

Fred

November 14, 1979

Fred, my dear friend,

Let me say, to begin with, that there is nothing in this letter that should displease or make you feel uneasy. At least, I hope not. And I would have preferred writing it by hand, since type seems so cold and impersonal sometimes; but you know as well as I that my penmanship, owing to my state of nerves tonight, would be as illegible as ungrammatical Sanskrit!

I suppose the real reason for this letter is simply to say again I am happy that you have come to a decision and grateful that you let me know about it in the caring, sensitive way you did. Put aside your doubts and fears; you are doing the right thing, and, if I must be profound (and it seems I must!) -- Cow ~~A~~ is not Cow B! What happened in the past does not have to happen again. I want you and Pamela to be happy together, and my psychic vibrations tell me you will be.

I've felt strongly since talking to you this morning that you and I have reached both an ending and a beginning. In spite of all your repeated assurances and reassurances, I have often felt gross, monstrous, grotesque. Tonight, I feel less so; indeed, feel a certain elation in writing you what amounts to the renunciation of a disputed claim. I will always cherish you as one of the most, if not the most, beautiful spirits. I have no fault to find with you on any score. During these past months, months of uncertainty and near-despair, your presence, your kindness, your forbearance, your help in so many ways have made a difference. Yes, I have felt lost and beyond the reach of even God's help. But, then, your

compassionate understanding, your willingness to share what you could so easily have walked away from, often rescued me from worst of it.

I spoke of an ending and a beginning. Tonight, I end the importunate and frustrating expectations, impossible hopes, burdensome fantasies that have all but brought our friendship ^{to}ruin in the past. I am resolved "to ask no more of you than you have freely given, or can give." Of course, I might have gone on being unrealistic, and I have known for a long time now that I was forcing an impossible issue (if that phrase makes any sense, and I doubt that it does!) But I want to be free, even if, tattooed man that I am, I cannot really change. I am weary of self-betrayals, which is what these "attachments" of mine always amount to; I want to free you of the necessity of always having to "fend me off," in a sense. But what is the beginning? Simply (but it's not a matter of "simply") the cancelling out of everything but a relationship which allows me to keep you as a friend and allows us to work together. Yes, I do love you -- as a poet now whose work and dedication to a demanding and difficult art I admire; as a man who has the gift of ~~himself~~ *immersion*.

I thank you for everything you've brought me -- for the poems (and I'm not thinking merely of the "personal" ones) I was able to write in a bad time because you were there to care whether I wrote or not. I cannot say clearly what I mean, but in spite of the tattooed man's grotesqueries, you will know what I mean. We are one in our struggles toward perfection. And I hope we shall always be.

I do not expect a reply to this over-long letter, and

you should feel free to destroy it. May God bless
you in all your endeavors.

Ever yours,

Bob