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Card 5 Apr 75

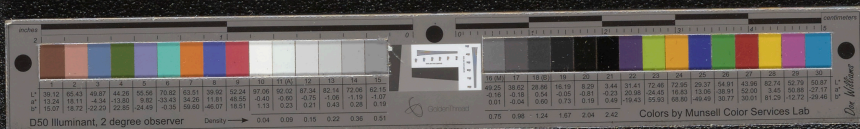
(P.S. Rumors circulate that you are Henry Kissinger, are high/low in the Federal Gummint, are really the force behind Congress, &c.?) 29 March 1975

Dear Tip,

Thanks ever so much for the books. I lash out at the world occasionally, especially now when am having blood tests, barium X-rays, whatnot, to determine why I keep having attacks of mild chills. It will probably turn out to be (1) stress (2) early menopause (3) nothing, but I'm going to an endocrinologist who's already guv me a fancy shampoo and lotion for dry feet (if that strikes you funny, it IS funny). And a spritz can you spray over yourself after a shower, leaving you with the problem of how to spray your own back. I haven't solved it.

BUSINESS: Can you send me names, authors, publishers (preferably volumes) of the men-and-themmatriarchy items? Just what I'm looking for. Trying to get John Boy'd's SEX AND THE HIGH COMMAND but it's o.p. and can't find a copy anywhere. And do you have or can you find that old novella about the teenager who lets the man cozen her into Falling in Love? ~~THE~~ I remember it, too, but can't remember date, author, anything. It's a perfect case for my thesis. And as usual it's somewhere in the vast limbo of gurry s.f. that I can't get me hands on. I remember the Gurrul is all very Femeneen, all sorts of Greeky chiffon veils or something and all the women Love everything, &c. Anyhow, that's all I remember.

Your sketch of your childhood explains a great deal. About mine, I can only say that by the time I was five I had been (inadvertently) so tormented by Mommy and Daddy that I had a firm conviction that life was unliveable,

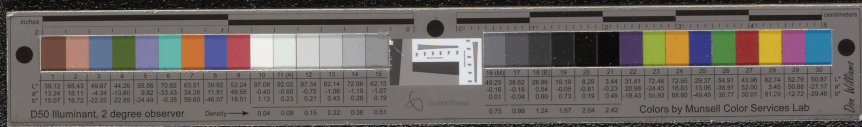


People aren't evil, just, impossible.

one that replays itself now and then, especially when I get ill. The discovery of any enjoyment to life has been a source of perpetual wonder. One doesn't get used to cruelty, but what I went through, coming out schizoid (they weren't that bad all the time, or I couldn't be sitting here writing this) and in some ways very strong, in some almost played, has made it a matter of course to me that the world is rotten, it's a place where "they" torture people and one does it oneself, so you can't even blame them, and nobody can help it.

In short, cautious optimism (so to speak).

Mommy and Daddy weren't evil, but Mommy (especially) trusted nobody and tried to devour me and Daddy was distant and promises-only. I even went thru a stage of falling in love with endless processions of goyische young men, all blond and all cold and all distant--just like poor Portnoy! Promises, promises; they were really Daddy, I guess, the Unattainable. Both of them are now old people (and older than most at 68 because they're still trying to live in 1958) who insist that except for a teeny-weeny bit of reality and a lot of rather insane but subtle rules, nobody can say boo to them. I've just about given up on saying boo to them. The result was (and is) a very very tough life but not visibly. It's not that Chip & I aren't troubled by corpses and torture; it's the difference in expectations, just as you say. For years I felt that if I were suddenly to be stoned in the street, I wouldn't exactly like it, but I'd feel it was fitting, somehow, and quite expectable. It doesn't leave me unmoved, and I do get scared, but it never never surprised me. A childhood like that (and Chip's, which I don't know much about personally) leaves you oddly volatile and completely embattled. The one defect it has is that it isn't restful. Not ever. I can remember perhaps 3-4 times in my life when I've really relaxed. So perhaps it's no wonder I get chills & fever. Mind you, it bothers me but it never occurred to me life could be any different. And I guess I was right. "World At War" on TV here had a program on



* Clearly so on the maps.

