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o.O., 1950-03-20

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Erika Mann

March 20, 1950

Dear Peter Viereck:

Golo has shown me your letter of March 8th, and I am glad to know that you'd like to do a piece in memoriam Klaus. I notice that you must just have come back from your lecture tour, and also that you - rightly - don't wish to be rushed. I'd like you to know, though, that owing to Landshoff's long illness publication of the small volume has been deplorably delayed and that we hope now, at least to get the book out for the anniversary of K's death (May 21st). Hence while you obviously need some time, please don't use up too much.

I don't know whether Golo has answered your letter, but perhaps you'll permit me to reply to some of the problems you raise. You wonder whether you should let your contribution consist of excerpts from K's letters to you, or of your own remarks or of a combination of both. It would seem to me that this last possibility would be the best. You then say that to your mind K's "fate was similar to that of Goethe's son". Now this is a thought I am peculiarly frightened of. For while the fates of all sons of great or famous writers do in a sense resemble each other, no particular similarity would seem to exist between Klaus and poor August. As far as I know the latter never wrote anything worth reading: he wasn't anyone much worth knowing, and had he not had to live in the shadow of his father he wouldn't, in all probability, have amounted to more than he did. You knew Klaus, and I don't have to explain to you that none of the traits characteristic of August could possibly be ascribed to him. This does not mean that the father-son difficulty was absent in K's life. It only means that I should be grateful if you would find it feasible to omit the August parallel which could not but harm K's memory.

Would you be so kind as to send your piece directly and by airmail to Dr. Rudolf Hirsch, c/o Querido Publishers, 262 Singel, Amsterdam, Holland? If you would let me have a copy by even mail I'd be all the more obliged. Thanks again for wanting to do the paper.

Best wishes

Yours cordially

Erika Mann.