

Konnarock, Virginia
June 27, 1950

Dear Margaret,

It is almost too late and I am almost too tired to write to you tonight, and you must pardon whatever unfortunate result may follow from my tiredness. This was a long and weary day. Until evening there were no clouds and the sky was a bright blue. It was my birthday, but it was marked only by a trip to White Top and Buzzards Rock. We stayed for the sun set and watched the moon, nearly full, rise in the East. I thought of you and wished you could have been with me, but since I knew that in a sense you were, I was not unhappy, but calm and incomplete, waiting and patient. Tonight the table was set more carefully than usual; we had cold cuts and a bottle of very good Rhine wine. Except for the dishes that remain to be washed tomorrow morning, everything is over now. It is not very late and my tiredness is due to the glass of wine and to the exercise in the fresh air, to both of which I am somewhat unaccustomed. Tomorrow morning I shall go up, - as I did this afternoon, - to the apple orchard where our prospective house is going to be built. There I can read and write without the consciousness of being closed in which troubles me when I try to work in my room. Mother has had some garden chairs brought up there, where the view of White Top is most beautiful. Sheep graze placidly under the trees; they take one look at me, and apparently not satisfied with what they find, express their disappointment with a long, mournful "bah", and go away.

My days, you see, are very simple, and except for an occasional intra-family disagreement, not very difficult. Whatever beautiful things I see or hear remind me of you, and give me a pale sense of longing and pain because you are so far away, - but only geographically. If you and Alex should want to come, nothing which I have said or fail to say now should detain you. And if you do not come to see me, then after a while nothing will remain but for me to come to see you. Thank you very much for your letter. Even your letters have an enchantment for me which I find difficult to describe; perhaps they seem so unusually meaningful to me, because I never dare to expect them. I am glad that you like Iphigenie, although if you failed to see its "edle Einfalt und stille Groesse", that would be no tragedy. What you say about your inability to be aware of the rhythmic and tonal qualities of Goethe's poetry as opposed to that of French authors seems only natural to me. I can think of several reasons why this should be so. French seems to me to have much richer tonal qualities in the first place. German is very much burdened with consonants while in French vowels dominate the sound of the poetry. German consonants are very difficult to pronounce correctly, and particularly in Iphigenie the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables is only slight. Hence the poetry flows like prose and the ear must be carefully trained to detect and to evaluate the meter. For the same reason the poetry seems very dense. Its imagery is intellectual rather than sensual; its beauty is connotative rather than tonal. That is why Iphigenie is so little understood. It expressed the essence not of human nature as do Shakespeare's much more easily accessible plays, but rather the essence of a humanism which reaches into every phase of Goethe's background. To enumerate the details would take too long. Aesthetically it is very classical: Goethe sees Greece through Winkelmann's

eyes. But Ethically it is a product of Christian humanism. Iphigenie's soul is not a Greek but a Christian ideal of mildness and love. Humanism enters in because Iphigenie knows no sin; her character itself is a contradiction, a denial, a cure of the evil in Orestes' soul. Evil is nothing but imbalance and ugliness. The good is balance, clarity, calmness, and perfection. The God of this play is not the Delphic Apollo nor the Olympian Zeus, neither Moses' God nor that of Saint Paul. He is the logos God of Saint John, the "infinite substance" which Spinoza preaches. But God is not seen directly. He is but the light which illuminates the white and colorless figure of Iphigenie, and Iphigenie is idealized almost to the status of a feminine divinity. Her soul is the calm, unruffled mirror which reflects the harmony of nature and the ideality of the divine. All these things Goethe has attempted to express not only conceptually but poetically as well, in the steadfastness of the rhythm and the balance of the tonality. Because he succeeded, Iphigenie is one of the greatest plays ever written, - at least in my estimation.

I hope you will pardon the length of my discourse; the other things which I had on my mind, I have forgotten. May I go to bed now? Tomorrow I shall write to Alex. Will you remind him of the "A" string I asked him to get for me, please? I think of you very often and I try to be patient. Most of all I worry about you, and hardest of all is the recognition that being so far away, I can do very little for you.

Dein,

Jochem.