

10 May 1981

Dear Toes,

How can you write in the dark?

But I put nothing past you.

It was good to get your letter.

Yes, your history interests me immensely. You give me little bits of it + I remain hungry. I feel like a baby bird every month getting 1 worm — I WANT them.

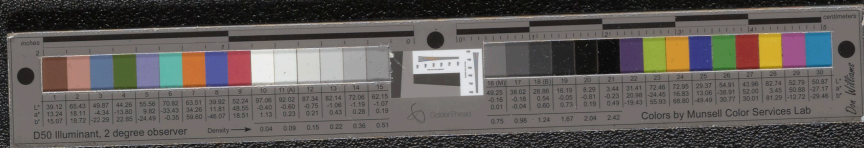
AHA, candle.

Yes, I do want more of your astonishing and unusual history. Tell, tell.

I know that awful tendresse women feel for one another — let some younger female person (with a high I.Q.) appear + Be Honestly Unhappy + I melt all over. Let her be seductive and unhappy + I am a goner.

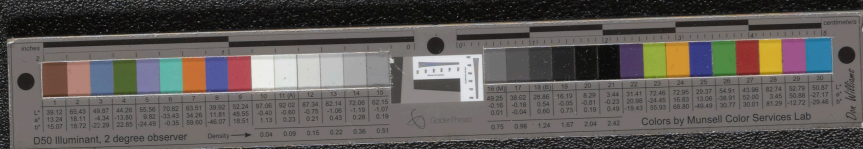
I control myself but it's all there.

You know, part of our problem is simply that we are appallingly intelligent. We are Martians. Teresa, Michele, my mother, one of my baby cousins, my old friend Mary — all female Martians. I was tested as a 12-year-old in N.Y.C. as part of some academic program: 140 in class, 160 at school (with the test given personally), 190 afterwards and 200+ on a re-test. (Either I was telepathic ~~but~~ or learning how to take them.) Most people are, at best, foreigners + at least



~~My mother, too.~~

another species. James Blish was one of us; Samuel Delany is clearly another. R.D. Laing ditto. Teresa + Patrick (her husband) ditto. It makes for dreadful problems — i.e. one is socialized + given a <sup>civilized</sup> conscience by being socialized among one's own kind — but we hardly ever meet our kind! So there are gaps. Anyway I have also been told I'm clinically depressed + believe it — it makes sense out of enormous amounts of info. I had been trying to plug into the computer for years + could not. I am in a worse way now than in the past but was always like this + probably grew up thus. It explains the eerie sense of being a very tough, experienced, and extremely strong guerrilla fighter in a perpetual, invisible war. It explains why it's always been hard for me to tell whether or not I'm physically ill — the pain level is so high I've learned to discount it. It explains why I don't "pay attention to my body" in my shrink's words — it hurts. Everything hurts but my hair. It explains, I think, my <sup>continual</sup> temptation to find someone to be utterly dependent on (life is so awful + everyone else seems to do better) + also the fear of becoming addicted (to something the supply of which may disappear). My <sup>other (!)</sup> friends know all about this — I've been calling them. They are the same. And I thought of you, instantly. With brain chemistry like this, anything that



- feels good is a lifesaver, not just a pleasure. Which makes life rather desperate, eh?

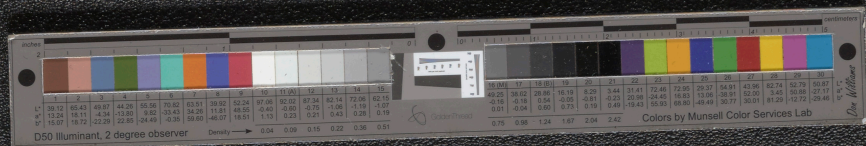
When one's small — and depressive — ordinary nurturing doesn't feel good enough. It would take a superhuman mother to do an "adequate" job.

It explains why I have spent the last 20 years gaining insight, knowledge, tolerance, ability at human relations, etc. — and have been feeling steadily worse. Why walking down the street can feel like walking through a minefield. (Why, perhaps, depressives often perk up in wartime or in places like the London blitz — it's a relief to

- have a visible cause of the misery. Also we have a lot of experience in being wretched; it's no novelty! And survival skills aplenty. And just possibly the adrenalin — and the camaraderie — make us feel better rather than worse.)

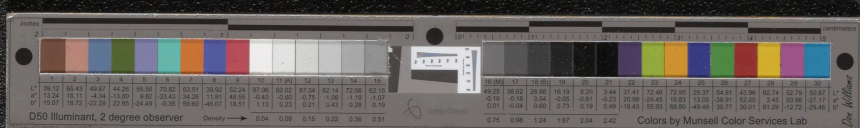
I have spent my life — as I guess you have — being blamed for all this: cultivate a sense of proportion, think of others rather than yourself, face your neurotic feelings, feel your feelings, etc. etc.

