

Shoreline

two

Published for Crapa (fifth mailing) by Jeanne Gomoll, 2018 Jenifer Street, Madison, WI 53704, who can be reached at a new phone number: (COP!) 608-241-8445. © Copyright 1978, Jeanne Gomoll

Hello. In this issue of SHORELINE, I will hopefully tell you what SHORELINE means exactly, well, here anyway; do some mailing comments, and launch into an essay on What Art Means To Me. Which can also be seen as a sort of mailing comment, only the roots of it are not only in Crapa's conversations, but in a lot of things, even some conversations conducted just recently at Iguanacón.

A scene persists in my memory from many years ago. I'm leaving a theatre which has just shown a film with some gorgeous scenic background shots (and not much else). Totally unaware of the incredibly beautiful sunset painting the horizon and silhouetting the buildings directly outside the theatre, several people are commenting on the beauty of the country in the film, how one never sees such scenery in our own part of the world. I thought for a while afterwards about why some people need to have something "framed" before they will react to their own perceptions about it as art.

This gets to a basic element of what art is for me -- the process of putting down in thought, in words, in color, in music, in numbers, in sound, or in whatever medium is available; some perception, some *connection* between the senses and recognition. Connection is all for me: the excitement I feel when reading, for instance, of plot, metaphors, theme, my own experiences, knowledge of the artist's background other artists, other art, -- all connecting, integrating and being articulated in my mind in a unique way, creating a unique "piece" of art. I think that in the participation of any person with a piece of art (what you've called "artistic consuming," Denys), by their reactions and perceptions unique to themselves, *every time* this occurs a new connection, new art, is created. In my definition, *any* articulated reaction made by any individual about something "outside," as interpreted by its connection with something "inside" (experiential memories, opinion, personal ethics, knowledge, everything a person *is*) makes art. There's a lot of art.

Whether or not that connection results in a perception that is committed to a less ephemeral medium than thought (e.g., canvas, language, numbers, a billboard, speech or film, etc.), or whether the connection is a "new" one, a "good" one, a "true" one, a "humane" one, or a "correct" one -- has nothing to do with it's being art to me. Neither does art need an audience. One person's idea, writing, painting or whatever, even if it is never seen by another person (the unheard tree falling in the forest), is still art.

Art is the process, not the sharing, though there's that too. (*communal art? Yes. I like that.*)

And of course after one had defined art one can qualify art. I make as many value judgements as anyone else about whether what I call art is good or bad, objectionable or healthy, etc. But again, the qualifying adjectives have nothing to do with it being art or not. That area, where one draws lines and what kind of value judgements are important when speaking about art (and *making* art), and what those judgements require us to do once we've made them, seems to be where the discussion in Crapa is going on.

Several years ago, I participated in a demonstration, a sort of informational picket, against the showing of BIRTH OF A NATION on campus, and afterwards we encouraged the people who'd seen it to join us in a discussion of the racist aspects of the film. Well, that was during my radical-student-days, when I was to the capitol building every few months, testifying for pro-choice groups in the abortion debates, and various ecological causes and the like, but even now, I'd certainly still support such a picket. There are times for me when art has a clearly unhealthy (as in commercials for vaginal deodorant sprays, or Nestlé's formula for third world women) or inhumane aspect (as in TRIUMPH OF THE WILL). To communicate my perceptions of this art, I have and will engage in various political activities to share and make others aware of my views.



