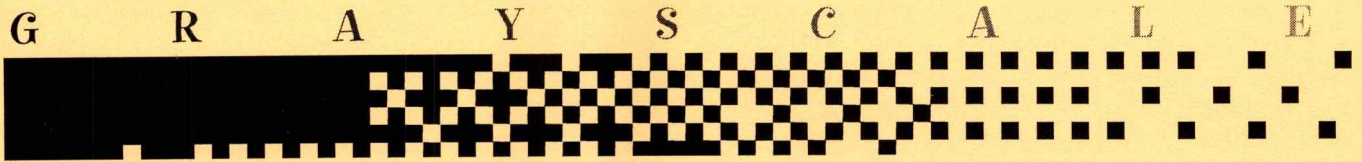


The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #2, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #184, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@aol.com

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I chose the name *Grayscale* for my zine because it seems to me that the name provided a good visual metaphor for the process of getting to know people. We gradually piece together a picture of someone based on the things they say about themselves, the things others say about them, various labels, and the many other little pieces of information provided by statements and actions we hear and observe over time. The accumulation of information forms a patchwork of sometimes contradictory and random detail, that constructs in turn a mirage of a whole person. (Everyones picture of another person, however, differs in many of its elements, but the long range picture may match pretty closely the long range picture that others have formed of that person. And so we say we all know the same person.) Just like a grayscale image, the dots and smudges of ink create an illusion of reality when viewed from a distance, and we may even forget the complexity underlying which makes up that long-range image, to the extent that we readily apply simple labels. But it's always possible, if we get closer, to find the amazing range of contradictory elements that make up our understanding of any one person.

It seemed to me when I was thinking about a title for this zine, that much of my interaction with folks in this zine would mirror the structure of a grayscale image: the gradual accumulation of bits of information about people, until gradually I had formed composite images in my mind of the various members of *Intercourse*.

Now I find that the title is even more appropriate, not only in the sense that the zines provide the incremental accumulation of information about you all, but also gradually unveil the content and direction of your conversations. This is the first time I've actually joined an on-going apa. Well no, I joined ANZAPA well after its beginning, but only stayed for two issues because the problems of international apa membership proved too difficult for me at that time. The other apas I have belonged to, however — *The Women's Apa*, *Cascade Regional Apa*, and Madison's *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* — were ones that got started at about the same time I joined. I was able to get to know people just as they were beginning acquaintances with one another. I got to start conversations at the same time everyone else was starting them.

I find myself a little hesitant to dive into conversations here (though I will, anyway), because I am unsure whether I might not be revisiting discussions that may have been talked to death already, or because I am stepping on toes that the group has learned through long experience must be treated gently. I am very much aware of the dots of ink right now, and not yet capable of backing up and seeing the larger picture.

But I'm enjoying the process. This is an awesome apa.

I would like to extend my sympathy to all of you who have lost a friend by John McClimans' death. It is a very sad thing that his stroke took him so suddenly, but wonderful, at the same time, to witness the network of friends who cared for him and hurried to spend some time with him at the end.

I was a bit taken aback by some of his opinions in the first issue of *Intercourse* that I saw, and decided to wait an issue or two, to get an idea of the

kind of comments he received from others, before I chose some topics to discuss with him. And so, after I'd read his zine from the *Intercourse* 67, and having marked the margins with some notes for future mailing comments, it was disconcerting and distressing to find that I'd forever lost the opportunity to begin this conversation with him.

Ironically, one of the things I wanted to reply to John about were his comments about how far society's responsibility goes to sustain the life of a person dependent upon expensive life support systems. John said, "This planet is overpopulated. Yet we have doctors keeping people alive longer and helping more people have babies." It's a vexing problem, one that I've frequently seen acted out among friends and co-workers who have had to deal with HMOs and heard discussed in terms of the federal or state budgets. The discussion tends to come down to a simple equation, that is, we can't afford to give everyone all possible treatments, and so we've got to choose who is most likely to benefit, and whose survival will most benefit society. Society-wide triage.

But I always get a bit uncomfortable about the discussion when it heads in that seemingly "practical" direction. It seems to me that there are so many assumptions built into the word "afford," that we are actually talking about something much more complex than a limited amount of resources than can be provided for a very large number of people's needs.

