

25 August 1966

Dear Maggie,

Thanks for your letter of Thursday the 18th, which arrived only this morning. Why a week in transit, I wonder? I cannot really attempt a proper, thoughtful, coherent letter of reply. You will understand when I outline developments during the past week. As best I can from memory, I should add. Bear in mind that apart from the events relating to the case, I was also getting incessant phonecalls related to (a) a legal action between two of my three nieces, and the husband of the third; and (b) the incarceration of one dear friend in a psychiatric ward for electric shock treatments, against the violent protests of another and even dearer friend (just between us, Isabel, but please never breathe a word) who then became actively suicidal herself, to the enormous anxiety of her sister, some mutual friends, and myself—and I was the one everyone called, since I had not yet joined forces with any faction. With that out of the way, here is a skeletal report on relevant happenings.

Friday the 19th—out of the blue, a phonecall from a senior editor of Random House; heard I have a manuscript on the WR; can he read it; can he send a messenger for it; will I lunch with him on Wednesday the 24th. I was BLISSFUL.

Monday 10 p.m. Epstein vs Liebeler on a local non-commercial TV station. Horrible performance by Epstein; oily smooth well-acted Liebeler performance. I got the better of it, hands down. 3 p.m. Telephone rings. Jones Harris. His record of effrontery is unmatched, but now he outdid himself—3 a.m. What for? To boast about his marvelous long-range plans for enticing L. to "our side." To boast about L's having agreed, in the TV discussion, that if it will satisfy people like Ed, yes, maybe the autopsy ~~and~~ photos and xrays should be revealed; to boast that in the L-seduction-campaign, he was taking L the next day "to one of the biggest publishing companies" because L. wanted to write a book and make some \$\$\$\$. Refused to give me the name of the publisher. I reminded him that this was the first time I had ever asked him anything, said it was important to me—and still he refused. "Don't be offended," he said...Disgusted is the word, I answered, and slammed down the phone. Refused to pick it up when he immediately rang back. Stewed fumed and raged, feeling certain in my bones it was Random House. Couldn't get back to sleep until 5 a.m.

Tuesday 7:15—overslept, thanks to Jones Harris, missed part of the Mark Lane/Albert Jenner "debate" on the today show NBC TV...Jenner was loathesome, made Liebeler look good, made Lane look Heroic. Nasty face, vicious tongue.

9 a.m. Arnoni called to say how frightful the EE/WL TV thing was...9:15 a.m., my nice niece Susan called to say the same. 10 a.m. Ed called and I told him just what I thought of his inexcusable spinelessness with Liebeler and his inadequate performances on previous radio or TV programs. I said that I thought his original decision—not to accept any radio/TV invitations—was correct and that he should not accept any more appearances, he was undercutting his own book, undercutting all of us, by giving ground constantly, speaking without conviction, failing to use devastating arguments which he had at his fingertips, and being an outright yellow-belly. No anger; no self-justification (one mild attempt). Had to catch a plane. But before we hung up, I told him about the 3 a.m. call; and he (not having a secrecy fetish as Jones has) told me what I already knew in my bones—it was Random House to which Jones was taking Liebeler! I knew that was death to my book.

Just realized I left out all of
Monday before 10 p.m. so I must
go backward.

Monday 12 noon—Esquire called; wanted to engage me as consultant to go over the WR issue for which Ed did a big article, invited me to lunch on Tuesday. Next, a call from Theater for Ideas, would I be on a panel to discuss the WR (live audience in theater-loft) September 30th, with Sauvage Epstein and anyone they could get to speak FOR the WR (Jenner has since accepted; Salisbury and Wicker declined; Ford said maybe)

Monday 7 pm Call from Studies on the Left; would I review the four books on the WR; would I let them have a chapter or chapters from my ms.

Tuesday morning--after Ed's call en route to airport, call from Jones Harris. I said that I did not wish to speak to him. He begged me not to hang up--actually apologized for having called at 3 a.m. Gave me long self-justification for cultivating-Liebeler-strategy. I told him I wanted nothing to do with that; Liebeler could be bought; he was a dirty liar and thorough opportunist; and I didn't want to discuss it further. Told him also that I now knew what he would not tell me--the name of the publisher--and that his project had just killed my book at RH. (True, he didn't know my ms was there; but even if he had known, it would have made no difference, I am certain.) He remained polite (abject is more correct), conciliatory, and sweetly reasonable--but I have been on to him for a long time now, and I know what a good act he was putting on. What I derive from the whole performance is that he needs me, or thinks he will need me at a later stage, so he is willing to eat humble pie and act the veritable saint.

Tuesday 1 p.m.--Lunch with Esquire editor handling the WR issue; told him I was willing to advise Esquire for nothing but would not accept the insulting paltry fee he suggested--"advise" meaning anything already in my head was at his disposal but I would not undertake any work that would cut into other activities or commitments. In the end, he offered me a minimum of \$200 to review Ed's article (full of errors, most of which I hope I caught and removed--but I am getting ahead of myself) for accuracy and to let him have my list of non-witnesses (people who should have been asked to testify but were ignored). He was a generally decent thoughtful and educatable man (knew NOTHING about the evidence, nil); was wildly excited as I reeled off fact after fact to demonstrate the utter fraudulence of the WR; and since his response was gratifying, and he even admitted to feeling his strong convictions rocked by what I was telling him, agreed to do the list and to check Ed's ms for the mentioned fee. (Finished the whole thing this afternoon--Thursday--it was just picked up by messenger.)

Tuesday 5 p.m. Call from the Random House editor to break the Wednesday lunch date or, rather, to make it Thursday instead. I said no. I suggested that he might as well give me my "no" right then, as I was already aware of the new situation. He pleaded ignorance, even after I proceeded to tell him about the Liebeler conference (actually, with a different editor at R.H.) earlier that day. Said he would look into it. Had read only 1/3 of my ms. Would call me as soon as he finished reading it. (I am not holding my breath in anticipation.)

Tuesday 6 p.m. Bob Silvers of NY R of Books (I may have written that I had lunch with him about 3 weeks ago?) called; I told him the sad R.H. story; he said Liebeler had called him after the R.H. conference, said they had been very tentative, not at all encouraging, and didn't really want to discuss anything until he actually wrote and submitted at least a precis.

Wednesday 1 p.m. Call from a CBS-TV newsman, asking for background on the WR; he got my name from Penn Jones; we talked for 2 hours at least. 11 p.m. Call from Penn Jones; he will be in NYC next Monday for a few days to tape a TV special--2 hours on the WR with Sauvage, Weisberg, Penn J and perhaps others. Told me he finds the Bowers "accident" very definitely sinister after talking to the doctors who treated him before he died (i.e., no heart attack, "peculiar" state of shock).

Thursday 11 a.m. Call from London Sunday Times, urgent and frantic--where can they get my Subject Index? Needed at once in London office "where they are going to do a big research job on the 26 volumes." In the middle of all this, I am now writing this demented incoherent "reply" to your letter...No wonder you don't find it clear! Forgive me Maggie, you know how dearly I love you and how much I am thinking about you; but I am just too worn out to make sense any more. I am so tired, physically and mentally, getting so little sleep, such irregular and improvised meals (tuna fish tuna fish tunafishtunafish cheese cheese cheesecheese) and in between running up endless flights of stairs to obstruct would-be suicides and comforting the relatives of the would-be bereaved and the relatives of the induced-psychotic (reduced to an amnesiac moron by the therapy) that I will say au revoir