

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*.

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“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.

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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