Mutable Sex, Cross-dressing, and the mujer varonil: Understanding Non-Normative Sex in Early Modern Spain

DISSERTATION

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By
Rebecca M. Mason
M.A., B.A.
Graduate Program in Spanish and Portuguese

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Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jonathan Burgoyne, Advisor
Dr. Rebecca Haidt
Dr. Eugenia Romero
Abstract

This dissertation examines circulating popular beliefs in early modern Spain that addressed sex difference and the possibility of sudden sex changes due to fluctuations in climate and humors. These beliefs are articulated by authors of medical treatises and other texts that deal with human anatomy, health and wellness, and natural phenomena. Understanding how early modern Spaniards conceived of sex and gender is crucial for analyzing the reception and representation of historical and literary figures with non-normative sex and gender during this time period.

The central thesis of this project is that early modern Spaniards accepted the possibility that an individual might experience a sudden change of sex, and therefore understood human sex to be mutable, rather than fixed, and to some extent, spectral rather than binary, given that said sex changes were believed to leave an individual with vestigial characteristics of their original sex. Therefore, in order to understand how historical and literary figures with non-binary sex and/or gender were understood, for example, Catalina de Erauso, or the theatrical figure of the *mujer varonil*, we must take into account these beliefs, as they would have played a role in the reception of said figures.

In order to arrive at a better understanding of how non-normative sex and gender were explained, understood and represented in early modern Spain, I consider three different perspectives. The first of these are the medical and scientific theories
that informed popular beliefs about sex and gender. Many texts were published in early modern Spain in which these topics are examined at great length, suggesting the importance and relevance for the authors and their perceived audiences. The second perspective concerns the reception and perception of historical figures whose sex and gender did not adhere to a strict binary. The documents written by and about individuals such as Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes shine light on how they understood and explained themselves, as well as how they were understood by those who knew them. At various points in both cases, references are made to the popular beliefs found in the medical texts I consider in my first chapter. Finally, I look to theatrical representations of particularly masculine female characters, or instances of the *mujer varonil*, a popular figure in the Golden Age *comedia* who, in some cases, shares characteristics with the descriptions of masculine women found in the medical treatises as well as descriptions of historical figures with non-normative sex and gender.
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Vita

2009………………………………………………B.A. Spanish, Saint Mary’s College
2011……………………………………………M.A. Iberian and Latin American Literatures and Cultures, The University of Notre Dame
2014……………………………………………ABD in Iberian Studies, The Ohio State University

Publications


Fields of Study

Major Field: Spanish and Portuguese
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Introduction: Contextualizing the mujer varonil

Twenty-first century audiences, just like the audiences of the Spanish comedia, are undoubtedly familiar with the character of the mujer varonil,¹ or the manly woman, though they may not know her as such. While cross-dressing is certainly used for humorous purposes in modern film, theater and television (such as Lucille Ball donning a fluffy white beard in a rather unconvincing attempt at drag), it also comes in more serious forms, in which the cross-dressing arises out of a character’s genuine need, or as a reflection of her masculine identity. Examples of such characters abound, from dramatic films like Albert Nobbs (2011), in which Glenn Close plays a woman living as a male butler in 19th-century Ireland, to films for children, such as Disney’s Mulan, which tells the story of Hua Mulan, a legendary Chinese heroine who dressed as a man to take the place of her elderly father in the army. In fact, by early modern Spanish standards, even the characters of Margaret Thatcher in The Iron Lady (2011) or Lisbeth Salander in Stieg Larsson’s Girl with the Dragon Tattoo book trilogy, as well as the films it inspired, could just as easily be categorized as mujer varonil characters for their obstinance, intelligence and self-sufficiency, though they do not actually disguise themselves as men. Many of these examples are fictional, but none of them is fantasy—that is, they are plausible, if not

¹ According to Melveena McKendrick, the term mujer varonil “almost defies translation”; she rejects both “masculine women” and “manly women”, describing the mujer varonil as “the woman who is ‘masculine’ not only in her dress but also in her acts, her speech, or even her whole attitude of mind”, emphasizing that the term is used, in Golden Age Spain, as a form of praise, and not criticism (ix-x). Likewise, I will use the term to denote female characters who display traits traditionally associated with the male sex, regardless of whether or not the character in question dons men’s clothing.
factual, and we are never led to believe that the characters who accept the cross-dressing women as men are foolish for falling for the disguise. Furthermore, we, as an audience, are not asked to suspend our disbelief at the notion of a woman taking on roles that have traditionally been associated with the male sex, like athletes, soldiers or prime ministers. On the contrary, we are able to accept the premise of these stories because we believe that women can be athletes, soldiers, and prime ministers, among many other roles more commonly held by men, either on principle, because we believe women to be capable of roles traditionally assigned to men, or because history has shown it to be so. In other words, our knowledge and beliefs about the differences between men and women shape our reception of these characters. Moreover, as audiences of these films, we are shown believable examples of women who convincingly disguise themselves as men and/or enter into traditionally masculine spaces. These representations reaffirm our belief in the possibility of such behaviors.

The comedias of early modern Spain were rife with female characters who dressed as men or otherwise adopted masculine characteristics on stage. And, like our own perception of similar figures in modern entertainment, we must consider the possibility that understandings of sex and gender would have influenced in the perception and reception of female characters with non-binary or non-normative sex or gender. However, this has not traditionally been the case when it comes to scholarly work on the mujer varonil. The theatrical figure of the mujer varonil has long intrigued scholars of early modern Spanish literature who have sought to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the success, the inspiration, and the limits of the cross-dressing actress so frequently found in the Spanish comedia. In this dissertation, I argue that in order to come to this understanding, we must take into account many
contextual factors whose relevance for analyzing sexual and gender transgressions in early modern Spain will help us to understand the significance of the *mujer varonil*. In early modern Spain, we find the co-existence of popular medical beliefs, which held that masculine women were women who had once been male, and following a sudden sex change, retained vestigial characteristics of their original sex, and a plethora of plays depicting women dressing and behaving as men. In some cases, as I will show, the behavior goes beyond a temporary disguise and forms an inherent part of the female character’s identity. In these cases, we must consider the possibility that such a character would have been understood as a woman who was not, biologically, entirely female, and that her irregular anatomy would have caused her to exhibit masculine traits. This is not to say that she would have been understood as an aberration or a deviant, since, as I will show, such individuals were depicted in medical literature as the natural consequence of Nature’s whims, intrinsically linked to divine will. Before outlining the structure of this project, I will first explain the popularity of this figure in early modern Spain and present the some of the most fundamental pieces of *mujer varonil* scholarship.

The theatrical figure of the *mujer varonil* was popular enough that Spanish playwright Lope de Vega dedicated a portion of his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* to her, warning: “y si mudaren traje, sea de modo/que pueda perdonarse, porque suele/el disfraz varonil agradar mucho..". (17). Here, Lope’s words can take on a double meaning: on the one hand, he is alluding to the great popularity of the *mujer varonil*; on the other, he makes a subtle reference to the actual disguise itself—at this time in Spain, men’s clothing was more revealing than the dresses traditionally worn by women. The *mujer varonil* who dressed as a man was scandalous, not only for her
trickery and transgressions, but for the fact that she was now strutting about on stage in clothing that left her body much more exposed than traditional women’s clothing would have. According to McKendrick, between 1590 and 1660, at least one new play featuring a *mujer varonil* debuted each year; beginning in the 1590s and continuing through the early 1600s, Lope de Vega alone wrote at least one such play per year. Thus, the popularity of this character type and the frequency with which it was featured cannot be overstated.

In his *Arte nuevo*, Lope goes on to warn fellow playwrights: “Guárdense de imposibles, porque es máxima/que sólo ha de imitar lo verosímil” (17). The question of what was “verosímil” is integral in understanding the theatrical representation of manly women. I do not argue that the playwrights of early modern Spain, in creating *mujer varonil* characters, were imitating a world in which women were dressing as men left and right, incessantly challenging the limits of gender and laying the groundwork for Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender. Advising fellow dramaturges to imitate “lo verosímil” is not the same as insisting that theater must mirror reality, but rather, that theater must represent what lies within the realm of plausibility. So, while the *comedias* cannot be understood as credible documentation of historic reality at every plot turn, we can certainly speak of the expectation that theatrical characters imitated that which was feasible and believable. The question of feasibility becomes more important when we consider certain examples of the *mujer varonil* who went beyond the trope of a woman dressing as a man as a last resort for resolving a conflict, and instead are represented as masculine women, from the beginning of a play, until its end. That is, we should not be so quick to disregard the *mujer varonil* as a capricious, whimsical character meant only to
briefly entertain. Rather, we should keep in mind Lope’s warning to not stray from what is verosímil, and consider that perhaps the mujer varonil was not such an impossibility after all.

The history of scholarship on the mujer varonil is nearly as fascinating as the character type itself, since the approach taken by scholars to this topic is reflective of the context in which he or she is writing. It is evident, for example, that scholars writing on the mujer varonil in the early- to mid-1900s are, at times, appalled by the “un-feminine” comportment of mujer varonil characters. One of the earliest mujer varonil scholars is M. Romera Navarro, who published an article titled “Las disfrazadas de varón en la comedia” in 1934, in which she details some of the debates surrounding the appearance of the mujer varonil on stage. Much of the debate, as Romera Navarro indicates, centered around the dangers of allowing women to tempt male audience members by appearing in plays wearing clothing that accentuated their bodies—“con ropas tan delgadas que se transparentan las formas”—and to put the honor of the actresses themselves at risk, through their contact with male actors (270). On top of the dangers inherent in allowing women to participate in theatrical representations, Romera Navarro notes concerns over women dressed as men; since men’s clothing revealed more of the female body than women’s clothing would have—as Lope alluded to in his Arte novo—, the cross-dressing actress was an even more scandalous spectacle than she would be in women’s dress. Any threats posed by the mujer varonil, however, did not seem to diminish her popularity among
audiences.\(^2\) Indeed, as Romera Navarro states, various royal decrees prohibiting the use of the character in the theater went unheeded:

\begin{quote}
Y así, en la Real Orden del 1 de enero de 1653, tras ordenar absolutamente que “ninguna mujer pueda salir al teatro en hábito de hombre", se agrega, como comprendiendo su imposibilidad, “que si hubiese de ser preciso para la representación que hagan estos papeles, sea con traje tan ajustado y modesto que de ninguna manera se les descubran las piernas ni los pies, sino que esto esté siempre cubierto con los vestidos o trajes que ordinariamente usan, o con alguna sotana, de manera que sólo se diferencie el traje de la cintura arriba”.
\end{quote}

(272)

Spanish authorities, it seems, could do little to curb the appeal of the \textit{mujer varonil}; the best they could hope for was modesty in her representation.

Romera Navarro is conservative in her conclusions about the \textit{mujer varonil} and any possible ties to the historical reality of Spanish audiences; while she concedes that Catalina de Erauso was a recognizable figure during the height of the \textit{mujer varonil}'s popularity in Spain, she is unwilling to accept that there were other cases of women dressed as men, and insists that this theatrical figure was understood as an

\(^2\) Romera Navarro includes excerpts from a petition written in Madrid, to Felipe II, requesting that the 1598 ban on \textit{comedias}, instituted in May of that year, be lifted. The petition addresses concerns over the \textit{mujer varonil}, and offers solutions to the problems she presented: “En cuanto a que la muger que representa no vista el traje del hombre ni al revés, puede haber moderación, mas no se puede del todo prohibir, pues es muy vierto que a veces es paso forzoso en la comedia que la muger huya en hábito de hombre, como en sagradas y auténticas histories de estos reinos está escrito. Debe, pues, para esto permitirse, mas con orden expresa que ni el hábito sea lascivo ni tan corto que del todo degenere del natural honesto de mugeres, pues la invención muy fácilmente de hacer que el mismo sayo sea más largo y no tan costoso ni afectado de compostura lo que se hubiere de ver; especialmente no poco de todo se remedía con que estas que representan sean casadas con hombres de aquel oficio” (in Romera Navarro 271).
“inocente capricho” (279), concluding that: “La mágica doncellita del traje varonil fue un recurso convencional del arte. Autores y públicos la tuvieron por libre creación y fantasía del poeta” (284). Furthermore, she insists upon the implausibility of such a figure: “que una mujer pueda pasar por hombre lo impide la naturaleza” (279), arguing that all women have certain traits that would make it impossible for them to disguise themselves as men. The author continues: “Podrá una mujer española cubrirse el rostro con careta, las manos con guantes, los pies con botas de hombre, las orejas con la gorra y guardar silencio, y aun la denunciarán la manera de andar y los pormenores más o menos salientes” (282). Later, she concedes that perhaps some women might be able to pass as androgynous, but—offering anecdotal evidence to support herself—the only women she’s known who could pass as men would have been too old and unattractive to engage in such capricious behavior for the sake of love (this being the only conceivable motive):

Mujeres barbudas y de ronca voz he conocido yo, entre las del pueblo, que vestidas de hombre podrían pasar tal vez por ‘género epiceno,’ jamás por varones, pero siempre de edad madura, y aun pasada, para locurillas de amor. No, las lindas y seductoras doncellitas no podían echar las piernas a la calle con calzas de color y correrar por las plazas de Madrid como por los teatros. Las noticias que tenemos de la época no ofrecen base alguna—fuera del dato aislado y extraordinario de la Monja Alférez—para sostener que las disfrazadas de varón en la comedia tuvieron su prototipo en la vida española.

(283)

In other words, the only women who would have been inspired to don men’s clothing—to pursue a male love interest, why else? —would have been far too young
and attractive to actually pass as men. Ultimately, Romera Navarro’s article serves as a benchmark against which we can measure the progress of mujer varonil studies. Her comments belie rather antiquated views on sex and gender, and her omission of other historical figures who dressed as men or could otherwise be categorized as real-life mujeres varoniles—figures that I will examine at greater length later on in this project—leads her to conclusions that, in my view, are erroneous.

Three years later, in 1937, J. Homero Arjona published “El disfraz varonil en Lope de Vega”, in which, as the title suggests, he explores the character of the mujer varonil as she appears in plays written by Lope; Arjona finds 113 texts—nearly a fourth of Lope’s theatrical production—in which the playwright includes a mujer varonil (121). The author is primarily concerned with categorizing the different incarnations of the mujer varonil, and offers six categories that divide and describe the different motives for which a female character dresses as a man in Lope’s plays:

I. Cuando una dama abandona su hogar para seguir a su amante o a su esposo.

II. Cuando ella se lanza a vengar ultrajes.

III. Cuando se ve obligada a huir para evadir castigos o peligros que amenacen su vida.

IV. Cuando su carácter, excesivamente varonil armoniza más con el vestido masculino.

V. Cuando una dama de espíritu inquieto y aventurero se engalana con el disfraz varonil para lucir caprichosamente sus bizarrías.

VI. Cuando las actrices tienen que hacer el papel de un personaje masculino imberbe. (124-25)
Arjona concedes that in many cases, the mujer varonil occupies more than one of these categories but insists that, taken together, they accurately describe all of Lope’s mujer varonil characters. Of all that Arjona’s article has to offer, it is perhaps the fourth category—“Cuando su carácter, excesivamente varonil armoniza más con el vestido masculino” that will be most relevant for this project. Arjona offers María Pérez, of La varona castellana, a figure that I will analyze later in this project, as one of a few examples of this category. I do not believe that Arjona is suggesting—and neither am I—that some mujeres varoniles were so excessively masculine that they should really be read as male characters. Rather, in this category he acknowledges the existence of some mujeres varoniles who do not fit into the typical trajectory of a feminine woman who temporarily adopts male clothing as a last resort to resolve the conflict that she faces and that, in some cases, a male disguise permits greater freedom, both socially and physically, for the mujer varonil.

Arjona turns, at the end of his article, to the topic of the mujer varonil in general, no longer speaking only about her specific incarnations in Lope’s texts. He reiterates the criticisms mentioned by Romera Navarro concerning the scandalous effect of a woman dressed in tightly-fitting men’s clothing, concluding, as others have done, that it was this aspect that most contributed to the popularity of the figure. However, unlike Romera Navarro, Arjona is willing to accept that the mujer varonil wasn’t entirely inverosímil, offering cases—including but not limited to Erauso’s—of real-life mujeres varoniles;³ and concluding: “La existencia real del disfraz varonil

³ Lope nos relata con todos los visos de verdad el caso de una tal Feliciano que disfrazada de hombre estudió en Salamanca y se echó a perder por celos que concibió de don Félix, su amante. Hecho histórico y probado jurídicamente es el disfraz de Catalina, esposa de Lope de Rueda. Esta comedianta, según aparece de las declaraciones de los testigos que se presentaron
establece su posibilidad dramática dentro de los límites de la verosimilitud” (145).

However, while Arjona is willing to concede that the mujer varonil was not merely a theatrical invention, and that she had a place in the reality of early modern Spain, he does not delve into the documentation and reception of these figures in order to consider a link between the popularity of stories about real-life women who dressed as men and the representation of said women in theater.

In 1955, Carmen Bravo Villasante published Mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro español. Bravo Villasante offers two categories of this character found in Spanish literature—referring to the mujer vestida de hombre and not mujer varonil, though I will continue to refer to the mujer varonil, for practical purposes—the mujer enamorada and the heroica-guerrera:

La primera, muy femenina y normal, y la segunda, hombruna y de una anormalidad casi siempre patológica. Ambas visten la indumentaria masculina por bien distintas causas, ¿como que son opuestas! La enamorada en todo momento guiada por el amor, trata de reunirse con su amado para toda la vida y en su empresa no duda en habérselas con rivales femeninos y aun a veces en...

en el pleito que ella entablaría contra el Duque de Medinaceli, acostumbrada a servir al dicho duque en calidad de paje, luciendo el varonil vestido que el duque le diera. Igualmente histórica es la fuga de la duquesa de Chevreuse, quien pasó a España en traje de hombre a caballo, acompañada de un escudero. Miguel de Castro nos refiere en su autobiografía los lances a que se expuso cuando huía de la justicia con su amante disfrazada de hombre. Diego Duque de Estrada nos relata aventuras semejantes cuando el y su amada, disfrazada de varón, asentaron plaza en Milán, en la compañía de don Luis de Córdoba. El duque de Lorena huyó de su casa y corte en hábito de carbonero, y su mujer también. EN todos lugares y en todo tiempo ha habido espíritus inquietos y aventureros. Los biógrafos de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz afirman que ella importunaba mucho a su madre, pidiéndole que la permitiera disfrazarse de hombre y la enviara así a la Universidad de Méjico. Volviendo a la Península, sabemos que doña Mariana Alcaforada, monja portuguesa, sintió vehementes deseos de disfrazarse y escaparse del convento al igual de doña Catalina de Erauso. En las mentes españolas del siglo XVII, parecía ejercer especial atracción la posibilidad del disfraz varonil” (143-144).
hacerse guerrera. La guerrera, brava por naturaleza, abomina de su propio sexo, se queja al cielo de haberla hecho mujer, y ya que no puede variarse, intenta transgredir las leyes naturales usando continuamente el traje del hombre, que la dé apariencia de serlo y la permita conducirse como tal. Al contrario de la enamorada, la guerrera no quiere oír hablar del amor y huye de los hombres. (33-34)

Bravo Villasante locates the inspiration for the mujer varonil in Italian literature, noting also the tradition of tales about Amazonian women who eschewed marriage in favor of war and fighting. Additionally, she speculates that the libros de caballería, which often feature “doncellas en peregrinación por regiones remotas en busca de su amante o desleal caballero” and “hadas y doncellas guerreras que combaten para proteger y favorecer al campeón predilecto” (35).

Lope de Rueda is credited with being the first Spanish dramaturge to feature the mujer varonil, which he does in his play Los engañados (1567), though Jorge de Montemayor also includes the figure of the mujer varonil in Los siete libros de la Diana (1559). Likewise, as Bravo Villasante points out, Lope de Vega models some of his mujer varonil characters off of Italian predecessors, for example, in La Jerusalén conquistada, inspired by Tasso’s Gerusalemme liberata (66). Of course, not all of Lope’s mujeres varoniles are taken from Italian models; some, like La varona castellana are taken from Spanish history and others are simply a product of his theatrical creativity. While Bravo Villasante acknowledges some of the especially varonil characters in Lope’s plays, her interests lie primarily in tracing the origin and

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4 Perhaps the most famous example from Italian literature is the figure of Bradamante, who appears in Boiardo’s Orlando Innamorato and Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso. Bravo Villasante recounts the details of the trajectory of this Italian mujer varonil in her text.
inspiration of his texts, and less in an analysis of the characters themselves. At the end of her text, the author addresses the ongoing question of whether or not the mujer varonil was a reflection of real women living in early modern Spain, or simply an effective means of creating successful theater. Ultimately, she concludes that it was more likely a “bella creación literaria” than a reality of the times (184). In fact, she goes so far as to suggest that “los pocos casos [de mujeres varoniles históricas] que se dieron en la realidad fueron determinados por la influencia del arte” (184). On the one hand, Bravo Villasante seems to dismiss the notion that flesh-and-blood women were dressing as men in early modern Spain—aside from Catalina de Erauso, whose case she of course acknowledges, but on the other, she implies that the representation of cross-dressing, masculine women on stage was powerful enough to influence the behavior of women who saw the mujer varonil in theatrical works.

Bravo Villasante’s text was followed by an article published in 1960 by B. B. Ashcom (“Concerning ‘La mujer en hábito de hombre’ in the Comedia”), which criticized, among other elements of Bravo Villasante’s book, the inconclusiveness of her analysis and her unwillingness to make a stronger argument for real-life mujeres varoniles in early modern Spain. While I find Ashcom’s criticism to be excessively disparaging, I agree with some of the main issues he takes with Bravo Villasante, particularly those mentioned above. While Ashcom explores some useful elements of Bravo Villasante’s text, his article seems to be directed more at criticizing nearly the

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5 For Américo Castro, the issue appears to have been unresolved; in 1919 he wrote: “este tipo femenino, con matices y gradaciones variadísimas, tiene bastante difusión dentro del teatro del siglo XVII, aunque aún se ignore si se trata solamente de una moda literaria o si las costumbres contemporáneas influyeron en la concepción de los caracteres” (in Bravo Villasante 183).
entirety of Bravo Villasante’s work than at offering a productive contribution to the field.

Over a decade later, McKendrick published her aforementioned study on the *mujer varonil*, in which she provides a much more nuanced list of *mujer varonil* categories than what is offered by Bravo Villasante. In the preface and the introduction to her text, McKendrick repeatedly emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between successful theatrical tropes and the daily reality of early modern Spaniards, giving as an example the wife-murder plays⁶ so common in Golden Age theater (3) and the character of the *mujer varonil* (xi). However, she, like Bravo Villasante, is willing to concede the possibility that representations of the *mujer varonil* may very well have influenced the behavior of Spanish women:

It is impossible to conclude that the dramatists were merely holding up their mirrors to nature in their depiction of the *mujer varonil*. Indeed, art may have influenced reality. Many of the incidents involving women in masculine dress, for example, belong to the period when their dramatic counterparts were already well-established stage characters. It is not impossible that the theatre inspired some real-life *mujeres varoniles* to action or at least suggested to them the form that this action might take. (43)

Here, McKendrick hints at an issue that she does not fully explore: the significance of the representation of *mujeres varoniles*—who dressed as men, lived as men, engaged in battles of arms and wits and drew attention to the spectral nature of sex and

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⁶ In another text, *Essays on Honour, Gender and Women in the Comedia*, McKendrick deals specifically with the disparity between representations of violence against women in Spanish comedias and documented cases of gender violence in early modern Spain, challenging those who have drawn conclusions on the prevalence of such violence based upon its representation in theater.
gender—within a society whose model of sex difference left open precisely the possibility for sudden sex changes and women who “behaved” like men. While I do not dispute her assertion that dramatists were not “holding up their mirrors” and reflecting a reality full of cross-dressing women, I am unsatisfied by her failure to consider at greater length the likelihood of a reciprocally influential relationship between real-life and theatrical mujeres varoniles.

An additional shortcoming of present scholarship on the mujer varonil concerns the interpretation of marriage, which typically comes at the end of the comedia, uniting the mujer varonil with another (male) character, whether said character was a notable romantic interest of hers or not. The marriage is not generally represented, but is merely alluded to, often in a slew of declarations about who will marry whom, since nearly all of the characters must pair off at the closing of the text. It is often accompanied by the woman’s return—or promise to return—to female dress, especially if the conflict that necessitated her cross-dressing has been resolved. Frequently marriage and the return to female dress are understood as sufficient closure or “undoing” of prior transgressions, even in cases in which “masculine” characteristics are present prior to the decision to adopt a male disguise. These characteristics—namely a preference for violent or bellicose acts, inherent hunting and dueling skills, a general aversion to femininity and female gender roles, and/or attraction toward another female character—appear to be intrinsic parts of the character. Given that they are not simply another layer of acting necessary to create a convincing male disguise, a return to a traditional “female” role, which is indicated in the closing lines of the play when the characters pair off into (heterosexual) marriage, is not a guarantee that said characteristics will disappear. Furthermore, as I will
explain in greater detail in the final chapter of this dissertation, it is unclear whether or not we can assume that all audience members would interpret the allusions to marriage in the same way.\(^7\) Indeed, if the complaints of the moralistas are any indication, the effects of cross-dressing on the Spanish stage were perceived as anything but innocuous.\(^8\)

The scholars who have worked on the figure of the mujer varonil have provided extensive categorization of the incarnations of this figure, documenting and analyzing the texts in which she appears, and have offered crucial insight into this unique element of early modern Spanish theater. However, our understanding of the meaning and significance of the mujer varonil would benefit even further by taking into account contemporary beliefs on sex and gender, in order to gain a better understanding of how early modern Spaniards understood individuals with non-binary sex and/or gender, which is the purpose of this dissertation. In early modern Spain we

\(^7\) According to Catherine Connor, comedia audiences, made up of individuals from varied backgrounds, social and economic statuses, would not have necessarily understood marriage as the definitive end to a mujer varonil’s adventures. She suggests that such an understanding of marriage at the conclusion of the comedia featuring a mujer varonil is reflective of a modern bias and leads us to an excessively conservative interpretation. Furthermore, Connor argues that the conflicts and transgressions experienced by the mujer varonil could not be so easily undone by marriage and their presence in the comedia was more than simple convention: “To say that such conflicts are merely art, merely theatrical genre, or merely convention, is to overlook the particularly socially located and participatory role that the highly polysemic structures and conditions of early modern corral performances offered early modern spectators” (27).

\(^8\) Kathleen Regan notes that: “Los moralistas veían la comedia como una fuerte amenaza al establecido orden del sistema patriarcal. La queja principal de muchos era que enseñaba al público a transgredir las normas de la conducta adecuada” (287). Cross-dressing in theater was particularly dangerous because, as they argued, wearing the clothing of the opposite sex could cause one’s soul to also change sexes: “Lo que temían los moralistas…era que al apropiarse la ropa del sexo opuesto, se apropiaba el alma también…Esta perspectiva de los moralistas manifiesta un fallo en su argumento porque si el género fuese una esencia irrevocable, entonces el apropiarse de la ropa del sexo opuesto no tendría ninguna inconveniencia. Obviamente sólo se cambiaría la apariencia y no la esencia. Así pues, los moralistas rechazaban el travestismo por ir en contra de la Palabra de Dios y por pervertir el alma tanto de las mujeres como de los hombres” (291).
have, simultaneously, a collective belief in the possibility of sudden sex changes; a conviction that one’s (mutable) anatomy was responsible for one’s gender; a generally positive reception—at least on the part of the general public—toward individuals with non-binary sex or gender, due, I suggest, to the aforementioned belief that said individuals were explained by the one-sex model; and an abundance of gender transgressions represented onstage. While some instances of the *mujer varonil* consist only of superficial, temporary disguises, others, as I will show, involve *mujer varonil* characters whose masculinity involves much more deeply-rooted characteristics. These representations of the *mujer varonil* merit a consideration of their characteristics and traits that takes into account the popular beliefs about sex and gender that circulated in early modern Spain, which will draw attention to and help us understand the masculine traits that do not pertain to a temporary disguise but rather form inherent, preferment parts of the *mujeres varoniles* in question. In order to arrive at this re-consideration, I will consider understandings and representations of non-normative sex and gender from three different perspectives.

In the first chapter, I will look to medical treatises, such as the *Cirugias Universales* written by Juan Calvo and Juan Fragoso, as well as hybrid texts that straddle the categories of medical and popular literature, like Antonio de Torquemada’s *Jardin de flores curiosas*. While the genres of the texts vary slightly, what they share are authors who are interested in explaining differences between men and women, the mutability of sex, as they understand it, the the unstable, non-binary nature of sex and gender. I will show that these authors not only offer explanations for individuals with non-binary sex and gender, but also categorize such cases as natural, attributing them to Nature and divine will. I will also explain how different
interpretations of the prevailing model of sex difference yield distinct implications for the understanding of sex difference and fluidity of sex and gender.

In this second chapter, I will consider historical cases of non-normative sex and gender, specifically, those of Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes. I will use the documents written by and about these individuals in order to argue that the general public of early modern Spain was able to accept their non-normativity because of the circulating popular beliefs about sex and gender that I analyze in the first chapter. Thus, I argue, the consequences of these beliefs include tolerance for women who dressed and lived as men. This is evident in the fact that, for example, many who knew Céspedes understood him to be a woman living as a man, and yet did not seek the intervention of church or state authorities to put an end to this behavior. This chapter looks to draw connections between the information offered in early modern Spanish medical treatises and the reception of historical figures in early modern Spain whose sex and gender did not adhere to a strict binary. In other words, in this chapter I ask: how did circulating information regarding sex difference inform the attitude of the general public towards individuals who transgressed the sexual and gender binary?

Finally, in my last chapter, I will provide textual analyses of four early modern plays featuring a mujer varonil whose varonilidad goes beyond that which is explained in the categories offered by McKendrick. I will argue that these instances of the mujer varonil correspond in many ways to the descriptions of masculine women found in early modern medical texts. Furthermore, the most masculine of the mujer varonil characters are based on historical figures from medieval and early modern Spain. Therefore, I argue, their masculinity and gender transgressions had very real
ties to the historical reality of the audience witnessing their representation in the
theater. In this way, they cannot be written off as the fictional creations of a
dramaturge looking to capitalize on popular trends in the theater. Moreover, the visual
representation of these transgressions, and their basis in the audience’s collective
reality, makes the impact of the *mujer varonil* all the more profound, as it reminds
audiences that women could and *did* exhibit traits traditionally considered masculine
and take on roles typically assigned to men.
Chapter 1: Dialogues and Debates on Sex and Gender in Early Modern Spain

What distinguishes men from women? Authors of medical treatises in early modern Spain regularly attempted to provide an answer to this question. These authors, who more often than not, were also surgeons or physicians, suggested to readers that sex, and consequently gender, was neither dichotomous nor stable, subject to changes according to variations in the four humors believed to be found in the human body. As proof for their theories, they frequently included tales of individuals who experienced spontaneous sex changes, either in vitro or later in life. In their medical treatises, one finds a persistent struggle to understand and explain the biological systems responsible for distinguishing men and women. The interpretations and consequences of these explanations vary from author to author. For modern readers, it might be tempting to take for granted the apparent simplicity of the matter and its facile resolution; we are taught from a young age what distinguishes men from women. However, I would argue that it is an issue that has yet to be resolved, whose relevance continues to exist centuries later, and that, despite the scientific shortcomings found in these early modern texts, the implications of the models of sex difference offered by these authors are perhaps more closely aligned with reality than one might think. That is, while the anatomical models offered by these authors are far from perfect, their notion of sex and gender as non-binary is anything but erroneous. In fact, if recent debates over intersex women in sports are any indication, we have yet to fully explore and explain the matter.
This reality is clearly illustrated in the case of Caster Semenya, a South African female distance runner who was banned from participating in international track and field competitions over allegations that she was not a woman. Semenya took first place in the women’s 800 meter run with a time of 1:55 at the 2009 World Championships and was subsequently subjected to so-called “gender testing”, a misnomer used to describe tests done on hormone levels and examinations of reproductive organs. As it turned out, Semenya, who was identified at birth as female and was raised and identifies as a woman, has neither ovaries nor a uterus but does have undescended testes. While she produces much less testosterone than most men (about 10 times less), she does produce more than most women (about 3 times more). Medically, Semenya is intersex, displaying sexual traits of both male and female type. Not technically a man, yet prohibited from participating as a woman, she was forced to abstain from competing until the International Association of Athletics Federation cleared her to return to competition.

Semenya is not the first female runner to undergo such an ordeal. She is preceded by a series of women from the past century whose athletic accomplishments were thrown into question under suspicions that they were not, in fact, women at all. Eva Klobukowska, a Polish sprinter, won a gold medal in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics but failed a “sex chromosome test” in 1965 and consequently was prohibited from further competition. However, she gave birth several years later, calling into question the decision to ban her from competing as a woman. In 1985, Spanish hurdler María Patiño failed a similar test and was not only barred from competition but stripped of her titles and kicked off the Spanish national track and field team. She challenged the decision and was reinstated several years later, but not before suffering public
scrutiny and humiliation. More recently, in 2006, Santhi Soundarajan, an Indian runner, took second in the 800 meter run at the Asian Games with a time of 2:03. The following day she was whisked away for medical testing and ultimately diagnosed with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, or AIS. Soundarajan was stripped of her medal and banned from competition. Finally, in 2014, Indian runner Dutee Chand was banned from competition upon being diagnosed with naturally occurring high testosterone levels. Chand was told that unless she underwent surgery or agreed to take hormone suppressing drugs, she would not be allowed to return to competition. She has taken her case to the Court of Arbitration for Sports—essentially an international Supreme Court for athletics—to challenge this decision.⁹

The undeniable fact is that elite male runners are, by and large, faster than elite female runners, and allowing a male runner to compete as a female runner would constitute an advantage for him. But which “disadvantages” should be mitigated and prevented? Differences in metabolism, fast twitch and slow twitch muscles, lung capacity, and a slew of other factors contribute to athletes’ success; why do we only take issue with discrepancies in hormone production? And, perhaps the most basic question underlying this entire conflict: what is male? Semenya, Chand, and the other women I have mentioned are not. However, according to the IAAF—and the doctors

⁹ Chand’s case has been developing throughout the writing of this dissertation. In July of 2015, the Court of Arbitration for Sports ruled that “the level of natural testosterone in an athlete’s body … is insufficient to bar some women from competing against females”. The ruling has put into suspension the “hyperandrogenism regulation” that the IAAF had used to keep women with naturally occurring high levels of testosterone from competing. The court has given the IAAF two years to come up with concrete evidence that naturally occurring high testosterone levels in women leads to improved athletic performance. John Branch, author of the New York Times’ article on the ruling, observed that “[this case] is the latest demonstration that sex is part of a spectrum, not a this-or-that definition easily divided for matters such as sport. It also leaves officials wondering how and where to set the boundaries between male and female competition”. 

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consulted by this organization—nor are they female, or at the very least, they are not female “enough”. Unable to determine whether they belong in the category of male or female, and unwilling to recognize that this binary model is insufficient, IAAF has attempted to “resolve” this situation by categorizing these individuals as neither male nor female and banning them from participation in professional track and field competitions.

Despite the wide span of time separating runners like Semenya from the stories of sex changes circulating in early modern Spain, I have chosen to include it as an introduction to this chapter for the illustration it offers of the complexities and challenges inherent in our binary system of sex difference and gender. It is one of various issues that link our understanding of sex difference and gender to the debates around these issues that were ongoing in early modern Spain. In these modern examples one sees that a dichotomy of sex difference is insufficient when it comes to understanding and categorizing human bodies. One might argue that many early modern Spanish authors were also aware of this insufficiency. Moreover, in both these modern examples and the texts I will analyze from early modern Spain, the use of external characteristics in determining internal anatomy is a key factor. Much like the early modern authors—who labeled women who were particularly strong or robust as manly or varonil, assuring readers that such women had surely originated as men—, the accusations lodged at women who triumph on the track expose beliefs about the limits of women’s capacity to excel at physical endeavors, suggesting that only women who were not quite women could run so quickly. In both situations, women’s skills and traits, incongruent with beliefs about female bodies and feminine gender, call into question their femaleness.
These women’s athletic feats, however, are not the only reason for the accusations. Athletes like Semenya have been tested on suspicions that allegedly arose from their athletic performances, but a closer look reveals that it is more likely that the use of external characteristics, stereotypical beliefs about masculinity and femininity and an inadequate understanding of sex difference were the factors that led to these accusations. Semenya’s 800 meter time in 2009 was fast, but it was still two seconds slower than the world record—a substantial amount in such a short race. She was not forced to undergo testing solely because of her feats—had she demolished a world record by an extreme margin, this might be a plausible explanation for the suspicions around her sex—but rather because of physical characteristics perceived by others as not feminine. In our dichotomous models of gender and sex categories, in which categories of masculine and feminine or male and female are differentially defined in opposition to one another, that which is not feminine is understood as masculine, and that which is masculine, is assumed to be male. Semenya’s physical characteristics, failing to align with conventional models of femininity, were consequently deemed masculine, and a series of allegations about her biological sex ensued.

However, these characteristics could just as easily have been the result of the training required of her during her professional running career. Generally speaking, successful elite female runners seldom “look” like women; that is, they do not share many of the physical attributes accepted as feminine by conventional standards of female beauty. Intense training and high mileage cut down on excess body weight, which is advantageous given that a leaner, lighter, more compact person can run faster while expending less energy. Thus, elite female runners’ body frames are often
comparable to that of a man. In fact, some have argued that women with a smaller hip to knee ratio—that is, women with narrower hips—are, biomechanically, better built for distance running, which perhaps further explains why elite distance runners tend to share a similar narrow, angular build. Additional effects of high mileage and intense training include very low body fat; consequently, elite female runners are relatively flat-chested, have a prominent facial structure—sharp cheeks and jawbones left exposed by the lack of body fat—and often face problems related to menstruation.

Undoubtedly, many of the stereotypical physical traits of femininity are missing in this demographic of women. However, separating the effects of their training from potential external markers of “non-femaleness” is impossible to do simply by sight; concluding, as many have done, that such women are not female ignores other factors that might lead to this lack of feminine physical traits. Additionally, accusations of non-femaleness based on physical appearance, and to a certain extent, athletic performance, rely on a faulty understanding of sex difference as a strict binary. This is evidenced by the fact that many of the women I have discussed were eventually discovered to fall somewhere in between male and female. In this regard, the cases I have cited here differ sharply from those offered by early modern Spanish authors, who do not provide two mutually exclusive categories of sex but rather varying degrees of male and femaleness, and consequently, of masculinity and femininity.

