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veral examples of Mr. id. He puts me in the L. Mencken's satirical his represents guilt by satirist; I am an histo- l on extensive analysis f documents. My con- of Wilson in many re hyperbolic extremes ot room for nuanced, ng Wilson?

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nt upon showing that re except the virtue of nflates evidence and out that nearly all my ce from *The Papers of* edited by Arthur S. To Mr. Cooper this is liar way" since I make nfront other interpre- first responsibility of analyze the evidence, gnificance. Given the r book, there was too

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little space for historiographical debates about what other historians have said at other times.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Cooper in his zeal to defend Woodrow Wilson casts my conclusions about Wilson's relations with his children and the impact of his health on his thinking and behavior in September 1919, as well as apparently all my other conclusions as "errors of fact." "The fault in this book," according to Mr. Cooper, "lies not in its valuation of Wilson, but in how it reaches that judgment." If one confuses facts with interpretations that is understandable. My evaluations of Wilson are based on the pattern of the evidence.

Mr. Cooper also stoops to the equivalent of political mudslinging by accusing me of political correctness concerning Wilson's views and response toward African Americans and women. This type of character assassination should be beyond the pale of academic discourse. The evidence shows very clearly that Mr. Wilson was a Victorian gentleman with a host of paternalistic views and policies in regard to women and blacks. How in the world is this political correctness?

Mr. Cooper berates me for leaving out Wilson's tenure as a professor at Wesleyan University. Is this really crucial to an understanding of Wilson? More importantly, Mr. Cooper uses my failure to mention Wilson's appointment of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court as an example of my alleged one-sided attack on Wilson since I noted Wilson's failure to appoint Mr. Brandeis as his Attorney General. If this represents evidence of an unrelenting bias toward Woodrow Wilson, this was not my intent.

You do not have "to dislike the man and his works" as Mr. Cooper contends to appreciate my analysis and synthesis of important themes concerning Woodrow Wilson and twentieth century America. Without becoming overly critical and cynical, we need to move beyond Wilson the idealist, the innocent, the morally triumphant and acknowledge that he was a complex blend of beliefs and behavior.

Robert M. Saunders
Williamsburg, Virginia

Editorial note: Professor Cooper declined to respond.

To the Editor:

Ralph E. Luker's laudatory review of Gerald Posner's *Killing the Dream* (March 2000 *JAH*) falls short of history standards.

Posner's record with *Case Closed* on JFK's assassination ought to have alerted Luker to the potential for a similar trampling of historical principles. There in order to convert the subject for purposes not historical he committed literally hundreds of factual errors and used a variety of devices—omissions, fake map, invented "facts," and misrepresentations, which numerous responsible reviewers copiously reported.

Failing to heed that flag Luker could have read Harold Weisberg's *Whoring with History: How the Gerald Posners Protect the King Assassins*, a 472 page fact by fact refutation of Posner told exclusively in terms of the official and freely available evidentiary base by a subject matter master who is not a theorist.

Extensive and profound errors abound. For example, in a 1974 federal court trial for the first time James Earl Ray had an opportunity to question the official assertions and alleged evidence against him with officials and witnesses placed under oath. The trial examined and refuted the evidence against Ray without dispute or appeal. Although aware of its existence Posner does not mention this exculpation of Ray, the complete refutation of the state's case.

The bullet in King's body could not be connected to the rifle. The rifle could not be connected to the crime. It was not even swabbed to see if it had been fired since last cleaned, a common and cheap test that the FBI performed on more than a dozen totally irrelevant rifles but avoided on the rifle it proclaimed the murder weapon. Witnesses saw the blanket-wrapped rifle dropped on the street before the shot was fired. News photographs taken immediately after the shot show the bathroom window opening too little to enable a scoped rifle to fire through it. Additionally, inside the small bathroom the way the Shelby County police and FBI said the rifle was fired would have required the back of the shooter and rifle butt to have been inside the wall when allegedly fired.