There's that old reply to the question asked of the explorer, why did they climb the mountain? "Because it was there," they answer. Or, "because I could," they say. We build weapon systems because someone thinks of them, because it's possible to do it, because if we don't, others will. And we solve problems because they are there, because we can. Scientists are presently decoding DNA sequences because it's possible, because they can. . . . And because of the potentially huge benefits to society if they do so. I don't think that a challenging opportunity alone is a necessarily silly motivation for doing something, but I think, as with any action taken or not taken, some responsibility is entailed by that choice. A person who accumulates great wealth, accumulates too, the responsibility to do good with it. A society that builds weapons systems is responsible for the damage that those weapons do, or cause others to do in fear of them. A society that builds incredibly powerful life-saving methods has the responsibility to use them ethically. Right now, the only measurement of use seems to be a monetary one. In the United States, anyway, we have institutionalized the notion that

society as a whole should invest in the invention of new and better medical care, but that individuals are entitled to the benefits of these advances only if they, personally, can afford the cost. This seems very wrong to me, though I acknowledge that all medical treatments cannot be made available to all people who need them without bankrupting the systems that makes possible their invention and maintenance.

The current situation with the new AIDS treatments being available only to a small percentage of the people in the world who need that treatment is the most obvious example of this dilemma. But as we grapple with the problem, I am firmly of the opinion that we need to discuss the *whole* picture, that is, we need to include in the discussion the vast amount of resources the U.S. pours into other areas, like weapon production, which has a direct impact upon the range of choices available to us in other areas.

So, anyway, I am sorry not to have had the opportunity to discuss this with John. And I am sorry not to have had the opportunity that Donya describes of meeting him in person and being charmed.

Donya Hazard White

You write, "I don't believe much in either the Old nor New Testament ideas of goodness, but I believe my half-assed religious education as a child gave me faith in working towards Goodness."

I am a "fallen Catholic," and don't consider my 8 years of parochial school training as particularly important to my moral development. I've got several funny memories of religious debates with a couple of nuns who taught in our school and didn't much care for my imaginative questions; lots of memories of dreary mornings spent kneeling in church services when I would rather have been doing anything else; but I think I learned most of the lessons of good and evil, right and wrong, etc. outside of church or religion class. Memorable sermons are those that I silently argued with in my mind. In fact, the most long-lasting effect a conversation with a priest had on me was when Father Mehan visited our 7th grade class and encouraged us all to argue with him about the existence of god. Father Mehan took on the devil's advocate position, and by the end of the class, my fuzzy doubts on the topic were brought into crystal clarity. Ironically, he provided the final piece to the puzzle in my mind; that's when I decided I no longer believed in god.

I have been puzzled lately to see so many people in my generation who stopped going to church when

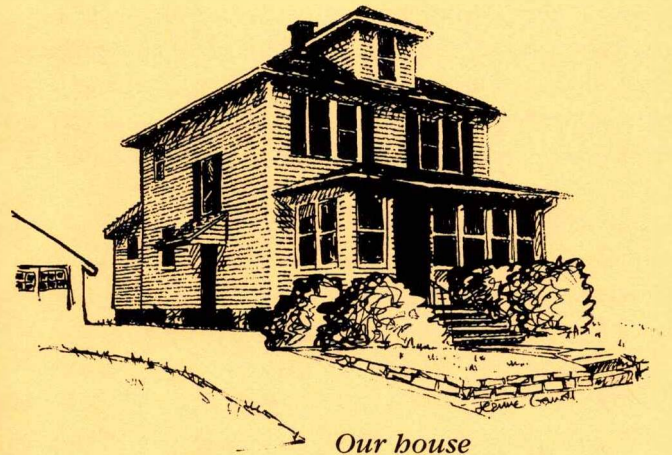
they left their parents' home, suddenly change their minds about the value of a religious upbringing as they raise their own children. The hypocrisy reminds me of the similar phenomenon talked so much about these days, of babyboomers lying about their drug experiences to their kids. There was an article in the paper just last week with a blazing, 32 point headline: "Atheist Advocates Religious Training."

