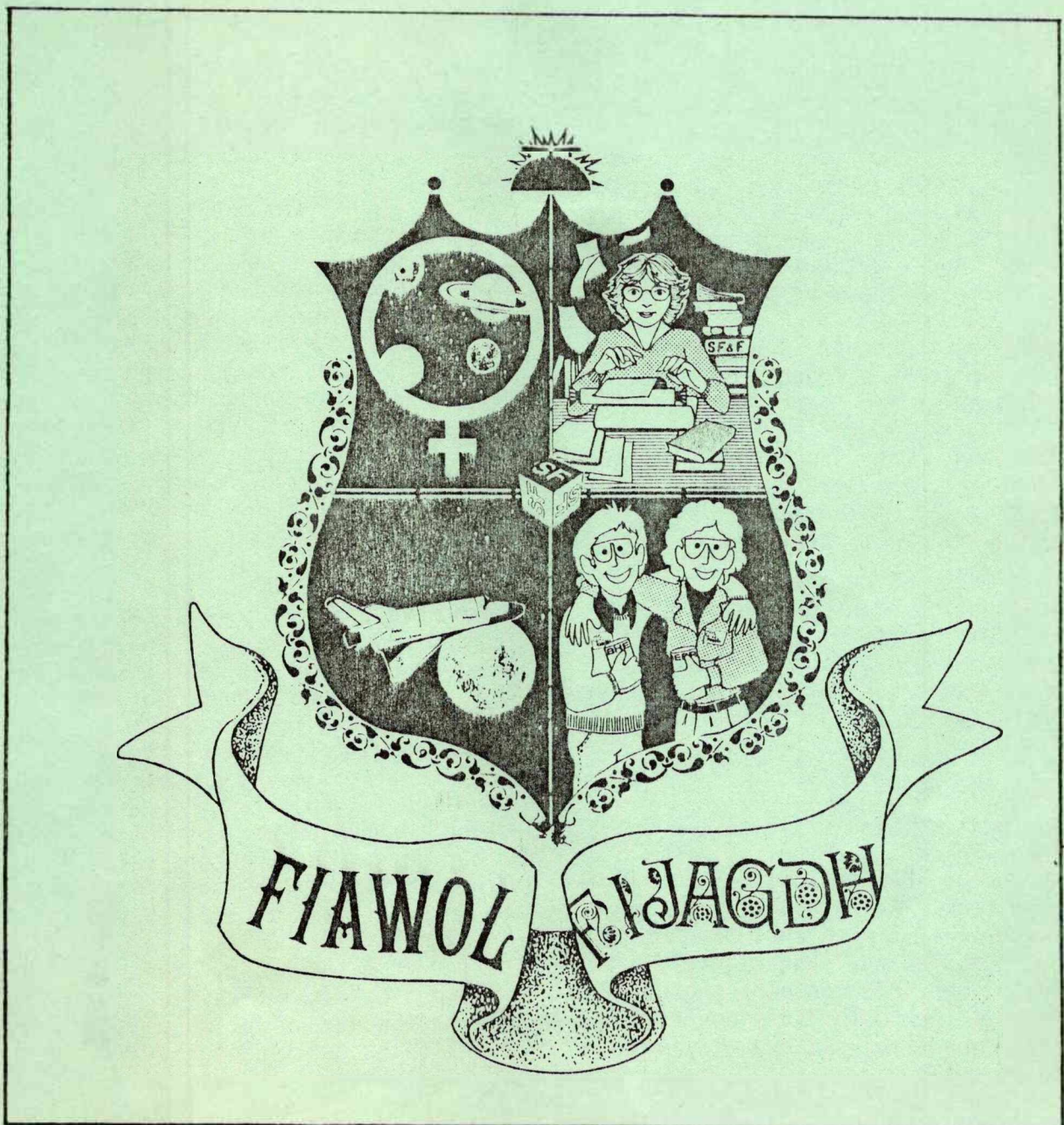


OBSSESSIONS

This is Obsessions 28 and number 69 of the Obsessive Press Publications, amazingly, and it still comes to you from Jeanne Gomoll at 2018 Jenifer Street, Madison, WI 53704 for the 39th issue of A Women's Apa. My telephone number is 608-241-8445 and all material herein is copyright © 1983, by Jeanne Gomoll. Sorry, no joke in the colophone this time. It's 2:15 a.m., and I'm too tired to be witty. Not to worry, though; I'm finishing this zine, not starting it, as I type this paragraph.



