

June 2 [1974]

Dear Gail,

Enclosed is a copy of a review which this eighteenth-century journal-newsletter requested me to do after my name appeared in the London Times--of course they never imagined I was far from a specialist in the eighteenth century! (This is the same book which was being reviewed when my name was mentioned.)

Fessenden says he told you I've decided to leave Bennington and that you agree it's the best thing to do. I won't be going through the shlep of formally applying elsewhere until the fall of 1975, though if Harold Bloom hears of something good before then, I'll leave after the coming academic year. This was a good place to come when starting out, due to the freedom of course selection, but the unprofessional atmosphere is really getting to me. Intellectual distinction is my first principle of judgment, but it is plainly not Bennington's. I used to be full of reformist zeal, but the experience of this semester has quashed it. It's not just the literature division, but the other divisions as well. The art division's "senior crit" was one of the sloppiest, most appalling spectacles one could hope to witness, for example. I used to think that you could turn everything around if you put your mind to it, but the situation now seems to me irreversible. Mediocrity, like Pope's Dullness, seems universally to reign. Anyhow, the drudge-like anonymity of a university, where one can monastically pursue one's research aspirations, now seems fatally attractive after the dizzying glamour of Bennington, where I ~~am~~ feel the spotlight of ~~seeking~~ public attention ^{become} absolutely oppressive. Much was learned here, however, particularly my revelation about the necessity of WASPish froideur for institutions. (Why else have there been 36 governments since World War II in Italy? Italian individualism and "honor" plainly lead to anarchy!)

(I see how few options you actually have)

Camille