My brother Steve, for instance, is no more religious than I am. Maybe even less so, because he spent much less time than I did agonizing over the truth of what we were taught about god and religion in school. But he and his wife suddenly decided they needed to find a suitable church and began attending for the sake of their children. They literally went "shopping" for a church that would provide the services and atmosphere they thought would most benefit their kids. The actual religion of the particular church was irrelevant. I don't think I would decide to send my kids to school if I were in his place. I believe that moral philosophies can be devised and lived by without the necessity of a god or a religion to motivate or enforce its systems. And I believe that children soak up ethical concepts from the people around them, whether those concepts are presented in the form of formal religious training or simply as day-to-day living examples.

Would your appreciation of your religious upbringing, Donya, cause you to recommend religious training for kids, irrespective of their parents beliefs?

Janet Lafler

I share your feelings about the horrendousness of long commutes. It's one of the things that I like about living in a smaller city like Madison, that I don't have to spend huge chunks of time traveling to and from work. Ever since I moved to Madison from Milwaukee (in my Junior year of college, in 1971), I've relied upon a bicycle and, in the winter months, public transportation to commute. I've chosen all my apartments and the house Scott and I bought in 1989, partially on the basis of proximity to bus lines. I never even owned a car until after Scott and I bought a house together. My commute time these days is about 15 minutes by bike and 20 minutes by bus. We live 4 miles from the center of town, in what is known as the "Near East Side" of Madison. I can hardly imagine what it would be like to spend several hours each day commuting; I hardly spend that much time, total, in a car in one month. And whenever I've considered moving to a larger city, the specter of an automobile



Our house

commute is one of the main things that convinces me to consider other options.

...But you bring up yet another specter, that of Very Expensive Housing. That \$2,600-a-month, three bedroom apartment might rent for as much as much as \$800 here. Heating and air conditioning bills might increase that monthly bill by, at most, \$100 a month.

Given the fact that I actually *like* winter, except for the fact that it lasts too damn long, not to mention the many other pleasant aspects of this place, Madison is an wonderful city for me. I'm very glad to be living here.

I liked your story of unexpectedly meeting someone at a party with whom you've had bad experiences, that Mr. X. I've also had similar experiences, in which that first crucial step of speaking to the dreaded person, of defining for yourself and that person the new boundaries of polite interaction, imparts a mixed sensation of both empowerment and freedom. By taking the initiative of speaking first, one gains power because that single interaction defines the parameters of future interactions. But mostly, I recall the sensation of freedom: freedom from nightmarish fears of a continuation of a bad situation, fears of uncomfortable, but increasingly unlikely interactions. A sudden grounding in a manageable reality.

Most recently, an uncomfortable situation of many years duration has finally been laid to rest by a stratagem similar to yours. Jan Bogstad and I coedited a fanzine in the mid-70s and because of some rather severe personality differences – mostly having to do with our different preferences for sociable interactions — our friendship finally blew up in a stormy confrontation in 1979. Jan started her own fanzine, *New Moon* and I stayed with the local group, publishing *Aurora*, which felt to me like a continuation of Jan's and my fanzine, *Janus*. For many years, neither

Jan nor her partner Phil spoke to me. In fact, even though her participation in fandom had always been limited, Jan pretty much removed herself from fandom all together for a long time. Her work took her away from Madison and I have seldom seen her since. In spite of the fact that feminist SF is central to both of our lives, friends — aware of the strain between us — endeavored never to put us on the same convention program. She has never commented to me nor attempted to participate in Tiptree Award stuff.

It's a weird situation, especially since I suspect that both of us still respect the work the other does. I certainly have appreciated the work she has done academically in the area of feminist SF, and was much impressed to hear about the role she took at the Beijing Conference of Women last year, at which she taught workshops about Internet use. I respect her work and her ideas; I just know that we should never work closely together.

So, at Reinconation this year where Jan was being honored as Fan Guest of Honor, Scott and I sat in on some panels where Jan spoke and I suddenly realized that I was enjoying hearing her speak as much as I ever had when we were still friends and working closely together, before things had gone bad. I made a point of stopping her as she left the room and told her that I though she had been brilliant in her comments about women and the Internet, and that I really enjoyed her insights on women in China. She grinned, acknowledged my words, and promised to send me some material I had requested. And then she apologized for not showing up at the convention parties. She had learned, she said, that she was just not comfortable in such situations. We parted smiling. "What happened?" Scott asked later, a little confused. I told him that, in one brief conversation, that Jan had acknowledged the source of the problem that led to the end of our friendship, and that we may have revitalized the thing that first drew us together so many years ago — mutual admiration of each other's ideas. I am hoping to let her know soon that she is welcome to get involved in the Tiptree Award stuff if she is interested.

