



#22

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— PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG HAND



Even as I write, the mailing comments included with this zine are already written, typed, layed out and xeroxed. There are 10 pages of them and it is three weeks before the deadline. For the first time in many mailings, I'm not feeling pressured as I start these general comments. Perhaps you will note a less frequent occurrence of spelling errors. Or maybe more. I'm not really sure what is more likely to be the cause of my erratic spelling—the pressure of too little time or too much time (time to puzzle over possible variant spellings all of which look ecually correct).

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Lately I have been thinking of how we take care of one another. How a friend gives time, energy, or money (and sometimes all these things) to another friend when they need those things. A friend (Anne Steel) and I, here in Madison, have helped one another through innumerable crises: illnesses, lonely times, and insolvent times. We have cared for one another. In a number of different ways I have similar reciprocal, caring relationships with other people here in Madison and elsewhere that I've often, and not at all originally called "family." But, recently I found myself at the receiving end of one of those caring relationships and found myself suddenly surprised at it all. I was ill—having just had my two lower (impacted) wisdom teeth extracted in oral surgery—and a friend stayed with me for the entire weekend afterwards, changing my ice packs almost on the hour, seeing to it that I took my medicine (penicillin and codeine) on time, that I was comfortable, entertaining me when I was awake, and mostly doing what must have been a very boring job. For I wasn't able to talk much and what talking I did do was mostly about my needs and pain. The medication left room for little else in my consciousness (certainly not rational thought) and what I wanted to do most of all was to sleep. What I found remarkable about that situation was that the friend who cared for me was a man.

Soon after that weekend of convalescence, I read a news story that reported on a finding made by the American Heart Institute. Of the group of people who have

had a heart attack, they said, men were far less likely to have a second attack than were women. Women, they explained, took care of men who had had an attack. Furthermore, they pointed out, women FAILED TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES after they themselves had a heart attack. Shame on us women, taking care of men and failing to take care of ourselves. We've really got to work on that, yup.

I thought about how I'd been so astonished at the fact that a male friend had done what my friend had done. I thought about how I'd felt guilty at times for "using" him, how I felt, at times, that I really should be getting up and doing dishes, making an attempt to be more sociable, something. I thought how I'd easily accepted the fact that Anne Steel had taken time off from work to pick me up at the Dentist's after the operation and I merely felt grateful (not guilty). This was something that we did for one another after all. I have done and will do similar favors for her. I found that I was not and am not used to accepting similar support from men. (Don't misunderstand me though, I don't mean to say that I didn't enjoy it and think it's something to avoid, no.)

I hadn't known this man well for very long. We'd been acquaintances and beginning friends for a half a year, lovers for only a couple weeks. I hadn't asked him to stay with me. (I hadn't considered asking anyone. I was going to take the phone off the hook and hide behind my chipmunk cheeks until I was better.) But he volunteered, and as it turned out, I did need someone. The drugs' effect on me would have resulted in my skipping meds or maybe overdosing myself. I probably would have given up on doing the icepacks and would have taken much longer to recover were it not for his being there.

What had been a pleasant dalliance has turned into something more im-

*Continued on p. 12, after the MC's.*

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MAILING COMMENTS

AnneLaurie Logan Hopefully I will have remembered to enclose a photograph of myself with this mailing. You ask for suggestions for the September (#30) mailing... the anniversary issue, I assume. How about short biographical recaps? Not only for women new to the apa who never got properly introduced, but for all of us to get reacquainted? I noticed that when I ran a copy of an introductory apazine (for another apa) through AWAPA, that a number of people thought it would have been a good idea for everyone to do that periodically.

Jane Boster "scruit" is a wonderful word. It vaguely feels like something one would hear in the old style Latin benedictions in a Catholic mass. Thanks.

How have you improved on your involvement style? By making do with the long-distance lovers, or by finding close-distance lovers and learning to handle serious, long-term involvements again? I am finding that with myself, the long-distance kind of relationships have become less and less attractive during the past year or so, and that I'm concentrating more and more on lovers who live in Madison. This seems equally related to a gradual dissatisfaction with repeated attempts to maintain long-distance relationships (with mostly frustrating effect), and to a sense that I am very much "settling" in Madison. My job here continues to give me much satisfaction; I no longer think of my residence here as intrinsically temporary. And the more conventions I go to, the more the frequency of really special, intense conventions decreases. To be expected, I suppose...and I think I prefer the tendency of in-town relationships even if that sort of thing does take a whole lot more time and energy, entailing more problems, pitfalls, and potential pain, etc...

