

CONTENTS

RETURN TO SENDER: A TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD	<i>xiii</i>
TRANSLATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	<i>xxxv</i>
RECOLLECTIONS OF RAHEL	<i>xxxvi</i>

I

LETTERS TO FAMILY

<i>By my reckoning, you owe me a reply</i>	3
<i>With what words shall I tell what I would rather relate to you with a single scream!</i>	5
<i>A Jewish wedding</i>	10
<i>A letter of reckoning with Mother</i>	11
<i>Seek out distractions . . . go to places where you come into contact with new objects, words and people</i>	16
<i>Consulting Dr Teufel</i>	18
<i>What is this host of eternal exiles to do?</i>	19
<i>Half an artist</i>	20
<i>Strain your wit to write to me, but spare your purse</i>	22

II

LETTERS TO DAVID VEIT

<i>My incorrect writing</i>	25
<i>Yes, I waltz</i>	29
<i>Learning to lie</i>	31
<i>My entire life is a slow bleeding to death</i>	34
<i>If only I could open myself to people the way one opens a cabinet</i>	35
<i>I think I just wrote you the most confused letter ever written</i>	36
<i>The greatest artist, philosopher or poet has nothing on me</i>	37
<i>What good does it do, my friend, to look into happiness with strange eyes?</i>	39

III

LETTERS TO VARIOUS FRIENDS

<i>Those are the chosen ones, the wormlike ones among us</i>	45
<i>What kind of fear!</i>	46
<i>Although speaking and writing are of no help, one ought not therefore to stop speaking and writing!</i>	47
<i>Love is so much the stuff of life</i>	50
<i>As long as you live, you love, if you've ever loved anyone</i>	51
<i>The storm is raging so fiercely on my rooftop that the eaves are trembling</i>	53
<i>A picture of pure stupidity</i>	57
<i>On translation</i>	59

<i>Nothing has happened until it has been talked about at tea</i>	62
<i>Friend of the heart, and friend of the mind</i>	66
<i>Can you tell my mood from this hastily scribbled note?</i>	71
<i>What is friendship?</i>	73
<i>Do you know that peculiar kind of melancholy?</i>	77
<i>I consider this name change to be of pivotal importance</i>	78
<i>I do want a letter to be a portrait of the moment in which it was written</i>	80
<i>Time flies</i>	82
<i>There is only one person in this world who knows who I really am</i>	83
<i>My prison of sickness, suffering and melancholy</i>	85

IV

GRAPPLING WITH GOETHE AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS OF NOTE, AND OTHER LITERARY REFLECTIONS

<i>Man is himself a work of art</i>	89
<i>Throughout my life this poet has led me unerringly and helped me realign what misfortune and good fortune had shattered</i>	92
<i>No one can love me without loving Goethe</i>	95
<i>A sense of place</i>	97
<i>His original language was lost</i>	98
<i>The French and the Germans are like two halves of a whole</i>	100
<i>Pondering the extraordinary individual who in a wondrous way expresses herself in these pages</i>	102
<i>Can one make a clean break from what one actually is?</i>	103

<i>Unlike every other spoken word, the lie does not unfetter the constricted chest</i>	105
<i>Goethe's pen</i>	106
<i>A literary style is only good if, like the skin of a fruit, it grew out of the innermost core</i>	107
<i>Do not, I beg you, count me among the scribblers of note</i>	108
<i>Words are pearls compressed for a half century and spit up out of a stormy human soul</i>	110
<i>What demon of inspiration took root in your soul!</i>	112
<i>The poet</i>	114

V

LETTERS TO AND RECOLLECTIONS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH KARL AUGUST VARNHAGEN VON ENSE

<i>Do you see the rain?</i>	117
<i>Here, my dear, take this flask!</i>	118
<i>I am a misbirth, and ought to be highborn</i>	119
<i>Sometimes the sun shines, sometimes it doesn't</i>	123
<i>I will follow hot on your heels</i>	125
<i>Varnhagen, you must come out into the garden</i>	127

VI

REFLECTIONS

<i>I altogether lack grace</i>	131
<i>On being original</i>	132
<i>No poet can conceive of a situation better, more varied and extraordinary than what actually transpires in life</i>	133
<i>History in the hands of madmen</i>	134

<i>All mothers should be deemed innocent and honoured as we honour Mary</i>	136
<i>Ever since childhood I have had a kind of horror of clocks and of water confined in ponds and pots</i>	137
<i>Too bitter a taste is a true mortification</i>	138
<i>We talk a lot, because we cannot find the right words</i>	139
<i>We are nothing but drops of consciousness</i>	140
<i>I am, after all, an ego created to accompany an I</i>	141
<i>To establish the nature of our consciousness we must acknowledge multiple personalities</i>	142
<i>Age is always unfair to youth</i>	143
<i>We are a composite of fragments</i>	145
<i>All that will one day be discovered is already here</i>	147
<i>To grasp what we call life</i>	148

VII APHORISMS

<i>Holiness</i>	151
<i>Knowledge and wisdom</i>	152
<i>Wellbeing and woe</i>	154
<i>Love</i>	156
<i>Feeling and thinking</i>	157
<i>Lying and truthfulness</i>	160
<i>The way we are</i>	161
<i>Hope and despair</i>	162
<i>Miscellaneous musings</i>	166

VIII
DREAMS

<i>Memorable dreams</i>	169
<i>Music is God</i>	177

IX
LAST WORDS

<i>Last will and testament</i>	181
<i>These words are but weak approximations and the shadows of shadows of the life we've lived together</i>	186
<i>The smoked goose breast is superb</i>	189
NOTES ON PERSONALITIES	190