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dropping the bomb on Japan, with a clip of Oppenheimer talking about the White Sands test, and quoting the Bhagavad-Gita, "I am death. I am the destruction of worlds." And crying. The only man in the whole program who had the bloody sense to know what happened. And of course none of the others wept; they hardly looked conscious of cerebral activity at all.

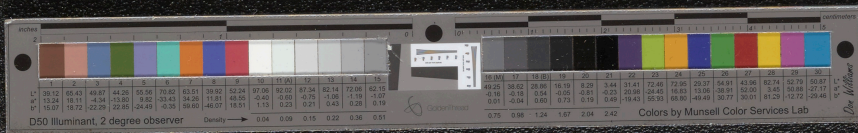
But I expect everyone to be unbearably stupid, and revolting, and not worthy of trust, and so on. I have to fight it. In one way I think I (and perhaps Chip) have one advantage: evil is in me. I can feel it. I know that I'm capable of a good deal of immense nastiness and I know why--so I assume that's why other people do it. The one thing I don't understand is genuine, sheer stupidity, because I've never had that refuge.

Take courage. There are other worlds. Ahem.

I used to read the NY times book review (Sundays) at age 12 and 13 and scream about how stupid it was (and it was, and is). My parents couldn't understand why it maddened me so. No brave battling, by the way, just sporadic outbursts which I couldn't understand myself. I couldn't even put words to most of it. But if you've endured parents like mine, concentration camps have an eerie familiarity. Even more familiar is brainwashing.

Yes, Mordor is obviously Cherman. All full of "gh"s and "kh"s and so on. Heavens, I thought everyone knew that. (I must say, I tho't four's W W 2 was my innocent fashion, tho')

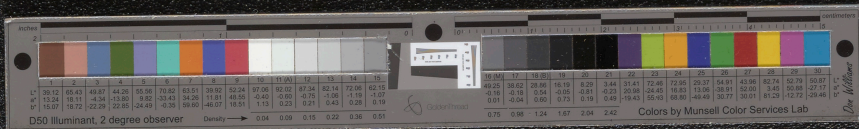
A young friend (?) of mine said airily, when I mentioned "World at War" (a splendid series, by ~~the~~ the way) "Oh, I'm not interested in World War Two." Like those people who think Hitler is dull. Far from wishing us



short lives, I really think (like Shaw) that nobody lives nearly long enough. Yes, students who weren't even born until after the Korean war. I told the young lady who wasn't interested in WW 2 that those who couldn't remember their mistakes were compelled to repeat them, and she looked blank. Hadn't heard of that, either, it seems. Like those people who say "Oh, I'm not interested in politics" to whom I've learned to say, out of bitter experience, "Ah, but politics is so very interested in you."

Enough mutual congratulations on being old. Bowling Green will let you loan your papers to them. They are greedy. There are, by the way, places which will actually buy mss. and correspondence. I am ~~gray~~ trying to sell my mss. (first drafts & stuff which I consider pure junk) but will not sell letters. Some of them are too incriminating. Do indeed leave my letters to whoever you will.

Oh Tip, I have just been reading A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST and have come to a clear understanding of P. Anderson's mode of work: interesting novelties on the surface and underneath the most utter banality. It is a dreadfully dull, dull book, all heroes who heft 400 lb. and heroines with big breasts and adventures I've read 20 times and couldn't care less about and Kings and Queens of Faerie with cobwebs in their hair and suchlike garbage. Why is s.f. so unbearably stupid? Most of it doesn't even have ideas, just pretends to. And the very best is only honorable failures. Trouble is, the insight has acted retroactively on books of his I rather enjoyed, esp. the one in which the alien says to the hero "Let us make love with guns" which ought to be worked on a sampler somewhere and hung out to dry; but I did believe he could command some originality. But there is nothing, nothing, nothing. Are we all idiots?! I find Ursula's work bad in exactly the same way, though she's too intelligent not to strain the limits and may eventually get out of them. But magical stuff just won't work in narrative; it must



