

short letter  
29 Mar -  
explaining "where"  
plus chemicals

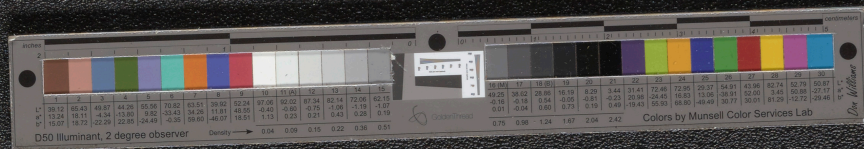
March 25, 1979

Dear Triptrup,

Why do you have to go to Quintana Roo or Maine or British Columbia, if not to get away from me (and everyone else)? i.e. out of communication.

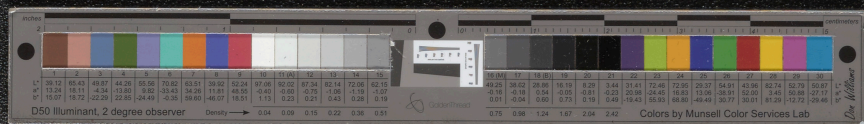
Another disappointing day has come and gone. I always thought there'd be a time when the disappointments would stop. Like the characters in the fairy tales, one finally Wins Through. Psychoanalysis (as in so many other areas) nourished this illusion — there would be The Day when one was O.K. and "didn't need" the analyst any more and then, presumably, one (purged of sin) could lead a normal life, whatever that was. Nobody ever got to this point, somehow, except a very few (one or two) white, middle-aged, rich men (one, actually) but everybody came into the group each week and dutifully announced they were Getting Better or Working At Their Relationship. So we all followed the rules — and never questioned who had laid down the rules (God? the Transit Authority?) or the whole American fix-it mentality.

Life doesn't have enough satisfactions. The things I can count on for pleasure are either so mild as to be non-existent (running errands) or ~~not~~ unattainable (conferences) or so rare that they hardly ever happen (visitors). And the





others are either highly unreliable (parties) and most-of-the-time disappointing. So much is simply utterly disappointing. I went to a Womyn's Theatre Festival last night + was physically uncomfortable (standing up in back with one foot on a stool + being periodically crowded out of position by other people, also ~~is~~ temperature in the 90's) and bored out of my mind - the plays were awful. Static. This morning my feet hurt. I'm tired of buying books (most of which are disappointing, too) and trying to find things to share with people when we don't have that much in common. I seem to have some things in common with everyone and a sizeable amount in common with almost nobody. Except once in a very long while a woman like Michele - and then it hurts and hurts. I wish I were dumber. The academics here, whom I can talk to about some things - well, you know what happens sooner or later with men; one walks into their sexism and hurts one's nose on it. Everything is partial and painful; it's impossible really to love (or even hate) anyone fully. And most pleasures are the willful ones of observing and understanding; they aren't the whole-hearted ones of just enjoying. Ditto bars + discussions + all the other ways people get together. They bore me. I can't get into them. And if I try to approach the topics which in-





terest me, I bore everyone else. I wonder if most people face this; I suspect not. Being ordinary protects most people from it, I would think.

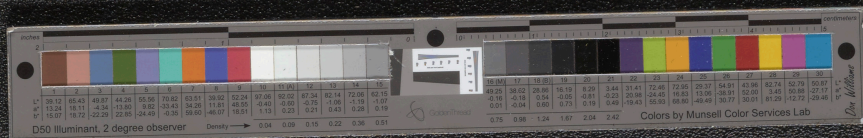
And I'm physically so very limited. Which means I can't even do the mildly dull things I used to do.

Half the time I don't even know ~~at~~ how I'll feel about anything, or whether I'll be able to stand it. Everything is so chancy.

It's really loathsome. Will I be able to sit down or won't I? Will I be able to get along with X or won't I? Will I be physically capable of sticking around or not? Who knows. So it's all disappointing over and over and over again and I feel terrible. Looking back, everything has been so rotten and this goes on + goes on. If all this were new, I could simply wait it out. But it's not.

