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→ ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS THE PRICE OF LIBERTY ←  
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20 Apr 85

Darling Jo -

Your paper on Reactive Feminiam has just worked its way to the top of my pile labelled "Really Read," and I spent the morning really reading it to my great profit --- but not to much surprise. The tendency of a ruling class to co-opt the inventions of the inferiors is as old as history.

And as to women's inventions --- do you recall the idiotic anthropology tenet that speech originated in the hunting cries of males? Aside from the fact that you don't catch much game if you keep uttering "hunting cries," it's as plain as sunrise that speech originates in the mother-child dyad. Some mother chimpanzees have been observed almost inventing speech. Just as society itself originates in a matrilinear group, judging from our cousins. (Those observations of chimp life by Jane Goodall have yet to be fully exploited for their bearing on women.) It was a female chimp who used "tools."\*

And I have read a million sentences starting like this: "Man had not yet invented agriculture"---or, he had. Whereas I'm quite sure that it was the female gatherers who poked a seed-head down near the parent plant so something would be there next year.

As to fire, I have no guesses, except that it seems likely that the group who had the most to do with it may have tamed it.

The wheel I'll leave to man---if any of those Indian women who dragged forehead-strap pole cloths had put a wheel under it, the men would have declared it a sin against the natural order. And men probably pushed heavy stones on log rollers, in one of their asinine monument-building sprees.

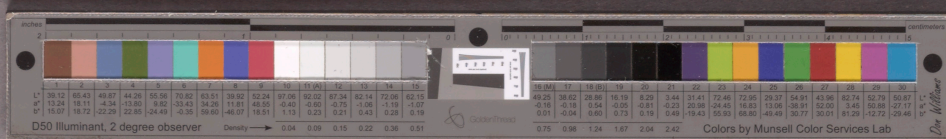
And the theft of ideas from women (and male slaves) is as old as the history of thought, I'd bet.

As for the falling-away from the original feminism, the neglect of its works, the necessity of re-inventing --- take a look at Russia through Lenin's eyes. That's the history of all socially threatening or Utopian thought. It gets co-opted, remolded, watered-down; and the original manifestoes honoured in name only, or not even that. (China offered a curious example of the attempt to return to its radical roots in the disastrous Cultural Revolution and the "little red book." Does this hold a lesson for anybody or was it specifically local? I dunno...)

But the loss of womens' work and the early writings is serious. We should have a central Womens' Library, or rather, Archives. I'd be happy to leave some funds to one in my doubtless-soon-to-be-implemented will. What exists? Who collects? Is there still an all-female college to serve as base? Of course, some of the non-collection is our own fault; we don't realise how fast time recedes and how this common text can vanish. But it's asking rather a lot to demand that someone active in the movement should also cope with history. Still, someone should --- now.

I can issue these commands because my age & heart preserve me from

\* It was also a young female rhesus who invented the sifting method of food washing, in the Japanese study.









being told, You do it.

You know, it's my impression that this round of feminism contains fewer rich women than the suffragette movement. No right to vote was galling all up the socio-economic ladder.

A note on your paper, purely format-wise. When you aren't sure of a date don't say so---if the ones you used are "close enough" they are. (Yours are, too, in my recollection. And you can always use "circa" and even better, the word "surfaced".)

Also on the long Freud paragraph, page 3 --- Do break that into about 5 paragraphs; it's tough going.

And by "re-invent" which you use very broadly, don't you sometimes mean the simpler word "revise?" or "revised out?"

Orwell's 1984 had some words for this process.

(You see in many ways I equate feminism with revolution in general.) I mean many of the phenomena are parallel.)

