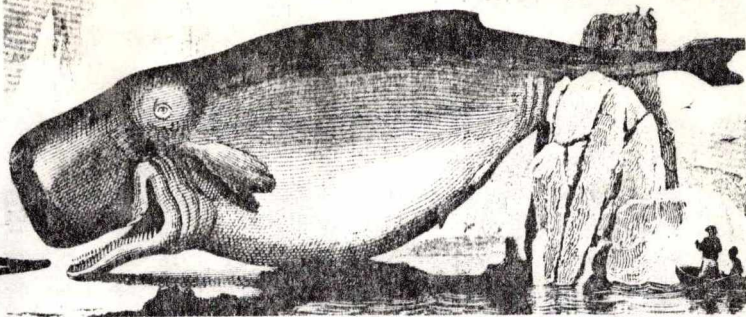


WHAT
Spare Time!?
2



WHAT SPARE TIME!? is a letter-substitute written by Jeanne Gomoll (2018 Jenifer, Madison, WI 53704. 608-241-8445) and is not generally available...so please don't review it. Though not appropriately titled, SECRETARY NO MORE was actually #1 of this letter substitute series and WHAT SPARE TIME!? 2 is #52 of OBSESSIONS PRESS. This issue, and presumably all issues following, will appear as supplements to my apa-zine contributions to A WOMEN'S APA (OBSESSIONS) and to C/RAPA (SHORELINE). All contents © copyrighted 1979, by Jeanne Gomoll, unless otherwise noted.

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A title change was in order once I decided to make this letter substitute a continuing event. Unlike my usual practice (well, a two-time habit) of pulling title/concepts from MOBY DICK, this one has no direct reference in Melville's novel (though I suppose one might imagine Ahab exploding with such a question). And so I repeat: there will be no whale symbolism in WHAT SPARE TIME!? The title is, in fact, one of the fannish phrases of the Madcity SF community: to evoke authentic colloquial ambience, it should be pronounced with a note of hysterical defensiveness and a distinctly threatening tone of voice.


In case some of you haven't heard already, I got the job I mentioned that I'd interviewed for a couple months ago (I believe I called it the "best interview I'd ever done"). I'm now working for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation in the State of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, as a Graphic Artist. The job involves doing maps, illustrations, and layout for the department's programs and publications like environmental impact statements, brochures, articles, etc. Contrary to that matter-of-fact sounding announcement, the event has taken on anything but a camouflaging role in my life. That is: I'm incredulous and extremely happy.

In 1974, after 4 1/2 years at the UW Madison, I graduated with an "official"

bachelor of arts degree in urban/environmental geography (emphasis, planning). Now, a little more than four years later, I've emerged from a different, less official sort of course-of-study. To describe my feelings about my experiences working with JANUS and those while I gradually found free-lancing work, I often referred to myself as doing "apprentice" work...and now, seeing that those latter four years of experience had equal effect with the earlier four years in procuring my new job for me, comparing the two periods seems a quite reasonable hind-sight sort of perspective exercise.

(You see, it was primarily the peculiar combination of my college emphasis and my publication/graphics experience that won me the appointment over...gasp!... 260 other applicants. There are a lot of planning graduates and a lot of artists in Madison. Fortunately for me, apparently not to many combinations.)


My lifestyle didn't change much after graduating from college...I fumbled around a while trying to figure out how to deal with the fact that I was a lot more enthusiastic about continuing education in an area that I'd specialized on with so-called elective courses (40+ credits of post 1940's English and American Lit) than with Geography/Planning which seemed then to depend on my getting increasingly entangled in (ugh:) statistics-studies and computer analysis. So, I put off graduate work and tried to start up a magazine with a feminist reading group I'd helped organize. But,



when that didn't work out, I finally fell in with the Madstf SF group and became obsessed with the enterprise of producing JANUS. Not only did my income stay at painfully sub-poverty levels, but those years now seem to have worked out to be a sort of free-enterprise degree program for me. Those years included the typical freshman ambivalence concerning a "major" which gradually focused in on a specialization and obsession with developing certain skills/areas of knowledge. I stayed physically and emotionally in contact with the University community and because of my unsettled economic and social patterns, found it easy (if not easiest) to continue to identify with the "counter-culture" or whatever passes for that in Madcity these days. In fact, with JANUS, I even had the equivalent of term paper deadlines, heavy reading assignments, and many activities and interests that are typically thought of as "academic," or "sercon."

