

16 July 77

Dearest Joanna:

This is just a hand-clasp-at-2000-miles letter, I can't begin to rival your 3-di in Living Colour wondrous scenarios. The fact is, you are a writer all the time, everywhere. By the way, didn't you like that reviewer who called your story in Women of Wonder a "superb fountain of ideation" or words to that effect?

Oh shit. I now realise you probably didn't see it and are eager for the author and exact quote. All right. Excuse me while I go thru 25 back issues of everything I read last week.

....Back same day. The reviewer was Algis Budrys in June 77 MF&S, and what he actually said was, "The Russ and the Saxton are dissimilarly psycho-technical....the Russ is the work of a superb ideator pulling one after another out of the previous ones, inexorably building a great piece of writing to its climax."

Looks like I'm going to have to read it. ...Okay; another pause while I just sent for it.

Listen, far be it from me to ask a superb ideator to descend to the level of commonplace fact, but the one thing you didn't tell in your letter was whether you ever got your parents told. (You swung into a dire account of your sadistic childhood dentist. Someday we'll swap dentist-stories. I bit one.)

My mother once more or less openly invited me to bed with her. I was 14, it was in a steamy little stateroom on a boat. I almost did but the gleam of her gold fillings put me off. (I have this horror of age, see.) Also, I didn't know how. This lack dogged me through all the loves of later life. And since I looked and talked knowing, real gays were always throwing themselves at my once-handsome feet, and I hadn't a clue how to pick them up. Still don't really. I guess you could call me a frustrated gay. God knows, the scene with men was mostly pure havoc.

As to the horror of age it is still with me, and now applies to myself. Christ how I hate my aging body, the knobby veined claws that once were hands, the seismic collapse of skin around my mouth. I never planned to live this long. If I hadn't got psychically close to Ting, who can't bear to be left, I wouldn't. What pills can they give you for that, except a prefrontal lobectomy? I have both a shrink and an MD psychiatrist trying to prop me up, but it's like trying to cure a Mafia informer of the delusion that people are after him...The only thing that would cure me is legalising opium.

No, I'm not writing. Doubt I ever shall again. Over my desk is the William Yeats quote: "Rhetoric is the attempt of the will to do the work of the imagination."....Very monitory.

Who wrote Ectopia?

Let me know your new address dear gifted one



