

Lybra, Paul Gary

June 8, 1969

Mr. Aaron Asher, Editor
Viking Press
625 Madison Ave.,
New York, N.Y. 10022

Dear Mr. Asher,

When Edward J. Epstein's Times Magazine piece appeared, geared to promote the sale of "Counterplot", of which you are the editor, I immediately wrote the Times charging all references to me were designed as libel, were deliberately inaccurate, were skilfully distorted, or a combination. With its special anti-dictionary definition of "presently", the magazine editor wrote me they were looking into my complaint and I would hear from them "presently". Because the Times has access to its author and he certainly has access to the information allegedly supporting his writing, the silence of the Times and Epstein for this long interval do not encourage the belief that if you were to make a similar request of your author it would be more productive. Nonetheless, especially because of the credit and responsibility he bestows upon you, I do suggest it.

The longest footnote in "Counterplot" is contrived to libel me. Without going into great detail about it, I suggest you undertake to learn for yourself if the quotation is accurate, if the meaning is distorted, if the incident is completely and faithfully presented and, in fact, if the purpose is. As a beginning point, separate from what Epstein should be able to provide you, why not ask yourself why Fred Newcomb was asked to set as a makeup man (he is an artist, not a photographer, as Epstein says) with only "one of each pair".

You might also ask to examine the result of this work, learn for yourself whether it was part of the implied plot to "frame" Thornley. If Epstein cannot show it to you, I can - and will.

Because it is part of a libel, you might ask Epstein for the justification of saying this was "an effort to help Garrison realize this plan" (framing and falsely charging Thornley). I think you should also ask him for what he carefully elected to omit that exactly coincided, my visit to Thornley's close friend and agent, Clint Bolton, and what I then forecast and what I offered.

As my writing, which preceded Garrison's charge, makes clear (and Epstein's writing makes clear also his familiarity with my writing), my interest in Thornley was and is not related to perjury. It is very specific. However, for whatever it may or may not be worth to you, I do tell you that more than one person told me of seeing Oswald and Thornley together in New Orleans. And here, because I think it fair to presume you are a decent man of decent motive, you might want to ask your author for the justification of the charge that Barbara Reid is a practitioner of "voodoo" (in other formulations "witchcraft").

I doubt very much if you have the slightest idea what kind of book you edited. If you doubt the applicability of what I wrote the Times, send me a copy and I will annotate it for you, not only as it relates to me. On a subject that did not require it, this earns for itself the distinction of being the most dishonest, contrived that way. I do not recall any book where the natural gifts of the author have been as skillfully applied.

And I presume you are unwilling to believe this. Adjacent to the cited libel of me is a lengthy section on Dave Lifton and Harry Thornley and the allegation Garrison was designing a frame of one John Rene Heindell. What I find totally lacking is any reference to any affidavit executed by Thornley and midwifed by Lifton, Certain an author as thoroughgoing and painstaking as yours conducts a thorough investigation (should I specify of his sources also?), the representation of the book. If, as seems to be the case with the Times, your inquiry is fruitless, I will supply you with a copy.

As a matter of fact, I will also supply a copy of the "letter" to Newcomb - and you may wonder whether or not I can spell my own name when you read it. But I think you should first ask your author.

I suggest these things as convenient touchstones. They are far from isolated instances. The error is purposeful and cannot be accidental. If you for one minute question this, I extend to you an unqualified invitation to come here and I will go over it with you page by page and give you what is so artfully misrepresented with such consummate science.

Alas, the mother has no way of knowing the nature of the monster who may be in her womb.

I do hope you will inquire into this (for it is your own reputation that is at stake). If you get no response or none that has meaning, I do encourage you to accept my invitations (otherwise they are unaccepted challenges). And if they in any way dispute what I say, ask me to support what I say and I will.

Once before we had a brief correspondence. You did not then look into the source of the material added to "Inquest". I did. I have learned how Epstein got it and that, in fact, it was my material.

In this spirit, I commend you on the real catchy title of the prologue of "Counterplot", "Oswald in New Orleans". As you just might not know, from the careful omissions in "Counterplot", I do - and have - liked that formulation.

Please excuse the haste with which I write you and its fruit. Were I not so preoccupied, I'd accompany this with photocopies I think you'd find informative and illuminating. But I do offer you the opportunity to recapture your integrity if I am correct in believing that as the editor, with the responsibilities I believe are those of editors in this field, that is involved.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg