

Rischin notes that Ladislav becomes Dorothea's second love but not how the text subtly reinscribes the Vatican statue—a "reclining *marble*" of "*marble voluptuousness*" (186; ch. 19; emphasis mine)—in the process. For when Dorothea finds herself in a type of Ariadne "sleep" between a "repulsion from her departed husband" and a "strange yearning heart towards Will Ladislav" (whom she cannot yet marry), Dr. Lydgate observes that "Dorothea's *hand* was of a *marble* coldness" (476–77; ch. 50; emphasis mine). Throughout the novel Eliot's narrator repeatedly describes poses of Dorothea's hands that are reminiscent of the sleeping Ariadne's unusual hand positions—probably the most striking feature of the statue and evidently of Dorothea as well. Indeed, the second sentence of the novel introduces her "finely formed" hand and wrist as the primary evidence of her "beauty." This hand explicitly connects the statue and Dorothea when her "beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek" while she stands before it (186; ch. 19), as Rischin affirms (1128). It fits the thesis of the essay that, after Casaubon has died but before Dorothea is able to receive Will's love, she makes a similar gesture: Dorothea "took the little oval picture [of Will's grandmother] in her palm and made a bed for it there, and leaned her cheek upon it" (529; ch. 55). This reminder of the Vatican pose (Ariadne's and Dorothea's) follows a visit from Will in which he and Dorothea become statue-like, "two creatures slowly turning to marble" (526; ch. 54). During their next meeting Dorothea is set up against a statue once again, as she takes "off her gloves and bonnet while . . . leaning against a statue in the entrance-hall." And when Will is presented to her, he "thought that her face looked just as it did when she first shook hands with him in Rome"—the city where he saw her in front of *The Sleeping Ariadne*. During this meeting Dorothea suddenly realizes that Will loves her, but immediately before the realization she "sat just like a statue while images and emotions were hurrying upon her" (611, 612, 616; ch. 62). The verbal text continually reminds readers of the visual moment in Rome, "exploit[ing] that moment's dynamic implications" (Rischin 1124) in ways that Rischin has yet to explore.

Ekphrasis in *Middlemarch*, then, not only re-presents "the frozen moment" of sculpture while exploiting "that moment's dynamic implications"; it also imposes the stasis of a statue on the temporal flow of the text. As the narrative repeatedly returns to the Vatican moment, "it converts its chronological progression into simultaneity, its temporally unrepeatable flow into eternal recurrence." The words are by Murray Krieger ("The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or, *Laocoön* Revisited," *The Play and Place of Criticism* [Johns Hopkins UP, 1967] 105), who believes that the genre of ekphrasis

"institutionalized" the use of "an object of spatial and plastic art"—like the Ariadne statue—"to symbolize the spatiality and plasticity of literature's temporality," so that "the object of imitation, as spatial work, becomes the metaphor for the temporal work even as the latter seeks to free it from space" (107). To tie this insight into Rischin's thesis, then, one could say that the narrative of *Middlemarch* echoes Ladislav's role, foregrounding its (and his) commitment to the power of the word while subordinating the word to the frozen moment of visual experience.

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The Trumpeted I

To the Editor:

At an international colloquium in the Paris area that I recently attended, *je* made its appearance from time to time in the French-language papers. The European *je* was modest, slipped in by a subordinate clause. It seemed natural in comparison to the *je* that came out of the only American mouth using it. This *je* was trumpeted at the beginning of each major statement, constituting one of the "annoying and embarrassing narcissistic spectacles" that Sylvia Molloy seems to downplay ("Mock Heroics and Personal Markings," 111 [1996]: 1073). This example, with statements in the October 1996 issue of *PMLA*, shows that the current use of the personal is a matter of fashion, neurosis, dehumanization, and *nombri*lism.

When I wrote my dissertation, my director asked me why I did not use *I* in formulating the project. My explanation was accepted without comment, but it was clear from the tone of the question that I was "supposed to" use *I* and that its absence was disconcerting. The director gave no reason for this assumption; nor do Norman N. Holland (1147) and Deborah Tannen (1151) for their similar predispositions. All the "reasons" given in the letters to the Forum that advocate the personal are *ex post facto* rationalizations of a new fad. It is indeed "one tactic among others" (Richard Dellamora; 1161), a rhetorical convention (Jane Gallop; 1150) that requires no "decision" (Cathy N. Davidson, "Critical Fictions," 1072).