I have dedicated so much space to the specifics of this issue because I believe that it illustrates a point about our lack of knowledge concerning gender and sex difference, or at the very least our refusal to admit that we are operating within a flawed system. The way that these cases have been adjudicated demonstrates the incompatibility between our paradigm of sex difference and the complex reality of
human anatomy. So, while this project is not a dissertation on, nor a solution to, the issue of intersex women in sports, I include this example in order to demonstrate that well into the twenty-first century, our questions about sex difference are not altogether different from those that were circulating in early modern Spain.

Nowadays, while some may be willing to accept that gender exists along a spectrum, and not across a binary, the thought that sex might exist in a similar way is incompatible with the very structure of our society, which is contingent upon the orderly division of human bodies between the categories of male and female, despite very real evidence that suggests that these categories are insufficient. In fact, a 2015 article by British developmental biologist Claire Ainsworth, published in *Nature: International Weekly Journal of Science*, provides ample evidence in support of the non-binary nature of sex difference, and asks for a re-consideration of our notions of male and female in accordance with the biological reality of the human body. Ainsworth estimates that approximately one in every 100 people has some form of DSD, or a disorder of sex development, more commonly known as intersex conditions (290). She goes on to note that biological sex also exists on a cellular level, and that “new technologies in DNA sequencing and cell biology are revealing that almost everyone is, to varying degrees, a patchwork of genetically distinct cells, some with a sex that might not match that of the rest of their body” (288). It is an undeniable fact that we still find ourselves grappling with what makes a body male or female and wondering what to do with the bodies that do not quite fit into either category, much as the authors of early modern Spanish medical treatises did. In fact, as I will show, one might very well argue that in terms of understanding sex difference, the explanations offered by the authors I will cite in this project are in
many ways much more aligned with the reality of sex difference; that is, they provide a model of sex difference that is less binary, and more spectral, recognizing and understanding the existence of bodies that did not fit into a dichotomous system of sex difference.

In this chapter I will examine a wide variety of texts, written and circulated during early modern Spain, that address the topic of sex difference and sudden sex changes. Some of them are strictly medical treatises, others are more heavily influenced by philosophy and religion, and still others lean more towards the category of popular literature, or literature that explicitly aims not only to teach, but to entertain. Despite these differences, I have grouped them all into this chapter because of their direct treatment of sex difference and the didactic approach taken by their authors who clearly intend to inform and educate their readers. In my analysis I will consider the multitude of perspectives on this issue and the implications that each theoretical stance carries in its practical application in order to better understand the dialogue occurring around issues of gender and sex difference during this time period. Additionally, I will look for intertextual references, finding points of commonality and dissidence among the authors who are familiar with each other’s work. In my analysis, I will arrive at a better understanding of how the categories of male, man, masculine and female, woman, feminine, were understood, explained, and carried out during this period. By examining the beliefs surrounding what made a person male or female; masculine or feminine; and man or woman I will be able to draw conclusions not only about scientific beliefs of this time period in Spain, but also about the ways in which anatomy was understood to influence social behavior and other traits that,
taken together, are considered to be related to, indicative of and/or constitutive of an individual’s gender.

The authors I have chosen for this project are: Juan Huarte de San Juan, Juan Calvo, Juan Frago, Antonio de Torquemada, José de Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo, and Antonio Fuentelapeña, all of whom lived and wrote in early modern Spain and addressed in their texts the topics of sex difference and sex changes. These authors achieved varying levels of fame and recognition, both in their time and throughout history, and consequently, their texts did not all circulate to equal extents nor have they received equal amounts of scholarly attention. Furthermore, the scope of their texts varies as well; some, like Frago and Calvo, are strictly writing about medicine and anatomy, while others are more interested in philosophy and religion as they pertain to the human form. I have chosen this varied group of authors and texts because it will allow me to examine a variety of perspectives on this topic and better understand the dialogues—plural—taking place on matters of sex difference and sex changes during early modern Spain.

What I am not arguing is that, as early modern science held, men and women are anatomically identical, save for the location of their genital organs. Rather, I want to show that, in our insistence upon creating and defining mutually exclusive, differentially defined—female is what male isn’t; masculine is what feminine isn’t—, binary categories of biological sex, we often overlook the outliers and non-normative bodies that defy such categorization. These anomalous individuals ultimately destabilize and call into question the extent to which our understanding of sex difference is adequate for the reality of human anatomy. In this regard, early modern science can perhaps offer a perspective on gender and sex difference that modern
science is only just beginning to articulate. I will use the theories, explanations and examples given by the authors of these texts in order to argue that early modern Spanish concepts of sex difference left open space for persons whose biological sex was neither fully male nor female, and whose gender—believed to be a consequence of anatomy—was neither fully masculine nor fully feminine. Furthermore, these texts clearly show that the topic of sex difference was frequently debated among early modern authors, thereby indicating the relevance, importance and interest that it held for early modern Spain. In comparison with modern western attitudes toward sex difference and gender, in these early modern texts one can find a certain permissiveness towards non-normative bodies, or at the very least, an understanding, based on early modern science, of the naturalness of said bodies.

The idea that early modern Europeans conceived of sex difference differently than we do is not new. In 1990, Thomas Laqueur published *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, in which he traces a genealogy of the western European beliefs surrounding sex and sex difference from Ancient Greece to the twentieth century. His text is a frequent source of reference for many working in fields related to sex, sexuality and gender in nearly any time period of western European history. One of Laqueur’s main assertions in *Making Sex* is that biological sex is a concept that has been continually constructed over time. It is a product of specific belief systems and specific historical, social, epistemological contexts. The shift from the one-sex model to the two-sex binary that is by and large accepted today, at least in western culture, which Laqueur locates in the mid-eighteenth century, is itself evidence of the constructed nature of models of sex difference.
In *Making Sex*, Laqueur posits that prior to the eighteenth century there was “but one sex whose ‘more perfect exemplars were easily deemed males at birth and whose decidedly less perfect ones were labeled female’” (124). He later explains that the key factor in determining sex difference is found in the location of genitalia: “creatures with an external penis were declared to be boys and were allowed all the privileges and obligations of that status; those with only an internal penis were assigned to the inferior category of girl” (135). The “one-sex model”, Laqueur’s term for this model, is more spectral than dichotomous, contrary to the sexual and gender binary that is later accepted. The male body, as it was understood in early modern western Europe, is the perfect product of nature and lesser bodies exist along a gradient scale that ultimately ends in the female body. Laqueur’s “one-sex model” is inextricably linked to humorism, a concept that I will discuss at greater length later on in this chapter, given that temperature was believed to determine whether or not one’s reproductive organs remained inside the body or were forced outside of it.

While *Making Sex* is undoubtedly a fundamental piece of scholarship for anyone studying concepts of sex difference throughout western history, by no means has this topic been exhausted. For example, the particular nuances of the dialogues on sex difference present in texts written by early modern Spanish authors fall outside of the purview of Laqueur’s study, which provides instead a much broader and comprehensive view of this topic throughout western Europe.10 Richard Cleminson

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10 In *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, Joan Cadden points out the heterogeneity of society, which complicates broad generalizations about what an entire civilization believed: “Medieval society in western Europe was not homogeneous: it was peasant and noble; north and south; rural and urban; Christian, heretic and Jew” (2). While Cadden is dealing with the medieval period in western Europe, and not specifically with early modern Spain, those same ideas can be applied to complicate Laqueur’s work. As I will show,
and Francisco Vázquez García’s text *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodisim in Iberia, 1500-1800* (2013) has made important strides toward filling that void.\(^{11}\) Incidentally, one of the criticisms of Laqueur’s work is that he takes Galen very literally, perhaps more literally than Galen intended, and even more literally than medieval and early modern medical scholars in Europe may have taken him; Helen King, for example, has drawn attention to the possibility that Galen’s description is merely a “thought experiment”, not meant to be a definitive description of human anatomy.\(^{12}\) However, the literal interpretation of Galen found in Laqueur’s text seems to have been the tendency among early modern Spanish authors as well, who frequently cite the same passage used by Laqueur, taken from Galen’s *On The Usefulness of Parts*.\(^{13}\) By the

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the topic of sex difference elicited discussion and differing opinions and interpretations from authors in early modern Spain. Katherine Park offers a side-by-side comparison of Cadden’s and Laqueur’s respective takes on the one-sex model in “Laqueur, and the "one-sex body”(2010).

\(^{11}\) Among the contributions that Cleminson and Vázquez García make to the subject of sex difference in early modern Iberia in this text are their conclusions that Spain and Portugal relied on sources outside of Ibera for information on this topic, but their texts were, by and large, limited to the peninsula in terms of circulation (112). They also suggest that the timeline offered by Laquer in terms of the shift from a one- to a two-sex model of sex difference is “not so clear-cut as Laqueur has suggested” (113).

\(^{12}\) In *The One-Sex Body on Trial*, King challenges Laqueur’s use of medical sources, arguing that Laqueur bases himself heavily on one particular passage from Galen, which is just one of many that deal with anatomy and sex difference. King argues that Laqueur’s analysis of this passage is inadequate and that it: “does not represent a summary of anatomical studies; human dissection did not feature in Galen’s world”, calling Galen’s ideas a “thought experiment” and not necessarily a definitive description of anatomy (35). Moreover, as King points out, the one-sex model may have been used throughout early modern Europe as exactly that—a model, or an introductory device for teaching medicine and helping students to memorize the names and locations of body parts.

\(^{13}\) Galen’s text, which serves as a point of reference for early modern Spanish authors, reads as follows: “All the parts, then, that men have, women have too, the difference between them lying in only one thing, which must be kept in mind throughout the discussion, namely, that in women the parts are within [the body], whereas in men they are outside, in the region called the perineum. Consider first whichever ones you please, turn outward the woman’s, turn inward, so to speak and fold double the man’s, and you will find them the same in both in every respect. Then think first, please, of the man’s turned in and extending inward between the rectum and the bladder. If this should happen, the scrotum would necessarily take the place of the uteri, with the testes lying outside, next to it on either side; the penis of the male
early modern period in Spain, medical authors still depended heavily on Galen’s work and models for the study and practice of medicine.\textsuperscript{14} Though the interpretations and applications of Galen’s text vary from author to author, the general consensus among early modern Spanish authors does not seem to be that Galen was merely directing a thought experience. Early modern Spanish authors accept that men and women are distinct only in the location of their reproductive organs, which in turn affects a slew of elements—hair, facial characteristics, voice, among others—that allow us to categorize a person as masculine or feminine. In this case, there may be an argument to be made for a specifically Spanish take on Galen and its consequences for understandings of sex difference in Spain versus in the rest of Europe.\textsuperscript{15} In fact, in

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\item[14] Richard J. Durling indicates that Galen’s texts circulated in early modern Spain in both Latin and Greek (243) and Bjorn Okholm Skaarup finds that Galen’s De usu partium was required reading in the University of Salamanca during the sixteenth century (17). Explicit references to Galen can be found in Huarte, and others publishing during this time period, suggesting that he continued to be the major point of reference for medical study in early modern Spain, despite the influence of other sources, as I will discuss further on in this chapter.
\item[15] While a comprehensive analysis of the translations, transmissions and transformations of Galen’s texts in western Europe lies outside the purview of this project, it is not impossible to think that Galen (and other Greek sources) might have taken a different turn as they were translated and circulated throughout Spain than they did in other parts of Europe, given that they were often translated from Arabic (that is, Arabic translations of the original Greek) into Latin. As Vivan Nutton points out: “Of equal significance, however, was the great outpouring, from the 1140s onwards, of Latin translations made in Spain from the Arabic, often with the assistance of Hebrew intermediaries. This included, as well as medical texts, many works of science and philosophy, especially Aristotle. Although Gerard of Cremona (1150-87 at Toledo) translated some of Galen’s writings, e.g. the Method of Healing, he and
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early modern Spain the ideas laid out by Galen are taken a step further in order to conclude that sex changes do not occur unidirectionally. Both modern scholars working on early modern science and medicine\(^\text{16}\) well as the non-Spanish contemporaries\(^\text{17}\) of the authors examined in this project insist that only women could turn into men, and not vice versa. While this conclusion does seem to fit with early modern misogynistic views about female and male bodies, it is not reflected in all the texts published in early modern Spain. This reading, in turn, necessarily affects how early modern Spanish authors address not only individuals with anomalous sex but those with anomalous gender, as well. Consequently, there is much to be learned about the circulation of information on sex difference within early modern Spain, as the details and transmission of this knowledge is indispensable for understanding how

\[\text{his colleagues concentrated on major Arabic practical texts, like the } Canon \text{ of Avicenna and the } Liber \text{ ad Almansorem} \text{ of Rhazes. The consequences of these Spanish translations were two-fold. They provided a far wider and heavily Arabised vocabulary for learned medicine in Latin, and they imparted an ever greater Arabic and Aristotelian slant to Gaelic medicine” (143).}\]

\(^\text{16}\) Lisa Vollendorf maintains that this transformation was only believed to occur unidirectionally, from woman to man, because anything else would be a degradation of the male body (12). Likewise, Laqueur cites early modern thinkers who affirm that men cannot turn into women because such a change would constitute a degeneration of the individual, and nature always works for the betterment of an individual, not to make him or her less perfect (142-43).

\(^\text{17}\) The French Ambroise Paré, often accept the possibility of women turning into men while discarding the possibility that men turn into women, on the basis that the male body is perfect, and nature always tends toward perfection, and does not degenerate the human form: “The reason why women can degenerate into men is because women have as much hidden within the body as men have exposed outside, leaving aside, only, that women don’t have so much heat, nor the ability to push out what by the coldness of their temperament is held as if bound to the interior. Wherefore if with time, the humidity of childhood which prevented the warmth from doing its full duty being exhaled for the most part, the warmth is rendered more robust, vehement and active, then it is not an unbelievable thing if the latter, chiefly aided by some violent movement, should be able to push out what was hidden within. Now since such a metamorphosis takes place in Nature for the alleged reasons and examples, we therefore never find in any true story that any man ever became a woman, because Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should become imperfect” (32-3).
individuals with anomalous sex and gender would have been received during this time period.

In order to speak about early modern concepts of gender, a distinction should be made between modern understandings of gender and the concepts that emerge in the texts I include here. Present-day scholarship often relies on Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender to analyze how individuals perform the social constructs assigned to them as a consequence of their biological sex. Butler summarizes this theory in *Gender Trouble*:

In this sense, *gender* is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. (34)

In other words, Butler describes gender as a performance, which both maintains and is regulated by social conventions that serve to dictate proper behavior and appearance for men and women. In this sense, Butler is, unquestionably, retroactively applicable; gender was as performative in early modern Spain as it is now, though certainly the performances of the two periods are not identical. Despite the difference in how gender was performed in early modern Spain, it was still a product of the social conventions, expectations, and beliefs about human behavior and their relationship to biological sex. In this way, Butler can help us to understand the factors and conventions that lead to (re-)productions and performances of gender in a given
context—for example, that of early modern Spain, and consequently, to an understanding of why gender is what it is in a particular time and place.

However, this project does not seek to merely apply Butler’s definition of gender to the context of early modern Spain. With respect to gender I ask, rather: how was gender understood at this time? And, to a greater extent, how did the concept of sex difference relate to an accepted concept of gender? This in turn helps us understand how individuals whose sex and/or gender falls outside of a strict binary were understood, explained and perhaps permitted. The answer to those questions is certainly not the definition of gender provided by Butler. There is no evidence to suggest that the medical authors who write on gender, (who do not even refer to it as such), were critically analyzing, reflecting on, or questioning the ways in which gender is a socially constructed performance that reproduces conventions and expectations that are held of people depending on whether a person is born male or female. Instead, as I will show, they look for essentialist, causative relationships between a person’s physical, internal anatomy and their external characteristics, attributes, social and sexual behavior. In their texts lies the conglomeration of elements that, taken as a whole, were understood to be a person’s gender. So, while Butler and her ideas on gender may come into play for us in an effort to understand the mimicry and performance inherent in gender and gendered behavior, they are not sufficient to me in my quest to understand how early modern Spaniards conceived of gender and understood its relation to biological sex. Ultimately, Butler’s work on the performativity of gender might be most helpful as a point of comparison; modern scholarship understands gender as a performance shaped by societal expectations and conventions, but in this project I am asking: how did early modern Spain understand
gender, and what were the consequences for individuals who did not adhere to a strict male/female and/or masculine/feminine binary?

In addition to the distinction between Butler’s definition of gender and the concept of gender that I seek in the writing of early modern Spanish authors, I would like to point out the definition of “género” provided by Sebastián de Covarrubias in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*. Covarrubias defines “género” (gender) as the following: “Comúnmente en castellano se toma, o por el sexo, como género masculino o femenino, o por lo que en rigor se llama especie, como, Ay un género de carneros que tienen seys cuernos” (635). Covarrubias offers few details as to what constitutes gender in the first sense included in his definition. It is clear that he understands gender and sex to be interchangeable terms, or at least, this is how they are commonly used when he is writing in the early seventeenth century. The definition provided by Covarrubias makes clear that there is a disconnect between the understanding of the term “género” (used as a synonym to biological sex) and the ensemble of characteristics and behaviors that we understand as gender. So, while these characteristics do appear in medical and scientific texts of the times, in Covarrubias they do not appear under the umbrella of “género”.

Bearing this in mind, I will use the word “gender” in this project, conscious of the fact that it was not articulated as such during the time period in question, in order to describe the external characteristics that authors of medical and scientific treatises maintain to be indicative of a person’s biological sex. To this end, “gender” in the context of early modern Spain will include: hair, speech/voice, gestures, complexion, intellectual prowess and professional proclivities. For example, a woman (female biological sex) who was particularly intelligent or especially given to bellicose tasks
could easily have been described masculine, or varonil, due to this trait. As I will
demonstrate throughout this chapter, these are the characteristics that the authors I
include cite as evidence that a person’s biological sex is male, female, or in some way
anomalous, ambiguous or hybrid. In this way, gender might best be understood as a
person’s “social sex”, by which I mean, it was understood as a natural, inevitable
manifestation of a person’s anatomy—his or her biological sex—in the social sphere.

In order to contextualize the medical treatises produced during early modern
Spain, it is first necessary to understand the education required of medical
professionals during this time period. In most of early modern Europe, surgeons
(cirujanos) occupied a separate category from university trained doctors (médicos),
and their preparation varied accordingly; a surgeon’s apprenticeship and a formal
university degree in medicine were not equivalent or interchangeable. The former
category was associated more closely with practice, while the latter was more closely
tied to theory. In Spain, though, this does not appear to have been the case; doctors as
well as surgeons could receive university training, depending especially on where
they studied, thus blurring slightly the distinctions between the two professions
(Fresquet Febrer 252). José María López Piñero provides additional information,
explaining that traditionally, doctors were required to complete a series of degrees and
apprenticeships before they could take the necessary exams to practice as professional
doctors. Surgeons, on the other hand, since the Middle Ages, were viewed as
technical or artisanal professionals.18 However, in Spain, and Italy as well, this

18 “La situación de médicos y cirujanos era muy distinta. En líneas generales, para presentarse
al examen que facultaba para el ejercicios profesional, los primeros tenían que haber cursado
unos estudios universitarios estrictamente reglamentados. Tras obtener el grado de Bachiller
de Artes, en universidades aprobadas, debían estudiar cuatro años en una facultad de
distinction was not as clear, as universities began to establish chairs of surgery and some doctors earned university degrees in surgery, not medicine. A growing concern for the preparation of the surgeons themselves also led to less significant distinction between the two professions (Ciencia y técnica 50). That surgeons were able to receive some university level education and that doctors not only studied theory but also engaged in medical practice suggests that the medical texts written by members of these professions drew both from practice, first-hand experience, and medical theory.

So, while some surgeons received a university education in medicine and/or surgery, this was not a prerequisite for medical and surgical practice. Furthermore, control over licensure of medical professionals differed throughout Spain; in Castile, medical licenses were handled by the Protomedicato, a tribunal of royal doctors (protomédicos) founded at the request of the Catholic Monarchs in 1477 in order to establish a means of officially authorizing medical professionals, whereas in Aragón and Navarre, there were similar, though not identical institutions that attempted to control the professional preparation of doctors, surgeons, pharmacists (boticarios) and examinadores. (Lóp. Piñero, “Los orígenes” 446). While the Protomedicato was established in order to create a controlled system of granting licenses to doctors, Juan Juan Riera and Juan Granda-Juesas note that it was not entirely successful; the authors cite various petitions, complaints and royal decrees issued by the Spanish Crown in

medicina para conseguir el de Bachiller en Medicina, después de lo cual tenían que practicar “sin que puedan curar, dos años continuos en compañía de médicos aprobados”. Por el contrario, los cirujanos para ser admitidos solamente tenían que presentar testimonios de haber practicado durante cuatro años “en algún hospital donde haya tal cirujano aprobado”. Los cirujanos, en suma, carecían de enseñanza reglamentada, aunque en algunas ciudades como Valencia existían escuelas de cirugía a cargo de médicos universitarios en las que recibían una sumaria formación” (Lóp. Piñero, Ciencia y técnica 50).
response to widespread corruption among the protomédicos, who issued licenses to unqualified individuals who had not taken the required courses, who had little or no experience treating patients or who had not passed the necessary exams. Riera and Granda-Juesas also note falsified and stolen licenses (28-32).

In more rural locations, the only medical professional may well have been the town barber, whose would have been responsible for tasks like bloodletting, a frequently used treatment during the period. Fresquet Febrer points out, for example, that medical practice was carried out not only by trained surgeons and doctors in hospitals, but also in rural settings by practitioners whose formation was based perhaps more on beliefs than on empirical science (257). Those who practiced medicine ran the gamut, from doctors holding university titles, to surgeons licensed by the Protomedicato, to local barbers responsible for treating the various maladies of his neighbors to unlicensed healers of diverse sorts, as Enrique Perdiguero explains:

Además de los autorizados para ejercer actividades sanitarias—médicos, cirujanos, barberos y boticarios—existían otra serie de personas, implicadas en mayor o menor medida en la asistencia sanitaria de la población, cuya actividad se extendía desde los quehaceres empíricos hasta los claramente creenciales. Estos últimos, conocidos con muy diversos nombres—ensalmadores (especialistas en dolencias externas), saludadores o santiguares (especialistas sobre todo en la rabia), brujas, hechiceros, etc.—fueron, al

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19 Unlicensed healers, particularly those who were “cultivadores de supersticiones y hechicería” were often charged by the Inquisition (López Piñero, “Los orígenes” 447).
 menos en la letras de las sucesivas disposiciones, proscritos desde los inicios de la reglamentación relativa a los Protomédicos. (95)20

Information regarding medicine and surgical practices, therefore, was not only relevant for the highly educated medical professional, but for a variety of other groups of people as well, since the responsibility of providing health care did not fall only to university educated doctors.

Rafael Muñoz Garrido offers additional insight on medical professions in early modern Spain, indicating that, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, medical professionals—surgeons, doctors, and a variety of other professionals related to understanding, treating and healing human bodies—did not necessarily enjoy much social prestige. In fact, the author explains that only those doctors and/or surgeons who were employed at the service of Spanish royalty, such as the protomédicos, were considered respectable professionals (18). Surgery in particular appears to have carried a particularly negative connotation until the eighteenth century, perhaps because, as Muñoz Garrido states, many (though not all) universities seem to have been relatively disinterested in imparting classes specifically geared toward surgical skills (18-20). These details suggest that the medical profession was neither especially respected nor highly regarded as a prestigious career.21 Furthermore, López Piñero

20 In his article “Protomedicato y curanderismo”, Perdiguero suggests that it was possible that elite, licensed medical professionals would have been less appealing to patients who found more cultural common ground with non-official healers (106). He also emphasizes the difficulty with tracing the history and practice of non-official healers, whose records are not as well-kept as the records of officially licensed medical practitioners, and can often only be studied in cases where they received official discipline.

21 López Piñero offers an incredibly detailed statistical analysis of the backgrounds of medical professionals during early modern Spain. He finds that individuals belonging to the noble classes tended to shy away from the study of medicine, which was far less lucrative than studying law, for example (Ciencia y técnica 69).
has shown that the majority of those working in the field of science during the
sixteenth-century belonged to the lower class.\textsuperscript{22}

In light of this, I argue that it would be an error to understand medical
professionals—and those among them who published extensive medical treatises—as
part of an elite group of people, far removed from a general public who also
benefitted from the publication of medical information. Similarly, it is important to
note that many of these texts are written in Castilian, and not Latin, a stronger
indication that the audience who accessed these texts, which were so clearly aimed at
disseminating medical and scientific knowledge, did not necessarily possess a high
level of education, at least, not the education required of practicing doctors. It is
possible, probably even, that the authors purposely chose to write in Castilian in order
to facilitate access to their texts. It might also be the case that they used Castilian
because they had no other language in which to write, since surgeons—as many of
these authors were—did not generally have to learn Latin as part of their studies. In
either case, we see that individuals who were not educated enough so as to have
learned Latin would still have been able to lean about and, if they so chose, write and
publish on, these topics.

On one hand, these medical treatises likely served as a way in which non-
university educated surgeons—or otherwise classified healers—accessed information

\textsuperscript{22} “La mayoría de los cultivadores de la ciencia en la sociedad española del siglo XVI
pertenecían al estado llano. En nuestra serie biográfica, en concreto, hay 306 plebeyos, lo que
representa un 63\% del total. Conviene, sin embargo, especificar dentro de tan amplio y
heterogéneo estamento. Hay que excluir, en primer término, la gran masa campesina, base
demográfica del país. También hay que descartar los estratos inferiores urbanos, integrados
por todo género de criados y sirvientes, parásitos, miserables y esclavos. La actividad
científica estaba de hecho restringida a la pequeña porción del estado llano que agrupaba a
mercaderes y artesanos, letrados y funcionarios, junto a los consagrados a las profesiones y
ocupaciones relacionadas directa o indirectamente con la ciencia” (Ciencia y técnica 71).
circulating among and produced by medical authorities. On the other, the very generation of these texts comes about as a sort of dialogue between the authors who write them in response to contemporary medical topics and needs; each author who publishes a medical treatise engages with the others on issues that the authors themselves perceive to be important, relevant issues both for the medical community itself and for the wider public that it served. These texts are simultaneously didactic tools and a form of dialogue, but their influence did not end with those who actually read them. Rather, they served as the starting point for the dissemination and/or diffusion\(^{23}\) of scientific knowledge and medical information that trickled down into the masses:

La cultura de esta gran masa popular, que seguí dependiendo de la transmisión oral, no permaneció absolutamente impermeable a los conocimientos científicos, como a primera vista pudiera creerse. A través de una larga convivencia, elementos muy diversos de la cultura científica académica se incorporaron, más o menos deformados, a la sabiduría popular. Los estudios de los especialistas demuestran que en el folklore se han conservado hasta la actualidad muchas nociones propias de la ciencia culta de este período. En la folkmedicina, por ejemplo, ocupa una posición central la

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\(^{23}\) In “Diffusion theory and knowledge dissemination, utilization and integration”, which deals with the sharing of knowledge and information between public health officials and their intended audience, authors Lawrence Green, Judith Ottoson, César García, Robert Hiatt and Maria Roditis distinguish between “diffusion” and “dissemination” in the following manner: “Whereas diffusion is the natural spread of ideas, dissemination is the conscious effort to spread new knowledge, policies, and practices to target audiences or the public at large” (4). In this sense, diffusion is inevitable and organic, while dissemination connotes a conscious intent, on the part of the author of a text or another form of authority in the matter, to spread information among a specific audience. I believe that both terms are applicable to the spread of medical and scientific knowledge in early modern Spain, and will therefore use both.
concepción humoralista procedente del gallinero e incluso hay refranes que reproducen literalmente fragmentos de sus más famosos textos (López Piñero, *Ciencia y técnica* 128).

We must keep in mind that the physical texts themselves were not the only means by which information concerning medicine and health circulated in early modern Spain. As López Piñero states in the above quote, such information trickled down and was shared among groups of people with little or no education, literate or not, who were, by their very nature as human beings, no less invested in knowing about human bodies, illness, medicine and health than the most educated of doctors. On a broader scale—that of literature as a whole in early modern Spain, and not only treatises dealing with science and medicine—Margit Frenk has argued for a greater consideration of the oral transmission of written literature in early modern Spain, which she insists was not only read silently, but aloud, for illiterate listeners:

> Dada la importancia que la voz seguía teniendo en la transmisión de los textos, el público de la literatura escrita no se limitaba a sus lectores, en el sentido moderno de la palabra, sino que pudo haberse extendido a un elevado número de oyentes, de todos los estratos sociales, incluida la población analfabeta.
>
> Cada ejemplar de un impreso o manuscrito era virtual foco de irradiación, del cual podían emanar incontables recepciones, ya por su lectura oral, ya porque servía de base a la memorización o a la repetición libre. Bastaba con que en una familia o en una comunidad hubiese una persona que supiese leer para que, virtualmente, cualquier texto llegara a ser disfrutado por muchos. (25)

She even suggests that authors in early modern Spain were conscious of the oral transmission of texts, and points out that they direct reference to the “lector o oydor”
so as to address all of the possible recipients of their texts. With this in mind, we might even conclude that it was likely that the authors of these treatises were themselves aware of the oral diffusion of the information they include in their texts.

I will now turn to the treatises themselves, beginning with that of Juan Huarte de San Juan. Huarte was born in or around 1529, in Sant-Jean Pied-de-Port, but later studied medicine in Alcalá de Henares. Following his studies, Huarte held various titles, including medical practitioner and city physician of Baeza and worked in textile production (Javier Virués-Ortega, Gualberto Buela-Casal, María Teresa Carrasco-Lazareno, Pamela D. Rivero-Dávila and Raúl Quevedo-Blasco 22). Huarte’s text, *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* was published in 1575, making his work not only the most well-known but also the first printed of the texts to be examined in this project. It is distinct from some of the other medical texts to be examined for another reason: the *Examen* is not so much a compendium of ailments, diseases, treatments and cures as it is an exposition on human psychology, intelligence, aptitude and education, meant to educate Spaniards on these topics in order to create a better nation.

The proliferation and influence of Huarte’s text are extraordinary, as Virués-Ortega, Buela-Casal, Carrasco-Lazareno, Rivero-Dávila and Quevedo-Blasco

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24 “Qué duda cabe que algo –si no mucho– tienen que ver es- tos varios fenómenos, y sus abundantes ramificaciones, con la todavía generalizada difusión de los textos a través de la voz. Ya hemos comentado que no se escribe igual cuando se prevé una lectura silenciosa que cuando se sabe que el texto va a ser, literalmente, escuchado. Muchos autores del Siglo de Oro español escribirían anticipando una posible y pronta conversión de sus letras en sonido, hablarían con sus oyentes desde un aquí y ahora que –imaginariamente– compartían con ellos; hasta llegarían a entablar con ellos una vivaz comunicación de toma y daca: ‘Oyente, si tú me ayudas/con tu malicia y tu risa/verdades diré en camisa/poco menos que desnudas…’ (Quevedo, 1971, 723) “ (22).
describe in their article “A systematic archival inquiry on Juan Huarte de San Juan (1529–88)”:

Huate’s publication of the Trial [Examination] in the 16th century had a great impact in Europe. Within 100 years after the manuscript was first published in Baeza (1575), the Trial was translated into French, Italian, German, Dutch, English and Latin. Before the 1700s there were no fewer than 60 editions circulating throughout Europe (de Iriarte, 1948: 85–134). The Trial became common reading among the intelligentsia of the period but it also made interesting reading for a wider audience … The book was also present in the collections of medical practitioners, educators and politicians. (23)

It quickly becomes clear that Huarte’s Examen is not a text destined only for readers with a medical background similar to Huarte’s, but rather that it reached a varied audience consisting of teachers, politicians and the literate population at large. Additionally, the number of languages into which it was translated demonstrates the demand for and popularity of the Examen. One sees the extent to which Huarte’s text influenced European, and especially Spanish, citizens from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions. With this in mind, the chapter of his text that addresses sex difference and sex changes—as well as persons with anomalous or ambiguous sex—acquires greater importance, given the dissemination of the text as a whole.

When analyzing the material provided by Huarte, it is important to keep in mind the purpose with which he is writing. Huarte’s text, in its entirety, offers information and advice concerning human character with the intention of maintaining an (explicitly patriarchal) social order, in which women are most useful for their reproductive function. Huarte goes about matching individuals’ character to the
profession which best suits them, always keeping the ultimate good of his nation at the heart of the text. So while his text contains medicine and philosophy, it must be understood in the context of an author’s desire to create a well-informed nation that will develop and function to the best of its ability by following his advice. Information regarding sex difference is relevant for this text insofar as it pertains to what tasks are best suited for men’s and women’s respective characters and capabilities. Additionally, Huarte provides advice to parents who are interested in conceiving a male child, at which point the anatomical differences between men and women also come into play.

Huarte relies heavily on humoral theory, a prevailing medical model of the time, which holds that humans are composed of four humors: yellow bile, black bile, phlegm and blood. These four elements also correspond to qualities of hot, wet, dry and cold and were understood to determine not only one’s temperament and character, but also biological sex. Men were comprised principally of hot and dry humors while women were wet and cold. A change in the humoral composition could provoke a change in one’s sex by causing a shift in the position of the reproductive organs; Huarte and his contemporaries, as I will show, explain this in great detail. As Noga Arikha notes, the humors were understood as representative of the universe as a whole:

The microcosm of the body corresponded to the macrocosm of the universe: to each one of the cosmos elements corresponded a bodily humor; and it was thanks to this correspondence that we were able to perceive the world. There were debates as to the exact number of humors, just as the number of qualities themselves was subject to some variations. But the useful symmetry inherent
in the fourfold division of the universe into seasons, qualities and elements was applied to bodily humors as well. Air corresponded to blood…; water corresponded to phlegm; fire corresponded to choler, the yellow bile; and earth corresponded to melancholy, the black bile. To each humor corresponded two of the basic qualities associated with its element: blood was hot and moist, phlegm was cold and moist, choler or yellow bile was hot and dry, and melancholy or black bile was cold and dry. (5-6)

According to this theory, not all individuals possessed the same quantities of each of the humors (Arikha 9). Every individual was believed to be born with a certain ratio of the four humors, but factors such as environment and external temperature could influence and alter the balance of the humors in a person’s body. For this reason, civilizations living in different locations, in different climates, were thought to contain particular ratios of humors, in accordance with their surroundings, which, in turn, affected their external appearance. In fact, humors were believed to fluctuate on the basis of seasonal changes and consumption of certain foods, as well. The humors, therefore, were not thought to be in a static state; rather, it was believed that they fluctuated for various reasons, and that these fluctuations would have repercussions in an individual’s physical appearance and personality traits. In this way, we see that the humors, whose fluctuations and balances determine a multitude of physical, emotional and psychological outcomes for humans, mirror the fluctuations and balances of the universe at large. Humorism, and its implications, is more than a medical theory; it is a cosmovisión. Within this cosmovisión is a concept of biological sex that will be fundamental to this project: biological sex, like all elements of the universe (according to humorism), is a question of balance and position, organs are
not fixed in one location, which in turn makes sex—and gender, a consequence of sex—unstable and, in the right circumstance, i.e., sudden, radical change in temperature, subject to change.

Another important part of early modern medicine and science is physiognomy, or the study of a person’s external characteristics, particularly the facial features, which were believed to reveal his or her internal characteristics. Joseph Ziegler explains that physiognomy is “the art of deciphering a person’s character by the external appearance of his or her bodily organs through analysis of their size, proportion, shape, color, hairiness, and motion or gestures” (84). According to Ziegler, physiognomy was originally used in western Europe for purposes of political defamation—conclusions drawn through physiognomy could be used as criticism—but also became a useful tool, particularly for rulers, in determining the character of others, which was an important piece of successful political relations. One crucial factor of a person’s character was his or her sexual behavior, especially for women, and physiognomy was believed to provide authoritative insight into this realm. As Ziegler explains:

Medieval physiognomic texts devoted profound discussions of this aspect, much more so than did their Classical sources. In so doing, their authors turned women into an object of physiognomic gaze in a way that classical physiognomy never envisaged. Furthermore, they buttressed their physiognomic insights against medical and natural philosophical authorities, thus lending scholarly gravitas to what could easily have degenerated into a pornographic, voyeuristic discourse. (84)
Ziegler goes on to describe the ways in which particular characteristics—curly hair, short hair, foot width, nose length—were used to determine fertility, virginity, libido and other characteristics considered to be important when choosing a spouse, or perhaps, simply judging a fellow citizen or potential political rival. The focus on issues related to sexuality should come as no surprise; as Jean Dangler points out, medieval Iberian treatises already show “significant interest in topics like gender and sexuality, because gender and sexuality were intimately connected to well-being”. On a social scale, she argues, physiognomy functioned as a way of classifying individuals and reinforcing stereotypes about different groups of people. Characteristics associated with women, physiognomy (and humorism) maintained, were indicative of and caused by women’s cold and moist constitution. Traits associated with men were believed to be caused by dryness and heat (83-5). Since corporal humors and their (im)balance were believed to be the determining factor for a person’s perceived gender, physiognomy could be used to interpret external characteristics and behaviors in order to formulate ideas about what an individual’s humoral composition and consequent internal anatomy were; in terms of sex and gender, as I will show, it could be used to draw conclusions about the spectral sexual anatomy of individuals with non-binary gender. The importance of these topics for early modern authors cannot be underestimated.

Physiognomic theory is undeniably present in early modern Spanish texts. In Spain, in 1591, the physician Luis Fernández published a treatise on physiognomy titled Historia de animales y phisiognomia. Historian Martha Vicente explains that, for Fernández: “physiognomy allowed the viewer ‘to know the state of the body, the proportion of all its parts and the general and particular temperament’” (10). Vicente
also notes another important text on physiognomy: Giovanni Battista della Porta’s treatise *De humana Physiognomia* (*On Human Fisionomy*), which was originally published in Latin and, a few years after Fernández’s treatise, was translated into Italian and Spanish. While Battista della Porta is not a Spanish author, Vicente insists upon his importance for the Spanish context, calling his text “one of the most important treatises on physiognomy” (10). According to Vicente, Battista della Porta:

connected facial traits with improper sexual behavior. One could spot the effeminate man by his facial and physical characteristics, “beardless, wet eyes, small mouth, and delicate eyelashes”, but one could also recognize the effeminate man in the way his hands moved, the way he walked, his delicate voice, and his skin, too white for a man. Moreover, the physical characteristics usually extended into womanly behavior as ‘he will want to stay home always wearing a skirt, will tend the kitchen and worse than a woman he will endure the “nepanda venere” or sodomy. (10-11).