Joyce Scrivner/Gerri Balter *Young and Pretty* was certainly interesting... I thought about it for quite a long time after reading it. Gerri's conclusions don't strike me as being right though. Perhaps she has some valid insights into the sample of women she interviewed, but regardless of her belief that the sample is representative and that any attempt to say that there are other women for whom the system does not work is naive—I think precisely that. (Some of my best friends are young and pretty...)(I think I know what she means by that phrase "young and pretty," hereafter Y&P, but I really don't like it. Still for the purposes of reacting to the essay, I'll use it in abbreviated fashion.)

Gerri's conclusions as I understood them were these: 1) that the primary attraction for most men with respect to women is youth and physical beauty. Some men are able to apply other criteria (as demonstrated by the fact that Gerri defines her attractiveness in terms of personality rather than physical attractiveness and has attracted men), but these are few and far between. 2) That all Y&P women's ability to foster other aspects of themselves other than their physical attributes is diminished as a result of excess in the area of physical attractiveness.

It's the second part of the conclusion that most bothered me. I am mostly sympathetic with a generalizing statement to the effect that most men in our culture are overmuch concerned with the youth and physical attractiveness of women with whom they are considering a sexual relationship. I don't, however, believe that most women are so affected by this state-of-affairs that Y&P women let all other aspects of themselves atrophy. I think we all know women who seem to rely too much on their appearance to make romantic/emotional/survival connections, and it seems to me that Gerri's bitterness concerning this awareness is what flavors a great deal of this essay.

I'd agree that it is too bad that our culture has encouraged a state of affairs (called the patriarchy) in which men are valued for a wide ranging, complex series of attributes (power, personality, intelligence, strength, physical factors, even age), while women are valued for a far more restricted and shorter list of attributes, most of which have to do with the Y&P characteristics. But the effect on women's behavior has never been, and especially now, is not an irresistible tendency that makes beautiful women neglect their minds and forever (and unsuccessfully) seek relationships that are based only on their looks and a man's appreciation of that.

I think it would be profoundly wrong and terribly unkind to assume Y&P women to be unenlightened and as trapped as Gerri's conclusions suggest. It would, in fact, be as misguided an assumption as the one she attacks: the one that she points out that men use in assuming that the only worthwhile lovers are women who are attractive in a certain socially-defined way.

Pat Mueller Once again, my compliments to you for a beautiful layout job on your apazine.

I laughed for a few moments on reading the first sentence of your essay. "One thing I don't understand are people who don't want to understand how things work." In a number of areas, I am one of those people. One major reason, for instance, for my avoidance of automobiles is that I know that I would not want to have anything to do with fixing one if I owned one. (Other reasons, more to the point, have to do with living in an urban area magnificently served by an excellent mass transit system.) I tend to understand mechanized things by analogy rather than attempting to understand-by-taking-apart, although once I have taken apart a device and put it together by myself, I am completely

comfortable with it. My technical pens are a case in point. At first I tended to try to keep them clean by soaking them (without taking them apart) every once in a while when they got clogged. Inevitably, of course, they got clogged to the point where soaking the whole pen had no effect. But after I'd been forced to take the things apart, and the process demonstrated to me by a pro, it was OK, and now I clean the lot of them (9 pens at work) about once a week. As a result of the intimate knowledge one gains by taking technical pens apart, I am now pretty adept at trouble-shooting problems that come up with them, because I understand how they work. Which was something that completely mystified me when I just soaked (and hoped). Still, for most things, I do have this tendency to try to avoid finding out about the inner workings, to want to be able to take the whole thing to someone and turn my back or go away while they do something with it...or if I can afford it, to just throw it out and buy a new one.

So I laughed at your first sentence. I can understand your frustration with people like me (because with things that I do understand, I can be just as impatient as you when it comes to expecting others to share my understanding of the "obvious."), but I also sympathize with the desire to avoid understanding how some things work.

Your description of your work at Flying Buffalo sounds fascinating, like something I'd enjoy. Thanks.

Mog Decarnin I missed doing mailing comments on the issue with Adrienne's *Golden Flower*, but if I had been able to do them, I hope I would have responded as you did. I agree completely, and for the same reasons, that zines of this kind (to a man, oriented almost exclusively to a male-oriented discussion) is not one I enjoy seeing franked through AWAPA.