- My shrink — who is, I am sadly afraid, rather dumb — has been exhorting me to "stay with my feelings." What this is supposed to do I am not sure. To tell a depressive "Feel your feelings" strikes me as rather bad advice, and fairly senseless, too, since my problem is that I



\* When the guard's down, horrors happen. In future I think I will say to myself, "That's the price you pay for being wonderful."!

feel rotten. Also there is the 200-plus I.Q. and the Chameleon Effect: I pick up others' behavior, accents, beliefs, etc. like a sponge and can't stop it — so I learned to be very careful who I spent time with, who I saw, what I read or saw — + to keep my guard high all the time.\* I have always felt so guilty about being rational + intelligent — when Jesus Freaks keep trying to persuade me of their rubbish, I feel an abject pull: they're right to be stupid, right not to think; I should be like that, I should force myself to believe what they do, etc. One gets such an enormous amount of this sort of rubbish, from early on. It is simply wrong to question or be intelligent. And since I am usually in pain (or about to be) I want love + approval + no fights. And I feel guilty about disagreeing. (Have you always felt that you were Galileo?) Meanwhile I try earnestly to believe that it's somehow my own doing that I'm unhappy — for the only possible explanations seem to be either (a) the world is a ghastly, awful place — but nobody else seems to think so. (b) I am crazy. So one tries to make sense out of both (a) + (b). Both are fruitful — but the giant bug in the info. system remains. One gets meta-depression (depressed at being depressed) and guilty. Very guilty → worse depression → worse guilt. Etc.



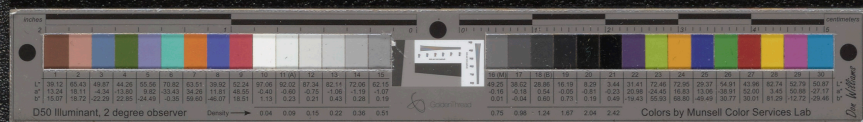
The guilt of being intelligent is confused with the guilt of being miserable.

I tell my shrink I feel awful. She says "Stay with it." I do. It gets worse. I cry. She gets loving and affectionate. If I don't cry + refuse to "stay with it" she insists + is NOT loving and affectionate. If I say, "Look, this makes me feel abject and humiliated, I don't want to feel like this."

She: "But you do feel that way." (in a voice full of meaningfulness)

I feel that I am going mad or that she is mad. I tell her this. She ~~st~~ says, "Stay with your feelings." (stalemate)

She recommended a "movement therapist" who turned out to be a creepo — full of mystical statements about how your feelings caused you to have physical illnesses. I took one look, more or less, + loathed him; he (sensing this) told me that my anger was making my back + feet hurt. I said my feet suffered from a congenital orthopedic condition. He said it was caused by rage in the womb. I left. She + I had a row, she saying (truly) that she had warned me that his theory sounded rather silly. (But not that totally irrational!) One thing I never can do is spot stupidity in people — ~~st~~ I have to judge it from the outside, by signs I've learned, as healthy people judge illness (paleness, fever,



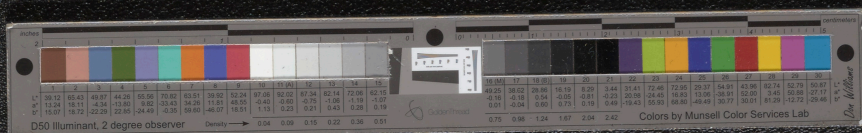
a look of distress, etc.).

I can't imagine how it feels to be the sort of person who really doesn't care about irrationality, doesn't think it matters, etc. Or at all how it feels if you're the sort who believes that junk!

Well, there was the row. I went away feeling utterly crazy — the floor of the universe slipping. This is a woman whom I do trust, who has become very important to me, whom I depend on far too much — because for a long time she was my only link to sanity. ~~and~~ I felt bad + felt bad because I felt bad.

She kept saying, "Why is it so important to explain things? To make sense of things?" Which dumbfounds me; how does one answer a question like that? "Can't you just trust that we are different people and it's O.K.?" When I talk about the Chameleon Effect, she says "Why don't you just let it happen? After all, it's happened before and you survived." (My immediate reaction: No I didn't.) "Survival" — I'm not sure what that's supposed to mean — is very important to her.

All this has come clear in the last week. The clanking of theory. The stupidity! She is warm + means well, but that's not enough. I am a twitch, but you don't help a depressive by saying "Feel your feelings" or a schizoid by saying, "It won't hurt you." Asking someone



to endure the Insanity Effect (!) because if they go through it they will see it isn't so bad, is genuinely stupid — it is that bad + it isn't something one "goes through;" it's timeless. One is in it. And every approach of it — if classical learning theory applies, ~~it~~ I think it does — is further conditioning against ever coming near it again.

