

Germantown
July 1, 1950

Dear Jochen,

I went yesterday morning with Margrit to the train. Her suitcase was almost as heavy as yours--full of books. On the way back I thought of the letter that would be waiting for me and of the similarities and difference between you and your sister. We had talked a little about books, especially D.H. Lawrence whom she is reading with some enthusiasm. I expressed my own dislike of the little I have read, and Margrit said that that was what you would say; but we both knew that you would have expressed yourself much more strongly, and I wondered whether you would not regard my mild, unfinished opinion as hostile to your own, though I do not think it is. I like your sister's warm enthusiasms for people and for her other interests (though these too seem to lead back to her love for people). But listening to her talk about her teachers and fellow-students at Wilson, I felt myself in comparison, a very non-committal and self-centered person; I do not think that my liking for people has ever been like Margrit's. At the moment I feel very withdrawn and wrapped in a mood which I hold close around me. At lunch time today Papa and Mother looked out at me sitting in the sun on the terrace and agreed that I was like the cat, removed, only slightly responsive, and decorative. It is a very vegetable mood. The housework that I do becomes a soothing routine, often a background for some image of you. Yesterday I sat with cool pea-pods in my lap, shelling the peas into an aluminum bowl; each family rang as they fell, and I watched you sitting on your hillside, dismaying the sheep.

Today Mother is doing most of the cooking. I have most of the day, instead of the usual two or three hours, in which I can read. I read about two pages of Goethe a day and, in addition some of Janet's very simple little readers. I should probably write some English into German exercises, but most days I am too tired, and today I am trying to read some history; my laziness can always find excuses. Yet considering all the distractions, I think I do pretty well. Today I have had to cope with telephone calls, door-to-door salesmen, men who wish to repair one of the three air-conditioners which Papa owns (which one?), Vicky who always wants to bark at someone, etc. Now Alex is pounding up and downstairs looking for extensions which he needs for the paint-gun that he plans to use on his car. Does this list make your distractions seem more bearable? Except occasionally, I do not resent all these interruptions; I can remember other summers which were far worse, and in which all my activity seemed quite meaningless. The simple facts of sleeping eight hours, of lying in my bathtub watching the leafy branches outside the window, listening to the birds, or to that Chaconne from the Bach Partita-- all of these things seem satisfactory in themselves and part of a very calm existence. Yet I know how easily I can slip from calm into depressed inertia, and I wish that I could give my days more form.

When I have finished Iphigenie you must tell me more about it and read some of it aloud. I begin to hear more than I did at first, in fact, far more than when you were reading it to me. Think how much I will be able to hear next time.

Deine Margarete