

'You give up your virginity to become a housekeeper. Is that what you girls really want?'
French, 17th century.

*Vous filles Friquettes et Gentilles
Frons Gardé à Vos quoquilles.
Contemples ce pauvre Visage:
Que L'onbaras du Mariage:*

L'AFEMME DE MÉSNAË.

*A deguise' en peu de temps
Malgré tousmes beaux Courtisars
Brefc per mon pauvre pucelage
Et devient femme de ménage*

Obsessions
NUMBER 12
#11

Jeanne Gomoll
2018 Jenifer Street
Madison, WI 53704

For A Women's Apa,
mailing #15

LINDA JAIN
LUCIENTE

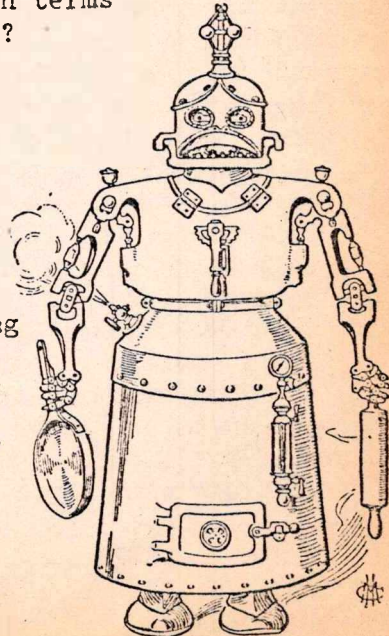
I was impressed too about the contemporary background

Piercy put into A WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME. Not only did she create a very real image of the lower class Latino community, but her familiarity with women in sanitariums was extraordinary. The two parts, future utopia and Connie's experiences in Belview (?) linked together perfectly too.

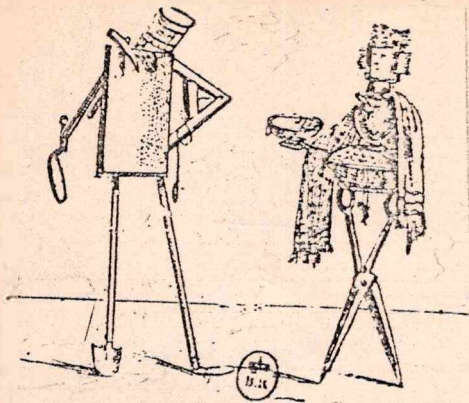
What do you mean by needing help with the "language of the apa"? Do you mean with such feminist shorthand as CR groups, or fannish terms as fanzine, etc.?

MARGARET HENRY
IN MY OWN WORDS

I was really struck by your ideas about Americans' penchant for covering and packaging everything, the dislike for carrying out "naked" things from the grocery store, etc. It's true, it's true! Certainly not so in



A Victorian domestic invention



Two sets of figures made up of domestic implements, from Braccelli's *Bizzarie di varie figure*, 1624

Progress.....

A household robot designed by Quasar Industries in New Jersey, July 1977. It can be programmed to mop floors, mow lawns and do simple cooking. 5 ft 4 in. (1.6 m.) high and weighing 180 lbs (81.7 kg.), it is expected to be available for \$4000 (£2077) in 1979.

Europe where they have been carrying their own containers to the market for a long time. But when you think of all the waste when our little "excentricity" is carried to the extreme it sometimes is (at McDonald's say, or when you buy one carton of cereal --already packaged and they put it into another bag so that you can carry it anonymously home), the situation loses some of its humor. I think it's got more to do with a horror at "nakedness" (or embarrassment that our purchases will reveal something about us, for instance: that carrying tampons home will reveal us to be women, gasp!), but also is connected to what Europeans find so absurd, that is our constant up-tightness about germs, contamination ... in the midst of pollution and other urban poisons.

Re, trusting a person because she is a woman -- a friend of mine had a bad experience because she did this. The woman had ruined my friend's bike by ramming it with her car, and my friend's feeling that they could trust each other ended up later, ^{with} having to press charges in what turned out to be a useless attempt to be reimbursed. Had she called the police at the time of the accident there would have been no problem. Oh well. However I think still myself in other matters, especially in assuming that women are or can be sensitive in emotional matters, I think I will still tend to trust women more than I will men.

