

Germantown  
July 18, 1950

Dear Jochen,

Thank you for your letter; it does help me.--as much as the disguises confuse and lose me.

I have a strangely empty and bare feeling today. I am still at the task of sorting all my old letters and papers. I have had no time to read. I do not know what to make of the person to whom all these letters were written, who wrote all these messy notebooks. Usually a page of notes starts out very neat and round and clear, but by the end of the lecture there is a discouraged scrawl. Most of the evidence stands in boxes waiting to be burned. I wish that I could burn more than the paper and ink. It is hard to feel so estranged from the persons that I have been, and am, and to be so uncertain as to who is coming next. Sometimes I am very much afraid that it is neither the person whom you look for, nor anyone--simply a bad patchwork, so weak and badly made that it will not hold together.

I have found at least one beautiful and sought-for thing in all this work. It is a reproduction of an engraving of the Return of the Prodigal Son, done by a modern Frenchman but to me very Rembrandt-like in feeling.--like the Agony in the Garden. The son kneels at his father's feet, but the father bends over him so humbly that he also seems to ask forgiveness and to desire to kneel. The landscape is also very flat and lonely. It is strange and wonderful how one can grow to love and understand a picture more and more. I loved this very much when I had it with me my first winter in New York. I have not seen it since then, though I have often thought of it in these four long years.

I slept badly last night, wondering when you will come, and trying to think of a way out of this trip if you do not come. My relationships with my family are very confused, and I do not know of any way of simplifying them except by being cheerful--which is sometimes very hard, indeed, impossible. But at the moment things are fairly easy. Now I must finish my sorting job and then read-Iphigenie and some history. I wish that I could have waited and written to you in the quiet and coolness of the night, but then I know that I would think of you so intensely that I would lie awake all night; Papa is being very reluctant to give me any more sedatives. I am very well and rested now after this long month, but my emotional need for sleep, for oblivion, is very great.

Deine,

Margaret