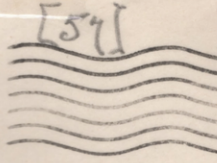
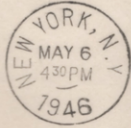


I - 57. Letter to Miss Agnes Smedley - Yaddo, Saratoga Springs,
New York, postmarked May 6, 1946, New York, New York,
Signed Joan .

I-57



57

Miss Agnes Smedley
Yaddo
Saratoga Springs,
N.Y.

Dear Agnes,

A few days and the world is changed. Here I am, already leading, as if I had never been away, that nervous N.Y. life- writing late at night, drinking coffee all day, seeing too many people, getting too many impressions which I can't seem to find the time to correlate and coalesce and splitting myself up, too, between "pure" writing and impure writing. How really filthy it is to have to misuse words.

Nevertheless I've been overwhelmed with love since I've come back- love for the mornings afternoons and nights and for all the Bleecker St. market faces and all the rowdy, termagant soulless life of the streets I know so well, too well. And still I feel enormously refreshed and strengthened by my month of solitude and detachment and ready to take on anything. That shot of Yaddo vitamins- I mean not only the good dinners but the fragrant air and silence- seems to go farther too, beyond somehow, mere energy. I feel quietened and full of faith. Perhaps in some way I connect this with you. For I must say that in connection with all that you talked about, and in connection with Bread and Wine which I read on the bus coming down, and in connection with all the thoughts I was led to think--I feel--at least I still continue to feel it deeply- that I have begun to find, to stumble out, the way to a clue for myself. Perhaps in a way I feel near the presence of some mysticism, Importance, Significance, or etc. I am being vague now because actually such delicate beginnings of, and shades, can only be translated by symbol. And that is why poetry is for me always the best. It gets out of theory into the real world of suns, hills, seas, sounds, birds, all the things that back us, as irrational semi-animals, up, all the things that keep us in our place, in our spiritual, racial-memory place, in our relation to earth and to imagination. But right now I am unequipped to try a poem and so I write this letter on Monday at one o'clock, due soon for that place where I pick up my money, and thus live. It is important for me to say this or I would not and as much as anything, a sense of gratitude moves me to say this, gratitude for ~~in~~ my own state of mind, and for my own feeling that possibly somehow somewhere I may begin to forge a new concept or two. Which I was in need of. But there is no use to go on or it would be to belabor a point. If I were to go on, it would have to be objectively, much in terms of that great and searing book I just read, and much in terms of ideas of the past I have had and then deserted, and stands I have taken --in a way it gets into the heretical land of faith --that sort of faith which it is so ~~a~~ goddamned difficult to keep and yet, without which, it is virtually impossible to live. So, I leave it at this. I hope it does not read like a muddle. But if it does-remember, it was an aborted poem. If it does not read true, remember, for me only a poem can tell the full truth, the all truth.

J. D. W.