

West Road
Bennington, Vt
Aug. 13, 1955

Dear Kenneth,

Here we are.

Am working away, and so are you, it sounds. Hope all projects went fine, and go fine.

Enclosed find list of topics and terms which I gave out to yr class for a discussion. We had the meeting on the hottest Sunday afternoon in June, in hot, hot west room in barn; about $\frac{1}{4}$ had done reading, and most vocal were those who had not. Actually, we never got much farther than the title of yr course. I told em the billiard ball thing, and they swatted it around, quarreling over motion/action. The mathematics major was happily attributing volition to the billiard ball, and sundry lit. types were seething with objections. All this very illuminating: 1) that nice clear simple little points we think we can simply announce do not get accepted so easily and simply by the gals as we might suppose; 2) that Hamlet's disease is really much more prevalent in them than we usually suppose -- this math gal was insisting that the billiard ball acted, in her vocabulary, because her 'thinking made it so'. 3) that we have reached the age where we look like granma and granpa and have reached the quiet, assured, declarative statement which makes em bristle up because in their young, fledgeling, ~~awkward~~ bewildered, groping state they react to us as that damn old voice of authority telling em what's what once again. I must add: that the ones who had done the reading did not behave exactly this way. They were less belligerently, more humbly in the dark, and fumbled with their notes, hunting for a phrase here a term there which they were unsure about, and more quietly, less querulously asked what the devil THAT meant. (For all of them, whatever the temperament, it feels as though they were skirting along the precarious edge of the unknown, making sallies into it as best they can, darting, retreating, merging, dividing according to their temperature and temperament. Not to mention sexuality. One thing we ought to know, and by gorra how CAN we find out? is: how would it have gone if the white-haired man instead of the white-haired woman had led the discussion? In this period of their lives when they are really tussling with their homosexuality-heterosexuality, the URGE TO MERGE so often controls their responses to ideas spouted by female or male teachers, I do believe.) (Have you every done a trial run on anima and animus, and watched what happens?)

Well, anyway, I told em all to read some Burke before they came back in the fall, and to get their questions ready.

I also told em all, singly, and repeated again in the group for a visitor, the story of the day you were giving em in class last year the directions for making an index. That was the day one gal looked up at you and said, "You mean we are to put down whatever comes into our heads?" And your jaw dropped and you said, "Why, no! What came into the author's head." This, I said, is a great story, and reveals a lot when you think about it.

The paper just came. Thomas Mann has died. We grieve; and celebrate all he taught us, and think of his deep and lasting penetration

of our lives in the thirties, and into the forties, and of how he opened our horizons and moved them, -- both macro- and micro-. And really did show us something about the meaning of 'dying to live'. And that his symbolic deaths into his work really did spread the manna that made these things happen to us.

And thank you for your manna, too. Think about that some time when you are trying to get some sleep; I mean, think of how your manna, the words in your helpful insights have enabled us to slay monsters and wake up out of sundry darknesses and come alive in a new way of seeing. I am looking forward to those Monday nights when you'll be getting off the bus in front of our house for confabs. The bizz of driving you to Shingle afterwards is easily manageable, of course.

The class shpes us this way:

- Helen Allentuck -- a junior in literature. Bright, creative, a ranger & challenger. Easily disorganized, but with a passion for learning how to organize perceptions.
- Patricia Ayres -- a senior in literature, who just changed from music. A little girl, over-anxious for help and praise, with a very good mind which she hasn't learned to use. Is doing a thesis in German lit.
- Uli Beigel -- a senior in lit. Very good short-story writer. Intelligent, with the lit'ry pose, veery blasé, one of the testy defiers during that discussion, because, I thought, of her deep suspicion of definitions.
- Louise Carty -- junior in lit. and physics. Very bright, and easily discouraged. Makes a butt of herself and undermines her own confidence. Only finished half her courses this last term.
- Honora Fergusson -- junior in lit. Daughter of Francis, with Marion's histrionics. Gifted and groping.
- Diana Garfield -- senior in art, though she started out in lit. Has great trouble organizing herself; works with Mary Delia. Big clumsy, very creative, very serious and active mind.
- Nina Gelles -- I don't know.
- Helen Goodwin -- the math major. Friend of Nancy Silbowitz and that crowd.
- Judy Greenhill -- senior in lit. Is writing a novel. Will counsel with you. Writes wonderful stories. Can be very belligerent and told me with genuine concern that she hoped she was going to be a good girl next year and control herself.
- Sandra Hochman -- junior in lit. I don't know her, but she is considered a handful because of her ambitiousness to make big effects. Acts very interested in big ideas. Loves Rimbaud, and what W.F. has taught her.
- Barbara Israel -- junior in lit. Very bright, writes poetry, resists but is working to attain discipline. Sister of art major of two years ago, though less posy.
- Gretchen Lindblad -- senior in physics. Almost chose major in Dorner. Is rascally, recalcitrant type, the Bostonian who loves to shock. Used to have good clear mind, scientific and businesslike, till she began dabbling in the occult.
- Rivi Magaril -- senior in philosophy. Best in art. Gift for conceptualizing but she, too, messes things on purpose.
- Renee Patenaude -- senior in French lit. Commonplace mind. Docile.
- Mary Lou Peters -- senior in lit. Wants to write for the slicks. Has very high I.Q. Ambivalent about her Ohio small-town background. Image of self: girl reporter, covering crimes passionell