

12 April 1967

Dear Vince,

After you called last night, I had two more calls which were relevant to our conversation. First, Bob Richter happened to phone from Washington. I told him that we might be getting together with Sauvage on Sunday and that you had suggested that he should be there too. He would be glad to come, if we get together at night, since he has a commitment on Sunday afternoon. I then tried to reach Sauvage but he was not in, so I will try again tonight.

The second call was Maggie. She and Steve Burton are trying to draft a letter to be signed by all the critics and sent to Lifton, saying that henceforth we want nothing to do with him—a kind of excommunication. I strongly advised against such action, on the grounds that Lifton would take it immediately to Liebeler and Schiller, and the press would have a ball with headlines about dissension among the critics. She saw the point and I think they will drop the idea.

You will be wondering why such drastic action was even contemplated, especially in the wake of the 147 slides which you said last night convinced you that Lifton was really on the side of the critics. Well, he is—some of the time. But he is also with the opposition, some of the time. A case in point, and the immediate reason for the proposed letter of excommunication, is that Lifton has agreed to perform a service for Liebeler, by fine-tooth-combing Weisberg's Whitewash II and drawing up a list of all the errors in it. He is also doing his best to sabotage Maggie's peace of mind, by floating malicious rumors about her book (i.e., that the publishers had hired someone @ \$40,000 to write the text—a bald invention); and he is fraternizing with Schiller as well as Liebeler.

Vince, I know how hard it is for you to sustain any hostility toward anyone—even Jerry Cohen—and I know that your impulse toward Lifton is one of warmth and friendship. I don't want to proselytize for negative and hostile attitudes—but I do want to safeguard the position of the critics as a group. So I will only suggest that you maintain whatever relationship you wish to maintain with Lifton, but remain conscious at all times that he does serve as a pipeline to the opposition, that he has some history of instability and doubledealing, and that nothing should be put at his disposal that can be a potential weapon against us all. My own position, as you know, is that I have ruled out any communication with so-called critics who fraternize with those who are playing a dirty game of slander and whitewash of the WR.

I don't want to ask you to take my word for the story that Lifton has agreed to do a job on Weisberg's book, and I have asked Maggie to write to you directly about it. I hope that you will reconsider very carefully the advisability of placing trust in someone who has undertaken such a dirty job.

Looking forward to seeing you and Livie come Saturday morning, and with lots of love to my so-favorite lecher,