I support you in your hope that if there is going to be an AWA book that it be put together with the intention that it be published commercially. That may not

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happen, but I would like to see it put together with the assumption that the book would be seen by a large, unrestricted audience. The point of doing this in the first place, after all, is to remedy the implicit "limited audience" nature of an apazine, to put together the best of our writing for a wider audience than could be reached by the apa. I don't see much point in putting the kind of time and energy that would be required by such a project into the book if it is only going to searve as a "memory book" for those of us who would rather not have to go through our back mailings to re-read some particularly good selections of AWAPA.

Annelaurie Logan Actually, I like the color of your zine. Ever since

I first saw it used by Victoria Wayne (in one of her apazines, I think), I have been fond of gray paper. I agree with you, however, it is a really strange thing for the manufacturers to call it "blue."

I'm looking forward to *Harlot*. You know, if the zine continues to be as irregular as this, I might let you call my column a regular one rather than the irregular one we agreed on. I think I can handle your deadline schedule as it has been...

As I said to Mog, I second the motion for making the AWA book one that we produce with the intent of publishing it commercially.

I certainly didn't react to *My Brilliant Career* (the film) as you did. It seemed to me that the protagonist's "habit of wandering through life leaving a trail of open gates, half-finished tasks, and insulted or embarrassed acquaintances behind her" (as you wrote), was not the behavior of an insensitive woman but of a realistic and surviving woman. Given the time and place, every person she met and every situation she found herself in, represented some sort of trap, which if she re-

mained or submitted to, would stifle and bind her forever. I found her awareness of the traps and her single-minded avoidance of proper daughter-,sister-,lady-like behavior and of the traps of marriage and sex, wonderfully exhilarating. I cheered her on for every rude, erratic action. I found the book different in a number of ways, mostly in the amount of background detail concerning the country and the author. (It is apparent that the protagonist is more of a combination of the author and her beautiful sister who was the one in the family to live for a while with wealthy relatives near Canberra, when you read the new prologue.)

Did you know that there is a sequel to the novel *My Brilliant Career* called *My Career Gone Bung*? I haven't read it yet, but it is available at the Madison library. I do love the title though.

Yes, I love *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* too. I've been listening to the weekly episodes on National Public Radio. They started broadcasting it the first Friday of March, and there are 13 episodes. It is hilarious.

I've been thinking that we should have an AWA party at Denvention. If I do decide to do something about it, you will hopefully have heard something about it from me before reading it here in the apa. I'd like to send out flyers and start getting support for a "Susan Wood Memorial Room of One's Own." I would be open for as many days as we manage to collect money for. I wonder too if the Denvention committee might not be willing to contribute to something of the kind as a way to honor Susan's memory. In the tradition of R000's of the past it would be open to women only, days; and be open to women and their invited guests during the nighttime. One of those nights, then, we could have an AWAPA party. Any other suggestions?

I'm glad you liked the writing I did on my tubal ligation. But no, I don't think it's a pity it's not getting wider circulation. This is exactly the level of circulation that this kind of writing is perfect for, I think. I can't imagine any fanzine or magazine, for that matter, that the tone and/or subject matter would

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be altogether appropriate for. But yes, I'd like to see you write up your notes on the vacuum suction abortion. As Avedon says, this is the place, exactly the place, for material like that.

San Francisco (and Seattle) was wonderful. I spent about a week and a half in SF and then went up to Seattle for five days around Christmas and New Year's. It was like the most intense and enjoyable of conventions (I kept looking around for people's nametags), and I saw lots and lots of friends and am very pleased at how time worked out for the most part. (There are a couple of disappointments—not being able to spend more time with Mog, for one—but for the most part, the time I spent with friends was quality time and I have lots of good memories of the trip.) My brother and his lover were great—they gave me the use of their house one night for a party and I invited about 30 people from the Bay area. The day of the party Rick, Danny and I spent the whole time baking up a storm, making cannoli, spinach and cheese ravioli, chocolate eclaires, and other good stuff for the party. I saw Richard Burton in *Camelot* while I was there, toured Chinatown with Debbie Notkin, rode lots of busses and BART and started to feel really comfortable in the city. I spent an afternoon with Quinn Yarbrow, which was really neat, and got a chance to sit in on one of the "Messages From Michael" sessions. (For those of you who know what I'm talking about, that is if you've read Quinn's book of that title, I am a "mature priest," no shit.) I went to two New Year's parties, one at Ctein and Terry Garey's house and the other at the Carr's (where Joan Vinge and Jim Frenkel had dropped by, which was neat). I spent an evening with Liz Lynn, and probably did a whole lot of other things with other people which I will be embarrassed about not having mentioned now that I have turned this trip report into a list...\*sigh\* Well anyway. Seattle was a continuation of the pace I

