

P.S. I want to be called a swan. Will you nickname me a Swan? I really love it much better than my name. (Because you made it up!)

19 Sept. 1979

Dearest Trump,

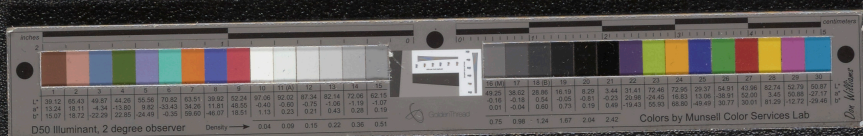
I was making out a list of s.f. for the Radical Women group, re-reading "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" and "Houston, Houston" + "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats" (which is simply splendid) + thinking what an unbelievably good writer you are — and how beautiful the "Psychologist etc." is! And you took all color out of the world for me with "A Momentary Taste of Being" + it took me an hour to figure out how impossible it was!

How could I teach you? All I could do is babble. You're some sort of blooming genius. Alas, that doesn't help one's personal life! But aren't we lucky to be alive at the same time?

You started high, as a good writer — even better, with "The Last Flight of Dr. Ain" — but have gone straight up.

Do you think Chekhov was a sort of missed woman? And her soul got into you somehow?

For Heaven's sake, write stories + poetry to the so-called art of the novel; you are in some perfect mid-length with the best of them and they are simply splendid.



I'm coming out of some kind of funk, or developing social-critical eyes or something — and am simply, suddenly utterly bowled over.

But I never told you, did I?

God, you're good!

You've been saying it all out loud over + over again, in the "Psychologist Who" and "Beam Us Home" and "Dr. Ain" + "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" + your shrink keeps saying you should get angry (ha!) and I, in my 40-year-old innocence keep saying it, too. THE WORLD IS ROTTEN.

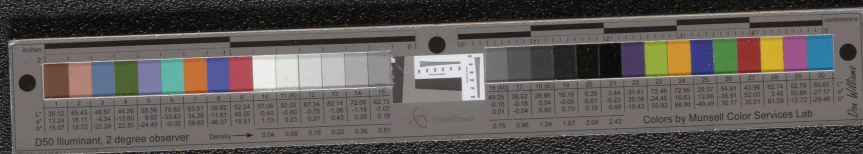
It is.

Fame doesn't change that. Or love. There are ways of contacting things within + beyond the rottenness, though.

Are you religious at all?

I've been having mystical experiences all my life that I can remember. I finally decided about 3 years ago that because they weren't enough, they were all lies and fakery + I must stop. So I tried. I was going to put "people" first + "relating" and stop "living in my head."

This made me almost as miserable as not being a Lesbian had, + almost as miserable as not loving the part of myself



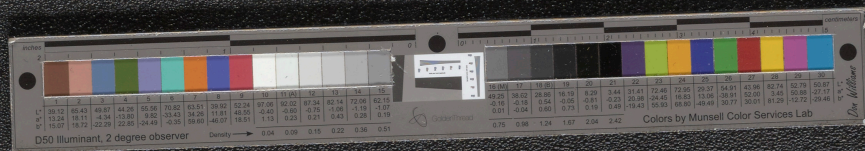
I call the Little Dirty Girl, whom I met a year or so ago (+ have now writ into a ghost story.) Why I was trying to be so "rational" I don't know, but psychoanalysis was a good part of it plus the lifelong conviction that my mother wanted me to be someone else. She now writes me that ~~she~~ from the time I was 8 or so she was very unhappy with my father and wanted to divorce him. I had no idea! (All kept quiet, of course.) But I must've felt it.

So off I was on one of my "I-am-the-wrong-person" trips. And miserable —!

First I had to let in the Lesbian. And get over all the taboos + stupidity + my own ghastly conventional beliefs about that. 6 yrs!!

Then I had to let in the Little Dirty Girl, who burst out some 18 mos. ago, all snot + tears + baggy shat-in pants + crying very loud + neglected + promise her she could be part of me + I'd listen to her, + try to help her get what she must have + never force a stupid "ought" on her again, especially ought-to-enjoy this or that.

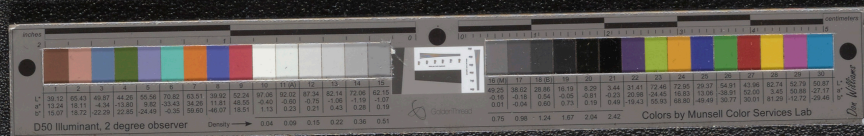
Then it was suddenly understanding my damned class position — walking a tightrope for 12 years as a teacher + writes! There's no more exposed position



than living by one's wits. My very success is radical-feminist + that in itself is a peril; this constituency is itself rigid and demanding + often ~~false~~ wants what is false. Why didn't I feel safe? (Because I wasn't!) Every time I write anything + even in classrooms, I have always the nagging feeling, "Am I about to go too far? Will I get in trouble? Is this it?" And must fight, or calculate, or whatever.