REBECCA LESSES I loved the film
EMBLEMS OF A SEA- EQQUS. Besides
SON OF FURY the acting which was
excellent, I am
attracted to the philosophy of the



film, that is that we are responsible for our own lives to the extent that we chose to make certain events important/crucial in our lives, although environment by offering the range of choices available is still a definite limiting factor. It was weird seeing the protagonist react to that as such a depressing realization (it meant that his profession--psychologist--was a farce; he saw himself as an accomplished temple priest, skillfully cutting the hearts from children, eliminating their "passion" to cure them.). Oh and, yes, though the final scene in which the boy kills the horses (blinding them) is horrible, I don't think either that violence is a very central part of the film.

Hope you do (did) make it to WisCon; it'd be good to see you again.

I have little check marks besides your comments on pornography and censorship, but I can't seem to get enough energy up right now to dig into my head and find out why I can't, haven't ever been able to agree with the notion that porn should be forcibly done away with. I think at base, I don't feel in danger from it, and my notions of freedom of the press are too strong. Too strong in that I will always assume that restrictions, once adopted will be sooner or later be turned against me to restrict my rights.

The self-fulfilling prophesy process certainly worked with me for a while, especially in grade school. When I graduated from 8th grade, my teacher advised me to elect non-college directed courses because she said that she didn't think I'd make it through high school much less get to college. SHE ACTUALLY SAID that! During grade school I was a constant marginal C but I was reading everything except the texts (stealing books temporarily from the library because they didn't think my grades indicated I could handle more difficult ones). But I had the good luck in High School to start out in classes that I was for one reason or other "ahead" of the other kids...and I got a taste of what it was like to be the smart one, bask in the approval

of my teachers, etc. So I started putting the same energy that I had put into private (extra-curricular) reading, into my classes, and became the Complete Academic. Which carried me nicely through college before I began to burn out on the feeling.

C. DECARNIN I'm learning a lot
SCORPION CROWN reading your zines,
it's all rascinating...
and percolating inside of me. Hopefully someday I'll be able to make a few more connections to my own experience and be able to comment more than "Oh really?" "Gee", "You're kidding" etcetera. I'm certainly more open to s/m ideas than I had been before reading your zines. Before, I would have been one of those people assuming that sexual role expectations/tastes reflected political/social ones. Maybe I'm too unsteady in my own politics to allow conflicting behavior (to my ideals) in my sexuality. I liked what you said about, well, easier to quote: "One thing I know S/M means to me is attention. S/M at its best is total attention, total relationship." That sounds very attractive, will have to think about it some more.

Yes, I did get your postmailing but it wasn't around when I did my postmailing (and I still don't have it with me damn it). Sorry.

I agree with you that AWAPA seems to have problems what with the high turnover and so many of us skipping mailings, etc. I don't think (I hope) though that the cause is the absence of men. For myself, for a while I was turning off to doing mailings because the Jessica and attendant controvercies were making me feel tired/frustrated/and draining a lot of enthusiasm for the apa for me. I think this is true for a lot of the women here, and I also think we're starting to recover. I've decided to be very dutiful with regard to mc's, making that a priority (and try to get my own comments into them or add them to the end of OBS) and to get my mailings in on time or else to seriously consider dropping so that a more dutiful waitlister can get in. (But see, I am trying hard; look at all these mc's!) I know that the absence of men isn't making AWAPA

less interesting to me, if anything: the opposite.

FRAN SKENE I won't start worrying
VENUS IN too much about it un-
CONJUNCTION til after WisCon, but
imagine that I will
also be an nervous wreck in anticipation
of my thing in Austin for the convention
in May. Please, do you have any hints
about doing a speech?

SARAH S. PRINCE OK what does the title
NOBODY'S KNOWS and Illo refer to?
The illo looks like
a typical cat typically trying to kill
itself though, truly by a unique
method, plugging itself in... It's a
neat picture.

I know what you mean about the common
assumption that artistic ability is some
kind of mystic zap that only some people
get. (Almost like the physics majors
who feel the same way about the interpre-
tation of a novel ((Sometimes, Jane,
only a lot of sometimes))) I get
especially sarcastic when people look
at a drawing of mine and sigh and say
Oh I'd never be able to do that in
a hundred years, why I can't even draw
a straight line! As you say, what
people identify as artistic ability is
a mixture of a lot of factors, mostly
I think practice/skill but yes, too,
a sense of good taste. But no matter
how often you say that it's learned, that
if they spent time working on it,
practicing, "exercising" as you say,
there wouldn't be, probably, much differ-
ence in my drawing and their's.

