

I am writing to you because you were the recipient of an e-mail that I sent on 15 April 2010 with the subject heading 'Orlando-Birkbeck'.

In that e-mail I referred to an email that Professor Robert Service had recently circulated to you which suggested that I had been the author of critical reviews, posted on the Amazon website, of books written by himself and Dr Polonsky. I criticised him for jumping to conclusions and denied that I was the author of the reviews.

That was not true and my criticism was unfair. All the reviews in question were in fact posted by me.

By this e-mail I am making a formal apology to Professor Service and Dr Polonsky for having made this false claim. Insofar as my e-mail reflects adversely on them, I withdraw any such imputations and accept that they acted properly and in good faith in drawing attention to the reviews in the terms that they did.

I am genuinely sorry for their distress and inconvenience and for instructing my lawyer to write to them in threatening terms, including a threat to sue Professor Service for libel.

As part of the settlement of this dispute, I have undertaken not to repeat the statements in the e-mail or to review their books anonymously in the future. I have also agreed to pay them compensation and legal costs, including the costs of a computer expert.

I wish Professor Service and Dr Polonsky well and I trust that a line can now be drawn under this matter. If you forwarded my e-mail to third parties, please ensure that you forward a copy of this apology as well.'

Orlando Figes