

Jerry Policoff
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4/12/91

Dear Jerry,

Glad to hear from you. Agree with most of what you say. But two things first: I am fairly feeble, as Roger, by the way, knew, I have help for the first time in a decade and while I still respond to all mail, which means I'll get nothing else done for the rest of the day, I want to do what writing I'm able to do while I have this help. So, I'm avoiding all else I can. Second, I'm not going to have any further involvement in this business. I didn't care where Sylvia's papers remain, I still don't, I've been subjected to incredible abuse over trying to be helpful, I'm threatened with being involved in a lawsuit, in the threat defamed, so no more time on this.

However, I remain concerned about Roger and your letter does not remove my concern.

Page 1: no, I wasn't seeking your endorsement of Hood for anything. Moreover, it is Roger who got Hood to put it in the hands of the lawyers, where it is. I'll not say another word unless the lawyers ask me because I am responsible for this not inconsiderable expenses to which Roger put them without an advance word to me.

I think you realize that I did not say a word in anger about Roger although what he sent me was outrageous and indecent. Obscene. This is because I believed he was not himself. If I had, my reaction then and later would have been quite different. If you are uneasy about asking Roger for anything, ask Wrono if he is willing to give you a copy of what Wrono told me he said about me.

Hood has a copy of Greg's will. I have so little interest I've not asked to see it.

There is an immature emotionalism in what I suspect you adopted from Roger in your interpretation of what Sylvia desired, so much that she omitted it from her will - that her papers be in total isolation. So her work can stand in its own. Did she also ask that her book be judged only by those who have seen no other?

Where her papers are deposited does not associate them with any other deposit there.

However, unless her own files are purged it will be without question that she did have other and close association with critics, including some pretty wretched ones.

A deposit does not mean a merger. Her work does not lose any merit or any independence and there are innumerable illustrations of this in all such deposits.

What you guys are really anxious for is burying her work where only someone interested in a biography of her or something like it will even want to see it. For all the magnificence of her book, what will interest scholars and writers of the future is information on the subject and there is a fixed point at which for all practical purposes her work ended. As I believe I told you, it is because later work would attract people to where hers would be that I thought her work, early and dated as it was and is, would be more sought after and

examined.

Or, as I've come to suspect, it would be more convenient for Roger for his purposes.

The things you now tell me Roger never once mentioned in the reasons he gave me, by the way. As I've told you before, you are welcome to go over my entire file and copy whatever you may want.

It simply is not reasonable for either of you to put words in Sylvia's will that she did not put there. Or meaning to it and them.

I think I sent you a copy of the relevant pages that Greg's sister sent to McKnight. She went out of her way not to say what you say she meant.

I have another concern about Roger, one of the reasons I think you should read what Wrono told me he said about me.

Roger ought have been sought after by many law firms over the younger people they all picked up. He is not at all old, he has had experience, and he has a knowledge and skill most law firms ought want, from his news days.

It has troubled me that in all this time he has not found it possible to make any connection. Because of my affection for him I've thought of this. I believe he has turned prospective employers off by what he projects, not because they ^{do not} regard him as well qualified.

You have said nothing that relieves my concern. I can't imagine the Roger I knew and liked so much being capable of writing and in legal papers alleging some of the really terrible things I have seen and heard.

Ask yourself coolly if you can imagine him being 100% in control of himself and saying what he said in the letter to me that I sent you. In his letter to Wrono, among other things, he even included sexual implications.

I'm finished with it, Jerry. I've been abused, imposed upon and had too much of the time that remains for me taken up by this. "o more!

I would like you to call. But please remember that I now must be in bed by 9 because I am now weak and require more rest and because I can't help getting up early. So allow time when you call so we can end it by 8:45.

Best wishes,

Harold

2200 Victory Parkway
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April 8, 1991

Dear Harold;

I apologise for the time that has elapsed in responding to your three letters. I was not ignoring you, but this is a difficult issue for me. I am torn between my fondness and respect for you (and not very fond memories of our long estrangement) and my sense of responsibility and loyalty to Sylvia who is no longer able to articulate her wishes and desires. Sylvia was a dear friend. I suspect that I was second only to Roger in being privy to her inner-most feelings ~~about the case~~, and her work on it. In fact, over the years our friendship transcended the case, and we really became quite close. It was unthinkable for me, no matter how busy I was, to ever make a business trip to New York and not set aside an evening for Sylvia.

Before addressing anything else, I'd like to respond to your concerns about Roger. This is a very emotional issue for him. Not only was it very painful for him to learn that Sylvia had changed her mind about leaving her papers with him (she never, by the way, told me of her change of plans), but his devotion to Sylvia imposes a very sincere desire (perhaps even an obsession) to see that her wishes regarding the disposition of her papers are fulfilled. You suggest that Roger's interpretation of what Sylvia would have wanted are "a matter of opinion." True enough, but who on this Earth is in a better position to have a valid opinion of what Sylvia would have wanted than Roger? It is eating him up that the papers might be handled in a way other than Sylvia would have intended. You expressed concern that Roger might be more-or-less going off the deep-end (my interpretation, not your words), and that you feared that he might do himself physical harm. Though some of his recent letters are a bit strident and agitated I am certain that he is emotionally fine save for this obsession with at least trying to protect Sylvia's files from a disposition which he passionately believes she would have vehemently objected to.

Your letters focus on several points:

- Sylvia did Greg a grave disservice by leaving him her papers.
- Hood would be an excellent repository for them both from an academic point of view and from the point of view of present and future historians having access to them.
- You have no personal vested interest either way.
- I gather that you would like my endorsement of Hood, or would at least like to see me lobby Roger to withdraw his active opposition.

(more)

Harold Weisberg
April 8, 1991
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I agree with you that Sylvia did Greg a disservice in leaving him her papers, though I think her motives were well-intentioned -- even altruistic. (I am to this day puzzled as to why Sylvia never shared this decision either Roger or with me. We were her confidantes in so many other matters. In fact, though she loved Roger like a son, there were many things about him that irritated her no end, and she never hesitated to share those feelings about him with me. She also told me on several occasions that she planned to leave her papers in Roger's care). Sylvia often told me that she was "worried about Greg." She foresaw that he would "burn out" on the RFK case. Perhaps, though she never specifically mentioned it, she detected suicidal tendencies. I believe that she hoped to replace what she saw as an RFK obsession in Greg with a JFK obsession, thinking that suicide would likely take a back seat to any obsession. Where I think she erred was in believing that the RFK case was Greg's obsession (he confessed to me that he was not even convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that there was a conspiracy). I believe that Greg's obsession was Al Lowenstein. His work on the RFK case was his way of completing Al's un-finished work. He saw no need to "solve" the case -- only to exhaust every reasonable venue towards forcing full disclosure. When he had accomplished all that he felt he could accomplish (or that Al could have, had he lived) his obligation to Al had been fulfilled.

Though I am certain it was not his intent, I think Greg betrayed Sylvia in a very real sense. I visited with Greg less than three weeks before he died. He expressed confusion, even distress (much as he did to you), at the obligation Sylvia had imposed upon him. I felt for him. He was terribly depressed. He was clearly burned-out on the RFK case. He wanted to put the assassination business behind him. I encouraged him to get on with his life. I suggested that the case would "drag you down" if he didn't resume a normal life and regain a detached perspective. Clearly Sylvia's papers represented an intrusion and something of a dilemma to Greg. The fact remains, however, that this was a bequest that Greg and Sylvia had discussed and to which Greg agreed. Greg and Sylvia had detailed discussions as to what Sylvia expected of him. Greg apparently expressed no mis-givings. Having agreed to inherit Sylvia's papers, and to perform certain tasks regarding their eventual disposition, Greg took on a moral obligation that he never fulfilled. We'll probably never know why Greg agreed to this bequest which was to become such a burden to him, but having done so, his responsibilities were clear. I am very sorry for the pain Greg endured. Nevertheless, just as you have expressed your conviction that Sylvia did Greg a terrible dis-service by burdening Greg with her papers, I feel that Greg similarly did Sylvia a grave dis-service by agreeing to this bequest.

Harold, I don't need to tell you how fiercely protective Sylvia was of her work. She took great pains to distance herself from the other critics and to have her work stand strictly on its own. She avoided forums and collaborations that she felt would threaten the reputation she enjoyed as a scholar separate and independent of the critical community. The word "obsession" is appropriate here as well. She was obsessed with the desire that her work stand entirely on its own, and that she not be not be categorized as just another one of the "critics."

(more)

Harold Weisberg
April 8, 1991
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Sylvia was, to use her own words, "very fond" of you, Harold. She also respected your work a great deal. Nevertheless you and she had your differences, some of which you acknowledged in your first letter to me. Despite her fondness for you and her respect for your awesome contributions to the case (and that is an understatement) she took pains to distance herself from you as evidenced by your letter: "we had very little to do with each other for years." It is because of her efforts to distance herself in life from you and the other critics that I am convinced that she would object to her papers being placed at Hood, not because there is anything inherently wrong with Hood as an institution of higher learning, but because Hood is to be the repository of your papers. Future historians (or present ones for that matter) would have no idea how Sylvia's papers came to reside at Hood. The inference that you were collaborators or at least close associates would seem in-escapable. Sylvia's insistence that her work be judged separate and apart, and that it stand entirely on its own merits would be negated.

This issue was one of the things I discussed with Greg when I saw him in early January, though in a different context. I wanted to impress upon him that he owed it to Sylvia not to let Oliver Stone have film rights to her book unless he could be absolutely certain that the project was one that Sylvia would have approved of. Of course at the time none of us knew that Stone meant to do a movie that would glorify Jim Garrison. Any one who knew Sylvia knows that she would have turned over in her grave if her work were ever associated with anything that cast Jim Garrison in a favorable light. Greg also alluded at that meeting to the fact that he was leaning toward Hood College as the eventual repository for Sylvia's papers. I thought about sharing my opinion that she would not have wanted that, but given his depressed state I judged that that discussion ought to be post-poned until a later date.

Like Roger, my opinion is just that. However I know that Sylvia regarded it as imperative that her work stand strictly on its own while she lived. She guarded her individuality fiercely, distanced herself from the other critics religiously. I know in my heart that it would distress her to have her work repose with yours, or that of any other critic. As I said before, Sylvia was a close friend. I knew her better than all but a handful of people. She shared her thoughts and opinions with me. I am of one mind with Roger on this. Sylvia would not have wanted her papers to go to Hood!

You indicated several times in your letters to me that you had "no personal reason to have Sylvia's papers with mine." Harold, if that is so I urge you to use your influence with Hood to reject Greg Stone's bequest. Placing Sylvia's papers there might very well be the "right" thing to do for historians and scholars. Even if the arguments in favor of Hood are overwhelming, the sole fact that Sylvia would not approve should be reason enough to find another place.

(more)

Harold Weisberg
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I'll call you in a week or so to discuss this letter. I value your friendship and hope that my position regarding Sylvia's papers does not result in a second schism between us. I also value your judgement most of the time, but on the matter of Sylvia's papers we disagree, and I loved and respected Sylvia too much to sit this one out on the fence.

Warm Regards,



Jerry Policoff