Editor's Note

A CLUSTER OF FOUR essays by contributors in the Hispanic field launches *PMLA*'s new volume year. General readers as well as specialists in Spanish and Spanish American literature will observe that these discussions reach deeply into territory that has no geographical limits, for while the texts examined reflect their distinctive national circumstances in some respects, the authors broach issues and adopt methods that belong to the literary and critical community at large.

It is fitting that this group of articles should be accompanied by the speech Camilo José Cela delivered in accepting the 1989 Nobel Prize in Literature. In honoring the Spanish author, the Swedish Academy was clearly responding, like this number of *PMLA*, to the vitality of Hispanic letters on both continents, as it did once again in 1990 with the selection of Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz. The fifth Spaniard and the ninth Spanish-language writer to receive the award, Cela has been a dominant force and a controversial figure on the Spanish literary scene for nearly half a century. In its citation, the Nobel Prize committee noted his "rich and intensive prose," his "marked fondness for experiment," and his "provocative attitude." It also recognized in his novels, sketches, and travel accounts "an old Spanish tradition of hilarious grotesqueness, which is often the other side of despair. Compassion for man's hopeless suffering is there, but tightly controlled." As an author often credited with the revitalization of the Spanish language in modern times and as someone who matured in an oppressive political climate, Cela quite appropriately chose in his address to pay eloquent homage to the word and to the writer's freedom of expression. We are deeply grateful to Camilo José Cela, an honorary fellow of the Modern Language Association, for his generosity in permitting us to print an English version of his speech in *PMLA*. I also wish to thank Joaquín Roy of the University of Miami for his assistance in this project.

The remaining four articles open up this issue to other geographical areas and to a further variety of important subjects. Kenneth Hovey examines the impact that matters French, and Montaigne in particular, had on the thinking and writing of Francis Bacon. In "Suffering and Sensation in *The Ruined Cottage*," Karen Swann discusses Wordsworth's poem in the context of the poet's relation to the literary marketplace. Fields of

interest—rhetoric and the classics—not often represented in *PMLA* come to these pages in James Kastely's "In Defense of Plato's *Gorgias*," a fresh and unexpected reading of the dialogue.

Although *PMLA*'s announcement of a special topic on canons garnered almost seventy submissions, only two survived the rigorous scrutiny of the consultant readers, the Advisory Committee, and the Editorial Board: Ignacio Navarrete's piece, included in the Hispanic cluster, and Wendell Harris's "Canonicity," which closes this issue but, provocative as it is, will most likely be a fresh opening rather than the last word on the subject. For anyone interested in pondering the factors and the very fate of the commotion about the canon, the severity with which the submissions were read and judged may in itself be a significant statement. Those of us involved in the process reaped our share of surprises, and we could not easily answer the question, Statement of what? I do want to extend our sincerest gratitude to Margaret Williams Ferguson and to Domna C. Stanton for their energetic support, their advice, and their sympathetic response to all developments.

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