

assertion, no one can remain “beyond its seductions” (1161).

Unfortunately, violence has been with us since *before* the time of the *Iliad* and the Greek city-state. The Greek polis, however, tried to curb violence and to some degree succeeded. To be a *polites*, a citizen of the polis, was an honor and carried with it a heavy civic responsibility—to debate, to judge, and to vote on decisions that affected the lives of every Greek man, woman, and child. In fourth-century Athens, a statue dedicated to *dēmos*, the people, was erected next to that of Zeus Boulaios in front of the Greek Assembly, the most important political ground in the city, and as a result I. F. Stone wonders in *The Trial of Socrates* if democracy might not have been personified as a civic goddess had Athens had the time to develop into a full democracy. We citizens of the United States are sorely in need of the classical Greek commitment to public service and public values at a time when, as Rich writes, “the ghettos and barrios of peacetime live under paramilitary occupation” and “the purchase of guns has become an overwhelming civilian response to perceived fractures in the social compact” (1161). The Greeks of the *Iliad* are our ancestors, but not just for the worst as Rich and her poet friend Suzanne Gardinier would have us believe. It is a silly fiction to suggest, as Gardinier does, that we might be better off pledging cultural allegiance to the Mayans, the Mohawk, and the Iroquois (1161). She is simply reromanticizing the “noble savage.”

The falsity of an equation between making poetry and acting politically is evident when Rich quotes the poetry and notebook of Audre Lorde, a black poet. Enraged by the killing of a ten-year-old black boy by a white police officer in Queens and the policeman’s subsequent acquittal by a white jury, Lorde wrote a protest poem entitled “Power,” which recognizes the difference between writing a poem and acting politically (1163). In her notebook, Lorde wrote the following about the killing: “How do you deal with things you believe, live them not as theory, not even as emotion, but right on the line of action and effect and change?” (1163–64). To write a poem protesting a terrible death is nowhere near as difficult as taking action to demand justice.

In acting politically, Lorde joins George Oppen in the streets and not in the poetic pulpit. As theory, the poem hints at a life-or-death action that is not the poem and could never be. The poem is like the action, however, in that both come “from fearful and raging, deep and tangled questions within” (1164), and it is on this ground that I can agree with Rich’s assertion

that political activism is like making poetry. In both cases, these questions result from conflicts within culture that extend as far back as the loved and hated cultures of the Greeks and Romans, whose fluted pillars’ blossoming antique acanthus *still* lift their tremendous cornices on our and other coasts.

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Scholarship at Whose Service?

To the Editor:

Only *PMLA* could turn a column on multiple article submissions into a tortured discussion on censorship, loaded with the rhetorical excess afflicting most post-modern writing (Editor’s Column, 109 [1994]: 7–13). What bombast—“polysemy,” “plurivocality,” “monologic meanings,” “the imperial will to control” (7)—all this baggage in the service of such a small idea!

Rejecting multiple submissions is fine if that’s what *PMLA*’s Editorial Board wants to do. But does this policy decision have to be clothed in pages of abstruse rationalization, which, after making its strained point, *misses* the point? That point is made obliquely in the quotation from Ursula M. Franklin to the effect that scholarly publishing has become a service to authors’ careers (11n2). Indeed, authors (still) produce most of what passes for scholarly publication only to avoid perishing.

Recently returning from the business world to teaching, I have found the administrators at my undergraduate institution obsessed with faculty publication in refereed journals. Trying to oblige my bosses, I have written several pieces and submitted them to various journals. The pathetically slow pace of academic publishing astounds me. Two journals each took six months even to acknowledge receipt of the articles I had sent them. These pieces are now being circulated to referees, and I can only imagine how long it will take before I get letters of acceptance or rejection. Other academic journals have quickly accepted pieces of mine, but for publication eighteen months in the future! For junior faculty members trying to pump up their résumés for promotion or tenure before they are eligible for social security payments, eighteen to twenty-four months, or longer, is simply too long to wait for a piece of writing to appear in print. Nevertheless, a fast letter of acceptance is useful until an article can be published.

No doubt *PMLA*'s multiple-submissions policy is well-intended, but it is not realistic in today's world of fax machines, Internet, voice mail, and the like, where communication is virtually instantaneous and decisions in areas outside academic publishing are made immediately. Who can wait a year, or two years, after sending an article to a refereed journal before submitting it to another? Academics who will perish unless they publish must get their writing into print quickly. Multiple submissions are simply a "sellers'" attempt at self-preservation in the treacherous academic job market. While art may be long and scholarship longer, contemporary academic publishing is yet a longer and an even more excruciating process, apparently derived from, and more appropriate to, the hand lettering of manuscripts in the medieval era.

Censorship is hardly the issue. Quick response is. Businesses do not, could not, function as academic journals do. Only in journals is an indefinite response time still tolerated today. It's a luxury that few faculty members scrambling for promotion and tenure can afford.

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To the Editor:

Typically for this egocentric time, the new editor of *PMLA* cannot believe "that the purpose of publication was ever principally and altruistically the benefit of readers" (11n2). Such is Domna C. Stanton's reaction to Ursula M. Franklin's nostalgic essay "Does Scholarly Publishing Promote Scholarship or Scholars?," which finds that crude careerism is now the rule of the day.

We are not dealing with mutually exclusive motives. Of course one writes with hope of reputation and its benefits (sometimes very solid benefits), but those who do not put the reader and the subject matter first are liable to stumble as they dash toward their professional goals. While a true scholar may be defined as a person who is not in a hurry, the research of these numerous others may, as may their conclusions, be quick. Their style is likely to be obfuscatory, for being understood risks objections. Since they do not really care about the advancement of knowledge, they react with not always muted rage (in, for example, the Forum) when corrections or suggestions for expansion are offered; any questions raised are treated as personal insults, despicable and malicious assaults on

their amour propre, and monkey wrenches in their careers. An impersonal interest in getting things right is outside their conception.

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The Paradox of Censorship

To the Editor:

Agreeing with Paul de Man, Michael Holquist contends in "Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship" (109 [1994]: 14–25) that censorship encourages parabolic and oppositional readings that "specifically resist . . . what the censor wants" (22). My reading of his essay and of the essays that he introduces supports his contention. According to one of Holquist's uses of the word "censorship" (he says that an editorial decision not to print de Man's "Resistance to Theory" was censorship), the Literature and Censorship issue of *PMLA* "censors" the arguments in favor of censorship. Although Holquist is correct to say that censorship is "ineluctable," he merely concludes that it is therefore difficult to know "which of its effects to oppose" (22). For him censorship is always "repressive" and "vicious" (16, 18). People whose utterances are censored are always "victims" (16, 17).

Holquist renders these totalizing judgments while refusing to distinguish between different forms and occasions of censorship—by refusing, one blushes to say, to define his term. It seems that Holquist is against all the various acts throughout history that have been called by someone or other "censorship." At one point "censorship" is even personified—it "loathes" poetry (19). I can report that I do not oppose all that has been called censorship, and I do not loathe poetry. There is at least one exception to Holquist's universalizing judgments.

Certainly there are many repressed questions that his highly censored view of censorship might prompt in the resisting reader. What does it mean to rail against censorship for being repressive in a context in which one has acknowledged that we are always within power—that censorship and power are inescapable facts of social life? Why do the authors in the Literature and Censorship issue inevitably treat the censored author as a victim, without ever considering the ways audiences can be victimized by unscrupulous texts? Why are all the "victims" of censorship chosen