
Forum

PMLA invites members of the association to submit letters, typed and double-spaced, commenting on articles in previous issues or matters of general scholarly or critical interest. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit Forum contributions and offers the authors discussed an opportunity to reply to the letters published. The journal omits titles before persons' names, discourages footnotes, and regrets that it cannot consider any letter of more than 1,000 words. Letters should be addressed to PMLA Forum, Modern Language Association, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003-6981.

The Last Taboo in PMLA

To the Editor:

Isn't it about time to eliminate the last taboo that's inhibiting the self-expression of contributors to this learned journal and others? For some years now we've been allowed to discuss sexual practices in our articles, and even to mention the organs of generation, so long as they're given polite names. And it's now all right to put a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, which we're also permitted to put a preposition at the end of. There's no longer a rule against using the first-person singular pronoun, and when I refer to my colleagues I don't have to—in fact I'm told not to—include the academic titles that they've worked so hard to acquire. We won't see *ibid.* in footnotes anymore, and we'll never encounter another roman numeral designating the volume of a journal in the *MLA International Bibliography*. Each of these changes, we'd been warned, would mean a serious lowering of professional standards, but you'll see that the profession hasn't collapsed yet. So why can't we use contractions on the pages of *PMLA*?

RICHARD LEVIN

State University of New York, Stony Brook

The Medieval Kiss

To the Editor:

I found Glenn Burger's "Kissing the Pardoner" (107 [1992]: 1143–56) sorely lacking in the historical groundwork necessary to support his central assertion, that the public kiss of peace between Chaucer's Host and Pardoner had to be a mouth-to-mouth kiss. Logically, Burger ought to have been at least open to the possibility or even the likelihood that it was a different sort of ritual kiss—a *baiser d'étiquette* on each side of the face. Or else he needed to provide historical evidence in his article that men unrelated by blood ordinarily gave each other mouth-to-mouth kisses as public, ceremonial signs in fourteenth-century England. Moreover, Burger seemed to lose sight of the public nature of this kiss as the essay developed, drawing conclusions as though it had been an intimate kiss. And yet the line between