had set for myself in San Francisco: lunch with someone every day, a party or something every night. I started to get very burned out with respect to large numbers of people in one room, but it didn't hit me till after I'd gotten back to Madison, and even then it didn't really have the usual effect (that is, to make me act like a hermit for a while), because there was so much to do after I'd gotten back. There were also visitors or other trips every weekend for two and a half months after I returned. It wasn't until after WisCon last month that I finally had some weekends to myself. Probably a lot of the blame for the cold that I held on to for a month and a half (through most of February and March) has something to do with that schedule.

But things are settled down now. WisCon went well and is over now. We haven't decided yet on GoH's for next year's WisCon, though we are committed to a new hotel (something that those of you who have gone to previous WisCon's will appreciate). We're now almost entirely unassociated with the University and will be running the con in one place, that is hotel and programming space will be in one facility.

...This all sort of got off the track of a comment to you, didn't it? Ah well.

*Anna Vargo* It would be helpful if you would put your name somewhere on your apazine, Anna...

This may not be recent enough, but I last heard from Virginia Aalko at 6460 Mammoth, Van Nuys, CA.

I just joined the Book-of-the-Month-Club for the same reason you did, i.e., to get an Unabridged Oxford English Dictionary. What a WONDERFUL thing. I just picked it up at the post office last week.

*Avedon Carol* Hope you're feeling less down and depressed by the time you read this. Whether or not your moods affect the quality of your writing, I found your zine this time to be just as thought-provoking and interesting/exciting to read as I usually do.

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I agree with you that refusing to let a man pay for the dinner or the movie or whatever is not a thing to always do on principle. Often it just doesn't matter and is not a reasonable "rule." But for me, and for most of the time, it is a good rule. Most of the time, while I was in college, I went out with men who were just as poor as I was. Now, I more often go out with men that are either in about the same financial situation as I am or are considerably less solvent. Going out with men who are comparatively rich and for whom the spending of money does not incur "debts" on my part, give me no compunctions against accepting the traditional arrangement. But for most of those situations, with the exception of the last one, I feel much more comfortable avoiding any possibility of certain assumptions coming up. I find that making an effort to pay my own way often makes a man who does not know me well unsure of what our relationship is exactly. Paying my way would, I think, have given him the incorrect feeling that he knew what our relationship was, the traditional "date", you know. I feel more comfortable the more unsure a new male friend is in such a situation. The more unsure he is, the more leeway I have to redesign his expectations and to make my own desires and assumptions clear. And since I have so seldom allowed myself to be in the position of someone who's way was paid, I've gotten to the point where it's the traditional situation that seems strange to me.

"Wallowing in fairly extreme fantasies (sexual) about" no-longer-viable lovers, sure doesn't work for me. I tend to do it (think too much about lovers with whom I've recently split), but I know that I heal a whole lot better and sooner if I bury them and don't think of them for as long as I can.

*Cheryl Cline* Your description of how you "play" at writing fiction when

you need a break from writing nonfiction reminds me of my technique of writing when I need a break from drawing, and visa-versa. The only problem is there that I tend always to need a break from the thing that most needs to be done and want to do instead the thing that should be lowest on my priority list.

I like the vagina/Dinner Party stamp... and how it connected visually with the paragraph just preceeding it.

Yes, the overused unicorn. Now that I no longer do "The Dead Cat through History Slide Show", I am starting to talk about doing a dead, cute, trite unicorn (and other over-used and better-dead fantasy symbols) slide show. I figure I would ask any artist who shows at convention art shows and who perhaps has used unicorns in their art and has been dismayed at how much better that art sold as compared to other stuff, to do a picture of a cute unicorn (or fairy, or dragon, etc...) in a position they have always wanted to see a cute unicorn... They could even do it on black velvet if they wanted to...

I'm glad you liked the tubal ligation account and that it doesn't seem so frightening to you any longer. But I'm afraid I did forget to mention one thing that was a bit frightening, the only thing in fact, and that is the film that they show you before you go in to talk to the doctor and talk about whether or not you are really serious about wanting to have yourself sterilized. The film is awful. I really didn't want to know what it looked like when they make the incision in a woman's belly and insert the tool which cuts or fuses the fallopian tools, and I almost got sick watching it. I just kept telling myself "You'll be asleep. You won't know what's happening. You won't see any of this. You'll be asleep." And it's true. You are asleep and it didn't matter. But I've got this thing about blood. I'd have made a lousy medic.