1. Mailing Comments

Anne Laurie The lack of ballots has nothing to do with dissatisfaction with the way you've been running things, or, I'm sure, with a dangerous apathy level in the women's apa. We all think you're doing a fine job, and as with any election that has only one candidate running, abstention is pragmatically the same thing as voting for that one candidate. Admittedly you deserve more back-patting and general kudos/ego-boosts for your admirable work these past few years, and I for one apologise for having forgotten to send my ballot it. But, truthfully, honest injun, cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die, it was general forgetfulness lulled by cheerful approval of your administration that allowed me to forget, not apathy (which would imply that I thought you were doing a mediocre job but that noone else would or could improve on your record). I hope that you keep on being AWA's OE for as long as you have the energy and interest to continue. And I bet most every other woman in AWA feels the same way.

Terry Garey (re the cover illustration)... You and I seem to have found this interesting fascination in the "hand" motif...

D/Nina Rzrushen *women honestly discussing sex is always seen as pornographic. Men discussing sex is, of course natural and Rill and Urnest. Feh. so you said.*

I have this interesting anecdote to discuss in connection with your point up there. (Imagine that! I found an honest-to-goddess comment hook lying undisguised in more-or-less prose form in your apazine. Better watch that, D. You're slipping.)

This is the anecdote.

One of the neater things I've gotten from the National Women's Mailing List is a brochure and poster advertising the upcoming photography book, *Rising Goddess*. It's a feminist publication with an introduction byshoot, I forget now (Kate Millet?)... well, anyway, the book contains photos of female nudes. The poster (and cover) is a particularly wonderful picture of a swimmer on her back, still partly under water, except for her back-tilted head, shoulders, breasts and upper rib cage. Water swirls

about her. The sky is bright with sunlight. Her body is muscular, sparkling with water running from her just-surfaced skin. The image telegraphs strength, calm, sensuality, beauty, and a special sense of immediacy: Every time I see her, it's as if she has just surfaced above the water surface. As if she is just then breathing in that rush of air into her strong lungs. Sometimes I see it in a more abstract way: I see her shoulders, her breasts with taut nipples, the water lapping on her upper abdomen, as if she were a continent. Other times, I can see her symbolically, as representing all women, just now rising above the water, at last able to use our strength and breath in fresh air.

I get to see her lots since I donated the poster to Bodyworks (the YWCA weightlifting gym), and we've got it posted on the wall next to the universal. It's quite inspirational.

When I first brought it in, I left it up to the supervisor to decide where (or if) to post it. I thought some women who came in the evening might object to it because men come in at night and I thought they might feel uneasy seeing men look at that poster as pornography instead of a gorgeous photograph of a strong woman. (You see, I assumed no woman would look at that poster in any such way.) Carol, the supervisor, didn't think there was any problem, and liked the poster even more than I do.

