

7/10/72

Dear Harold,

Today I got your 7/6 to me and 7/6 to Sylvia, postmarked 7/7. I am responding in haste in the hopes of getting this into the pm mail pickup.

I have not yet responded to the several lengthy letters you wrote me prior to these. I read those several times, and as I recall now there was nothing specific that warranted response. I can only tell you that I very much appreciate your concern over my position. Your letters were a help and a boost to me and I am quite aware of the time you sacrificed to write them--again, please know that I consider these things and appreciate them. I have also read the parts of the bible to which you referred, and while I'll have to re-read several times to understand better, there is already much instruction in them.

Before getting to the present letters, let me take a minute to explain a little better to you my really over-all problem at this time, with respect to what is "tormenting" me. I have had a decision to make, and for whatever it may be worth considering Wecht's latest behavior not befitting anyone who calls himself a man, I have had to choose a course of action which, right or wrong, I'll have to live with in the future. One of the things that disturbs me now is that in the past I've made decisions which I absolutely cannot reconcile now. I realize this is a human condition, but you have to realize that in my case it is also very much a condition of my youth and the maturing process. In retrospect, when we first were in contact, I was a naive child. Today, I am a little less of both, but I realize that both are still part of my make-up in many ways. The rationalizations and judgements I made two or three years ago are now foreign to me, usually immature and unjustifiable. This dates to even two years ago, no actually a year ago. The case that particularly comes to mind is including the shirt slits in my book. I wrote that part summer of '70. The book was copyrighted summer of '71, but I still didn't take it out. I read the completed PMIII end of summer '71 and decided then that I would not allow my book to be published unless mention of the shirt slits was deleted. Now, at the end of that summer I could clearly see that this was rightfully your literary property, really the product of your work, and I could not in any way justify having it in my book, whereas somehow I could at the beginning of the summer. This has bothered me since, although I have deliberately not brought it up with you. The point I am making is that at my stage my mind is in a perpetual state of change and growth and what seemed logical and justified yesterday seems the opposite today. This, to a degree, has been a contributory source to my ambivalence and confusion over my position concerning Wecht's access. This is not an "excuse" to explain away what I now may view as irresponsible behavior on my part, but I just want you to understand that adding to the difficulties I might have about living with my past is the fact that so often I "out-grow" my past, so to speak, and this is something I think few others can understand or really can be expected to understand. So, as I think about this Wecht thing, with all the pressures that have been on me, this is one of my considerations.

With respect to your two letters of 7/6, I have not given the one to Sylvia the detailed reading I will later. On the first reading, I think it is a good letter which makes very logical, coherent and persuasive points. I do not know how Sylvia will take this letter, and I do not know exactly what she wrote in response to your first. She did not send me a copy, and if she expressed no restrictions to you, I would like a copy of what she wrote. If you do not want to copy it, and you don't mind, then you can send me the original which I'll return to you. I have many reasons for wanting to see exactly what she wrote, one of which is to compare it to what she told me. Back to your letter, I do not expect, and I think you too do not expect, Sylvia to suddenly come up with a decent, honest response. I think there is the possibility of change and rethinking within her, judging from her changed tone on our last conversation (memo enclosed). Agreed, there has been something eating her, and I wonder just where it has been mental and where physical--according to her

she has for years been dependent on stimulants, which she was recently deprived of, with withdrawal symptoms. I believe her story, but that of course does not mean there is something beyond the drugs themselves. I will be on the lookout for other changes in Sylvia and her positions.

With respect to writing Mary as you request, I would prefer not to, for several reasons. First, I am sure Sylvia has expressed these things to Mary for it seems inevitable she will say them as soon as your name is brought into the conversation, and it is equally inevitable you will pop up in a conversation between critics. She has never held back since I've known her (not too long admittedly) and I have no reason to think she would not express these things to Mary. However, the night she first called me about Wecht was without doubt her most vehement and passionate explosion against you, and I do not think she was herself that night, if her story about the drugs is true. I am not willing to let her slide for things that she has said about you all along, but for her passion and anger that night, I am willing to overlook that. So, right now I do not see the need to write Mary of this.

Your response to everything in my letter of 7/1 is sufficient and well-taken. On your criticizing the critics, you present your position well and clarify my confusion. To correct your mistaken impression from an ambiguous sentence in my letter, I do not allege that you don't know Salandria. I said you didn't know the guys he sent ~~it~~ down to you that time. I KNOW very well that you know Salandria.

While I accept all that you wrote with respect to my mistaken impression of your position, I still think, in general, that you have been too loose in what you have told strangers who visited you. I know how good and decent your motive is, but I think you sometimes work against your own interests by taking strangers who you have no reason to trust into your confidence. I think now especially you are learning about that, and you know I am not alone in my feeling.

There is really no point in my making detailed response to all the points you raised in response to my plea for details on your fears should Wecht get access. I do thank you for taking the time to make that response; it is persuasive and logical, and you are right that I should see these things for myself. Indeed, they are things I know of but which in this time of confusion and countervailing pressure, got clouded out of my mind and my thinking. I must admit though, that your letters makes the argument more cogent than before, and it is a help to me. There are also points in your letter to Sylvia which help me.

You are also right about the smallness and inconsequentiality (?) of my role in all of this. It is, as you put it, simply whether I am "to be part of it." As I see this ~~on~~ moral terms, there is nothing I can do to stop Wecht or to stop the evil that may come from him, but my speaking to him does not mean I approve of what he is doing. I have tried to make it clear that I do not. It associates me with what happens if I do speak to him, to my personal thinking, I am satisfied that it is enough for me to make a clear record of my opposition to hsi seeing these materials now. If I speak with him, it is not because I agree with what he is doing. At this point, there is very little about which I would speak with him and it would deal only with details relating to his examination, not with context or legitimacy, etc. The moral issue which concerns me the most because it is the one over which I do have a meaningful choice is the use of your work, and you know my unbending decision on that. I will not use it, period.

With Jerry, I anticipated he would act like a baby in response to my strong letter, but I did not expect him to tell the lies he did about me. I'm not sorry I wrote what I did, but I am sorry that I wrote it to someone like Jerry, who is immature in a bad way and who can only cause me problems now, like

what he tried to do in his letter to me. I am sending you a copy only because I want you to be aware of his distortion of my position should it ever come back to you.

Incidentally, what I wrote in the first letter to Jerry was my independent thought, and I did not write it because I anticipated it would please you. I knew you'd agree with what I'd said, if not with the force with which I said it, but that was not what prompted me to say it. I wrote those things because I believe them.

Yes, this has all been hard on me, but not without benefit for me, as I think you realize. I do appreciate all the time and effort you have devoted to helping me through this. I am no longer perpetually oppressed by this, for my position is clear to me now and I know (or am reasonably certain) I can live with it. One of the things that assured me was my second conversation with Sylvia. If my memo does not disclose it, I think I did handle myself better with her. I was firmer in the positions I took, and I was also firmer when I took exception to the things she said.

With hurried thanks and best,

*Howard*