

From

"Wandering"



Notes and Sketches

by

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Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York
© 1972 (Noonday #420, out of print)

Farmhouse



This is the house where I say goodbye. For a long time I won't see another house like this one. You see, I'm approaching a pass in the Alps, and here the northern, German architecture, and the German countryside, and the German language come to an end.

How lovely it is to cross such a boundary. The wandering man becomes a primitive man in so many ways, in the same way that the nomad is more primitive than the farmer. But the longing to get on the other side of everything already settled, this makes me, and everybody like me, a road sign to the future. If there were many other people who loathed the borders between countries as I do, then there would be no more wars and blockades. Nothing on earth is more disgusting, more contemptible than borders. They're like cannons, like generals: as long as peace, loving kindness and peace go on, nobody pays any attention to them — but as soon as war and insanity appear, they become urgent and sacred. While the war went on, how they were pain and prison to us wanderers. Devil take them!

I am making a sketch of the house in my notebook, and my eye sadly leaves the German roof, the German frame of the house, the gables, everything I love, every familiar thing.

Once again I love deeply everything at home, because I have to leave it. Tomorrow I will love other roofs, other cottages. I won't leave my heart behind me, as they say in love letters. No, I am going to carry it with me over the mountains, because I need it, always. I am a nomad, not a farmer. I am an adorer of the unfaithful, the changing, the fantastic. I don't care to secure my love to one bare place on this earth. I believe that what we love is only a symbol. Whenever our love becomes too attached to one thing, one faith, one virtue, then I become suspicious.

Good luck to the farmer! Good luck to the man who owns this place, the man who works it, the faithful, the virtuous! I can love him, I can revere him, I can envy him. But I have wasted half my life trying to live his life. I wanted to be something that I was not. I even wanted to be a poet and a middleclass person at the same time. I wanted to be an artist and a man of fantasy, but I also wanted to be a good man, a man at home. It all went on for a long time, till I knew that a man cannot be both and have both, that I am a nomad and not a farmer, a man who searches and not a man who keeps. A long time I castigated myself before gods and laws which were only idols for me. That was what I did wrong, my anguish, my complicity in the world's pain. I increased the world's guilt and anguish, by doing violence to myself, by not daring to walk toward my own salvation. The way to salvation leads neither to the left nor the right: it leads into your own heart, and there alone is God, and there alone is peace.

A damp mountain wind drifts across me, beyond me blue islands of heaven gaze down on other countries. Beneath those heavens I will be happy sometimes, and sometimes I will be homesick beneath them. The complete man that I am, the pure wanderer, mustn't think about homesickness. But I know it, I am not complete, and I do not even strive to be complete. I want to taste my homesickness, as I taste my joy.

This wind, into which I am climbing, is fragrant of beyonds and distances, of watersheds and foreign languages, of mountains and southern places. It is full of promise.

Goodbye, small farmhouse and my native country. I leave you as a young man leaves his mother: he knows it is time for him to leave her, and he knows, too, he can never leave her completely, even though he wants to.