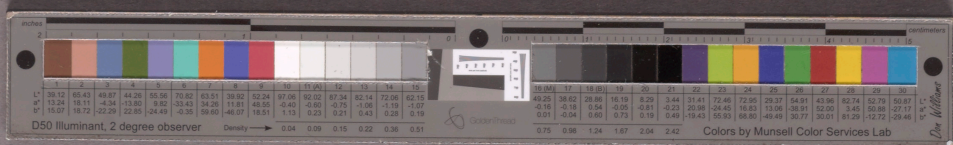
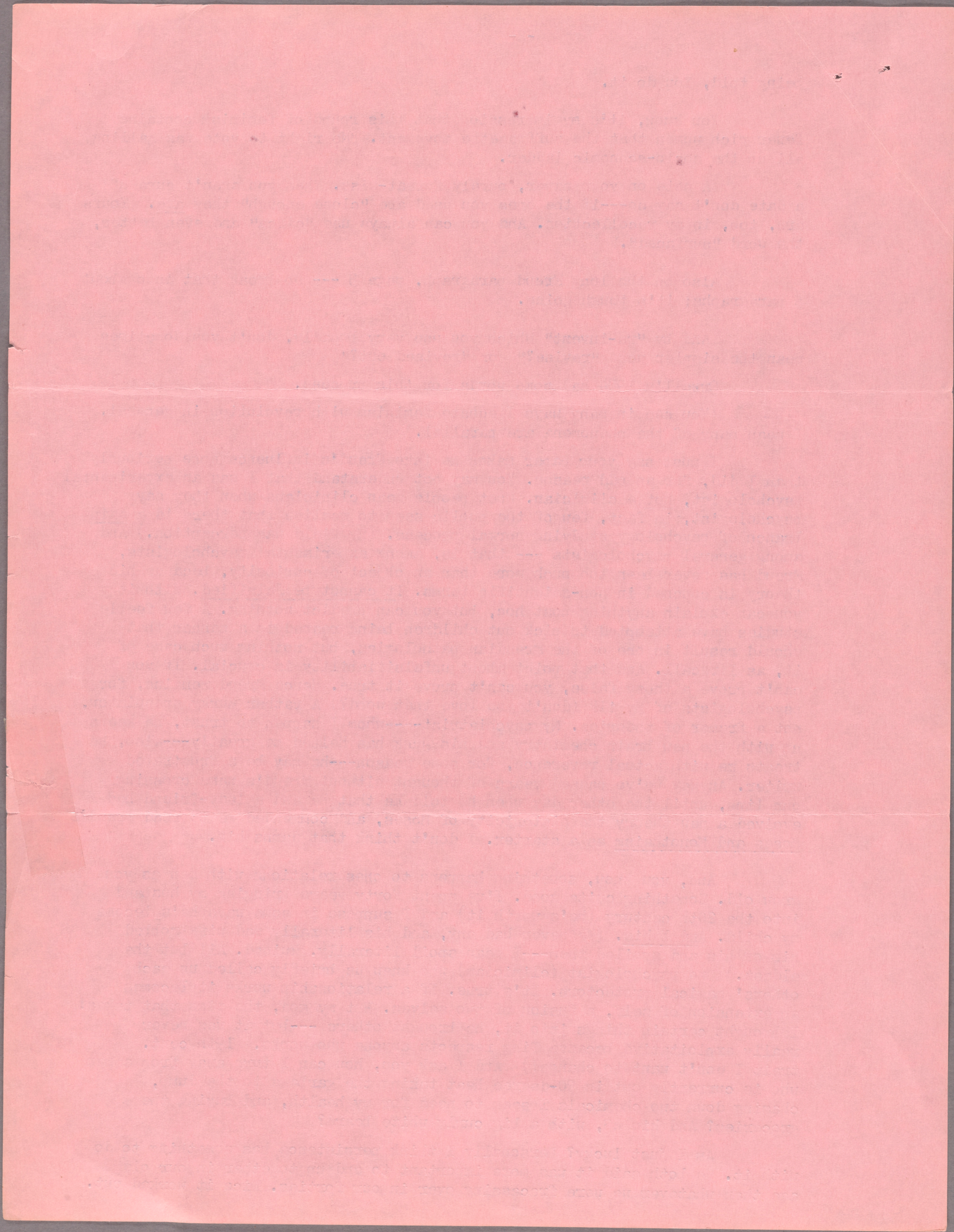
I must say your paper makes me take Freud's influence more seriously than I did, for an odd reason. You may not understand that I was an experimental psychologist, not a clinician. Most people mean clinicians when they say psychologist, in fact, few of the public seem to realise that there is a main branch of psychology studying normal process. (My field was perception.) And among general psychologists --- that is, among experimental psychologists, Freud has never been too much more than an object of curiosity, because his theory is couched in non-scientific terms. It cannot be falsified. With it you can explain anything post hoc, but you can predict nothing. A few feeble studies have attempted to pick out children being reared in a manner that should result in one of the Freudian pathologies, but nothing much came of it, as I recall. And that point about unfalsifiability is crucial. If you can't prove a theory false, you can't prove it true. Hence Freud remains, for psychologists of my ilk (don't you love that word?) A rather murky speculator, not a framer of theories. My psychiatrist----whom I happen to trust, he keeps up with the new brain chemistry and his junk has helped me greatly---also, he treats me with actual reverence, for some reason---he may be a frustrated writer. Anyway we've passed years of thought without Freud's name crossing our lips, until the other day when he told me that he and a lady-friend had evolved a new theory the historicity of Moses, and commended me to read Freud's Moses and Monotheism as a starter. I don't think that damns him.

