

10 January 1968 (evening)

Dear Tink,

I have now received the copy of your letter of January 7th to Ray Marcus. Up to the middle of the last page, it is fine, I think. As I wrote earlier today, I have reservations about your resort to advice from myself and others--recognizing at the same time that it was Ray who initially circulated his letter(s) on the question--on whether or not you should do anything further to comply with Ray's demands, in the interests of fairness.

As I understand the facts, you have attempted to redress the omission of attribution on the shoulder dip in the SEP, and you have already credited Ray in the book with this discovery. No further action seems to be needed, unless you wish to credit Ray in the text rather than in a footnote for his discovery of the shoulder dip, in the light of the importance of this argument. That, I would think, is up to you; the author should retain certain prerogatives.

On the transposition of frames 314 and 315: in my own original ms., I mentioned this as well as the letter from J. Edgar Hoover without attribution. At Ray's request, I inserted a phrase indicating that he had discovered the transposition. I was glad to accommodate him, although my first judgment had been that it was not necessary to make any attribution (I assume that that was my judgment, since I made no attribution in the first instance, but I have no recollection of weighing this or reaching any decision.) Having inserted a phrase indicating that Ray had made this discovery, as he requested, I left the remainder of the paragraph as was, since we were then in galley proof and changes had to be kept minimal. As you know, I have recently been reproached by Lifton for failing to credit him with eliciting the letter admitting that the frames were transposed. This is an example of how entirely innocent and well-intended actions can generate resentment and assume, in some eyes, a sinister or suspicious hue.

In the light of these facts, I find it hard to advise you on Ray's request for credit for the switch of 314/315. I was glad to insert the attribution which he requested, because it was requested and not demanded, by a colleague and a friend. At the same time, my first draft makes no attribution; and I continue to believe that the author of a major work must exercise discretion on secondary or marginal points of evidence, as to including it at all or as to giving credit or not.

On the prior independent discovery of the double head-hit: I think it would be in order to indicate the date of Ray's independent conclusion, since you do give the date of Weisberg's. Finally, since you did not derive the time-constraint or slow bullet-fast fragment arguments from Ray's work, I see no need to comply with the demand that proper credit be given Ray for those points.

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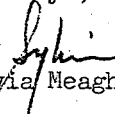
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If any of this is helpful, good! but I have the fatalistic fear that in the end I will merely have succeeded in offending and alienating both parties to this "dispute." I am frankly horrified that it has assumed such gigantic proportions, involving so many people, and so much passionate microscopic measurements and reconstructions in attempts to establish claims to credit.

When I was writing my book, over a quite long period of time during which I interrupted the work in order to compile the Subject Index, and in order to help other critics with their mss., either checking or indexing or evaluating or any combination of these, I was engaged in extensive correspondence with a fairly large number of critics and others interested in the WR. I was also meeting with my colleagues, or talking with them by phone. There was a tremendous flow back and forth of information, from the microscopic detail to the broad hypothesis. Some of the findings or insights that I derived remain, for one reason or another, vivid and identified with the specific individual in question. Others, I have long since forgotten from whom I heard, or when, or how.

I know that when I was writing the book, I made a consistent effort to be fair and to attribute credit to the source whenever the particular point seemed to warrant credit and whenever the source was clear to me. Nonetheless, in at least one case, a fellow-researcher has accused me of failing to give him due credit, or failing to include in my book information he had given me which, had I used it, I should have credited to him. It verges on a surrealist comedy, or nightmare, that so many of us are writing so many long single-space pages, in order to pick so many nits. As Ray suspected in his "note to third parties," the temptation to say "a plague on both your houses" is not inconsiderable. But you and Ray are both my friends and my valued colleagues, and your house--and his--are also my house. And I have no immunity from the plague. So I would like to appeal to everyone concerned to cool it, so that we can all go back to the real work that remains for all of us to do. I am not going to write further on this question, unless I absolutely must, and those who cannot yield one inch and cannot conceive of anything but the worst motives on the part of others might at least consider postponement of the settling of accounts to such time as that has priority over other pending work.

As always,


Sylvia Neagher

cc Ray Marcus, M.S. Arnoni, Bill O'Connell