

HELEN VENDLER  
16a Still St.  
Brookline, Mass

phone: 617-566-4657

acc. to 1985  
Boston phone bkr  
in Grand Central

HELEN  
VENDLER - 1

December 1, 1986

Dear Helen Vender:

I am writing, first, out of intellectual gratitude. I feel indebted to you for an understanding of some of the texts I have wished most to understand: The Auroras of Autumn, Yeats's Vision as an account of poetic activity, certain poems of Ashbery and Bishop.

I am an American playwright to whom Edgar Bowers and Geoffrey Hill (say) mean a great deal; David Mamet and Christopher Durang, very little. My plays have been fairly widely performed, both in New York and regionally (see enclosed resume); but till now, I have sought no readers for them outside the theatre.

Recently, though, some poets and people concerned with poetry have spoken to me of my work with such enthusiasm as to make me feel I should like to find more such readers. (John Hollander, for example, told me that the enclosed short script was one of three American plays he had liked in the past twenty years, the other two being, as I recall, by James Merrill and Jay Wright.) I knew, however, our culture being what it is, that I should not find them in the theatre; and if not in the theatre, where?

I knew where to find one. Often, working through one of your books or essays, I have found myself envying the writers who were being that well read. It is a desire to be "that well read" in turn that prompts me to send you The Responses.

Along with the script I enclose some letters I have received about it from people in the theatre (Andre Gregory, among them); a resume; and a copy of Stanley Kauffmann's New Republic review of my first book, The Theatrical Event (Wesleyan University Press, 1975; paperback, 1977). I am at present completing a second book, Acting as Reading, a study of acting as a physicalization of the reading process.

If The Responses interests you sufficiently to recommend it to anyone else's attention, or to recommend what I might "do" with it, I would of course be very grateful: "finding readers" means, on one level, finding a publisher. Of course, quite apart from your feeling about the play, I do not know whether you like to become involved in such recommendations.

(cont.)

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If the request is inappropriate, please consider it withdrawn.

I know your writings well, from the Yeats book on, and have often felt better sustained and more ruggedly challenged by them than by criticism in my own unhappy "field." Much as I would like you to know my work, I would not thrust it before you this way if I were not sufficiently aware of your concerns to suppose The Responses might speak to them.

Sincerely yours,

David Cole

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
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HELEN  
VENDLER -3

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December 10, 1986

Mr. David Cole  
137 Cottage St.  
New Haven, CT 06511

Dear Mr. Cole:

I'm sorry that my life precludes my commenting on manuscripts. I am totally without understanding of the theatre, in any case, alas--nor do I have connections with trade publishers, since I have never published with them myself.

Thank you very much for your kind remarks about my own writing. I wish I could have made you a more positive response.

Yours truly,



Helen Vendler  
Kenan Professor of English

HV/nws