There are acute problems with Posner's sources. As one example: through ignorance or deliberate obfuscation or both Posner constantly footnotes to "MURKIN." But that is a FBI acronym not the file number. MURKIN records contain over a million pages in three score independent field offices, which, as cited, cannot be checked. When through occasional fortune a few sources were located erroneous and distorted use of their information was sometimes found to be the case. This is not history's method.

Luker's denigration of Oliver Stone's cinematic corruption of history is well taken, but he fails to see that his Posner is merely a Tweedle Dum to Stone's Tweedle Dee—and that right after breakfast.

His instructional homily to the King family is gratuitous, misconceived, and improper for a review in the *JAH*. What else could the King family do? With historians deaf, with justice's doors shut, and with Ray exculpated—in public and with the official evidence, they mistakenly appealed to theorists, the only apparent open path in a world where professionals had ceased to be their brother's keeper.

Our history is too precious to be Posnerized—corrupted and manipulated in the quest for private ends.

David R. Wrone
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

To the Editor:

I am surprised Mr. Wrone's letter finds space in the *Journal of American History*. It's a Tweedle Dud. Unhappy with my review of Gerald Posner's *Killing the Dream: James Earl Ray and the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Wrone faults Posner and me for falling "short of history standards." One would not want to do that. I used Lewis Carroll's language because, like Holocaust-deniers, conspiracy theorists like Wrone seem to dwell somewhere on the other side of the looking glass. Responding to them can be bottomlessly unproductive. My review noted that conspiracies undoubtedly occur and that Posner outlines what he believes were the most likely parameters of any conspiracy in King's assassination.

Wrone has hired on as an academic gofer

for Harold Weisberg. In a badly written and poorly argued book, *Case Open: The Unanswered JFK Assassination Questions* (1994), Weisberg claimed to find "hundreds of factual errors" and many violations of good historical practice—"omissions, fake map, invented 'facts,' and misrepresentations"—in Posner's book, *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK* (1993). In this letter, Wrone hoists himself on his own petard by misrepresenting to us a fake book, Weisberg's *Whoring with History: How the Gerald Posners Protect the King Assassins*. As if, mind you, such a book existed. Searches for it on amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, Lexis-Nexis and OCLC yield nothing. Through the looking glass, it is no longer odd to argue that in order to review a book one should have read another, albeit an unpublished, one. It is worse than odd, however, that having found a press to publish a tedious volume of personal attack on Posner and the Kennedy assassination, Weisberg now seeks one for 472 more pages of bile on Posner and the King assassination. Someone here should "get a life."

King scholars have shown that some powerful federal agencies were hostile to King, that there may have been degrees of conspiracy in his assassination and that there was bureaucratic ineptitude in the investigation. Beyond that, however, Weisberg and Wrone find few credible allies because of their own distortions of reality. It is worse than misleading to claim that James Earl Ray was exonerated in a 1974 trial. There were federal court proceedings in Ray's case in 1974. Had there been a trial and had it exonerated Ray, as Wrone assures us, why did he remain in prison until his death? Beyond the incompetence of government investigators, beyond Ray's guilt or innocence, Wrone, Weisberg and the conspiracy theorists have yet to offer *any* evidence that government agencies conspired to assassinate King. Rather than laying out a documented, reasonable case for such a conspiracy, they peddle malicious innuendo about those who disagree with them, implying that Posner is motivated by "purposes not historical," sinister "private ends" or CIA subsidies. If conspiracy advocates have evidence of that or of a conspiracy of government agencies in King's death, show us the evidence by publishing it.

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As I write, the Justice Department has just issued a report recommending no further action on the King family's request for a renewed inquiry into the assassination. I have no "gratuitous, misconceived, and improper" advice for the family. It has received and acted on quite enough bad advice in the last twenty years. Good, thoughtful advice is more capably offered by Michael Eric Dyson in his book, *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther*

King, Jr. (2000). The family (and the rest of us) would do well to read and ponder it.

Ralph E. Luker
 Atlanta, Georgia

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