And, you know, something happens to one's relations with men as you grow old. Something quite good. I've spent forty years bringing my husband into the 20th century (he's worth it) and I suppose in some ways he's become my child. And I his. (We never had any, and his literally mad wife robbed him of his and spoiled them---I mean spoil literally. Ruined. All but the eldest.) One psychologist (clinician) who knew us briefly called us each others' magical protectors. It's true. If a relationship works it becomes an extension of self, a fusion of two selves. But my god, the time that takes! I brought certain things into it, he brought others ---but it was never really exploitative because Ting respects anyone who works. (19th cent. trait I don't want to change!) And I ask you, how can I turn away from a man who is currently out in 90-degree heat taking the garbage to the dump, chasing down two chemicals I seem to need for my health, and buying the groceries? And him 83, with a big curly white beard?

Am I just lucky? Personally I think persistence has something to do with it. We both said it was more important to end up together in our old age than whatever we were fracassing over in our forties. Nice it worked out.









But my own situation does NOT blind me to the rest of what's going on in life. I've had my share of active persecution --- would you believe that when the Women's Army marched through the wintry streets of Des Moines ---and you are singularly helpless, marching in formation --- the good young male citizens kicked slush at us and threw tomatoes and iceballs? Eyes front, march on. Jesus. And that is only a highpoint of the stuff I've personally endured, being the "only woman" in this or that. And in academe--- "But we already have a woman instructor!" And as a young girl ---no, there are some things I prefer to remember the lesson and forget the details.

And the lesson is just as you state it.

Oh, hell, you know all this about me. Why do you suppose I wrote Houston, and The Women men don't see? (You know I got a letter from a man about Houston who said he felt I'd stripped him naked, what should he DO? A scream.) (Meaning, pretty funny. I guess "scream" is obsolete.)

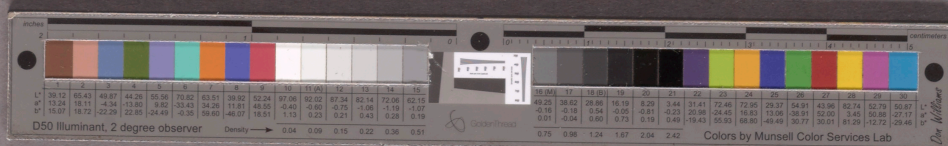
Well Sweetheart Ting is back with the chemicals (Thyrosine and L-Phenylalamine) and I've got to call Steve to find how I take them. Supposed to help what's wrong with my general energy level.

So bye bye. But we have to do something about a Woman's ~~LXX~~ Archives. Or find out who's doing it.

And someday I want to write (with you?) A handbook on tactics, or Alternatives to Standing There and Crying. You know, ways of holding your own in the throng when some joker insults you. (I once thought of doing it with Vonda, because she seemed to be doing so much just standing there and expostulating, but she made it clear ABUNDANTLY! --- that she wasn't interested.

Love, sweetie. By the way, is your real love deal going ok?

2.





*[Faint, illegible text visible through the paper, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.]*