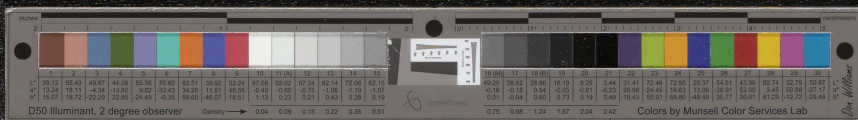
* Yes, I know. You did.

be lyric, which means static. And Dunsany (and Leiber, sometimes) only keep their fantasies going by vast quantities of critical irony, even (Dunsany) primitive theology and cosmology. No, I mean metaphysics.

This partly brought on by reading a magnificent new writer called S. Lem; run out and get "The Futurological Congress," "The Cyberiad," and "View from Another Shore" by Seabury Press. He THINKS. He doesn't just think he thinks; he thinks. And imagine this Pole, centuries of invasion, Germany here, Russia there (my God, what a position) where my grandmother hid radicals in her sheitel store in Warsaw, taking for granted (fictionally) the very things that make us wince, a sexist yes (in the old-fashioned sense, quite unaware) but funny, funny, funny! And intelligent. And a realist to his bones. He wrote me, very kindly, after I'd sent him my book (the Polish publishing venture has shrunk considerably) and said offhand that he was said to see Delany doing a Gotterdammerung because of course one had to take Delany seriously, unlike Silverberg. Russ's jaw drops. She says, "Yes, yes, there is real litrachoor out there! Analog is not the edge of the earth." He says the most ~~ag~~ obvious things that, frankly, I haven't the courage to say in reviews because it would be useless. And he is a truly educated, truly brilliant writer. He's as good as Wells.

He's as good as Wells, that's right.

By the way, THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU seems to me very dry and hard; as if the author were withholding all the usual gratifications of adventure or even horror, so as to drive the message home. I'm not surprised the critics originally hated it. What do you think of it? I like it immensely, but it's a very un-gratifying sort of ~~hak~~ book. Dhalgren, despite the glitter, is



very like that, and a novella of mine I'm typing up now--as if one wanted all the usual satisfactions and without breaking the reader/writer contract in an obvious way, the fiction just firmly refused to do what one expects. E.g. in Moreau (and Dhalgren and my novella) the "exotic" landscape is NOT beautiful or spectacular but in an odd way, dull. Chip really succeeds in domesticating catastrophe in a peculiar way; in the end, Bellona is just a place like any other, and Wells's tropical island has absolutely no natural beauty, none at all, something that annoyed me until I placed it. The end of MOREAU seems too fast and sketchy, but maybe that's part of it. He even withholds the thrill of horror a s.f. flick would give you (and did--it got into several remarks) OR any diabolizing of Moreau, (by telegraphing the situation before Prendick tumbles to it, so you are driven back again and again on meaning. Which seems to me what Chip does and I hope what I've done, 8 passengers crashland on a liveable (but not very) planet and do....nothing. They mostly just squabble. One abortive fist-fight. Until the narrator (who is not so nice, either) flees, to avoid being impregnated (everybody wants to "colonize" and they can't even eat the food) and kills all of them, some from necessity, some not. They are the unpleasantest bunch I have ever had to live with.

I would like to hear what you think of MOREAU. It interests me. FIRST MEN IN THE MOON is just messy and sloppy, I think, but Moreau is short enough, and has the proper narrator (Moon doesn't -- TWO unreliable narrators is too many for one book.). Anyhow, do write, and if you can dig up the men-in-vade-matriarchy stories, do. I have "War Against the Yukks", "Ecce Femina" and yours now. Amor Vincit Femina.

Is the problem why people do not get enough as children? Or is it structural later in life? I'm just hoping for some real psychology in about 80 years or so...By the way, Dick the Mad has written some good books, e.g. UBIK and COUNTER CLOCK WORLD.

Dinner, I starve
Joanna

