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Dear President Murphy:

August 25, 1978

As you and many of my colleagues know, I am currently in the final stages of completion of a large book upon which I have been working for many years. I had hoped to be able to have it in the publisher's hands in March, at the close of my sabbatical, but the complexity and scope of the book have put me far behind schedule. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that I will not be able to bring the book to a prompt end if I must return to teaching duties in September. Therefore, I am hoping it will be possible for me to secure a leave of absence from my teaching responsibilities sufficient to complete this project.

In good conscience, I must tell you that I am uncertain whether I will return to Bennington afterward. I have realized for some time that, from the larger point of view of my professional career, it might be advisable for me to leave the college after the completion of my book, in accord with the urgings of my advisor at Yale, who rightly feels that I must have immediate access to a major research library for the kind of interdisciplinary work that I do.

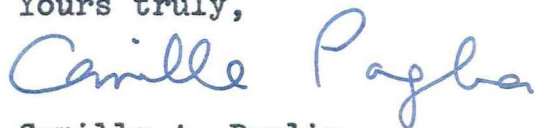
This will be a very difficult decision for me to make, and I have struggled with it for several years. I have spent six extremely satisfying years at Bennington, and I know that by moving into a more research-oriented environment I will be sacrificing the close contact with students which Bennington fosters. My experience as a young faculty member has been far more fortunate than that of many of my friends from the Yale Graduate School who went on to jobs at the major universities. The absence of ranks at Bennington, the unrestricted access to course selection, the avoidance of departmentalization and of the ordinary academic demand for rigid period specialization--all these things create an atmosphere of freedom and dignity for the junior faculty. I have no doubt that this congenial situation at Bennington has added immeasurably to my personal and intellectual growth, and this is a debt which I look forward to acknowledging in the book itself.

Furthermore, this is an exciting period of transition at the college which I would be very sorry not to be part of. But practical career considerations must remain uppermost in my mind.

If it seems likely that I will not return to Bennington, I will notify the Literature Division of this fact by the first day of the spring semester, that is, March 8, 1979, in order that there might be adequate time to recruit a replacement.

In conclusion, I hope that the possibility that I may not return will not be a serious impediment in the approval of a leave. Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

Yours truly,



Camille A. Paglia
Literature Division