It's amazing what one small exchange of pleasantries can do....

As for your question about confronting Mr. Y on his homophobic statement, I should think that Mr. Y is quite aware that he said something out of line, at least for the group with whom he was talking. If I were you, I might prepare a little statement to have ready just in case it happens again, but unless this was a

friend or acquaintance I wanted to cultivate, I think I would choose to believe I'd adequately communicated my non-approval of his statement by the awkward silence that followed.

I share your frustration with Steve Swartz's discussion of spirituality. Steve and I have actually had a version of the discussion you may be beginning here. In our discussion, Steve attempted to convince me that the definition of spirituality was a whole lot broader than one I usually accept. Like you, I tend to define it as the stuff that "defies analysis." For me, the keystone word, "faith," from my Catholic background anchors this concept. And for me, "faith" is sort of like antimatter in the world of logic and experienced reality: Applied according to directions, it is capable of negating anything with which it comes in contact. According to Steve's much broader understanding of spirituality, there are probably lots of elements in my life that might be called spiritual. But it's hard to redefine that term, since my understanding of it to this point is so different than his.

Re your comment to Karen about educational and employment opportunities for prison populations.... I think it's important for us to get straight as a society, just what our goals are for people we put into prisons. People who argue against education programs in prisons on the grounds that it is unfair to "give" such benefits to prisoners that non-prisoners must pay to receive, remind me of welfare critics who argue that women choose to become pregnant *in order* to reap the apparently luxurious benefits of welfare. I think the real objection in both cases has more to do with the desire to punish the lawbreaker or impoverished fornicator. If our goal in corrections is to keep certain people away from society forever, perhaps one could argue that we should not waste remedial services upon this population. But if our goal is to reduce recidivism and to save money in the long run by encouraging the growth of a self-sufficient, law-abiding citizenry, then it seems obvious that educational programs in prisons are a Good Thing.

The use of prisoners in private sector jobs is very much a can of worms. Here in Madison, where unemployment is at an all-time low, there has been some legislative pressure to create programs that will allow low-security risk prisoners to work in service industries, like MacDonalds, etc. I think that businesses would like to use prison labor to keep the minimum wage artificially depressed, and in fact, I can imagine a science-fictional future in which the stock market reacts to decreases in the prison population in the same way that it reacts to decreases in the unemploy-

ment rate — with alarm and cries for the Fed to raise the interest rate. Well, in this imaginary future, perhaps the stock market would demand an increase in penalties for certain crimes in order to increase the available cheap labor population. I can imagine that prisoners might someday perform the same function as immigrant labor workers: providing temporary, almost slave labor for industry whenever required.

Kluge. I first heard about that term in John Varley's 1986 story, "Press Enter ■." John Kluge was the alias of the dead hacker being investigated by another computer hacker and a cop.

"You know what it means?" asks the computer hacker.

"Clever," I said.

"Literally. But it means... a Rube Goldberg device. Something overly complex. Something that works, but for the wrong reason. You 'kluge around' bugs in a program. It's the hacker's Vaseline."

Good comments about the housekeeping issue. This conversation seems to be similar to the conversation currently happening in the *Turbo* apa about Martha Stewart, and leading to the same conclusion about the touchiness of issues that are "supposed to be" areas of expertise for women. If I could afford it, I'd hire house cleaners to come in once a month to do big cleaning jobs, although I'd keep control of the "straightening" part of housekeeping.

Interesting comment on the film, *Matilda*. I liked it a lot, and was very relieved when Matilda's friend, the good teacher, has a problem that is *not* resolved by finding her own true, gentleman love. I had been suspecting just that as soon as Matilda met and began to idolize her pretty, but mysteriously sad teacher — that Matilda would end up helping to get her idol married. Instead Matilda *moves in* with her first girlhood crush, her adored teacher, and masters her magic skills acquired by reading. An evil, butch headmistress in this context seems quite delightfully bizarre. I've been recommending it to my niece and others.