Both Battista della Porta’s text and Fernández’s text indicate that the implications and usages of physiognomy extended beyond facial features and into other traits—gait, domestic proclivities and general movements—associated with gender and sexuality as well. This method of using the external to determine the internal will be present throughout many of the texts that I have included in this chapter. Physiognomy is used, if not explicitly, implicitly, by medical authors who write on sex difference and sex changes. The belief in an irrefutable correspondence between a physical characteristic and a social or sexual behavior suggests that all persons with a given
physical trait will exhibit its corresponding behavior. Here there is no room for
individual agency in terms of behavior and personality traits.25

HUARTe, basing himself in the humoral theory, outlines how fluctuating humors
can cause changes in human anatomy, namely in the location of one’s reproductive
organs, altering a person’s biological sex and consequently, his or her gender:

Es menester saber primero cierta filosofía particular que, aunque es a los
peritos del arte muy patente y verdadera, pero el vulgo está en ella muy
descuidado, y depende de su conocimiento todo lo que acerca del primer punto
se ha de decir. Y es que el hombre, aunque nos parece de la compostura que
vemos, no difiere de la mujer, según dice Galeno, más que en tener los
miembros genitales fuera del cuerpo. Porque si hacemos anatomía de una
doncella hallaremos que tiene dentro de sí dos testículos, dos vasos
seminarios, y el útero con la misma compostura que el miembro viril sin
faltarle ninguna deligneación. Y de tal manera es esto verdad, que si acabando
Naturaleza de fabricar un hombre perfecto, le quisiese convertir en mujer, no
tenía otro trabajo más que tornarle adentro los instrumentos de la generación;
y, si hecha mujer, quisiese volverla en varón, con arrojarle el útero y los

25 One could certainly argue that, in the twenty-first century, we continue to look for cause-
and-effect relationships to explain human behavior, skills, preferences and disorders—to cite
a recent example, a 2015 study published in the American Journal of Medical Genetics:
Neuropsychiatric Genetics found a link between light eye color and alcohol dependence.
However, observing a correlation between a physical characteristic and a behavioral trait is
not quite the same as claiming a causative relationship. Modern science (provided that it is
not “junk” science) might find that individuals with light-colored eyes are more likely to
develop alcoholism, hypothesizing that light eye color can lead to other types of sensitivities,
whereas physiognomy could easily have led early modern doctors to conclude that all people
with blue eyes will, as a consequence of their eye color, engage in heavy drinking. This
insistence upon a causative relationship between location of one’s genital organs—both
current location and any previous locations, in the case of a sudden sex change—is present
throughout the treatises included in this project.
testículos fuera, no había más que hacer. Esto muchas veces le ha acontecido a Naturaleza, así estando la criatura en el cuerpo como fuera; de lo cual están llenas las historias, sino que algunos han pensado que era fabuloso viendo que los poetas lo traían entre las manos. Pero realmente pasa así: que muchas veces ha hecho Naturaleza una hembra y lo ha sido uno y dos meses en el vientre de su madre, y sobreviniéndoles a los miembros genitales copia de calor por alguna ocasión, salir afuera y quedar hecho varón. (237)

Huarte (and others) insist time and again that the male and female bodies are distinct only in the location of the reproductive organs. While Huarte is, of course, citing Galen, and not developing his own theories, it bears mentioning that Huarte, arguably the most important early modern Spanish source on this topic, does not question this model of sex difference but rather accepts it as an undeniable truth. We should remember, too, King’s argument that Galen’s one-sex model is merely a “thought experiment “(35); Huarte certainly does not interpret Galen’s words as such, as he applies them literally in explaining human anatomy. In fact, comparing Huarte’s text with Galen’s original ideas on sex difference raises the question of whether or not early modern authors are playing a bit fast and loose with Galen’s concepts. Galen’s original text, taken from *On the Usefulness of Parts*, which I reproduced earlier in this chapter, does not mention the possibility that sex changes occur throughout one’s life nor the vestigial characteristics of the original sex explained by Huarte. A comprehensive study of the interpretations of Galen throughout history falls outside the purview of this project, however, my preliminary suspicion is that early modern Spanish authors extrapolate upon the basic tenets of humorism originally offered by Galen in order to draw such conclusions about the mutability of human sex.
Lest one think that such a description is only theoretical, Huarte assures his readers that if an *anatomía*\(^\text{26}\) is performed, these similarities will be readily visible to the observer. Furthermore, he insists upon the mutability of one’s biological sex, a belief that has already been commented on by scholars but whose details and implications I will point out briefly here. The possibility for a sudden sex transmutation is based on humorism, or humoral theory, as previously explained. A sudden influx of heat, as Huarte notes, causes a woman’s reproductive organs to leave the internal body and thus turn her into a man. While Huarte, in previous sections of his text, offers advice for parents wanting to conceive a male child, he provides no such advice for persons wanting to avoid a sudden change of sex. One might ostensibly avoid exposure to great heat or cold in the hopes of remaining as one sex or the other, but ultimately, this change seems to lie in the hands of Nature herself, a force which is inextricably linked to divine will.

Another prominent element of Huarte’s explanation is the physiognomic traceability of sexual anatomy through the outward manifestation of biological sex. By “traceability” I mean that, according to the theory laid out by Huarte, external characteristics are indicative not only of one’s anatomy, that is, of the location of one’s reproductive organs but also of the *history* of their location(s) as well. Huarte states that women who began as a male fetus, undergoing a sex mutation before birth, can be recognized in their speech, movements, behaviors, indeed, in their general presence, which will carry a certain masculinity:

\(^{26}\) The second entry for “anatomía”, according to the *Real Academia Española* is: 2. f. Biol. Disección o separación artificiosa de las partes del cuerpo de un animal o de una planta.
A quien esta transmutación le acontecería en el vientre de su madre, se conoce después claramente en ciertos movimientos que tienen indecentes al sexo viril: mujeres, mariosos, la voz blanda y melosa, son los tales inclinados a hacer obras de mujeres y caen ordinariamente en el pecado nefando...Por lo contrario muchas veces tiene naturaleza hecho un varón, con sus miembros genitales afuera, y sobreviniendo fraldad, se les vuelve a dentro, y queda hecha hembra. Se conoce después de nacida, en que tiene aire de varón, así en la habla, como en todos sus movimientos y obras. Esto muchas veces le ha acontecido a naturaleza, así estando la criatura en el cuerpo, como fuera. De lo qual están llenas las historias: sino que algunos han pensado que era fabuloso, viendo que los poetas lo traían entre las manos; pero realmente pasa así: que muchas veces ha hecho naturaleza una hembra, y lo ha sido uno y dos meses, en el vientre de su madre, y sobreviniéndoles a los miembros genitales copia de calor, por alguna ocasión, salir a fuera: y quedar hecho varón... Esto parece que es dificultoso probarlo: pero considerando que muchos historiadores auténticos afirman, es muy fácil de creer. Y que se hayan vueltos mujeres en hombres, después de nacidas, ya no se espanta el vulgo de oírlo: porque fuera de lo que cuentan por verdad muchos antiguos, es cosa que ha acontecido, en España muy pocos años ha: y lo que muestra la experiencia, no admite disputas ni argumentos. (238)

Here, physiognomy is used to discern an individual’s biological sex via external characteristics believed to indicate the current and prior location of one’s genital organs. Any person who encounters a woman who is not quite as “womanly” as she ought to be is privy to the history of this woman’s anatomy—what she was and what
she became as a result of the changing location of her reproductive organs. This approach is evidence of a culture that is interested and invested in understanding the relationship between physical anatomy, appearance and social behavior.

At first glance, the misogyny inherent in Huarte’s ideas on the human body and reproduction are difficult to ignore; scholarship on Huarte, or on the one-sex model in general, often belabors this point. For example, Dangler is critical of Huarte’s approach to anomalous or ambiguous sex, arguing that his *Examen* “demonstrates the new link between ambiguous sexual and gender traits, pejorative theological and moral value, and the state” (104). However, she is also willing to admit that Huarte’s attitude towards such cases is undeniably ambivalent, though she later suggests that Huarte’s “link between church, state, medicine and body type sets the stage for an increased divide in early Spanish discourse and society between normative men’s and women’s bodies and non-normative ones” (105). The relationship between the human body and the Spanish nation is undeniably present throughout Huarte’s text—the lengthy discussion on reproduction and biological sex is part and parcel of the *Examen*’s role in improving the nation by advising and improving its citizens, so it is certainly fair to say that he favors the creation and development of individuals who will best serve their nation. However, I would argue that Huarte, for all of his misogyny, presents ambiguous gender as entirely natural, depicting it as a result of what he considers Nature’s will and plan. Ultimately, for Huarte, sex and gender are the consequence of a given combination of humors. That Huarte does not propose social categories to correspond to each and every distinct combination of humoral elements does not mean that he adopts a critical view of non-normative bodies, as Dangler suggests.
In fact, when we consider the fluidity and spectral nature of biological sex, as described by Huarte, what might be termed “gender” is simultaneously liberating and limiting; it is liberating in that it eschews the restraints of a dichotomous sex model, and limiting because the fluidity inherent in Huarte’s description is not a matter of an individual’s free will and self expression. In other words, this model of sex difference includes the possibility for a non-binary system of both sex and gender; a manly woman or an effeminate male is not misbehaving or mis-performing gender, but rather, his or her gender is a natural expression caused by, and indicative of, the location(s) of the genital organs throughout his or her lifetime. So, a masculine woman could be masculine without calling into question her femaleness (that is, she is still a woman) nor being accused of transgressing the natural boundaries of femininity. Thinking back to the case of Caster Semenya, and the other female athletes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this model of sex and gender allows space for individuals like Semenya to be “masculine” women and/or to be intersex and not lose their status as female. On the other hand, such a model of gender is undeniably essentialist and therefore, in a sense, limiting. That is, to say that a man or woman whose gender lies outside of a strict binary can only be explained through assumptions about his or her reproductive organs (and their anatomical location) suggests that one’s gender is permanently fixed, tied to anatomical details, and in no way in the hands of the person in question. This model does not suggest, for example, that a woman could independently choose to dress, behave or work as a man; she could only be compelled to do so as a consequence of her anatomy.

Finally, if we consider the telltale signs believed to indicate that a person has undergone a spontaneous sex change, we see a stark difference in the treatment of
sexual orientation in cases of men and women who were believed to have originated as the opposite sex. Huarte states that males who were once female can be recognized not only by their voice and general effeminacy, but also by their tendency to commit “the unspeakable sin”, that is, to engage in same-sex relations. No such correlation is made between females who were once male and the tendency to engage in sexual relations with other women. Huarte is a thorough author, often to the point of redundancy; it seems unlikely that he would simply forget to include this detail when describing the characteristics that identify such women. Rather, it appears that the model of sex difference described by Huarte is more lenient with women in that it allows them greater variation in terms of gender without calling into question their sexual orientation. According to Huarte, men who fall too far from the ideal, masculine body will necessarily display a sexual preference thought to be natural to woman (i.e., attraction to men), but women can be manly or masculine in their speech, features and movements without also being attracted to women. In this way, one perceives in Huarte’s text a different understanding of gender for men and women, in that non-normative gender presentation in men is believed to indicate non-heterosexuality, while for women, the two concepts—gender and sexuality—are perhaps not as closely linked. In a way, this model grants greater leeway or permissiveness with respect to the gender presentation of women because the woman who deviates from normative gender roles can do so without calling into question her sexual preferences.

Though Huarte may be the most well known author of his kind in early modern Spain, he is not the only one writing on gender and sex difference during this time. Juan Fragoso is another such author. Fragoso was born in 1530, in Toledo, and
later went on to study medicine in Alcalá de Henares, graduating in 1552. Although biographical information regarding Fragoso’s life is scarce, documents show that he worked as a surgeon for Felipe II and later, in 1570, began work as a surgeon in the court of Queen Ana of Austria, Felipe II’s fourth wife and the mother of Felipe III (Jacint Corbella 10). Fragoso died in 1597, not before publishing, among other texts, one Cirugía Universal, whose first edition was printed in 1581 (Sagrario Muñoz Calvo 256). The text, which was quickly disseminated both within the Iberian Peninsula and beyond,27 is a compilation of smaller treatises, and it is important to note that Fragoso writes in Castilian, not Latin, with the purpose of reaching a wider audience.28 Despite the lack of biographical information on Fragoso, for Corbella, Fragoso is “la figura más importante en la historia de la medicina legal española de su tiempo … Él llena la medicina legal de nuestro siglo XVI y marca un hito en la época” (9). This, according to Corbella, is due to Fragoso’s extensive work in la medicina legal, or forensic medicine.

The majority of the Cirugía is structured as a series of questions and answers on a vast variety of topics related to human anatomy, illness, treatments, and medical miscellany. Consequently, the text functions as an imagined dialogue between the author, who establishes himself as a medical authority, and his uniformed

27 According to López Piñero, within about a century of its first publication, seventeen editions of the Cirugía had been published: fourteen in Spanish and three in Italian (Ciencia y técnica 366).
28 Corbella notes various moments during which Fragoso offers reasons for writing in Castilian, among them: “Y por proveer al bien común de nuestra nación española, al cual todos tenemos obligación, saqué a la luz este libro en vulgar castellano, porque aunque es verdad que la nueva pragmática obligue a los cirujanos a ser latinos y médicos, ay muchos romancistas que les será necesario tener libros de su facultad en lenguaje que puedan entender” (in Corbella, 11). His desire to create a text accessible to an audience of varied education levels is explicit.

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interrogator, who can be understood to represent the intended audience of the text. This interrogator stands in for Fragoso’s uninformed public, posing questions to the author on assorted issues related to human life and well-being. In other words, the modern reader of Fragoso’s text should understand that the author chooses questions to ask himself in his text, based upon what he perceives to be the most relevant and important topics among his countrymen, and placing them, so to speak, in the mouths of everyday Spaniards.

In the *Questión quinta. Si es posible tornarse las mugeres en hombres?*, Fragoso addresses the issue of sudden sex changes referencing cases of women who were known to have turned into men. He begins by citing Galen, reproducing nearly verbatim the information provided in Huarte’s *Examen*:

> El hombre (como hemos dicho) no difiere de la muger, sino en que tiene los genitales fuera del cuerpo: porque haziendo anatomia de una donzella hallaremos que tiene dos testículos, dos vasos de simiente y la madre con la misma compostura que el miembro del hombre. Por lo qual, si en acabando naturaleza de fabricar un hombre perfecto, le quisiesse convertir en muger, no era menester más de volverle adentro los instrumentos de la generacion. Y si hecha muger la quisiesse volver en varón, con echarle la madre y testículos fuera estava hecho. Esto le ha acontecido muchas vezes a naturaleza, así estando la criatura en el vientre como defuera. (162)

29 In my transcription of Fragoso, and all subsequent transcriptions of manuscripts, I have maintained the original spelling and accentuation except in cases where lack of accentuation may cause confusion between words, for example, between “de” and “dé” or “mas” and “más”, or when accent marks denote verb tense. In some cases, I have added punctuation, to improve readability by breaking up consecutive run-on sentences.
Until this point, Fragoso does not deviate from the common source referenced by his contemporaries.

However, unlike Huarte, Fragoso goes to the trouble of including nearly a dozen stories of women who turned into men. The sheer quantity of examples, anecdotal as they may seem, serves to substantiate Fragoso’s bold claims, lending him an air of informed authority, in addition to his accumulated medical studies. Furthermore, their inclusion in this treatise suggests, at the very least, a perceived, if not also a real, interest on the part of Fragoso’s readership in this phenomenon and in having proof of its veracity:

El hombre (como hemos dicho) no difiere de la muger, sino en que tiene los genitales fuera del cuerpo: porque haziendo anatomia de una donzella hallaremos que tiene dos testículos, dos vasos de simiente y la madre con la misma compostura que el miembro del hombre. Por lo qual, si en acabando naturaleza de fabricar un hombre perfecto, le quisiesse convertir en muger, no era menester mas de volverle adentro los instrumentos de la generacion. Y si hecha muger la quisiesse volver en varón, con echarle la madre y testículos fuera estaba hecho. Esto le ha acontecido muchas vezes a naturaleza, asi estando la criatura en el vientre como defuera. Y desto estan llenas las historias, sino que algunos lo tuvieron por fabuloso (según Plinio refiere) viendo que los Poetas lo trahian entre las manos: pero el dize aver visto en africa una muger que el dia de las bodas se convirtio en hombre y se llamó Lucio Cosicio. Tito Livio dize que el año de quinientos y quarenta de la fundación de Roma, entre otros prodigios que se vieron, fue, que en Spoleto una muger se convirtio en hombre y asi mismo, el año de quinientos y ochenta
y tres de la misma fundacion, siendo Consules Publio Licinio Craso y Cayo Gassio Longino, una moza de poca edad se convirtio en varon y por la novedad del caso, por consejo de los adivinos fue desterrada en una isla desierta. Licinio Murciano testifica que en Argos vio una muger que se llamava Arescusa que después de aver sido casada se convirtio en hombre y le nacieron barbas y se hizo llamar Araescon y se casó con otra muger: y dize, que lo propio acaecio en Smirna a una moça. Hipocrates escribe que en la ciudad de Abderas, Phaetusa muger de Pytheo, en el primer tiempo de su edad era aparejada para partir, y aviendo desterrado a su marido, estuvo muchos meses sin que le baxasse su costumre y luego se le bolvio el cuerpo de varon todo veloso y le nacio la barba y la boz se le hizo aspera. Lo mismo dice que sucedio en Taso a Namisia, muger de Gorgipo. Un Doctor cuenta que en Esgueyra cerca de Coymbra, estava una señora llamada Maria Pacheca, la qual llegada la edad en que suelen tener las mugeres sua purgacion le salio un miembro genital de hombre y luego la vistieron de hombre y la bautizaron llamandola Manuel y después fue casado. Pedro Peramato escribe que no a muchos años que acontecio lo mismo en Cordova. Lorenzo Palmireno en su estudioso cortesano lo afirma y lo prueva con Caleoto Marcio en su libro de doctrina promiscua. El Doctor Fernan Sanchez de Ribera, Medico de Llerena, entre otros tratados a Arias Montano, fue uno de la conversion de las mugeres en hombre y al contrario. Aqui en Madrid se acuerdan muchos que una Monja de Santo Domingo alçando un gran peso se convirtio en hombre y se llamó Rodrigo Montes y recibio ordenes sacros y fue después frayle. (162-63).
It is important to note that these are not vague, mythical references, but stories with concrete dates—recent, in some cases—, locations and sources, cited from doctors and classical sources. They are not limited to temporally nor geographically distant places; some are reported to have occurred in Spain.

Additionally, certain words employed by the author expose the instability and fluidity of gender as perceived by this author who attempts to write about persons who have suddenly changed sex. For example, Fragoso writes “Licinio Murciano testifica que en Argos vio una muger que se llamava Arescusa que despues de aver sido casada se convirtió en hombre y le nacieron barbas y se hizo llamar Araescon y se casó con otra muger” (emphasis mine). If Fragoso truly conceived of the person in question as a man, why describe the woman that s/he married as “another” woman? If Arescusa/Araescon had become a man, would not the wife simply be “a” woman? Later, he says: “en Esgueyra cerca de Coymbra, estava una señora llamada Maria Pacheca, la cual llegada la edad en que suelen tener las mugeres su purgacion le salio un miembro genital de hombre y luego la vistieron de hombre y la bautizaron llamándola Manuel y después fue casado” (emphasis mine). Long after Pacheca “becomes” male, Fragoso continues to use male pronouns to refer to him/her. To what extent are these transformations believed to be “complete”? In Fragoso’s mind, the vestigial characteristics of the original sex are present even at the linguistic level, suggesting that there was a kind of in-between space for these individuals.

After the plethora of examples that he provides, Fragoso returns to the familiar ideas about prenatal sex changes, reiterating Galen’s concepts—the same ones to which Huarte refers—as he explains the vestigial characteristics visible in individuals who experienced a sex change before birth:
También afirman algunos que muchas veces ha hecho naturaleza una hembra y lo ha sido algunos meses en el vientre de su madre y sobreviniendo a los miembros genitales copia de calor, salir a fuera y quedar hecho hombre. Lo cual se conoce después en ciertos movimientos que tienen indecentes para varones, tienen la voz blanda y melosa, son inclinados a hacer obras mugeriles y caen en el pecado nefando, por el contrario tiene muchas veces naturaleza hecho un varón con sus genitales afuera y sobreviniendo frialdad se les buelven adentro y queda hecha hembra. Conocense después en tener el aire y meneos de varón, así en la habla, como en todos los movimientos y otras. Que sea la razón de esto y de engendrarle los miembros genitales dentro o fuera, o salir hembra y no macho, esta claro, visto que el talor dilata y ensancha todas las cosas y que el frío las detiene y encoge. (163)

Fragoso, like Huarte, accepts the notion that these changes may occur prenatally and consequently cause a person to retain characteristics believed to be inherent of the opposite sex—the original sex of the individual who underwent a sudden sex change.

Fragoso’s Cirugía, like Huarte’s, also circulates among medical authors contemporary to him. Among them is Juan Calvo, who studied in Valencia, in one of the first European universities with a cátedra in surgery.30 According to Fresquet Ferrer, while Calvo had the good fortune of studying at the University of Valencia,

30 La enseñanza quirúrgica gozaba ya de cierta tradición en [Valencia], puesto que su lectura data de 1462 en que fue creado un Estudi de este arte o disciplina a instancias de un grupo formado por el gremio de barberos y cirujanos, que desde hacía años venía reivindicando la necesidad de una preparación más rigurosa. El prestigio que llegó a alcanzar este centro dio lugar a que en 1478 obtuviera un privilegio real para disecar cadáveres y que desde 1486 se hiciera obligatorio haber cursado cinco años para poder ejercer como cirujano. (Fresquet Ferrer 255)
whose approach to the study of medicine was particularly forward-thinking, his texts sought to be more didactic than innovative:

En definitiva, la intención de Calvo no iba más allá que la de construir un libro útil y didáctico para los cirujanos «romancistas» y con pocas posibilidades de acceder a tratados de mayor envergadura. Una buena medida del éxito que tuvo su obra es el número de ediciones que alcanzó: doce completas en castellano y dos parciales en francés. (256)31

Calvo’s Cirugía Universal was published in 1580,32 and in its prologue he refers to this didactic purpose, explaining that he sets out to write this text in order to share his knowledge with his peers concerning issues that are relevant and pressing for the other medical professionals with whom he works and/or discusses the field of medicine:

Muchas veces entre mi mismo he pensado (benigno lector) con que poder satisfazer a la afición y buena voluntad que no sólo los Cirujanos que conmigo han oído esta facultad por espacio de doze años, mas aun los demás, los cuales siempre se han holgado comunicar conmigo las cosas arduas, y dificultosas, que en su Arte cada día les acaece; y hallo, que con ninguna cosa mejor, que es hacer lo que muchas veces me han rogado, y es, que sacase a luz lo que les había leido, y dado por escrito… (1)

31 López Piñero coincides with Fresquet Febrer’s assessment of Calvo’s text as primarily didactic purpose (Ciencia y técnica 366) and Okholm Skaarup has suggested that Calvo published the Cirugía in the hopes that it would help him earn an appointment as chair of surgery at the University of Valencia.

32 This particular text was reprinted ten times in Spanish, and twice in French (López Piñero, Ciencia y técnica 366).
While it is impossible to prove the extent to which these texts were actually read by everyday members of society, and not solely by scientific and medical professionals with university training, there is certainly a clear sense of transmission of ideas and dialogue among authors, doctors and students of medicine and surgery, by which ideas about sex difference and sex changes circulate.

Calvo, unlike other contemporary authors, is not as willing to accept the possibility of sudden sex changes as they are described by figures such as Huarte and Fragoso, whom he references by name when he refutes ideas Fragoso33 discusses in his *Cirugia*. Rather, he proposes that perhaps some individuals who already display characteristics belonging to the opposite sex might be caused to turn “completely” into the opposite sex. That is, according to Calvo, a woman with no masculine characteristics could not possibly experience a spontaneous sex change. Such a change would only be plausible for women who are already “manly” and “robust”. Calvo explains his understanding of the one-sex model as follows:

Ha hecho naturaleza estos vasos [espermáticos] en las mugeres para que por ellos baxasse sangre venal y arterial, para que della en los testes se hiziesse simiente y por ello les hizo naturaleza de sustancia rara y espongiosa aunque

33 Okholm Skaarup notes a deep medical rivalry between Calvo and Fragoso, suggesting that Fragoso’s *Cirugia* might have been seen as a “serious contender” to Calvo’s: “In one of a series of similar instances of medical rivalry between Spanish scholars and universities with regional differences and mutual antipathies, Fragoso’s name had only negative associations in Calvo’s account. For Calvo, the medical practitioners of Valencia towered far above other contenders in their unmatched standards of teachings and research” (55). Of course, it is not that Fragoso and Calvo developed a rivalry solely based on different interpretations of Galen’s model of sex difference. However, perhaps any point of disagreement was capitalized upon in their respective treatises.

34 Sagrario Muñoz Calvo cites the first publication date of Fragoso’s *Cirugia* as 1581, which creates an unresolved discrepancy with respect to Juan Calvo’s text, in which he implies having read Fragoso’s at the time of publication of his own text, allegedly a year earlier. The copies held at the BNE are later editions published between 1606 and 1643, and provide no clarification on the matter.
esta sustancia es más fría y flaca comparada con la de los testículos del hombre, y así vemos que por ser fríos no les hizo redondos ni los puso a la parte de afuera como en los hombres, aunque Fragoso en su glosa dice que una muger puede tener tanto calor en las partes genitales que le salgan los testículos fuera y que de muger se vuelva hombre y en confirmación de esto trae muchas historias, empero yo tengo por imposible muchas cosas que trae allí, aunque bien puede ser que una muger nazca tan robusta y varonil que por el mucho calor le vengan a salir los testículos algún tanto fuera, empero dezir que alzando un gran peso una monja se convirtió en hombre, tengolo por fabuloso. (498)

If we were to imagine the anatomical configuration as these authors conceived of it, the fully female body is one that contains reproductive organs that are entirely contained inside the body. Consequently, such an individual would display the behaviors, characteristics, airs and other such traits accepted, in early modern Spain, as feminine and her body would be fully capable of all parts of the female role in reproduction. As Calvo imagines it, a woman of this sort could never turn into a man; in order for that to be possible, the woman in question would need to be, anatomically speaking, not fully female, which would be obvious by her “robustness” and “manliness”.

In spite of these nuances, Calvo does not negate the effects of heat and cold on a person’s anatomy, nor does he refute the possibility that, as humoral theory argues, temperature changes might affect a person’s biological sex. Furthermore, his understanding of anatomy and gender exposes his belief in a model of sex difference and of gender that exists along a continuum. Finally, Calvo, while explaining the
reproductive capabilities of men and women, presents ideas about men’s and women’s respective roles in reproduction not found in the other texts mentioned previously.\(^{35}\) His explanation provides further insight on the spectrum of sex difference, as he highlights the existence of female bodies with male reproductive capabilities:

Y no hemos de pensar (como falsamente algunos pensaron) que el simiente solamente se halla en los hombres, porque también se halla en las mugeres, lo cual por la experiencia se muestra y la anatomía lo enseña, porque tienen ellas sus vasos espermáticos, como los hombres, y no solo los vasos mas aun todas las partes sirvientes a la generación se hallan en las mugeres, así como en los hombres…El semen que en las mugeres se halla es poco, acuoso y frío, comparado con el del hombre, y por tanto el solo no es bueno para concebir, como luego diremos…Aquí podría alguno decir que pues que en las mugeres se hallan los dos principios de la generación, que ellas pueden engendrar sin ayuntamiento de varón. A esto respondo con Galeno que no pueden, porque el simiente de ellas es poco acuoso y muy húmedo y flojo y se hallan algunas mugeres varoniles y fuertes, que tengan buen simiente y fecundo, digo, que

\(^{35}\) One reason for this discrepancy might be that Calvo studied in Valencia, whereas Huarte and Fragoso studied in Alcalá de Henares. In Valencia, Calvo studied under Luís Collado, a disciple of Andreas Vesalius. Vesalius advocated for the use of dissections of human cadavers (as opposed to animals) for the study of medicine and surgery and challenged many of the theories offered by Galen, as C.D. O’Malley explains in *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels, 1514-1564*, as does Bjørn Okholm Skaarup in *Anatomy and Anatomists in Early Modern Spain*. This focus on dissection as a “method for producing and presenting new anatomical evidence” rather than “to prove the unquestioned authority of ancient medicine” (Bjørn Okholm Skaarup 10) might further explain Calvo’s negation of theories that he himself might have seen disproven by dissecting human cadavers, such as the literal application of the one-sex model, as he would have had access to dissections that demonstrated that women and men did not possess identical organs. According to Fresquet Ferrer, the University of Valencia received a special royal decree that permitted dissections of human cadavers to be carried out (255).
In this passage, Calvo, who is so resistant to the possibility of women turning into men, admits the possibility of female bodies with male reproductive capabilities. He does not even find it necessary to reference the location of their reproductive organs as a possible explanation for their excessive production of “male semen”. It is important to note that these women are distinguished not only for their internal characteristics (the reproductive fluids that they produce) but by their external characteristics. In order to produce “male semen” the women must also be “manly” and “strong”, or perhaps it is the other way around: that because they are “manly” and “strong”, they are able to produce “male semen”. Calvo is very clearly referring here to female bodies who fall outside of both a sexual and a gender binary. They are not fully female in the biological, anatomical sense, and consequently, they are not fully feminine in their gender. One sees in Calvo that even a more conservative approach to the implications of humoral theory inevitably leads to recognition of non-binary models of sex difference and gender.

Fray Antonio Fuentelapeña, a Capuchin friar living in Spain during the seventeenth century, is another of the early modern Spanish authors who writes extensive treatises on the natural world. While other texts I have included here are primarily medical treatises, Fuentelapeña’s is much more philosophical in nature. In fact, it is not a Cirugía at all, but a treatise primarily focused on monsters and marvels: El ente dilucidado: Tratado de monstruos y fantasmas, first published in Madrid in 1676. However, the text is structured similarly to Fragoso’s Cirugía in that
each section begins with a question, which Fuentelapeña addresses in the following pages. Like many of the other authors included in this project, Fuentelapeña treats topics ranging from multiple births to the duration of sleep to hermaphrodites, eventually arriving at a question about spontaneous sex changes: “Duda XVI: Si las mugeres pueden convertirse en hombres, y los hombres en mugeres?” (241). Unlike Fragoso, Fuentelapeña does not simply reiterate the Galenic ideas cited and expounded upon by other authors. Rather, he constructs a logical argument consisting of various pieces of evidence in order to support his affirmation that women can, in fact, turn into men, and vice versa.

The first piece of his argument is a list of authors who have cited instances of sudden sex changes. His argument goes as follows:

Lo segundo, porque no hay repugnancia alguna para lo dicho en lo natural. Y lo tercero, quasi a priori, porque las fuerzas de la naturaleza por ser flacas, y débiles en los niños, no todas veces pueden arrojar afuera el miembro viril, que es el mas perfecto, y al que aspira, hasta que después con alguna fuerza, ó con algún notable incremento de calor, y vigorosidad prorrumpe en él. (242)

While Fuentelapeña also presents a naturalized explanation of sex changes—that is, they are not described as abominations or deviations against Nature—he is the only one of these authors that makes reference to a particular weakness of Nature as the cause for a sudden sex change; others attributed these mutations to a change in Nature’s will.

Fuentelapeña relies implicitly upon humoral theory but he does not detail it in the way that Huarte and Fragoso do, arguing that such changes occur not only in humans but also in other species as well:
Que à mi ver también el hombre puede mudar sexo, y convertirse en muger…

Lo primero, porque así lo tienen San Agustín, Cardano, Marcelo, Domado y otros que cita, y sigue Torreblanca citado arriba. Lo segundo, porque no solo en los hombres, sino también en las aves ha sucedido dicha transmutación, lo cual confirma con ejemplos San Agustín…Lo tercero, porque así sucedió a Thyresia, que de varón se mudó, ó convirtió en muger. Lo quarto, porque en esto no se descubre implicación alguna en lo natural, ni aun mayor razón de imposibilidad (aunque si dificultad mayor, como luego diré) que en la mutación de hombre en muger, sino veamosla. Y lo 5. porque si por el incremento de calor puede mudarse el sexo de femenino en viril, porque no podrá surtir efecto contrario por la diminución de calor, pues las causas de incrementos y diminución son contrarias y á contrarias causas deben seguirse efectos contrarios. (242-43)

Finally, Fuentelapeña’s stance challenges traditional beliefs about the implications of the one-sex model and humoral theory on sex change because he argues that women are not the only ones who can experience these changes. Huarte too, makes this suggestion, but he does not enter into a detailed argument in support of it, as Fuentelapeña does. Fuentelapeña in particular demonstrates how humoral theory, if accepted, cannot be understood to only cause women to turn into men. He is yet another example of an early modern Spanish author who is reluctant to selectively apply a theory that was so fundamental for the science and medicine of the period.

In another section of his text, Fuentelapeña considers the relationship between sudden sex changes and hermaphrodites, phenomena that he considers to be closely
In the following chapter, I will examine the social and legal aspects of such individuals; here I will limit myself to the medical and scientific beliefs related to hermaphroditism. Luciano López Gutiérrez explains that many early modern doctors believed that hermaphrodites were born due to especially potent seminal fluid from both the man and the woman. In these cases, where the fluid of one partner did not “cede” to that of the other, Nature offered a compromise, allowing the conceived fetus to develop both male and female genitalia. Others, following Galen, believed that it was the stars, whose particular alignment at the moment of conception, could cause the fetus to be a hermaphrodite (85). According to Moreno Mengíbar and Vázquez García, in early modern Western Europe we find two contrasting conceptions of hermaphroditism, one positive, and one negative. On the one hand, it is miraculous, combining both sexes in one body. Popular belief suggested that hermaphrodites might possess magical or exceptional knowledge. On the other hand, some believed hermaphrodites to be monstrous, a harbinger of bad luck. This line of thinking also considered hermaphrodites to be born through a divine punishment for “unnatural” sexual acts, such as sodomy (189). This ambivalence toward the figure of the hermaphrodite is expressed in contemporary literature, too, for example, in Mateo Alemán’s El Guzmán de Alfarache, in which mention of a hermaphrodite is made with explicit reference to the good omens it carried.37

36 I use the term “hermaphrodite” here because it is the term used by the authors included in this project. Modern medicine has replaced “hermaphrodite” with the more accurate and less stigmatized “intersex”.

37 “El año mil quinientos y doce, en Ravena, poco antes que fuese saqueada, hubo en Italia crueldas guerras. Y en esta ciudad nació un monstruo muy extraño, que puso grandísima admiración. Tenía de la cintura para arriba todo su cuerpo, cabeza y rostro de criatura humana; pero un cuerno en la frente. Faltabanle los brazos y dióle naturaleza por ellos en su lugar dos alas de murciélago. Tenía en el pecho figurada la Y pitagórica y en el estómago
On the subject of hermaphrodites, Fuentelapeña, for his part, has this to say:

Para inteligencia de esta duda, es necesario suponer, que no solo ay
Andróginos ó Hermafroditas descubiertos, y manifiestos, sino que también los
ay ocultos. Esto es, que no solo ay personas en quien exteriormente se hallan
los dos sexos, sino que las ay también, que teniendo descubierto el sexo
masculino, interiormente tienen el femenino oculto, de modo, que siendo en lo
que se ve solo varones, en lo que no se ve son también hembras y en uno y en
otro son Hermafroditas. Pruebase ser esto así. Lo primero, porque (como abajo
veremos) se han hallado algunos, que siendo en lo exterior solo varones, han
parido. Lo segundo, porque muchos han mudado de sexo, la qual no pudiera
ser (en sentencia de algunos) sin ser Hermafroditas ocultos, como se dirá
después. Lo tercero, porque se a visto muchos varones, que tenían las
purgaciones menstruales cada mes, evacuándolas por la orina: luego porque
interiormente eran mugeres. (229-30)

On one hand, Fuentelapeña seems to question the general possibility of sex mutations,
excepting the instances in which a person is hermaphroditic, which he argues, is the

hacia el vientre una cruz bien formada. Era hermafrodito y muy formados los dos naturales
sexos. No tenía más de un muslo y en él una pierna con su pie de milano y las garras de la
misma forma. En el índolo de la rodilla tenía un ojo solo. De aquestas monstruosidades tenían
todos muy grande admiración. Y considerando personas muy doctas que siempre semejantes
monstruos suelen ser prodigiosos pusiéronse a especular su significación. Y entre las más que
se dieron, fue sola bien recibida la siguiente: que el cuerno significaba orgullo y ambición;
las alas, inconstancia y ligereza; falta de brazos, falta de buenas obras; el pie de ave de rapiña,
robos, usuras y avaricias; el ojo en la rodilla, afición a vanidades y cosas mundanas; los dos
sexos, sodomía y bestial brúteza. En todos los cuales vicios abundaba por entonces toda Italia,
por lo cual Dios la castigaba con aquel azote de guerras y disensiones. Pero la cruz y la Y
eran señales buenas y dichosas porque la Y en el pecho significaba virtud y la cruz sobre el
vientre, que si, reprimiendo las torpes carnalidades, abrazasen en su pecho la virtud, les daría
Dios paz y ablandaría su ira. Ves aquí en caso negado que, cuando todo corra turbio, iba mi
padre con el hilo de la gente y no fue solo el que pecó. Harto más digno de culpa serían tú, si
pecases, por mejor escuela que has tenido”. (46)
only way that a person can experience said changes. Incidentally, this position
contradicts his answer to the question regarding whether or not women can turn into
men and viceversa. No mention is made, at that point, of the necessary condition that
a person be a hermaphrodite in order to change sex. Regardless, his stance on “hidden
hermaphrodites” puts into play the possibility that members of the general population,
perhaps unbeknownst to them, possess both male and female sex organs. In this way,
the potential to suddenly become a member of the opposite sex is presented as a very
real possibility for anyone, as Fuentelapeña does not offer any way of knowing if one
is a “hidden hermaphrodite”. The explanation of “hidden” or “secret” hermaphrodism
leads Fuentelapeña to argue that men who are also “women on the inside” (“en lo
interior, mugeres”) could plausibly contain the necessary materials for reproduction
without the participation of a woman.

Another author who wrote on issues of sex difference is José de Rivilla Bonet
y Pueyo, a seventeenth-century doctor and surgeon from Aragón, who studied both
medicine and surgery, most likely in Zaragoza. According do José Toribio Medina,
don Melchor Fernández Porcarrero, count of Monclova, viceroy and governor in
Mexico and Peru, Terrafirme and Chile, took Rivilla with him, naming him cirujano
de cámara. In Lima, Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo oversaw the surgery department of the
limeño Protomedicato and worked as a surgeon in the Hospital real de mujeres in
Lima (215-216). It was there that he published his text, Desvíos de la naturaleza ó
tratado del origen de los monstruos, in 1695, in which he too outlines an
understanding of the human body that shares the spectral nature of the one-sex model.
However, Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo uses the one-sex model to defend the female sex and
challenges the notion that the male body is necessarily perfect. The author begins by
defining the term “monster”, which he immediately connects to the topic of sex difference, noting that many authors have attempted to include women in this category. He first challenges the argument that all women should be considered monstrous by virtue of not being male by arguing that women are necessary for the propagation of the human species.