Your comment about the practicality of
wearing a choir cassock reminds me of
the time --my graduation day-- when I
wore one of those things in an unusual
way. It was late in the afternoon and
I was in the art lab working frantical-
ly trying to get the last of my pots
either glazed or at least with their
feet carved, using the equipment for
what I figured might be my last chance.
Well my watch stopped and I suddenly
realized that it had been "7:30" for an
awfully long time. I jumped up from
the wheel and ran around the corner,
heart thumping, to check out a wall
clock and realized I had only 5 minutes
before our class was supposed to march
into the gymnasium and graduate... I
was wearing old slacks and sweat shirt--

both completely disfigured by old and
new blotches of clay and glaze and
dust. My face and hands and arms
were mucky and gray and fingernails
overflowing with clay,

I panicked.

I ran down to the locker room to find
that all the women in my class had
already gone up. I stripped all my clothes
off and stuffed them into the locker,
jammed a shower cap on my head, took
a quick shower to get all the clay
off, got out and put my heels on and
my gown on. That's all. Then I ran
up to the gym, walked VERY CAREFULLY
to my place (so as not to jiggle you
know, that being pre-braless days
even for women unlike me who feel
much more comfortable with a bra any-
way) ... and probably was the most
comfortable person in the whole steam-
bath of a gymnasium. Except when I
had to walk up to get my diploma
and also except for the end of the
ceremony when everyone else ripped
open their gowns and ran estaticly
down the aisle back to the lockers.
I walked back with great dignity. My
parents were soooo proud of me. The
people down in the locker had a
somewhat different reaction when
(me, mild-mannered recluse) took off
my gown.

You need another testimony? I've
been sure for more than 4 years now
that I want to stop using the pill
as a stop-gap measure and be sterilized
and will as soon as I can afford it
or get on an insurance plan that will
pay for it.

AVEDON CAROL It's weird, but
AC/DC expectable I guess,
that nothing explo-
ded at Iggy among AWAPA people.
People act much more human in person
I think. Well sometimes. Someone in
C/RAPA who was being attacked from all
sides for something he had written in
his first zine, commented that it was
like sitting in a circle of people
each one of whom repeat the same
criticism sometimes word for word
after each other. Usually in a
person-to-person situation, when there
is a large group of people, once one
has said something that many agree
with, the others simply nod in agree-

ment. They don't usually all gang up on the one person, repeating and repeating. Of course, as this person also brought up, the effect of mounded on praise, as sometimes happens in an apa is also unreal, but also incredibly ego-boosting. Anyway, I guess I'm saying that I don't think the seeming unusual politeness of the people at Iggy was uncharacteristic of these (us) people at all, merely what happens with one of the sometimes bad effects of apa communication removed.

I'm not worried about anything happening to make anyone too uncomfortable at WisCon either. But we'll see.

My section at the end of this zine on woman definitions is partially an mc to you. But there is a little more that I want to respond to you in connection to that. I don't think the process of identifying (or not identifying) with the stereotypical female role is quite as hard-and-fast as you indicate. I am thinking particularly about a study on young girls (& mathematics learning) that I was connected with last year. Julia Sherman's previous study with the same girls a year before had shown conclusively the availability of role models (women who were clearly good at and enjoyed mathematics), attitudes and proficiency scores among the girls improved DRASTICALLY. And in some cases these role models were available only for a week at a time --during"career week." If they could be so impressionable on this one aspect of sexual role molding, I should think that the whole spectrum is wide open to manipulation.

I like and feel close to your feelings when you commented about having "given up trying to define myself sexually." "I'm just me, and I have been attracted by varying degrees to various people at various times, and will probably continue to be so."

I haven't received TIF #7 yet. Hope it wasn't lost in the mail. (That is the one with my cover isn't it? That's why I'm thinking you may have sent it to me in the first collation.)

ANNA VARGO
BACHELOR'S HALL

Working with the group here in Madison on the con and JANUS and all the other projects we have gotten ourselves involved with, I think the main thing we've learned (since we all work for "nothing") is the thing you talked about in connection with your experiences at Iggy. "...the only way to cope is to find out what people like to do, and do well, and let them do it..." We don't do our con for others, not really: we do it for ourselves: the convention is a collection of the things we are obsessed with, reminism/sf, and this year you will see a more dramatic emphasis on radio and tv and video-tape since many people in madstf have gotten so involved with that, etc. It doesn't work to say, "the con should be this" and expect somebody to do it even though that's not what they're interested in --not when we depend utterly on volunteer work.



