

senior scholars who continue to serve as outside readers. As examples, George Economou called mine “the most original and provocative [essay] on Chaucer I have read for some time in any form or source,” and Hamlin Hill said that my investigation of Mark Twain’s use of Malory “is original [. . .] energetic and witty; and [. . .] adds a new element to our understanding of the metamorphosis of the genial humorist into the bitter misanthrope.” After I publish such rejected articles in other refereed journals, I thank each *PMLA* reader by sending an offprint and by sharing hope that reports of the death of genuine literary scholarship are greatly exaggerated.

Betsy Bowden

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“Globalizing Literary Study”

TO THE EDITOR:

Carlos J. Alonso’s plainspoken and persuasive Editor’s Column in the January issue seeks an explanation for the decline in the number of unsolicited articles submitted to *PMLA* (“Lost Moorings—*PMLA* and Its Audience,” 116 [2001]: 9–15). He discovers several plausible explanations. I wish to suggest that one of the articles he and Giles Gunn chose to include in that inaugural issue of his editorship could well discourage potential contributors “concerned with the study of literature and language” (A Statement of Editorial Policy).

Edward W. Said’s “Globalizing Literary Study” neither mentions nor discusses any literary work (116 [2001]: 64–68). The first part of the article decries the “Eurocentric mode” of literary study “grounded in the European and North Atlantic world of the classics, the church, and the empire, their tradition, languages, and masterworks, plus of course the whole apparatus of canonicity, synthesis, and centrality.” Said favors scholars “attuned to the non-European, genderized, decolonized, and decentered energies and currents of our time” (65). Isn’t the passage intended as parody? Alas, no. Consequently, all these clamoring catchwords call for close scrutiny, especially the widely used and abused “Eurocentric.”

Said knows as well as any of us that European culture has successfully traced its origins and its ideals to the Greco-Roman world and to the Judeo-Christian world—to Mediterranean culture and to

Near Eastern culture. The Tanakh and the New Testament do not belong to Europe or to the North Atlantic world. European history reaches deep into Asia Minor and encompasses a long series of renaissances, revivals, and reawakenings of those origins. The most recent was provoked by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls—not in Europe and not in a European language. The suffix *-centric* combines uneasily with Europe; that region developed a remarkably open and eclectic culture, which has turned outward as much as it has turned inward. “Eurocentrism” is a polemical misnomer ill-suited to the analysis of our history and literature.

The second part of Said’s article advances a harsh criticism of United States foreign policy since World War II. He cites the writings of Noam Chomsky to certify the “facts” on which he builds his case. This ideological declaration almost buries a few promising points near the end about the separation in Europe of science from the humanities and of aesthetics from politics.

Said is capable of writing eloquently on literature and literary works. “Globalizing Literary Study,” however, sets a poor example for potential contributors to what Alonso calls the “flagship journal” of an association devoted to language and literature (12). Whether Said’s article was solicited or unsolicited, Alonso would have exercised better editorial judgment in the first number of his term by declining so hackneyed a piece of writing.

Roger Shattuck

Lincoln, VT

Reply:

Roger Shattuck has no grasp of the facts. He doesn’t seem to have taken in that my article, which he invidiously says Carlos Alonso “chose” for publication, was part of a panel at the 1998 MLA convention convened by Giles Gunn, author with Stephen Greenblatt of an MLA-commissioned book on new directions in literary study, *Redrawing the Boundaries*. Gunn himself entitled the panel “Globalizing Literary Study,” hence—since I was a member of the panel along with Greenblatt, Rey Chow, and Homi Bhabha—the title of my presentation, which in its published form appears in *PMLA*.

Poorly informed about elementary matters, Shattuck proceeds to complain petulantly that I don’t