So we were both shocked and upset when we found out that a woman who came in for a morning workout (not during Carol's hours) had removed the poster. No men work out in the morning, and apparently the woman was offended by the poster itself and took it on herself to remove the offending object. I left a note, asking the poster at least be returned to me and suggesting that she talk to some of us about it. The poster was replaced the next day (all of this anonymously) with some stains on it. She had obviously tossed it in the trash. The next day she'd put up a sign inviting people to vote on whether or not we should keep the poster up or get rid of it. She and two other women left anonymous "X"s under the "throw out" column. During the days that followed, about 20 other women signed

their names under the "keep" column, along with statements describing their liking of the photograph. The consensus among the "keepers" seemed to be a surprise that female nudity could be per se labeled as pornography. (Although we all admitted that we were assuming here, as the "tossers" hadn't defined their reasons, and only by word-of-mouth had we heard the word "porn" used in connection to the "rising goddess".) If this photograph is porn, wrote one signer, then my body and your body is porn. And maybe that's what we've been taught to believe and that makes it all the more important to reaffirm the beauty in our own and other women's bodies without reference to men and the violence of real pornography. I agree with that. Pornography is more than nudity, and even in the worst cases where violence and pain are linked with men's enjoyment and use of women's bodies, I wouldn't accept censorship. In this case, the issue was more than censorship, however. It was the tragedy of women feeling their own bodies are shameful.

This story has an even sadder postscript. It turns out that the women who objected to Woman Rising were objecting not only to her as pornography, but as a "perversion" as well. A couple weeks after the voting list had been taken down (end result 28-3 to keep her up), I talked to someone who knew the 3 women. It turned out that one of these women had convinced the other 2 that since the poster had been brought in at noontime when a number of lesbians work out at BodyWorks, that this poster was lesbian porn. She has apparently been lobbying to put up a Playgirl centerfold. Now it's true that a large percentage of the noontime weightlifters are lesbians. It's mostly a chance, and probably temporary situation: it's a flux situation, though it may be intensified if women like these 3 stay away because of what they see as a restricted situation. But it certainly is a frustrating, disillusioning realization that in the midst of all the self-confident, strong women coming to BodyWorks and "Rising Goddess" there on the wall, we should be confronted with this homophobic response from women who will not even confront the people they feel have offended them.

As Cheryl says, it's all too complex a situation and hasn't been dealt with by the feminist anti-porn groups who want to make it so simple and black-and-white.

Pat, I really enjoyed your discussion of living alone, living rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, and roommates. I've been living alone now for five years and found that I very quickly got used to not having people around all the time. Of course, I was moving from a situation that made living alone feel like the proverbial one in which the guy stops hitting himself over the head with a hammer. It feels so good when they stop. A bad roommate situation, y'know. This is the second apartment I've had alone, and it's a wonderful one with some limitations. The limitation is mostly the lack of a living room. I've got cheap rent, no electricity bills, low heat bills (because I'm upstairs from landlords who keep their apartment very warm), and lots of storage space. When I moved in, though, I decided to sacrifice the living room to make my office: room for desk, file cabinet, shelves, that sort of thing. When I have friends over we tend to sit around the kitchen table or sit on the bed. Which is OK. The lack of public sitting room inadvertently sparked an affair once (there was no place else to listen to music but the bedroom...) —but there is not enough room for a party. Any more than 4 or 5 people begins to make the apartment seem crowded. Eventually I'll move again: I hope, to a place I own. And then I want a bigger, better organized kitchen and a big, sunny workroom. It's even conceivable that I will eventually move in with someone. But I feel that the experience of living alone all these years has given me a clear perspective of what I really need in an apartment or house, a much clearer idea than I had when I had only lived with others. Your revelation about affirming your suspicion regarding your attitude toward clean dishes (that you wouldn't let dirty ones lie around in your own apartment), is one that I experienced too. That's the sort of thing that, I think, would be much easier to defend (yet not feel defensive about) if thrown into a roommate situation again.