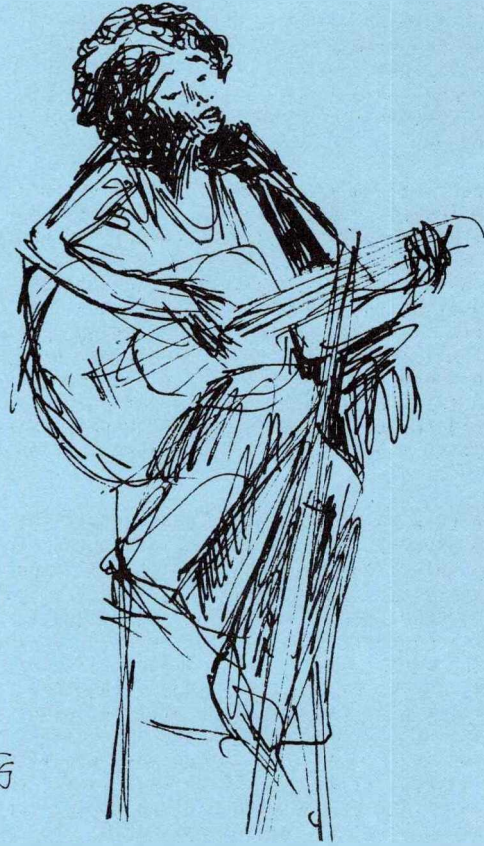
I agree that all art is political. The political point of view (my shorthand definition: that point of view that considers the manipulation of power among individuals and groups) is one that can be used in the perception of art, in fact of any situation in which human beings are involved. In some cases the aspect of the political is of greater or lesser importance to the artist who conceives the work or to an individual who reacts to it or even to the same individual who reacts at a different time to that work. Example: Seeing the fairy tale-opera, THE MAGIC FLUTE, had very little impact on me in a political sense the first time I saw it. The second time, because I'd just read WHEN GOD WAS A WOMAN by Merlyn Stone, and thought of the opera in terms of perhaps being a re-arranged, re-told story (tragedy transformed into comedy) of the overthrow of the matriarchy by the patriarchy, it was as if I were seeing an entirely different opera. My suspicion that the fairy tale from which Mozart adapted the opera was actually based upon the fall-of-the-matriarchy and rise of the family mythologies, may in fact be entirely in my imagination (but useful, nonetheless), for I have no idea of when the story did in fact originate. But that particular political dimension, in this case, would thus exist for me and not the artist, and for me once but not another time. I would say that all art is political as I would say that all art has a personal dimension for any individual encountering any work. They are both aspects that are present to a lesser or greater extent in/for all art. I assume there are other such aspects as well.

But beyond agreeing that all art is political and going further: qualifying, for instance, that sort of perception in terms like "correct" and "incorrect," and then acting upon such judgements with censorship -- I get very nervous and not very apt to agree readily. There is so much art that I can't easily qualify in my own mind as hurtful to other people (or, on the other hand, art that I *do* view as such) that is seen by others in totally different ways. I am nervous about being a censor for them. I am afraid of being censored *by* them. And it's not just a matter of a narrow band of fuzziness that would be affected by these value judgements. It's more like a long, long string of Christmas tree bulbs all tangled up in the middle, with only a short length sticking out from each end. You know where the thing starts and where it ends, but everything is tangled up in the middle. With a few works of art I can easily say, this is unhealthy or this is inhumane and people should be aware of the implications of them; and sometimes I am able to say the opposite (and I suppose I am less constrained there). These are the two "ends" sticking out of the tangle. The tangle is made up of all sorts of elements, not just the qualities of the art itself but of all sorts of elements, not just the qualities of the art itself but of the concerns, biases, knowledge and background of the people who come in contact with it as well, all relative according to when and who is concerned.

Several months ago, there was a show of photographs done by a woman artist displayed at the University of Wisconsin Art Center. In my opinion they were excellent satirical photos of women in stereotypical roles, perceptive examples of the positive end sticking out of that tangle of Christmas tree bulbs. Objectionable aspects of our traditional behavior/expectations were ex-

aggerated and in most cases quite humorously and sensitively dramatized. I thought the show was an excellent one. However one group of women -- I forget the name they scrawled in spray paint over the walls and photographs of the art center -- apparently felt far differently about the show than I did; felt, I guess, that it was representative of the objectionable end of that tangle of Christmas tree bulbs. I would guess that the essence of my disagreement with that group of women concerns the same argument that comes up about female impersonators/drag queens, etc. Many people believe that to poke fun and exaggerate the traditional, objectionable female role is, on the whole, degrading and harmful to women.

I don't think it would be possible to easily come to a consensus about the "correctness" or



"incorrectness" of this artist/photographer's work. But I am opposed to and very angry at the kind of destruction and censorship that the group of women took upon themselves to respond to her work. And since I think that in most cases, there would be quite valid and tangled reasons for disagreement as to the actual effect of a work of art, I will always be opposed to any group taking it upon themselves to censor according to their morality. Practically speaking, chances are that if a group *would* be granted or took such power, I would not be in fundamental agreement with them anyhow. I don't mean to say that this relieves myself or anyone of the responsibility to counteract messages presented in art that I or anyone else considers injurious/inhumane/unhealthy -- only that I can only see the method of censorship as a "cure" worse, in most cases, than the disease.

Now for some mailing comments...

