

in *Mapp and Lucia* that Benson was referring primarily not to 2 Samuel but to *Mill on the Floss*. Besides, he quotes not David's original but Eliot's revision. Thus I don't really understand the point Ruth apRoberts is making here. If anything, she seems to add support to my argument: Eliot, in her omission of the "in life and" from David's "In life and in death they were not divided" underscores the gender issue—Tom and Maggie cannot be united "in life" largely because, as the text frequently asserts, Tom has been raised to be a man and Maggie to be a woman. *Sharing*—with its Old English roots and distinguished history—was a word much used in my Italian Catholic family of seven and in the families of ten and twelve that peppered my childhood environment. That the word has become a popular piece of psychobabble and the target for blasters of such does not, I hope, render it useless. At the root of apRobert's critique seems to be a fear of canon expansion that I, obviously, do not share. Learning to appreciate Thai, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Afghan, and Mexican food has not at all lessened my love for the pasta I ate at grandmother's house (though it has, I admit, made large slabs of beef less appealing).

Thanks to all the respondents—those whose letters appear here and those who wrote to me personally—for the numerous culinary and bibliographic suggestions (like Mark Dunphy's wonderful quote from Plath's journal), the tempting embedded recipes (all of which I intend to try, all of which I will gladly share), and the delicious praise, in which I am still reveling.

SUSAN J. LEONARDI
University of Maryland, College Park

Letters and Submissions

To the Editor:

It's easy to sympathize with Dwight Purdy's disgust regarding the reply by twenty-four feminist academics to Richard Levin's essay (104 [1989]: 357). What comes to mind is the familiar joke "How many X's [supply your own genus] does it take to change a lightbulb?" In the present instance, how many literary academics does it take to produce a crudely conceived, ineptly contrived expression of totalitarianism?

Nevertheless, I need to disagree with Purdy, because I don't see why the *PMLA* editorial board should serve as a filter to protect some of our colleagues from their self-destructive impulse to tell us exactly who and what they are. Indeed, documents like this would serve very well as educative handouts to undergraduates for defining *in concreto* the meaning of "hegemony." For if evidence was needed, such documents enact the steps through which yesterday's pariahs become today's tyrannical hegemonists. Wounded and caterwauling (with some

justification) when powerless, they quickly become whining capitalists engaged in hostile buyouts of dissent once they arrive at a degree of power approaching monopoly. (Only a glance at the book exhibit in New Orleans was needed to reveal where the power now really lies.)

In the light of Barbara Herrnstein Smith's Presidential Address, with its defensive whitewashing of academia's stewardship of the humanities, letters like the ones Purdy deplores become all the more crucial as counterinstances. Deprived of these blatant demonstration cases, we might too readily succumb to Smith's upbeat cheerleading. One doesn't, after all, have to be Lynne Cheney to feel that everything is not perfectly right with the humanities. In fact, this morning when I opened up the Fall 1988 issue of *Telos*, which features an essay on "reinterpreting 1968" and the New Left, it wasn't necessary to go beyond the first page of text to discover that journal's assessment of "oppositional" academia: "Worse yet, the original emancipatory intentions have now frozen into a self-righteous moralism which, dogmatically identified with their self-serving translations [of the New Left's original impulses], today perpetuate the same structural dysfunctions they were meant to eliminate" (3).

HAROLD FROMM
North Barrington, Illinois

To the Editor:

I'm sure many people think the Forum is one of the best parts of *PMLA*. I've had much fun reading it, especially in the past few years. Some readers, perhaps, would like to see more restraint in the letters. Evidently outraged at an earlier letter signed by twenty-four people, Dwight H. Purdy recommends in the May 1989 issue, "Treat letters like submissions" (357). Don't take his advice! Were Purdy's plans implemented, I'm afraid the Forum would lose all its energy, spontaneity, and boldness. Do we, really, want our letters pages to resemble the Letters to the Editor section of the good, gray *New York Times*?

J. T. SCANLAN
Providence College