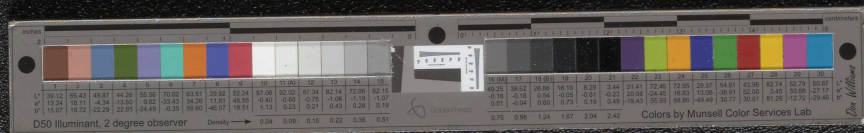
I think she thinks I ought not to think! All that theory about how you treat a schizoid (who "turns off" his emotions, no? Like an Analog hero) but you and I are not that sort of schizoid. We are the sort the wind whistles through. It is often lovely —

Isn't it odd? I think I have got back my sense of myself that I lost when I came here! That would be strange. That knowledge of what choices are right for me. Well, we'll see.

It is lovely, <sup>and dreadful.</sup> If someone told me the universe was made of green cheese, just for a split second (before, of course, I laughed or walked away)....

You know.

The moment the dependency on her disappeared (with the announcement that my biochemistry could be adjusted + it wasn't my fault) I said to myself, "She's stupid." The "movement therapist" wasn't power-tripping, only stupid. Which is rather sad, but not crazy-making.

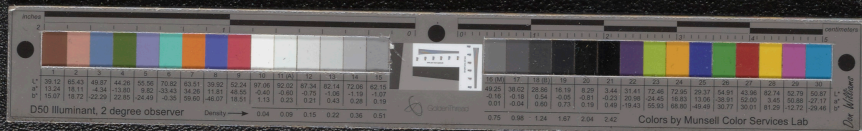


I ought to emphasize that she has been useful + good in many ways. Yet if it hadn't been for all my desperation (the constant pain, the misery, the sheer terror of not knowing why) I would have seen this long before. It's when she's out of her depth intellectually that she does these rather odd things, I think.

Of course every pain terrifies me now. I'll need her, I'm really crippled, ~~my~~ I'm really "crazy" and need "help" — it's a bad business. The thought of having to live ~~with~~ forever in the meat-grinder is terrifying — being ill and getting no support for it, no understanding from people. And I guess I do feel guilty about being O.K. It would be so good if only some therapist existed who was a Martian and wasn't sexist + all the other stuff. I want to get myself untangled.

What does one do with the "If it hurts, it must be true" assumption? Obviously if it hurts it may be true; it may also be <sup>extremely</sup> dangerous.

I'm getting muddled. This is the time to STOP REASONING + go to bed. Mood elevators take several weeks to work; I will just have to take it easy. A hell of a time to be fighting one's shrink. Especially one who isn't that good or that wise. I think she gets defensive when I get smart, a Godawful



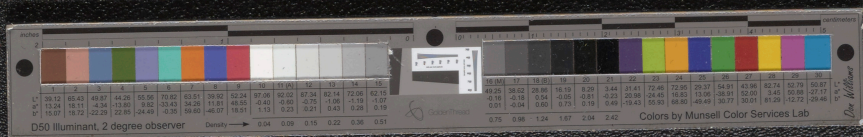


situation.

Is all this familiar, old Tree? One suspects so.

You know, if you and I have trouble "genitalizing" — no, no, consummating — our loves, it's probably the same prosaic reason it took me so long to learn to drive. There's simply so much more to integrate. I had terrible trouble learning to drive — a friend of mine who was a driving instructor told me, "Every time a professional, a doctor or lawyer, walks through our door we groan; 'Another one who'll take six months!'" Now sex is very like driving; and if there's a lot to put together in the one, think how much body-knowledge there is in the other! Sex must be done bit by bit, like writing, + when it's bad one must go back + start again. (M+J.) No?

Brains Do matter. Oh Tiptree, us super-intelligent depressives must stand together! I remember C.S. Lewis (yugh) doing some inanely Catholic speculation about the first Neanderthal to have a "soul" and the gulf between "him" (!) + his mother + how sad it was. I feel a bit like that. She is permanently blind in one way. I'm going to see next week if we can talk about it — I suspect she will treat me as if I were doing something wrong, like a



⊗ The fourth in ten years.

very sincere little psychic sheepdog trying to herd me back to the Right Place + nipping my ankles. I don't want to hurt her feelings but I certainly don't want her to keep me going bananas, either. And I suspect I must leave, anyway.

I left Boulder and lost my love, my beautiful light (which was a permanent high), my struggle-for-tenure scenario, my putting-things-off-until-I-was-famous ~~syndrome~~, promise, + in addition when I got here simply refused (in some corner of my head) to do all the <sup>psychic</sup> work necessary for a move. I lost everything at one blow + became almost suicidal - I had no idea I was so fragile + could feel so bad. Then I was ill for 7 months.

Then I hurt horribly for 6 more.

Gee... maybe that's how I got <sup>extra-</sup>depressed.

Do you think it's possible?

\* Hm. \*

You + I have trained all our lives with 500 lb. weights strapped all over us.

We have enormous muscles.

(Unfortunately we also have 500 lb. weights strapped all over us!)

So I now believe in Pills, too. If they dissolve the weights, then I will have enormous muscles and no weights!!!

Imagine.

Whoof + good night, old Root. Tell me about thyself more, eh?  
Love, J.

