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Iannone, Carol: National Council on the  
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# Iannone, Carol: National Council on the Humanities Nomination (1991): News Article 02

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## *The Iannone Nomination*

It is heartening to see The Post opposing the Modern Language Association's campaign against the nomination of Carol Iannone to the National Council on the Humanities [editorial, May 20]. The spurious charge of racism has been launched, and this level of irresponsibility typifies what is wrong with the whole MLA campaign. Still, The Post is unfair when it characterizes Carol Iannone as someone "who has made a reputation as a slash-and-burn critic." Anyone who has followed Miss Iannone's regular articles in Commentary is bound to be surprised by that characterization. Her writing is conspicuous for its carefulness and balance in a field where this is not always the case. Very likely, it is precisely this responsibility and moderation that so rankle her critics.

It is also misleading to assert that Miss Iannone has focused more on criticism than on literature. Much, probably most, of her writing consists of in-depth reviews of contemporary novels. But even if The Post's charge were accurate, there would be nothing wrong with discussing critical theory, as Carol Iannone has occasionally done. As anyone who even remotely follows critical fashions is well aware, the fashionable literary theories exalt the authority of the critic over that of the text. In other words, a text is held to mean whatever the reader wants it to. If to criticize the denial of meaning, as Carol Iannone does, is now "political" and "conservative" in the eyes of The Post, there may be a lot more conservatives out there than anybody suspected.

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New York

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