

Dear Dick,

If you were an agent who spends his days doing what an agent does I'd respond to your letter of the 8th, which didn't get here until yesterday, differently. What you say is a close enough approximation to what I faced for so long with WHITWASH. There never was a serious and adverse literary criticism of it. The most common reason alleged in rejection is that there was no interest in the subject and therefore no book could be profitable. As it turned out, the most profitable (and far from the best) was sixth or seventh in order of appearance and the one for which there was best prospect bombed in less than two months in hardback, despite much steam behind it. So, I can make my own evaluations of publishers and what they say. Often it is what they say, for their understanding and intentions have to be considered.

I think fear is the dominating consideration. Many will fear as you initially said, that Bantam will cross the market. I think the market will be good enough for more than one book to succeed in reprint. I also think a hardback can succeed without reprint. I would imagine that most publishers do not think this way. I would also suppose that with S & S in for \$55,000 for the Post boys' book, Pocket Books is taken up. Bantam also is. Avon has gone for an unconscionable bit of rubbish. The major mass markets are improbable.

However, on an unparalleled subject, to this day there remains a grand total of two serious books. On almost any subject the market should be greater than that. So, rightly or wrongly, I conclude that commercial fear is not the dominating influence. It is precisely the fear I confronted with WHITWASH, fear of the government. It is "safe" for S & S and Bantam because they are going to rehash what has already been published. I learned this early in a remarkable honesty from Doubleday, which frankly said its decision was not editorial and not easy to arrive at and that they'd have been much more willing if they could have failed the book. (Thus you have never heard me say a bad word about Doubleday. They were honest.)

This kind of fear is legitimate. I know what the consequences can be. I live with them. I could say in spite of them.

However, there has never been a situation like this on in our history. What is now at stake is the kind of society we will have. To put it more bluntly, whether your boys will grow into manhood in an overtly American fascist state. (Thus the ambiguity in the title. I am not a pessimist or I'd not still be trying.) I simply can't believe that there is no publisher with the principle to publish a book of this kind. I can easily believe that it is impossible for you, with all the other things you have to do, to pursue him, to seek him, rather.

One of the things that is inevitable if I do not persist is that there will be no book that is not some kind of cover-up. The Post boys are so ultra-heavily indebted to the prosecution, meaning the staff DAs, the Department of Justice and the FBI, that as in all their stories, in their book they'll hide the extensive covering-up of which all have been part. Mollenhoff is a Nixonite who remained a Nixonite after he could stand the White House no longer. He will proclaim the Glorious Leader's personal innocence and will use his book to get even with the palace guard, his ancient enemies.

What we are really talking about is an exceptionally sick publishing industry in an extraordinarily sick country.

No, I do not think you have some magic potion. I do think that your interest would be restricted to a work that has best-seller likelihood. I don't think this is probable, in normal concepts, for a book without the probability of high mass cheap sales. I do think an approximation is not impossible and that it would depend on the publisher rather than the market. I go into these things on the off chance that at some point you may be speaking to someone to whom a casual mention might have some possibility, so you won't be as hopeless as your letter indicates. Personally, if I had the money, I'd be on the phone to editors who have been unsuccessful with me in the past. That is, in placing a book they wanted published. I'm too broke to think of it and I can't write all of them.

Because what you write is essentially what you said earlier, if I am disappointed I am not surprised. I do keep trying to keep up with developments and when I can write pieces to be worked in later. Thus I am taking in all of the Ervin hearings, few which I now suspend.

It troubles me that Manny has not delivered the complete files to you. On all matters. The promise was specific before I left New York. I have written him. Copy enclosed.

Manny's files may not have what relates to the moneys I believed are owed me as a consequence of their not living up to their agreement on the spurious Bringuier suit and for the purchase of copies of my edition of WHITEWASH. John Friedman and I had been dealing with them on this and Manny said to go ahead and see what they would do, that on those things Bair should have been willing to pay because there was no question. (This does not mean that we expected them to pay for the books short of court.) You had parts of this file first, from your Parallax days. You then told me that the contract for the original edition of WHITEWASH, which has no return provision, means they do owe me for all the copies they got. In any event, when you got this file and have time to go over it, let me know any areas of deficiency and I'll see if I have anything relevant.

I have just had a phone call from a book-purchasing friend who follows some of the things that interest me closely. He says that S & S had delayed pub date on the book by the Washington Post reporters to next year. If you recall the analysis I sent you as soon as I returned from New York, you may recall that I said all books latched to the stories that are appearing in the papers and on TV will have to be held and that it is possible for a hardback book to still be first. Pretty much the same is likely to be true of the Hollenhoff book, Bantam's now not "special". I realize that it is not possible to expect publishers to tell themselves that others can tell them what they don't know about publishing, but they lack experience with special-problem subjects. A "special" is a snap on a Candy Mosler story, or where there is a government report to be reprinted. With such projects, the main prerequisite is money. I have a long history of looking back with regrets that publishers are the captives of their own experiences and fears, this being no exception now. I could have completed a viable book and it could have been coming off the presses by now, and it would not have taken much of an investment by a publisher to make it possible. Once my wife and I, entirely alone, did a longer than average book, complete with 150 pages of appendix and name-and-subject index, in 28 days. This means from the time I wrote the introduction to the night the first 100 copies, with sewed binding, were delivered for use as press copies. Of course, there was no editing. But the book has survived the testing of time. I am still selling copies of it, as I am of the earlier works.

Best to everyone. It was a joy to see how your boys are growing and that now that they require less of her attention, Jill is going back to writing.

Sincerely,