So now I'm "graduating" again: but as was the case five years ago at the UW-Madison there are no meaningful graduation ceremonies to attend this time either.

About the job now.



First of all, it's really fun! (They're paying me to play!) I have this enormous drafting table in my own office, a good set of technical pens, lots of good quality paper and mylar, stacks of zip-a-tone color, dot and line screens, press-type, boxes and boxes of felt-tips of every color you can imagine, burnishers an electric eraser, and a light table. ...in short, the sort of toys that can hold my attention indefinitely. Sort of like Eli Cohen's computer. My job description takes up four pages and I don't expect to be bored by this job for a long, long time. As the people here have told me, there's not a whole lot of potential for creative graphics: mostly maps to be drawn according to DNR specifications (for archives, working files, and visual aids used in meetings to explain DNR projects to State legislatures); laying out, designing and illustrating of department brochures and park newsletters/papers; designing DNR stickers and signs; doing all the graphic work (graphs, maps, illos) involved in environmental impact statements.

(I will get to take some field trips to the camping and backpacking preserves as well!) So, it's true, I'll be working under many limitations, but the way I see it is that I have PLENTY of outlets for really creative work: I'm still doing JANUS, freelance stuff and selling my stuff at convention art shows after all. What I really need is training in improving my technical skills, working with different mediums and tools than I'm used to. For that, the sort of experience this job affords me is ideal. And not only that...it turns out that State employees get to take job-related courses at the State's expense (even during working hours if a night course isn't available). Now I'll be able to take some art courses which I've never done before, unless you want to count high school pottery classes. I think I'll aim for an MFA (Masters of Fine Arts).

Not only is the potential of this job exciting for me, but it is one of those fairy-tale-perfect jobs for which I am utterly and completely qualified for. Behind me at work there is a book shelf of which at least 2/3 of the books on it were required

in one or another of my Geography and Planning courses in college. I'm familiar with most of the others. The cartography courses, glaciation geography classes, environmental impact reading, public participation and urban dynamics studies — they're all turning out to be useful now. I can't believe it. And I'm not doing statistical analysis: I'm drawing, making use of all the things I've taught myself during the last couple of years. Gad: it's incredible.

So I've been having fun at work. I tend to forget to take breaks, find myself surprised that it's already 4:30, and in general, am looking differently at my day and when the "important" times of that day occur. I mean, I no longer look on after-work hours, evening and nighttime, when I do JANUS work or other work of my own, as the most valuable, productive parts of the day. I'm finding myself needing a bit more sleep than I'm

used to and having to "psych" myself up to do JANUS. It used to be that I'd spend the whole day half-thinking about how I'd lay out a certain page, how I wanted to illustrate that poem or sererep-ticiously outlining NEWS NURDS or a book review. Recently I've started delaying such thinking for off-work times: my job is taking up a lot of creative energies. And that's the main reason I'm enjoying this job so much. Don't despair about JANUS slipping though: just this weekend I layed out more than half of JANUS 16 (and am extremely pleased at how it's turning out: beautiful art and a review of Jessica Amanda Salmonson's AMAZONS! that I put a lot of work into). We should have it to the printer's in a week or so... I doubt that we will have made WindyCon, but it won't have been long after that when you will have seen JANUS 16 in your mailboxes. For all the energy I lose through enjoyment of my job, I gain back not having to worry about paying the rent.

You have no idea what a good mood, what an incredibly long-lasting high I've been on this month! I figure I'll spend a couple more months being "poor" and paying off some long-standing debts before I do any splurging.