Thanks for the Katha Pollit article. Speaking of idols, she's one of mine. Pollit's response to some of the letters she received in answer to the article you reprinted on not voting for Clinton, is published on Working Assets' web page. Sorry, I forget the www address, but you should be able to find it fairly easily by using a search engine to look for `working_assets`.

Debbie Notkin

What good news about Karl Michalak's improved health! Thanks for letting us know. I'm sorry you have so much painful stuff to deal with at the same time — John's death and Sheila's condition. It's good that you have such a supportive and caring circle of friends around you at this time. I'll be thinking of you (all) and hoping that Sheila's melanoma can be knocked out.

My reading eye was caught three times in your zine by your mention of yelling as a useful and constructive way to shed anger quickly. I'm one of those people that does not do well in interactions that involve yelling. I suppose part of it has to do with the frequent yelling arguments my parents have with one another. Whatever the source of my feelings on this, yelling is one of the kinds of major, potentially fatal sorts of interactions, in my experience, that can lead from disagreement to a breakdown in relations. (Other potentially fatal interactions involve deeply cutting statements made by one person or both in a conscious attempt to hurt the other person.)

Jan Bogstad's and my friendship ended, partially because we were unable to quietly discuss the reasons for our disagreements and our personal differences. Everytime we argued, Jan would scream and yell, and I would watch myself build another wall (further out from the last one) to protect myself from those outbursts. By the end, she could no longer hurt me by her words, and I was no longer able to reach out past the walls I had constructed against her. It's pretty obvious that Jan and her partner Phil's relationship thrives upon vigorous and at times violent verbal disagreements. They're happy and clear about one another's points of view after such arguments. I could see that this was Jan's method of working out conflict, and she could see that mine involved careful, deliberate discussion, but neither of us were able to accommodate the other. She accused me of verbal manipulation; I protested her verbal violence.

Scott and I, on the other hand, share very similar methods of dealing with conflict. We both avoid yelling, aware of its potentiality for inflicting real damage. In fact, in our 12 years together, we have never had an argument that involved yelling. We do argue, but the arguments tend to follow a short period of silence, when we both come to a realization that one or both of us is angry, hurt or upset in some way. The silence is usually short — rarely longer than an hour or two, if we are together. The pause gives us time to think about what happened, and what the

source of the problem really is. And then one of us breaks the silence by asking the other what the problem is or saying that we need to talk about what just happened, saying something like, "I'm feeling angry about what just happened...."

Much of the calmness with which we deal with conflict is something I have learned from Scott. Admitting at the outset of the discussion that something is wrong, that I feel anger or hurt, is something I would not have done as readily in the past, before I met him. I might have tried to "win" an argument, to make points, to force an apology, without acknowledging my own feelings or to have put a serious initial effort into understanding the other person's side in the argument. Scott is still better than I am at this process in that he seems to be able to apply it to a lot more situations outside of our relationship than I do. Last year, when I was chairing WisCon 20 and Scott was running operations, he dealt with several difficult personal situations with committee members where I was ready to simply ask the person to leave the committee. In one instance, a concom member had threatened several times to quit the committee unless certain things were done the way they wanted them done. The concom member didn't want to listen to other viewpoints and immediately escalated to "I will quit unless...." Fine, let them quit then, was my opinion. Scott, however, managed to defuse the situation by discussing with this person the inappropriateness of responding with threats, and convinced the concom member to try to assume that we all shared the same goal — to put on a great convention — which should provide more than enough common ground to find a solution acceptable to everyone. And it worked. The concom member did indispensable work and Scott helped me avoid a potentially debilitating split on the committee.

As I say, I am still learning how to do this better, but I don't think I can ever learn, nor do I particularly want to learn how to dissipate my anger through yelling. I'd rather go out biking or do some other physical thing to vent. For me it seems to be a hardwired thing to react to yelling in an always negative way. The work repairing the damage that yelling does, for me, almost always involves more work than that required to repair the thing that initially inspired the yelling....

I have found Suzette Haden Elgin's verbal self-defense skills useful in this area in helping me to avoid using language that attacks more than examines and/or explains.