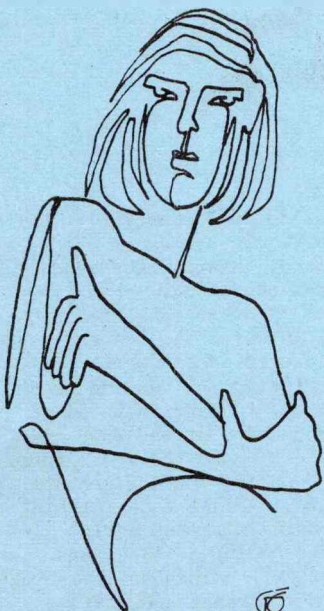
Robert I also was not too enthusiastic about your Amin satire. The idea of satirizing him is great, I think, but I react to your particular method of doing that as I would if Anita Bryant, for instance, were to be satirized as a "typical female" -- with a stereotypical lack of logical, reasoning capacity, etc. But you aren't even satirizing Amin by exaggerating characteristics of the group he belongs to, as has been pointed out by others in the apa already, so your method loses even more effectiveness.

carl Maybe I missed the explanation. But I don't understand why you offset title/colophone onto a blank sheet of paper and then put ditto on that. Why don't you offset or ditto the whole thing?

Me Weird isn't it, how offsetting a xerox of a photograph put a grin where (really!) there was a sober expression to begin with.

doug I enjoyed your trip report immensely. It felt as if it must have been an exhausting thing to put down onto paper, but satisfying too. I keep thinking about the selective thief with your book of contemporary Canadian poetry.

Paul I like your comment (via Delany) about actually counting how many women there are in a group before saying that the percentage must be 50-50. I realize this would be a good thing for me to do too. For example, with Madstf -- the group in Madison that does JANUS, WisCon, radio and TV shows, and in general does everything but live together in one house -- I tend to think of as equally divided female/male. But as we've grown during this past year, (because of the con mostly) the ratio has been getting increasingly lopsided with more and



more men in the group. I tend to still think of it being equally divided though and did in the past too, mainly because, oddly enough, it is the women who dominate the group philosophically and in terms of energy and politics. We do the most and thus have the most to say in terms of decision-making. I tend to think that's the reason I do make estimates of this sort -- from the sense of who has more power, but I think I'll check it out to find out for sure.

Elinore: In our group, the Treckies seem to have integrated themselves easily and comfortably (perhaps because since most of the Treckies in our group were women too; they didn't have to hold on to and emphasize their knowledge of ST trivia to maintain status). So, anyway, that sub-group has never gotten to me too much. My snide remarks regarding Treckies stem more from less personal experiences with them, for example reading about them, contact at cons, and the time I was walking behind two guys on the street and they were playing this game in which one would quote a line from an ST episode and the other would identify it by title and character. Trivial trivia obsession.

I've been a lot more turned off by the Dungeon and Dragon players (D&Ders, as they're known). (Now, since most of the D&Ders are men, perhaps *they're* having to emphasize their sub-group chauvanism in order to maintain status in our women-oriented group...) Anyway, there's a growing, rabid and sometimes obnoxiously rude (to the extent of using our meetings/parties to do their D&D adventures) group of them in Madstf that is obviously (thank goodness) soon going to split off/be split off from the main group. I find their activities unappealing and sometimes irritating for some of the same reasons I feel this way about ST fandom at times. The members tend to put in incredible amounts of energy, time, and work into the games -- obsessions that take at least as much time and energy as anyone in Madstf devotes to other projects (like JANUS, the con, the shows). And yet, like the Treckies who spend hours discussing endless, inflated trivia, the D&Ders produce nothing, make nothing. The adventures seem to be a little higher level escape mechanism than is TV since the players do participate to a degree. To be fair, I've talked with some of the people involved and they *are* producing something; they've evolved a much more complex and "real" set of rules and plans for individuals' activity in the imaginary worlds than the regular sort of game you see going on at cons. But too, there's my prejudice against activities which don't change me somehow or in which I can produce nothing as a result of. More and more I find D&D players more unappealing than the Treckies, even if they don't (yet) get written up in TIME or NEWSWEEK.

Denys A lot of my essay on art was directed toward you. I also want to say though that I agree heartily with Jane's and your analysis/criticism of Eli's comments on possessive pronouns. I appreciate, too, your sharing your experiences in Iran and knowledge about Anent with us.

As always, it was terrific to see you again at Iguanacon. Hope you had as good a time as I did. There's no con report here because, though I did write one (pouring it all out during the trip up

back to Wisconsin with Hank and Lesleigh, and later editing out the personal stuff), it's going to be printed in JANUS as part of (or rather, most of) "Newsnurd." To everyone: I'll probably be sending out at least the next issue (#14) to everyone on the Crapa mailing list, but you will probably have to "do something" in order to keep it coming if you want it thereafter.