Concerning your many coas, now. As chief mailing list person in the Madison SF group, I must protest. I'd actually gotten your coa before AWA came in the mail. (We've just finished entering 7 year's worth of WisCon names and addresses, and the entire AURORA mailing list into a computer and have sent out a WisCon mailing to the entire, cumulative list in order

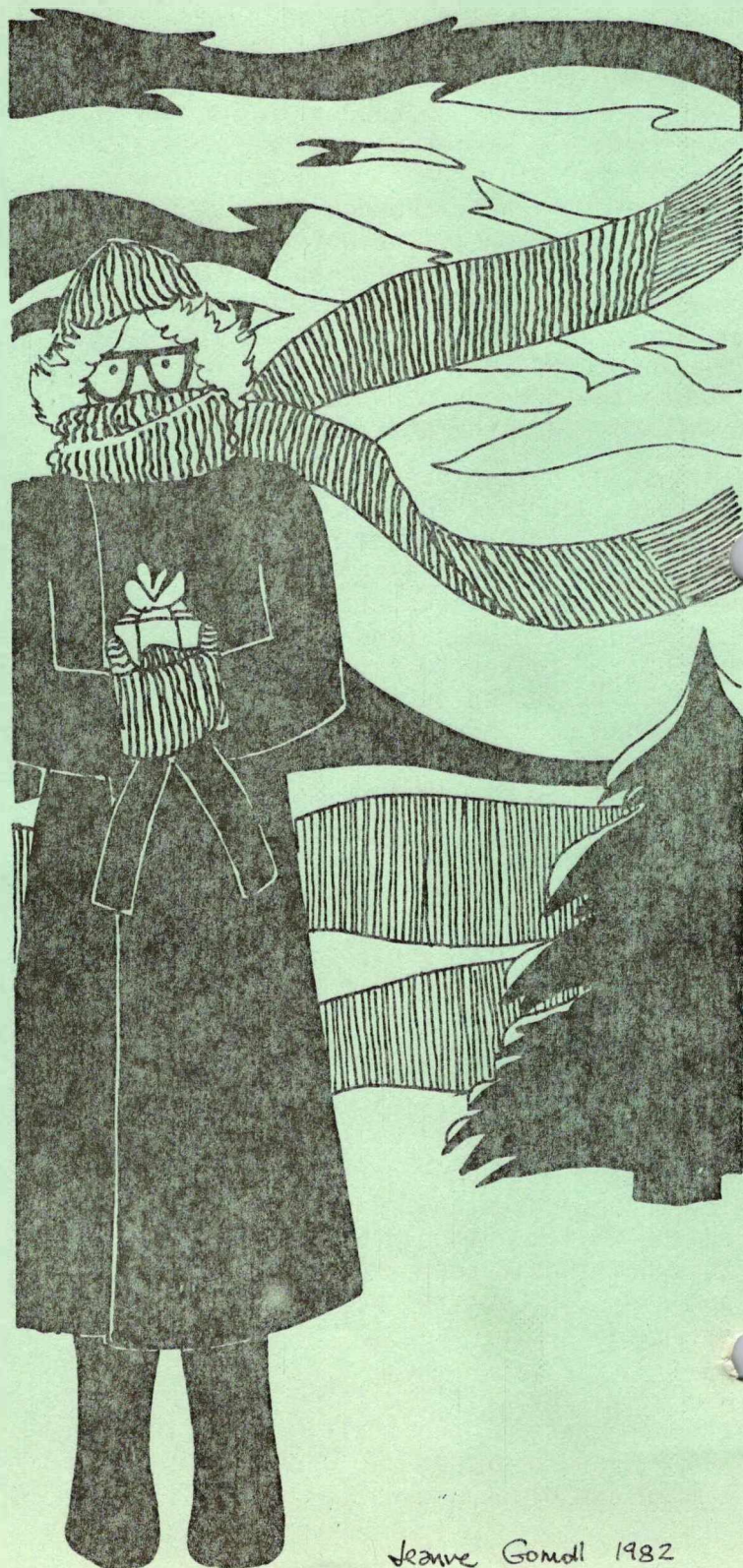
to clean up our mailing list. As of this date we've spent about \$150 paying for returns (at 25¢ a return). Now, hopefully, this will be a one-time expense.) Next year's mailing will yield much fewer coa's and, at least, fewer "no forwarding addresses", but still, I must protest. Fans move around all too much. You should all consider buying houses, putting down roots, or at least—getting yourself a PO Box. (Insert Sarcasme here.)

