demonstration is whether it is meant ironically as radical parody or whether O'Hara means for us to take his critical practice as perpetual, rather than as "totalized," autolepsis instead. Either way, the relentlessness of the autoethnography, whether as critical or as symptomatic identity, leaves no room for the issues of American studies and of America as part of the world.

As I argued in my essay, this is lamentable, especially at a time when America may be the most compelling subject of study in the world, whether the world would wish to be so compelled or not. At the recent world congress of the International American Studies Association (22–24 May 2003, Leiden, Neth.), another American Americanist, as genuinely self-searching as O'Hara, asked her international colleagues from nearly forty countries when they would finally differentiate between American Americanists as American figures and as critic-scholars engaged in the production of knowledge about America. She then proceeded, unwittingly, in the vein of O'Hara's performance here, not only to rehearse the current American obsession with demonstrating "the Nietzschean perspective on identity, that one becomes what one is," as O'Hara notes. She also, much like O'Hara in pursuit of self-differentiation and self-justifying autoscopy, confirmed, simultaneously, the "truly prophetic Blakean critique, that one becomes what one beholds."

I have been trying to make the case for an international, exogenous American studies when America is not wont to see or hear anything or anyone but itself. O'Hara's response demonstrates the urgency with which such a project must be pursued—if, that is, America and the rest of the world are to continue to exist with any modicum of civility and mutual comprehension. Conversation, perhaps the most significant sign of humane civilization, is more than soliloquy, just as insight must amount to more than self-contemplation. Failing this, autoethnography becomes, at best, a self-contradiction and, at worst, a self-erasure that also rubs out the rest of the world. At a moment when we are compelled to oscillate between these two possibilities, we need greater intellectual responsibility and a greater commitment than self-pursuit, whether as critical identity or as cultural and national symptom.

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The Crisis in Scholarly Publishing

To the Editor:

I read the exchange between Lindsay Waters ("A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Books of the Members of the MLA from Being a Burden to Their Authors, Publishers, or Audiences" [115 (2000): 315–17]) and Philip Lewis ("Is Monographic Tyranny the Problem?" [117 (2002): 1222–24]) on "monographic tyranny" with great pleasure but also with real concern. I feel it merits an extension.

Lewis laments that, because "graduate students in literature . . . have faced increasing pressure to choose their special area and dissertation project on the basis of what they and their mentors know about the constricted job market," which is that even candidates for beginning assistant professorships now often need a book or the clear prospect of one, and because the most esteemed venues for publication, university presses, currently "favor books . . . on broad topics," "forces in the academic book market aggravate the shaping of the disciplines to the advantage of larger fields and cross-disciplinary trends and at the expense of . . . long-term programs of scholarly inquiry." Graduate students are not the only scholars affected by this situation: university presses' current focus on "books . . . on broad topics" "inclines many authors," not just graduate students, "to bypass the rigors of large-scale inquiry and sustained argument, [putting] our profession at odds with essential values of scholarly inquiry we purport to uphold" (1223).

Lewis's words came back to me during the last several weeks as, for various reasons, beginning assistant professors sent me forthcoming book chapters and journal articles, all growing out of recent dissertations, in my bailiwick of literary scholarship, Pierre Loti. I was dismayed to see how many mistakes almost all these pieces contained, most introduced because the authors, while they speak of Loti and "his work," have read only one or two texts in isolation and as many works of Loti criticism.

I am sure that the authors of these pieces have the intelligence to produce sound scholarship. What they do not seem to have, at least yet, is the understanding that such scholarship results from "long-term programs of scholarly inquiry . . . and sustained argument." There was a time when dissertations were designed to teach that; they were monographs

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in the true sense, learned in-depth treatises on focused subjects.

It would seem, however, that to a significant extent, and for reasons Lewis outlines, they no longer are. Waters laments the "monographic tyranny" of our profession, but the book fetish (his understanding of that tyranny) is only part of the problem. In fact, we now also have antimonographic tyranny, pressure on graduate students to produce a dissertation that can be accepted as a book but that, because of the nature of the current academic book market, does not require knowledge of an author's corpus as a whole or the critical work on it.

I do not mean to suggest that there is no place for studies that examine one idea across different authors. Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, more than five decades after its first publication, still stands as brilliant proof of the contrary. But Auerbach was fifty years old when he undertook that summa and was able to write from the Olympian perspective of vast knowledge acquired through decades of wide-ranging and in-depth reading informed by the rigors of large-scale inquiry and sustained argument. If dissertation directors do not instill that rigor in graduate students during the exercise called a dissertation, when and where will our colleagues-to-be learn it? If they are able to publish in respected journals and with distinguished university presses without it, why will they bother? Will the chapter or article on work X by author Y that entails reading only X and two or three works on Y, of which I have seen too many examples, someday become the norm in our profession?

I concur with Lewis's call for us to retain our valuation of "a substantial, exacting project of research and writing" (1222), but the results should not have to be published by a university press in book form to earn their author a job. Since monographic dissertations are no longer likely to get published, at least by university presses, departments should reconsider the pressure they put on candidates for assistant professorships to have a book (or two) rather than articles, so that word can get back to graduate students and their dissertation directors that a dissertation does not have to have university press potential as long as it has journal potential. Here Waters is correct to condemn monographic tyranny.

University presses might also want to reconsider their refereeing process. While Waters is right that departments should not relegate the judgment of a tenure candidate's work to these presses (316), the profession would benefit if there were more quality control of those broad field books presses are so intent on publishing. If a manuscript deals with the works of several authors, could these presses not arrange that there be readers who can pass valid judgment on the analysis of each work or author treated? This does not have to add to the already lengthy referee process; there is no reason why those judgments cannot be sought simultaneously. If university presses are privileging broad fields, could they not maintain the same quality control exercised when single-subject books are sent off to one or two specialists in that field who know the relevant primary and secondary works?

Like Carlos J. Alonso (Editor's Column [118 (2003): 217–23]), I, too, would love to save the scholarly monograph (as distinct from the not-too-scholarly broad field book), but until university presses change their idea of what will sell, I see this as a real challenge. Meanwhile, I feel a greater urgency to preserve the "essential values of scholarly inquiry we purport to uphold," which today's academic book publishing sometimes works to undercut.

Richard M. Berrong
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Reply:

That word *broad* crashes five times through Richard M. Berrong's letter, like trees falling in a forest, potentially unheard. Well, I hear you, brother, or I think I do, and I like what you said. OK, I accept the fact that I'm too utopian. But I don't think all that happens in the academic world—including dissertations and first books—should be market-driven, as if dissertation directors were only a focus group telling advisees what outfit to wear for the interview at the MLA convention or for research in the library. If this is the case, then indeed Henry Ford has won and Charlie Chaplin has lost. Oh, modern times! Oh, mores!

I represent the market, so I shouldn't be telling you to ignore it, right? But I am getting depressed dealing with young scholars in shock because they "did everything" their dissertation directors instructed to craft a product that would sell, only to be told by me it's uninteresting. The situation of young

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