

active role; but this—like Balée’s evocation of homophobia—is an opportunistic rhetorical ploy to arrive at exactly the same ideological effect. Dickson too wants to banish any discussion of the cultural politics of language as a determinate structure (for him, such discussions are just instances of “repressive tolerance,” “bad faith,” or “posturing”), but he does so in the name of a “post-al” politics that he somehow regards as “activism.” However, Dickson’s “active” defense of the undergraduate, worker, or person in the street is just another version of American entrepreneurship: it substitutes “actionalism” (a gut reaction to events, the kind of response captured quite “clearly” in Balée’s refusal to “swallow” my arguments) for activism (carefully thought-through practice guided by and subjected to the test of theory). As Lenin argues, “critique-al” citizens (the goal of productive pedagogy) will not be passive recipients but active producers of knowledge and will intervene “not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians”:

But in order that working men may succeed in this more often, every effort must be made to raise the level of consciousness of the workers in general. It is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially limited [i.e., commonsensical] “literature for workers” but that they learn to an increasing degree to master general literature. It would be even truer to say “are not confined” instead of “do not confine themselves,” because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough for workers to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known. (*What Is to Be Done?* [Moscow, 1975] 34)

Neither Balée nor Dickson engages my questions: How do retrograde pedagogues masquerading as progressives use the defense of commonsensical language (from the street, clear to all) to perpetuate the rule of the dominant ideology? Why is it that (as not only their own discourses but also *PMLA*’s interest in printing their intellectually vacuous and politically tired texts show) such an empty position (relying on “truths” that don’t need any argument) is so powerful? Who benefits from recirculating the language of common sense or, in Dickson’s words, keeping the “merry-go-round” going? By the way, if Dickson believes truly “radical” action takes place in the world and not in the classroom or the pages of journals, why is he reading *PMLA* and writing a letter to the editor, when following his own logic, he should be actionalizing in the streets?

DONALD MORTON  
Syracuse University

## Author-Anonymous Submissions

To the Editor:

Lest I be misunderstood on the matter of “blind submissions” (Editor’s Column, 110 [1995]: 985), I would vote on balance to keep the policy—if I ever had to vote on it. My point was less about the policy, with its obvious blend of positives and negatives, than about why I’ve not been anxious to send other essays to *PMLA* and about feelings intensified by—but not owing solely to—the policy. Also for the record, I should say that the question of author-anonymous submissions has not come up for me except hypothetically. Like many of us who have been around a while, I’ve not written a paper on spec (as the real estate developers say) for years, but I appreciate Domna Stanton’s challenge to do so. If I don’t ever get around to it, that will be one consequence of my current pursuits, which more and more fall outside *PMLA*’s boundaries.

BLISS CARNOCHAN  
Stanford University

## Today’s *PMLA*

To the Editor:

In a recent Editor’s Column (111 [1996]: 199–203), Domna C. Stanton uses “the data banks at 10 Astor Place” (199) to expose the popular myth that senior academicians rarely contribute to our journal. She makes a convincing argument and supports it well, but a related question that I wish she had taken up is why, if our contributors are indeed of diverse ranks, *PMLA* continues to publish a narrow range of material.

We might better apply those data banks to the bibliographies of our last fifty published articles; we might search for vogue names—Barthes, Bhabha, Derrida, Fish, Foucault, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Marx, Said, and a dozen other venerable gurus—and calculate their frequency of appearance and, if we’re really slick, the extent to which they are trusted as authorities and the extent to which they are responsibly challenged.

We might then apply our computations to the texts of those articles and build a profile of vogue words formed of or related to *colony*, *color*, *discourse*, *Eros*, *ethnic*, *feminine*, *gender*, *history*, *homo-*, *hyper-*, *inter-*, *masculine*, *oppress*, *Orient*, *politic*, *post-*, *quasi-*, *queer*, *race*, *sex*, *theory*, *victim*, and *violence*. In the end I predict