

1 December 1967

Dear Ray and Letha,

It was wonderful talking to you both last Sunday, although I shudder to think of our respective phone bills. I received the copies of the L.A. Free Press, and I do think your "Blowup: 1963" is forceful and provocative. Any reactions yet? I mailed some of the copies, in turn, to Sauvage, Shirley Martin, etc. Meanwhile, I received some copies of Epstein's review of my book (AAF for short) and mailed you one. I have written a 3-page letter to the editor, taking issue with the CBS "evidence" and with Ed's views on "implausibility." I am sure you must have been incredulous, as I was, at his conclusion that in spite of everything the WR has not been proven beyond the last shadow of a doubt to be wrong. But I am not convinced that this is a cop-out, in the sense of a deliberate and conscious attempt to conciliate the Establishment: from a personal letter Epstein sent me, which is patently and unmistakably a sincere letter, I am convinced that the copping-out takes place on the subconscious level, and that however absurd and illogical his refusal to give up the ghost of the WR, it represents his actual views.

When we talked on Sunday, I had not read the SEP condensation of Thompson's book (I still haven't found time to read it), and you had not read the book. I was not aware until last night, when I received copies of Tink's letters of 11/27 to you and to Emerson of SEP that he had independently discovered the double head-hit—he may have told me this, probably he did, but I did not remember it. I do know what I discovered myself, naturally enough, but since I have been in touch over a long period with almost all the critics, I don't have at my fingertips a precise picture of who discovered what and when he found it—which is perhaps true for each of us, generally speaking. Tink insists that he has abided fully and fairly in his book with the canons of attribution; at the same time, he does agree that the omission of attributions in the SEP condensation was unfortunate. In his letter to Emerson, he has included me as well as you in referring to the omitted footnotes. I think I should say, to avoid any misunderstanding, that he did this entirely on his own volition and without my prior knowledge.

This is essentially a question between you, Ray, and Tink. It is no easy matter to weigh the merits of the case when both his book and the SEP condensation are taken into account. I think I am greatly influenced by something that I should have remembered and mentioned on Sunday, when we talked: that is, that last February, when Maggie and I visited Vince, Tink made a special visit to have a private talk with me in Vince's office (I think Maggie will tell you that we were closeted there for two hours or more). What he did at that time was to offer me every single one of his findings (documents from the Archives and accounts of his interviews with Dallas witnesses and the dented cartridge case, etc.) to use, if I wished, in AAF. I had met Tink only once before, at that time, in December—in fact, I have known him just under a year, and seen him perhaps six times in all. I do think that his offer of all his findings was extraordinarily generous, and motivated by a desire to place all the facts before the public, and not by any conceivable form of self-interest. I might add that in the last few weeks, I have heard Tink on radio and TV and that he has frequently plugged AAF. When I think back to last year, when Lane and Epstein and Weisberg were having their hour on the media, and the care that was taken not to mention the other critics' work, I begin to appreciate the exceptional nature of Tink's mentions of my book (he has never told me himself that he mentioned AAF; I heard it from others, or heard it myself on TV). In short, Tink has been willing to share his findings and his publicity, at least where I am concerned, and I find this hard to reconcile with plagiarism or deliberate unfairness to another critic.

It is perhaps irrelevant but I am also impressed by Tink's history of opposition to the Vietnam war and his militancy, which has taken courage. He has been in the vanguard of the peace movement and even in jail, during the recent demonstration at the Pentagon. This is not to say he is a paragon or automatically above suspicion; but it does indicate that he is no cop-out in this context. I know that you thought, on the basis of the SEP story, that he did cop-out in the context of the WR. I don't know whether you will continue to think so after reading his book. As you know, I read it in ms. While I differed with Tink on certain issues, and said so, I did not think for a minute that the book was a compromise or an attempt to let anyone off the hook. Two people can disagree without either being necessarily ill-motivated and I would need a lot of proof before coming to a conclusion of conscious dishonesty or cop-out.

Even where Garrison is concerned, I do feel that he went into this thing with honest and good motives. It is my impression that he said too much, too soon, and that in his vanity and reluctance to admit error he then began to do violence to facts and logic in desperation to vindicate himself. However much his position may appeal to many of the critics, it is a fact that he has been an apologist for the FBI, that he has been careful always to name ex-CIA people and to vindicate the CIA as an institution of complicity in the planning and execution of the assassination, and he has certainly not said that it was a Government plot or a coup. Let me be clear: I don't think that he should have said these things, necessarily. Unaccompanied by proof or serious evidence, such public accusations are of the most questionable value and may even create immunity from suspicion for those accused repeatedly and without substantiation. But I know that some of the critics feel disappointed that he has stopped short of their "truth," yet they do not think that he is a cop-out.

And certainly Garrison has constantly and continuously drawn on the findings of the critics, presenting them as his own and without attribution (except occasionally, and non-specifically, as in the Playboy interview). I don't consider him a plagiarist--good heavens, he doesn't even learn the findings carefully, or present them accurately, and he is ready to accept credit for an overall thesis which is hardly more than a patchwork conglomeration of the work of a whole constellation of critics. (I realize of course that Garrison himself produced Russo and Bundy, and I give him full "credit" for that, thanking heaven that no critic has compromised himself by such "discoveries.")

There is some resentment of Thompson, I think, because he is a "late-comer." True, he came into the ranks of the critics late---I think it was the summer of 1966---which is not to say that he has made no contribution, or must be a junior partner in perpetuity. For that matter, wasn't it only in the fall of 1966 that Garrison got into the case?

Well, I have not intended this to go on at this great length. It is not a "defense" of Thompson, just some of the points that occur to me as being relevant. Just got a phone call from Bobbs-Merrill telling me that Richard Whalen in the Chicago-Sun-Times of 11/26/67 has a tremendous review of AAF and SSD; then a phone call from Arnoni, that one Donald Stanley in the San Francisco Examiner of 11/26/67 pans AAF as "a weak and sentimental defense of Oswald" (which is about the least offensive item in his malicious and hostile review, which includes, for example, labelling me as "left"). My father has been taken ill and is in hospital, in Miami Beach; I am worried and very upset, he is 80 this week, and is having some internal bleeding. ~~will close now, but I go on to state, another page and then fall to sleep,~~ always a temptation. Much love to you both,