Then, without explicitly referring here to the one-sex model, Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo argues that there are actually very few men who could be considered a “perfect” male specimen. In this way, he suggests that individual persons exist along a continuum, in which deviations from the ideal human are considered part of a natural order of the world:

Aristoteles en primer lugar si no nos atrevemos a decir que le erró, a lo menos ha habido quien diga que no le acertó: dixo ser el Monstruo un concepto vicioso y procreado fuera de la intención de la Naturaleza con falta o exceso de alguna cosa en El. Siguieronle de los Juristas…y de los Medicos. Y segun Paulo Zachias tanto faltó para que esta definición fuese congrua que por ella el mismo aristoteles incurrió en el error de tener por primera degeneración en Monstruo la mujer, así por la falta que tiene de perfección viril, como por averla querido hacer una obra preterintencional de la naturaleza, cuyo directo fin es producir un animal perfecto: y aunque suponiendo ser Monstruo cualquier concepto vicioso por falta o exceso de su perfección respectivamente a la del varón pudiese decirle en algun modo haber degenerado la Naturaleza en la mujer, empero como es falso el supuesto, es absurda la consecuencia, porque dado que faltasse en la generación femínea (de cuya causa hablaremos despues) no por eso esta le diría monstruosa, por
no solo ser fuera de su intencion sino antes ser pretendida de ella para la
propagacion y conservacion de la especie, no menos que la del varón: por
cuya razon (como le suele decir) mulier est vin occafionatus: esto es, criada
por ocasion, y causa de la conservación de su especie, y assi ella y el varón, en
quanto a la generación, son todo el hombre..Si luego que la naturaleza en el
hombre falta a su perfeccion en qualquiera cosa, hubieramos de dar un
Monstruo, mas poblado estuviera el Orbe de ellos, que de hombres
verdaderos, siendo tan singulares los perfectos. (citado en La crónica médica,
244)

For Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo, both women and “imperfect” men are distinct from
“perfect” men. While women are examples of persons whose physical body falls short
of the ideal (male) perfection, there are many imperfect males who also do not
achieve said physical perfection. What Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo is dealing with is not
explicitly tied to sudden sex changes or anomalous gender. However, his commentary
on human (im)perfection speaks to the concept of an anatomical spectrum; at one end
of said spectrum we find the perfect, ideal male body, examples of which, according
to this author, are few and far between. His understanding of the human species
depends upon a non-binary model of the human form. This explanation of the variety
of individuals, male and female, logically coincides with the non-binary model of
human gender; given that anatomy (location of reproductive organs, specifically),
determines gender (or external physical and social traits associated with one sex or the
other), individuals with imperfect male bodies will have imperfect masculine gender.
That is, they will not display the valued physical and behavioral traits embodied by
the ideal male subject. The author does not condemn imperfection; rather,
imperfection, like so many concepts and conditions examined in this project, is
normalized and described as a benign part of the natural order.

Medicine and science are not only addressed in specifically medical texts, but
can also be found in popular literature of early modern Spain; in Medical Cultures of
the Early Modern Spanish Empire, Enrique García Santo-Tomás goes so far as to say
that understanding early modern Spanish literature is impossible to do without first
understanding contemporary medicine (149). The necessity of this interdisciplinary
approach can be seen in the work of various early modern scholars. Daniel Heiple has
demonstrated that Lope de Vega responds directly to Huarte through his play, La
prueba de los ingenios and that María de Zayas similarly engages with Huarte in her
Novelas amorosas y ejemplares.38 In Portentos y prodigiosos del Siglo de Oro, López
Gutiérrez provides a comprehensive look at prevalent attitudes in early modern Spain
toward monsters, giants, mysteries, ghosts and natural marvels. The author relies on
historical documents, medical texts and literary sources as well to expose the extent to
which phenomena such as werewolves and literally murderous gazes formed a part of
of collective knowledge and beliefs. As an example, the author notes that Lope de
Vega wrote to the Duke of Sessa about a convent that was forced to relocate because
it was originally located next to a river where the friars washed their undergarments,
which caused the local women who drank from the water to become pregnant.
According to López Gutiérrez, Lope’s belief in these unlikely pregnancies was shared
by many of his time, including Fuentelapeña (43). Similarly, as López Gutiérrez
points out, Cervantes intervenes, in chapter LXII of the second part of Don Quixote,

38 In “Profeminist Reactions to Huarte’s Misogyny in Lope de Vega’s La prueba de los
ingenios and María de Zayas’ amorosas y ejemplares”, Daniel Heiple explores explicit
references to humorism and Huarte’s use of it to prove women’s intellectual inferiority.
in an attempt to dismantle the belief in phenomena such as talking heads, which were believed to hold powers of wisdom that enabled them to predict the future (93).

While I do not equate these marvels directly with the circulating stories of spontaneous sex changes, the interaction of authors such as Lope de Vega, who accepts them, and Cervantes, who apparently does not, with these beliefs speaks to the feasibility with which stories of this ilk were received in early modern Spain. Lope’s participation in such a belief system is not only indicative of the extent to which ideas about Nature and her marvels reached a community beyond scientific authorities, but it also suggests that authors of popular literature in early modern Spain could serve as effective vehicles for the propagation of such information. On the other hand, Cervantes surely would not have deemed it necessary to criticize such beliefs were they not prevalent in the collective consciousness of his peers. The actions of both authors with regard to these ideas and beliefs are evidence of their circulation and acceptance among the public at large. This acceptance, as I will show in the following chapter, is of utmost importance for our (modern) study of the reception of individuals with anomalous or ambiguous sex and/or gender during early modern Spain. The general populace’s willingness to believe in these phenomena speaks to their willingness to accept such individuals.

It appears, however, that Cervantes did not reject and criticize all popular, early modern beliefs; while he mocks the idea of giant, fortune-telling heads, he seems to have accepted contemporary theories of sex difference, as published by Huarte. B E.C. Riley and Rafael Salillas find evidence that the author was not only familiar with but also influenced by the material published by Huarte. Salillas dedicates an entire book (Un gran inspirador de Cervantes: Juan Huarte de San
to the parallels between Huarte’s ideas on men’s intellectual capacities, mental wellness and professional propensities and the creation of Don Quixote as a literary character. E. C. Riley, in Cervantes’ *Theory of the Novel*, makes similar claims about Cervantes’ familiarity with Huarte’s *Examination of Men’s Wits*.

Salillas finds evidence to support that Huarte’s ideas on human character influenced Cervantes’ construction of his own literary characters: “en la revelación de la colosal figura literaria de *El Ingenioso Hidalgo* influyó caracterizadamente con sus enseñanzas y doctrinas, aquel insigne médico, el doctor Juan Huarte” (35). Salillas devotes an entire book to pointing out the ways in which Cervantes’ characters and texts reflect ideas in human nature and human character put into circulation in Spain by Huarte. Riley echoes Salillas’ affirmations about Huarte’s influence on Cervantes (9). While these scholars are not referring directly to the theories of sex difference published by Huarte and their influence in Cervantine texts—they propose that Cervantes was influenced by Huarte in a broader sense—it would not be logical to conclude that Cervantes was familiar with all of Huarte’s *Examen* except the section

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39 Salillas offers the following as evidence of Huarte’s influence in Cervantes’ literary creation:

1. a El calificativo de Ingenioso Hidalgo es un transporte del *Examen de Ingenios*
2. a La modalidad del trastorno mental de *Don Quixote* deriva de textos señalados de la misma obra
3. a Lo propio ocurre con la modalidad del trastorno mental y la significación de *El Licenciado Vidriera*
4. a Cervantes es autor de un *Examen de Ingenios* en la *Galatea*
5. a Cervantes transforma una doctrina psicofisiológica de Huarte en un simbolismo de acción dramática en el *Persiles y Segismunda*. (40)

40 These conclusions are reiterated by Virués-Ortega, Buela-Casal, Carrasco-Lazareno, Rivero-Dávila and Quevedo-Blasco: “Beyond the scientific realm, renowned writers such as Cervantes...made an obvious use of Huarte’s characterology. A number of scholars have agreed that the personality and the physical characteristics of Cervantes’ *El Quijote* accurately fit Huarte’s characterological scheme. In addition, there are parts of *El Quijote* that are almost copied literally from the *Trial*” (24).
that dealt with sudden sex changes. Indeed, explicit reference to this phenomenon can be found in his play *La gran sultana Catalina de Oviedo*. Lamberto, disguised as a woman, claims to have turned into a man when his disguise is discovered.41

The more recent work of Sherry Velasco expands upon these arguments, finding explicit connections between Huarte’s chapter on sex difference and the *mujeres varoniles* in Cervantine texts. In an article entitled “*Marimachos, hombrunas, barbudas*: The Masculine Woman in Cervantes”, Velasco argues that the manly women in texts such as the *Quixote*—for example, Maritornes and Aldonza Lorenzo—appear to have been crafted with the information that Huarte provides on sudden sex changes in mind:

Given Huarte’s classification of the loud, clever, muscular, hairy, and homely women with the low levels of the “feminine fluids”, it would seem that according to Sancho’s description, Aldonza Lorenzo is a perfect match for early modern medical and psycho-logical doctrines regarding the masculine woman. Despite the narrator’s reference to Aldonza as “de buen parecer”, Sancho describes her as the ultimate marimacho…Likewise, Maritornes, “ancha de cara, llana de cogote, de nariz roma, del un ojo tuerta y del otro no muy sana” (I, 16; 198), in addition to her extracurricular activities with certain guests at the inn, would also pertain to Huarte’s and Cortés’s classification of women with high levels of the masculine humors… (71-2)

41 “Siendo niña, a un varón sabió oí decir las excelencias y mejoras que tenía el hombre más que la hembra. Desde allí me aficioné a ser varón, de manera que le pedí esta merced al cielo con asistencia. Cristiana me la negó y mora no me la niega. Mahoma a quien hoy gimiendo con lágrimas y ternezas, con fervorosos deseos, con votos y con promesas, con ruegos y con suspiros, que a una roca enternecerían, desde el serral hasta aquí, en silencio y con inmensa eficacia le he pedido, me hiciese merced tan nueva. Acudió a mis ruegos tiernos, enternecido el profeta, y en un instant volviome en fuerte varón de hembra” (2721-2744)
While Velasco refers here only to the “masculine woman”, and does not explicitly mention sex changes, I would argue that it is impossible to understand one concept without the other, since, as I have shown, sudden sex changes were believed to result in masculine women or effeminate men. Taken together, the work of scholars such as Velasco, Riley, and Salillas, among others, indicates that the information propagated in medical treatises—the tabloid-esque narratives of sudden sex changes, the implications of humoral theory for sex difference and sex changes, the consequences that a non-binary model of sex difference had on the physical appearance and behavior of everyday people—was absorbed by a readership and/or audience that went beyond medical and scientific elites, reaching, for example, esteemed and published authors, as well. Cervantes, who is quick to mock and dispel many of the popular beliefs held by his peers, is still willing to accept the possibility of sudden sex changes and appears to have modeled his own literary characters off of descriptions provided by Huarte. This is just one piece of evidence that speaks to the extent to which these ideas were disseminated throughout Spain; indeed, that non-scientific authors such as Cervantes were made aware of them is significant in and of itself, but this becomes even more important if one takes into account the fact that Cervantes, too, is an author who reached a wide audience through his own works. The influences on Cervantes and his texts, then, also reach Cervantes’ audience. Of course, we cannot equate Cervantes, and other literate members of early modern Spanish society, with the populace at large, many of whom were illiterate. I have already addressed oral transmission as a means of spreading and sharing knowledge about medicine. I include scholarship on Huarte’s influence on Cervantes in order to show that medical information was circulated not only by individuals whose work, to whatever degree,
involved medicine and healing, but rather that it was of relevance and interest even for authors of novels and comedias.

Like Cervantes, Antonio de Torquemada was also influenced by circulating beliefs about bodies, sex and reproduction, as is evident in his literary production, which actively engages with these topics. Torquemada was born in León, at the beginning of the sixteenth century; James Elsdon estimates 1510 to be the approximate year of his birth. Torquemada studied in Salamanca, beginning at the age of ten (Elsdon 128), though, according to Giovanni Allegra, he never obtained any form of official degree or title (10). However, it is evident through his text, Jardín de Flores curiosas (1568), its content and references, that the author was familiar with an extensive bibliography of classical texts. In addition to classical sources, Elsdon notes the influence of folklore and supernatural beliefs in Torquemada’s texts.42

Torquemada travelled throughout Spain and to Italy, visiting Rome and Sardinia, before finally settling down in Benavente, where he worked as secretary to Antonio Alfonso de Pimental, Count of Benavente (Elsdon 130). Torquemada’s text was well known among his peers; in fact, the Jardín is among the books burned by the priest in Don Quixote, along with another text attributed to Torquemada, Don Olivante de Laura.43 While these Cervantine characters condemn the Jardín, Alfonso Reyes, in

42 On the influence of folklore in Torquemada’s texts, Elsdon says: “One has the impression that our author is well-acquainted with the folklore peculiar to northwestern Spain, and that he cannot hide his truly Celtic inclination toward the marvelous and supernatural. One of the best stories in the Jardín, the “story of the man who saw his own funeral” comes directly from Asturian and Galician folklore” (127).

43 “¿Quién es ese tonel?” dijo el cura.
“Este es”, respondió el barbero, “Don Olivante de Laura”.
“El autor de ese libro”, dijo el cura, “fue el mismo que compuso a Jardín de flores, y en verdad que no sepa determinar cuál de los dos libros es más verdadero, o por decir mejor, menos mentiroso. Sólo sé decir que éste irá al corral por disparatado y arrogante". (50)
his book *De un autor censurado en el Quijote*, suggests that Cervantes’ *Persiles* draws some inspiration from the *Jardín*, in terms of the exotic and marvelous stories told by Torquemada’s characters and the far-reaching travels of the characters in the *Persiles* (45). Such intertextualities and inspirations serve to further bolster the argument that texts containing information on sex differences circulated among a wide readership.

The *Jardín* might best be categorized as a novel in dialogue; its three characters, Antonio, Luis and Bernardo, talk among themselves about a wide variety of topics and take turns educating one another on the different issues that arise in their conversation. The text is dedicated to one Don Diego Sarmiento de Sotomayor, Bishop of Astorga. In the prologue, Torquemada states explicitly that his reason for writing this text is driven by a desire for and appreciation of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, making clear as well that he hopes to share his knowledge with his reader:

Es tan poderosa la Naturaleza y tan varia en sus cosas, y el mundo tan grande, que cada día vienen a nuestra noticia muchas novedades, de las cuales V. S. R., como prudentísimo, no se maravillará; y aunque o todas o las más habrá oído y leído, holgará de ver recopiladas aquí algunas de ellas, con otras materias curiosas y peregrinas. Esto me ha dado atrevimiento a dirigir a V.S. estos tratadillos, llamados *Jardín de flores curiosas*, para que, debajo de su amparo y favor, puedan salir a luz, sin temor del juicio de los que murmuran de todo lo que ven y leen. (96)

Torquemada entrusts Sarmiento de Sotomayor with this text because he believes that it is a worthy contribution to the collective knowledge of his society and wants to
ensure its publication and circulation. One should therefore read the Jardín bearing in mind Torquemada’s didactic purpose.

Before Torquemada’s characters delve into the various topics to be covered in their conversation, they first discuss the concept of Nature, which they establish as inextricably tied to divine power. Bernardo, one of Torquemada’s three speakers, requests a definition of Nature before they speak of the “maravillas que hace y obra” and Antonio, another of the three, answers him:

pués que nosotros todo lo que trataremos ha de ser cristianamente, dejemos los autores y filósofos gentiles y sigamos solamente a los cristianos, entre los cuales, me parece que el que mejor ha acertado fue Levino Lenio, el cual, siguiendo a Santo Tomás…dice que ‘Naturaleza no es otra cosa sino ‘la voluntad o razón divina, causadora de todas las cosas engendradas y conservadora de ellas, después que se engendran, conforme a las calidades de cada una’. Y, según esto, este nombre o vocablo, naturaleza (de que comúnmente usamos), no sirve de más de representarnos la voluntad y mente de Dios, por la cual se hace todo lo criado y se deshace y resuelve a sus tiempos. (104-05)

The divine character of Nature, or the understanding of Nature as a manifestation of God’s will, means that the phenomena carried out by Nature and described by authors from Huarte to Torquemada are not disasters, mistakes, or deviations from the norm. Rather, they are explicitly understood as the direct result of God’s plan for humanity, enacted by Nature. Therefore, individuals who undergo a sudden sex change, and later display vestigial characteristics of their original sex, are by no means aberrations; the
discourse used to describe them naturalizes and normalizes their condition, placing them within a divine plan, carefully organized and with no room for error.

Further along in the Jardín, Torquemada introduces the topic of women who turn into men. Bernardo, incapable of believing in such a thing, insists that it must be “fábula”, but Antonio assures him that it is very real. He directs his companions to Pliny, and proceeds to cite, nearly verbatim, many of the cases included in Fragoso’s and Calvo’s treatises. After Antonio recapitulates these cases, in addition to some new ones, Luís intervenes to tell of another case:

En un lugar, no muy lejos de adonde ahora vivimos, estaba una mujer casada con un hombre labrador, no muy rico; y como esta mujer no tuviese hijos, el marido y ella estaban mal avenidos, y así, le daba tan áspera vida, fuese de celos o por otra causa que la mujer, una noche, hurtando los vestidos de un mozo que en casa estaba, vestida con ellos, se fue y anduvo por algunas partes fingiendo ser hombre, y así, vivió y ganaba para sustentarse; y estando así, o que la naturaleza obrase en ella con tal pujante virtud que bastase para ello o que la imaginación intensa de verse en el hábito de hombre tuviese tanto poder que viniese a hacer el efecto, ella se convirtió en varón, y se casó con otra mujer, lo cual no osaba descubrir ni decir como mujer de poco entendimiento; y hasta que un hombre que antes la conocía, hallándose en el lugar de donde estaba, y viendo la semejanza que tenía con la que él le había conocido, le preguntó si era su hermano, y esta mujer, hecha varón, fiándose de él, le dijo el secreto de todo que había sucedido, rogándole con gran instancia que en ninguna manera le descubriese. (189-90)
Torquemada, through the mouthpieces of his three characters, uses the *Jardín* as a means to dispel disbelief around these allegedly natural phenomena. The material covered by the author leaves no doubt as to whether or not the information regarding sex difference and sudden sex changes was limited to individuals with formal medical or scientific training; clearly, it was not, as Torquemada—neither doctor nor surgeon, though educated to some degree—was familiar with this information and deemed it important enough to share with his readers in a text that is explicitly didactic.

In this chapter I have analyzed texts written by medical authorities who take on issues of sex difference, sex changes, human reproduction and hermaphroditism. Each of these authors comes to slightly different conclusions about the matters at hand, relying to some degree on Galenic humorism to explain how heat controls the location of the genital organs and thus biological sex and gender. At first glance, their differing perspectives and conclusions seem to clash with one another, casting doubt on the validity of their texts and on their authority in the context of early modern Spain. Calvo doubts that a feminine woman could spontaneously turn into a man, but suggests that an especially “viril” woman’s testicles might slip out slightly (“salir algún tanto fuera”) from their internal position. Fuentelapeña posits that sex changes might only occur in “hidden” hermaphrodites, opening up the possibility that any given person, unbeknownst to him or her, might possess sexual organs belonging to both sexes. He also assures his readers that men can turn into women just as women can turn into men, as does Huarte. The one-sex model of sex difference is used to explain not only sex difference and spontaneous sex changes, but also, by Rivilla Bonet y Pueyo, to propose a spectrum of human anatomy as a whole, ranging from male perfection to monstrosities. Finally, Fuentelapeña relies on theological
arguments in order to consider same-sex reproduction, thus questioning the extent to
which reproductive capabilities were a part of a person’s sex and/or gender or a
separate matter entirely.

However, perhaps the single greatest, most conclusive interpretation of these
texts is not what people thought about gender and sex difference in early modern
Spain but rather, that they were thinking about it at all. In the introduction to Gender,
Identity and Representation in Spain's Golden Age (2000), Anita Stoll and Dawn
Smith suggest that gender concerns were already a pervasive issue in early modern
Spain:

Seventeenth century Spanish theater, in which there was no prohibition of
women actors, nevertheless reflected a preoccupation with gender roles in
hundreds of plays which included the figure of a woman dressed as a man.
The theatrical use of cross-dressing defined as the act of creation through
performance of a different gender (Butler) highlights the wider interest in the
subject of gender among writers of the period. Huarte de San Juan’s treatise
on the difference between men and women responds to the general
questioning and concern in the period, as does Fray Luís de Leon’s La
perfecta casada. As Marjorie Garber has shown…the pervasiveness of cross-
dressing in literature in many cultures throughout the centuries confirms that
gender studies began long before their present appeal. (11)

Stoll and Smith are not primarily interested in the discussions surrounding gender
found in medical texts. However, they argue that the number of early modern Spanish
texts—literary, medical or otherwise—that present the complicated nature of gender
is evidence in and of itself of discussion on the topic. I have made the same argument
with regards to the texts included in this project: whether or not all of the authors I have included agree on gender and sex difference, the fact that they are all writing on this issue is evidence that it was an issue at all. In fact, that they do not agree on models of sex difference or the conditions necessary for spontaneous sex changes to occur—or whether or not they might occur at all—only further bolsters the argument that sex difference and gender were up for debate. This debate was ongoing and present in a variety of texts from a variety of authors who use different medical, scientific and philosophical approaches to approach the topic of sex difference and gender. Similarly, their texts reach and influence individuals from a variety of backgrounds, with a variety of professions and varying levels of education, either by circulation of the texts themselves or through oral transmission of knowledge.

A second observation that can be made from these texts concerns the treatment of the female sex and the posture taken with regard to the possibility of sex changes: no advice is given to help women turn into men nor are there descriptions of precautions to be taken to help men avoid turning into women. These texts are, in large part, compendia of diseases and treatments; authors offer cures for any ailment under the sun, and yet no treatment, speculative as it may be, is put forth to confront the looming possibility of a sudden sex change. The information provided on these issues, then, is just as telling as what is not provided: namely, a way to treat or prevent the shifting of the location of one’s genital organs, which would, in turn, cause a spontaneous sex change. We can therefore conclude that these changes are fully naturalized, considered benign, unpreventable, unforeseeable parts of a natural order. They are certainly not pathologized, presented as diseases or monstrosities, and no attempt is made to prevent or treat them.
I will delve into the legal issues that crop up in cases of hermaphrodites and sex changes in the following chapter, but here I would merely like to point out the lack of solutions or preventions offered in these texts. This becomes particularly noteworthy when we consider the treatment of intersex individuals in modern, twenty-first century medicine. Even today it is not enough for an individual to choose to live as one sex/gender or the other; parents and doctors of intersex infants do not only choose the gender of the child but also the sex. That is, it is not simply a matter of choosing the pronouns to be used with the child, or the stereotyped gender roles to be imposed upon him or her. Rather, the child is “treated” with surgical correction, a medical guarantee that his or her anatomy will align with the gender that has been chosen for him or for her at birth. In the texts I’ve included here, this pathologization, and a prescribed treatment, are notably absent in the treatment of hermaphrodites and individuals who have experienced a sudden sex change—that is, persons who, in our times, might be recognized as intersex.

Finally, and with this observation I will lead into the historical cases examined in the next chapter, the permissiveness surrounding women and their gender presentation clearly differs from the situation of men. As previously explained, men with non-normative (effeminate) gender characteristics were assumed to also engage in homosexual activity—a criminalized threat to the institution of marriage and social stability as a whole—whereas no such assumption is made about “manly” women. For men, effeminacy and homosexual activity went hand in hand, but when it came to women, it was entirely conceivable that masculinity and homosexuality might be two separate, mutually exclusive issues. Between the leniency explained here and the belief that a woman who turned into a man constituted an improvement, it is clear
that, from a medical perspective, manly women and women-becoming-men were regarded as natural phenomena, in a positive, or at the very least, neutral light, and that they fit well within the realm of naturally occurring events. In the following chapter, I will expand upon this notion in order to argue for the ability of women to “pass”—either as men or as manly women—in early modern Spain, using historical cases to demonstrate how the theoretical and anecdotal material provided in these medical texts played out in everyday life.
Chapter 2: Reception of Non-Normative Gender and Sex in Early Modern Spain

Magdalena Muñoz was born a woman at the end of the sixteenth century in southern Spain. In 1605, her father brought her to the convent in Baeza, as he felt that this was the only suitable option for his masculine daughter, whom he considered unfit for marriage.44 Twelve years after entering the convent, Muñoz, while carrying a heavy load of grain, suddenly felt an intense pain in her groin. Three days later, she claimed, a penis appeared. Fearing that the nuns would accuse her of engaging in sexual activity with her fellow residents at the convent, Muñoz opted to call in Fray Agustín de Torres, the author of the letter detailing this case. When Torres and another priest had seen and felt Muñoz, they proclaimed her to be “hombre como el que más”, “hombre perfecto en la naturaleza de hombre” (Torres). Today, Muñoz would be diagnosed with intersexuality, a more nuanced, modern term for hermaphroditism. Perhaps a thorough medical evaluation by a doctor might have yielded a diagnosis of hermaphroditism—or not, given what we know about the beliefs of early modern Spanish medicine—but in the context of the convent, where Muñoz was seen not by medical authorities but by rural priests, the explanation of a sudden sex change was perfectly acceptable.

44 Muñoz is described, in Torres’ letter, as: “mujer varonil, y que echaba mano a una espada, y disparaba un arcabuz, y otras cosas que hacia de hombre”. Her masculinity was such that, at one point during her time at the convent, a group of men came to warn the nuns that they had admitted a man into the (women’s) convent.
In his account of the event, Torres emphasizes the joy felt both by Muñoz and by Muñoz’s father at this development. His narration, though, belies his own ambivalent feeling toward Muñoz’s true sex:

El padre está muy contento, porque es hombre rico, y no tenía heredero, y ahora se halla con un hijo muy hombre, y que se puede casar, ella también va contenta, porque después de doce años de cárcel sabe muy bien la libertad, y se halla de mujer varón, que en las cosas, y bienes temporales ninguna merced mayor le pudo hacer naturaleza. (Torres)

Lisa Vollendorf calls the mix of nouns and pronouns in Torres’ letter evidence of his “discomfort with gender instability” (12). While one could wonder whether Torres, one of few who had witnessed first-hand Muñoz’s transformation, was entirely comfortable with such a situation, I disagree with Vollendorf’s conclusion that the ambivalent pronoun usage is definitive evidence of his discomfort. Moreover, when we consider Huarte’s description of individuals whose sex had suddenly changed—that they would be recognizable by the vestigial characteristics of their original sex—the mix of masculine and feminine nouns makes perfect sense.45 It seems that, despite the plausibility of sudden sex changes, as Muñoz’s case illustrates, those individuals who experienced them were not seen as wholly one sex or the other. Rather, their original sex continued to follow them, either in visible traits perceived by those around them and/or in the words used to describe them, further blurring the notion of a sex and gender binary. We should keep in mind, too, that Torres knew Muñoz both

45 A similar tendency to mix pronouns is found in the texts that I discussed in the previous chapter. Like Torres, there is no reason to believe that those authors mixed pronouns because they could not accept the notion of a sudden sex change. Indeed, it is those same authors who want to convince their audiences of the plausibility of this phenomenon.
as a woman and as a man; it is not entirely illogical that he might slip up in his account, employing both masculine and feminine words to describe Muñoz. Torres, for his part, does not question the veracity of Muñoz’s transformation—on the contrary, he celebrates it—, which is further evidence that he was not experiencing, as Vollendorf suggests, “discomfort” with the possibility of sex mutations. Finally, he refers to it as one of many “milagros de naturaleza” that must be accepted, however strange they may seem, thereby categorizing Muñoz’s case as both natural and divine.

The documentation of Muñoz’s case is too scarce to lend itself to a profound analysis; Torres’ short letter recounting the events is the primary source detailing the case, though other early modern authors make brief mention of it as yet another example of an individual who experienced a sudden sex change. Brief as the letter may be, though, the account of Muñoz’s experience is actually quite detailed. More importantly, it stands as an example of the willingness in early modern Spain to accept sexual and gender anomalies and mutations as natural and even divine. Furthermore, Muñoz’s story offers powerful insight on early modern Spanish understandings of sex and gender, which will be integral for the analysis of the cases of Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes in this chapter. Muñoz exemplifies the spectral nature of the one-sex model; her behavior and characteristics made her too manly to marry a man but did not cause those around her to believe she was (fully) a man. Were this the case, it would have been difficult for her to enter a convent of nuns.46 So, while Muñoz was not taken for a man—before the sudden sex change—

46 Once in the convent, however, Muñoz’s masculinity does appear to have raised some concerns. According to Torres’ account, the prioress and Muñoz’s fellow nuns examined her on several occasions, looking for anatomical evidence of maleness that might have explained her masculinity. Muñoz’s masculinity does not seem to have been problematic in and of itself,
her masculinity brought her too close to manliness to marry one; only a woman with sufficient femininity could enter into a church and state sanctioned union with a man.\textsuperscript{47} Muñoz was too masculine (and therefore not fully female) to marry a man, but feminine enough (and therefore not fully male) to enter a convent, falling—seemingly with little conflict to those around her—somewhere in between the two categories.

The acceptance of Muñoz, both as a masculine woman and later, as a woman who had suddenly changed from female to male, is inextricably linked to early modern beliefs about sex and gender, which, as I explained in the previous chapter, were addressed by various authors in early modern Spain. Knowledge of medicine and human bodies, including the circulating beliefs on the instability of sex and gender, was undoubtedly transmitted to those individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and education levels who read the texts themselves, and, as I argued previously, was also transmitted orally, forming a part of the collective consciousness of the general populace, who was no less invested in knowledge about health and bodies than medical elites. One way or another, it is very likely that the general public in Spain was familiar both with these theories, according to which biological sex was neither dichotomous nor inmutable, and the stories of individuals who exemplify this unstable, spectral nature of sex and gender. Torres, who documented Muñoz’s case, is just one example of the proliferation of this information.

\textsuperscript{47} As I explained in the previous chapter, excessive masculinity in a woman was believed to be indicative of reproductive anatomy that was not, or had not always been, fully female. For Muñoz to marry a man would have meant pairing masculinity and masculinity, but also, some degree of maleness with maleness.
My insistence on the relevance of the one-sex model for understanding cases like Erauso’s and Céspedes’ hinges upon the fact that the willingness to accept these stories and the model of sex difference that explained them appears to have taken a strong hold in Spain’s general population. Marta Vicente, for example, has suggested that at the end of the seventeenth century—when Laqueur claims that, in western Europe, the shift from the one- to the two-sex model of sex difference took place—it was the general public, much more so than Spanish authorities, who was most willing to accept individuals with anomalous or fluid sex and/or gender.\footnote{Vicente addresses two issues in her analysis of the case of Francisco Roca [a seventeenth-century man accused of sodomy and well known in his community for his effeminate characteristics]: one is the extent to which the general public was aware of these theories, or at least, the possibilities they created for the instability of a person’s sex. Another is the extent to which these possibilities were considered feasible by this wider audience. She cites testimonies from those who knew Roca and took him for a hermaphrodite or a woman dressed as a man, describing his “feminine ways” and the juxtaposition of male and female physical traits. Vicente argues that, in the day to day practice, it was not the university educated medical elite who were pushing others to accept cases of sudden sex change, but the average Spanish citizens who, regardless of their knowledge of the explicit details of humoral theory and models of sex difference, were aware of stories like Magdalena Muñoz’s and, on the basis of these, were willing to accept such explanations for apparent cases of sex changes or anomalous sex among their peers. Vicente concludes:“The example of Francisco Roca is just one of the many that point at how this dichotomy between what the public was ready to believe and what physicians were willing to accept began to widen in the seventeenth century. The popular belief of sex change, for which Galenic ideas about the sexed body provided an educated basis, became progressively detached from the theory of medicine, represented by the world of physicians and anatomists” (15).} Vázquez García and Cleminson offer a similar interpretation of the acceptance of cases of sudden sex mutations in Spain, which appears to differ from the situation in other European countries. The authors confirm that, unlike other European countries, in which such phenomena began to lose credibility earlier, in Spain stories about sex changes and
hermaphrodites continued circulating up until the end of the eighteenth century (“El destierro…” 8).49

Vincente, Vázquez and Cleminson convincingly argue that, in the historical cases that they analyze, the general population was willing to accept that an individual had experienced a sudden sex change and that this was a plausible explanation for a person whose sex and/or gender was ambivalent or ambiguous. However, these beliefs have had little bearing on modern scholarship’s approach to figures such as Catalina de Erauso, who became famous after spending years living as a man in the “New World” during the seventeenth century and Eleno/a de Céspedes, who, in the sixteenth century was caught living as a man and claimed before the Inquisitional Tribunal of Toledo that s/he was a hermaphrodite. Scholars have largely tended to ignore the circulating beliefs regarding sex, sex changes, and gender when attempting

49 Vázquez and Cleminson provide the example of Fernanda Fernández, who joined a convent as a (female) nun, and was later believed—that is, accepted—to have become a man: “Valga como ejemplo el caso de Fernanda Fernández. Nacida en Baeza, tomó hábitos en el Convento de las Monjas Capuchinas de Granada. Profesó con 19 años y se mantuvo en la orden hasta los 27, cuando comenzó a reconocerse con señales del sexo opuesto. Al cabo de dos años se completó la transformación. Inicialmente, los médicos le diagnosticaron locura, pues no cesaba de manifestar, con gestos desabridos, sus tentaciones carnales por otras monjas y el intento de resistirlas. Fernanda, en efecto, intentaba vencer estos impulso, evitando a sus compañeras y utilizando estrictas penitencias (cilicios de hierro, disciplinas y cruces con puntas), a lo que se unieron más tarde las sangrías regulares prescritas por los facultativos. Por último, tras reiterar su condición viril ante los galenos, éstos la examinaron y la declararon varón. Acto seguido comenzó en el Obispado la tramitación de los autos para dispensarla de sus votos. Comunicado a sus padres el resultado, Fernanda, convertida ya en Fernando, se vistió de hombre. Aún habría de costarle acostumbrarse a su nueva identidad; conservó las destrezas aprendidas durante su etapa de monja y mostró tristeza al saber que no regresaría al convento. Lo que más sorprende del suceso es que éste tenga lugar en 1792 y que todos los que intervienen en él —empezando por los facultativos— no parezcan poner en tela de juicio la posibilidad de tales transmutaciones sexuales. Se limitan a constatar, a través del examen anatómico, la propia experiencia vivida por Fernanda, pero en ningún caso se arguye que en el fondo ésta siempre hubiera sido varón o que este fuera su verdadero sexo biológico. Y sin embargo, a estas alturas, el saber médico y la opinión ilustrada tendían a juzgar esta clase de metamorfosis y en general el hermafroditismo, como burdas supercherías o creencias supersticiosas, producto de la ignorancia y de la barbarie reinantes” (“El destierro…” 8).
to understand these figures. They have often focused their attention on one or two key moments, such as Erauso’s revelation of her true sex or Céspedes’ Inquisitional trial and its outcome, instead of considering their whole lives, identities, reception by their peers and interpersonal relationships, which are equally as significant, if not more so, in terms of shedding light on how individuals with ambivalent or ambiguous sex and gender were perceived and received in early modern Spain. I am convinced that in order to fully understand how these individuals were able to live the lives that they did, we must take into account the beliefs held in early modern Spain—namely, the one-sex model—with regard to sex and gender. In this chapter, I will argue that the one-sex model and the circulating stories of sudden sex changes and other sex and gender anomalies informed and influenced the reception of individuals who did not follow a strict gender or sex binary, creating an environment in which it was possible to explain and accept such individuals. This, in turn, should affect our approach to understanding early modern Spanish figures with non-normative sex and/or gender.

I will focus on the lives of Erauso and Céspedes as well as the documents written about them, which offer descriptions of them produced by individuals who met them. It should be noted that these are certainly not the only cases of ambiguous, ambivalent or transgressive gender to be found in early modern Spain. Other such examples include la Dama de Arrientos and Juliana de los Cobos, female soldiers who

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50 In this chapter I will use the term “non-normative” to refer to individuals who eschewed either a strict male-female sex binary and/or a strict masculine/feminine gender binary. I use the term “anomalous” with a similar purpose. In both cases, I recognize that labeling any individual as “non-normative” or “anomalous” implies that a given group of people are to be considered “normal” and that any individual who strays from that norm is, in a sense, abnormal. My aim is not to ostracize persons whose sex or gender strayed from a binary nor to cast judgment on what is or is not normal, but rather, to point out that they somehow differed from an established norm, which should, in any case, always be understood as a social convention rather than an essential and universal standard of normalcy.
were roughly contemporary to Erauso; María Pérez de Villanañe, another female soldier of the twelfth century whose fame continued well into the Spanish Golden Age; and even Queen Christina of Sweden, whose masculine traits and dalliances in homosexual relationships were tinder for speculation and gossip throughout the seventeenth century in Spain. However, in addition to the fact that we possess substantial documentation of Céspedes and Erauso, I have chosen these individuals because, despite the substantial scholarship that they have already received, said scholarship has not drawn the necessary connections between these figures, the long stretches of time in which they were allowed to live as a member of the opposite sex, despite the fact that many who knew them were aware of their true sex, and the role played by the one sex model in their reception among their acquaintances. I will analyze texts written by and about these individuals, arguing that early modern beliefs about the fluidity and spectral nature of sex and gender naturalized and explained such figures. I believe that a careful analysis of these cases, through the lens of the one-sex model, will offer insight as to how the general population of early modern Spain responded to cases of gender and sex anomalies. This will in turn allow me to argue that the theory of sex difference offered in medical treatises made it possible for some individuals to live outside a male/female or masculine/feminine binary.

I will first consider the case of Catalina de Erauso, taking into account the one-sex model and the way in which it might have shaped peoples’ understanding of her. Despite the vast amount of scholarly attention that she has received, when it comes to explaining how Erauso would have been understood and perceived by those who knew her, the existing scholarship falls short of providing a convincing explanation for the positive reception that Erauso received from her peers and
superiors. Many attempts have been made to explain how Erauso was able to live as a man, to consider how she might have been perceived, and to engage with the different lenses through which her life can be viewed and analyzed; scholars have considered her sexuality\textsuperscript{51} and her Basque nationality,\textsuperscript{52} and have sought to label Erauso as transgender\textsuperscript{53} or picaresque,\textsuperscript{54} among other categories. Yet, despite the plethora of scholarship on Erauso, scholars have failed to provide convincing explanations as to how Erauso was able to live the life that she did. Scholarship on Erauso has tended to gloss over the practical issue of how a woman was able to live as a man in the conditions under which Erauso lived for as long as she did, assuming not only that Erauso would have been able to fool everyone she met, but that no one could have known and understood her to be a woman dressed as a man. How was it that she was able to maintain her disguise and lifestyle for so many years without being discovered?