My shrink works with a psychiatrist, who (she reports) is on some sort of hyper-rational, schizoid kick — see, you not only choose what you do; you choose how you're going to feel about it. This means that life is infinitely manipulable — if you choose not only how to feel but how to perceive. It's also solipsistic and totally crazy,

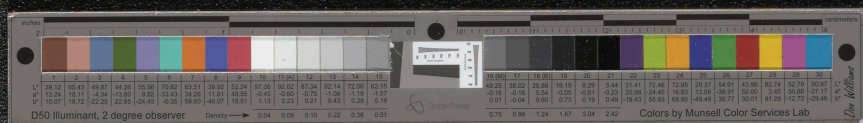
which doesn't seem to bother him. I pegged him as a shit last year. He's reverting, haircut and counter culture belt buckle not-





withstanding. The world seems to be full of people trying to find some way not to let things affect them and rationalizing their attempts in one nutty way or another. "You must change your perceptions," he says, not indicating how this operation is to be accomplished or what happens to your selfhood once you can change how you perceive just-like-that. These idiots ass-heads are always falling into metaphysical and philosophical booby-traps. They have no training in thinking, but think they know better than anyone. If you can't change the outside, mess up the inside. He's approaching people's subjectivity the same way Americans have approached the natural world: there's nothing really there, so why not simply do things to it (this "nothing," this plastic glop) to make it into what you want? He still assumes that pleasure and pain are real, but I've heard people talk as if that weren't true, either. What happens with a psychiatrist who assumes that nothing inside people is real? Not perceptions or values or goals or sensations or emotions? ~~the~~ What is the final appeal? That point goes beyond solipsism! In fact, I've heard people trying to do even that + talking as if nothing were real but observable behavior—this works even less well. Côte qui coûte, the whole mess is real.

I've talked myself into feeling better. It's





about midnight, and watch Alli scooting about in interstellar space, gathering material for a novel.

Well, you only called my complaints banal once and you did say adoration + empathy (but also exasperation).

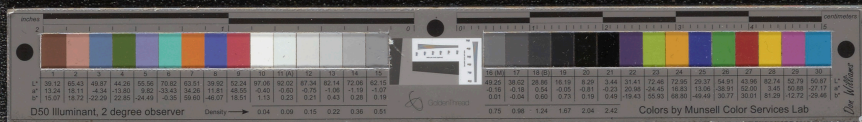
I'm better re my back — marginally, but it's very heartening. And there is always the possibility that we will both be killed instantaneously in a train wreck. (As my shrink says, look on the bright side.) I'm teaching an s.f. course to eager frosh and it's fun but exhausting — somehow at this time of night (9 p.m.) I'm always waking up. I really need a few days without work is all.

Yes, of course, all one wants is the empathic grunt.

Grunt!

There's an article you ought to read in Conditions Four. Do you get Conditions? If not tell me + I'll send it you for a birthday present. One of our (writers') problems is that we can't measure our lives by ordinary standards: Successful Children, Nice House, etc. — even if we have these, we're so apt to measure everything sub specie aeternitatis (sp.?) that nothing is unequivocally O.K. Which feeds all sorts of despair.

I am teaching your story "Houston, Houston" (in Star Songs) to the frosh — few of whom will





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● read the intro. + find out who you are. They'll get it at the end of the quarter, when they trust me....!

The article in Conditions is about a shelter for homeless women, the bag ladies, and what is the dynamic of their self-hatred. Basically it's the necessity of living for the needs of others, the guilt at having needs of their (her) own, the terror and rage of not being able to fill these needs. It sounded like me. I wondered if it would sound like you to you.

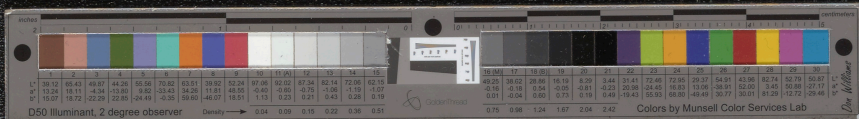
I'll get the essay xeroxed and send it to you.

● Actually, I'm not surprised at hurts and disappointments so much as outraged, cheated! - having very high standards for life (which I forego instantly at even the tiniest bit of pleasure). Some sort of family style.

I don't know what happened to the cat who was eating laurel - or maybe it was an azalea, which wouldn't be poisonous. Laurel is the pale-green, waxy, hedge stuff around here, so it must've been azalea. The place is full of cats. My next-door neighbor has a split-Siamese, not short-haired, with stripes instead of markings. A very elegant cat, who loves the hoods of warm cars. The warm hoods of cars, that is.