Cheryl I got some cooking things for X-mas too—some pyrex, deep-dish pie pans which are nice because I do good pie crust and as a result, make a lot of dessert-type pies plus quiches. I also got two new coats partially paid for by my parents for the holidays. Along with other parts of my wardrobe winter coats were definitely in need of replacement. In fact, I'd thrown away a couple coats in the Spring because they were just too large for me. So I was really grateful for my parents' aid in this large purchase: One parka suitable for X-Country skiing, and a long black wool coat that makes me look verrrry sophisticated that I wear with skirts, etc. I did a cartoon of myself wearing it and printed it up as a holiday card and will tape it in right there—→ poof. The miracles of scotch tape.

When looking around for stuff to reprint in the AWA-book, don't neglect your own writing. Specifically I am referring this past issue to your excellent essay/reply to Karen Pearlston on feminist anti-pornography. I agree that the movement's response is superficial and in the end, may be more harmful to women than the pornography it proposes to "protect" us from. My comments about "Woman Rising" in response to D's comments apply equally here. But again, an excellent discussion regarding the real complexity of the issue.

anna I hope you're enjoying working out at the YW as much as I do. I get involved on more levels every day (it's almost another fandom). I'm now on the HPER Board which advises on all the YW's athletic programs and have gotten permission to rent the YW's pool during WisCon (Saturday night). Plus, I'm taking a self-defense course there. Tomorrow night's the last of a 5 meetings, but it was/is an excellent brush-up on common sense, practical ways to defend oneself in a rape or assault situation, the primary lesson being to react quickly with "dirty" fighting,

and not to waste precious time in the sort of powerless struggling that society promotes for women. I recommend self-defense courses (as opposed to akido, karate, or other martial arts, unless you're prepared to keep practicing these skills for the rest of your life, regularly) to every woman. Unusual physical strength is not a prerequisite to survival on the streets. (This has not actually been a comment on your zine, it's just a digressive rant...)



Mog you mentioned having a "theory that there are certain series of notes that are actually emotional triggers" at least in Western music. I agree. And in fact the subject seems to have come up a number of times in conversation over the past month with several different people who also agree. Aaron Copeland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" (especially the opening few bars), invariably raises a lump in my throat and fills my tear ducts. Part of that response still resonates with my first hearing of that piece, sitting on the banks of the Mississippi River, when a symphony orchestra was touring down the river on a great barge, doing performances along the way. The sound of those trumpets echoing among the bluffs across the water, and all the beauty of awakening Spring blossoming all over the hills and over the flood plain, was a spectacularly emotional setting for a first hearing of that music. But I think that even so, the emotional connection is there in that piece, even without the memory. All of Copeland's music, in fact, tends to mix the personal-emotional with the fanfare of a sort of glorious/larger purpose or idealism that gets touched with such pieces as, well, the familiar Star Wars theme. Blood stirring, jingoistic stuff, that sort of thing. Which may be why Copeland catches what people think of as a particularly "American" sound. Anyway. A bit off the topic. In these conversations I was telling you about, someone mentioned having read a study that confirmed your theory, that there are emotional triggers. Maybe someone else here will have a bit more information on where or how this study was conducted. I've forgotten even who told me this bit of information. Myself, I prefer the tear-jerking kind of music, say the second movement of Beethoven's 7th and other soppy emotional gop as Tchaichovsky's "Pathetique"... (...I confess...)...or to be more familiar, say the love themes of various movies. Or nostalgic themes from films like "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "Sophie's Choice" both of which instantly settle you into a nostalgic openness, somewhat like Bradbury does with prose when he talks about midwest small towns in the summer when he was a boy. Anyway, I prefer that over the blood-stirring stuff (even though it can still affect me) that seems aimed at making you want to get up and go off on some grand quest or off to some glorious war.