The people at work are pretty nice too. The DNR is known as one of the more radical of departments in the state because it attracts cause-oriented, "concerned" workers. (The DNR is also noted as a political dead-end for anyone with ambitions of that sort: The DNR just does to many "unpopular" things, like preserve wetlands and wilderness areas, blocking highway expansion, promoting alternate energy sources, regulating industrial pollutants, opposing nuclear power plant building, etc...) So as a result, the atmosphere is very relaxed and most people other than executives wear jeans—especially in my bureau which is comprised of planners, landscape architects, and an artist (but all "artist types," you know). No one would say "chick" or make sexist jokes any more than they would say "nigger" or oppose the concept of regional land management. This is not to say that I work in a feminist Shangri-La, but they know the vocabulary and it's comfortable

talking to them. I expect that I'll make a lot of good friends at this place.

What's the catch, you ask. I keep wondering that myself. So far I haven't found one...

Well, now I guess I've told you much more than you ever wanted to know about my new graphic artist position. So on to other things.

I've been doing work with the Madison Review of Books, helping to contact publishers and ask for books. MRB is a network of about 75 reviewers who review books (and get to keep the books they review). The reviews are used on WORT-FM and Cable Channel 4, get printed in JANUS once in a while and are finding their way into other outlets as well. Publishers love us and generally send us all the books we ask for...which has recently amounted to about 100 books a week.

Such frequent contact with free books has resulted in more reading for me. About a month ago I picked up a huge stack of biographies (mostly of women who lived in the 1800's) and intended to skim them and do a survey-review of what sort of things have been recently published. Well, I did skim two. But the rest were so fascinating I read them cover-to-cover. So the last several weeks have been partially spent in another century. Biographies of Russian-born North African Journalist and traveler, Amelia Eberhardt; writer Margaret Fuller; two saints (one of Northern Mexico La Sante de Ortuba, or Teresita—the book's title, and the other of Bernadette of Lourdes). The first two were great, the last trash. Well, I'm not entirely biased against "saints" biographies, but in the case of Teresita, I am biased against chauvanistic American scholars (this one, an "expert" on Mexican archeology, architecture and history who has never taken the time to learn Spanish). I enjoyed more George Sand's essays on Majorca (where she spent a summer with Chopin), and even more THE WORLD OF EMILY HOWLAND: ODYSSEY OF A HUMANITAR-

IAN, by Judith Colucci Breault (1979). This last one I'd recommend strongly, as I suspect I'd recommend anything coming out of Les Femmes Press. It's written with a distinct feminist perspective (not bias), and makes some really remarkable comparisons between the reformist period that preceeded the Civil War and womens' role during all that, and the 1960's period of activism. More than that it had an impact on my perception of women's history (as all of these recently read books have had cumulatively), making me realize how close are the times when education of any sort was out of reach for any but the daughters of rich and eccentric fathers, and how very recent have been women's battles to win basic rights. It's really a well-written, enjoyable book. As are all these books, it was interesting just for the reason that I was (and am) so ignorant of the accomplishments and lives of women who should be well known to me; but besides that, it had the added quality of being written by a perceptive and brilliant feminist historian. And then I read a book covering 12 American women by Elizabeth Anticaglia and some pre-civil war collections of letters and diaries by women, one on a contemporary woman dancer, and then there was this gorgeous book of women artists covering 12 women from the Renaissance to contemporary times. How embarrassing: I recognized barely half of the women's names. But it's been interesting.

One nearly universal similarity I've found in these historical women's lives—especially if they did excellent work in some field and made important contributions to society, was the extreme amount of pressure they were under for contradicting the expected sex role behaviors. --So much so, that nearly all of these women experienced frequent debilitating depressions and illnesses related to their rebellion. It made me really sad—and frustrated to think how much more they might have accomplished had they not had to spend so much time justifying themselves to others and themselves. I'd really be curious to see a study done on the percentage of mental and physical disabilities suffered by talented well-known women

as compared to those suffered by equally well-known men of their times. I expect that the women would be found to be disproportionately affected by illnesses, depression, etc., and that those afflictions could be traced to primarily psychosomatic factors connected to the tremendous social resistance they met with. What's more frustrating is that a successful woman in any field today—the arts, business, politics, etc.—still has to do more than do well: she must justify her choices in a way men have no need to do.

Following that course of reading, I went through two self-defense books written by police officers, for women who want to be able to protect themselves from rapists. They make me want to take some classes... but I think are useful in themselves if you take the time to practice the moves they cover. I'm reading a collection of Capra chapbooks now and an actual novel by Phylis Eisenstein (SHADOW OF EARTH). Strange to be reading fiction again. But I think I'll probably continue pulling a lot of women's biographies and feminist books from the MRB shelves. I still tend to do things in student mode: I feel like I'm just beginning on a self-directed survey-course on women in history and in the arts.



