

articles submitted to *PMLA* (356–57). Having recently served as a reader for a manuscript submitted to *PMLA*, I must report that I was shocked not only to learn that my identity as a reader was available to the author unless I put a check mark in a small box on the form but also to receive a copy of another reader's report to *PMLA* on the same manuscript. Shapiro's argument that readers should be willing to "stand behind their written evaluations" misses the point. I am certainly willing to "stand behind" any critique I write, in the sense that I take full responsibility for providing an informed, balanced evaluation of manuscripts sent to me for review (I serve on the editorial boards of two scholarly journals), but I fail to see what purpose it would serve for authors to know which specific individuals have recommended acceptance or rejection of their manuscripts. Indeed, despite the hordes that descend on MLA meetings each December, the academic world is actually quite small; and whereas we might like to think that, as academics, we are above the common herd in our ability to be objective and to take criticism, in reality we can all cite instances of professional jealousies and vindictiveness.

But to return to the Leonardi article. When I read the abstract, I initially thought the article might be a parody of academic discourse, and this did not disturb me, for we are apt to take ourselves far too seriously sometimes. Upon reading the article, however, I found it a graceful, intelligent reading of texts that raises significant issues of gender, style, and community, and I particularly appreciate Leonardi's overt challenge to male colleagues who might find her "feminine interest" in cookbooks and recipes cause for an erosion of her credibility. Thanks, *PMLA*, for having the courage to publish this piece.

NANCY WALKER
Vanderbilt University

To the Editor:

When I casually perused the table of contents in the May issue of *PMLA*, my eyes were instantly drawn to Susan J. Leonardi's "Recipes for Reading." I concocted several possibilities to explain the presence of what seemed a zany piece in your typically staid, dignified publication: "the editors have gone mad"; "this must be the April issue and it's an April Fools' Day joke"; "they got mixed up and bound the wrong innards inside these se-date *PMLA* covers."

Keeping an open mind, I went into class to proctor an hour-long examination, during which I read the Leonardi contribution. I was absolutely dazzled by it. The piece is brilliant in every respect, combining valuable information on literary embedding with feminist matters, with issues of kinship, with an analysis of symbolism, and with all sorts of other choice matters that I gleaned on my second and third readings of the piece, which is now begin-

ning to look ragged from the use I have given it. Besides all else the article accomplishes, it shows by subtle example the very sorts of techniques its author comments on.

I have wheedled a number of my colleagues into promising to read this article at once; a few of them already have done so, and we have had more spirited discussions over the piece than I have had over anything in *PMLA* since Dorothy Bethurum and Sister Amelia Klenke were locked in mortal combat for several years in the letters-to-the-Editor pages back in the far reaches of my dimmest memory.

It is a credit to the journal that it is willing to take a chance on a contribution as far out of the ordinary as Leonardi's contribution is.

R. BAIRD SHUMAN
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

To the Editor:

The Editorial Board is to be congratulated for its breadth of vision in approving for publication Susan J. Leonardi's excellent essay. Seldom have methodology, form, style, and content been so beautifully integrated in an article for *PMLA*, the first one I have *wanted* to read in ten years. It is an impressive tour de force.

There are many of us in the profession who believe that the *whole* of our culture deserves scrutiny and that the definition of a literary text should be expanded beyond the traditional genres and the narrow confines of the canon. Leonardi demonstrates the rewards of examining what some consider to be the ephemeral corners of our culture.

I suspect the methodology of studying embedded discourse helped win approval, but we will take what small foothold we can. I hope that her article's acceptance is a sign of things to come and that *PMLA* can become an essential text itself once more.

M. THOMAS INGE
Randolph-Macon College

To the Editor:

The May issue of *PMLA* arrived as a welcome interruption of my plans for a small dinner party. I've mastered only two entrées—coq au vin and flounder almandine—and flounder is out of season, while my wine sauce is probably too heavy for springtime. So I was happy to postpone the decision and turn to Susan J. Leonardi's "Recipes for Reading." Its exposition of the "almost prototypical feminine activity" of recipe sharing (343) and the ways that activity is reflected in both cookbooks and novels is as entertaining as it is illuminating, and it even helped me in my dinner plans. For it engendered a nagging defensiveness that led me to remember