

5 January 1968

Mr. David S. Lifton
11818 $\frac{1}{2}$ Dorothy Street
Los Angeles 90049

Dear David,

I must thank you most sincerely for the very generous comments on ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT in your letter of the 1st of January. Please feel sure that I greatly appreciate the obvious detail and thoughtfulness of your comments and that I am genuinely gratified by your commendatory remarks.

As to your criticisms: as you yourself acknowledge, two of the three points you raise involve your follow-up on work done by others, while the third involves information elicited by you (followed up by Turner) which I did not use in my book but which, had I used it, you consider I should have credited to you (and to Turner, by implication). In all three instances, I have exercised the discretion which is an attribute of authorship and which I have no intention of relinquishing. I do not necessarily agree that a specific piece of information is "so solid and so relevant" as others consider it; nor do I necessarily agree that the information in question is indispensable to a line of argument or reasoning which I have pursued. Neither do I relinquish the option to exercise my own judgment about credit in cases of secondary or marginal information, supportive of a major discovery. In the instances you mention, there was no violation whatever of the canons of attribution. Since I merely exercised my prerogatives as author, I see no need to provide "alternate or reasonable explanations" or any kind of explanations.

I make these remarks, David, in a friendly spirit. In the same spirit, I should like to express regret at the increasing tendency among critics of the Warren Report to issue reproaches, recriminations, and demands with respect to personal credit. The passion and time expended in this respect begins to rival the passion and effort expended on the fundamental work of research and criticism, and has long since exceeded the boundaries of legitimacy and rationality. There have been wholesale and blanket accusations of plagiarism from one quarter which I personally consider entirely unfounded; in another instance, a valid complaint of insufficient credit has been converted into accusations of plagiarism and double-agentry. (I understand that I have now made the elite ranks of those accused of being secret CIA agents, according to a West Coast critic whose identity has been withheld from me.) I think we all have more important work to do than to measure the credits we receive and demand the last soupçon of what we consider, perhaps subjectively, we should have received. Lest you leap to the conclusion that it is easy for the "offender" to call for such magnanimity, I must make it clear that in at least one instance an important discovery of my own was published without attribution of any kind, thanks to one of my closest colleagues

among the critics at that time, who made a gift of the information to the writer of the article in question, without even consulting me in advance to obtain the consent which I would gladly have given. I will not pretend that it did not rankle a little, momentarily, at least. Nevertheless, I have remained silent, in my conviction that the important thing was for the discovery to become public, with or without attribution. This may seem sanctimonious, but I am wholly convinced that these disputes for credit only serve our adversaries and cast the shadow of pettiness and self-interest over what I consider to be a mission of the highest moral purpose.

Yours is the only letter I have received thus far which raises the question of attribution; perhaps there will be more, although almost every one of the critics has already written to me about the book. You have yourself acknowledged that my book generally gives recognition and credit to other researchers. Indeed, I made a conscious effort to do so. If there were serious oversights or omissions, I am not yet aware of them, nor were they malicious.

It has not escaped me that you made rather a pointed reference to the fact that you purchased your copy of my book. You are no doubt aware that I sent inscribed copies personally (i.e., not through or from my publishers) to many of the critics, including those from whom I have had to disassociate myself in the course of the last seven or eight months as a result of unreconcilable differences on the fundamental issue of the New Orleans investigation. The estrangement, in those cases, although bitterly regretted by me and I assume by the others involved, was at least personally courteous.

In your case, I had received a letter written in extremely abusive terms, in which you termed me "unbelievably vindictive," "malicious," untrustworthy, a "screaming shrieking woman," etc. This letter, dated 2 January 1967, as never been retracted, withdrawn, or superceded by a further communication from you ^{re-} assessing my character or conduct. I felt no obligation whatever to maintain a professional or personal relationship with a person who entertained such an opinion of me, much less to engage in courtesies which I must say frankly would have been hypocritical on my part and which might even have appeared as an attempt at self-ingratiation on behalf of the book. I am not known for turning the other cheek.

This being said, I must thank you once more for your generous remarks about ACCESSORIES, which I can only welcome and for which I am grateful and appreciative.

Yours sincerely,

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