of the AHA. The problem of the function of an umbrella organization in a highly departmentalized world will not be solved by hiring a new membership director.

JAMES BENNETT
Northwestern University

LOUIS R. HARLAN REPLIES:

James Bennett and I agree that the American Historical Association should be much more than a club of academic historians, that its umbrella should extend over historians of all kinds and venues. To a considerable extent, he and I are reading from the same sheet music. The trend toward narrow specialization, though necessary to a degree as a means of advancing knowledge in our discipline, threatens the pursuit of common interests of the historical profession and also threatens the dialogue between various historians who have much to learn from one another. I welcome his and other suggestions as to how we may broaden the base and promote the common goals of our profession.

Perhaps there were sins of omission and lack of clarity in my address. To reduce my suggestions for change to a “public relations plan,” however, is a misreading. I suggested other changes, and the membership drive is a means to the end of broader participation in the affairs of the AHA. The AHA is already open, and has been for years, to anyone interested in history.

LOUIS R. HARLAN
University of Maryland, College Park

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

TO THE EDITOR:

The strong criticism of my contribution to Josine Blok and Peter Mason, eds., Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society (Amsterdam, 1987), voiced by Sarah B. Pomeroy in her review of this collection of articles in the AHR (94 [June 1989]: 724) calls for some reaction because it seriously misrepresents what I have written. First, Pomeroy thinks I have taken “a step backward in current scholarship on social relations in the Bronze Age,” but I do not pretend to say anything at all about the Bronze Age. As the title of my contribution indicates, I am after “male-female relationships in the Homeric epics,” and I argue at length that the epics do not portray any historical society whatsoever, least of all a Greek Bronze Age society. Maybe Pomeroy thinks that one must conclude differently, and that I should have been speaking of Bronze Age social relations; but I am not, and she should criticize my arguments for rejecting the overall historicity of the epics, not my contributions to a field that I am not contributing to. This also explains my refusal to use Linear B texts, a refusal Pomeroy seems to find unpalatable. Alas, she does not say what those texts are supposed to tell about male-female relationships, even if we would think that the epic society and the society that produced those texts had much in common (which I feel was disproved with the texts in hand by M. I. Finley a very long time ago). Surely, not again those palatial water-carriers or landowning priestesses that we know nothing about (but which I have mentioned all the same, with relevant literature)? We will certainly not find in the Mycenaean material any arguments supporting ideas about an early Greek matriarchy, ideas once defended by Pomeroy and now questioned by me; alas, she did not touch upon that matter in her review.

Secondly, Pomeroy states that my analysis of the epics resembles that produced by W. K. Lacey in 1968. Anyone who cares to compare my article with the relevant chapter of Lacey’s Family in Classical Greece will find that nothing actually could resemble Lacey less. I look at the epics as oral poetry first; Lacey does not bother about the particular nature of his source. Next, I try to elicit whatever elements of historicity the epics might contain by a careful comparative exercise; Lacey only provides a straightforward catalog of Privatiertertümer. In contrast to Lacey’s (in my view, unwarranted) answers, I have mainly asked questions: “just the right questions,” according to Peter Walcot in Greece and Rome, n.s., 35 (1988): 226, with whom I wholeheartedly agree, not because I think myself very clever but because these are fundamental questions about the nature of our source that have to be faced before we could even contemplate a study such as Lacey’s.

A minor point to conclude with: Pomeroy thinks the doubts I have expressed about the prevalence of endogamy in classical Greece are “surely disproven by the institution of the epiklerate, which compelled close kin to marry.” Now I did not overlook the epiklerate; in fact, I explicitly defend the existence of the epiklerate in epic society against those who have denied this. Of course, the epiklerate is indeed close-kin marriage but of a particular nature: it is an institution that makes it possible for (but does not compel!) male next of kin to marry a sole surviving heiress. I cannot see how this could possibly be used as an argument to plead for a prevalence of endogamy in general. Of the studies of Athenian marriage patterns by Wesley Thompson and Cheryl Cox, mentioned by Pomeroy in support of her position, the one by Thompson has, as she fails to say, also been mentioned by me and found wanting in comparison with other material, presented in one of my footnotes. What I am arguing for is care: care in handling sources and care in reviewing contemporaries’ writings.

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