

SUBSESSIONS #1

The Subapa of OBSLSSIONS, both produced by Jeanne Gomoll, 143 W. Gilman Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703January 1, 1976

Hello there...

I knew that I might not have access to the neat ditto stensil-maker I use to print OBSESSIONS with, so temporarily (for this issue only) I'm going to use this bleak, pictureless mimeo method.

First of all, I want to rephrase some things I will have said in the #3 issue of the regular APA, and also have said in a response to Ctein's letter, about the subApa debate.

I am somewhat hesitant about the idea of the subApa personally because I don't like the idea of withholding certain kinds of information from one group and not the other. I think that given time, the withheld-information group would begin to receive more and more superficial and less important thoughts from me. As to the rationale/philosophy behind the creation of a subApa, (1) I agree with Ctein that the subApa does not pose the same benefits as an actual CR group because it is not direct face-to-face and is so characterized in "lags" between comment and response. Therefore, I don't think the reasons used to exclude men (rightly) from a CR group apply here. (2) with regard to avoiding the rehashing of elementary tenents of feminism, I have two thoughts: first, that it is a sad but very obvious fact that there are a lot of women, not just "all" men, who are at the beginning stages of feminist understanding. Our own group is not unrepresentative of that state of affairs. Secondly, the written form of these communications allows anyone that wants to avoid such review sessions to do so easily. Alternately, the written form also allows those whose beginner's status stems from a lack of contact/awareness of the ideas, to get that contact, to become

more aware perhaps. The important thing is anyway (the idea that Ctein very correctly, I think, is insisting upon) is that the subApa will not, and cannot be a real CR group, and because of the differences (time gaps and written form) it will have quite different characteristics.

I'm not arguing this point on the basis of a dislike for reverse-discrimination. If I thought that there was some real potential for power being used by men in the main Apa; or if I thought there was a chance for more personal and interpersonal growth in the situation of the subApa --If I thought any of these things, I would be in favor of the idea regardless of the necessity to exclude others. I do think it is really important for women to be strong and convinced of that strength in order to change things, and sometimes that means a period of private support among women is necessary. But I don't think this is one of those times.

So, unless the idea is discontinued, which I wouldn't object to, I plan to participate in both Apas, but do not plan to reserve certain information for one or the other. Obviously, as the conversations of the two diverge, the result may be that I say some things in one that I don't say in the other, but it won't be a conscious exclusion...

This has become more of a verbatim report of my #3 Apa than I had originally planned. You can all probably just skip that part of the page when you come upon it next month. Sorry. But I thought it was important to make these ideas public here since

I sent off copies of it to Ctein (following receiving his letter) and to Janet too.

I'm writing this two weeks before Christmas, frantic because I haven't even begun to think of Christmas presents (mainly because I'm going to be rather pressed for funds this year but also there's been JANUS and a few other things). We finished JANUS #6 this week and will be collating tomorrow night. And as soon as I finish this, I will be through and caught up with the Women's Apa through February.

I saw the "new" PETER PAN at a friends house last night (the version with Mia Farrow as Pan, and Danny Kaye as Hooke). It seems to me that they borrowed from both the Disney and Mary Martin versions, but came down most heavily on the mother theme. (Women being too smart to fall from their prams, they never go to Neverland, but grow up to be mothers, protectors of goodness and civilization, & protectors/wardens of young boys.) But I kept drifting off into other thoughts, a somewhat different reaction to a (I'm sure) quite unconscious theme of the film. Since Martin did Pan many years ago, it has become tradition for a woman to play the part... Perhaps this is because Martin was so very successful in the role, but I think it has a little to do with a "right" feeling from such a choice. Bad english there, sorry: to rephrase, There is something about the story that makes the choice of a woman to play the part of the closet-woman, Pan, a very appropriate casting decision. I think you can look at the modern version of PETER PAN in a very different way than Berry probably ever meant it to be looked at.

Notice how the double character of Hooke and the father are made purposely transparent mirror images. We are meant to see the casting trick and compare the roles of father/pirate (the pirate says his evilness is due to his not having a mother). Well, why not look at Pan in the same way? Pan is a woman pretending to be a boy.

Pan is in conflict with Wendy, another woman in disguise (she is pretending to be a mother). What I found myself doing as I watched the film, was to think about Wendy and Pan as being two sides to one whole woman. Wendy is the part that heeds (swallows whole) the role society tells her she ought to want. Pan is the part which realizes the horrible waste of such a role ("her" slanders against the situation of a mother-son relationship become far more understandable from the point of view of a person not wanting to trade in life of freedom in Neverland for the restrictive one nursemaid). The boys in Pan's care are all easily tempted back to their mothers from Neverland. Pan never will be, but returns generation after generation to tempt the adolescent daughters of Wendy to escape from the role of mother, and more: to learn to "mother" another woman, to share the support that is reserved for men and the freedom that is reserved for men too.

Someday, I would like to see a version of PAN that ended with one of Wendy's daughters leaving for good, and not just for Spring Cleaning...

It seems a bit odd to write this last, when it will appear first (before, I mean, the third edition of the regular Apa) and even more strange because my OBSESSIONS #2 didn't make the Dec. 1 deadline and so will not appear probably until February either. I've said a lot to you and yet you don't know yet. That is the reason too, that this seems (or might seem to you) so impersonal. I went into a lot of detail about the substance and the whys of my personal life and philosophy, and cannot build on that without repeating large chunks of OBSESSIONS #3 wholesale. So I guess I'll wait for the rest of it to catch up and continue on afterwards.

That's all I think for now. I'll see you in a month.

Jeanne