

15308

Nov. 15, 1981

Dear Kevin:

This P.S. to the scribbled note of the morning will actually answer your question of "artistic-cultural" tendencies arising that I did not wish take time out to answer because when I looked at what is the topic of today's class: Introd., Chs. 7 & 8 + S c. 3 of 9, I realized they include as the new no one has except in abbreviated form of letter of week last wk. so here goes:

Ch. 7 will now have a Melville Q from The Confidence Man since the stupid copy editor had objected to my use of the word, "original" re RL, so here is way Melville articulates it: "Quite an original..."

As for original characters in fiction, a grateful reader will, on meeting one, keep the anniversary of the day... Their meeting with one keep the anniversary of the day... Their rarity may still the more in from this, that, while characters, merely singular. imply but singular forms so to speak, original ones, truly so, imply original instincts... It is with fiction as with religion; it should present another world and yet one to which we feel a tie."

This quotation, which will go at top of p. 135, will in many ways both sum up when I first involved RL as an original in Ch. 6, and continue with Ch. 7 when it is specifically RL as "person" both as feminist and as break with Jogiches. I doubt that even now readers quite understand RL's statement, "I am only when I am free of Leo." She never broke fully politically even on the party though she began to suspect that they really do have different attitudes of relationship of spontaneity to organization, and he, too, fully--indeed gave his life to it--followed in her footsteps. So, "flying alone" is very, very more complicated than what passes for "independence" in WLM today.

In any case, what is great about the Melville quotation is that, though he is talking of characters in fiction, and form of novel, and language as articulation from another, past world, as well as a future and present world, the relationship to the crisis in USA--on everything from racism vs. democracy and utilitarian is definitely the problematic of our age. In Ch. 8 on the Tasks that Remain to Be done, if one still thinks of "culture and art" as if that had priority over class and philosophy especially the latter, they understand nothing whatever on how concited the writers of the Nation who were one step below the 1954 Writers Congress which, though run by Stalinists, had at least one presenting true theory--Mailer on state capitalism (taken jointly from Malaguais & me--whereas the latest held made an abstraction of both philosophy and proletariat and, instead, offered itself as "the" revolutionary force. The reason I brought in Mikhail Lifshitz's The Philosophy of Art of Marx was the exact opposite of anyone seeing something "unique and original" in culture. Rather, it was because he had refused to single out a theory of art but insisted that you must see it in the innards of Marx's total philosophy so that even the expression "revolution in permanence" was introduced by Lifshitz when he spoke of 1841 doctoral thesis & 1842 freedom of the press articles, stressing Marx had never abandoned his Hegelian inheritance, as seen in Fetishism of Commodities in CAPITAL itself.

As for anyone thinking that "Marx's Marxism" is any sort of deviation from the Hegelian dialectic, I'd like to see anyone having both stuck to the inheritance in Marx and truly recreated something of Hegel "in and for himself" in something as new and original (YES, ORIGINAL, STRICTLY MARXIST HUMANIST AND TRULY US AND US ALONE) as "Absolute Idea as New Beginning" and "Absolute Negativity as Ceaseless Movement of Ideas", following the trail both of Marx's 1880s writings and "Self-Determination of the Idea" as I. When, oh when, will our comrades learn to be proud?

John, Kay