WisCon 3

JANET WILSON
CARDBOARD
REPLICA

Sorry about getting
your name wrong on
our last mailing
--I hadn't gotten

around to changing it. We'll get it
right next time.

I don't understand what you meant by
saying that you didn't like the idea
of a "homosexual or group church-type
marriage". I don't see what it mat-
ters which form people decide to sol-
omnize their promise/contract, or how
a church marriage is, as you said,
a thing that makes that contract seem
more important than one signed in a
courthouse... Maybe I'm misunderstand-
ing??

Joyce Scriviner told me that you had
been considering dropping all of us
delinquent Madisonian apa members
(before you knew of Diane's and my
postmailing), but reconsidered thanks
to the work you assumed we were in-
volved with getting WisCon together.
Thank you for the grace period, even
though it turned out we made it (just)
anyway. Can I have a raincheck on
the last chance? Just kidding.

GAYLE A. KAPLAN What does Eashaw
EASHAW mean? Did I miss
 your explanation?

Thanks for the brochure on the
National Women's Health Network.
Looks interesting.

JANE HAWKINS I can't believe it
DREAMSONG that I'm going to
 make it through
this whole mailing in one no-first-
draft-right-on-the-typewriter-mc's.
I think I've found the only way though
that I'm going to be able to keep up...
I can't afford the time to write drafts
for AWAPA, except for essay type sections
I guess: so I read it through putting
little x's next to things that intrigue
me or that I know I have something to
say something about, and then go
back later and skim the mailing for
the x's and type comments. This way
I've managed to do the postmailing for
the last issue of AWAPA and ^{regular} a zine for AWAPA and
for C/RAPA inside of 2 weeks, at work.
Puff, puff...

Hmmmm. Maybe my iron pills are having
some effect after all on my energy
level?

You can consider the whole next section
part of your mc. I think the stuff
you wrote was excellent and points out
a real need to consider the matter of
how we define the sexes. It's an
incredibly wide-ranging and many-
fasceted topic. Thank you for working
your ideas out in this apa.

(Although we will have already seen
each other by the time you see this, I
have to say that I can't wait til
WisCon. See you soon, love!)

Since there isn't room
at the proper end of
this zine for a good-bye

—(Goodbye & love (now))

Jeanne

Note: most artwork is taken from the
book, ROBOTS:FACTS, FICTION & PREDICTION
by Jacia Reichart; except for WisCon
brochure illo by me & copyrighted © 1979
by Jeanne Gomoll.

WOMAN EQUALS WHAT Someone mentioned the fact that the question of transsexuals is one

that is coming up more and more often in feminist circles other than just the Women's Apa. I think, too, that basic questions like, What is a Woman?, What is a Man?, even, What is a Human Being?, are questions that are going to be increasingly important as the sciences, and a more complex society make unheard of choices available. I wonder if our backgrounds in sf might ultimately make the discussion going on in the apa come out with some creative conclusions.

I'd like to think so. For myself, I'd like to try to be able to reach beyond my friendship with Jessica and formulate some ideas on what I think a woman is. It seems too that a lot of you are trying to do this, or alternately, to try to reach beyond anger and frustration that you have felt with Jessica and do the same thing.

I think that I am basically in agreement with those of you who have said that you think that socialization/environment is the crucial factor causing an individual's identification as a woman or a man. I'm uncomfortable though, with the simplistic definitions I've been reading here so far. I've liked most the ambiguous definitions, like Janet's on Ts's, ie, "a woman whose actions and personality are influenced by having been a man."

In a weird head conversation with myself, the following mumbling was overheard:

--OK, you think "woman" is mostly a label, that refers to a set of socialized behaviors.

--Yeah. That's my assumption. Given.

--OK, "given" that, is there any variation in the amount of socialization a woman can receive?

--Probably. I keep hearing women claim that they felt they were sheltered from some of the worst pressures to be the stereotyped wife, mother, slave...and too, I've seen plenty of women living in a

pressure cooker (like a modern Sleeping Beauty) of that propaganda. Some women seem to have an easier time freeing themselves, finding options. Some harder.

