

as authorial warrant for textual integrity and for reading such sets as self-referential—that is, as designed to signify as a set. Externally, in the self-consciously literary tradition in which these two “foundational texts” stand: as additional warrant for the perspective of “trans-historical intertextuality” the cluster of essays advocates (Warren 286). Specifically, can Dante help with the many philological quandaries *Beowulf* continues to pose? The compositional strategies observable in these two examples suggest yes. Because for some matters of philology, to adapt Harold Bloom’s dictum, “criticism is the art of knowing the hidden roads that go from poem to poem.” *Mutatis mutandis*.

Thomas Elwood Hart
Syracuse University

“La Monstrua” on *PMLA*’s Cover

TO THE EDITOR:

In receiving my January 2011 issue of *PMLA*, I was initially pleased to see the cover illustration of the famous portrait of the fat Eugenia Martínez Vallejo, painted by Juan Carreño de Miranda for Charles II. One would expect the issue to contain a critical discussion of fatness (and the fat child), especially since categories like race, sex, and nationality are analyzed critically in it. Only fatness, it seems, must be a stable, modern category; thus, Eugenia is said to have been famous for her “obesity,” itself a recent invention (126.1 [2011]: 8). “Modern observers,” it is also noted, have diagnosed her as having Prader-Willi syndrome, a diagnosis that attempts to make us read the portrait with its indignant haughty look as only a representation of a modern disease (and, indeed, a modern diseased identity). Because this stable, singularly modern meaning is attached to Eugenia, other pertinent questions are not considered, including what her lived experiences were like as a fat person known as “La Monstrua”; how her fat body was seen as spectacular, even perhaps supernatural, as evidenced in the nude portrait of her in the guise of a Bacchus; and what some contemporary, alternative ways are in which her

body can be understood by a humane (Spanish) audience, as evident in the bronze statue completed in 1997 by Amado González Hevia in Avilés. Fat people are all too familiar with the way our bodies are used for a bit of sensationalism, but one would have expected more from *PMLA*, a journal that speaks for and to scholars who represent a range of languages, cultures, and histories.

Elena Levy-Navarro
University of Wisconsin, Whitewater

Spain’s Marginality in Early Modern Studies

TO THE EDITOR:

In the Theories and Methodologies section of the January 2011 issue, Margaret R. Greer, in “Thine and Mine: The Spanish ‘Golden Age’ and Early Modern Studies,” and Alison Weber, in “*Golden Age or Early Modern: What’s in a Name?*,” shed light on the challenges raised by Spain’s place in early modern studies (126.1 [2011]: 217–24, 225–32). As Greer shows, classifying the early modern era in Spain—a time marked by the words *thine* and *mine*—as its “Golden Age” problematizes issues of imperialism, economic expansion, and religio-racial difference. The period is well known for the pursuit of wealth and territorial power. Thus, it is not surprising that the picaresque novel—in which an antihero of low social standing tries to make a living in a corrupt society—was born in Spain. It does not astonish either that early criticism of the cruel and violent treatment of indigenous subjects resulting from capitalist expansion—writings later known as the Black Legend—started by condemning the Spanish enterprise in the Americas. The racialized religious difference among Christians, Jews, and Muslims also contributed to the formation of a unique territory that confronted its otherness more directly than did the rest of Europe. Spain advertises its own difference, but, as Weber asks, at what cost?

Both articles show how the term *early modern* has recently come to replace, or be preferred over, the traditional *Golden Age*. The preference for *early modern* calls for a revised reading of

the entire period. It also calls for an evaluation of how Spain's difference from the rest of Europe can be enclosed in a broader context. Whereas Greer delineates the evolution of the term *Golden Age* and explains how canonical writers came to occupy their places in the history of literature, Weber focuses on the implications of the term *early modern* in connection to other factors. Weber writes that *early modern* "favors other precipitating factors for demarcating a new age: political (the consolidation of monarchical power), social (urbanization and demographic growth), and technological (the introduction of the printing press)" (227). Indeed, the denomination *early modern* is an attempt to depict Spanish texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as closer to a contemporary audience, part of a nonending process more like José Antonio Maravall's *fieri*, unfinished and always developing, than his *factum*, closed and complete. Moreover, the term allows for a proliferation of studies in dialogue with other literatures through convergent theories and methodologies.

The inclusion of the three literary manifestos by the sixteenth-century Spanish poets Juan Boscán and Garcilaso de la Vega, which follow Greer's and Weber's articles in the same issue, is an assertive editorial decision (233–42). Boscán's and Garcilaso's declarations illustrate how artists' desire for novelty and fear of the criticism their inventions would attract produced an anxiety that cannot be apprehended by the canonical term *Golden Age*. These "little-known documents" draw a picture of how early modern writers approached translation and adaptation. In fact, the absorption of foreign sounds into the vernacular language, the incorporation of new ideas and values into Castilian culture, and the establishment of a dialogue with a European audience prove that Spain was experiencing a dynamic and complex modernization.

My objection to these articles is their omission of noncanonical authors. This exclusion perpetuates the practice that the field tries to overcome, keeping up the pressure on gradu-

ate students to write about renowned authors in order to find a niche in the demanding job market. It is justified, however, by the marginal place early modern Spanish literature occupies in Spanish studies. To engage a contemporary audience, then, it makes more sense to mention Cervantes than Francisco López de Úbeda or Francisco Tárrega.

Although the assertion that early modern Spain has been marginalized in literary studies has become a commonplace—one that cannot be explained only by our view of Spain but that also reflects the consolidation of theoretical approaches and the predilection for Latin American and Latino studies in the last decades—it is nonetheless true that early modern Spanish literary studies have experienced a degree of marginalization. For instance, the MLA's series *Approaches to Teaching World Literature* contains only four texts about early modern Spain and two about colonial Latin America. While these texts include extraordinary volumes on teaching topics such as the Spanish comedia and the picaresque tradition, there are half as many volumes dedicated to this field as to early modern English literature. Although I am not going to contrast the quantity or quality of texts produced by different nations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, it would be naive to think that England's literary production at that time surpassed the impressive and prolific literature of Spain.

I want to congratulate the contributors for such an enlightening group of essays and translations, and I hope that this initiative provokes a series of articles about early modern Spain in a forthcoming issue of *PMLA*.

Melissa Figueroa
Cornell University

Reply:

As the authors of "Thine and Mine: The Spanish 'Golden Age' and Early Modern Studies" and "*Golden Age or Early Modern: What's in a Name?*," we appreciate Melissa Figueroa's thoughtful response to and good summary of