This is my Jerry Pournelle story: At Noreascon in the SFWA suite, Jerry was getting drunk. By the time John Berry, Eileen Gunn and I arrived he

was no longer getting drunk; he was there already. And he was blithering on and on about something that I hear is a fairly familiar topic for Pournelle, that is the disgusting influx of plebians (non-writers) into the SFWA Suite. The SFWA Suite is traditionally paid for by the worldcon committee and given over for use by all members of the Science Fiction Writers of America. At Noreascon the committee was trying to combine bills and payed for a suite for both the SFWA people and for program participants. Seeing how that John, Eileen and I were all program participants (and in fact, in Eileen's case, was a writer), we felt free to walk into the Suite. I don't understand why Pournelle feels that every worldcon convention owes him this special honor, but he was in a lather, going from person to person decrying the fallen quality of humanity inhabiting the SFWA Suite, walking up to non-writers and embarrassing them with absurd acusations... He approached Eileen first (and never did get around to making any complaint to John Berry who is very tall and decidedly untimid-looking.) "Who are you?!" he demanded. "Are you a writer...?" Obviously not expecting the answer he got ("Yes."), he sputtered a bit and then asked/assumed "You're related to James Gunn?" "No." Having struck out there, he spun around to me and grabbed hold of my ribbons (which Noreascon distributed to identify program participants and hugo nominees) and practically ripped them from my shirt. "This, this is what gets me mad!!" He was distinctly red in the face and seemed to be starting to fume through the ears. Well he went on for a bit about how awful it was that they would let just anybody in the suite and I just sort of stared at him, utterly amazed. He finally wandered off and Eileen and I looked at one another and then started laughing hysterically. Pournell, hearing the laughter behind him, came back, obviously convinced that he'd made

a big hit with us. He commenced to recount various scenes from the movie, *Airplane*, in grotesque drunken swaggers. And then he got back to his main topic, the one about the influx of lower types into the SFWA Suite. At this point, Paul Novitski wandered over and started listening in (it was a good show, after all, for a while anyway), and Pournelle said something about having sometimes walked into the SFWA Suite and not been able to see one, single writer. He shook his head in sorrow. We all shook our heads in sorrow. And then Paul, with eyebrows raised and an incredulous tone to his voice, asked "Not even you, Jerry?" Sadly, Pournelle was too drunk to get the fact that he'd been verbally jabbed, and just blithered on some more and started to bore. We left.

This was not the first time I'd encountered Pournell. I remember one time at Norewescon, outside of the programming rooms which were just letting out two programs simultaneously—a save space program (Pournelle's, of course), and a feminist SF program. Jessica Amanda Salmonson were walking out of that, when Pournelle cornered Jessica (literally, arm leaning against the wall, blocking her way with his body) and said in a sugary sweet voice that he really couldn't believe she meant all that rot about feminism. He went on with his evidence, i.e., that his wife with a Ph.D. would rather stay at home and take care of him than have a career. At times, Jessica has demonstrated a great deal of restraint, I can testify to that: this was one of those times.

And so meeting Pournelle's son at AquaCon this February was a rather weird experience. He introduced himself to me at a party, and I asked him what he thought of his father's politics. He said he thought his father was a bit too liberal. (Very soon after he made that surprising statement, someone misunderstood him and thought that he was "accusing them of being a liberal," and seemed about to fight it out for the insult. At that point, I backed away, and said that I didn't think I belonged in the conversation. Unfortunately this was not an untypical moment at Aquacon. You'll



forgive me, I hope, if I don't go into detail about that con...)

I liked and mostly agreed with your thoughts on the need for sf writers to widen their familiarity with other writing fields.

Janet Wilson I keep forgetting about that book, *Man-rape!*, and would have forgotten it entirely if you didn't keep bringing it up. It's OK Janet, I understand how all the turmoil of the past year has resulted in it's being mislaid/misfiled. I'm only sorry that my unsolicited lending of it to you has caused you so much hassle...

