

I show in *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization*. Similarly, when Una strikes Hawthorne as “supernatural,” the moment evokes a tradition of religious thought that is traceable to ancient Greece, in a version latterly conditioned by deist conceptions of nature. When Hawthorne in the same passage views his daughter’s boldness as a lack of “delicacy,” he relies on conceptions of gender that likewise have a long history and that took an especially polarized form in the early nineteenth century.

To demonstrate these influences on perception is a matter of understanding the cultural traditions that were active in the mentalities of our forebears and of showing such traditions to be at work in specific cases. Mellard, by contrast, demands a blanket theoretical authority; he “expects to find a theoretical claim that remarks about angels and devils are ‘really’ about the contrasts between men and women.” My argument about Hawthorne’s perceptions is certainly open to dispute, if substantive contrary evidence can be found, as is the argument of the essay as a whole. But my conclusions cannot be dismissed merely because they are painful, nor do Mellard’s intemperate denunciations vitiate their force.

The article on Pearl and Una, like my forthcoming book on the Hawthornes’ family life, deals in issues that are charged with emotional torment, such that clarity of understanding is not achieved separately from coming to terms with one’s own psychic investment in them. Hawthorne’s writing remains a cultural treasure for us largely because of the way it engages chronic anxieties regarding sexuality, gender, and the politics of intimate experience.

T. WALTER HERBERT, JR.  
*Southwestern University*

### ***PMLA’s Editorial Policy***

To the Editor:

Under the heading “Widening *PMLA’s Appeal*” (103 [1988]: 816–17) you print Guy Stern’s plea for a more tolerant editorial policy, which would be less committed to the new (?) orthodoxy of style and method expected of articles submitted for publication in *PMLA*.

Stern ultimately argues the benefits of scholarship and knowledge that will accrue from a policy designed to attract young scholars and probing new ideas to the association. While I am in full agreement with him, let me add another aspect in support of his appeal. As one of the 4.14% of the MLA membership residing in “the rest of the world” (as Jerome Mandel puts it in the Fall 1988 *MLA Newsletter*), I prize *PMLA* as a means of keeping abreast of the variety of scholarly endeavor in our vast discipline, at least so far as the North American scene is concerned. Scholars sharing my situation are likely to regard their

membership similarly, as a link to those activities (mirrored in *PMLA* particularly) from which they feel separated by physical distance, if by no other circumstances.

Such members abroad would clearly favor an editorial policy that would place less emphasis on the in-depth pursuit of specialized topics, which generally find appropriate outlets in established journals and reviews devoted to just those specialties. *PMLA*, we would argue, should make it an obligation to ensure the lateral growth of linguistic and literary scholarship by providing a forum for ideas and opinions that have not yet been canonized but that—who knows?—may provide essential stimuli to the tradition-building debate among members of our profession.

This is not an argument against quality and standards. I merely wish to put the quality of critical substance and generating potential before that of form and style in a journal that should, I feel, stop short of becoming an aesthetic object.

KURT OPITZ  
*Fachhochschule Hamburg*

### ***PMLA’s Review Process***

To the Editor:

Stanley Fish’s guest column, “No Bias, No Merit: The Case against Blind Submission” (103 [1988]: 739–48), strikes me as wrongheaded on several counts, and I will let other respondents do the work of demolition that the piece deserves. I would, however, like to raise one point that Fish does not—namely, the anonymity of the referees.

The main argument for confidentiality in all such processes of evaluation (including the work of appointment and promotion committees) comes down to the assertion that evaluators will be inhibited from writing their candid opinions if their identities are known to the persons being evaluated. Now, I doubt that any reader of *PMLA* would contest the judgment that the veil of anonymity also licenses the worst abuses of probity and fairness.

To make the review process really open and fair, it seems to me that blind submissions are not enough. Consultant specialists and members of the Advisory Committee should be willing to stand behind their written evaluations, particularly rejections, although positive evaluations should not be allowed to warrant anonymous reports either.

If the price that the cause of scholarship has to pay is the refusal of some referees to involve themselves in a review process that requires their identities to be disclosed, so be it. In the long run, neither the body of scholars nor the advancement of knowledge will suffer irreparable damage. On the contrary, full disclosure of the evalua-