If we are to believe the autobiography, her true sex was never discovered, or at least, she was never turned in for this reason; it was Erauso herself who informed the authorities that she was a woman. In addition to the many years of daily interactions with fellow soldiers, neighbors, and even potential love interests, Erauso makes multiple mentions of time spent in jail—at one point she even states that the prison

\textsuperscript{51}Velasco, \textit{The Lieutenant Nun: Transgenderism, Lesbian Desire & Catalina De Erauso}; Camacho Platero, Introducción a \textit{La monja alférez}; Perry, \textit{The Manly Woman}; an Historical Case Study. (Catalina De Erauso)”.

\textsuperscript{52}In her book \textit{In Search of Catalina de Erauso: The National and Sexual Identity of the Lieutenant Nun}, Mendieta focuses on Erauso as a representative of Basque identity in the New World.


\textsuperscript{54}Camacho Platero, Vallbona, \textit{Vida I Sucesos de la Monja Alférez}.  

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guards dressed her—and received medical treatment on various occasions. Are we to believe that early modern Spaniards were so unobservant as to not notice any irregularities about their fellow “male” soldier or prisoner? Furthermore, any encounter with a doctor would have quickly exposed Erauso’s femaleness. The privacy that Erauso would have needed to maintain in order to conceal her identity at all times seems extraordinary, especially given the fact that she travelled aboard ships, embarked on long, perilous journeys with other Spaniards and was frequently treated for wounds sustained in street fights. In light of these circumstances, and the close physical proximity they would have involved, it seems highly unlikely that absolutely everyone who crossed paths with Erauso, from soldiers to doctors, assumed, without a shadow of a doubt, that she was a man.

In this project I will offer an explanation of Erauso’s life that takes into account the one-sex model, which would have perfectly explained an individual like Erauso, who was very likely recognized by some as a woman living as a man, and certainly, as documents written by individuals who met Erauso, after revealing her sex, she continued to be viewed as a virago,\(^5\) a flesh-and-blood mujer varonil, a woman with undeniable masculine traits, but not a man. I will turn not only to the Historia de la monja alférez, Catalina de Erauso escrita por ella misma, the autobiographical text attributed to her, but additionally to a variety of letters,

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5 In addition to the term “mujer varonil”, the term “virago” is used to refer to excessively masculine women who, despite their masculinity, were not understood to be men. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “virago” as: (1) “A loud, overbearing woman”; or (2) “A woman of great stature, strength and courage”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a virago is (1) “A domineering, violent or bad-tempered woman”, though this source also recognizes an archaic meaning, which is more closely aligned with the concept I will use in this project: “A woman of masculine strength or spirit; a female warrior”. Finally, both the DUE and the RAE state that a virago is simply a “mujer varonil”, a term that has come to be associated so closely with theater that I am hesitant to apply it to real-life figures.
relaciones and other documents written about her, the majority of them by individuals who met Erauso during her lifetime. While these additional texts will have an important role in my argument, the majority of the details of Erauso’s life and travels come to us through said text. Therefore, it is important to establish why I believe this text to be a credible source for Erauso’s life story, as some scholars have alleged it to be fictional.

It is believed that the original manuscript was given to Bernardino de Guzmán, an editor, in Madrid in 1625, and that Cándido María Trigueros, an eighteenth-century author and poet, acquired a copy of this original document. In 1784, Juan Bautista Muñoz copied, or at the very least, contributed to the publication of Trigueros’ manuscript with the title Vida i Sucesos de la Monja Alférez, o Alférez Catarina, D[a] Catarina de Araujo [sic] doncella, natural de S[an] Sebastián, Prov[inci]a de Guipúzcoa. Escrita por ella misma en 18 de Sept[iembr]e 1646 [sic] volviendo de las Indias a España en el Galeón S[an] Josef, Capitán Andrès Otón, en la flota de N[ue]va España, General D. Juan de Benavides, General de la Armada Tomás de la Raspuru, que llegó a Cádiz en 18 de noviembre de 1646. In 1829, and again in 1838, Joaquín María Ferrer published the manuscript under the title Historia de la Monja Alférez, Doña Catalina de Erauso, escrita por ella misma, correcting various errors he claims to have found in the names of people and towns, as well as in the dates listed in the manuscript (Rima de Vallbona 3). Ferrer’s edition is the one most commonly used today, and it is the text used in the Cátedra edition, edited by Ángel Esteban. In addition to the multiple versions of the autobiographical manuscript, an anonymous manuscript titled La Monja Alferes, possibly the work of a Mexican

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56 All references to Erauso’s autobiography in this chapter will be to this edition.
author, was written in the nineteenth century, along with three other relaciones, two from Spain, written in 1625, and a third from Mexico, written in 1693 (Vallbona 4). While they are not autobiographical in nature, they do speak to the proliferation of accounts of Erauso’s life, her fame and her popularity among early modern Spanish and colonial Latin American audiences.

Throughout the years various scholars have debated whether or not the Vida i Sucesos was truly penned by Erauso, calling into question the autobiographical nature of the text itself.\(^57\) Additionally, discrepancies of dates and apparently exaggerated scenes in the Historia have caused some scholars to consider it the work of another (anonymous) early modern author. However, as Vallbona points out, Erauso’s text is modeled, in many ways, on the Autobiografías de soldados, typical of the period, which were written to exalt soldiers’ accomplishments and earn them fame and economic compensation through hyperbole and exaggeration of events (10).\(^58\) It is not so strange to think that the Historia would adopt the same hyperbolic narrative style,

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\(^{57}\) Diego Barros Araña, for example, suggested in 1872 that the literary skill of the author of the alleged autobiography surpasses what would have been feasible for this adventurous nun to have possessed (Vallbona 6). Encarnación Juárez Almendros challenges this assumption, arguing that since Erauso spent over a decade in a convent, it would not be impossible for Erauso to have learned to write well enough to compose an autobiography (161). I side with Juárez Almendros and consider Barros Araña’s conclusions on Erauso’s literacy to be unfounded; discarding Erauso’s authorship on the basis of her sex is unconvincing, especially given the education she would have received in the convent; Erauso herself mentions that she knew Latin, as one of her earlier masters encourages her to be his student. She would not be the first literate woman living in early modern Spain. Furthermore, her extensive travels are an undisputed fact and for the majority of her time abroad, she was living as a man, which certainly would have facilitated access to education, though she does not mention any formal studies undertaken abroad.

\(^{58}\) In the introduction to Autobiografías de soldados, José María de Cossio explains that the exaggeration of feats in these texts can also be attributed to the effects of time on memory accuracy, and that, regardless of the intention of the soldier-author, are valuable for what they bring to light about the general context in which the narrated events took place, and less for a detailed, accurate description of events (XVI-XVII).
especially given the fact that she sought not only economic compensation but
permission to live as a man; exaggerating her feats as a Spanish soldier would have
helped her to make a case for these petitions. Elements of other contemporary literary
models, such as the picaresque, present in the Historia, have not gone unnoticed, leading some to believe that the Historia is a non-autobiographical work of fiction in the picaresque genre. That Erauso followed the models of the picaresque or the Autobiografías de soldados does not necessarily indicate that the autobiography is purely fictional, but rather that Erauso, either unconsciously or in an attempt to represent her life in a way that would be well-received by a wide audience, drew from the models of writing available to her in early modern Spain.

Vallbona concludes that a very likely explanation is that the original manuscript, given to Bernardino de Guzmán, was Erauso’s own work, or at the very least, that Erauso’s own narration of her life forms the basis of a text that was then built upon to create a text that followed the models of contemporary literary styles such as the picaresque and the Autobiografías de soldados. It bears mentioning that in reading the text itself, despite the exaggerated scenes and self-aggrandizing accounts of duels, valiance and trickery, one observes a meticulous inclusion of tedious, even irrelevant, details, such as how many nuns belonged to particular

59 Luzmila Camacho Platero notes the presence of picaresque characteristics, such as the episodic nature of the narration, suggesting that Erauso might have also been inspired by contemporary literary models of the period (15).
60 “Por nuestra parte, consideramos que en la base del texto de Vida i sucesos subyace el original autógrafo de Catalina de Erauso (o el relato oral de sus aventuras hecho por ella misma), ampliado por interpolaciones de secuencias narrativas increíbles, las cuales no se han podido cotejar con documentos relativos a la época o a la misma Monja Alférez. Tales secuencias son las que contribuyen a la ficcionalización del discurso, ésta, además, queda sustentada por el desenlace de la historia, completamente abierto y lleno de cinismo, el cual encaja más en el modelo de la novela picaresca, que en el pacto autobiográfico (Vallbona 8)”
convents (164) or the exact amount of money paid to the narrator by various masters (102; 109). Were this text written by anyone but Erauso, it seems unlikely that such painstaking measures would be taken to include these details, which have little bearing on the plot and do not add to the excitement of the adventure narrative. Rather, I suggest that the most logical explanation is that they are the work of Erauso herself, who is taking care to include any and every detail that she recalls.

For the reasons I have outlined here, in this dissertation I assume the Historia de la Monja Alfèrez to be to have either been written or dictated by Erauso, though I will stop short from insisting that it is an autobiography; categorizing the Historia as an autobiography is problematic for reasons unrelated to the author of the text. As Margarita Levisi points out, the term “autobiography” is a relatively new term that is often applied retroactively to texts that were written for different motives and different audiences and do not necessarily include all of the elements that we expect from the genre that we understand as autobiography, such as a profoundly self-reflexive narrator.\(^1\) Levisi is willing to categorize as “autobiography” texts that were written before the creation of this term, but does so acknowledging the challenges and impossibilities inherent in applying a literary genre to texts written centuries before

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\(^{61}\) “Lo que no puede ponerse en duda es que la historia de la literatura se enfrenta con una cantidad de textos en los cuales individuos reales buscaron el sentido de la propia vida a través de su revelación escrita mucho antes de que esta forma de expresión tuviera no sólo un nombre específico, sino regals claramente percebidas. ‘Memorias’, ‘Vidas’, ‘Confesiones’ o títulos semejantes manifiestan la ambigüedad genérica en la que se desenvuelve la autobiografía, hasta que en 1798 Schlegel acuñó el neologismo que hoy utilizamos para designarla. Estos escritos tempranos no están, por lo general, destinados a un público y no buscan la imprenta: en su mayoría son documentos privados dirigidos a la propia familia o cuanto más a un grupo restringido de lectores, que por diversas razones deben ser informados de los acontecimientos ocurridos a sus autores, circunstancia que naturalmente impide la influencia recíproca entre este tipo de narraciones, pero que no las aisla de las circunstancias literarias que imperan en el momento de escribirlas” (14).
the genre was cemented and defined. Similarly, Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson have coined the terms “life writing” and “life narrative” in order to account for the differences between what is expected of a traditional autobiography and the many other kinds of writing whose focus is the life of the author, but that do not fit under the parameters of “autobiography”. It might be better, then, to consider the *Historia* as an example of “life narrative” rather than debate its status as autobiography. Furthermore, categorizing this text as autobiography would not make it any more or less fictional than a novel; likewise, writing it off as an apocryphal autobiography written by someone other than Erauso would not make it less truthful than, say, a historical account of a given event. As Hayden White points out, “there is a fictive element in all historical narrative” (99); no amount of proof that Erauso was the true author of the *Historia* would render it immune from scrutiny of historical accuracy.

Therefore, by assuming Erauso to be the author of the *Historia* I am in no way suggesting that every event described in the text occurred exactly as our narrator tells us it did. I am conscious of the possibility that it contains fictitious details and of the challenges inherent in determining whether or not Erauso herself wrote the *Historia*. I

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62 Rather, it might better be described by Sidonie Smith y Julia Watson’s term “life narrative”, a sub-category of their term “life writing”, which comprises various types of narration whose subject is an individual’s life, expanding the term “autobiography” to include other forms of writing about oneself and one’s life. In *Reading autobiography: a guide for interpreting life narratives* (2001), the authors describe their categories in the following way: Smith y Watson definen sus categorías de la manera siguiente: “We understand life writing as a general term for writing of diverse kinds that take a life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer. We understand life narrative as a somewhat narrower term that includes many kinds of self-referential writing, including autobiography…[which] is a term for a particular practice of life narrative that emerged in the Enlightenment and has become canonical in the western…A growing number of postmodern and postcolonial theorists contend that the term autobiography is inadequate to describe the extensive historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life narratives and life narrators in the West and elsewhere around the globe” (3-4).
concede that Erauso might exaggerate or even invent details of the narration, however, her exaggerations, just like her attempts to tell what happened as it happened, are equally influenced by the context in which she lives. In any case, the purpose of this dissertation is not to debate the authorship of the Historia nor is it to examine the trustworthiness of its narrator or the discursive strategies that she employs to engage with her readership. While one could undoubtedly carry out a fascinating study on the structure of the Historia, on the role of the narrative voice or on the strategies that the narrator uses to present herself in a positive light, I am interested in this text for what it tells us about Erauso and her context, and less interested in how it tells us about her; it is one of many documents that informs our knowledge of Erauso’s life and as such it must be included in this project.

Catalina de Erauso was born in San Sebastián, Spain in 1592. At the age of four, her parents took her, along with her sisters, to a convent in San Sebastián, from which she escaped at the age of fifteen. As Erauso tells it, as the time to take her vows...
drew near, she had an unpleasant encounter with an older nun in the convent, and
decided to leave. Erasmo cuts her hair and dresses in men’s clothing so that she will
not be recognized, and walks from San Sebastián to Vitoria, eating only the plants
that she found along the way. Disguised as a man, Erasmo spends a few years in
Spain working as a page for a series of masters, eventually arriving in Bilbao, where
she has her first encounter with the law, spending a month in prison for throwing
rocks at a group of boys who were harassing her. Erasmo adopted the name Alonso
Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán and ultimately found work as a cabin boy with the help of
an uncle, a Basque maritime captain, who brought her to Cartagena de las Indias.

Unwilling to return with the crew to Spain, Erasmo robs her uncle and deserts
the ship, traveling to Panamá with another captain instead (100). After Panamá,
Erasmo heads to Perú, settling briefly in Saña, where she again runs into trouble with
the law after attacking a man who had threatened her. As will become apparent,

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66 “Doña Catalina de Alíri, que viuda entró y profesó, la cual era robusta y yo muchacha, me
maltrató de manos y yo lo sentí. A la noche del 18 de marzo de 1600, víspera de San José,
levantándose el convento a media noche a maitines, entré en el coro y hallé allí arrodillada a
mi tía, la cual me llamó, y dándole la llave de su celda me mandó traerle el Brevario. Yo fui
por él, abrí y tome, y vide allí en un clavo colgadas las llaves del convento, dejéme la celda
abierta y volví a mi tía la llave y el Brevario. Estando ya las monjas en el coro y
comenzados los maitines con solemnidad, a la primera lección llegué a mi tía y le pedí
licencia porque estaba mala. Mi tía, tocándome con la mano en la cabeza, me dijo: —Anda,
acuestate—. Salí del coro, tomé una luz, fui a la celda de mi tía, tomé allí unas tijeras y hilo, y
una aguja; tomé unos reales de a ocho que allí estaban, tomé las llaves del convento y salí, y
fui abriendo puertas y emparejándolas, y en la última, que fue la de la calle, dejé mi
escapulario y me salí a la calle sin haberla visto ni saber por dónde echar ni adónde ir” (94-5).
67 “Corté e hiceme una ropilla y polainas: el hábito me lo dejé por allí, por no ver qué hacer de él. Corte el cabello y eché por allí, y parti la tercera noche y eché no sé por dónde, y fui
calando y caminando…y vine a dar a Vitoria…a pie, y cansada, y sin haber comido más que
yerbas que topaba por el camino” (95).
68 “Diéronme allí entre tanto unos muchachos en reparar y cercarme hasta verme fastidiado y
hube de hallar unas piedras y tirarlas, y hube a uno de lastimar, no sé dónde porque no lo
vide; y prendiéronme y tuvieronme en la cárcel un largo mes hasta que él hubo de sanar y
soltáronme” (97).
Erauso’s run-ins with the law are hardly heroic. Rather, they reflect a violent, aggressive character who seeks out opportunities for violence. In this particular instance, after being threatened by a man to whom she refers only as señor Reyes, Erauso takes a knife to a barber to have it sharpened, tracks down Reyes, and attacks him, stabbing him several times.69 Ten pages into the Historia, Erauso has abandoned multiple masters, lied, stolen, spent time in jail—twice—and openly admits to a rather premeditated attack from behind of a man who has angered her a few days earlier in the street.

This trend—aggression, deceit, violent bravado—is recurrent throughout the text and brings me to my first point about the existing scholarship on Erauso: in order to explain the success, fame, and permissiveness that Erauso enjoyed, many scholars have argued that Erauso fits into an idealized image of the loyal Spanish soldier in the New World. For example, Velasco connects Erauso’s fame with a particular moment in Spanish history, when Spain was beginning to lose hold on its empire and looked to figures like Erauso—a loyal soldier and allegedly devout Catholic—to serve as propagandistic examples for other potential defenders of the Spanish Crown.70 It may be true that Spain’s position as a colonizing force in the New World also played a role in the success of Erauso’s story; narratives about adventurous soldiers who find opportunities in the New World helped to create interest in the exploration and

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69 “Tomé un cuchillo, fuime a un barbero e hícelo amolar y picar el filo, como sierra; púseme mi espada, que fue la primera que ceñí, vide a Reyes delante de la iglesia paseando con otro, fui a él por detrás, y dijéle:—¡Ah, señor Reyes!—Volvió él y dijo: —¿Qué quiere?—Dije yo:—Esta es la cara que se corta—y, dile con el cuchillo un refilón de que le dieron diez puntos” (103).
70 “Erauso’s military success surfaced at at time when Spain was struggling to maintain control of its empire both domestically and internationally. As a result, the sensationalist story of a military hero in the New World was easily manipulated for nationalistic purposes” (46).
conquest of present-day South America.\(^{71}\) When word of Erauso’s life spread—in particular news of her adventures in the New World and her monetary compensation for the time she served in the army—it was not only Erauso who benefitted from the retelling of her tales, but Spain, as a nation, as well. However, Erauso’s life cannot be understood to propagate the image of the loyal Spanish soldier, which harkened back to the Reconquest period, when such a lifestyle appealed to those looking to improve their social status and economic wealth by pledging loyalty to their king and helping to expand the territories of a particular kingdom. While her monetary success might have provoked interest among Spaniards in the Peninsula, encouraging them to travel abroad and increase the numbers of Spanish-born citizens in the New World, she is certainly not the image of the ideal soldier. In fact, the original prologue to the Historia makes explicit mention of the fact that Erauso is not, the prologuist laments, an ideal citizen.\(^{72}\) Her aggressions, by and large, arise out of conflicts that she herself

\(^{71}\) Mary Elizabeth Perry emphasizes the political motivations on the part of Spanish authorities who had a stake in creating and propagating tales about successful soldiers—male or female—in the New World in order to further Spain’s imperialist cause there: “The adventures of the Nun-Lieutenant publicized the attractions of the New World as a place for impoverished nobles and second sons of noble families with estates in systems of primogeniture…For a Crown dependent on a nobility that faced major economic problems, the Indies provided opportunity to demonstrate royal largesse and support while diverting nobles’ attention from serious economic hardships in Spain…The stories of the Nun-Lieutenant illustrated that the New World offered an arena in which to revitalize the warrior ethic of the Reconquest” (412).

\(^{72}\) “Quisiera yo en verdad que mi heroína hubiese merecido este nombre por sus virtudes; que hubiera utilizado las grandes calidades de que la dotó la naturaleza; que de su claro entendimiento, de aquellas disposiciones felices con que en las variadas situaciones de su vida mostró toda la extensión de su capacidad hubiese hecho un uso acertado y noble, ilustrando su sexo por la superioridad de su razón; que su ánimo esforzado y varonil exento de las manchas de los delitos, renunciando a la triste celebridad de jaques, espadachines y perdonavidades, se hubiera exclusivamente empleado sobre el campo del honor en añadir nuevos timbres a las glorias de su patria. Mas por desgracia la Doña Catalina de Erauso está muy distante de ser un modelo de imitación. Mezcla extraña de grandeza y de funestas inclinaciones, su valor es las mas veces irascibilidad ciega y feroz su ingenio travesura, y sin merecer el nombre de grande
creates, and are not an act of national patriotism, and her criminal behavior is far from the image of the ideal, heroic soldier.

From Saña Erauso moves on to Trujillo, but quickly leaves again for Lima, after finding herself in another fight with señor Reyes and his friends, where she kills one of them (107). In Lima, we find Erauso’s first narration of flirtation with women in the New World. In this case, her current master’s sister-in-law displays an interest in Erauso, which causes her master to fire her.73 Erauso is hardly offended; she opts to become a soldier, stating that it was her “inclinación andar y ver mundo” (110). As a soldier she travels to Chile and stays with her brother, though he does not recognize her. This arrangement is short-lived, however, because Erauso begins to visit a female acquaintance of her brother without his knowledge, which angers him, and she leaves (113). Later, in Tucumán, Erauso finds herself in yet another situation with a woman who takes Erauso in and later attempts to marry her daughter off to Erauso, an offer that Erauso refuses, stealing a mule to escape.74 Yet again, in the same city, Erauso meets a priest who attempts to marry off his niece to Erauso, who feigns interest and accepts the generous dowry offered to her, but once again skips town without making good on her promise. The descriptions of Erauso’s same-sex encounters have elicited much scholarship from those who seek to establish a relationship between Erauso’s

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73 “Al cabo de nueve meses me dijo que buscase mi vida en otra parte; y fue la causa que tenía en casa dos doncellas hermanas de su mujer; con las cuales, y sobre todo con una que más se me inclinó, solía yo más jugar y triscar. Y un día, estando en el estrado peinándome acostado en sus faldas, y andándole en las piernas, llegó a caso a una reja por donde nos vio y oyó a ella que me decía que fuese a Potosí y buscare dineros, y nos casaríamos” (109).
74 “A pocos más días, me dio a entender que tendría a bien que me casase con su hija, que allí consigo tenía, la cual era muy negra y fea como un diablo, muy contraria a mi gusto, que fue siempre de buenas caras” (122).
masculine disguise and the series of women who demonstrate romantic interest in her—Erauso, for her part, never admits to engaging in any kind of sexual relationship, in fact, she does not even admit to an interest in the women who pursue her, though on multiple occasions she is clearly not disinterested.75 What most interests me about these encounters are the lack of repercussions faced by Erauso upon admitting to flirting with other women and the fact that the readership of the Historia, and even those who became familiar with the case through other means, were made aware of the real-life possibility that a woman, dressed as a man, might attract the romantic interest of other women.

Erauso continues her New World travels as a lieutenant in the army, narrating various battles in which she partakes. Some of the battles she describes fit into the typical soldier of the New World Conquista narrative, such as attacks on towns of indigenous peoples who resist conquest and are unwilling to provide gold to the soldiers. Other descriptions, however, are borderline excessive, such as the time she killed her own brother in a street fight (118) or the revenge carried out on a young boy who shot one of Erauso’s soldiers with an arrow; in retribution, Erauso says, they cut the boy into “diez mil añicos” (127). From Potosí, Erauso makes her way to La Plata, in Bolivia, and continues to engage in various street fights, nearly facing the gallows after killing a Portuguese man who called her cornudo (136). In La Paz she kills another, and in Cuzco kills a man called el nuevo Cid (153). Finally, in Guamanga,

75 Both Velasco and Camacho Platero consider the potential of applying modern terms such as “lesbian” and even “transgender” to Erauso. Camacho Platero also suggests, on the one hand, the possibility that “Catalina viera en la ropa del hombre la vía más fácil para tener relaciones con mujeres y/o que sólo pudiera entender su atracción por el mismo sexo pensándose hombre y, por consiguiente, adoptando un rol genérico que fuera congruente con su sexualidad” (45), and on the other, that the narration of amorous encounters with other women further cemented Erauso’s masculine identity (44).
Perú, Erauso’s luck comes to an end. In a *casa de juego*, Erauso has an altercation with a *corregidor*, which later leads to her arrest (161).

Fearing for her life, Erauso confessed to a bishop that she was a woman, a nun—though she had not officially taken her vows before escaping the convent—, and a virgin. Sensing the bishop’s apprehension, Erauso offered to be examined to prove her story. Once this had been done, the bishop was convinced of Erauso’s female sex and sent her to the convent of Poor Clare Sisters in Guamanga, however, she left the convent shortly thereafter, finally returning to Spain. Once she arrived in the Peninsula, Erauso travelled from Cádiz to Seville to Madrid to Pamplona, and then to Rome. After Rome, she returned to Madrid, where she requested and received economic compensation for her time in the army. She then returned to Rome, where she had an audience with Pope Urbano VIII and recounted the details of her life to him. In turn, she was granted papal permission to continue dressing and living as a man.

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76 “Digole: —Señor, todo esto que he referido a V.S. ilustrísima no es así; la verdad es ésta: que soy mujer, que nací en tal parte, hija de fulano y sotana, que me entraron de tal edad en tal convento, con fulana mi tía; que allí me crié, que tomé el hábito; que tuve noviciado, que estando para profesar, por tal ocasión me salí, que me fui a tal parte, me desnudé, me vestí, me corté el cabello; parti allá y acullá, me embarqué, aporté, trajíné, maté, herí, maleé, correteé, hasta venir a parar en lo presente, y a los pies de su señoría ilustrísima” (160).

77 “Víenme a Madrid, presentéme ante S.M. suplicandole me premiase mis servicios, que expresé en un memorial que puse en su real mano. Remitióme S.M. al consejo de Indias; allí acudí y presenté los papeles que me habían quedado de la derrota. Viéronme aquellos señores, y favoreciéndome, con consulta de S.M., me señaló ochocientos escudos de renta por mi vida, que fueron poco menos de lo que yo pedí” (169).

78 “Besé el pie a la santidad de Urbano VIII, referíle en breve, y lo mejor que supe, mi vida y corridas, mi sexo y virginidad; y mostró su santidad extrañar tal caso, y con afabilidad me concedió licencia para proseguir mi vida en hábito de hombre, encargándome la prosecución honesta en adelante, y la abstención en ofender al prójimo, temiendo la ulción de Dios sobre su mandamiento *non occides* y volvime” (173).
The pope’s permissiveness and benevolence toward Erauso has been perhaps one of the most puzzling elements of her case. It has led some scholars to conclude that Erauso was allowed to live as she did because of her religious devotion. There is an undeniable presence of cross-dressing women or *mujeres varoniles* in Catholic history, such as Joan of Arc, who physically donned male clothing, or even Teresa of Ávila, who inserted herself into a traditionally male religious role. Such a position with respect to female transvestites accepted women’s “desire to imitate the male Christ and preserve one’s virginity” as motives for donning male clothing and Erauso would have likely been familiar with these women as a result of her convent education. It is plausible that her decision to leave, dressed as a man, was inspired in these religious stories (Prensky 230). But, while a precedent had been established of women who essentially improved upon their condition of womanhood by “becoming” men and serving a greater purpose with their disguise, there is nothing to suggest that Erauso was understood to be a saint; certainly, no one writing about Erauso during her lifetime was calling her the Spanish Joan of Arc.

Erauso herself makes no mention of such a noble purpose; she explicitly tells us that she left the convent for the first time after a dispute with another nun and when she leaves the convent a second time, as an adult in Lima, she makes clear that her priorities are hardly religious and that she had never really been a nun in the first place:

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79 Mia Prensky, for example, argues that taking a hagiographic perspective to the autobiography allows us to inscribe Erauso in a religious tradition that praised and even beatified women who adopted men’s clothing in order to defend their Catholic faith (228). While Prensky does not suggest that Erauso intended to represent herself as a saint, in the religious sense of the word—such a claim would be absurd given the admissions that Erauso makes in the autobiography—she does propose that Erauso’s audience in Spain might have understood Erauso in this way.
Allí me estuvo cabales dos años y cinco meses, hasta que volvió de España razón bastante de cómo no era yo ni había sido monja profesa; con lo cual se me prometió salir del convento, con sentimiento común de todas las monjas, y me puse en camino para España. Partí luego a Guamanga a ver y despedirme de aquellas señoras del convento de Santa Clara, las cuales me detuvieron allí ocho días, con muchos agrados y regalos y lágrimas a la partida. Proseguí mi viaje a Santa Fe de Bogotá, en el Nuevo reino de Granada; vide al señor obispo don Julián de Cortázar, el cual me instó mucho a que me quedase allí en convento de mi orden. Yo le dije que no tenía yo orden ni religión y que trataba de volverme a mi patria, donde haría lo que pareciese más conveniente para mi salvación. (165, emphasis mine)

Neither the autobiography nor the documents that were written about Erauso during her lifetime make reference to a deep religious calling as a reason for her behavior; as these texts tell us, reiterate, her justifications for her behavior, violent or otherwise, rely more than anything on a desire to travel and to defend her own honor. While it is true that Erauso appears to have won some good favor with Pope Urbano VIII more than any half-hearted religious conviction, Erauso’s good favor with the Pope was largely tied to her virginity, an indication that she was living a chaste, honest life. Erauso never cites respect for the holy sacraments nor dedication to remaining a virgin as her motives; more often than not she is simply disinterested in the commitment of marriage and, on at least one occasion, passes on a marriage offer because she finds her prospective wife to be wholly unattractive. In this sense, Erauso does not follow the traditional Catholic model of the saintly cross-dresser; she makes no reference to a desire to become more Christlike nor to protect her corporal purity.
In order for Erauso’s peers, or the Pope himself, to have compared her to these saintly religious figures, they would have had to entirely ignore the majority of the autobiography—scenes in which Erauso is involved in street fights over card games, objectification of potential romantic interests, and her outright admission that religious life is simply not for her. Even the most cursory reading of the autobiography makes clear that the majority of her brawls stem from accusations about her honor; they are certainly not the result of a stalwart defense of the Catholic faith.

Despite Erauso’s blatant disinterest in religious life and her stark admissions to violent street fights, she quickly grew popular and was generally treated as a celebrity. The Historia closes with two references to Erauso’s fame, the first occurring in Rome:

Hízose el caso allí notorio, y fue notable el concurso de que me vide cercado, de personajes, principes, obispos, cardenales, y el lugar que me hallé abierto donde quería, de suerte que en mes y medio que estuve en Roma, fue raro el día que no fuese convidado y regalado de principes; y especialmente un viernes fui convidado y regalado por unos caballeros, por orden particular y encargo del senado romano y me asentaron en un libro por ciudadano romano. Y el día de San Pedro, 29 de junio de 1626, me entraron en la capilla de san Pedro, donde vide los cardenales con las ceremonias que se acostumbraron aquel día. Y todos, o los más, me mostraron notable agrado y caricia, y me hablaron muchos. Y a la tarde, hallándome en rueda con tres cardenales, me dijo uno de ellos, que fue el cardenal Magalón, que no tenía más falta que ser
Español, a lo cual le dije:—A mí me parece, señor, debajo de la corrección de vuestra señoria ilustrísima, que no tengo otra cosa buena—. (174)

While this particular account emphasizes the kind and welcoming reception Erauso was given, the final chapter of the book makes clear that Erauso, despite the papal permission she received to live as a man, was still perceived as a woman. For example, Erauso describes how, while traveling, she passed two women who recognized her and called her by her name: Señora Catalina (175). Not only did they recognize her, but they recognized her and perceived her as a woman, despite her fame as the monja alférez. Six years later, having adopted the name Antonio de Erauso, Erauso returned to the New World, where she died in 1650.

As the events outlined in the Historia show, Erauso was frequently treated with an undeniably permissive attitude. By “permissive”, I mean that her cross-dressing was not seen as an offense, she was only reprimanded for violent, criminal behavior, and it seems that those who heard of her and met her accepted that she was a woman with masculine characteristics. To be clear, there are a few factors that worked in Erauso’s favor. For example, not only did Erauso maintain her virginity, she never entered into a publicly acknowledged relationship with another woman. In that regard, Erauso did not challenge the existing social order in the sense that she did not question or defy the institution of marriage. Her masculine identity never involved—at least as Erauso tells it—marriage nor sexual relations with another woman. Given the importance of marriage for creating and maintaining social order, as well as its status as a Catholic sacrament, it should come as no surprise that any behavior that threatened this institution merited punishment. In the eyes of the law, Erauso was neither disrupting social order nor challenging the institution of marriage;
in the eyes of the Catholic Church, not only did she respect the sacrament of marriage, she had not tarnished her corporeal purity and, in the eyes of prevailing scientific theory, her behavior and appearance did not automatically mean that she was engaging in non-procreational same-sex relations. Though these factors may explain the complete lack of punishment, or even admonishment, toward Erauso’s cross-dressing, they do not adequately explain the attitude of permissiveness, or even acceptance, demonstrated toward Erauso.

So how was Erauso was able to pass as a man for so many years before eventually confessing? Did she, in fact, pass as a man? Or were there many who knew her to be a woman in men’s clothing? If so, why did they not take issue with it? And how might a phenomenon such as hers have been explained and understood? These questions could be answered, at least in part, by considering the intricate details of early modern understanding of masculine women. Scholars have not adequately taken this information into account when analyzing Erauso’s case. Rather, they often rely on a broad understanding of early modern Spanish medicine with respect to sex difference, ignoring the nuanced details offered by the medical authors I analyzed in the previous chapter. Scholarship on Erauso (and on gender transgressing figures from early modern Spain in general), if it takes into account medical theories at all, tends to refer only to the idea that the female body is the lesser, imperfect iteration of the male body, and under particular circumstances, might suddenly become male, which would, according to the early modern worldview, constitute an improvement upon her original condition of femaleness. While this is certainly an important part of the application of humoral theory in early modern Spain, it is not the only relevant element and it does not account for a woman who was naturally inclined to war,
rigorous travel, gambling and street fights, as Erauso was. As I will show in this chapter, the one-sex model is of utmost relevance, not because it posited the woman as a lesser form of the man, implying that any transition towards masculinity was an improvement upon the female body, but rather, because Erauso has many of the traits described as being indicative of a woman who was once a man.

In the previous chapter, I established that the model of sex difference offered by medical authorities such as Juan Huarte de San Juan was part of the collective understanding of human sex and gender, appearing not only in medical treatises but in popular literature as well. Therefore, it is only logical to consider how this model would have shaped the perception and reception of Erauso by her fellow Spaniards. As it turns out, Huarte’s description of men who turn into women in the womb coincides closely with the descriptions of Erauso found both in the autobiography and in other sources, as I will show. I reiterate a section of Huarte’s description, found in the Examen, here:

Por lo contrario muchas veces tiene naturaleza hecho un varón, con sus miembros genitales afuera, y sobreviniendo frialdad, se les vuelve a dentro, y queda hecha hembra. Conocesse después de nacida, en que tiene ayre de varón, assi en la habla, como en todos sus movimientos y obras. Esto muchas veces le ha acontecido a naturaleza, así estando la criatura en el cuerpo, como fuera. De lo qual están llenas las historias: sino que algunos han pensado que era favuloso, viendo que los poetas lo trayan entre las manos; pero realmente passa assi: que muchas veces ha hecho naturaleza una hembra, y lo ha sido uno y dos meses, en el vientre de su madre, y sobreviniéndoles a los miembros
Anyone familiar with this theory—and there is reason to believe that many were—could easily have applied it to a figure such as Erauso and used it to conclude that she was one such woman who had originated as a male fetus and later experienced a sex change that, as Huarte and his contemporary authors assure us, was quite common.

Evidence that this theory played a role in how Erauso was understood can be found most explicitly in the prologue to the *Historia*. Laqueur claims, as I have pointed out, that by the eighteenth century, Europe has experienced a shift from the one-sex model to a two-sex binary model. However, in 1829—over a century past Laqueur’s suggested endpoint for the one-sex model and nearly two centuries after Erauso lived—Joaquín María de Ferrer recounts his motives for publishing the *Historia*, and, in so doing, explicitly engages with theories of sex difference and gender in order to explain Erauso:

Al notar por ejemplo que en esta muger asombrosa la fuerza de sus músculos, la rigidez y dureza de su organización, sus calidades varoniles llevan consigo la extinción absoluta de las pasiones y deseos propios de su sexo, el primero podrá examinar, si en estos en la economía animal están vinculados a la conformación esterna ó interna de ciertos órganos; si en ellos debe localizarse su acción, o si teniendo en otro su residencia primitiva, los estímulos que por lo común en aquellos aparecen y sentimos son puramente simpáticos, en términos que, por decirlo así, un individuo de la especie humana, con todas las apariencias exteriores de su sexo, pueda real y verdaderamente pertenecer á otro, mientras que el filósofo observando que esta muger extraordinaria no
solo se olvida del suyo en las acciones comunes á los dos, sino en aquellas en que esencialmente consiste la diferencia de entramos, y que llega hasta adquirir, y sentir las inclinaciones y deseos del sexo opuesto, deducirá de este fenómeno ideológico y moral, hasta qué punto la influencia de nuestros juicios habituales y por consecuencia la acción de la educación, es decir la de los ejemplos y hechos repetidos son capaces de modificarnos, de alterar y trastornar los movimientos menos dependientes al parecer de nuestra voluntad, las leyes más mecánicas de nuestra organización. (ix-x)\textsuperscript{80}

While Ferrer is willing to consider factors beyond biology and anatomy, such as the importance of education for allowing individuals to develop to their full potential, it is clear from his prologue that that well into the nineteenth century, the one-sex model continues to influence Spanish understanding of sex difference. Ferrer, writing in 1829, is still referring back to the ideas published by Huarte and considering the possibility of using them to explain Erauso’s case. Given that this early nineteenth-century text mentions the influence of anatomy on gender, desires, physical strength and behavior, it is certainly logical to think that these same ideas would have formed a part of the collective consciousness in early modern Spain, when they were at their peak, influencing those who saw and heard of Erauso during her lifetime or shortly after.

\textsuperscript{80} Ferrer goes on to make a compelling case for the importance of women’s education, arguing that Erauso is an example of women’s capacity for tasks beyond the domestic sphere, and that denying women a proper education limits their ability to reach their potential, as Erauso did. In this sense, while Ferrer is still making explicit reference to the notion of an essentialist one-sex model, he simultaneously suggests that perhaps some characteristics, such as intelligence and professional proclivities, might be learned or conditioned, and not innate.
Our understanding of Erauso’s reception in Spain should, as Ferrer did, take into consideration the medical theories of early modern Spain that both address sex difference and make direct reference to figures like Erauso whose gender, more masculine than feminine, would have been understood as indicative of non-binary and/or mutable sex. While some scholars have recognized that the one-sex model coexisted alongside Erauso (and other gender transgressing figures), they do not go so far as to definitively argue that this explains how Erauso was perceived in early modern Spain. Velasco, for example, explains how “early modern medical wisdom” would have explained gender transgression, but does not make any assertions about whether or not the general public would have been influenced by the one-sex model.81 Furthermore, Velasco is incorrect when she ties both female (homo)sexuality and female masculinity to a prenatal sex mutation. She argues that medical wisdom and physiology made it possible for early modern Spaniards to see a masculine woman and know that she was attracted to other women.82

Instead of concluding that early modern medicine could explain lesbianism, which it did not, we should instead see it as an explanation for individuals with skills, interests and traits—which are never explicitly sexual in nature—believed to belong

81 “Early modern medical wisdom would have people believe that masculine women such as Catalina de Erauso and Queen Christina [of Sweden] were nonconformist due to a prenatal sex mutation, explaining that their consequent female masculinity (and the related deviant sexuality) could be confirmed through visual observation” (163).