The date is now more than a month and a half following the writing date of the last four pages. When I realized that I was going to miss the deadline of the apa, I put this aside and went on to more pressing commitments, figuring that I didn't need minac for the last mailing in any case. So here I am again.

During the interval, I've gotten more acquainted with my job at the DNR, find that I like it even more than I thought I would, and have begun to really enjoy the people I work with. Except for projects that are needed right away (and I work on things like that about 2-3 days out of the week), I am left completely on my own to work on long-range projects at my own speed and discretion. After, say 6 months or so, I'll present that work to my boss, Jim Treichel, tell him how it all turned out and discuss with him the system I will have devised to keep the work updated. It's weird (in comparison with previous typing jobs in which all aspects of the job are scrutinized every step of the way, and my competence is suspect every moment) to be given such open-ended responsibility. Makes me feel pretty good, and the DNR makes out pretty well too I think: I've been working hard.

The people are great. My office is right next to George Knudson's, an older man (late 50's, looks like), who is one of the most famous naturalists in Wisconsin. He tells hilarious Backwoods "Tall Tales" with a flair that never fails to cause laughter in whoever's listening. He's a huge man: about 6'6"—taller than my brother anyway—and looks like a lumberjack. It always seems incongruous to see him writing behind his desk. I've heard about his house: It's built on a terminal moraine and he's used all the rocks he found in his yard to build some gorgeous rock gardens. The special thing about George's rock gardens is that north to south, lowest to highest elevation, the rocks are arranged chronologically according to Wisconsin

strata. ...When I'm not laughing with him, I'm learning.

Then there's David across the way from me. (I can never remember how to spell his last name.) And with Jody Les, David and I are probably the youngest people in the bureau and make up the "radical, counterculture" group, in quotation marks because that label seems ludicrously incongruous for state employees. But we have really engrossing conversations and enjoy one another's ideas tremendously: as I guessed when I first began, I'm going to make a lot of very good friends here.

Ellen Knurr is the only woman in the Park Planning bureau, and coincidentally she and I attended two years of college together at the Waukesha Center of the UW (freshman and Sophomore). Back then I looked up to her as a role-model for a radical, politically involved woman. I was, at that point, the complete academic totally involved and only involved with my books. Knowing Ellen had a lot to do with changing that. Weirdly, however, after we got over the surprise of meeting one another again, getting caught up again with one another's lives, the switch that had occurred became obvious. For the last couple years, she's been engaged to a very religious man (he's studying to be a doctor), and a lot of her politics and philosophy have changed drastically. She wants to quit her job as soon as Jack gets through with his internship and be a housewife and raise lots of kids. She is still undecided about which Republican candidate she will support for the presidency and she becomes very nervous when people talk supportively about abortion, drugs, feminism or...(how does one say this?:) agnostic morality. Avoiding politics, sex and religion, as topics of conversation, however, we still get along fine. I still like her, and anyway, since typists and secretaries are segregated away in another part of the building, she's the only woman I have anywhere near frequent contact with.

And so, other than finding out how this so-called professional level differs in all sorts of cultural, personal and financial ways from previous secretarial jobs (and discovering how carefully the two groups, "professionals" and secretaries, are kept separated into their class cubicles), I've been working hard. Learning curving and Leroy lettering. Traveling up to some of the state parks for training sessions.

I'll be here for a while.

During the interval between the first four pages and these later pages, I've found time to continue reading. I read David Halberstam (he's the media writer that was caricatured in DOONSBURY a couple months ago): THE POWERS THAT BE. Not quite in my "study area" of women's biographies, but excellent. With the exception of the tendency Trudeau spotted in DOONSBURY of making individuals into god-like personalities, Halberstam is a fine historian. That's what I think this book should be used for in fact. It's a valid history book of the last couple decades which we will never be able to see without taking into account the effect of the news media in its production or our perception of it. THE POWERS THAT BE is about the powers that produced and affected our perception of recent decades; it's about the evolution of TIME magazine, CBS, the Washington POST, and the Los Angeles TIMES. It's also a Watergate thriller, and a fascinating source for all sorts of information about what reporters thought about the events they were covering, but for one reason or another were not able to say in print or on the air. It's also a very long book, 771 pages of small print and narrow margins. But I found myself wishing there were a couple hundred more pages at the end.