Celia Chapman I'm surprised by the response that I've heard fairly often and from quite a few people, including you, about *The Bleeding Heart*. That book impressed me so much, much more in fact than French's first book, *A Women's Room* did. The style of the book didn't seem so much a string of speeches as a focus on the decision-making points of these people's relationship. I identified on many levels—in the matter of how an affair changes as one begins to explain oneself to a new lover (and how that communication is both the life and, in our culture for men and women, the death of a relationship). In the matter of the balance, the impossible balance, between passion and friendship. In the matter of the impossibility of a really indefinite, long term, satisfying relationship between women and men, as things stand now. It seemed to me—the second book—to be a far more sophisticated view of the concerns of feminists living and breathing in today's world. The first book still seems to me to be somewhat of a Primer for people newly aware of feminist concerns. Sort of a survey course.

Kate Robinson I enjoyed meeting you too, however briefly, while I was visiting

in Seattle earlier this year. It is always nice to have a face to attach to writing. It doesn't seem to match up with your self-view though (comment to Elaine). Congratulations on the new fun job. It sounds great.

I don't understand how a dress code encourages men to stay away from the male strip joint.

Would it be possible for you to reprint that Robbins article you mentioned to Mog?

I agree with your distrust of mood-changing drugs. I have to stay away from codein-related drugs because they affect me so strongly. I've lost one and two days at a time from merely taking a few pills and that sort of thing really scares me.

Fran Skene I thought Jon Singer had the position of Den Mother at Denvention as a result of his work at Noreascon? Did he back out of that?

I know what you mean about tending to believe what people say about themselves (mixed with a healthy dose of what I want to believe about them), and taking a long time to recognize that what they are doing just <sup>is</sup> ~~isn't~~ matching up to that composite... Sometimes a useful way to convince myself that it's time to break up with an individual is to write down the list of things that I want to believe or the things that he says he is or will do or whatever, and right beside that column to list the things that are really happening. It's a real eye-opener sometimes.

Janet Bellwether It's hearing things like you mentioned your Australian friend saying ("Jumping into a jeep and making the 2,000 mile run to the next school in her district the way I talk about popping off to LA for the weekend."), that makes me eager to travel there someday.

Teresa Nielsen Haden's account of her break with the Mormans really made me want to try to get myself formally ex-

communicated by the Catholic Church. I keep thinking that it would be an awfully effective, even newsworthy phenomenon if a whole lot of people started asking to be formally removed from their church's or synagog's or whatever's membership lists. "It would be a movement!"

*Joan Gordon* The last I heard— which admittedly was more than a month ago, the official cause of Susan's death was still undecided. They were almost completely sure, however that it was not a suicide because of all the evidence that she was clearly on her way out of the house and had plans for the day and for the rest of the week. (Notes written to neighbors, etc.) The last I heard, they thought the cause of death was a coronary.

It's interesting to compare your concept of "tall-willow" with Gerri Balter's concept of "Y&P" women.

You asked for help on getting back to writing again. Several people here in the apa, myself included, have found the multiple-project method useful, that is, having several things going at once, so that if one project hits a dead-end, you can continue working in another area. I think I've heard of quite a few authors who tend to be more than average in production that use that method.

Thanks for explaining Oz=Aussie=Ozzie, etc. I love it. It's perfect. Thankyou too, for the comment about how MOBY DICK can be seen as dealing with female/male interfaces. Gives me an excuse to reread it. Of course, it's true, that's there too.

*Ethel Lindsay* I found your comments on how you see American feminists through their writing here in AWAPA quite fascinating. Of course everyone likes to hear people from other countries discuss their per-

ceptions of this country and people who live here. But I think that you are wrong in concluding that so many of us are sex fiends...or, at least, that we are obsessed with that topic... I think that you are getting, in AWAPA, a sample of writing that is indeed more concerned with sex, sexuality and talk about relationships than can be found in any other apazine, but for good reason. These are topics that are of prime concern for women as feminists and topics that we don't get to discuss in a restricted women-only setting all that often. Frankly, this is one of the main things (this tendency of talking subjects) that attracts me to this apa.

*Joyce Scrivner* Congratulations on winning DUFF, Joyce. I think that you are right in thinking that the trip may be a great opportunity to rethink things and to possibly make decisions to change your situation with respect to relationships, etc. I find that longish trips are marvelous for any self-changing projects. Being removed from familiar spaces and for an extended time (that for me, always has the effect of a much longer period of time at home), makes change much less wrenching. Habit makes things seem much more painful than they really are.

*Tina Henry* NOSERATU was most definitely in color. Remember the misty blue morning when the ghost ship sailed up to the dock? The opulant dinner setting, full of golds and roses, that covered the dinner given by the dying people in the streets. Yes, it was definitely in color and some of the most beautiful color cinametography that I have ever seen.

