

Konnarock, April 4, 1950

Dear Margaret,

The past three days have reduced me to a numb machine whose primary purpose is to rewrite fifty pages of poor essay. Twenty pages I have already finished, and the rest, I hope, will be done in due time. I have tried hard not to think, to be as motionless as the animals who protect themselves by playing dead, and at times I am frightened by the extent to which I have succeeded. Strangely I find it some effort now to write you, to bestir myself to saying a few of the many things which are to be said.

I have often thought that the transition from one locality to another which the body makes too easily is all the more a shock for the spirit whose roots, like those of trees in arid regions, are tenacious and very intricate and deep. For some annoying reason I find it hard to reconcile this reality with the other reality. Somehow the two will not fit. Even the work I do seems different here amid the intimacy which is so good and yet in its own way oppressive.

This afternoon Pastor Hewitt asked me about P. O. Mathiessen. He had read the newspaper accounts. No explanation I could give seemed adequate, and the import of my words echoed in the emptiness of misunderstanding, so that one sentence drowned out the other, and when I stopped no impression remained but that of confusion and vagueness. Also my parents do not understand what I understand, and I know my own understanding to be so far from reality as to be meaningless. Perhaps as time goes on I may, I must learn more.

Now, in the instant, I know so little that every sentence exhausts my reservoir of thought and I must take long pauses while something from beneath the dullness replenishes it. Please do not mind the brevity; it is all the result of my uprootedness. Probably I will see you next weekend and tell you about those things which written words have difficulty in explaining. Besides it would be good for me to get back to my work.

Good night:

Jochen.