The trouble is, we're taught to mis-name needs and confuse them. Affection is necessary + so is sociability + being accepted, but none of these is the same as safety.

Then it was a whole night in which my body was some sort of inert, awful thing I couldn't get out of + I cried + cried in fury and despair: I was stuck in it by mistake, they'd left me here + forgot about me, I was the subject of some kind of error, just a computer mix-up; this thing wasn't me, that's all. I didn't hate it; I just wasn't it. And a feeling I absolutely can't describe of being hopelessly stuck in time. And exiled — that was the worst, being in exile. I was strong enough by now to just let it come + live it through. Went to my shrink the next day, + babbled it all like an early



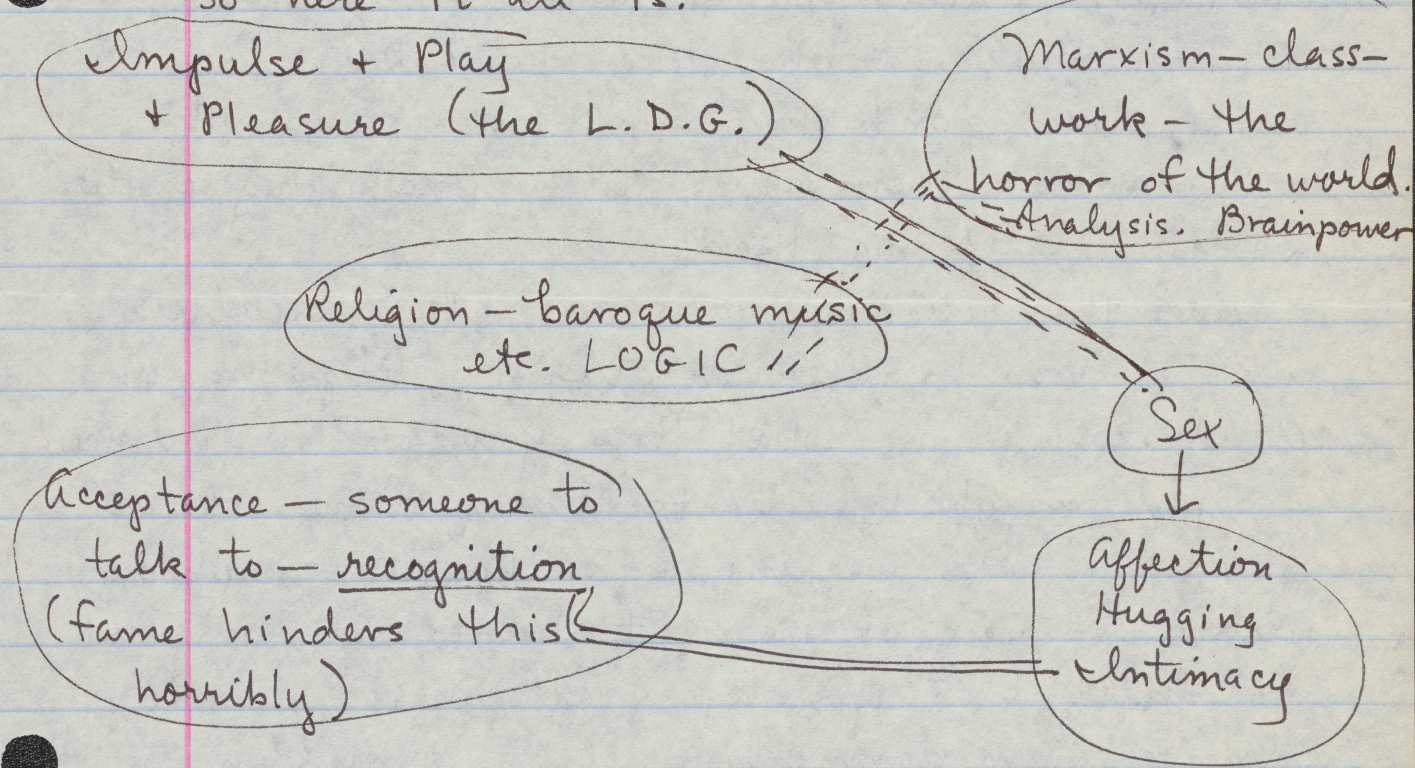
Christian: Oh, who will deliver me from the body of this death? She said, "You're denying ~~some~~ your soul, you know."

I was shocked. I had expected some kind of psychiatric jargon. (She doesn't do that.)

