> much talk to-day about Criticism as a science and an art. Most of this talk, even when professional critics are the speakers, is deeply imbued with scepticism. (*On Writing and Writers*, ed. George Gordon, 1926, Freeport: Books for Libraries, 1968, 215)

Raleigh, I might add, was venting his antiprofessional feelings specifically against George Saintsbury's history of criticism and Joel E. Spingarn's promulgation of a "New Criticism."

Or note these lines written nearly forty years later, by Helen Gardner, who, attacking a later, quite unrelated New Criticism, looks back nostalgically to an earlier, "non-professional" form of criticism that had no specialized vocabulary or scientific pretensions:

> The notion that anybody with natural taste, some experience of life, a decent grounding in the classics, and the habit of wide reading can talk profitably on English Literature is highly unfashionable. The cynic might point to other more sinister signs of professionalism: the esoteric and almost unintelligible vocabulary of some critics; the appearance of a Dictionary of Critical Terms, comparable to a legal or medical dictionary; the embittered quarrels of rival sects, ranged under banners whose significance the lay mind can hardly appreciate. (*The Business of Criticism*, Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford UP, 1959, 3)

In case the graduate student I mentioned in my introduction succeeds in instituting that movement she called the "new essentialism" (407), Mitchell should not be surprised to see the movement's adherents engaging in a variety of professional activities—composing manifestos; holding conferences; founding a journal; arranging talks, grants, publication contracts, and jobs for fellow members of the group; and, not the least of their endeavors, vociferously attacking the theory generation. Nor should he be surprised to find the new essentialists themselves attacked for some imputed neglect of humane values.

HERBERT LINDENBERGER
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To the Editor:

Congratulations on the excellent May issue, which arrived, providentially, as I was finally emerging from my own studies into a consciousness of a higher curiosity—in other words, it arrived when I had time to read it. I began with the last essay (David Kaufmann, "The Profession of Theory," 519–30), as is my habit, only to surmise that the best wine must have been saved till the end of the feast. However, encouraged to look further—all the way to the first essay—I discovered a classic (Victor Brombert, "Mediating the Work: Or, The Legitimate Aims of Criticism," 391–97). My considered opinion is that this issue deserves a permanent place in my library.

JEANNE McPHEE
Gulf Breeze, FL

A 1951 Dialogue on Interpretation

To the Editor:

Herbert Lindenberger and the *PMLA* Editorial Board have shown by their selection of "A 1951 Dialogue on Interpretation: Emil Staiger, Martin Heidegger, Leo Spitzer" (105 [1990]: 409–35) that critical readings by distinguished scholars can lead to stimulating ideological and methodological discussion, even if a comparatively obscure eight-line text by a nineteenth-century German author like Eduard Mörike is involved. Parallels can only be found in the analysis of such famous poems as Goethe's "Wandrers Nachtlied," Baudelaire's "Les chats," and Gerard Manley Hopkins's "The Windhover." Lindenberger does not specially emphasize the problem of translation, but it is a crucial issue here. Idiomatic formulas (e.g., in a letter, "Hochverehrter Herr Heidegger" 'highly esteemed Mr. Heidegger') cannot be idiomatically translated. In the use of critical language as discussed (411), the German term *Literaturwissenschaft*, referring to the discipline and field, can only be rendered idiomatically in English by "literary scholarship," the term for the activity; this fact seems paradoxical, but it is true. In the translation of poetry, the theme (topic)–rheme (comment) structure, or the semantic progression of the content and the motivic texture, can be easily rendered, but rarely features of expression like meter, rhyme, "sound symbolism," alliteration (e.g., line 10 of Mörike's poem: "schön . . . selig . . . scheint . . . selbst"). The semantic ranges of equivalent words in two languages are rarely identical: our key word *scheint* versus English "shines" or "seems" is an extreme case and is complicated by the grammatical ambiguity of *selig* 'blissful, blissfully,' by the semantic linkage of *selig* to eternal bliss after death, and by the special meaning of *scheint* in Mörike's Swabian area as "exhibits splendor" (Spitzer's discovery).

I was surprised not to find in the selection and in Lindenberger's comments any reference to a fourth distinguished critical reader: my late colleague Heinz Politzer, who criticized interpretations by Staiger, Spitzer, and Heidegger and also quoted additional readers like