

8 July 1967

Dear Shirley;

Yesterday I received your letter re: Aynesworth (listed in Volume XV also as "Ainsworth" with references to Volumes II and XIV) and Robertson, but I am putting that aside for future study and reply in order to answer right away your letter on Colonel Castorr, just received.

By way of preface, let me say that my first contact with Harold Weisberg was made when I wrote him on 31 January 1966 after reading his letter to the editor of the New Leader, published in the same column as my own letter to the editor. A few days later, I had a long conversation with him on the telephone, in which he indicated repeatedly reluctance to allow any other critic to read his ms. of Whitewash, for fear that his material would be plagiarized. However, he did later agree that I should read the ms., by borrowing a copy then in the custody of a NYC publisher. I made the loan on Feb. 14, 1966 and on reading it that night realized that some parts of his ms. coincided very closely with parts of my ms., which was then two-thirds or more completed. Obviously, it was a case of parallel discovery and parallel reasoning; but I did not want to risk accusations of plagiarism at any future date. Therefore, the very first thing the next day, I wrote to Harold (letter dated Feb. 15, 1966) "enclosing a copy of my chapter "The Proof of the Plot" in which you will see that our reasoning was quite similar in evaluating the Odio testimony and its implications."

In that chapter I discussed the whole Odio affair and then postulated a purely theoretical hypothesis, showing a possible network of relationships among people whose combined knowledge, opportunities, and ideological/political activities might have combined in such a way as to explain the seeming incrimination of Oswald in a crime of which I believed him innocent. One of the people I mentioned in this hypothesis (but who was NOT mentioned in Harold's ms. at all) was the "Colonel Castor" who figures in the FBI interviews of Father McCham and Mrs. O'Connell. In my ms. I pointed out that he was an apparent intimate and colleague of General Walker's and that he might indeed be the same colonel as the one in Nancy Ferrin Rich's story. To the best of my knowledge, that was the first time that the matter of Col. Caster came to Harold's attention—he may of course have noted the documents about him, but he did not mention Col. C. in his ms. or published book Whitewash.

Some months later, I encountered for the first time a mention of "Colonel Castorr." It was in an article in The Nation on the subject of South Africa and its propaganda activities, including paid trips to South Africa by friendly American right-wingers who returned and wrote, pretending to be independent journalists or political scientists, glowing accounts of the beneficent practice of apartheid. Col. Castorr's name was on the list of those who had accepted a free trip to South Africa. I assumed immediately that he was the same colonel whose name in various misspelled forms I had seen in the WC exhibits. The only thing I did was to obtain the address of his organization or association in Washington, D. C., with the thought of someday trying to determine if he was the colonel in question.

Not long afterward, Harold told me of his unsuccessful attempts to contact Col. C. More recently, he related how he had finally made contact, and various things that the colonel and the colonel's lady had told him. I am sorry that I simply do not remember what Harold related—but one thing I do remember, that is, that then and subsequently Harold always gave me the impression that this Castorr was identical with the WC Caster or Castor. I am therefore astonished and uncomprehending to learn from you that Harold no longer thinks he is the same man. Relying on my very vague recollection of Harold's account of his first conversations with the Castorrs, and perhaps my memory is wrong, I would have said not only that Harold was certain he was the right colonel, but that Castorr and/or his wife acknowledged that he was the same man. (I am no less astonished and horrified at the news that Harold can even SUGGEST that we had "misjudged" verminous Schiller—Shirley, are you sure that is what he meant? I just can't believe it possible for Harold to say such an outrageous thing, unless he meant that Schiller was even worse than we thought him.)

Shirley, I know you will not misunderstand me if I say that in spite of my affection for Harold and my respect for his phenomenal energy and dedication as a researcher, I can only take him in small doses. And this has been a big-dose week. I received his latest book in the mail on Wednesday; before sitting down to really read it, I started flipping through some of the documents zeroxed in the appendix and noticed an FBI interview with Mrs. Philip Willis, from which I realized with enormous shock that Willis, on 11/22/63, was employed at the very same Downtown Lincoln Mercury showroom as Bogard! I immediately called Harold but he said, oh yes, he knew that, but had never found time to raise this in his correspondence and/or conversations with Willis! Too busy asking him about the Willis slides! Harold has sent Willis to Life magazine with his never-published slides—a recommendation which I seriously questioned, as I told Harold. Suppose there is something of utmost importance in the unseen slides? Life is a graveyard for evidence proving the fraudulence of the WR. Life has had the Zapruder film since the very day it was made, 11/22/63, and could have told the whole world the next morning that JFK was killed by a shot from the right and front of the car. This could even have saved Oswald's life! Yet to this date Life has said nothing about the proof in its possession that JFK was murdered in a crossfire of bullets fired by political assassins. Willis, a venal and greedy little bastard, is concerned first and foremost with the value of his property, the unseen slides. If Life offers him enough \$\$\$, he will cheerfully allow his photographic evidence to be buried alongside of Zapruder's. Talk about Harold being naive: he may be helping Willis and Life to bury forever still another piece of priceless evidence.

The rest of the "big dose" was the reading of Photographic Whitewash, i.e., continuous contact with Harold's prose, anger, and incessant self-praise. Much as I would like to praise and compliment him, there is not a word or phrase of glowing praise that Harold has not already preempted about Harold's work. Harold the publisher extols Harold the author to the very heavens, but that is not enough: he must not only praise himself, but he must disparage and dismiss all other critics and their books, published or still to be published. Thus, he writes of the first Whitewash that it "includes all the essential information subsequently duplicated in part by others and exposes more than all collectively have." He writes this, not even truthfully, because I myself told him in April 1966 that Vince had an article in TMO quoting, for the first time anywhere, the FBI Summary Report of 12/9/63 about the place of the wound in the back and the fate of the bullet, the fact that it had not exited from the front of the body but fallen out of the hole of entrance. Harold was thunderstruck, it was absolutely new information to him, and asked me to send him a copy of this part of Vince's article. (By the way, Vince phoned this morning, he is going to New Orleans for a few weeks, though he doesn't yet know exactly when he is leaving. We had a very calm and friendly conversation, compared to the shouting we both did when we last spoke a month ago, but we are still as far apart as ever on the question of Garrison.) Harold writes, of himself, "It is his shocking and sensational exposures that destroy the WR and lay the foundation of credibility for those less exhaustive works that followed, without materially adding to his revelations." Even if it was true (which it is not), such utter immodesty is embarrassing and ludicrous. But Harold is Harold...he does not realize the effect he has on others, and he never will...When all is said and done, he is still to be preferred a thousand times above such finks as Epstein or such foul-mouthed troublemakers as Jones Harris—but how hard he makes it to sustain one's affection and regard for him!

To sum up: I agree with you that Castorr is Castor/Caster, and that Harold is buying the Brooklyn Bridge with shit on it. I am mailing your letter to him, as you requested, and please let me know what he has to say in reply. All my love,

Sylvia