--And so maybe that factor should be considered when we talk about whether a transsexual is a woman or not?

--Sure, like: if I were asked whether this person who was socialized to be a woman for x years and a man for y years, it might be important to know how many years she'd been a man first. How many years she had been a woman since the change. I mean if she had been a woman for a much larger proportion of her life than she had been a man, or if she'd had the body of a man for only a short time, I'd have to consider her a woman...

--Ah, I see. You're saying that the socialization process continues throughout the whole life. Well, then how long?

--How long would she have had to have been a woman?... I don't know, um...

--Well, would it be crucial say, that she have been raised a woman through her early childhood? Her adolescent years? Do you think a lot of important socializing continues to go on later? Do you think it's going to be the same for every individual?

--er...

--How many minutes of male experience contaminates a woman?

--Isn't this starting to sound like how many drops of Indian blood or Jewish blood, or whatever, wipes out White privilege?

Nothing in that stumbling conversation above says anything final about what I think about all this, but I went through something like that in trying to figure out what I thought was wrong with saying

that an experience as a man could never be outweighed by any amount or quality of experience as a woman. This is what I have understood in a lot of your definitions. Like Linda Jain's most recent summation, for instance: "A man is and always will be a man. It doesn't matter how the plumbing is changed, he has still had the power of being a man in a man's world. And when the coin is flipped he has never felt the oppression of being a woman." But what about a person who has not just changed; are months and years of life after that time to be disregarded? Can anyone seriously claim that they think one stops changing, being affected by the world around us after some sort of cut-off date in our youth? (The old joke that someone recently brought up: A grown-up is someone who has stopped growing.)

Why is it necessary that we all fit into one of two categories? Woman. Man. It probably is much more of a spectrum of people fitting into the artificially labeled attributes that society gives us, at all points along the way.

An idea that particularly struck me in the play/film *EQQUS*, is that certain events, parts of our environment, people, ideas, whatever, end up having more (or less) affect upon us than others. We are responsible for our lives to the extent that we have chosen those crucial affective factors (from those available). From this point of view, environment is always a limiting factor, but not a deterministic one. For instance, I have known women for whom the experience of rape is one of central, overriding importance, one that is tragically never dealt with, never overcome. It's not an insignificant part of my past, but I'm grateful that it has not been as overbearing a memory to me as I have witnessed it as being in others. But why wasn't it? Why do certain experiences in the family, in school, in work, wherever, have such widely varying effects on all of us? Why is a particular argument, a certain love, a certain abandonment, one book, an hour of tears, so important in how I would describe my life, the substance of what I am? We all have certain crucial

experiences/revelations that are either culminations or break-throughs in nature --such that our life becomes drastically changed because of them.

In effect, the whole idea of there being some monolithic "Female Experience," gets to be too abstract and non-applicable for me to use. There are too many kinds of experience one can have as a woman. Too many one can have as a man. So that though the difference between most women's and most men's experiences are qualitatively and unarguably very different, there is a large area of tangling and blurriness. I prefer to view the intersection as part of a spectrum rather than a fence.

I've always thought that complex situations were far more conducive to freedom than simply defined ones. Obviously, the more choices there are, the more possibility for diversity, the more potential there will be that more than just the mid-section of the bell curve can be accommodated.

In fact my whole bias towards an ambiguous, flexible system, or non-system of sexual identification has more basis than simply this personal attraction to social anarchy. I think that if we persist in looking for/expecting to find cut-and-dry distinctions, applicable to every individual case, no exceptions, we're going to be backed into a corner dangerous for more than just its tendency to objectify human beings. We're going to find ourselves forced to say also that real change, fundamental change, in our lifetimes, is impossible.

I say that, because it seems to me that the corollary of attributing inevitable power to either genetic heritage and/or environment, is a conclusion of hopelessness for change for us now. We say in this way that we cannot escape institutionalized sexism which pervades and controls the socialization process. On the other hand, if we do believe fundamental change in our lifetimes is (has to be) possible, change that challenges the essence of the roles we have learned, we have to believe also that fundamental change may have occurred (and can occur) in the case of a transexual or other cases of gender confusion.

As is probably obvious, I voted that no vote should be conducted to decide what constitutes a woman with regard to an apa membership.

-Jeanne