82 Velasco goes so far as to suggest that Erauso’s portrait, painted by Francisco Pacheco in 1630, serves to answer the question “what does a lesbian look like? (163)” Such an assertion implies that the main point of interest that Erauso offered for her contemporaries was an alleged interest in other women, and disregards a slew of other details that made Erauso a figure of interest for early modern Spain. Undoubtedly, Erauso was the subject of much gossip and speculation, but there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that her sexual orientation was the primary focus of this attention, as Velasco seems to imply.
to the opposite sex. Huarte only references sexual orientation when speaking of men who had undergone such a mutation. In the case of female fetuses who become male, it would seem that one of the vestigial characteristics believed to be left behind in the individual is an attraction for men; this would have been the “natural” heterosexuality had the sex change not occurred. But when Huarte (and others) describe women who had originally been male, there is no reference to sexuality; the male fetus who becomes female in the womb does not, as far as these authors are concerned, retain an attraction for the female sex. The anxiety around feminine men and the perception of masculine women are not at all identical, and early modern medical theory does not attempt to conclude that the female who was once a male will grow into a woman who pursues sexual relationships with other women. It is logical, then, that the effeminate man would pose a greater threat to the established social order, given that his effeminacy is understood to be intrinsically linked to non-procreational sexual activity in which one man assumes a sexually submissive role to another.

Other scholars who have referenced the one-sex model only take into consideration the possibility for a woman to turn into a man after she is born, ignoring the implications of the one-sex model for a prenatal sex change that, according to medical authorities, the one-sex model made possible. Since, the argument goes, a

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83 “A quien esta transmutación le aconteciere en el vientre de su madre, se conoce despues claramente en ciertos movimientos que tienen indecentes al sexo viril: mujeriles, mariosos, la voz blanda y melosa, son los tales inclinados a hacer obras de mujeres y caen ordinariamente en el pecado nefando” (237).

84 Mendieta suggests that, in a society that believed in the possibility for women to turn into men, and thus “improve” upon their condition of womanhood, the body becomes a “natural transvestite, containing male organs within it”, rendering external transvestism “a natural social extension” of this flexible model of sex difference (172-73). While I agree with the conclusion drawn by Mendieta, I do not believe that she fully takes into consideration the implications of the one-sex model.
transition from female to male—allegedly the only possible direction of change—
would be seen as an improvement upon the former woman, it is logical that Erauso
would have been accepted and even praised.\(^85\) However, the one-sex model cited by
early modern authors also speaks to cases of prenatal sex changes that would leave
vestigial traces of the original sex. Erauso does not become a man, and the nickname
of “monja alférez” that follows her around for the duration of her life is evidence
enough that she was not perceived as one. Erauso was manly, but she was not male.
While she may have displayed attributes and behaviors considered varoniles, she did
not claim, as Eleno/a de Cèspedes did, to have become, physically, male; Erauso
herself admits that she is a woman. The one-sex model can be applied differently in
order to understand not only women who turned into men, but women who displayed
masculine traits without ceasing to be women. The relevance of the one-sex model in
understanding Erauso’s success lies in the notion that a male fetus might become
female, leaving this individual with vestigial masculine traits. This, in turn, could
explain why a woman, like Erauso, was especially masculine later on in life.

\(^85\) Stephanie Merrim has argued that the transition to female to male would have been
understood as an improvement—the male body being superior in so many ways to the female
body—and that this would explain Erauso’s fame and the permissive attitude with which the
authorities viewed her case (12): “Sex and gender ideologies, the two of them constructed and
clearly constructed from the same patriarchal fabric, both conspired to enshrine the male and
thus to proscribe male to female crossings on either level. Despite or because of its potential
for fluidity, the one-sex model interdicted male to female transsexuality…In physiological
terms, a woman might become a man by externalizing her internalized male organs through a
burst of heat; Huarte’s previous explanation of Nature’s powers notwithstanding, logically the
converse does not obtain…We see that sexual dimorphism allows only for movement up, as it
were, the Great Chain of Being” (16). Merrim does not link this model to how Erauso could
have been perceived by her peers. Rather, she uses it to explain how science provided a
biological model, according to which the transition from female to male was a positive
transformation. Consequently, she suggests, a woman who emulated a man would have been
understood as improving upon her female condition.
In this way, the one-sex model naturalizes the figure of the *virago* or the *mujer varonil*, by providing an explanation for any masculine traits she might display, excepting involvement in a sexual relationship with another woman. Erauso’s success as a soldier, her dexterity with a sword, her rugged appearance and thirst for adventure all speak to her natural proclivity for traditionally masculine roles; her motives for cross-dressing, as she tells it, stem more from a desire to live the lifestyle of a soldier than to maliciously deceive others and wreak havoc on the established social order. While Erauso does take measures to alter her appearance—cutting her hair, dressing as a man, and allegedly using an ointment to shrink her breasts—she does so in order to pursue a (somewhat) noble cause. Moreover, unlike Céspedes, as we will see, she never uses unnatural means to alter her reproductive organs, a move which would allow her to take a man’s place in a heterosexual relationship. For all of her disguises, Erauso never claims to be, biologically, a man—she doesn’t need to; a plausible explanation for a phenomenon such as hers already existed.

That Erauso was ultimately perceived as a woman is evident from the additional existing documents detailing her case. For example, the various *relaciones* that were written about her, despite the fact that Erauso opted to live out the rest of her life as a man, refer to Erauso always as a woman and focus on what, emphasizing the need to celebrate and remember Erauso’s accomplishments and skills. Cándido María Trigueros included in his manuscript of the *Historia* a collection of documents written by individuals who had met Erauso at some point in her life. Their descriptions of the *monja alférez* allow us to better understand how contemporary Spaniards viewed and understood an individual like Erauso. The first description of interest is given by one Friar Nicolás de la Rentería, who in 1693 dictated the
following to Friar Diego de Sevilla, both of the Convento de los Capuchinos in Seville:

Que en el año 1645, siendo seglar, fue en los galeones del Genera D. Pedro de Ursa: i que en la Vera-Cruz vido i habló diferentes vezes a la Monja Alférez Dª Catarina de Araujo (que entonces allí se llamava D. Antonio de Araujo) i que tenía una requa de mulas en que conducía con unos Negros ropa a diferentes partes: i que en ella, i con ellos le trasportó a México la ropa que llevaba: i que era sujeto allí tenido por de mucho corazón y destreza: i que andava en hábito de hombre, i que traía espada i daga con guarniciones de plata: i le parece que sería entonces como de cinquenta años, i que era de buen cuerpo, no pocas carnes, color trigueño, con algunos pocos pelillos por bigote.

(in Vallbona, 126)

First of all, the description emphasizes her rather unfeminine appearance, describing her bulky physique and mustache. Second of all, the friar’s words are extremely ambiguous in terms of how he perceived Erauso at the time that he spoke with her. De la Rentería says only the Erauso, at that time, went by the name Antonio; he does not say that he believed her to be a man and later found out that she was in fact a woman. We cannot be completely certain that he was aware that Erauso was a woman dressed as a man; however, neither can we conclude that he met her and assumed she was a man. If we look to accounts of women who turned into men—such as Muñoz and others described by authors of medical treatises—we see that the tendency is to privilege the original sex, maintaining the feminine form of pronouns and adjectives. Therefore, if the friar truly believed Erauso to be male when he knew her, we would expect him to revert back to the masculine form when talking about her later; if the
gender of the words he uses to describe her reflects how he perceived her when he knew her, we can conclude that he perceived her to be female.

Gil González Dávila, a Spanish historian contemporary to Erauso, also includes a description of her in his account of a 1608 battle between Spaniards and Araucanos:

Una muger, natural de San Sebastián, de la Provincia de Guipúzcoa, que dexando su patria, y mudando hábito y nombre de Cathalina de Arauso, en la guerra se llamó Pedro de Oribe, y siguiendo el destino de su suerte, se halló en la jornada que hizo á las Salinas de Araya D. Luis Faxardo, pasó al Perú, dissimulando con el valor lo que era; y militando con esfuerzo raro, llegó a ser Alférez del Capitán Alonso Rodríguez…Volvió a España, y entró en Madrid por el mes de Diciembre de 1624, y estuvo en mi posada en hábito de soldado. (in Vallbona 157-58).

Like de la Rentería, González Dávila does not conceive of Erauso as a man. Rather, the two of them make clear that Erauso was a masculine woman in men’s clothing. Moreover, neither of these two accounts belabor the oddity of a woman dressed as a man. These two texts appear to be more concerned with documenting details and events than they are with exaggerating and disseminating scandalous, attention-grabbing, tabloid-esque stories. Their frank treatment of Erauso—particularly in González Dávila’s account, in which Erauso’s story is inserted between other accounts of battles in the New World—suggests that the authors of these texts were not shocked by her story. Perhaps the men’s clothing she wore was much more coherent with her appearance and behavior than women’s clothing would have been,
or perhaps a masculine woman, even in men’s clothing, was not as scandalous as we might think.

Pedro de la Valle el peregrino, an Italian contemporary of Erauso, offers a similar description of her in a letter to a friend written in 1626. He states in the letter that Erauso came to his home in Rome. De la Valle explains that Erauso escaped from the convent, “disgustada de aquella vida encerrada, i antojándosele vivir como hombre” (Vallbona 127). Here we have an explicit motive that differs slightly from the explanations given by Erauso in the autobiography, where she tends to chalk up her disguises and trickery to necessity or survival. In de la Valle’s account, Erauso chooses men’s clothing because she does not enjoy the suffocating life in the convent and wishes to “live as a man”. “To live as a man” is not quite the same as “to be a man”; one implies access to certain liberties, professions, and a general change in lifestyle—dissatisfaction with the options available to her as a woman—whereas the other insinuates a dissatisfaction with being a woman. These dissatisfactions might come hand-in-hand, but they are not the same, and certainly, the desire to live as a man could exist without the desire to be a man, as it appears to have done in Erauso.

Like de la Rentería and González Dávila, de la Valle emphasizes the particularly masculine physical attributes that he notices about Erauso, whom he meets knowing she is a woman:

Ella es de estatura grande y abultada para muger, bien que por ella no parezca no ser hombre. No tiene pechos: que desde mui muchacha me dixo haver hecho no sé qué remedio para secarlos i quedar llanos, como le quedaron: el qual fue un emplasto que le dio un Ytaliano, que quando se lo puso le causó gran dolor; pero después, sin hacerlo otro mal, ni mal tratamiento, se surtió el
efecto. De rostro no es fea, pero no hermosa, i se le reconoce estar algún tanto maltratada, pero no de mucha edad. Los cabellos son negros i cortos como de hombre, con un poco de melena como hoii se usa. En efecto, parece más capón, que muger. Viste de hombre a la Española: trahe la espada bien ceñida y así la vida: la cabeza algo baja, un poco agoviada, más de Soldado valiente que de cortesano i de vida amorosa. Sólo en las manos se le puede conocer que es muger, porque las tiene abultadas y carnosas, i robustas i fuertes, bien que las mueve algo como muger. (in Vallbona 128, emphasis mine)

De la Valle’s description offers another glimpse as to how Erauso was perceived by her peers. His impression of her makes clear that, for de la Valle, Erauso’s masculine traits were not limited to her manly wardrobe, flat chest and hairstyle—traits that she herself modified. He notes that she is large, for a woman, not ugly, but not pretty, and more like a eunuch than a woman (though he does not go so far as to call her a man). Her movements are both masculine—he comments that she is more like a valiant soldier than a person of the court—and suspiciously feminine—de la Valle notes that she moves her hands more like a woman, perhaps the only trait that would give her away. De la Valle’s description makes clear that Erauso was both inherently, albeit sometimes intangibly, masculine, but always also a woman.

From these descriptions, it is clear that Erauso was not understood as a woman who had turned into a man, and it is not clear whether or not those who met her, before she revealed her true identity, assumed her to be a man. Though some scholarship suggests that Erauso’s male identity was never questioned,\(^\text{86}\) the

\(^{86}\text{Camacho Platero proposes that the only viable response to Erauso’s behavior was to assume that she was a man and allow her to live as such: “El hecho de que se la aceptara...”}

descriptions I have cited above suggest that perhaps some knew that she was a woman all along. Those who knew her might just as well have concluded that her biological sex was not fully female, or that it had been male, at one point in her life, and consequently, that her gender was not fully feminine. Such a perception is comparable to the case of Muñoz, cited at the beginning of this chapter, who was brought to the convent because her excessive masculinity, while it did not cause others to take her for a man, made her unfit for heterosexual marriage. Erauso’s person—her physical appearance, her profession, her skills and characteristics—is perfectly explained by the medical theories proposed by early modern Spanish authors. It is not impossible to think that this information allowed people to understand Erauso as a manly woman whose masculine traits were easily explainable through her anatomy. This understanding of Erauso is evident in the monikers given to her—Nun Ensign, or Lieutenant Nun—which, on the one hand, exploit the dichotomous nature of these two professions pursued by Erauso, but on the other, expose the perception that she was somewhere between the categories of masculine man and feminine woman. The descriptions of her, and, I argue, their understanding of who she was and why, all point to the influence of the one-sex model, which provided explanations for

como hombre, sin que ello creara mayor polémica, no significa que ésta fuera una cultura genéricamente flexible, sino que, según la definición de hombre y mujer, ésta fue la única forma de entender un fenómeno como el suyo. En ella tenemos a la mujer que utilizó el género masculino par referirse a sí misma y que oficialmente cambió de identidad genérica tan pronto como el Papa Urbano VIII le dio permiso para continuar vistiendo ropa del sexo opuesto y, por consiguiente, vivir como hombre” (42). While Camacho Platero is correct in concluding that Erauso’s desire to dress and live as a man was accepted by many around her, what this explanation does not take into account is that there would also have been a very simple explanation for Erauso and her behavior, and it was not necessarily that she was a man. The physical examination performed on Erauso when she confessed to being a woman would have been hard evidence against this, not to mention, in the aftermath of her confession, Erauso did not insist upon her maleness.
individuals such as Erauso, whose behavior and persona would have been understood, according to this model, as being a result of non-binary or otherwise unstable sex.

While the issue of Erauso’s gender is undoubtedly one of the most interesting facets of this case, scholarship on Erauso has tended to focus almost exclusively on the shock factor of her transgressive gender, treating her as the sole example of a real life *mujer varonil* in early modern Spain whose cross-dressing alone brought her the fame that she accumulated. This has caused scholars to “write off” Erauso, and dismiss the notion that any other individual might have led a similar, albeit less publicized, life. In no way do I wish to argue that an individual such as Erauso was the norm in early modern Spain; certainly cross-dressing women were not going off to battle left and right and incessantly enamoring unsuspecting women. However, we should not conclude that Erauso’s fame was due exclusively to her gender transgressions; her unique character and the fame surrounding her are complex. While it is tempting to write off Erauso as an extraordinary, singular case—an outlier in the realm of gender transgressions—I insist that if she is an outlier, it is not solely because of her ambivalent gender nor because she successfully dressed and lived as a man, but rather because of the things that she did while dressed as a man. She was not only a manly woman, but one who escaped the life her parents chose for her, traveled extensively, endured many challenging conditions and fought fearlessly and ceaselessly to defeat enemy after enemy. In fact, it is perhaps the moniker of “monja alférez” that attracts so much attention to her case. Erauso herself makes clear in the autobiography that she never actually became a nun. This title was added to her story to make it more attention-grabbing for possible audiences and readership; it is the title used by Juan Pérez de Montalbán when he composed a theatrical work based upon
Erauso’s life. While a “manly woman” combines masculine traits in a female body, “monja alférez” is a dichotomy that is even more contradictory, as it juxtaposes the female ideal—virgin, religious calling—with the male—loyal and successful soldier.

Indeed, without the nickname of “monja alférez”, Erauso is simply a woman passing as a man in the New World, a story that doesn’t sell nearly as well as the exaggerated retelling and representation of the paradoxical lieutenant nun, who, in her name alone, encapsulates religious fervency and military superiority. As Perry notes, it was neither Erauso’s virginity nor her cross-dressing that brought Erauso the fame she enjoyed, but rather, an amalgamation of many extraordinary traits that, when combined, made her truly notable. Velasco has also suggested that Erauso’s fame stemmed not only from her actual life, but from the representation of her life, which naturally involved exaggerating and exoticizing Erauso’s person and feats and casting her, simultaneously, as a loyal soldier, an outlaw, a virgin and a lesbian. In these four identities, Erauso embodies ideal citizenship, social deviance, religious and spiritual purity, and sexual deviance.

87 “[Erauso’s] virginity alone did not attract the crowds that flocked to see the Nun-Lieutenant when his ship sailed into Seville at the end of 1624. After all, thousands of women in Spain at this time had preserved their virginity, most in convents, but some as beatas…Nor did the crowds press around Erauso simply because she had lived and dressed as a man, for the people of Golden Age Spain also knew other cases of the “manly woman”. What attracted these people who wanted to see the Nun-Lieutenant was his inclusiveness as a hyphenate” (407).

88 In The Lieutenant Nun: Transgenderism, Lesbian Desire and Catalina de Erauso, Velasco analyzes how Erauso’s figure has been “constructed, interpreted, marketed, and consumed by the dominant culture and divergent audience groups from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries in Europe, Latin America and the United States” (ix). According to Velasco, Erauso—her image, her story, her values—is manipulated and becomes a “hybrid spectacle”, not only a manly woman, but simultaneously loyal, heroic soldier, criminal, virgin and lesbian, which are all combined in the title of warrior nun (46).
In addition to the multitude of characteristics that led to Erauso’s fame, we must remember that Erauso’s story and fame also cannot be extricated from the Baroque preference for shocking, convoluted stories. In this way, Erauso’s fame and singularity cannot be interpreted as a result of her masculinity alone, but rather as a successful representation of several contradictory, dichotomous identity markers that were manipulated in order to attract the attention of a Baroque Spanish audience. This representation can be seen in Juan Perez de Montalbán’s *La monja alférez* (1626), a *comedia* based loosely upon the life of Erauso. Montalbán’s play participates in the exoticization of Erauso by isolating and exaggerating select characteristics of Erauso and the autobiography, disseminating an image of Erauso that went well beyond a woman dressed as a male soldier. Montalbán’s protagonist, for example, is excessively masculine—in fact, the male disguise is present from the onset of the play—and deeply chivalrous, a trait that is hardly reflected in the autobiography.

Erauso’s story must be viewed within the context of Baroque Spain, its preference for shocking and contradictory stories, and its national interests, firmly rooted in encouraging loyalty to the Church and the Crown though the endorsement of figures that embodied the ideas of the loyal, valiant, Spanish soldier. Yet, in spite of the recognition of Erauso’s other noteworthy characteristics, and the malleability of

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89 Eva Mendieta considers Erauso’s role both as a figure of the Baroque and as a specifically Basque subject in her text *En busca de Catalina de Erauso*.
90 Camacho Platero also emphasizes not only the general Baroque preference for shocking, surprising stories, but the purpose with which the text would have been written: “La intención del dramaturgo a la hora de escribir su comedia no fue la de ubicar La Monja Alférez dentro del genero de teatro histórico, sino la de crear una comedia que reflejara la rareza de la protagonista y, como insistía su maestro Lope de Vega, entretuviera al público…Así y con las palabras de Lope en mente, Montalbán explota una noticia de gran interés social y construye su comedia en torno a unos datos biográficos que le sirven de esqueleto para producir una pieza teatral basada en un contemporáneo suyo” (19).
her character to further nationalistic or religious causes, she continues to be studied most frequently for her gender transgressions. Existing scholarship on Erauso continues to overemphasize her gender as the sole or primary factor for her fame while simultaneously ignoring a very key factor for understanding just how her sex and gender would have been understood by her peers. If we (erroneously) conclude that it is Erauso’s gender alone that made her so remarkable, and ignore the presence of the one-sex model, we fail to consider the possibility that, as I have shown, a masculine woman could have been understood as natural and easily explained, as it was through the one-sex model.

So, while Erauso was undoubtedly a well-known figure—arguably the most well-known virago in Spanish history—we should not conclude that it was her gender and sexual transgressions alone that made her so famous. Besides, if that were the case, other gender transgressing figures like Magdalena Muñoz or Eleno/a de Céspedes would have enjoyed similar fame by way of multiple relaciones and theater works written about them. Moreover, why would the authors of the medical treatises I examined in the previous chapter dedicate sections of their texts to masculine women or effeminate men if such individuals did not exist, save for one or two well-known cases, like Erauso? The lack of historical mujer varonil figures who achieved the status that Erauso did should not lead us to conclude that Erauso was the only cross-dressing masculine woman in early modern Spain. She was simply one with a story so wild, and perhaps embellished, that it garnered her a great deal of fame.

The modern reader can understand Erauso as a “manly woman”, or perhaps, as a woman who was interested in or skilled at traditionally masculine roles, or who simply wanted to pursue a life beyond the domestic sphere, because we are capable of
conceiving that such an individual might exist. In fact, we are certain of it because we have witnessed women who pursue activities, roles and professions traditionally considered to be better suited for men. Why, then, is it so difficult for us to imagine that early modern Spaniards might also have understood Erauso as a manly woman with natural, albeit atypical, inclinations and capabilities? Descriptions of Erauso certainly seem to indicate that this may have been the case. While Erauso was granted official permission to live as a man, the documents that describe her do not refer to her as a man; rather, they continue to insist that she is a masculine woman, straddling the categories of feminine female and masculine male. The use of female pronouns and the name Catalina (in lieu of the male name(s) she adopted) exposes how those who knew her and knew of her viewed her: as a woman, albeit one with masculine qualities. In this way, we can see that neither behaving and dressing as a man nor receiving papal permission to live as one were reason enough for Erauso’s contemporaries to conclude that she was a man. Furthermore, the model of sex difference in existence at this time period did not require such a conclusion. Within this paradigm, it was perfectly comprehensible that Erauso could both be a woman and behave, dress and live as a man. In this way, circulating medical theories created a space for individuals whose sex was female but whose gender was masculine.

To be clear, while medical theories would have explained how a woman could have a certain proclivity for traditionally male roles, such as that of a soldier or hunter, this did not mean that said woman would necessarily have been allowed to freely pursue that career. That is, in no way do I want to argue that early modern Spain was free of social conventions that dictated appropriate behaviors, privileges and professions for men and women on the basis of their sex. Such conventions
absolutely existed and posed an obstacle to women who wished to pursue activities not considered appropriate for their sex. But, as I have argued, it was understood that, as a consequence of one’s anatomy, a person could have a natural proclivity for behaviors and professions that were considered proper of the opposite sex. Erauso, as a woman, could pursue and excel at the male-dominated profession of the soldier without constituting a case of cognitive dissonance, but joining the army without making any attempt to hide her femaleness might not have been such a simple task; as I will show in the following section of this chapter, it is my position that there was a discrepancy between how authorities reacted to gender transgressions and how the general populace reacted to them. The male garb facilitated her access to a world in which she was well-suited to participate, but once her actions had been confessed and exposed, this explanation, made possible by the one-sex model, would have served to understand how, as a consequence of the anatomy Nature provided to her, Erauso had led the life that she did. Furthermore, Erauso’s masculine identity does not cease to exist upon her admission that she was a woman; aside from her brief stint in the convent in Lima, she is unwilling to give up the lifestyle she pursued while living as a man.91 Because Erauso does not claim to be a man, she stands as living proof of the fact that a woman could want and excel at a traditionally male profession.

It may be tempting to conclude that Erauso, by using a male disguise to access freedoms, privileges and opportunities not easily attainable by women, ultimately

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91 As Perry points out: “Unlike most other women known for cross-dressing, Catalina de Erauso did not assume male roles and male clothing in order to solve a momentary problem or to express a brief rebellion, after which she would return to her female identity. Instead, she apparently identified herself as male early in her life, disguised herself as a male, and succeeded in gaining acceptance for her male identity even after she had to reveal herself as a woman” (394-95).
reinforces a strict male-female binary.\textsuperscript{92} It is true that, at various points, Erauso correctly performs masculine gender and constructs a masculine identity, relying on a model of gender that was, in itself, a construction of traits believed to be inherent to the male sex. Erauso chose a male identity in order to pursue the lifestyle that most appealed to her, achieving fame, money and recognition along the way; passing as a man surely granted her the independence necessary for things like hopping aboard a ship to the New World. However, rather than reinforce the male/female binary by using a male disguise to pursue a lifestyle denied to her as a woman, Erauso exemplifies the blurring of sex categories facilitated by the one-sex model by presenting herself and garnering fame as a masculine woman. By the time she is famous, no one is questioning her sex, and neither are they questioning the things that she did. Of course, I am not suggesting that she was making any sort of intentionally proto-feminist statement on women’s ability to succeed in male-dominated fields, but, as an inevitable and undeniable consequence, all who heard of her were given one more example—or perhaps, for some, a model—of a flesh-and-blood \textit{mujer varonil}. Erauso served as a tangible example of a woman with masculine traits and as a point of reference for fictional representations of such an individual.

Erauso allows us to consider how a person with non-normative gender was received during early modern Spain, but her case is just one of various examples of individuals during this time period whose sex and/or gender did not adhere to a strict binary. Another figure who provides invaluable insight into the early modern Spanish

\textsuperscript{92} This is the position taken by Perry, who argues that, while the female soldier appears to challenge or break down the gender binary, ultimately she exposes the fact that woman and man are two separate categories, and to access male privilege, a woman must become, or at least appear to become, a man (92).
understanding of sex difference and gender is Eleno/a de Céspedes, who was born a woman, began living as a man, and was eventually arrested by the Inquisition. Céspedes’ case, more than Erauso’s, permits us to see a sharp difference between the willingness of the general populace to understand, tolerate, or accept individuals with non-binary sex or gender, and that of the authorities. It also serves as evidence that the one-sex model and other medical information pertinent to sex difference was accessible by individuals who did not receive a formal university education. Scholars have often used Céspedes as evidence of early modern Spain’s relentless rigidity when it came to gender and sex transgressions.93 A closer look at the trial and at Céspedes’ life, however, reveals that this was not the case, and that the general population with whom Céspedes came into contact was actually quite tolerant of this individual. This supports my theory that the one-sex model informed the perception of individuals with non-binary or ambiguous sex and gender in early modern Spain.

Elena de Céspedes was born in Valencia in the mid 1540’s to a Moorish mother and a Christian father. She94 was raised as a Christian and a slave, and at age sixteen, after being freed from slavery, married Cristóbal Lombardo, with whom she had a child. Shortly thereafter, her husband abandoned her. Céspedes, in turn, abandoned their child, and began a new life, living as a man and changing his name to Eleno. We see that his cross-dressing elicited a variety of reactions, some more permissive than others. By and large, those who met Céspedes and suspected him to be a woman were not interested in denouncing him to the authorities. During the trial,

93 Vollendorf, for example, concludes that “the Céspedes trial offers a complex and devastating example of the early modern world’s discomfort with gender instability” (13)
94 At the time of the Inquisitional trial, Céspedes insisted that he was more male than female. For this reason, I will use male pronouns to refer to him, except when speaking about his life when he identified as a woman.
Céspedes explains that he began dressing as a man after being released from jail, where he had been placed after stabbing a man in a fight:

En este avito de hombre se fue\textsuperscript{95} a Arcos, adonde asentó con Antón Marino, por moço de labranza, llamándose Céspedes, sin decir Pedro, Eleno o Juan. Estubo con él un mes porque le dava treinta y seis reales, y pan, sin otra cosa. Por esto, le dexó y asentó luego con Francisco López … que así le llaman de alevosía por ser muy boçinglero, y le sirvió de pastor como quince días, y sospechando que esta fuera monfí\textsuperscript{96} la prendieron. (109r)\textsuperscript{97}

Notably, Céspedes is not arrested on the basis of suspected gender or sexual transgressions, but rather, racial suspicions; the accusation that he was a monfí\textsuperscript{98} is wholly unrelated to Céspedes’ cross-dressing. In any case, Céspedes’ imprisonment was short-lived, as a former acquaintance intervened on Céspedes’ behalf: “Y pasando a caso por allí el licenciado Vanegas, vecino de Alhama, por haber dicho que esta era de Alhama, fue a ver a esta a la cárcel, y la reconoció y dijo…quién esta era al corregidor y la soltó” (109r). After leaving the jail, Céspedes was taken in by a priest, near Arcos, who insisted that Céspedes wear women's clothing.

\textsuperscript{95} Much of the information documented during Céspedes’ inquisitional trial is given in the third person, with the exception of a letter that Céspedes wrote to the tribunal. The answers that he gave in response to the Inquisitors’ questions, however, are all in the third person, though some scholars (see Kagan and Dyer), opt to transcribe the testimony in first person, so as to recreate Céspedes’ first-person narrative. I have maintained the original third person that is found in the original documents.

\textsuperscript{96} In their transcription of the archival document, Kagan and Dyer misread the term “monfí” for “manso” and conclude that Céspedes was arrested over suspicions of effeminacy or homosexuality. My own reading, as well as Israel Burshatin’s, is that the text reads “monfí”, not “manso”.

\textsuperscript{97} The transcription used here is taken from the “Proceso de fe de Elena de Céspedes”, held at the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Sección de Inquisición, tribunal de Toledo, leg. 234, exp. 24. The page numbers cited here correspond to the page numbers written in pencil in the upper right-hand corner of each folio.

\textsuperscript{98} Burshatin defines “monfí” as “morisco bandit” (436).
There is evidence to suggest that many individuals who came into contact with Céspedes suspect him to be a woman. For example, at one point, Céspedes begins to work as a seamstress in Arcos de la Frontera. The other people living in Arcos recognize that he was a woman, but do not denounce him to the authorities:

Començó esta a hacer oficio de sastre publicamente, en avito de hombre, y se examinó de sastre en Jerez de la Frontera, aunque en título pusieron sastra por conocer que esta era muger. Y después mandaron quitar los vecinos de Arcos para ir a la guerra de Granada y a esta se lo pagó bien…y fue a la guerra por la segunda vez y estuvo con el duque de Arcos en su compañía hasta que acabó la guerra. Todo esto duró de andar como tres años, que duró la guerra. Y acabada, se bolvió a Arcos a su oficio de sastre (109v).

While Céspedes is forced to identify himself as a woman, he is not punished or ostracized for cross-dressing. No authorities intervene to prevent him from continuing to live as a man. Céspedes’ peers, as this passage shows, believe that he is a woman dressed as a man and, rather than turning him in, accept the juxtaposition of a female body and male clothing by concluding and apparently accepting that he is a woman who dresses as a man, though they insist on making this public knowledge.

Céspedes worked as a seamstress in a handful of towns, between stints in the army, moving from Arcos to Alhama de Granada to Madrid. When Céspedes gives testimony at his Inquisitional trial, there is never any mention of any sort of consequences for his cross-dressing or gender transgressions. Likewise, when Céspedes served as a soldier in the army, his fellow soldiers were not fooled by his disguise; the officer who eventually turned him in to the authorities stated that it was
common knowledge among the soldiers that Céspedes was not a man.\footnote{99 When Céspedes is finally turned in to the authorities, it is by a man called Ortega Velázquez, with whom he had served in the army: “The officer denounced ‘her’ to the authorities, alleging that it was always known that Eleno had two sexes and that he was certain that she had been married to a man” (Burshatin 423).} To be clear, it does not at all appear to be the case that Ortega Velázquez was bothered by Céspedes’ ambiguous sex—if that were the case he would have turned him in much sooner; rather, he denounces him for bigamy, not cross-dressing nor sodomy.

Céspedes eventually began to work as a surgeon in Valencia, learning the trade from a friend but never studying at a university. He worked in Madrid at the Hospital de la Corte and at El Esocrial. At one point, Céspedes was accused of practicing without a surgical license, which he then obtained. He worked for nearly a decade as a surgeon, finally landing a position traveling with a band of soldiers and treating their wounds (Kagan and Dyer 42). Notably, Céspedes was accused only of practicing without a license, receiving, in his account, no accusations about his true sex or gender transgressions, despite the fact that, as I noted previously, it is evident that many who knew him understood him to be a woman dressed as a man.

In addition to Céspedes’ informal surgical training, he amassed a collection of medical texts, despite never attending any kind of university.\footnote{100 He himself admits that he had no formal education, when asked in the trial Céspedes responds that he: “Sabe leer y escribir, y no ha estudiado y tiene libros de cirugía y medicina en romance y en latín…son suyos porque los compró de un licenciado” (108r).} Evidence of his studies can also be found in the records of her possessions, which were confiscated by the Inquisition. Their inventory aligns with Céspedes’ statements about his education:

[Céspedes’] collection of twenty-seven volumes on physiology, rhetoric, natural history, anatomy, medicine, and surgery—written in Spanish, Latin and Italian—was acquired from a university trained man (licenciado),
probably a physician, judging by the book titles. Included among these volumes are works by Galen, Vesalius’s anatomical treatises, studies on surgery, Cicero’s epistles, and several commentaries on Galen. In his own defense Eleno cites several learned sources, including Pliny’s *Natural History*, book 7, in which marvels of nature, like monstrous births and hermaphrodites, are explained and documented. His account smoothly incorporates the prevailing medical and philosophical view that rendered the female body an unstable and deficient entity, susceptible to transformations of a male sort during extremely arduous physical activities. (447)

Undoubtedly, these texts contained information on sex difference, humorism, and anatomy; perhaps some of them were the same texts that I analyzed in the previous chapter. Given the wide dissemination of Huarte’s *Examen*, it would hardly come as a surprise if this were the case. These are the texts that afforded Céspedes the knowledge about hermaphrodisism that he would later use in his defense before the Inquisitional Tribunal.

In this way, Céspedes’ figure offers insight on the accessibility of medical information during early modern Spain, particularly when we consider his origins and the physical markers denoting them, as Burshatin explains:

At a very early age, her face was branded with hot coals; the resulting scars would transform her body into a tablet bearing the familiar record of slavery as written by Castilians on their human chattel. Thus branded and having joined her mother in service, Eleno’s face was a text to be read as “Andalusian slave”, as she would be called in a Spanish version of Pliny’s *Natural History* that appeared ten years after her trial (Huerta fol. 5v). By the time of her
prosecution, Inquisitors and civil authorities read the text of servitude back into Eleno’s slave brand, despite the accused’s brilliant career of “self-fashioning” in various artisans, military, and medical contexts. (421)

Despite these two physical markers—his Moorish origins and the facial scars revealing his prior status of slave—Céspedes is able to access and study the necessary texts in order to become a surgeon. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the requirements for holding such a title were a bit less stringent than they are now. Even so, Céspedes is proof of the possibility that individuals from various backgrounds and with various levels of education were familiar with the model of sex difference offered by early modern Spanish authors. If an individual such as Céspedes—allegedly a woman living as a man, half Moor and conspicuously bearing the physical markers of having been enslaved—was able to access these texts and their theories, we should have no doubts about their accessibility and circulation among a wider public. The information that they offered was clearly reaching and influencing an audience beyond university educated medical and scientific elites.

While working as a traveling surgeon with a company of soldiers, Céspedes found himself in Ciempozuelos, where he met and eventually married María del Caño. In order to marry del Caño, Céspedes sought a medical evaluation in order to prove he that he was male. The doctor performing this examination was aware of the high stakes—Céspedes wanted to prove he was a man before acquiring a marriage license—but granted him the necessary documentation anyway. When those who had previously confirmed Céspedes to be male later recanted at the Inquisitional trial, the tribunal concluded that Céspedes had engaged in some sort of witchcraft or had made pacts with the devil in order to trick all those who examined him—sexual partners,
physicians and other healers—into taking him for a man. Some scholars have suggested that Céspedes bribed the doctors who examined him, and that, under the threat of the tribunal, the doctors came clean and blamed Céspedes for deceiving them. If it is the case that they were bribed, are we to believe that maintaining social order through strict sex and gender norms was not so very important to the medical authorities who were easily persuaded into certifying that Céspedes was a man? Perhaps a more logical explanation is that the doctors who evaluated him were, like Céspedes, familiar with the one-sex model and therefore willing to believe Céspedes’ story about his unstable sex. Later, at the trial, these doctors were faced with a choice: stand by their original decision and refuse to help the Inquisitional tribunal in its quest to prosecute Céspedes, or change their story and become accomplices to the authorities who were less willing to believe Céspedes’ explanation.

Céspedes and del Caño lived together for a year until, in 1587 they were both arrested for sodomy.\textsuperscript{101} As it turned out, though, the Inquisitional tribunal in Toledo actually lacked the necessary jurisdiction to charge Céspedes with sodomy, and no specific charge for the cross-dressing—let alone the claims of hermaphroditism, which was not a crime in and of itself—existed for them to use against him. At the trial, Céspedes maintained that he was both male and female, basing himself on information provided by circulating medical theories. However, he was ultimately charged by the Spanish Inquisition’s Tribunal of Toledo, who found him guilty of sorcery and “disrespect for the sacrament of marriage”, on the basis that Céspedes’

\textsuperscript{101} According to Kagan and Dyer, “the nefarious crime of sodomy” was the term used to describe a capital offense consisting in “a broad range of non procreative sexual activities, though it sometimes was used more specifically to signify same-sex relations” (45).
husband, Cristóbal Lombardo, could not be proven to be dead, therefore, he had no right to remarry at all, whether to a man or a woman. By the end of the trial, Céspedes was found guilty of these accusations and was sentenced to “two hundred lashes, public shaming, appearance at an auto de fe, and to serve the poor as a surgeon in a charity hospital for ten years, without pay, and with the stipulation that she do so in women’s garb” (Kagan and Dyer 53).

