

May 26, 1967

Dear Julian:

I have finally managed to get around to the ms of Shadow of God. Not having read it in its entirety, I can't give you a fully responsible statement, but I have read enough of it to say the following:

- 1) It reads well and will undoubtedly be a best seller.
- 2) As regards the nuns, you will have no special problem with most Catholics today. They are obviously heroically virtuous in bizarre circumstances and that is the current formula, even a movie formula. No problem whatever that I can see, except from a few squeamish people who will only add to the lustre of the book.
- 3) My own personal question bears on the casuistical aspect of the thing and the trial-like interrogation of the nuns' "case". I think that it is unnecessarily ogre like and legalistic. I know that Church officialdom is sometimes pretty awful with legal red tape, but in things like this, surely, I doubt if even the worst arch conservative would turn the knife in the wounds for page after page. The Church does have some understanding of human frailty, after all. My feeling is that this is somewhat overdone, and that it reflects a lack of knowledge of a certain official type which, whatever its shortcomings, has heard about fornication and perhaps practised it. In other words, to put the whole thing in utterly unquotable blunt language: these sons of bitches will be mean as hell if you ~~fail~~ fail to observe their legal rubrics but they will let you off plenty easy if you are caught in an ~~obvious~~ obviously human frailty kind of a mess and aren't trying to be nasty about it yourself. This mostly for the edification of the author, I suppose.

4) As I say, I haven't read the whole thing, and there may be other twists that I should comment on. But this much anyway. I assure you that you have no need of a quote from me to publish, you will do ok. You are "safe".

I enclose a copy of a letter I wrote to the NY Times Book Review about Lewis Mumford's new book. Evidently they did not see fit to publish the letter. I thought you and Mr Mumford would like to see it. Is there some chance of my having a copy of his book? I could use it to very good advantage, and there I assure you that, if the occasion arises, I will give it a plug somewhere. (Each year I am asked by several publications to list some books of the year that I have liked, etc).

Sorry I can't just go overboard for Shadow of God but I have done what was humanly possible in the situation.

With my best regards always,