how it works and what we do to maintain it. But it's hard. (Your suggestion must be a form of subtle revenge for my dropping a casual question about the connection between hierarchy and dysfunction into an earlier mailing comment to you, right?) This also is a big topic, and one I haven't written about in a long time. That essay you remember was from *Cube*, one of the issues that Steve Swartz edited — on the subject of relationships. I think most of my essay was about the irrelevance of ceremony, (another subject I've revisited here in this apa), especially with regard to why Scott and I chose not to marry. But I was pretty vague on exactly what promises Scott and I have made to one another. One of the problems with writing this sort of essay for me is that Scott is such a private person. I'm far more willing than he is to write fairly personal and/or embarrassing things about myself. But I worry about how to phrase things without invading his privacy.

Does Harper-Greer publish a catalog?

Marge Piercy's novel *The Summer People* is of course about a three-way relationship, but I thought it's most interesting aspect was that it is a thought-experiment in neuro-linguistic programming, with all three sensory patterns clearly defined in each of the three characters. The man—a sculptor—communi-

cated almost exclusively through tactile senses. The younger woman, the fabric artist, communicated visually; and the older woman, the musician was the verbal one of the three. Piercy's story seemed to suggest that as long as the three had equal power in the relationship, all was well, but if one retreated or was pushed away, the other two became unbalanced and the relationship failed. It's one of my least favorite of Piercy's novels because it feels so "planned."

Your third lesson learned from Sheila's illness reverberated with my experience when my brother Rick was ill. He would call me or I would call him, and suddenly that little question that's usually tossed off as a form of small talk, "How are you?" would be on the tip of my tongue and if I asked it, sometimes Rick would sigh and rattle off his latest symptoms and sigh again, obviously tired of having to keep everyone up-to-date on the details of his health when he would rather have talked about the latest movie or a new recipe. And sometimes he would seize on the question, glad for the chance to talk about his health at that moment. And sometimes he would pretend it was only a rhetorical question and would say, "Just fine," and we would talk about other things. It *is* hard.

It makes perfect sense, as you wrote to Lisa, that a good manager should be able to manage jobs they cannot themselves do, but not jobs they don't understand. Unfortunately, there seems to be a very popular form of management theory that maintains that understanding isn't even important. All that's important is that the manager be able to motivate the worker to do their best. And unfortunately for me, this management theory is apparently encouraged in Wisconsin State service. My supervisor may have stopped trying to intimidate us, (and for that we are most grateful, believe me, and are getting back to normal productivity), but she still makes no attempt to understand what we do. The other day she was consulting with one of the word processors who — unknown to the rest of us — had been trying for weeks to figure out a way to do a complex job for a client. It involved creating a colored template for a cash register keyboard. Georgine (one of my artist co-workers) joined the conversation just after Jill, our supervisor advised the typist to give the job back to the client and to tell him we couldn't do the job for him, that he'd have to send it to an outside vendor. Georgine glanced at the job and told Jill that one of the artists could do it easily. I ended up with the job and turned it out in about an hour. Jill was surprised and happy to have the problem taken care of but never bothered to find out how we completed the job. She didn't seem to have any curiosity about

the matter.

You wrote to Douglas, "*I've known other people who've found strangers in their hotel rooms, but not literally in the bath!*" Did I ever tell you about the time, during an early WisCon when we used a small hotel called The Madison Inn, that I walked into what I thought was my bedroom and surprised a couple making love? It turned out that my key for my room, 426, also opened room numbers 226, 326, 526, and 626. What a shocker *that* was!

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I think it's a great idea to consider hiring cleaners rather than getting angry at one another for not doing enough cleaning. If you can afford it, I think that's one of the best ways of giving yourself and your partner a release from a not very fulfilling obligation. I know there's supposed to be a zen thing about doing everything, even the most boring, repetitive work, in a way that affirms life, and I really do like having things clean around me, but if I could afford it, I'd hire cleaners in a split second. Do it!

Your harvest sounds mouth-wateringly good. But I was (briefly) surprised to see your write about tomatoes. In the midwest, we pride ourselves on having the juiciest, sweetest tomatoes in the world and usually think of California tomatoes as those rock-hard, tasteless things that get shipped into our grocery stores after our growing season has ended. But I suppose you don't have to plant the shipping-friendly varieties of tomato just because you live in California (If I were that kind of woman, I'd put a smiley face here, just to let you know I'm just kidding. I *do* envy the fact that you all have more than one growing season.)

And I *really* envy that gala concert you attended for the reopening of the War Memorial Opera House! It sounds like it was a splendid evening. How wonderful that you were able to attend! Wow. Thanks for the report. The opera season will be over, I suppose, by Potlatch?

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I'm really sorry to hear about your diagnosis of fibromyalgia. I can see how hard it is for you to write about this now. What can be done to counteract the pain your feeling? Are there drugs, exercises, surgery?

What a wonderful essay/interview with Mike Ford! Thank you for including it in the apa.