● Give Ting my love.

Lizzie Lynn came up here a few weeks ago - did I tell you? I had a violent cold, but as





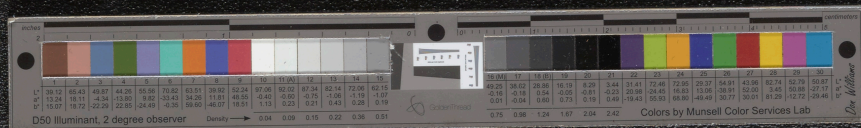
soon as she stepped in the door I swole up at the other end + we fell into bed and did things. It was very nice! And I couldn't get within ten feet of her without mooning all over and swelling up again. (Which I do just writing about it.) Unfortunately she lives in San Francisco. Which is far away.

Is there any chance that your peregrinations in the future will take you anywhere Westwards? I'd like to see you once before one of us departs for the Great Multiversity in the Sky — and you should meet Suzy Charnas, who is a grand person (and probably part of the interstellar C.I.A.) before your next trip to Yucatan. Where you will go off-planet with Only Heaven Knows Who....

My dear, if I don't comment/answer to/on some of the things you say in your letters, it's because I often don't know what to say. Depression is something we both know — and know how disgustingly protean it is + how so little can get through it.

I have been pretty demanding lately, I know. But if one can't get an empathic grunt from one's friends...? (Suzy + I both write stream-of-consciousness letters, both quite satisfied at never getting direct answers. I assume — like her — that this is OK. If not, if there's something you want a specific answer to, TELL ME!!!!

My God, the frosh are young. Great, hulking,





adult-looking things with smooth baby-faces.

I am pulling the oldest tricks - from my vantage point of 22 years! - and they LOVE it. They never saw anyone do it before. They're very nice.

I got "Star Songs" (told you that in my letter) + read it, very very admiring + pleased. You have developed by leaps + bounds in so few years! Tell me honestly - when did you really start writing?

And the short story is the beautifullest form for s.f., simply lovely. I read "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't" (etc.) and CRIED. Especially at the lovely sketches of the rats and all that stuff about rats - you got so

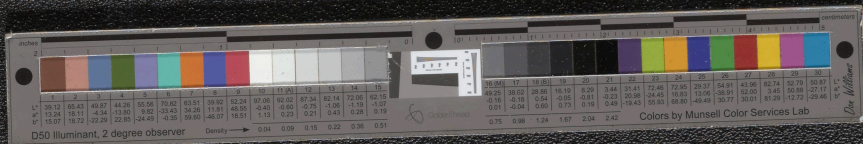
neighborly and appreciative of them, if you know what I mean. The pictures made them look so intelligent + plucky + rattish. "A Momentary Taste of Being" is a splendid story - you specialize in metaphysical s.f., I suppose one would call it. Does that make sense?

The stories all have, under them, one of those awful, stark philosophical questions about purpose, identity, reality, souls. And almost always tragic. I do hope, after that last moment, each of us wakes up on the Enterprise or its equivalent.

By the way, Susan Cornillon is trying to sell an anthology of Other Woman stories (did I

tell you?) and I told her that "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" was the ultimate in that line.

She's also trying to do an anthology of Fat stories -





can you think of any?

el's ~~part~~<sup>Mrs.</sup> Parsons part of a world-wide organization? I always wasn't sure....

Perhaps the afterlife, for a writer, is made up of her own stories?

It's too late - I begin to be not tired but gen-u-wynely sleepy. A lot of this has been my period, ought to remember, but what's time? Pure illusion. Part of the problem of being a depressive is that one doesn't believe in time - Now Is Forever, as the song says.

I'm gibbering - five book reviews in two and a half months may have something to do with being spaced out. Watch the D.C. Post for one on Rich - Adrienne Rich, "On Lies, Secrets, and Silence." A splendid, impressive book, of heartening integrity.

One thing Laing (I think) knew - that "neurosis" or "psychosis" is always based on basic human issues. Schizophrenia is, he said, the problem of the Other. Clever man!

Do go on with stories + the hell with novels! S.f. novels are simply a nuisance. Between 40,000 words and 200,000 there ought to be a vacuum, in s.f. FUCK NOVELS! (little dancing cigarette pks. with feet)

Lone,  
Joanna