I am very glad, Debbie, that you will be working

with me on WisCon 20 programming. WisCon, I think, is changing (or perhaps has *already changed*) into a convention that is more for the feminist SF community than it is for the Madison SF Group or the Midwest region. It seems to me that the Madison community is less interested in working on the convention. Future WisCons will depend upon the willingness of the feminist SF community to work on it. I hope its possible to make this transfer of energy and to keep WisCon going.

The horrifying case of the Wisconsin woman charged with attempted murder of her fetus by getting drunk just before the baby was born, is not yet gone to trial. I'll try to let you know what happens when it does. This case is one of several cases brought over the past few years in Wisconsin, against women whose behavior injured their fetus in the months before giving birth or against someone who assaulted a woman in the nine-month period. The prosecution of these cases has been backed in most cases by antiabortion groups who want precedent established against fetal injury. In spite of the fact that there already exist laws on the books against assault and against injury to pregnant women, there are no laws on the books which define a fetus as the injured party. The antiabortion forces want such a precedent very much, as it will support their position that abortion is murder. So this case, like the one last year which was pressed against the man who killed a woman and her fetus as two separate murder cases, gets a lot of publicity.

Thanks for the wonderful trip report, "American Girls in Tokyo." You make me want to visit there some day. Do you have any insights on the cultural reasons for the weird computer games that are popular over there? I am referring to the game (sorry, I forget the name) that is popular with older men and involves the raising of a young, very sexy young girl. If she grows up a good girl and marries or finds a good career, the player/"father" wins; if she grows up a bad girl the player/"father" loses. One of the tools of parenthood is, of course, judicial spanking of the young girl. The other game is one I recently read about. It's popular mainly among young men and involves a virtual 4-year courtship with a "perfect" young girl. The player doesn't actually get to say anything to the virtual girl, but must chose from multiple choice options. If he chooses correctly, the heart monitor in the corner of his screen shows a rapidly beating heart, and he might successfully ask to hold the girl's hand. The player wins the game when the girls finally says, "I love you." Apparently these virtual girls have huge fanclubs among young men.

Arthur D. Hlavaty

Congratulations on the new job! I agree with you about the prevalent requirement for expertise in high-end desktop publishing programs in the want ads. It certainly seems to be one of the most common requirements for most office jobs these days. I don't think it would be very easy to get a graphic arts job without a working knowledge of one of the high-end electronic drawing programs, like Illustrator or Freehand, plus Photoshop and either PageMaker or Quark XPress. However, if you've got that, there seem to be more and more jobs looking for that expertise. I hope you enjoy the new job.

I agree with you, too, about the superiority of Suzette Haden Elgin's nonfiction material over her fiction. I read her zine, *Linguistics and Science Fiction*, cover to cover within a week of its arrival in our mail box, which is something I cannot say about many other publications.

I haven't seen any examples of downsizing in which the company downsizes primarily in order to get rid of non-productive employees. The most horrid example that I've heard of so far of decisions made without respect for workers, and one that I fear may be all too typical is of Payday, Inc. (of candy bar fame) in Illinois. Political commentator/comedian Michael Moore (author of *Downsize This!*) interviewed the president of Payday a couple months ago about their decision to close down their Illinois plant. Apparently the long-term plan had been to close down the plant as soon as investment costs had been repaid. That is, when the costs of buying the land and building the plant, etc., were repaid by profit generated, they planned to consolidate production in a different factory where profits could be increased because it lacked union presence. Well, the profits at the Illinois plant hit the required level and employees received their pink slips. Michael asked the president to finish this sentence: If Payday employees had been less diligent, less efficient, and profits generated at the plant were in the range of hundreds of thousands of dollars rather than millions, then —. The president finished the sentence: —then we would have been in business here for another ten years, he said.

In the case of government downsizing at the DNR, where I work, the process was sparked by a Governor who transferred education costs from homeowners tax rolls to income tax, and then was forced to reduce the cost of government to accommodate that change. He is focusing most budget cuts on programs that are the most politically embarrassing to

him — education, Health and Social Welfare, and the Department of Natural Resources. The Departments of Transportation and Corrections, on the other hand, have escaped almost all cutbacks, and in fact are known as Wisconsin's "growth industries."

