

Germantown
June 24, 1950

Dear Jochen,

The hot and heavy summer has begun. Papa lies on his bed reading, the fan blowing on him. Janet and Bob are in the kitchen finishing the mint julep which it took them so long to make. Alex is out. Soon the house will be very quiet. This is a good time for letter-writing and I am not tired. And yet there seems to be very little to say; I should say it in German, but the errors which I do not mind murmuring to you I am embarrassed to write down so black on the white paper. Of all the many things, mostly very small and disconnected, which I have done in the past two days the fact that I have struggled through two and a half pages of Iphigenie—and that I like it— is probably what will please you the most.

I have done a great deal of housework, mostly cooking. Mother has been very busy packing Peter's trunk for camp. The house is very disorderly; there are so many things for which places must be found. I could work for 24 hours without stopping and still not be finished if only I could make all the necessary decisions. But I can't, so when I have a few spare minutes I sit down and try to read. And even as I sit down I wonder whether you would approve of this when there is so much to be done; and fearing that you disapprove, I begin my argument, telling you how endless and disheartening this is to pick up paper from the floor and put it in a wastebasket, to cook meals for people who are wondering where the misplaced checks are, or why Peter didn't take Vicky for a walk. How can I make a pattern for my life in the midst of all this? Yet I try to find the meaning of each separate thing I do, but it is very hard.

In reading Iphigenie the thing that troubles me most is not the difficulty of the translation. I like the process of guessing and of fitting the pieces together. But I cannot hear the music of the language as I can French. It is still too strange and unfamiliar to me. When I see you again I will probably have read through the play. Perhaps then you will read it to me so that I can hear it.

There seem to be a great many things that I must tell you. Alex said that there was no important mail for you, only a few odds and ends; I will make him put them in the mail tomorrow. He was too rushed to do your errands (He came back Thursday evening, so it really must have been hectic) He has lost the list. If you will send me a new and revised one, I will do what I can next week. He says to tell you that there is a new and very nice Modern Library Giant edition of The City of God. Have you a Shakespeare? Would you like the Kittredge edition which Janet has just brought back from New York? The records arrived yesterday; Alex looked them over for cracks. Papa seems to be retreating from the idea of large expenditures and will probably get an inexpensive LP attachment here. He seems to be very worried about several things, so I did not pursue the matter. You have probably realized that you left your history of art behind. Shall I send it to you?

I have the impression that I almost never stop thinking of you and longing for you. I suppose that one cannot really dignify with the name of "thinking" the way my mind dwells on words and images. I remind myself almost constantly to behave as if you were there, watching me and listening to me.

Now I must put this in the mail and go to bed. The time that I spend staring into space is much longer than the time it takes to write down the little that is here.

Good night,

Margaret