Then I read MANRAPE! by Marta Tikkanen (Academy Chicago Limited Press) which is about a woman who gets very unusual and appropriate revenge upon her rapist. Has anyone else seen it? The publisher is known for doing a lot of very good feminist things, but I found myself uncomfortable in parts, and I wonder if

this is because the author is British and the feminist response to rape is slightly different from the American feminist response (generally speaking). Sort of like the difference between American and British humor: it takes a while to accustom one's ears to it. A friend of mine has pointed out that there definitely is a difference between French and American feminist philosophies, at least as far as the concepts emphasized.

But most exciting of all the books I've read recently is Germaine Greer's THE OBSTACLE COURSE. I think that for women involved in one way or the other with production/criticism of art, this book is probably going to be one of the most important writing to come out of the recent women's movement. It was/is for me. The book answers the question as to why there are so few "great" women artists. Concentrating on painting exclusively (which has arbitrarily been known as the only medium for "great" art), Greer painstakingly (and with excellent academic/critical scholarship) works from early (pre-renaissance) painting to the 19th century. What she points out is the sorts of pressures that prevented women from getting the training, or from claiming credit for their work, or from getting adequate academic attention for their accomplishments after they have died, or from being authoritatively connected with movements in art that they were instrumental in directing. All the ways of procuring invisibility. The early chapters of THE OBSTACLE COURSE, for instance (on family and love) documents case after case in which women artists working with fathers, lovers, husbands (a necessity prior to the 18th century when the technology of acquiring equipment and medium, not to mention training were impossible for most women), who were used as copiers of their masters' work (printmaking being a one on one process then). Others developed styles indistinguishable from their lovers/husbands/fathers. Sometimes it seems certain that the process of one artist influencing another was certainly not from man to woman, though it often was.

But there is often little that can be done to really be sure of which paintings, or which parts of some paintings were done by women: Very often we don't even have the signature upon the painting. Women often worked in art "dynasties"—groups of people supporting the reputation of one painter by doing the miniature copies, doing the background details for portraits, sometimes doing whole paintings—all of which the head of this art "dynasty" signed under his own name.

Problems of correct attribution form the most interesting parts of THE OBSTACLE COURSE. Very often the work of the best women artists is hanging in museums under the name of another, more well known male artist. Museums are not too cooperative or happy about work to discover the work of women on their walls since nearly all such reattributions will end up devaluing works of art.

But it was the reason for and focus of the book that has continued to make me think about it in the weeks since I read it. Greer points out the way "great art" has been defined by its patrons and buyers to exclude women and, by implication, other minorities from its production. Great Art, at one time had to be done on an extremely large scale and only on religious themes. Women worked on miniatures, and the first time a movement of art included a great many women, it was one of still-lives, flower paintings.

I know I'm being much too vague in this review: not being specific about who or when at all. But read it, find it: it's really excellent.

Anyway, intrigued about the way certain arts have been categorized as major and others demoted to crafts (much as when in medieval days the artists who decorated/illuminated books were given a list of saints/animals/cherubim to include in a particular illumination, the sponsor of the work who supplied the list was credited as the artist. The inker was a mere laborer and not credited at all. Not

surprisingly, it's turning out that a lot of those inkers were women, nuns...). Anyway, as I was saying, intrigued by the definition of art on the basis of technique, I found another book about a not "great" artform that women were involved with during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

It's called WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT (1870-1914), by Anthea Callen, published by Pantheon Books. I'm still just getting into it but it seems to fit in really well with and continue from THE OBSTACLE COURSE. Greer's even got a blurb on the back cover. The best thing so far about this book is the way it is treating the crafts movement as a whole: as a sociological/historical complex of ideas and individuals. It's dry reading at times, not in what it says, but in the extremely undramatic style Callen uses. The book is stuffed with pictures, though, and is fascinating for its visual description of the use of Art Nouveau themes in ceramics (Sarah!—check this out!), embroidery, needlework, lacemaking, jewelry, metalwork, woodcarving, hand-printing, book-binding, illustration. And photographs of Jane Morris! (The model of so many of Rossetti's paintings)

