

rants a dose of demystification" (11). Most of us, I suspect, would agree that there is a naïveté in the belief that authorial pride and the desire for reputation, as well as for the good things of the world that go with reputation, have not always been strong motives for writing for publication. But the implication of Stanton's reply to Franklin is that the benefit to readers is distinctly secondary and that the primary purpose of publication is not to share insights and discoveries but to advertise oneself. I am not sure that that is not all too often the case today, but do we really wish to say that literary scholars and critics have little or nothing worthwhile to share and that the putative value of what they offer the reader is illusory?

The intellectual honesty and commitment to constant questioning the humanities have always laid claim to should demand debate on the more troublesome issues implied or suggested by the words I have quoted. Following are some propositions that ought to be debated:

1. The amount of publication expected for tenure and promotion is at present excessive.
2. Much of what is published consists of superficial insights dressed in pretentious terms because the authors, their eyes on the tenure clock, on promotion, or on establishing records that will allow them to move to institutions that will pay them more and require them to teach less, cannot take the time to read widely or carefully.
3. Much of what is published consists of little more than demonstrations that the author can follow others in applying portions of some conceptual scheme to portions of a literary text.
4. A great many books would be better presented as articles, and many an article could with profit be condensed into a note.
5. A great deal of published criticism and theory is essentially unread, and much of the remainder is read not for a deeper understanding of a literary text or texts but for material that can be used in whatever the reader plans to write next.
6. In order that graduate students may survive in a milieu where they must publish as much and as quickly as possible, they are encouraged to restrict their attention to those literary texts and theoretical approaches that can be quickly blended into at least the outward shape of books and articles.

Perhaps most members of the MLA are convinced that the profession and the world are really better for the ever-increasing flow of printer's ink, that granting tenure only to those who can exhibit "not only a book and a

body of articles but also substantial progress on a second major project" increases the amount of worthwhile publication and teaching, and that reading less widely in literary texts produces greater understanding of literature. But if the debates about the direction of the profession show that the majority has real doubts, the MLA should take the lead in promulgating a revised understanding of scholarly duties and priorities and in encouraging and helping departments to fight the necessary battles on their own campuses. No one would argue that university departments of literature possess sufficient autonomy to shape themselves wholly as they might wish, but nevertheless they need not simply roll darkling down the torrent of their fate.

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To the Editor:

By discussing the issue of multiple submissions to scholarly journals under the heading of "censorship," Domna Stanton distorts and, ultimately, trivializes an issue near and dear to the aspirations of many young scholars whose livelihoods now almost exclusively depend on opportunities to get ideas into print. Indeed, the issue represents an ethical dilemma of the greatest proportions, but Stanton fails to properly identify the genuine locus of this problem.

The difficulty young scholars have in publishing their work is only a symptom of a well-known larger problem pervasive in literary studies: the suffocating job crunch that threatens to snuff out the next generation of college teachers. Denying this situation is tantamount to renouncing any understanding of the profession as it exists today. *PMLA's* newly decreed refusal to consider manuscripts under consideration elsewhere, in the wake of similar decisions by other journals nationwide, merely serves to potentially exacerbate the obstacles young scholars face in their search to build professional credentials.

Stanton's specious reasoning in favor of eliminating multiple submissions implies that we should also restrict applicants for the few advertised positions in literature departments to one standing application per individual. Imagine how much fairer the hiring practices of the nation's universities would be if each candidate for a literature position could apply only to one place at a time! Senior, tenured instructors would look forward to no more tedious rummaging through vitae already being viewed by scores of literature departments across the country. No more worrying about prompt selection—

this newfangled process would have all the supplicants at the feet of a single faculty recruitment committee, anxiously waiting for its word and its word only. How refreshing! Why worry about these battered young scholars who wait against hope and continuously worsening odds? Once rejected (and painlessly forgotten), these Quixotes in scholar's garb need only to steer their mounts to the next forlorn queue, there to wait through a similarly exclusive application process, often for the scenario merely to repeat itself—ad nauseam. This mishandling and abuse of the disenfranchised (read: unemployed or untenured) would continue to roll merrily along, ironically reinforced by each new layer of scholars added to the tenured multitudes, their own recent pasts as untenured assistants now conveniently forgotten, their leaps into security and out of these debilitating queues now permanent.

Were we to follow this process to its natural conclusion, then, we would see the imperceptibly diminishing pool of potential assistant professors skulking in rejection from university A, where every newly minted PhD initially would like to take a first crack at employment, to university B, a fine school with excellent jobs in certain arcane fields (i.e., not the applicant's), to university C, and so on. Then, too, adding interesting complications to this morass, some of the smarter or more courageous, if not hungrier, protoprofessors would begin to back away from this endless procession through the academic hierarchy and brazenly seek to place their single-shot applications with smaller, lesser-known departments eager to get their hands on some "higher quality" PhDs instead of the usual fare of university A, B, and C leftovers. Where would this process lead? To academic excellence and the free exchange of ideas? To departments filled with scholars well suited to their student populations? Or to entropy and a free-for-all scramble, depending for its results almost as much on the desperation of its contestants as on the quality of the positions they seek or the appropriateness of the placements? Surely this method of selecting faculties would appear clumsy and absurd to any reasonable scholar and teacher. Why, then, must our professional journals adopt manuscript submission policies that replicate this elitist, leisurely process?

Stanton's argument discussing *PMLA*'s recent editorial shift mostly expresses the Editorial Board's self-conceit ("no journal's reviewing process is more demanding than *PMLA*'s" [10]) and contradictory and inexplicable desire to act like lemmings following a poll of major publication editors ("of the ten editors who responded to our survey, nine do not consider simultaneous submissions . . ." [9]) and does not address the obvious benefits

of multiple submission. In addition to allowing market forces to determine where articles would be placed, multiple submissions let authors get a variety of opinions on their work from sources outside their departments or graduate programs. Moreover, one of Stanton's major arguments against multiple submissions, the toll they potentially take on referees, is not a credible reason for limiting submissions. Being on a journal's publication jury should be portrayed not as a beneficent service to the field selflessly shouldered to add richness to the discourse in literary studies but as a scholarly credential often and appropriately used to advance the referees' professional interests. If juries are swamped, they should be expanded or given help.

While, finally, the readers of any journal should be kept in the highest regard, we must address the issue of multiple submissions realistically and with integrity. Limiting manuscript submissions to one journal at a time will cripple young scholars' attempts to create impressive dossiers before tenure reviews or job applications, and it will do so not to retain the purity of ideas or the integrity of the journals but to save the time of a hierarchy that has conveniently and tragically forgotten the struggles younger scholars undertake in the trenches every day. To take away the option of submitting duplicates of a manuscript simultaneously and thus expediting acceptance or rejection (and subsequent revision) would be to add yet another nail in the already tightly sealed coffins of junior scholars working in literature today.

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## What Is Literature?

To the Editor:

In reading the Editor's Column "What Is Literature?—1994" (109 [1994]: 359–65), I was shocked (shocked!) to learn that there are still unreconstructed members of the MLA who, refusing to follow their vanguard, prefer essays having to do with "language and literature" rather than with "culture." Surely it is high time, as Domna Stanton so persuasively writes, to "signal receptiveness to work in cultural studies, starting with this Editor's Column."

In response to this grave crisis—or "[i]n the face of this lack," as Stanton expressively puts it—"[s]ome members" of the Advisory Committee and Editorial Board have "expressed the view that consultant readers