

had become far too smug, far too happy in their eccentricities, and were basking much too luxuriously in the warm sunshine of the public's approval. Here in America, we were too gentle and soft-spoken among ourselves. How much more bracing is the atmosphere of combat which the irrepressible Mr. Boyd brings!

Literary bad manners are inextricably part of his appeal to the public. The impoverished tradition of the "gentleman" in letters, urged so fervently by Professor Erskine and other pacific scholars, is one which he relinquishes. Although his gait may be pedantic, the quality of Mr. Boyd's thought is almost completely unliterary and bears no relation to the academical reasoning about art upon the plane of ideas which usually forms the basis for our literary discussions. (2) His appeal is rather through prejudice; or to use a most recent idiom, by tapping the great public's "inferiority complex" with regard to those phases of modern art which they misunderstand and wish to despise. Thus Mr. Boyd, the Realpolitiker, asks the public to condemn and hate his Aesthete—1924:

- 1) because he is rich
- 2) because he went to Harvard
- 3) because he drinks bad gin
- 4) because he is Nordic or Jewish
- 5) because he travelled to Europe
- 6) because he is "incomprehensible"
- 7) because he is cowardly and patriotic—witness: "By luck or cunning he succeeded in getting out of the trenches . . ." and so forth, ad extremis.

Now literary bad manners form one of Mr. Boyd's great virtues. They are not only picturesque; they are entirely justifiable means to a worthy end. His motives are not to call attention to himself or to obtain publicity through his vigorous brandishings; they are very clearly governed by the

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negative courage the affable worms who direct this organ of criticism rejected my work without reading it.

So that the author of this essay is as one who has travelled a long and tortuous lane bootlessly. . . It is civilized, perhaps, to be debonair about this Journalist, this nuisance odor, but were it not more honest and more soul-satisfying to epitomize his doing with that short and ugly word which graces our language? . . .

(2) It was an extremely dull evening. Mr. Boyd attacked my contention that Maurice Barrés was a great writer of prose, although admitting that he had read nothing but several polemical articles in the newspapers and none of the twenty odd novels. He also made some astonishingly adolescent remarks to the effect of, how agreeable it would be if he "could press a button" that would end the life of the whole world. The ladies present were visibly frightened. I do not wish to speak ill of Mr. Boyd; rather to point out that you can be an uninteresting conversationalist, have very little concern for ideas or clear thinking, and still write an epochal essay like "Aesthete: Model 1924."