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Dear Bernard,

I was so delighted to receive your letter. The one thing I did not dare to claim for my work at my lecture, out of respect for the creative side of the Division, is that it is really a kind of fiction, although composed of provable facts; therefore, I was elated when you declared in your letter that it is "a dynamic fiction." I was saying this to Alvin years ago, that it is "half fact, half fiction."

In regard to the Spenser piece, you may be interested in seeing the enclosed letter from a journal which comments upon its originality. I had sent the essay to <sup>to</sup> other journals, where the outcome was exactly the same: The main editor would be sympathetic to it, but an anonymous reader would detest it. Then they would ask me to make changes in it, which I refused to do, since I will never dilute my work in the direction of ho-hum academic conventionalism. So while I was being asked to re-submit (the essay was never actually rejected), I still refused to compromise and determined that I would not publish it until my book, rather than sacrifice the originality which I believe to be one of the traditional hallmarks of Bennington College. You cannot believe the unimaginativeness and silliness of the criticisms! It is nice to know that one's work is so original that it can be resisted, but still, considering that nothing that I am doing would not be acceptable in France--or in America if it had a French postmark on it!--, I was quite exasperated at the general academic idiocy. However, as you can see from the enclosed letter, it was finally appreciated for what it is.

What you call "the hyped-up prose" is of course a French style. That is, this is how Baudelaire sounds when translated into English; it is the tone of Bachelard, of Barthes, of Sartre on Genet, etc. It's just that no one has actually written it originally in English! All French prose of this particular kind can sound quite absurd in English! But what I am trying to do, as I think I indicated in the prefatory remarks, is to attempt to discover just how much emotion--or fiction--the medium of scholarship can bear. Moving the emotions has not been an aim of cultural commentary since the nineteenth century, where we find it in Walter Pater, in Ruskin, etc. You correctly perceived the "self-celebratory" nature of many of my remarks in my lecture. This was a deliberate strategy which I discussed beforehand with Richard in detail. Each remark was submitted to him for discussion, and many things were discarded! Four years ago when I gave my first lecture, the success of that evening was immediately followed by the first attacks upon me from Cheuse and Sandy. These were utterly unmotivated; I had done nothing up to that point.\* But the tumultuous response of the students to my lecture produced an instant backlash from the jealous and the fearful. There were subsequent unjustified criticisms of the actual content and style of the lecture. Georges Guy was then on leave, but a year and a half later he actually had the nerve, on the basis of no evidence whatever, never having seen any of my work, to denounce me at a dinner to the Tristman's and to Ben Belitt as "uneducated", etc., etc. This is the technique of

\*Modesty of demeanor did not work.



"the big lie", for whatever negative things anyone might say about me, there are very few persons of my age who are more educated in the broadest cultural sense! Because of this constant hostility, in my lecture two weeks ago I was simply laying it on the line. The prefatory remarks contained this message: "You who have felt free to fabricate the most vicious lies against me are now warned. I declare here in the presence of the students of Bennington College that I will no longer tolerate your hypocrisy and your jealousy. I know, and my intellectual friends know, how good my work is, and I am not dependent upon your judgments, distorted as they are by your personal jealousy. If you choose to lie, your lies will only redound against you." Georges Guy pretends he did not attend my lecture because of Phebe, but of course it is only because I caught him last spring in his underhanded and illegal sabotaging of Claude's course description, and he knows it; and he knows that I denounced him for it. Moreover, by not attending, he now does not have to admit to himself that he has made a fool out of himself by denouncing my lack of learning for the past four years. I might point out that I also know too much about French culture for his comfort. Sylvie Weil-Sayre, in contrast, came and enjoyed herself greatly.

Your final observation in your letter about the androgynous experience being only a partial one was most welcome--I am so glad you did not keep this reservation to yourself, since it is only because of the necessary selection of extracts for my lecture that you did not see this other argument in my work. From the first page to the last, my book argues precisely this! As you can see from the book review of 1973 which I enclose (I've marked the relevant passage), I am most critical of anyone who facilely exalts the androgyn~~as~~ as an ideal of human conduct. For me this whole thing is an imaginative construct which has tremendous dangers when it is applied to life. That is, it belongs to performance, to art, but not to civilization as a whole. (Certain sentences in my Spenser essay were only referring to the poem, not to life in general.) I demonstrate that the androgyne is at its most spectacular and dangerous at decadent periods of history; that the cult of the self is inimical to social cohesiveness; that multiplicity of persona, much as I admire it in films, in literature, in art, is a disaster in life--would one want a brain surgeon, an airline pilot to adopt this as his life aim? On the contrary, responsibility, continuity, the raising of children, the preservation of order all depend upon the renunciation of flamboyance and idiosyncrasy. I am in complete agreement with Freud upon the necessity for instinctual renunciation for the advancement of culture. In the last paragraph of my dissertation at Yale, for example, I stated that a society of androgynes would be like the Eloi of H.G. Wells' "Time Machine"--weak, parasit~~ic~~al, listless, empty. So you see that my book has two levels to it: one, the vivid analysis of this marvelous image; two, the argument against its social manifestations. By the way, I am quite a conservative as a feminist on the question of sexual differentiation: I believe there are realy differences between male and female at the opposite poles, despite the big gray middle. I don't think it's because of the "social suppression" of women that there is no female Dante, Leonardo, or Beethoven. I am a firm believer in the power of hormones, which we know practically nothing about yet, because it is such a new science. Etc., etc.!

Best regards--

Camille