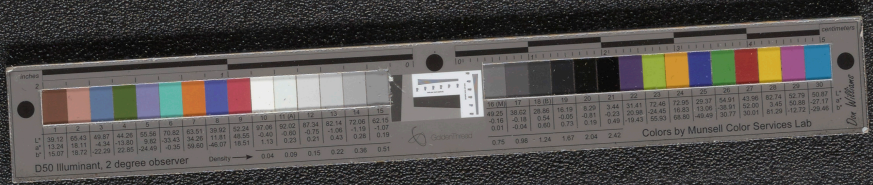
She's right.

I had it confused with love and sex and immediate pleasure (immediate pleasure is the Dirty Little Girl) for decades. It's none of those things. It's ~~not~~ close to mathematics, logic, Bach, light, space, high plains, the sky, unity-in-complexity.

So here it all is:



All these bongling about and I'm trying to put them together. And everyone else



is trying to keep them apart!

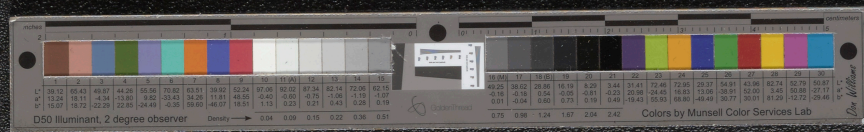
The Radical Women Do lack in the area of process — it's all "objective truth" + at least with some of them, a real insensitivity ^{about} to how to approach people and what other people can hear (I don't mean me). (In my first panel, a gay white man wanted me to listen to how rotten his mother was. In the 2d a black man wanted me to console him for his wife's leaving him! And I am tha-roo with all that!!!!)

But the "process" people have their silly heads in their own entrails + don't want to work with intractable realities. Like ^{class +} money + power.

And the ones who like the L.D.G. are worse; they don't keep appointments or plan or commit themselves to anyone! They're the woolly California Heads.

And the religious ones are also occuttery nuts + drag in reincarnation or telepathy or cloud-moving or what-have-you on NO evidence!

And everybody reacts to my fame. I feel as if I were wearing a billboard. Everybody wants a piece of me + it hurts. I was not so different 5 yrs. ago + all these people didn't give a damn; now, all of a sudden, I'm wonderful. I sort of like it but feel it isn't me. It's lovely to communicate, but



all the same —! A R.W. woman said to me, "But you're a leader. Don't you understand?" and I was immensely moved + embraced her — which surprised her and her being taken aback upset me — isn't anybody able to put it all together?

I suppose I've changed; I simply say what comes into my head now.

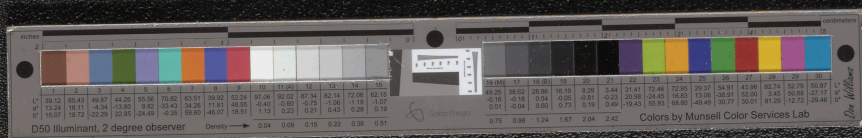
Now, as my shrink says, I must learn to say No.

The T.A. people are wrong about religion; it's not a Child function but a Computer function primarily — that impersonal, intensely "passive" & functioning. My L.D.G. jabbers.

How do we all get so split into pieces?

If any of this sounds the least little bit like anything that's happened to you, some day please write + tell me.

Somehow with each piece that fits back into place, it all gets better. I don't know how to put it. I am still awfully scared of a lot of things but it's not all for nothing; I had painted myself into a corner where the only values were physical safety and not being in pain (and a ^{hoped-for} "love" I tried to make carry the burden of everything else, without work or commitment or religious illumination or any real value to



Your stories simply opened the floodgates,
old dear, + out it ~~fall~~ came, Triptumbling!

love with). If literature is lies + the beauty
of the world is lies + the people who are
hugging + affectionate don't really see me or
will put themselves out or understand what
I'm about and I'm in pain + sick — !

It all failed.

Now I'm getting out of the corner, I
think.

I try to take on everyone else's "rational"
values, damn it, + then wonder why I'm un-
happy. I do it because I feel everybody
else is right + I'm wrong.

Mystical experience is basically cognitive;
I would call it the computer's delight in
itself if it weren't for the disappearance of
self into out-there + vice versa. But I had
better not try to describe it. It's the ultimate
passive-impersonal pole of existence (both those
in quotes, please), the most is-ing one can
in the ~~non-active~~ reverse-of-active mode.

Though they all converge somewhere. Didn't
Flannery O'Connor write a story called
"Everything That Rises Must Converge"?

Why do people bother to take acid?

O, it's LATE again. I must to bed.
Swimming pools to find, shoes to fix, car
insurance etc. etc.

Love, Joanna

