

September 27, 1959

Dear Mr. Ferrater Mora,

I have long intended to write to you, but since the last six weeks found me in Danbury, I had heard, seen, read, done, thought, or experienced absolutely nothing until this past Friday when I drove to Cambridge. The drive itself was uneventful. I arrived here late in the afternoon with Miss Trimble who, although she is still a student at Bryn Mawr, came to spend the week-end at Harvard, with head-quarters in my apartment.

The apartment itself may be something to write about. Last Thursday I saw Cynthia Lovelace in New York, and she had not yet found any apartment at all, so that I am very proud to have found one here, Cambridge being after all much smaller than New York and having correspondingly fewer apartments. Mine is in a large white house, in what my landlady says is an historic neighborhood. William James used to live at the end of the street, and next to him Zachariah Chaffee (I do not know who he was), and next to him Waleter Perry, or Walter Kerry, or something (I do not know who he was either), and in back of them "former President (of

what, I do not know) Eliot". The living room of my apartment has exposed beams in its ceiling. They are very thick and roughly hewn, which means either that the house is old, or that the second floor is too heavy for an ordinary ceiling. There are two beds and two fireplaces, but no stove. Cooking arrangements are thus rather primitive, but the apartment is otherwise perfect.

Tomorrow I must consult a departmental adviser, who will guide me in my choice of courses. A graduate student of mathematics who has already spent four years in trying to earn his doctorate told me that philosophy majors spend an average of seven years in working for a degree. I chose to disbelieve him, but I am a little afraid to ask my departmental adviser.

You seem, from your letter, to have been very busy writing. You mentioned that you have written the epilogue to a book which you will write some time in the future. I wonder whether you always begin work at the end of a book, and proceed backwards, finishing, perhaps, with a preface or prologue. Is it a book in which you state conclusions which you reached long ago, so that you write these first, for convenience, and turn later to the process by which you reached your conclusions? If it is customary in philo-

sophic works to begin at the end, I wonder if novelists also write their last chapter before the first. Perhaps historians do the same. I find it hard to sound serious in what I mean to ask as a serious question: did you begin with your epilogue by coincidence or on principle? and is it perhaps really a good idea to read the end of a book of philosophy before reading it through?

Between the preceding paragraph and this one, I have gone to a tea for Radcliffe graduate students, where I was informed by a philosophy major that students in her department do indeed require six or seven years to earn their doctorates, that, moreover, I must spend my first year taking undergraduate courses in Epistemology, Logic, Ethics, and Metaphysics if I intend to pass my preliminary examination for the Master's. Only quine, she says, has received his Ph.D. in what I had thought to be the usual three year period. Now, I have already noticed the appearance of my first few grey hairs, and within six years I had hoped to be the mother of several children, one of whom would be, in 1966, at least four years old. I had also hoped to have, well before 1966, a degree in some sort of linguistic philosophy, for which I would have studied the works of Urban, Cassirer,

and others. It seems, however, that when I am twenty seven years old, perhaps completely white haired, I shall be taking more undergraduate courses in the Basic Four, which do, I realize, become more rewarding with each year of study. By then I shall probably ~~wear~~ wear bi-focals and shudder at the mention of any philosophy at all. Linguistic philosophy, I guess, is not very solid fare, and Harvard does not tolerate philosophic frivolity.

I hope that you and your family are well, and that I shall see you when I visit Bryn Mawr (I have as yet no plausible excuse for such a visit, but I am determined to find one), or if you should happen to come to Cambridge. (Perhaps I could cook something for The Ferrater Loras over my fireplace or hot-plate, although my cooking is not yet altogether palatable.)

Sincerely,

*Renata*