

membership without the journal subscription, the truth of this would be immediately apparent. An MLA survey ten years ago indicated that at least eighty-five percent of those among the professoriat who teach language and literature continue to teach and think about our subject in fairly traditional ways (“Highlights of the MLA’s 1990 Survey of Upper-Division Literature Courses,” *ADE Bulletin* 101 [1992]: 34). These are the people who join the organization out of a sense of professional duty or because they need to attend the annual convention or because they want to purchase the bibliography or—especially among junior faculty members—because they want their own copy of the *Job Information List*. But they’re also the ones whose interests are largely not addressed by *PMLA* and who would drop that part of their membership in a heartbeat if they had the option. Some of them no doubt are not publishing anywhere, but many are. They just know *PMLA* won’t be interested in their work, so they don’t submit it.

In sum, if you and the *PMLA* Editorial Board are really interested in attracting more submissions, you might try actually following a big-tent policy rather than merely announcing one in the Statement of Editorial Policy. And this would have the added advantage of making the journal reflect the full range of interests represented among the MLA’s membership.

Gary A. Stringer
University of Southern Mississippi

TO THE EDITOR:

In response to Carlos J. Alonso’s informative report on declining submissions, I thought that, as a life member of the MLA and a constant reader, or skimmer, of *PMLA* over several decades, I would explain, for what it is worth, why I would not submit my work to it, though I did once, unsuccessfully, in the past.

1. Over the years I have grown rather weary of *PMLA*’s relentless self-praise in varying formulations, its incomparable rigor and selectivity, its restriction to “the best of its kind.” It is the University of Chicago of periodicals; the stance is not only ungracious and unmannerly, it is intimidating. Perhaps it is useful in driving off persons of my limitations, but I think it likely that not many capable scholars, especially younger ones, are supremely confident that they can meet such peerless standards.

2. Alonso seems to set less value on my time than I do. Why in the world would I spend it on a composition for a journal that boasts of a ninety-five percent rejection rate? Many of us have all we can do to meet solicited obligations for conference papers, thematic journal volumes and books, *Festschriften*, and the like. To attempt an essay for *PMLA* would be a foolish use of resources.

3. I remain fairly unimpressed by the advantages to the supplicant Alonso ascribes to the evaluation process. I neither want nor need the advice of referees, with which my overall experiences have been dispiriting. My clearest memory of the commentary to *PMLA*’s rejection of my paper is that it was cranky and petty; to be sure, that was a long time ago.

4. As to the journal’s content, I was once invited to a panel on that topic, where I ventured the suggestion that, instead of pursuing the most esoteric and rarified top of the line and leaving the expert general discourse on literature to the *New York Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, *PMLA* might better serve the diverse membership with fundamentally informative and instructive essays on literatures and theories not our own. This talk was not well received; it was supposed to appear in an MLA publication but was “lost” in the office. Still, no one I know likes *PMLA* as it is very much; at the end of the academic year, when people are on the move, the Dumpsters fill up with it. Since it occasionally prints letters from admirers, I have concluded that it is a coterie publication.

5. Finally, I will not submit, so to speak, to anonymous submissions; on this point I agree entirely with Stanley Fish. For the same reason I decline to evaluate such submissions. To translate Lincoln into a more trivial register: as I would not be treated as an anonymous by my own professional organizations, so I will not treat others that way. If I had one piece of advice, it would be to abandon that policy, but I expect it would be futile.

Jeffrey L. Sammons
Yale University

TO THE EDITOR:

You may remember that last fall I wrote the MLA offices in protest over yet another unreadable issue of *PMLA*. You kindly responded and pointed to your statement of policy to appear in the January