I love the cartoon about Mary who likes to be treated special.



Continued from p. 2

portant. This is surprising to me (it wasn't in my schedule, you know.) I feel as if I am getting to know this man from a direction that is entirely unfamiliar to me. There are unexpected connections being made (following swiftly on those needs being unexpectedly met). And it feels very good.

So, I am enjoying a rare and fine Spring. We've been spending a massive amount of time together but seem to be learning to use some of that time working (me at the typewriter and desk, he at a table in the other room) and so I am not feeling as if I am giving up too much work time. Conversations tend to be interesting, lovemaking wonderful. But as yet, I have very little feeling as to how things may turn out or continue. I am only a little nervous at how fast the relationship seems to be progressing.

...And as may be obvious from the anonymous nature of my account of this new lover, he's known to some fans and so this report must stay ambiguous.

Together with the wisdom teeth extraction, a bad, month-and-a-half long cold that climaxed at WisCon 5, and WisCon itself, this new turn of emotional events may explain why you haven't received a letter from me recently if I owe you one. And I probably do. ("...Real Soon Now...")

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This year I've been keeping track of books read as well as films seen. (Last year, for the first time, I listed all the films I had seen and shocked myself with a grand total of 106 movies.) I'm feeling somewhat mollified this year as I see that the number of books read is keeping slightly ahead of movies seen.

Of the books, I recommend Doris Lessing's *The Sirian Experiments* to those of you who enjoyed the first of the *Canopus in Argos* series, *Shikasta*. This third book is written as if from the point of view of an extraterrestrial bureaucrat commenting on Earth's history. (Earth, however, is called Rohanda by this bureaucrat, or *Shikasta* in its "post-fall" state.) *Shikasta* is narrated by Johor, a Canopian envoy. The second book, *The Marriage Be-*

*tween Zones Three, Four and Five*, is told in the form of a fairy tale or allegory about the progression of life through the various astral planes of Rohanda/*Shikasta*. *The Sirian Experiments* is again narrated by an envoy, Ambien II this time, from the Sirian Empire. The Sirian and Canopian empires are ancient rivals, now cooperating (though with not much trust on the Sirian side). Whereas the chief attitude projected by the narrator, Johor in *Shikasta* was one of near-omnipotence (understanding and accepting the vast ups and downs of a human culture from the nearly immortal Canopian point of view)—Ambien II's attitude and the novel itself is colored with repressed jealousy, distrust, and anger. The story of *The Sirian Experiments* revolves around Ambien's overcoming of those feelings, her understanding of a higher level of necessity which governs existence.

What becomes more and more evident with this series is that it is a philosophical/mystical/religious allegory: each book covers the same material (i.e., Earth's history and the circumstances of our "fall" and present condition) as seen from an outside viewpoint.

Book 1 (*Shikasta*) by "god" or the Canopian empire as represented by Johor.

Book 2 (*Marriage*) from within ourselves—the archetypal mythologies which are the clues to our own budding understanding of the universe and connection to god/Canopus.

Book 3 (*Experiments*) from an adolescent race—the Sirians—halfway between our infancy and Canopian wise maturity.

Each book says more about humans when compared and thought about together with information provided by the other two books than they would if read by themselves. I expect that there will be a book or part of a book based on the Puttorian's empire (the most despicable

of all races), and I expect another—the last which will tie all the books together. I think the series is important and impressive especially for the inter-relationships between the books.

It is not, in any way, though, a feminist book, per se—as was, for instance, Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*. Which is OK. But they are dense, hard books to get through. Worth it though.

Not a hard book to read at all is Erica Jong's *Fanny: Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones*. This is one of those rare times (as with French's books) that important, good books get on the best seller list. If you are like me and sometimes get uppity and sniffy, tending to avoid "best sellers", abandon those scruples in this case. *Fanny* is wonderful! Jong's writing is extraordinary and I can't say enough to praise her mastery of the 18th century (*Tom Jones*-like) style. Like *Tom Jones*, it's bawdy and funny and sexy—and it's also really interesting to feminists. *Fanny* not only has unusual and frequent sexual encounters, but we see them from an entirely different viewpoint—a woman's viewpoint (as opposed to the solidly male viewpoint that whole genre of picaresque literature gave us). (*Fanny* is supposedly writing her autobiography here for her daughter to provide her with a positive role model, as well as to counteract a biased biography of her, that is, of course, *Fanny Hill*.) We meet women pirates, witches (i.e., midwives and herbalists), see the realities of sex, prostitution and motherhood in the 1700's, watch a "Satan's Club" meeting in action, and in general see how the so-called Enlightenment was not such a wonderful time in which to live as a woman. *Fanny*, however, survives. With a different format, this book could have been dreadfully depressing and horrifying, but it is not—it is wonderfully, gleefully, life-affirming, woman-affirming. Read it. Enjoy it.