Interesting essay about the torturous arguments against same-sex marriages by right wing. I think that right-wingers horror against extending the institution beyond heterosexual couples has a lot to do with gender definition. Some men define masculinity based on their roles as soldiers — thus the debate about "allowing" gays into the military and women onto the front lines. I think a lot of men and women define their gender by their roles as husbands, wives and parents. Disturbing the traditional definition of marriage-eligible people risks disturbing the definition of gender — one of the many things disturbing gender definition these days.

Lisa Hirsch

For all that I tout the attractions of my hometown, Madison Wisconsin, I really envy people in big cities with professional opera companies. Your mention of buying extra tickets for the opera season so that you can invite friends to various performances makes me intensely jealous. Madison gets some traveling companies, and a few years ago, we got a really extraordinary performance of *Madame Butterfly* by the San Francisco Opera company, but those are few and far between. I've seen a few very fine productions by Milwaukee's Florintine company, and several excellent ones by the Chicago's Lyric, but we've discovered that it's impractical to buy season tickets for Lyric shows. Opera season lands right in the middle of the winter, you see, and blizzards stopped us from attending two shows the one year we bought season tickets. I ended up offering the tickets to a friend in Chicago who could get downtown in spite of the snow. *sigh*

I suppose I'm a rather "low class" sort of opera lover. My favorite composer is Puccini and I love the kind of music that I suspect is the operatic equivalent of gushy, tearjerker movies.

I wish you good luck in making a freelance career work for you. I can certainly sympathize with your fears of being able to impose the necessary structure on at-home activities. I do freelance work myself — mostly late nights, which is why I call my business "Midnight Mouse" — and suspect that I would work too many hours for my sanity if I was trying to do this full time. The main problem for me would be that I'd

tend to bury myself in a job and not come up for air until it was done, which is far too late to begin looking for the *next* job and not good for paying one's bills on time.

Karen E. Summerly

You touch upon at least two big issues in your "Rambling Essay: Parental Expectations." The first, which revolves around the question of who should be responsible for the financial support of poor, parentless children and poor, childless adults, is one that I doubt will ever or should ever be solved by mandatory allotment of responsibility among financially able adults. (You get this parentless child and this childless adult because you failed to have children of your own....) It is, at base, a problem that should be solved by an insurance system that is based on an ideal of mutual support rather than profit. It seems to me that we need an insurance system that is based upon a societal willingness to help shoulder the responsibility for those that tragedy strikes. I sure hope that I manage to get through my life without an accident or medical emergency that I cannot afford, but I am willing to pay my part into a pool of money that I can rely upon if I am unlucky, or that will be used for others struck with tragedy. I would like to see an insurance run on a no-profit basis with no restrictions against those with high "risk factors," and without reference to the employment status of the individual.

As for the other issue you raise — that of parental control over their children's live choices — I feel completely incapable of discussing it in terms of rules.... All I can bring to such a discussion is my own experiences.

My brothers, sister and I have all built lives that from most people's perspective would be called successful. We all did well in school, found fulfilling jobs, support ourselves financially, and have developed healthy, satisfying relationships with friends, lovers, partners and spouses. In spite of that, my parents have frequently referred of their "failure" as parents. My mom used to talk this way more than my dad, and actually she hasn't spoken this way in quite a long time; I think my brother's death from AIDS in 1989 put things into perspective for her. But she used to refer to her failure rather frequently in a guilt-inspiring tones. She and dad were failures, my mom said, because they were unable to instill in us what are for her the most important characteristics of a moral human being. All of us left the Catholic Church, and only two of five kids got married; Rick and Julie were

quite openly "deviant" in their sexuality. Steve is the only one who has kids and the only one likely to ever have them, and my parents can't convince me that marriage would improve Scott's and my relationship. So, the cornerstones of mom's life — religion, marriage, children — are absent and even rejected in the lives of most of her kids. She has, at times, been deeply depressed by it all. Her unwillingness to accept the idea that we could have different goals than she might have devised for us, has prevented all of us kids from maintaining as close a relationship with her, and to a lesser extent with my dad, as we would like.

Elisabeth Fox

Iwish you the best of luck in managing the process of moving in with Pat. I think the dynamics of a relationship between two or more people who share a household are potentially as difficult or even more difficult than the managing of just emotional aspects of a relationship between lovers that does not involve a shared lease or mortgage. (And taken together, the task can be amazingly difficult.) All of us hear something about the need for open communication and compromise with a romantic partner; hardly anyone warns you when you're young, about the minefield that waits you in the form of a new roommate whose cleanliness threshold differs significantly from your own, or to expect such a huge range of idiosyncrasies in daily living habits.