David You too. I mean it was good to see you at the con too. Actually though we've met at two (?) cons before, this is the first time that we've really talked. I enjoyed it. And you are too impish; even at 6 feet you would be impish. Though that'd be pretty weird, a 6-foot Canadian imp. Typical though. Look what happens to deer up there.

Jane After reading your moving story, I feel like gloating. I just moved too and had the first good time moving that I've ever experienced. I called it a "house collating party," and invited everyone in Madstf to it, especially the people who owned cars. I spent the whole of a Friday night up packing all my stuff into boxes (gawd there was a lot of it!) and at about 9:30 the next morning people started showing up. *Everyone* came! Within about an hour and a half all the stuff that had taken me all night to pack had been carried down two flights of stairs, packed into about ten cars, convoyed over to my new apartment which was across town about 5 or 6 miles, and carried up one flight of stairs. It went so fast that we could hardly believe it, and certainly noone was too tired except for me because I'd lost quite a bit of sleep. Later in the day, having gone over to some friends to watch Saturday Night, I fell asleep on their couch and didn't wake up till long after they'd gone to bed: they hadn't wanted to wake me and I spent my first night at my new apartment two days after I'd moved in.

It's too much of an understatement to just say that it was good to have seen you at Iggy. It was wonderful and much too short a time. You are one of the main reasons I want to move to the Northwest. Coming back from Iggy there was one of the largest, most gorgeous rainbows in the sky that I've ever seen. It was a full half-circle and must have spread across at least 50-60° of the sky. Around it the storm clouds were tinged with pinks and purples, reflecting vibrant sunset across from it. Every once in a while lightning streaked across the rainbow and clouds illuminating the dark shadows of the thunderhead. Well, I leaned out of the car in order to see the whole rainbow, getting my hair and head soaked in the process, but feeling wildly happy inside, and I thought of your apa title and of the Judy Collins song it comes from and smiled a lot.

Debbie I enjoyed reading your apazine as well as talking with you in Phoenix quite a lot. The conversation we had in the hallway once on inspiration and the process of writing/drawing was really neat. I hope someday I can get it down onto paper together with a review of Liz Lynn's novel, A DIFFERENT LIGHT. That conversation, together with a later talk with Loren MacGregor and some mulling I'd done on reading the Crapa mailings are what led to the first part of this zine.

I remember when I first read your apazine, I had some things to say in reply to your comments about shyness. It seems that I've forgotten my reactions in the main, or they've become less significant as time has gone by, but here is what I remember: I think everyone who goes through a period of extreme shyness when they were young (certainly a lot of us sf freaks, grown-up "book-worms", "four-eyes" and whatever), is somewhat like a person with a sort of condition that cannot be cured, only continuously fought against. Like an alcoholic. Anyway the only way to stay in contact with people and fight one's inclination to shy away from, retreat into delusions of one's inadequacy, etc., is to constantly put on a show (a bluff) of social ease. Then in the Vonnegut tradition, one becomes what one pretends to be. And every-one one comes in contact with thinks of you as an "outgoing" person. It's funny when one shy person pretending not to be, meets another shy person also pretending not to be and they confide in each other that they are really very withdrawn and not at all at ease in a lot of social situations. Suddenly one starts to suspect everyone of being really shy inside and existing only to the extent that they bluff or rather make themselves vulnerable, betting that noone will find out. Actually I think probably most people are doing this, and publically shy people are simply the ones who haven't learned the game, nor learned how easy it is to pretend to be at ease and how effective it is. So what we have then are two types of people: Secretly and publically shy people.

Looks like I'm not going to be able to get to comment on everyone's mailing. Because I do want to say something about my title and then I want to have room for some artwork, soooo...



SHORELINE... A shoreline is a constantly shifting boundary, which as it moves, leaves evidence of the sea upon the land, changing the land, changing the sea, interconnecting, separating. It, like the title for my other apa, OBSESSIONS, comes from MOBY DICK, in which the sea and land are powerful metaphors for ideas which still move me deeply. Conflicting desires and needs, for security and freedom, to want to be alone and self-sufficient and want, at the same time, to be connected to others. And the shoreline, being the constantly changing line of contact, tension between the two. Rather than thinking of myself in terms of a being with boundaries, I often think of myself as being a place that has a shoreline, and that the changes in me take place on that shore, moving back and forth, building slowly.

love, Jeanne