

April 3, 1950

4 A.M.

Dear John,

For no reason, except that I slept well last night, I have lain awake all night. I have been very patient; it is only at this hour that I begin to think impatient thoughts; it is such an untidy way to begin a week and such a waste of time.

Perhaps it was not a good thing that I went home. I think that Mother and Papa were glad to have me, but it was such a brief interval that I felt that I could not do or be anything. I saw a little of the spring; it is good to be reminded of that. If I do not have to spend all of next weekend correcting papers, I will work in the garden a little so that I may have some part in the spring.

Alex was disturbed by Matthiessen's death, but what he said about him was very much what you had said to me - except that the explanation ~~was~~ ^{was} not so complete.

Alex asked me what I thought about your reluctance to live with him next year. I told him that your desire to be alone did not seem strange to me - that I also felt the need to be alone. But I also said that I was not sure that it would be "good" for you and added immediately that, since I had been wrong before about what would be "good" for you, I really did not know at all.

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I asked Alex when he would be going back on Sunday. He does not seem to want to come to New York to hear Mahler and Brahms, but I doubt that he will make up his mind until Saja is there. If he did decide to go ~~there~~ to the concert, would you stop in Philadelphia for a few hours and go up to New York with me?

April 5

10 P.M.

I am alone here tonight.

The apartment is very neat and clean, as it was when I arrived Sunday night. It probably will not stay clean long; the windows are open to let the warm breezes in — and the soot. But it is nice and quiet tonight. No cats howl, and the radios are all quiet. I have spent some time looking over my bank statements and talking to Joy. Unless her family decides that she must live in a heated apartment for the sake of her health, I shall probably find myself still here with her next year. In any case, I do not think I will move. My escape from the city on weekends is my substitute for a more expensive apartment. Besides, I do not really think that other sections of New York are more attractive. The people here are very simple and pleasant. The street is not clean; the corridors are very depressing; this apartment is not beautiful. But I do not really live here; I work here. If it were all very beautiful,

I would only feel the more keenly my own inadequacy.

Perhaps my calmness at the prospect of staying here is the result of my expedition to the branch of the Public Library, around the corner on Second Avenue. I have often thought of becoming a member but have always postponed what I feared would be ^a complicated process. But it was quite simple - like most of the things that my inertia and shyness make me avoid - and I came away with two books. It is a very drab building; the light seems dim and far away, but there are many books that will help me at school this year and next year. One of the librarians, a very slender, pale, and gentle girl tried to help me find my books, but then went tactfully away when she saw that I just wanted to look. It was good to look at the shelves, seeing some books that I knew already others that I could pull out, look at quickly and decide the extent of their usefulness. My work this year has been so pressing that I have had almost no opportunity to do this to look around and choose and decide what to use and how to use it.

Tomorrow the Modern History Papers will be handed in. My brief breathing space will be over. Compared to their previous papers on the French Revolution, they have worked almost independently. I am afraid and very anxious to see what they have done. When I see you this weekend (or is it "if"?) I shall know a little better what kind of a teacher I am.

Wednesday

I do not seem to be able to finish anything. This letter is only one of the things for which my wandering and diffused feelings and thoughts refuse to be concentrated. Now, against the background of the Mozart concerto and before I begin my homework, I will try to finish this.

I have been thinking a great deal of the paintings we saw together and of my reactions to them. Next week I will go back to look again. That I see so much more than I would ^{if} I went alone is not so much due to what you say to me about them as it is due to the patience and sensitivity with which you look at all these things — though I do not think you are always as patient or sensitive toward living things. It is probably ungracious to add that thought, but there is a discrepancy which I feel, though I cannot analyze it.

I am not always as patient as I would like to be to my students — even though it is easier for me at school than it is, for example, at home. I had a very tiring day today and this afternoon I had to give some special help in grammar to three eighth-graders. Two of them grasped my explanations much more easily than the third. While they grew restless and noisy, I stumbled over my words, stuttering and distorting them as I do when tired and strained. Suddenly I realized that the child was relaxed and patient, smiling at me

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to encourage me to find the right words, while I was tense and confused and becoming increasingly more incoherent.

Your impatience is very different, perhaps it should not even be called by that name. You would never find yourself in this situation, ~~confused~~, and afraid because of your confusion; my fear and anticipation of failure so often produces my failures. But the pessimistic logic with which you read the future through your analysis of the present often frightens and disturbs me - and, at the same time, seems wrong. Sometimes I think that you anticipate pain in order to lessen the effect of the pain when it comes, like a vaccine or an insurance premium. To understand the meaning of suffering and to know that it is inescapable is necessary, but anxiety and fear should not be accepted on the same basis - Or do I read into you my own problems and, thus, mistake yours. Perhaps I have done it before.

This is more critical than anything that I have said or written to you for a long time. I hope that it will not make you feel completely misunderstood, and isolated and alone because of my misunderstanding. If you like, you can remember that so long as I am in some degree critical, I am also probably in some degree independent; your responsibility and burden is less.

Margaret