During the trial, Céspedes employed a variety of strategies to defend his innocence, but his main argument was rooted firmly in contemporary medical theories, further illustrating his familiarity with them despite never completing any formal university education. Throughout the entire ordeal, Céspedes maintained that he was a hermaphrodite, detailing how his sex changed from female to male:

> En realidad de verdad es y fue hermafrodita, que tuvo y tiene dos naturalezas, una de hombre y otra de mujer. Lo que pasó es que cuando esta parió como tiene dicho, con la fuerza que puso en el parto se le rompió un pellejo que tenía sobre el caño de la orina y le salió una cabeza como medio dedo pulgar, que parecía en su hechura cabeza de miembro de hombre, el cual, cuando tenía deseo y alteración natural, le salió como tiene dicho, y cuando no estaba con alteración se enmustecía y recogía a la parte y seno donde estaba antes. (112v)

The change in sex is, according to Céspedes, the reason that his marriage to del Caño was legitimate. Since, Céspedes argues, he was no longer a woman, he had no option

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102 As Burshatin points out, the conviction was made possible on a paperwork technicality, above anything else: “[Céspedes] further complicated her case in Toledo by her inability to produce to the Inquisitors’ satisfaction the proper certification of her first spouse’s death. Declaring that Eleno was, in fact, Elena, the Toledo tribunal convicted her on the technicality of having committed bigamy by marrying María without the required paperwork certifying Eleno’s widowed status—an emblematic piece of bureaucratic reasoning in the reign of the “paperwork king” (le roi paperasser), Felipe II” (Burshatin 424).
other than to marry a woman. As he writes in a letter submitted to the Inquisitional tribunal following the trial:

Lo otro por que no me daña el haberme casado primero como muger con hombre y después haberme casado como hombre con mujer porque cuando me casé con hombre prevalecía encalecía en el sexo femenino y muerto mi marido después prevalecía encalecía en el sexo masculino y me pude casar con mujer y así está determinado que se puede hacer. (182v-183r)

In this way, Céspedes argued that his original marriage to Lombardo was justified because at that time he was a woman. Later, when Céspedes believed that Lombardo was dead, and believed himself to be more male than female, he married del Caño, trusting that the (heterosexual) marriage did not transgress the rules of the Catholic Church. Whether or not the marriage to del Caño was a same-sex marriage is almost beside the point; as far as the Inquisition was concerned, Céspedes was married to two people at once. For her part, María del Caño, when called before the tribunal, claimed to have no knowledge of any anatomical irregularity in her husband. It is easy enough to understand that del Caño would feign ignorance when confronted by the Inquisition about the fact that her husband was, in fact, a wife; what is all but impossible to understand is that this defense would have worked or that modern scholarship on Céspedes would accept that del Caño was clueless as to the true sex of her spouse. In fact, Céspedes makes reference to del Caño’s curiosity about her spouse’s anatomy, assuring the tribunal that his wife had been told that Céspedes had both male and female sex, which is a much more plausible explanation with regards to del Caño’s knowledge of her spouse’s sex. While del Caño denied any such knowledge at the trial, she, like Céspedes’ fellow soldiers and others who knew him, almost certainly
must have known, or at the very least suspected, that Céspedes was not a man, though this did not prevent her from marrying him nor did it encourage her to denounce him to the authorities.

In Céspedes’ letter to the Inquisitional tribunal, he makes explicit reference to humoral theory in order to further justify his actions, denying having ever pretended to be a man in order to marry a woman:

E lo que pasa es que como en este mundo muchas veces sean visto personas que son andróginos, que por otro nombre se llaman hermafroditos, que tienen entreamos sexos, yo también e sido uno de estos. Y al tiempo que me pretendí casar, incalecía y prevalecía más en el sexo masculino, e naturalmente era hombre, e tenía todo lo necesario de hombre para poderme casar, y de lo que era, hiçe información e probança ocular de médicos e cirujanos…los cuales me vieron e tentaron e testificaron con juramento que era tal hombre, y me podía casar con jugar, y con la dicha probanza, hecha judicialmente, me casé por hombre y con licencia de juez competente…yo naturalmente e sido hombre y muger, y aunque eso sea cosa prodigiosa y rara, que pocas veces se ve, pero no son contra naturaleza los hermafroditos como yo lo e sido…

(182r-v)

In Céspedes’ explanation that heat was the cause for the change in his sex are clear, albeit slightly misguided, references to circulating theories of humorism and the effects of temperature and climate on the location of one’s reproductive organs. (Heat, as explained in the previous chapter, was believed to make an individual male by forcing the reproductive organs outside of the body, but cold, rather than heat, would have made an individual female.) In any case, Céspedes’ explanation of his condition
is not altogether incorrect; scholars agree that he likely had a form of intersexuality, which would have accounted for the fact that Céspedes had a son but also a penis, or something resembling one. When asked if he could prove that he had male genitalia, Céspedes replied that he could not, because he was forced to amputate it, little by little, because he injured himself while riding a horse and later developed a cancerous disease. Céspedes tells the tribunal that he had been examined by physicians who verified his male organs—they later recanted during the trial—and that if they would allow him to describe his particular anatomy to a physician, they would understand his description, which the tribunal found to be incomprehensible.

After the trial, Céspedes was sent to serve his sentence at Toledo’s Hospital del Rey. Here, we see again a stark contrast between the relentless pursuit of the authorities who are set on punishing Céspedes and a general public that holds a much more positive attitude toward such a figure. While the Inquisition was determined to punish Céspedes and force him to live as a woman, the general public displayed genuine interest in not only meeting, but being treated by, such an individual:

The sick and injured were eager to be healed by a woman who had lived as a man and was reputed to have both male and female genitalia, her powers now the stuff of an *auto de fe*. The hospital director begged the Inquisitors to reassign Elena to another hospital because of the scandal she was creating. In March of 1589 the Inquisitors obliged and banished the notorious *maestra* to another hospital, in the remote town of Puente del Arzobispo. (Burshatin 436)
In the previous chapter I referenced the popular belief, held during early modern Spain, that hermaphrodites might possess magical power or knowledge.¹⁰³ This belief certainly seems to manifest itself in the reaction to Céspedes’ case, as hopeful patients flocked to the hospital where he was stationed in the hopes of receiving particularly effective treatment.

The transcription of the Inquisitional trial further implies an acceptance, reluctant or unconscious, perhaps, of the ambiguity of Céspedes’ sex. The uncertainty of the scribe who documented the trial as to whether Céspedes was male or female is evident on a linguistic level. Initially, we find references in the trial’s transcription to “el dicho Eleno de Céspedes” and “Elena de Céspedes, cirujano”, suggesting that, even while on trial, Céspedes’ masculinity was convincing enough to alter the scribe’s selection of gendered words. However, as Kagan and Dyer note, even when the scribe begins to consistently refer to the accused with exclusively female pronouns, he switches to the masculine forms of the professions he held: calcetero instead of calcetera, sastre instead of sastra (40). In fact, the linguistic ambiguity is present in the very title of the Inquisitional archive detailing Céspedes’ case, held at the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid, which reads: “Elena o Eleno de Céspedes”. If the members of the tribunal were so certain that Céspedes was female, why were they so

¹⁰³ According to Moreno Mengibar and Vázquez García, in early modern Western Europe we find two contrasting conceptions of hermaphrodisim, one positive, and one negative. On the one hand, it is miraculous, combining both sexes in one body. Popular belief suggested that hermaphrodites might possess magical or exceptional knowledge. On the other hand, some believed hermaphrodites to be monstrous, a harbinger of bad luck. This line of thinking also considered hermaphrodites to be born through a divine punishment for “unnatural” sexual acts, such as sodomy (189). This ambivalence toward the figure of the hermaphrodite is expressed in contemporary literature, too, for example, in Mateo Alemán’s El Guzmán de Alfarache, in which mention of a hermaphrodite is made with explicit reference to the good omens it carried.
inconsistent and ambiguous when referring to his sex? The use of both masculine and feminine adjectives, pronouns and names to refer to Céspedes reminds us of the fact that Erauso, though living—officially—as a man, has been written about with nearly exclusively feminine gender markers. In both cases, the word choices of those writing about the individual in question reveal their own biases, perceptions and understanding of the individual. Despite living as a man, and doing so with papal permission, Erauso was written about as a woman, much as, even during a trial that insisted over and over again on Céspedes’ femaleness, those writing about the trial could not help but use masculine forms to describe him.

One could certainly read Céspedes’ case as an example of early modern Spain’s rigid gender code and eagerness to prosecute transgressing individuals. It is tempting to interpret the Inquisition’s intervention, accusations and punishment of Céspedes as an example of early modern Spain’s general discomfort with ambiguous or unstable gender. However, doing so would ignore the fact that Céspedes lived for twenty years as a man, apparently to the knowledge of many of his fellow citizens. The fact that such an individual could, to the knowledge of so many who knew him, live this way should be strong evidence in support of a general public who was more or less willing to accept such behavior. We simply cannot summarize the entire case based only on the behavior of the Inquisition. Rather, I suggest that the Inquisition’s approach to Céspedes’ case is indicative of a particular position taken by authorities in early modern Spain, which should not be confused with the attitude adopted by the general public, who, by and large, appears to have been much more willing to accept, or at least tolerate, Céspedes’ unique gender and sex situation.
Moreover, it should be noted that the Inquisitional tribunal does not rule out the possibility of hermaphrodites nor of sudden sex changes; in Céspedes’ trial, the problem is that there is not enough evidence to prove that either of these were the case. We must not forget that at the time of the trial, Céspedes, as he tells it, no longer has the male genitalia that he claims to have had when he married del Caño, and thus there is no way for the tribunal to see any anatomical evidence that might have bolstered this defense. For all the leniency that he and Erauso had living as men amongst their peers, Céspedes not only challenged the institution of marriage, he engaged in sexual relations with another woman, which was neither explained by medical theory nor permitted by legal authority, though the Inquisitional Tribunal of Toledo was not authorized to prosecute this particular crime.

A look at the legal situation of hermaphrodites in early modern Spain raises additional questions about how or not hermaphrodis—m—or non-normative sex or gender in general—was treated by authorities during this time period. Ambrose Paré, an influential French surgeon and author of the sixteenth century, offers a comprehensive description of hermaphrodites and the legal obligations imposed upon them:

Male and female hermaphrodites are those who have both sets of sexual organs well-formed and they can help and be used in reproduction; and both the ancient and modern laws have obliged and still oblige these latter to choose which sex organs they wish to use, and they are forbidden on pain of death to use any but those they will have chosen, on account of the misfortunes that could result from such. For some of them have abused their situation, with the result that, through mutual and reciprocal use, they take...
their pleasure first with one set of sex organs and then with the other: first with those of a man, then with those of a woman, because they have the *natures* of man and of woman suitable to such an act…The most expert and well-informed physicians and surgeons can recognize whether hermaphrodites are more pate at performing with and using one set of organs than another, or both, or none at all. And such a thing will be recognized by the genitalia, to wit, whether the female sex organ is of proper dimensions to receive the male rod [penis] and whether the menstrues flow through it; similarly by the face and by the hair, whether it is fine or coarse, whether the speech is virile or shrill; whether the teats are like those of men or of women; similarly whether the whole disposition of the body is robust or effeminate, whether they are bold or fearful, and other actions like those of males or of females. (27-8)

Again we see that many of the traits used to determine biological sex are rather subjective, gendered traits, such as hair, voice, personality traits, “robustness” and “effeminacy”, which are believed to be indicative of internal anatomy and consequently sex.

Moreno Mengíbar and Vázquez García explain that the legal requirements described by Paré hold true in early modern Spain as well, where hermaphrodites were required to choose a “legal” sex which would be maintained for the duration of their lives.104 Cleminson and Vázquez García, however, point out that this practice (of

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104 “El mito en cuestión, que reconocía la coexistencia de ambos sexos en un mismo individuo, formaba parte del derecho civil y cajónico en la Edad Media y el Renacimiento, si bien el cumplimiento de ciertos preceptos (fijación de la identidad en el bautismo, en el matrimonio, en las sucesiones hereditarias, en la testificación ante los tribunales, en la unción sacerdotal, interdicción de la sodomía exigi, tal como v.g. recogen las *Partidas* alfonsinas, optar por un sexo determinado. La elección recaía inicialmente en el padre o padrino y
allowing the individual to choose): “only applied to exceptional cases such as those hermaphrodites whose predominant sex on birth could not be identified” (*Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites…*, 5). However, the authors make mention, later in their text, of Estebanía de Valdaracete, who, by their account, was born female, but throughout her lifetime displayed so many “masculine” traits that she was eventually examined, at which point she was “hallada ser hermafrodita” and “commanded to choose the habit in which she wished to live and she chose that of the male” (43). Thus, it is not clear to what extent this legal practice was considered permissible and appropriate for individuals with non-binary gender and/or sex. Given the requirement to elect one sex or the other, it appears that, from a legal standpoint, the goal was not to punish them, but rather, to limit their social and sexual behavior to one category of gender and sex. We have seen that it is acceptable to be a manly woman, or a woman who lives as a man, to possess two sets of reproductive organs, or to experience a sudden change of sex at the hands of Nature. What is unacceptable in the eyes of Spanish authorities is to shift from one category to another *according to one’s own whims*; to be a hermaphrodite and live as a man one day and a woman the next, especially when pursuing sexual relationships with members of both sexes.

Beyond the need for social control, I would argue that the underlying concern with hermaphrodites or individuals who claim to have experienced a sudden sex change is more closely related to the agency of the individual than to the threat posed by the notion of sexual and gender fluidity. That is, hermaphroditism and spontaneous sex changes are, as I have shown, believed to be (divine) acts of Nature. Manly
women and hermaphrodites were easily explained through biology and anatomy. There is no inherent threat in the woman who suddenly turns into a man or the individual born as a hermaphrodite; this is an act of God carried out by Nature. The threat lies in the possibility that an individual try to effect such a change—as Céspedes was accused of doing—and thereby deceive others, perhaps even tricking women into engaging in sexual relations and committing the punishable crime of sodomy. For this reason, hermaphrodites were required to choose one sex and not stray from it for the duration of their lives; the danger, for Spanish authorities, was in the possibility that any given individual decide to become a member of the opposite sex. Such an act would not only disrupt the established social order, but would also defy the will of God.

In fact, this seems to be exactly the fear of many authorities at the time of Céspedes’ trial. The Inquisitors expressed anxiety over the possibility that women might imitate Céspedes and purposefully disguise themselves as men in order to deceive other women: “The Pregón addressed a female audience with the warning that the women of Ciempozuelos should be on guard against other burladoras...who might, like the convict, prey upon them sexually and emotionally, and even walk them down the aisle in same-sex marriage ceremonies” (Burshatin 430). While there were not specific legal measures that the tribunal could take against Céspedes for living as a man, they did, as Burshatin points out:

[buttress] the case against Eleno’s gender transgressions and assault on family values by documenting again and again, in prurient detail, the techniques of seduction and penetration employed by the accused, who was deemed by the tribunal’s medical experts to be unambiguously female in her sex. (426).
However, we see that here the Inquisitors are not addressing the issue of women turning into men nor are they speaking about “true” hermaphrodites; they are only referring to women pretending to be men in order to deceive and dishonor innocent women.

This fear of deceitful women and hermaphrodites who changed identities of their own accord, coupled with the fact that Céspedes possessed only female genitalia at the time of the trial, makes it difficult to read Céspedes’ trial as a definite statement on the Inquisition’s position regarding hermaphrodisim or sudden sex changes. Would the tribunal have been more lenient if Céspedes had been able to show physical evidence that he was a man? The fate of Marie le Marcis, a French contemporary to Céspedes, certainly suggests that this could have been the case. Le Marcis, born in France in the late sixteenth century, was believed to suddenly turn into a man one day while jumping over a fence, which created the necessary heat to move her genitals outside of her body, changing her sex from female to male. She changed her name to Marin and lived as a man, pursuing a relationship with a woman. Ultimately, le Marcis was arrested for sodomy and eventually condemned to death. Fortunately, he was saved when Jacques Duval, a French medical authority, examined le Marcis and found sufficient evidence of male genitalia (Vollendorf 13). While le Marcis was not accused by the Spanish Inquisition, the French authorities who took up the case were angry enough to impose a penalty much greater than that faced by Céspedes, and we should not conclude that their interest or concern in the matter was any less serious than that of the tribunal that charged Céspedes. However, the presence of male genitalia, notably absent in Céspedes’ case, was enough to cause the French authorities, who had been prepared to hang le Marcis, to drop the case.
On a broader scale, one might argue that the case against Céspedes fits in with a common theme throughout the Inquisition: punishing those suspected of carrying out harmful (in the eyes of Church and State authorities) deceit. Viewing the Inquisition from this perspective helps us to understand why Céspedes’ case was so problematic, while figures like Erauso and Muñoz went unpunished. Though the Inquisition was motivated by a desire for political unity and questions of race, among other issues, Mary Giles insists that anti-Semitism was the greatest factor behind the founding of the Inquisition.  

Céspedes was not charged with being a false *converso*, but the underlying crime he was charged with is not altogether different from the crime of practicing crypto-judaism; both share the common factor of deceiving others with motives and consequences that were, in the eyes of the law, potentially dangerous.

Though Erauso and Céspedes seem to present extremely conflicting implications of the one-sex model during early modern Spain, there is a logical explanation as to why their cases played out in such drastically different ways. First of all, Erauso did not pose a threat to the social order regimented by heterosexual marriage; she did not seek to marry a woman while disguised as a man nor did she admit to having sexual relations with another woman, which was perhaps the only transgression serious enough to bring punishment upon a cross-dressing woman.

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105 “Not only did the Inquisition direct its efforts principally against the conversos in the early decades of its existence, but the brutality and zeal popularly ascribed to the Spanish Inquisition as a whole especially characterize its treatment of suspected Judaizers” (2).  

106 As Merrim points out: “Recent investigations have brought to light that a lesbian came under the scrutiny of the law only when she in effect threatened heterosexual marriage either by being involved in sexual penetration (tribadism) or by entering into a marriage contract with another woman. That is, only when she performed the male actions that held legal and the most profound social implications was a lesbian officially disciplined” (16-17). Sexual
Incidentally, usurping men’s place in heterosexual relations—the only real threat posed by the manly woman and the only truly punishable crime related to her cross-dressing—is also the only trait not explained by medical theory.107 Everything else—preference for men’s professions, masculine voice, gestures, and facial characteristics—are easily explained, naturalized and understood by the science of the period.

Erauso, unlike Céspedes, never claimed to have become a man, but perhaps more importantly, she did not admit to carrying out any attempts to alter her reproductive organs, as Céspedes did. There was never a need to verify any alleged male anatomy as in Erauso’s case because she never claimed to be anything other than a woman with a proclivity for a man’s lifestyle. Erauso fit well within the early modern paradigm of the manly woman, a natural consequence of a male fetus becoming female and retaining masculine characteristics despite having female sex. Finally, despite her criminal behavior and dubious religious devotion, Erauso embodied many of the highly valued traits of the ideal Spanish soldier and, through her (reluctant) time in the convent, established some level of religiosity, further cementing her acceptance both amongst her peers and by Spanish authorities.

107 Relations were permissible only within the confines of marriage and only for reproductive purposes. On the one hand, homosexual relations were unacceptable because they could not be performed within church- and state-sanctioned marriage. On the other, the possibility that two women could engender a fetus—a topic discussed, as I noted in the previous chapter, by authors of medical treatises—was certainly cause for anxiety. The notion that women might not need men in order to keep the human race alive would have been deeply unsettling, but apparently not unthinkable; its relevance and plausibility is evident by the consideration given to the topic by early modern Spanish medical thinkers. Consequently, attempting such a feat could have led to serious punishment.

107 As I have shown, in the descriptions of women who had originated as men and had undergone a sudden sex change, found in the medical texts I analyzed in the previous chapter, attraction for other women is never included in the list of characteristics that one might find in such an individual.
Céspedes, unlike the Erauso, ran afoul of a much larger authority—the Spanish Inquisition—by allegedly committing bigamy, which, unlike sodomy or hermaphrodisism, was a crime that the Inquisitional Tribunal in Toledo was capable of punishing. He was unable to provide evidence of a sudden sex change and the doctors who had previously certified him to be male changed their testimony during the trial. Much to his detriment, he also admitted to using creams and pomades to alter his genitalia, which the Inquisitional Tribunal categorized as witchcraft and an attempt to change his sex by unnatural means. Céspedes was not content to live, as Erauso did, as a woman with manly traits; he wanted to be—and apparently identified as—a man. However, unlike Magdalena Muñoz, Céspedes lacked the anatomy necessary to convince others of this identity, and, also unlike Muñoz, he found himself dealing with much more powerful authorities.

What Erauso and Céspedes have in common is that, excepting extreme authorities like the Inquisition, those who knew or knew of these three individuals were, by and large, willing to accept them and their anomalous or ambiguous sex and gender. The reception of Erauso, Muñoz and Céspedes by those who knew them corresponds to the contemporary model of sex difference, which explained manly women and individuals who suddenly changed sex as natural, non-threatening occurrences. It should come as no surprise that these three individuals—one, a woman who turned into a man, another, a woman with notable “masculine” traits, and a third, a woman who identified and lived as a man—were tolerated by their neighbors, co-workers, friends and sexual partners. As these cases illustrate, gender transgressive individuals could be accepted by those around them, and might only face legal consequences if they run afoul of powerful authorities, such as the Inquisition, by
behavior or actions that demonstrated a lack of respect for the sacrament of marriage—bigamy or homosexual relations, for example. The general willingness to accept these individuals should undoubtedly shape our understanding of how transgressive, anomalous or ambiguous sex and gender were perceived by the average early modern Spaniard. In fact, it might lead us to question to what extent the mujer varonil was truly transgressive, given the manner in which her masculine attributes were not only explained, but naturalized, by contemporary medical theories.
Chapter 3: The *mujer varonil* and the one-sex model

The previous two chapters of this dissertation have dealt with medical treatises and historical figures of gender transgression, arguing that the information on sex difference that circulated in early modern Spain likely influenced the reception of individuals with non-binary sex and/or gender, such as Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes. While these issues, on their own, are undoubtedly fascinating, I am also interested in their relevance for studies on early modern Spanish literature, in particular, the *comedia*. As I explained in the introduction of this dissertation, this project came about because of a dissatisfaction with the existing scholarship on the *mujer varonil*, which, I argue, often tends to underestimate or disregard altogether the implications of the theatrical representation of cross-dressing women, particularly when said figures also exhibit deep-seated characteristics traditionally associated with the male sex. I have laid out the contemporary beliefs surrounding sex difference and gender, and have offered evidence to suggest that the general public of early modern Spain, when confronted with figures like Erauso and Céspedes, relied on this knowledge in order to explain and understand such individuals. Now, in this chapter, I will discuss four *mujer varonil* characters in conjunction with the popular beliefs about sex and gender previously discussed in this dissertation, challenging the notion that the *mujer varonil* was nothing more than a popular character type with no ties to any social or historical reality in early modern Spain. Rather, as I will show, certain representations of the *mujer varonil* should lead us to question the extent to which
masculine women in the Spanish *comedia* resonated with an audience who would have understood masculine women to be a perfectly natural consequence of fluctuations in the humors.

The plays that I will include in this chapter are: Lope de Vega’s *La varona castellana*; José de Cañizares’ *La señora Mari Pérez*; Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *La serrana de la Vera*, and Juan Pérez de Montalbán’s *La monja alférez*. What is most notable is that the protagonists of these plays—who deviate from the categories outlined in and accepted by *mujer varonil* scholarship—are all based on historical and/or historical-mythical figures. That is, the *mujeres varoniles* who most challenge the gender binary had ties to figures found in collective beliefs or popular tales about local heroines, and are not the creation of a daring playwright looking to test the limits of his audience’s suspension of disbelief. In addition to their ties to historical and/or legendary figures that were part of a collective consciousness among audiences of the *comedia*, what these works have in common is a female protagonist who defies the limits of the categories of *mujer varonil*, emerging from the onset of the play as a woman whose masculine characteristics are not a disguise created to solve a plot conflict nor temporary, superficial whims that are eliminated or lost by the end of the story, but rather traits that appear to be an intrinsic, long-term part of the *mujer varonil*’s persona. The *mujer varonil* often arrives on the scene in a moment of political or social chaos, in which the established order has temporarily been

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108 While there is certainly a difference between historical and legendary figures, one can argue that the line between historical and mythical figures frequently becomes blurred, as historical figures are mythified and repeated stories about legendary figures begin to form a part of a collective memory. In this way, historical figures like María Pérez become mythical or legendary, despite their historical origin, while the repetition of the story of the *Serrana de la Vera* has led many to question whether or not she might have some historical basis. For this reason, I consider these two categories as one.
disrupted. In these cases, the 

*disrupted. In these cases, the mujer varonil’s “manly” qualities are inextricably tied to the plot conflict, and not her character’s personality or behavioral traits. All too often, these characteristics are little more than a disguise, an invention, a solution to a temporary problem, or a whimsical behavior that is eradicated by the end of the play. But this is not always the case. In the texts I have chosen, the *mujer varonil* protagonist is not just a woman dressed as a man, but rather, a woman who, from the outset of the play, demonstrates masculine characteristics—traits considered in their time period, and perhaps even still, to be innately masculine or associated with the male sex—that appear to form an intrinsic part of her personality.

What I hope to show is that, in some instances, the *mujer varonil* in the Spanish *comedia* demonstrates many of the traits that early modern medical authors associate with women who were either once male and experienced a sudden sex change, leaving them with vestigial characteristics of their original male sex, or, as explained by Calvo, who have experienced a slight “slippage” of their reproductive organs, causing them to be anatomically “less female” and therefore exhibit masculine traits. In either case, the explanation for masculine women is found in their anatomy. In the previous chapters, I addressed the extent to which these beliefs may have circulated in early modern Spain, arguing that such ideas were available to the general public, and not only to a limited group of university-educated medical elites. Given the dissemination of these ideas, and the examples of real-life *mujer varonil* figures, as well as other examples of sexual and gender transgressions, it should come as no surprise that early modern dramaturges might be inspired by these beliefs. As Gail Bradbury notes:
The scientists of the age were not at all reluctant to associate the masculine woman and the effeminate man with at least two abnormalities—sex change and mixed sexuality…It would therefore be unreasonable to suppose that seventeenth-century dramatists avoided, of necessity, the more sensational aspects of the strong woman/weak man topic, or that their audiences were less aware than we are of the blurred boundaries between inverted and irregular sexuality. (573)109

Furthermore, Ruth Lundelius points out that literature has always provided a place for authors to explore deviance and atypical characters:

The classical tradition, peopled as it was with all manner of deviant behavior, sexual metamorphoses, hermaphrodites, heroic or mythical superwomen, such as the Amazons or Semiramis, and in fact, with the whole underworld of human sexual behavior, supplied both inspiration and legitimacy to the handling of such themes in the seventeenth century. The aura of unconventional sexuality surrounding these masculine women afforded the playwrights of that age an unusual opportunity to exploit the dramatic potentialities inherent in juxtaposing nature and convention, appearance and reality, sensationalism and instruction in paradoxical modes especially pleasing to Baroque sensibilities. (233)

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109 Based on the above argument, Bradbury suggests that McKendrick’s conclusions about the impossibility of reading encounters between two female characters when one is dressed as a man as “a lesbian motif” do not adequately consider the likelihood that early modern Spain was more familiar with “the underworld of irregular sexuality” than we have previously thought (566).
Bradbury echoes the importance of the classical tradition and suggests that, while some topics might be “borderline improper”, the literary tradition that preceded them would have made it possible to avoid censorship, even while representing characters with deviant gender or non-normative sex.\(^{110}\)

Given this tradition, there is no reason to think that early modern Spanish authors of popular literature, such as the comedia would not have been inspired by popular beliefs concerning sex and gender, especially when we consider that contemporary science and medicine claimed to back up said beliefs. In fact, in the first chapter of this dissertation I briefly referenced some authors of popular early modern literature, whom I distinguished from the authors of medical treatises, whose texts raise concerns about non-binary sex and gender. Indeed, even Lope de Vega seems to have been convinced that the Amazon women, on whom some of his mujer varonil plays were inspired, were not entirely fictitious. Rather, he claims, they were the predecessors of some of the flesh-and-blood mujeres varoniles who populated early modern Spain.\(^{111}\) Thus, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that early modern Spanish authors were familiar with the circulating beliefs about sex and gender that would have described and explained masculine women whose masculinity was caused by an anatomical irregularity, namely, the changed or changing position of her

\(^{110}\) Almost inevitably, the overlap between Christian morality and classical culture produced ambivalence and contradiction in seventeenth-century attitudes towards irregular sexuality. Therefore, it is probable that intimations of sexual abnormality on the stage were, although bordering on the improper, rendered less censurable by their precedents in the literature and mythology of the ancients” (570).

\(^{111}\) “Y aun he oido decir que andan algunas [amazonas] entre nosotros, como son viudas mal acondicionadas, suegras terribles y doncellas incasables, que todas estas infaliblemente son amazonas, o vienen de ellas” (cited in Bradbury 567).
reproductive organs. It should not surprise us, then, to find mujer varonil characters with inherent, unchanging, excessively masculine traits.

Of course, these theatrical characters can never fully align with all of the physical traits described by Huarte and his contemporaries. As Velasco points out, Huarte’s descriptions of women with dry, hot humors, which cause her to be unattractive, often emphasize her physical unattractiveness (71); a truly marimacho\textsuperscript{112} protagonist would not make for an attractive lead role. Thus, in no way am I suggesting that early modern Spanish playwrights sought to emulate in every aspect the women described in the texts written by Huarte and his contemporaries. The characters in question are examples of the mujer varonil, they are not marimachos, and the dramaturges who create said characters are not, to be clear, bringing theatrical life to the masculine women depicted in early modern medical treatises. Rather, their mujer varonil characters share the proclivity for male roles, violence, aggression, and independence, while still maintaining a feminine beauty that would make the protagonist an attractive figure who pleased audiences. Nonetheless, the theatrical representation of manly women, particularly those like the examples I will consider in this chapter, further exposed audiences to figures of non-binary sex and gender, whose relevance was especially powerful given their correlation popular beliefs about sudden sex changes and their role in destabilizing a sex and gender binary.

Of all the literary genres, one might argue that theater holds the most capacity for influencing the masses; unlike a novel or a short story, theater has the power to influence massive amounts of people simultaneously. Perhaps more importantly,

\textsuperscript{112} Covarrubias defines “marimacho” as “la mujer que tiene desembolturas de hombre” (790), which must be distinguished from terms like mujer varonil, which do not necessarily imply unattractiveness.
attending a play requires neither literacy nor an extensive time commitment, making theater a powerful instrument for communicating with large groups of people. In early modern Spain, dramaturges were well aware of the fact that their audiences were not comprised solely of the wealthiest and most educated sectors of the population;\(^{113}\) Lope de Vega refers to \textit{el vulgo} eleven different times in his \textit{Arte nuevo de hacer comedias}. Undoubtedly, theater in early modern Spain reached an audience with varied degrees of wealth, literacy and social standing. Theater, because it was not reserved for those who were able to read and write, was (and is) capable not only of entertaining illiterate, uneducated audiences, who would have perhaps been unfamiliar with other literary genres, but also of exposing them to political criticism, propaganda or representations of subversive characters, among other things. Indeed, precisely because of its ability to transmit ideas to many people at once through visual representation, theater was used extensively during the Neoclassical period in Spain as a means of instructing the masses on correct behavior. It was for this reason that Leandro Fernández de Moratín wrote in 1792:

\(^{113}\) Frenk challenges the notion that early modern Spain’s literary audience was limited to only a few literate members and insists that not only were audiences made up of literate and illiterate members alike, authors were aware of this diversity and openly engaged with an audience largely comprised by \textit{el vulgo}: “Con honrosas excepciones, los estudios de historia y crítica literaria suelen hablarnos sólo, para ese periodo, de “lectores”, como hoy entendemos la palabra. En su libro sobre \textit{Lectura y lectores en la España del siglo XVI y XVII}, Maxime Chevalier concluyó que el público de la literatura de entretenimiento era reducido, dado el alto grado de analfabetismo, el costo de los libros y el desinterés de buena parte de la población alfabetizada y con recursos. En la España de los Austrias, dice, sólo leían los hidalgos y caballeros cultos y algunos criados suyos, los miembros del clero dotados de curiosidad intelectual y los hombres de letras (Chevalier, 1976, 29 y ss.). Ahora bien, si los receptores de la literatura eran tan pocos y necesariamente tan intelectuales, hay una serie de cosas que no entendemos. ¿Cómo es que los escritores, sobre todo desde fines del siglo XVII, se dirigen una y otra vez al vulgo, o sea, a un público amplio, generalmente juzgado ignorante? ¿Cómo es que ese “vulgo” asistía sin cansarse a los corrales donde se representaba un teatro que, para ser minimamente comprendido, requería de sus oyentes una cierta cultura literaria?” (24).
Nadie ignora el poderoso influjo que tiene el teatro en las ideas y costumbres del pueblo: éste no tiene otra escuela ni ejemplos más inmediatos que seguir que los que ve allí, autorizados en cierto modo por la tolerancia de los que le gobiernan. Un mal teatro es capaz de perder las costumbres públicas, y cuando éstas llegan a corromperse es muy difícil mantener el imperio de las leyes obligándolas a luchar continuamente con una multitud pervertida e ignorante…Arreglado y dirigido como corresponde producirá felices efectos no sólo a la ilustración y cultura nacional, sino también a la corrección de las costumbres y por consecuencia, a la estabilidad del orden civil, que mantiene los estados en la dependencia justa de la suprema autoridad. (163)

While the theater of early modern Spain was not used as a didactic instrument in quite the same way as it was during the Enlightenment, it was no less powerful of a tool when it came to mass communication, and certainly had the capacity to be used as propaganda, if playwrights so chose. Ferrer, for one, was conscious of this power when he penned the previously-cited admonishment against cross-dressing women in theater, fearful of its ability to inspire women to imitate the behavior of the characters they saw on stage.

Evidently, the relationship between theater and reality did not go unnoticed in early modern Spain, nor did the threat of the theater as a potentially dangerous influence on its audience. As Kathleen Regan notes, contemporary moralistas criticized the formative power of the theater and considered it as a threat to the moral well-being of the audience: “Los moralistas veían la comedia como una fuerte amenaza al establecido orden del sistema patriarcal. La queja principal de muchos era que enseñaba al público a transgredir las normas de la conducta adecuada” (287).
Cross-dressing in theater was particularly dangerous because, as they argued, wearing the clothing of the opposite sex could cause one’s soul to also change sexes:

Lo que temían los moralistas…era que al apropiarse la ropa del sexo opuesto, se apropiaba el alma también…Esta perspectiva de los moralistas manifiesta un fallo en su argumento porque si el género fuese una esencia irrevocable, entonces el apropiarse de la ropa del sexo opuesto no tendría ninguna inconveniencia. Obviamente sólo se cambiaría la apariencia y no la esencia. Así pues, los moralistas rechazaban el travestismo por ir en contra de la Palabra de Dios y por pervertir el alma tanto de las mujeres como de los hombres. (Regan 291)\textsuperscript{114}

Indeed, in 1613, Catalán Jesuit Padre Juan Ferrer writes:

Otro daño es también el atrevimiento y desvergüenza que en nuestros tiempos se ha visto en muchas, y es andar algunas mujeres en hábito de hombres por las calles y por las casas, con tanto daño de sus almas y de las ajenas. Claro es que en tiempos atrás no había de esto tanto, con mucho, como en nuestros tiempos se ha visto y por nuestros pecados se ve, sino que el verse cada día en las comedias mujeres representar en hábito de hombres, ha hecho perder el miedo y la vergüenza á cosa en que tanta la había de tener de buena razón.

\textsuperscript{114} In *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites in Iberia, 1500–1800*, Cleminson and García also suggest the belief that donning masculine clothing could cause one’s sex to change, a sentiment discussed by Torquemada (13). However, the authors also suggest that, in the *comedia*, the act of donning men’s clothing might explain the female character’s ability to carry out “male abilities, as if by magic”. This argument might account for characters whose masculine traits are present only when she is disguised as a man, but does not explain characters such as María Pérez and Gila.
Similarly, Barbara Mujica cites the complaints of Juan de Mariana, who authored the *Tratado contra los juegos públicos*, in which the Jesuit railed against the immoral acts that the audience witnessed on stage, which would inspire conversation and jokes among theater-goers who did not question the unscrupulous ideas represented in the theater, and would allow their lives to be infiltrated by the behavior of the theatrical characters of the *comedia*.

The concerns of these early modern *moralistas* speak, first of all, to the contemporary beliefs about the mutability of sex and gender, which were believed to be unstable and subject to change depending on factors such as climate, temperature, and for the *moralistas*, apparently, clothing choices inspired by the theatrical representations of cross-dressing women. Ferrer refers specifically to the moral dangers of seeing such scandalous behavior as women dressed as men, which could provoke audiences to sin and to imitate what they saw on stage. The implications of donning male clothing onstage, in front of an audience, given the beliefs about the long-term consequences of such an act, might not be so easily “undone” by a brief mention of marriage in the closing verses. Therefore, we might reconsider how powerful the representation of the *mujer varonil* would have been for the early modern Spanish audience, who was not only familiar with the notion that men and women could experience sudden sex changes, but also with flesh-and-blood masculine women who inspired the plays, which would have made the representation of similar characters in theater much more realistic.
Lope de Vega’s play *La varona castellana* (1617) is one such play in which the *mujer varonil* protagonist is made more realistic because of her ties to a Spanish heroine. The play is based on a political conflict between the Spanish kingdoms of Castile and Aragón, which began in the 12th century, when Pope Pascual II annulled a marriage between Queen Urraca of Castile and León, and her cousin Alfonso of Aragón, which sparked a military conflict between the rulers’ respective kingdoms. Lope’s protagonist, María, is based upon a historical-legendary heroine\textsuperscript{115} from the small town of Villanañe, near Soria, who participated in a decisive battle during the war between the two kingdoms.\textsuperscript{116} According to Camacho Platero, the historical inspiration for this play would have been well-known to Lope’s early modern audience (1). In Lope’s rendition of the story, trouble erupts when Queen Urraca’s son, Alfonso, reaches ruling age in a kingdom that had been under the rule of the

\textsuperscript{115} According to Florentino Zamora Lucas: “Se tiene por real la existencia de María Pérez, la Varona, pues dicen fue hermana de Alvar Pérez y Gómez Pérez, caballeros fijodalgos y capitanes expertos en la milicia. Fue María Pérez, del Solar de Villanañe (Álava) y fue la tercera mujer del infante don Vela, hermano de tres reyes de Aragón: Pedro I, Alfonso I y Ramiro el Monje”.