Anne Laurie Well, I'm really looking forward to seeing what you come up with for ARTIFICE

(which I think is a dandy name for your zine). I'll try to think about some recommendations. Right off, with regard to your request for suggestions for stuff with especially limited circulation, I'd like to suggest WisCon's program book covers and progress reports. I'm really proud of Georgie Schnobrich and Lucy Nash and my cover for this year's progress report (the one with the fannish badge¹: did you all catch the dead unicorn in it?) and certainly that will not have a very widespread circulation (though we are having it printed on a limited number of T-Shirts and I'm thinking of having some postcards printed for myself using the design). Last year's "Ace Double Program Book" in honor of Terry Carr's and Suzette Haden Elgin's GoHships turned out very well, I think, and hardly anyone in fandom got to see it. Would you like me to send you a copy of that?

1983, the Year of Debt Retirement. You and me both. That's my new year's resolution too, and my friend Peter is helping me work out a budget and start keeping track of expenses so that I can claim myself as a self-owned business next year on my income tax. Not to mention the hope that I can, from now on, keep track of how much money I've got in my bank account. When I Changed My Ways in early January I found almost a year's-worth of unbalanced check statements, some envelopes not even opened. But so far, I'm doing well. I purchased a budget book from a stationary supplies store and have been diligently keeping track of my expenses and have embarked on a savings program to pay for conventions and to save for such things as a drafting machine and, eventually, a house. Next month, I think I'll know enough about my recording needs to design my own budget form. All this may never get to an "obsessive" level like some of my other activities, but it is just as much a change of lifestyle as starting exercising was. You'll probably hear less about it from me though than you do about the latter. Anyway, good luck to you. You have my understanding.

Avedon I have the same experience as you, with regard to finding more power when I'm more capable of self-disclosure than the other person. Loss of power, I think, comes in when self disclosure is done expecting and

¹A copy of the badge is on the front page.

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needing the other person to reciprocate. When they don't, a feeling of deception or dangerous vulnerability can develop. But if one self-discloses without expectations it's more common, I think, for the other person to feel nervous about their abilities to do the same if they aren't equally practiced. In fact, for Peter and I, this subject has come up a couple times. And he says that he has at times felt at disadvantage because of my easiness and his lack of ease in self-disclosure.

I think you're right, Avedon. You do seem to get mellower when you're in love. A definite decrease in doses of sarcasm and pointed repartee.

♀ ♀

That's all the mailing comments for this issue. WisCon is a mere three weeks away, and there is no more time for stuff like this. I'm happy that I've managed a zine though, and that after WisCon I won't have to rush out a postmailing though; I'm getting better. I hope I will have gotten to see some of you at WisCon.

Updates in my life: WHIMSEY will be coming out after WisCon now. (This is a very frustrating delay for me and has made me adamant in deciding to get off the WisCon planning committee next year: I don't have the time to do WisCon anymore, not if I want to do any projects of my own besides regular work hours and my freelance jobs plus working out, swimming, etc. I can't cut down on sleep time any more. Something has to go!)

One thing I should say here that I was planning to write in WHIMSEY, is that I've had to cut out some traveling this year in order to pay off debts and get my finances on an even keel. (As I said, Anne Laurie, I understand completely.) The section in question is supposed to be titled "Why I Won't be Visiting the West Coast This Year" and will go into the fun and games of working out a budget and what Awful things I'm trying to eliminate from my character (bad money management, foolish gambling instincts that, for example, the bank won't have gotten that check before I deposit my pay check next Thursday). More later, but that, basically is the situation. I do however, have postage money, so see you all in AWA in May.

love, *Jeanne*

Women's Aglow

Members of Women's Aglow will meet at 9 a.m. Feb. 3 at 2005 W. Belt-line Highway.

(From the "getting married" section of the local newspaper. Bizarre.)

(my first thought was that it was a ♀'s anti-mike group.)

[Faint, illegible text]