

Johnson
1 August 1981

Dear Tom,

I returned from Fire Island yesterday, very happy with my five weeks in the sun and especially happy with your all-too-brief visit. I wish that you and Carel Anne had been free to stay longer, it was a joy to have your company and I knew that Jean and Senia fully shared my pleasure in our being together. Ted was very sorry to miss the weekend. I am happy to report that his cat appears to be fully recovered. Let's get together soon, the four of us.

I have read and re-read the second paragraph of your letter, with sympathy and admiration. You are a gifted writer, and you must use your gift—whether in a novel or in some other form. It is such a joy to read writing of quality, and there is so little of it, that I do urge you to write and write and write.

As to the substance of your letter, I have probably told you already that I went through a similar process of progressive disillusion, first with the right, then with the center, and finally and most painfully, with the left, ultimately finding myself without institutional allegiance and without political moorings. Everywhere one sees greed, corruption, and appalling stupidity. Yet there is Beethoven, Balanchine, and other creative geniuses who redeem the human species somewhat. I cannot quantify the good and the evil which seize predominance in human affairs—often it seems that evil is ubiquitous and ineradicable, and that simple justice demands that we should yield the planet to some gentler species (dolphins? whales?). Yet there are occasional victories of the good and the beautiful, which to some degree vindicate and provide some hope for us.

I have lost all optimism about the System. It is rotten to the core and a mirror image of the underworld, although committing its crimes behind a screen of legality. I was for years an ardent advocate of decolonization—only to see Africa fall into the brutal hands of Idi Amin and his counterparts. I admired Fidel Castro, and I still do, although I am saddened that this country drove him into the arms of the Soviet Union and into a corruption of what was an idealistic revolution. In the last analysis, each of us as individuals must use any opportunity to work against injustice—whether the Viet Nam war or Watergate or whitewashed political assassination—and must in our personal life strive for integrity, generosity, and gentleness with each other, in the stubborn hope that ultimately the best in the human capacity will win the struggle with the dark side of human nature. It is not merely a problem of contemporary culture—it is a struggle that has always been with us, and probably always will be, unless and until there is the kind of transformation envisaged by Arthur C. Clarke in his better works ("Childhood's End" and "2001" come to mind). Forgive my rambling, and let's talk again when we next meet.

With deep affection for you and Carel Anne,

Sincerely,