

LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET

“THEREFORE, DEAR SIR, LOVE YOUR SOLITUDE AND TRY TO SING OUT WITH THE PAIN IT CAUSES YOU. FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEAR YOU ARE FAR AWAY... AND THIS SHOWS THAT THE SPACE AROUND YOU IS BEGINNING TO GROW VAST.... BE HAPPY ABOUT YOUR GROWTH, IN WHICH OF COURSE YOU CAN’T TAKE ANYONE WITH YOU, AND BE GENTLE WITH THOSE WHO STAY BEHIND; BE CONFIDENT AND CALM IN FRONT OF THEM AND DON’T TORMENT THEM WITH YOUR DOUBTS AND DON’T FRIGHTEN THEM WITH YOUR FAITH OR JOY, WHICH THEY WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND. SEEK OUT SOME SIMPLE AND TRUE FEELING OF WHAT YOU HAVE IN COMMON WITH THEM, WHICH DOESN’T NECESSARILY HAVE TO ALTER WHEN YOU YOURSELF CHANGE AGAIN AND AGAIN; WHEN YOU SEE THEM, LOVE LIFE IN A FORM THAT IS NOT YOUR OWN AND BE INDULGENT TOWARD THOSE WHO ARE GROWING OLD, WHO ARE AFRAID OF THE ALONENESS THAT YOU TRUST.... AND DON’T EXPECT ANY UNDERSTANDING; BUT BELIEVE IN A LOVE THAT IS BEING STORED UP FOR YOU LIKE AN INHERITANCE, AND HAVE FAITH THAT IN THIS LOVE THERE IS A STRENGTH AND A BLESSING SO LARGE THAT YOU CAN TRAVEL AS FAR AS YOU WISH WITHOUT HAVING TO STEP OUTSIDE IT.”

RAINER MARIA RILKE

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"Why do you want to shut out of your life any uneasiness, any misery, any depression, since after all you don't know what work these conditions are doing inside you? Why do you want to persecute yourself with the question of where all this is coming from and where it is going? Since you know, after all, that you are in the midst of transitions and you wished for nothing so much as to change. If there is anything unhealthy in your reactions, just bear in mind that sickness is the means by which an organism frees itself from what is alien; so one must simply help it to be sick, to have its whole sickness and to break out with it, since that is the way it gets better."

Rainer Maria Rilke

The Year of Magical Thinking

“Grief turns out to be a place none of us know until we reach it. We anticipate (we know) that someone close to us could die, but we do not look beyond the few days or weeks that immediately follow such an imagined death. We misconstrue the nature of even those few days or weeks. We might expect if the death is sudden to feel shock. We do not expect this shock to be oblitative, dislocating to both body and mind. We might expect that we will be prostrate, inconsolable, crazy with loss. We do not expect to be literally crazy, cool customers who believe their husband is about to return and need his shoes.”

Joan Didion

INFERNO

"And I — my head oppressed by horror — said:
"Master, what is it that I hear? Who are

those people so defeated by their pain?"

And he to me: "This miserable way
is taken by the sorry souls of those
who lived without disgrace and without praise.

They now commingle with the coward angels,
the company of those who were not rebels
nor faithful to their God, but stood apart.

The heavens, that their beauty not be lessened,
have cast them out, nor will deep Hell receive them
—

even the wicked cannot glory in them."

Dante Alighieri

on art

“Art has always been my salvation. And my gods are Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Mozart. I believe in them with all my heart. And when Mozart is playing in my room, I am in conjunction with something I can’t explain — I don’t need to. I know that if there’s a purpose for life, it was for me to hear Mozart. Or if I walk in the woods and I see an animal, the purpose of my life was to see that animal. I can recollect it, I can notice it. I’m here to take note of. And that is beyond my ego, beyond anything that belongs to me, an observer, an observer.”

Maurice Sendak