You write, "I still end up feeling like children need two parents who are legally committed to each other, and that intentional single motherhood is wrong." Unfortunately, in our society, the image of single motherhood is significantly tied up with the reality of poverty. When you control for poverty, it turns out that single motherhood has no significantly detrimental effect on the kids. That is, if you take some kids from financially secure two-parent households and some kids from financially secure one-parent households, the kids do equally well. Some studies have even indicated that the kids from the single-parent households do *better*. Kids from poor households, no matter whether there are one or two parents, do less well. The important factor is poverty, not the absence of a second parent. The unfortunate linking of kids-at-risk with single-parent families comes about because so many families headed by single mothers, fall beneath the poverty line. Fight poverty, not single moms.

I've been fascinated by the discussion, catalyzed by Jane's comment hook on star relationship vs. web

relationship people. My first impulse was to think that I was a star person. But after talking about it with Scott I gradually realized how often I tend to want to introduce good friends to one another and to see my relationships in terms of a web rather than a star. I've even tended to draw my brothers and sisters into fandom, by talking about them or actually introducing them to fandom and to friends I've made among fans. Scott, on the other hand is most definitely a star person. He hesitates to introduce a friend made in one context to someone he knows from another. Although he has become fairly comfortable with the web of folks he's met through me in fandom and has become increasingly active in fandom, he's frequently nervous even about introducing people from his job to me.

The reason I bring this topic up in a comment to you is that your reasons for defining yourself as a star person were initially what caused me to jump to that conclusion about myself. I also dislike it when friends of friends make intrusive assumptions that a relationship that we have in common automatically translates to the same relationship between the two of us. Frequently, I will jump easily into a friendship with friends of my friends, but I don't like the assumption that it will happen automatically. The most extreme example of this kind of assumption is something that happened about 13 or 14 years ago. A group of fans stayed at my house after a convention. I had met one of them, a guy, for the first time through a good friend and fellow apan, with whom he lived. He'd read

copies of her apazines and felt that he and I shared a similar philosophy with regard to sexual relationships. Because of this and because of his partner's and my close friendship, he was quite blunt in voicing his assumption that he would share my bed during his stay. I was equally blunt in nixing that assumption, and so did not suffer any extended embarrassment or pressure, but still, I was absolutely enraged at the assumption. I think, though, that such assumptions are more a function of socially inept individuals than they are the normal workings of a social web.

Tom Whitmore

Congratulations on graduating from massage school. The idea that there are different massage styles sounds fascinating and the idea that massage works differently when there are different emotional histories between therapist and client sounds reasonable....

What kind of prints did you inherit from your father's estate? Is there a common denominator — artist, period, technique?

Elise Matthesen

What symmetry. I am just now joining an apa of which you are a longtime member and you are entering an apa (*Turbo*) of which I am a longtime member.



My situation at work has improved slightly. We are now moving toward some sort of counseling session with a mediator. I am hopeful that communication will improve between my fellow artists and our supervisor. It's pretty obvious that she's been told by upper management to shape up, as she is making obviously painful efforts to act more civilly toward us....

I just finished a pro-bono project for the Milwaukee AIDS Project (MAP), of which I'm very proud. I designed a 50-page book that collates a huge amount of information for the Milwaukee AIDS population, detailing the resources available in the region — housing, medical, transportation, insurance — everything including burial services. MAP had been handing out flyers and brochures for

individual programs and the system had gotten pretty chaotic. I'm really glad to have been able to use my skills to do this kind of volunteer work.

My sister, Julie, was on the wait list for *Inter-course*, and while I haven't talked about this to her, I suspect that the reason she didn't get back to Debbie is that she is currently involved in the America-On-Line/Excite merger. Julie's company, Go Media, was purchased a couple months ago by Excite. And Excite just signed an agreement on Friday with America-On-Line to provide a new web search engine. Things have been,

to say the least, exciting for Julie lately. But those of you who know her, know that this isn't a new thing in her life. I'll urge her to at least contact Debbie and tell her whether she is interested in joining us or not.

MAP

MILWAUKEE AIDS PROJECT