The fashion of the *I* is linked to a neurosis of our profession that comes from overconsciousness of the problems of language (our occupational hazard). Although it is a natural law that language can only partially convey what the sender wants to express, literary scholars cannot escape the urge to "put it all" into words. Tyrannical overconsciousness of the word creates false binary oppositions

such as the assumption that writers who do not say *I* “ignore . . . the personal” (Claudia Tate quoting Ralph Ellison; 1147) or “deny their involvement” in their own research (Deborah Tannen; 1151). These overcorrections are products of the fact that consciousness of language, once adopted, comes to dictate everything, as Marshall McLuhan argues in relation to any technology throughout *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

In most of the letters on the personal, the *I* has been theorized. In a garish paradox, the attempt to argue for the personal has resulted in its depersonalization in the concepts of pedagogy (Joseph A. Boone; 1153), of organizing principles (Carole Boyce Davies; 1154), of metanarrative (Sharon P. Holland; 1158), an outcome often buttressed by barrages of quotations that finish the beating of the *I* into a docile abstraction (Agnes Moreland Jackson; 1159). Instead of restoring humanity to the profession (Sharon P. Holland; 1158), the personal thus represented obliterates it. If the *I* is authoritative, authentic, or acceptable, why does it need such artillery to back it up?

There are those who argue in favor of the personal while attaining the universality that the personal is supposed to avoid (Norman N. Holland; 1147). Frederick Douglass is said to reach the universality of race through his *I* (Nellie Y. McKay; 1155); Joonok Huh wants to speak for the universality of East-West complexity by recounting personal relationships (1156). Karl Kroeber is right in saying that the “autobiographical impulse is in truth a contorted masquerade of its opposite, the loss of meaningful individuality” (1163). Meaningful individuality has been replaced by the nomenclature of the clarion *I* sounded at the international colloquium. *I* is a chip on the shoulder, a need to justify oneself, as David Simpson suggests (1167). In that shouted *I*, what is shouted down first and foremost is the object of study. *I* takes the place of Shakespeare, Čexov, Sarraute (which is why *I* refused to use it in my dissertation). Every time *I* appears, the great writer or work—the point of the study—disappears. Perhaps the researchers hungry for an “audience . . . nodding in agreement” (Stephanie Sandler; 1162) replace the conflation of scholar and scholarship (Michael Bérubé, “Against Subjectivity,” 1067) by the drowning of scholarship in the scholar. Far from being a vehicle for avoiding narcissism (Sharon P. Holland; 1158), the personal is a way of confirming it. Arguing for the personal is impossible as long as the advocate is looking in the mirror, and looking in the mirror brings no new insight to studies of Shakespeare, Čexov, Sarraute.

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The Teaching of Literature

To the Editor:

PMLA's decision to publish an issue on teaching literature was admirable and important (112 [1997]: 7–112). But as fine as the individual essays are, the issue undercuts its apparent intention. It will do nothing to change the professional ethos in which teaching literature or writing about doing so is scarcely rewarded—at least in major research universities—and in which “my work” almost always means research and writing as opposed to teaching. All the more reason that the shape of the teaching-of-literature issue is so unfortunate. It is something of an embarrassment that the official professional organization of teachers and scholars of literature could not—after a long period of preparation—gather more than two essays about teaching that it was willing to publish.

Obviously, the teaching-research split does nobody any good. It hurts the profession in the eyes of an uncomprehending lay public; it sustains an artificial and potentially demoralizing division in the work of the professoriat. In research universities the argument in defense of a heavy emphasis on research is often that one cannot be a good teacher without being a good researcher. Nobody claims that you cannot be a good researcher without being a good teacher. And there is surprisingly little literature about the way research and teaching interact.

By barely addressing that interaction or the major questions confronting the teaching of literature in the university, this issue of *PMLA* becomes not a step toward improving a difficult situation but a symptom of the problems. It suggests that, as serious as most faculty members are about their teaching, the profession still does not know how to make it a subject of study.

The issue devotes little attention, for example, to the way graduate training is still, with an increasing number of honorable exceptions, unconcerned about teaching, although most PhDs do not go on to research universities, or about the fact that the “teaching assistantship” serves primarily as a relatively inexpensive way for the university to provide writing instruction to all incoming students. Moreover, it barely touches on the ways in which the nature and subject of the discipline are now in question. The profession badly needs a new orientation toward the integration of teaching and scholarship.

Teaching literature is a subject, and a difficult one. Addressing it well demands scholarly and critical sophistication but also a clear understanding of how such sophistication relates to the requirements of the classroom—to what, how, and when students are most likely to learn. To write well about teaching literature requires