

8 Nov. 1979

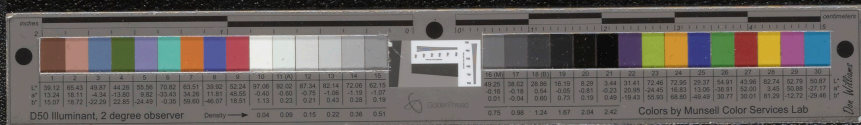
Dear Trip-up-and-down,

① No neck will keep me from writing you. Besides, in a week my over-the-bed table will be revised upwards (welded 12" higher) to make squinting etc. unnecessary. Likewise, prism glasses, whatever they be.

② I demand to be addressed in variations of whatever nickname thy mind can be inspired to devise BUT not of my own legal-type name (printed above, signed below). If I am your Black Swan as you used to insist — or Goose or Duck — do address me so.

It is very appropriate: graceful in the air and possibly water, waddly on land, irritable, short-sighted, insistent on its own path, and apt to peck at friendly hands.

③ Did you see yourself anatomized to criticism in the recent S.-F. Studies? Really a bit much — he seems to have noticed that you are a pessimist (true) and can't solve all the problems of a world you feel is rotten (true) and that ~~something~~ much in your work has Biology in it (hell, yes) but he doesn't distinguish between early work like ~~eg~~ "Your Haploid Heart," or



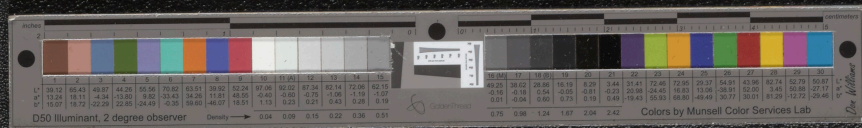
* it is not progressive, he says primly.

pure s.f. games, + can't believe that you mean an all-female world can really be O.K.* (the word "feminist" never crosses his lips) nor does he—oddly—notice the stories which I think of as pure Tiptree — "Beam Us Home" and "The Psychologist Who etc."

It is the nuttiest instance of crimestop; all New Criticism fifty years out of date and applied to s.f. which (as Delany patiently points out in The Jewel-Hinged Jaw, badly reviewed elsewhere) does not have room for any but the simplest symbolism.

I saw — or rather, didn't see — last night — "Auschwitz: the Final Solution" in World at War — which your critic ought to have his eyeballs glued to. Except where your feminism dashes some sort of reality he can't avoid in his face (ah, but even there, there is "complexity" — the women's world is unprogressive + murderous so it's really just as bad) he simply doesn't ask that simplest ~~question~~ ^{question} of all: Is James' pessimism right? Is the world really like that?

Now you see what was dumped on my unwilling head at age 17. I shall never cease hating these men.

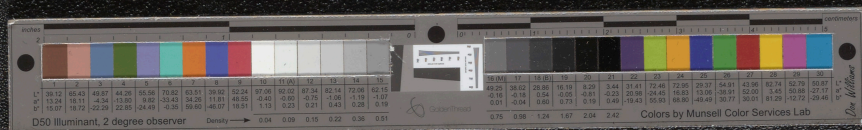


Some day you must tell me what you think of Vonnegut who seems to me very like you. Critics don't like him, either. He's a) popular, and b) simple. After all, if one's been trained in literature to look for irony, complexity, and suspension of judgment as signs of maturity, what on earth can one make of the fire-bombing of Dresden or any other unmitigated horror? Like biological warfare in Cambodia (but this time turned against us!)? Where is the suspension of judgment, the "mature" impersonality, the balance of feeling that marks the true poet? (Who is trying desperately to speak at all without screaming and running away?)

Vonnegut does get sentimental and simple-minded but it's usually when he's trying to be "positive."

"New crit." isn't just anti-politics, it's anti-reality. (It came out of the agrarian, conservative South in the 1930's which is a VERY ODD TIME AND PLACE, ain't it?)

You've been bit by one of them.
How's it feel? Pleased, my Trumpeet?
They could never do anything with



Shelley, either.

Please read Elizabeth Fisher's Woman's Evolution!

Love,
Joanna

