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EDITORIAL POLICY

THE PRESENT editorial policy of *PMLA* deserves a clear statement in a conspicuous place. That policy has changed somewhat through the decades, and it will doubtless change again. In the beginning there were articles on pedagogical problems. In recent years our journal has become almost a by-word for a special kind of literary research. Although past editors, in reports and regulations, have occasionally invited greater variety in the contributions, the policy of *PMLA* has in large measure been determined by—because contributors first infer it from—the articles actually published.

There are at least two ways of breaking this vicious circle. One way is to invite articles of the sort wanted from persons known to be capable of writing them. We choose to try the second way first, by breaking editorial silence and inviting all members of the Association to reconsider the function of their official organ.

We venture to affirm that *PMLA* should reflect the most distinguished American scholarship in modern languages and literatures. In our opinion it should not be a place for beginners to try their wings, unless those wings are used for sure and significant flight; and it should not be a place for established scholars to publish their incidental efforts, unless those efforts compare in excellence and value with the efforts of younger men. As the official Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, *PMLA* should publish to the learned world the most important work of members of the Association—that, and nothing less.

We affirm, moreover, that the distribution of papers in *PMLA* should reflect work of distinction actually being done from year to year, regardless of periods or languages. Thus, when literary or philological research in Spanish is at a low ebb, and research in German is flourishing, we should print many articles in German and (however regretfully) few in Spanish. When only a handful of scholars are producing really distinguished studies in American literature, and many are producing such studies in Old English, we should print many articles on the older period and (however regretfully) few on the modern. Members who feel their interests neglected by this policy can always alter the situation

by writing, and by encouraging others to write, articles good enough to be published. *PMLA* should reveal the best American scholarship as it is—not as it was, not as it theoretically should be. Equal representation is a tax on excellence.

We affirm that *PMLA* exists to encourage the advancement of literary and linguistic learning on the widest possible front. It welcomes new approaches to literary or linguistic study which are based upon sound scholarship, and it disavows any exclusive preference for conventional methods or for traditional papers on traditional subjects. Explicitly it invites important articles dealing with critical theory, the history of ideas, analytical bibliography, and American civilization, provided only that these articles have literary relevance.

While *PMLA* wishes to introduce to the Association new scholars and new lines of inquiry, it is reluctant to publish minor articles or highly technical studies which are more suitable for other journals. The editors also seek to discourage either brief notes (the staple of several other periodicals) or unduly long papers (unless these are unusually important).

Although *PMLA* is not a journal of *belles lettres*, and publishes nothing addressed to a wider audience than the Association represents, it insists that articles on literary or philological subjects should be written in a clear and readable style. This criterion should not be construed as an encouragement of florid or expansive writing. Space is at a premium. Documentation should be held to a necessary minimum (and footnotes are preferably typed, with double spacing, on pages following the text).

Every member of the Association has the privilege, denied to non-members, of submitting papers for publication in *PMLA*. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor of *PMLA*, 100 Washington Square East, New York 3, N. Y. Stamps need not be enclosed. Every paper submitted will be read by at least one consultant with special competence in the field of study, and by at least one member of the Editorial Committee. Rejected papers will be returned within about two months, usually with constructive criticisms, sometimes with suggestions that they be submitted elsewhere. Acceptance of papers may be conditional upon their revision in the light of specific criticisms. Papers can usually be published within nine months of acceptance.

Members of the Association are asked to consider not only the advantages of these services, but also the fact that these services are made possible by the unpaid labors of many distinguished men and women who generously contribute their scant leisure to the advancement of scholarship in America.

THE EDITOR
(for the Editorial Committee)