Just to finish this section off properly, I should say that I also zipped through Robert Sheckley's CROMPTON DIVIDED (feeling like I so often do recently with Sheckley's writing, that I've read it before...), have been dipping into Marilyn Hacker's SEPARATIONS, found some lovely Bradbury essays on the art (and zen) of writing, and have just found Liz Lynn's THE DANCERS OF ARUN on the Madison Review of Books shelves. That's next. Oh, also (in my bathroom available for skimming and paragraph reads) is Evelyne Sullerot's (a translation) WOMEN ON LOVE, little excerpts of writing of hundreds and hundreds of women throughout the ages on the subject. Mostly French, but as I said, translated. And lovely line illustrations. I've been finding it amusing, sometimes tender, sometimes honest & perceptive reading. A man I showed it to expressed his first

reaction after a few moments perusal:
 "This book is MORBID!" You takes your
 choice.

Other things that have happened since the first four pages were typed and xeroxed (and so not repairable) have to do with JANUS not being done yet. As you can imagine, we've all spent enough time trying to deal with that and talk about that with each other, and I am not going to go into much detail here. However, the main problem has had to do with a year-long snag with our printer. That problem has now become a terminal one: we've lost our fannish (cheap) printer. But we can actually afford another not-so-cheap printer now, and when we decide on one, and the process gets smoothed out, JANUS may start coming out at a more regular basis. Hope. Number 16 has been sitting all layed out in my apartment now for a longer time than #15 layed around ready for printing. Sigh. So it'll be out soon. Sooner or later. Real soon now.

Since I got the job with the DNR I have put dramatically less time into looking for freelance work, but I hope that after a while I can get back into doing that. I'd like to start sending out cartoons to the many publications listed in the 1979 ARTISTS MARKET that pay \$15-50 for one-shot cartoons. I'm also working on a comic strip with Richard Bruning. We finished (already) our first 1-page/3 line strip that you will get to see if you see the next JANUS. It's good and really satisfying to do. Surprising too, since Richard and I have rather different styles. But we each seem to "fill in" in areas where the other lacks, and the ideas and encouragement that flows between us when we work has on more than one occasion kept us going, where individually we both agree we would have given up. It's a humorous strip, SF and feminist aspects, but I won't say any more than that. You'll see it soon.

And WisCon planning is begun. This year I've convinced Jim Cox to take over the art show for me. I'm tired of doing it,

and I guess I never really enjoyed it anyway. It's too much of a business, it's complete with bureaucracy and is too much like balancing a checkbook. So I finished writing that article on art shows (turned out to be over 25 pages), am helping Jim set it up, and will do some work at the show during the con, but mostly I'll be working on programming and doing the program book for WisCon. If any of you haven't heard, our GoH's are Joan Vinge, Octavia Butler, David Hartwell, and Bev DeWeese. So far everything is going smoothly and it looks like it'll be another great WisCon. Our meetings are so orderly and get so much work done. We're all still incredulous about how calm and short we've managed to work these meetings lately. If any of you wants to be involved in programming, please let me know and I'll be glad to tell you what's planned and suggest possibilities.

The other day I had lunch with a friend I hadn't seen in quite a while and she asked how I'd been doing and I answered that I didn't think I'd been down about anything for the last six months or so. Things seem to be going so well. Of course the new job has a lot to do with that feeling, but also a part of my long-lasting high has been a really pleasant and important love that started about a year and a half ago and has been going steady ever since we got together again (after a hiatus) at the beginning of the summer. Usually I wouldn't believe that a relationship could be based on something negative but in a way, this one is: based on dissatisfaction with monogamous relationships. I feel as though I have found my "double" with regard to how I feel on this subject. Besides being more than comfortable with each other's other lovers, it's as if we share a language I'm used to having to translate. I can say things that normally have other meanings, dependency-making or -expressing meanings. "I love you," for instance means just that, not "I love you only." And other things.