At present, I'm reading two books by Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (finished yesterday) and *China Men*. You've probably heard of the first. It gained wide popularity in 1976 when it

came out. Both books are excellent. Basically they are two parts of an autobiography of a first generation Chinese-American woman who is attempting to piece together her Chinese heritage from the hints her parents have given to her. (In fact, she addresses both of them in the course of the book, asking them to verify her assumptions, deductions and guesses.) In the best tradition of Wittig's maxim, "...and failing that, invent", Hong Kingston does this, blending knowledge and desire. *The Woman Warrior* focuses on her mother and female relatives and ancestors; *China Men* upon her father and male relatives, though still, with much reference to how the myths and customs and history affected women and her own life. The books are beautifully written (I am tempted to compare her to LeGuin), and again, I recommend them highly.

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Lucky you, I'm not going to cover my whole list of books read in 1981. As for films, and of those most recently seen, I was most impressed by *Kagemusha*, *Tribute* and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. *Kagemusha* especially. I'm so impressed by the director that I'm tempted to ignore my assumed dislike of samurai films and check out more of Kurosawa's films like *Seven Samurai*, etc.

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And work goes well too. I'm now the editor of all the Park Newspapers for the State Park system. (Each park gets one issue per year, focusing on park features, special programs, rules and regs., a map, etc.) And I've been put in charge of the Parks exhibit at the Wisconsin State Fair (in August). I put together a proposal a couple weeks ago and everybody seemed to like it, even when I totaled up the budget and it turned out to be \$1000. That amazes me; I figured it'd be cut for sure, but the high muckymucks apparently see that as a reasonable expense for an exhibit that many thousands of people will theoretically wander past. So

that's been fun.

And *Aurora* 19 is coming along—this issue is on language and communication ("More than Words" we call it)—now that WisCon and the post-convention collapse is over. Gallies are being typed now and I expect that we'll only be a month late in publication, that is, we should be out by mid-May.

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A last moment book-note, having just finished Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*: *China Men* was, to me, even better than *The Woman Warrior*. A more complex, intricately woven tapestry. As I read, I recalled the review I'd read in *Ms.* a long time ago (last year?) which mostly focused on the author's treatment of her brother's experience as a Vietnam soldier. (On our side, as Tom Leher says.) I kept waiting for her to get to that, but the episode is merely one small chapter almost at the end of the novel. Mostly the book is a blend of real memories and (mostly) conjectured histories of real and construct fathers, uncles, grandfathers and brothers. Again, Hong Kingston's writing is very beautiful.

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I hadn't planned to have this much space left over after that talking about caring and the book reviews. I could talk about WisCon (except the memories are mostly blurred and have to do with trying to keep together enough so that I could do my share of the work), or I could talk about MiniCon (except that I went to no programming whatsoever, unless you count the dance, and so all my memories are rather private), or, let's see, I could talk about my freelance work...except that I really haven't been doing any lately. I have been keeping really busy at work...not only in real time, but in outside thinking time as well. I mean, I tend to spend more than the 40 hours a week mulling over how I'm going to complete one project or another. That tends to make me less enthusiastic to start new (but similar graphic) projects at home. This has begun to make me nervous, because I don't want to stop doing things outside of the office, graphics, that is, and I'm afraid I might.

I've done some writing, but because of that aforementioned new friendship, I have tended to neglect that as well. I'm going to have to try to buckle down and work on some sort of schedule from now on.

And this is called blithering. Time to stop. See you all in a couple more months, here or in Denver.

Love,  
*Janne*

P.S. All you Aussie film-fans out there: see *Breaker Moran*! It's excellent. It won, and deserved, 10 Australian Academy Awards. It's about a Lt. Calley-like situation in South Africa during the Boer Wars at the turn of the century. Really, it's marvelous, but I haven't seen much publicity on it, so if you get a chance to see it, go quick, because unless there's an upswelling of popular acclaim, I will bet that it doesn't stay around very long.

### CATHY