\textsuperscript{116} Camacho Platero provides additional information regarding the historicity of the play and the context of its plot: “*La varona castellana* (1617), is based on a historical conflict that unfolds during the twelfth-century political and military confrontation between the two most powerful Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula: Castile-Leon and Aragon. After the death of her husband, Raimundo de Borgona, doña Urraca (1109-1126), Queen of Leon and Castile, was forced by her father, Alfonso VI, to marry her cousin, Alfonso I, King of Aragon. The lack of children from this marriage made those around her suspicious about this marital union, and it was brought before Pope Pascual II, who annulled the marriage because of their blood relationship. This decision triggered the beginning of a war between the two kingdoms. This war serves as the backdrop to *La varona castellana* with its protagonist the legendary Baroness of Castile: warrior, cross-dresser, and beloved public servant, still famous in Sofia. The battle to which this play refers took place in Los Altos de Barahona. According to the legend and the ballad, "La Doncella que rue a la guerra", Maria Perez, the Baroness of Castile, participated in this war and defeated the King of Aragon. Maria was married to don Vela, Prince of Navarra, and brother of three Aragonese kings. After this war, she stayed visibly active and ordered a number of houses, a church, a bridge, and a palace to be built in the region of Palencia. She spent her last years in a convent in the province of Burgos, where she died at the age of seventy-three” (1).
foreign king, Alfonso of Aragón, due to the lack of a suitable—in other words, male—ruler. The Castilian subjects rebel against Alfonso’s continued presence, and María’s brothers are called to war.

From the outset of the play, we find out that María is famous for her bellicose prowess and her success as a hunter; her brothers keep her hidden from the world, fearful of a prophecy that proclaimed María to be born to conquer men and embarrassed to have a sister who bests them in a traditionally masculine art. María’s varonil character and her hunting skills are so obvious that the family servant tells another character that she: “¡es mujer y no es mujer!” (113) and that “En toda España / No hay tan grande cazador” (115). The brothers do their best to hide her, aware that she is a liability to their honor—both because of her superiority with a weapon and because, as a woman, her honor—her corporal purity—is integral to their own. We are left without any doubts as to María’s talent and taste for battle; in addition to the comments made by other characters, María makes clear her passion for war and fighting when she exclaims:

    Yo me muero por la guerra
    Piérdome por cuchilladas;
    En dos desnudas espadas
    Toda mi gloria se encierra
    Ver matar es mi alegría” (Act I).

When the brothers are called to war, María decides to capitalize on this opportunity to participate in armed combat: “¡Llevadme, así os guarde Dios! / que valdré por un soldado...Amo de suerte la guerra...en cualquier hábito iré” (Act I). Unwilling to leave
her alone, the brothers prefer to take María along. She accompanies them to the Castilian court, dressed as a male soldier and calling herself León.

María wastes no time in establishing herself as a talented soldier and authority figure, in whom bravery and dexterity with a sword are juxtaposed with an undeniably feminine beauty. Her disguise, coupled with her skill as a soldier, is sufficiently convincing so as to cause don Vela, one of Urraca’s noblemen, to fly into a homophobic panic when he finds himself attracted to María/León. He attempts to pacify his concerns by persuading himself that León, the object of his affection, must be female, but María’s disguise is too believable and, convinced that León might just be an effeminate man, eventually he decides to pursue Urraca, a safer bet than potentially pursuing a male love interest. Here, it should be pointed out, as in many plays featuring a mujer varonil, the audience watches on as a character they know to be a woman with manly traits successfully deceives another character into believing her to be male (to say nothing of the fact that don Vela is willing to admit his attraction for a character he believes to be male). In other words, the possibility that a woman pass as a man plays out before the eyes of an audience who would have been acquainted not only with stories of individuals like Erauso, but with medical theories explaining how and why a woman might possess undeniably masculine traits, perhaps even living as a man, or, on the other hand, why a man—as don Vela believes León to be—might possess undeniably feminine traits.

In order to make her male disguise more convincing, María/León pretends to seduce another woman, Celia. The audience now watches on as a female character, disguised as a man, successfully engages with another woman—who believes her
suitor to be male—and seduces her.\textsuperscript{117} When two other men arrive, planning to assault Celia, María’s servant flees, and she stays to defend Celia, mortally wounding one of the two would-be attackers. Later, it is María who breaks up a rebellion among the Castilian soldiers who begin to doubt their leader, Urraca’s son Alfonso. In her successful efforts to halt the rebellion, María stands in stark contrast to the disloyal soldiers, and insults them, calling them “medio-mujeres” y “gallinas”, making clear her own disdain for the female sex, complaining that for Nature to make a person a woman is an “agravio”, particularly when the woman in question was also given a natural inclination for handling weapons, as she was:

Nací con inclinación
a las armas y al ser hombre
tan fuerte, que en ocasión
que sólo tengo su nombre,
YA tengo su condición.
¡Oh gran perfección del ser
de ser hombre! ¡Oh gran nobleza!
¿Cuál agravio pudo hacer
mayor la naturaleza
que a un alma el ser de mujer? (Act I).

\textsuperscript{117} Velasco suggests that when a female character dresses as a man, her disguise is not “passable” for the audience that is watching her, therefore, scenes that depict attraction between a \textit{mujer varonil} and a female character are “rendered heterosexual due to the masculine disguise [but] also interpreted as homosexual” from the perspective of the cross-dressing character as well as the audience. (\textit{Lesbians} 135).
It is not that María wants to be a man, necessarily, but rather, she finds that being a woman is limiting, especially given her “inclinación a las arma”. Some scholars have pointed to María’s denouncement of the female sex as evidence of the impossibility that a woman in seventeenth-century Spain inhabit both the biological category of female and the inherently masculine gender category of a violent warrior. However, we would be remiss if we did not also take into account the fact that María is based on a historical figure, thus, such an individual was apparently not impossible, and the audience, likely familiar with the conflict and its heroine—as well as similar individuals and perhaps even the ideas about sex and gender that I analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation—would have been aware of its plausibility.

In the following scenes, María’s role as the hero of the story continues to develop, as she finds herself in the palace with a group of Moors. In a scene that closely mirrors that of El Poema de Mio Cid, a lion breaks loose in the palace and the Moors, much like the Infantes de Carrión, hide in fear. María tames the lion, and in doing so, is elevated to the heroic status of the Cid. Time and again, María seeks out duels and fights with male characters, whom she always defeats. Her greatest

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118 As I pointed out in the previous chapter, while medical theory explained and naturalized a woman with masculine tendencies and characteristics, who might have easily been understood and accepted by other members of the general population, this was not reflected at the level of state and church authorities, who continued to use gender as a means of dividing and controlling the social behavior of the populace. Camacho Platero, for example, argues that: “The idea of presenting herself as a woman warrior--and an alternative to the establishment--is an impossibility in seventeenth-century culture, in which body, gender, and sexuality are assumed to be one, and, in which the norms that define gender are already inscribed in the discourse. Her masculine discourse, her behavior, and her male cross-dressing help her to perform as a man, to be a man and to be treated as such; and finally, to transgress the gender boundaries. María / Leon's only objective is to be recognized as a (superior) man, and to enjoy the privileges and the freedom reserved only for men. She does not want to challenge the patriarchal system for the best interest of women, but to prove that the political, religious, and cultural laws imposed on women do not apply to her” (6).
bellicose triumph comes when she defeats King Alfonso of Aragón in battle, taking him captive and ending the war. The King is embarrassed to find out the identity of his captor, but admits his defeat, recognizing María’s superiority. The characters all reunite in the palace, where each one offers a gift to María in recognition of her vital role in the battle. The new King Alfonso, Urraca’s son, offers her the coat of arms of the defeated Alfonso of Aragón and proposes a new name for her:

   Vos, que como varón fuerte
   fuisteis varona de fama
   dejad el nombre de Pérez
   y el águila de las arma
   /llamaos, desde hoy más, Varona
   y pondréis las mismas barras
   que trae el rey de Aragón. (Act III)

Finally, in keeping with the traditional ending of the comedia, don Vela offers María the “prize” of marriage to him, which María, following her King’s command, accepts. Though McKendrick concludes that by the closing of the play, Maria learns “to accept her womanhood” (248), the text gives us no reason to believe that she is accepting anything but the offer of marriage, and at no point does she renounce the behavior and preferences she has displayed throughout the play.

   This particular comedia has received relatively little critical attention, despite the singularity of María’s character. J. Homero Arjona, categorizing the representations of the mujer varonil in plays by Lope de Vega, places María in the following group of mujer varonil characters: “IV: Cuando su carácter, excesivamente varonil, armoniza más con el vestido masculino” (124-125). But this label does not
work either, for María, even when dressed as a man, cannot hide her undeniable beauty. It is precisely a lack of total *varonilidad* that makes other characters suspect that she might be a woman. Similarly, McKendrick briefly references the text, placing María into the category of the *bella cazadora*. While I do not doubt the role of Nature on the development of María’s character—an issue that I will treat later in this chapter, along with Luis Vélez de Guevara’s Gila, who lives in a similar environment—McKendrick implies here that María, as a *bella cazadora*, is *varonil* due to her upbringing, a claim that María never makes about herself. Rather, María emphasizes a lifelong proclivity for hunting and weaponry (“Nací con inclinación / a las armas y al ser hombre…”). It may well be that, living as she did, secluded, with her brothers, allowed María to practice and hone these skills, but there is no evidence in the play that her character is a consequence of her upbringing. If anything, we are told that María’s *varonilidad* is as natural as anything else about her. Furthermore, María is not only a *cazadora* but a soldier, and the vast majority of her capabilities are seen on the battlefield, or fighting other characters, not in the realm of hunting.

Not only are María’s *varonil* characteristics not a product of her upbringing, they are not a part of a temporary identity adopted to resolve a conflict. María is motivated solely by her desire to engage in warfare and use her superior bellicose skills. Her soldier’s garb, on the one hand, does function as a disguise, but more than that, it is the means by which María is able to fully express and pursue her natural inclinations; while she was able to engage in hunting without a male disguise, María

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120 McKendrick defines this category as women who “have been allowed a physical freedom not normally associated with female upbringing and who have consequently developed a temperament which by conventional standards is not wholly ‘feminine’, together with skills which are decidedly masculine” (242).
needs to pass as a man in order to be allowed into combat as a soldier. Ultimately, as reflected both in the “prize” given to her by the king of Castile, as well as the very title of the play, María—*varona*—is a hybrid: exceeding the limits of femininity yet not fully masculine. Unlike many of the other *mujeres varoniles* of Golden Age comedias, her hybridity is not explained away as a superficial plot device. In fact, it can be neither explained away nor undone by the end of the play, given that María is based on a historical figure and shares traits with other individuals familiar to the audience, such as Erauso. While McKendrick considers María’s “strength and ferocity... [to be] grotesquely unreal” (249), one can see many similarities between her (fictionalized) behavior and the accounts of violent duels offered in Erauso’s autobiography, which might lead us to believe that there was nothing particularly “unreal” about María, either as theatrical character or as the historical heroine on which Lope based his protagonist. Additionally, as I have pointed out, María would not have been “unreal” at all for an audience familiar with the heroine upon whom her character was based.

Because María’s masculine characteristics are not adopted in response to a conflict, because she is *varonil* from the outset of the play and—according to her—from birth, it is illogical that she would renounce her proclivity for war and violence and “return” to a traditionally feminine role, as is often the case at the closing of plays featuring a *mujer varonil*. While the play does end with a reference to María’s future marriage to don Vela, the brief mention of their marriage does little to undermine the three previous acts, in which María proves herself to be superior to any man she meets, including her future husband. Additionally, the promise of (heterosexual) marriage to don Vela comes on the heels of María’s new name—Varona—making it
difficult to conceive of her as a *mujer varonil* who has suddenly decided to pursue a more domestic life as a married woman. Finally, unlike the cases of other *mujeres varoniles*—that of Rosaura, in *La vida es sueño*, for example—the marriage at the end of this play is not the primary resolution that María seeks, and securing matrimony with don Vela is not the reason for which she dresses as a man.

While María, like the rest of the *mujeres varoniles*, may have been a successful character because of the attraction and spectacle of a woman in men’s clothing, her character also coincides with scientific theories regarding sex and gender difference circulating in early modern Spain, namely, the one-sex model. I described these theories in the first chapter of this dissertation, but reiterate here some of the key components, outlined in Huarte’s *Examen*:

Por lo contrario muchas veces tiene naturaleza hecho un varón, con sus miembros genitales afuera, y sobreviniendo frialdad, se les vuelve a dentro, y queda hecha hembra. *Conocessea después de nacida, en que tiene ayre de varón, assi en la habla, como en todos sus movimientos y obras*. Esto muchas veces le ha acontecido a naturaleza, así estando la criatura en el cuerpo, como fuera. De lo qual están llenas las historias: sino que algunos han pensado que era favuloso, viendo que los poetas lo trayan entre las manos; pero realmente passa assi: que muchas veces ha hecho naturaleza una hembra, y lo ha sido uno y dos meses, en el vientre de su madre, y sobreviniéndoles a los miembros genitales copia de calor, por alguna ocasión, salir a fuera: y quedar hecho varón... (238, emphasis mine)

Huate and his contemporaries, who base themselves in the theory of the humors, assure their readers that changes in temperature or climate—which could alter the
location of the reproductive organs—can cause an individual to undergo a spontaneous sex change, either before or after birth, and that such an individual will be recognizable by vestigial characteristics of their original sex. Women who were originally male, before birth, will have manly airs, movements, and proclivities.

As I have argued, it is entirely plausible that the general populace in early modern Spain was familiar with these theories. In light of this familiarity, we might consider María not as a “monstruo” as Elizabeth Lagresa calls her, but rather as an entirely normal consequence of Nature. In this way, one might ask: to what extent does María’s behavior constitute a gender transgression? Some scholars have argued that by adopting male clothing in order to pursue life as a soldier, the *mujer varonil* only reinforces the notion of a gender binary by demonstrating that only by living as a man can she participate in certain, traditionally male, roles. Others have argued that by disguising herself as a man and successfully deceiving others into taking her for one, María exposes the constructed, performative nature of gender. These are valid points, and I do not dispute them, but perhaps there is another interpretation that we should consider: María, as a manly woman whose masculinity is present both while living as a woman and while disguised as a man, is an example of a woman who, through no conscious choice, defect or disguise, possesses many traits associated,

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121 In her article, “Monstruos de la naturaleza. Violencia y feminidad en *La varona castellana* de Lope de Vega”, Lagresa concludes: “En su estado de completa libertad de las normas sociales, María traspasa el rol de ambos géneros, transformándose casi en algo inhumano, y por lo tanto hasta cierto punto monstruoso” (105).
122 Perry argues that cross-dressing women, such as women soldiers who dressed as men to go to war, do not challenge the gender and sexual binary, but rather, reinforce it, by demonstrating that only by dressing as a man can a woman access such realms as the battlefield (92).
123 Camacho Platero makes this argument, and others, about the gender of María’s character, in an article titled “Political and Gender Transgressions in Lope de Vega’s *La varona castellana*”. 

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during the period, with the male sex. Moreover, María, as I have pointed out, is not
the product of a creative dramaturge’s imagination, but rather a character inspired in a
historical figure likely familiar to audiences in Spain. If there existed an accepted
explanation for an individual like María and a historical precedent of a woman who
reached heroic status, to what extent is her gender transgressive?

Lope is not the only playwright who capitalized on the story of the varona
castellana; José de Canizares wrote a play titled La señora Mari Pérez (1744)124
featuring a slightly more complicated version of Lope’s protagonist. Like Lope’s
María, Cañizares’ Mari—perhaps a play on the word marimacha—is daring,
aggressive, and skilled with weaponry. Her bellicose dexterity is evident from the
beginning of the play, when she kills a bear that has been terrorizing the town. Like
María, who confronts the lion in the palace, and the Cid before her, Mari proves
herself to be superior not only to the men who surround her, who are incapable of
confronting the animal, but to nature itself, by defeating a large and powerful animal
by herself. The episode with the bear, however, occurs before Mari disguises herself
as a man, further emphasizing the juxtaposition between Mari as a woman and her
masculine traits. In fact, Mari does not actually dress as a man until the end of the
play. In other words, her masculine, violent, behavior is not limited to moments of
desperation, in which disguising herself is the only option; her desire to fight and
show off her skills is constantly present, regardless of the situation and the identity,

124 While Cañizares is slightly posterior to the other texts I analyze in this dissertation, I
include a brief reference to his text, not only because it shares its inspiration with Lope’s play,
but also because it suggests that the mujer varonil figure, like the one-sex model, was not
immediately extinguished at the onset of the eighteenth-century. Furthermore, Cañizares was
undoubtedly influenced by the mujer varonil characters of the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries.
male or female, that Mari chooses for herself. The fact that Mari does not need men’s
clothing in order to fight—with men or with bears—is significant because she is,
therefore, a female character who does not require a masculine disguise in order to
enjoy and engage in war and fighting.

Unlike Maria, Mari does not live under the protection of her male siblings,
who, we learn, are both dead, and she spends her time outside hunting animals in an
attempt to “avenge” their deaths:

Con el dolor de que sea
causa natural su muerte
para que yo no pudiera
satisfacer mi dolor
y aun así, a bastar mis fuerzas
buscara venganza contra
la misma naturaleza. (Act I)

Upon learning of Queen Urraca’s pending divorce from Alfonso of Aragón, don Vela
decides that the Queen would make a much better spouse, and consequently abandons
Mari after promising to marry her. As she is the only character concerned with
defending her honor, Mari, enraged, and determined to avenge her honor, follows don
Vela to the palace. She does so, however, without taking recourse to a male disguise,
but rather, inventing a somewhat nebulous plan to convince don Vela that she has
fallen into dementia as a result of the anguish she feels over his actions. In fact, Mari
not only takes charge of her own life and honor, but those of the Queen, as well,
coming to her rescue after Urraca is taken prisoner by the Aragonese soldiers,
demonstrating the incapability of the male Castilian soldiers, who are unable to
defend their own queen.

In addition to her beauty, Mari’s bravery, among other aspects of her
masculine character, leaves Urraca enamored. She insists that Mari stay with her in
the palace, causing the servants to comment on the strange attraction between the two
women, comparing it to the heterosexual relationship between two of the servants:

Juana: Extraño
cariño, Nuño, la Reyna

a María le ha cobrado

Nuño: Como tu a Ziquiricata. (Act II)

Urraca, for her part, plays a much more important role in Cañizares’ text than in
Lope’s, participating in many dialogues, making decisions, and threatening her
enemies with violence. She, too, is even willing to participate in the war between
Aragón and Castille, causing another character to call her “marimachorra” (Act III).

Urraca’s character defies, additionally, the stereotypical absent mother in Spanish
comedies, forming a central part of the play’s action.

At the end of the play, it is Mari who defeats the king of Aragón in a sword
fight, ending the war and winning the respect of the other characters.

Ilustre muger, no hay nada
que mi grandeza te niegue
desde hoy, trueca por blasón
el apellido de Perez
en el de Varona pues
un hecho tan excelente
mas es de varon que de hembra
por armas se te conzeden
cinco barras de Aragon
en señal de que las venzes
trahiendo al siniestro lado
estos campos que a ser vienen
de Ariza y se han de llamar
los campos de la Varona
soldados decid mil vezes
viva la varona, viva!

La señora Mari Perez. (Act III)

Throughout the play, Mari is not only violent but daring, willing and able to come up with ways to swindle those around her. She is easily the smartest character, deceiving the queen, don Vela, and the rest of the characters with a variety of tricks. She is the defender of her own honor, ensuring that don Vela does not marry the queen, as well as the defender of Urraca and all of Castile. When, in the end, she finally does dress as a man, she does not do so primarily to participate in the war—in this play, not only Mari, but Urraca too, admit, as women, their willingness to fight—but to trick Alfonso, the Aragonese king, alongside Juana, a servant, who is also dressed as a man. In this way, Cañizares’ rendition of _la varona castellana_ offers an entire cast of manly women whose masculinity exceeds the moments in which they are dressed as men. Like Lope’s María, Mari Pérez, and to a certain extent, Urraca and Juana, are _mujeres varoniles_ whose _varonilidad_ is not bound by a disguise or a temporary solution for a problem, but rather, an intrinsic element of their characters.
While Cañizares’ Mari is more marriage-driven than Lope’s Maria, in neither case should the closing references to the protagonist’s marriage be interpreted as an erasure of her masculinity, which is never renounced. Furthermore, as I mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, Catherine Connor has argued that marriage at the closing of a *comedia* could have myriad implications for what was almost certainly a heterogenous audience, and that, in some cases, it could carry with it a change in social status and/or increased freedom for women, without always signifying an end to any adventure of deviance. Furthermore, she insists:

> We cannot automatically assume that audiences merely expect and accept that conclusion as ‘just part of the genre’ or just part of the theatrical experience and of its suspense of disbelief, thus rendering its meaning socially insignificant…To say that such conflicts are merely art, merely theatrical genre, or merely convention, is to overlook the particularly socially located and participatory role that the highly polysemic structures and conditions of early modern corral performances offered early modern spectators. (25-27)

In this way, the traditional ending, involving allusions to the marriage of most or all of the *comedia* characters, cannot be read as more than a superficial restoration of the “natural order”. Not only does it carry multiple interpretations for a diverse audience, it cannot retroactively undo the bellicose feats of the *mujer varonil* protagonist, nor can it make her intrinsic masculine qualities disappear, especially given that most *comedias* tend to dedicate very little time to the final resolution of the play.

Frequently, as in the cases of Lope’s and Cañizares’ texts, there are no more than a few closing verses that make reference to the protagonist’s future nuptials, and there is little else in place to de-masculinize the *mujer varonil* and convince the audience
that, moving forward, she will adhere to a traditionally feminine gender role. In these cases, such a change would suppose a complete alteration of her character; it could not possibly be read as a “return” to conventional gender role, given that the mujer varonil in question, as far as the audience is aware, never occupied such a role in then first place.

A similar, though more violent, example can be found in Luis Vélez de Guevara’s La serrana de la Vera, written in the early 1600s.\footnote{Ramón Menéndez Pidal and María Goyri de Menéndez Pidal insist that, though the manuscript held at the BNE is dated 1603, there is convincing evidence to suggest that it was actually written in or around 1613 (125).} The historicity of this particular text has been heavily debated; the only two scholars who support the notion that the play has ties to a historical reality are Vincente Barrantes and Vincente Paredes y Guillén. In 1871, Barrantes published a novela por entregas with the title La serrana de la Vera in the Ilustración de Madrid. In his version of the story, Barrantes leads his readers to believe that the heroine was a historical figure, who, over the years, has been mythified and poeticized. Paredes y Guillén, inspired by Barrantes’ work, published Orígenes históricos de la leyenda La serrana de la Vera y el de las demás de este mismo tema poético in 1915, in which he finds tenuous correlations between familial names in Plasencia and character names in Vélez’s text. Menéndez Pidal and Goyri de Menéndez Pidal discard the assertions of both Barrantes and Paredes y Guillén (130). Similarly, Julio Caro Baroja concludes that:

El tema de la Serrana de la Vera no es un tema histórico: se trata de un tema mitico que ha quedado en el folklore de una región bajo formas especiales, pero del que se pueden encontrar también vestigios en el folklore de otras partes. Los romances y las comedias basados en él no son sino una
elaboración final del tema por un pueblo con tendencias evemeristas, a través de la cual se ven muchos de los elementos míticos primitivos, que se podrán fijar mediante otros testimonios de carácter típicamente folklóricos, que deben buscarse en las localidades donde se dice que ocurrió el hecho. (569)

A more likely explanation, it seems, is that the plot of *La serrana de la Vera* is inspired in *romances* and *canciones populares*, given that the figure of the *serrana* appears in a variety of *romances*. While Caro Baroja insists that the *romances* that feature a *serrana* were created independently without any inspiration in a historical figure, James A. Parr and Lourdes Albuixech suggest that perhaps the multitude of *romances* depicting a similar *serrana* figure are all variants of one, original *romance* which was based on a historical reality of one particular town or region. (19)

In terms of how the *serrana* figure was perceived by early modern audiences, however, for the purposes of this project, it makes little difference whether or not there ever existed an “original” *serrana*. What is perhaps more important is that there was ever any speculation around the existence of a flesh-and-blood *serrana*. In other words, as long as this figure was understood as a feasible representation of a historical figure, the repeated representation of the *serrana* narrative was capable of resonating with an audience who was familiar with the tale and may or may not have known whether or not an original *serrana* had ever existed and inspired the story. One could certainly argue that many myths are erroneously taken as the truth of historical origin, and I would argue that a similar conflation of myth and historicity has happened with

126 Menéndez Pidal and Goyri de Pidal count 21 versions of the *romance* featuring a *serrana*, dating from the seventeenth century until the twentieth.

127 For a comprehensive study on the prevalence of the *Serrana de la Vera* in Iberian *romances*, see Pedro Manuel Piñero Ramírez, and Virtudes Atero Burgos “El romance de La Serrana de la Vera: la pervivencia de un mito en la tradición del sur”.

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the *serrana*, as evidenced by the multitude of scholarly works that either claim the *serrana* to have a historical origin or deny any historical basis whatsoever. In this sense, the *serrana* figure—particularly the *serrana de la Vera*, portrayed by Vélez, could easily have been read as a literary figure with loose ties to a historical reality. Thus, I argue, audiences would not have perceived *la serrana de la Vera*, represented onstage, to be an entirely fictional entity.

Gila, the protagonist of *La serrana de la Vera*, lives with her father, Giraldo, a farmer, in Garganta la Olla, near Cáceres. When the play opens, don Lucas de Carvajal, a captain in the army, arrives and demands that Giraldo allow him to stay in their house. Giraldo refuses, and begins to describe Gila, in an effort to scare off don Lucas:

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una hija me dio el Cielo
que podrá decir que vale
por dos hijos, porque sale
a su padre y a su agüelo,
que fuera de la presencia
hermosa, tan gran valor
tiene, que no hay labrador
en la Vera de Plasencia
que a correr no desafíe
a saltar, luchar, tirar
la barra, y en el lugar
no hay ninguno que porfíe
a mostrar valor mayor
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en ninguna cosa de estas
porque de las manifestas
vitorias de su valor
tienen ya grande experiencia
que es su ardimiento bizarro. (129-46)

From Giraldo’s words, we see that Gila takes after her father and grandfather and is physically superior to anyone—men included—that challenges her, which makes her, as a daughter, worth two sons. Her physical strength is well-known amongst all who have met her who, consequently, have resigned themselves to never attempt to best her. Giraldo continues:

Corre un caballo mejor
que si en él cosida fuera
y en medio de la carrera
y de la furia mayor,
que parece que al través
a dar con un monte viene
suelta el freno y le detiene
con las piernas y los pies.
Esta mañana salió en uno al monte a cazar
y casi todo el lugar
tras ella, que la siguió.
Siempre que a caza ha salido,
por verla con la escopeta
cómo los vientos sujeta,
que ningún tiro ha perdido
al vuelo, de tal manera
que no hay ave que la aguarde
ni todo el furioso alarde
de los brutos. (149-168)

In Giraldo’s continued praises of his daughter, it becomes clear that she is superior not only to the men around her, but to Nature, as well. Like Lope’s María and Cañizares’ Mari, who defeat a lion and a bear, respectively, Gila takes on wild animals and proves herself to be superior to them as well, and is well aware of her lack of femininity. She openly distances herself from the female sex, declaring: “Mujer soy solo en la saya” (772-73) and “por inclinación soy hombre” (1832). Other characters frequently comment on the varonilidad of her character, calling her a “moza varonil” (1849) for her physical feats as well as for her bold nature and taste for gambling. Her cousin even goes so far as to name Nature as the agent responsible for Gila’s masculinity, exclaiming: “Erró la naturaleza / Gila en no hacerte varón” (Act II). In Madalena’s words we have an explicit reference to Nature as the principle force responsible for altering an individual’s sex.

When Gila arrives, she is equally hostile toward the captain and his demand to stay at their home. When don Lucas does not back down, Gila is decidedly less diplomatic than her father, and opts to kidnap don Lucas. She drags him out of town, pointing out the gallows as the reach the edge of Plasencia, and tells him to never return. Throughout their dialogue, don Lucas is reluctant to take Gila’s threats seriously because she is a woman and, consequently, Gila insists upon her aggressive and varonil nature, threatening: “Si imagináis / que lo soy, os engañáis / que soy muy
hombre” (350-352). Don Lucas, once he is set free, immediately begins to plot his revenge, while the action of the play shifts to Plasencia, where a celebration in honor of Fernando and Isabel is taking place. When Gila spots a jousting tournament, organized as part of the King and Queen’s entertainment, she insists on participating, prompting her cousin Madalena to comment: “Erró la naturaliza / Gila, en no hazerte varón” (559-560); Gila agrees. Here, explicit reference is made to the figure of Nature as the agent of force responsible for determining and changing the sex of an individual. After defeating her opponent in the jousting tournament, Gila takes on a bull that has gotten loose and defeats it as well, prompting even the queen to comment on Gila’s strength.

Shortly thereafter, the captain returns to Garganta la Olla to convince Giraldo to give him Gila’s hand in marriage. Gila, for her part, is completely disinterested in marriage, which she views as an obstacle to her freedom and her lifestyle, explaining to her father:

No me quiero casar, padre que creo
que mientras no me caso que soy hombre.
No quiero ver que nadie me sujette.
No quiero que ninguno se imagine
dueño de mí; la libertad pretendo. (1582-88)

Gila, afraid that marriage to a man like don Lucas might mean the end of her freedom-filled life of hunting and jousting, points out that, beyond her disinterest, marrying don Lucas would be inappropriate, given the difference of status between them. Besides, she says: “Gila no es buen nombre para doña” (1601).
The mere topic of marriage causes Gila to question her own identity; as she explains to Giraldo:

Hasta ahora
me imaginaba, padre, por las cosas
que yo me he visto her hombre, y muy hombre
y agora echo de ver, pues que me tratas
casamiento con este caballero
que soy mujer, que para tanto daño
ha sido mi desdicha el desengaño. (1577-1583)

Gila refers here to the fact that her gender—what I referred to in a previous chapter as “social sex”, or an outward manifestation of one’s reproductive anatomy—is not fully feminine. Her skill with a sword and her preference for battle and violence have led her, as she claims, to conclude that she is not entirely a woman. Eventually Gila agrees to marry the captain, when he promises her the opportunity to be “otra Semiramis”128 at his side. Notably, it is Gila’s desire for heroic flory and power, and not the traditional motives of love or “feminine weakness” that drives her to accept Don Lucas’ proposal; as Lundelius points out: “Her very masculine aspirations led her right into the snares of her betrayer” (223). Don Lucas, as was his plan all along, abandons Gila after seducing her, leaving her alone and dishonored. When Gila realizes that she has been tricked, she is livid, and swears to spend the rest of her life seeking vengeance for her ruined honor:

Y hago al Cielo juramento

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128 According to legend, Semiramis, wife of Ninus, ruled Assyria for 42 years following the death of her husband.
de no volver a poblado
de no peinarme el cabello,
de no dormir desarmada,
de comer siempre en el suelo
sin manteles, y de andar
siempre al agua, al sol y al viento
sin que ma acobarde el día
y sin que me venza el sueño,
y de no alzar, finalmente,
los ojos a ver el cielo
hasta morir o vengarme. (2139-50).

Scholarship on *La serrana de la Vera* has often concluded that Gila is inexplicably violent and aggressive, but as her declaration makes evident, the violent behavior that follows her dishonor is a direct result of the deceit and injury inflicted upon her by don Lucas. From Gila’s perspective, it is not only don Lucas and her father who have failed her, but her entire community, who encouraged her, in one way or another, to settle down and abandon her life of independence, gambling, hunting and fighting.

True to her word, in the third and final act Gila leaves home to live in a shack in the mountains. Any travelers who have the misfortune of stumbling upon Gila are thrown over the side of the mountain into the river. Gila’s unlawful behavior in the final act of the play prompts McKendrick to categorize her as a *bandolera*,

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129 According to McKendrick: the *bandolera* is: “the female bandit, the woman driven by internal and external pressures to open rebellion against authority” (109).
she also categorizes her as a *mujer esquiva*¹³⁰ and a *bella cazadora*.¹³¹ None of these categories on its own can sufficiently account for Gila’s behavior from the beginning of the play until the end, and I would argue, fall short of describing and explaining Gila’s character. Gila is not so much a bandit as she is an angry defender of her own honor, and her rebellion exists long before the conflict of the play erupts. She shares with the *mujer esquiva* an aversion to marriage, however, she is anything but elusive, distant or shy. And, while she would seem to fit into the category of the *bella cazadora*, it is hard to conclude that this is a consequence of her upbringing. While Gila’s upbringing is certainly unconventional, various characters, Gila included, remark upon the natural origins of her unfeminine behavior, making it difficult to attribute all of her *varonil* characteristics to her upbringing.

It is not long before Gila learns that news of her attacks has travelled and there is now prize money offered to whomever kills her. Finally, don Lucas, lost in the mountains, finds Gila’s shack but does not recognize Gila, who quickly confronts him about what he has done:

Mi venganza solicito

y en estando yo vengada,

los ejes de la estrellada

fábrica sobre mí den

porque no espera otro bien

¹³⁰ The *mujer esquiva* is: “disdainful, elusive, distant, shy, cold…the *mujer esquiva* is the woman who, for some reason, is averse to the idea of love and marriage” (McKendrick 142).

¹³¹ “The term ‘bella cazadora’ can be used as a generic one for all those women who have been allowed a physical freedom not normally associated with female upbringing and who have consequently developed a temperament which by conventional standards is not wholly ‘feminine’, together with skills which are decidedly masculine” (McKendrick 242).
una mujer agraviada. (3060-65)

Don Lucas offers to marry her, but Gila refuses and throws him over the side of the mountain, proclaiming: “¡Quien tal hace, que tal pague!” (3074). Immediately after killing the captain, Gila is apprehended and taken to be executed. She is tied up and her body is pierced with arrows, a scene reminiscent, as one of the onlookers points out, of the execution of Saint Sebastian.

Some scholars have argued that Gila’s self-defense, aggression, violence and intimidation—characteristics that, taken together, constitute her masculinity—ultimately lead to her execution, concluding that the text denounces such behavior in a woman; McKendrick describes the “arrogant feminism which brings about her downfall” (118). It is possible, as McKendrick suggests, to read this play as a condemnation of Gila’s aggression and masculinity, or a cautionary tale warning parents and society alike against the dangers of unruly women. On there other hand, as Otero-Torres points out, reading Gila’s actions and their fatal consequence as a cautionary tale is not as clear-cut as it might seem. It is true that, as she is carried away to her execution, Gila admonishes her father for not reining in her free-spirited behavior. However, it is not just Gila who is punished, but don Lucas as well. If this text functions as a cautionary tale, I would argue, its caution is not only offered to parents of unruly children, but to all audience members. Don Lucas is punished because he is proud, arrogant and deceitful, lays ownership to what is not rightly his

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132 Lundelius argues that Gila explicitly criticizes her father for allowing her “inclinación gallarda”, which she translates as “masculine inclination” (230). I have not found a definition for “gallarda” that insinuates masculinity and am not convinced that Gila is referencing her masculinity, specifically.
and by all accounts is a destructive member of society, and for this, he must eventually die.

Furthermore, this play is not simply a condemnation of Gila’s behavior; rather, it exposes the deadly consequences of a society that attempts to force Gila into a role that she is ill-suited to play and simultaneously offers a mujer varonil who is varonil both physically and psychologically. In the first two acts, she is violent just as the men around her are violent—she hunts, she jousts, and she gets into minor fights while gambling with other men. As Margaret Boyle points out, Gila is exemplary for her masculinities: “Gila’s exemplary status is evident from her first appearance on stage, at the center of a parade created in her honor” (81). In the third act, Gila becomes violent, but she is not violent without reason, but because she has been wronged. Her violence is logical and it is not entirely unrestrained; she does not, for example, kill Fernando because, as she says, he is not a man, but a king, and “el Rey es Dios en la Tierra” (2565). Thus, the characterization of her as a bandolera who has rebelled against society is not entirely accurate. Gila’s violent attacks in the final act are a direct consequence of don Lucas’ insistence that she submit to him, and the revenge he carries out when she does not do so. The serrana de la Vera might have had a much happier ending if she had been left to her own devices, which, until don Lucas’ arrival, had won her fame and respect from the men and women around her.

Moreover, Gila’s reaction is aligned with her masculine character; she is offended and angry for reasons that would offend and anger a male character, and so her reaction is masculine too:

Gila is, in fact, the only serrana in Golden Age theater whose behavior seems thoroughly grounded psychologically and whose reaction to betrayal is
unwaveringly consistent with her errant character. A male viewpoint and masculine values dominate her reaction to the Captain’s betrayal. Violent crime and war have always been the male domain in society. The disaster strikes primarily at her pride and sense of personal dignity, not to mention her extravagant dreams of adventure and glory. She was overwhelmed by intense personal humiliation and not by the more customary agonies of dishonored females, namely public censure, the loss of reputation and marriageability, and familial loss of face. (Lundelius 235)

Since her offense is not feminine, we would not expect that Gila strike back with a feminine response, and her violent, aggressive, and therefore masculine, reaction is a coherent part of her character. Damaris Otero-Torres points out that, in medieval Iberia, aggression and insult were used as markers of masculinity (133); similarly, Louise Mirrer has argued that for medieval Christians, military prowess and physical strength were greater indicators of masculinity than biology itself.\(^{133}\) In this context, then, Gila’s aggression, proclivity for hunting and sword fighting, and ultimately, her recourse to violence would have made it difficult to read her as “fully” female. As Otero-Torres argues, Gila’s physical capabilities allow her to enter into a world whose access would have been denied to her as a woman (134). To this I would add that, therefore, it is Gila’s physical body and aggressive behavior, and not her masculine clothing, that allows her to participate in the traditionally male activities—activities at which she excels and for which she is praised. Masculine clothing, which she adopts

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\(^{133}\) “The literary texts of medieval Castile provide a clear picture of the traits and attitudes considered ideal for men in the society. Aggressive behavior, sexual assertiveness, and menacing speech all figure prominently in these works as characteristic of ‘real’ men. In popular as well as learned texts, masculinity is proved not through biology, but through force, intimidation, and the use of threatening language” (169).
only before entering the jousting tournament, is superfluous for a character such as Gila, who is masculine with or without a male disguise, as evidenced by the hunting and fighting in which she engages while dressed as a woman.

Like Lope’s María and Cañizares’ Mari, Gila’s masculine traits are an essential part of her character, present from the onset of the play until the end. Throughout the three acts, audiences witness a consistently masculine woman defeating male characters and wild animals in a variety of arenas. Gila’s aggression and violence are not, initially, a means by which she aims to solve a conflict nor are they a temporary disguise that enables her to resolve problems that she, as a woman, cannot. Rather, they are an intrinsic part of her person. Additionally, Gila, through her proclivity for masculine activities and her physical strength, personifies the descriptions of masculine women offered by authors like Huarte.

I would be remiss to conclude a chapter on mujer varonil outliers without mentioning Juan Perez Montalbán’s La monja alférez, inspired by the life of Catalina de Erauso. Montalbán wrote his play between 1625 and 1626, and it was first performed in 1626, shortly after, it is believed, the original manuscript of Vida i sucesos was given to Bernardino de Guzmán, who would edit it. Apart from the fame that Erauso had accrued by this point, Vallbona suggests that the playwright and Erauso herself might have been in Madrid at the same time (22). In composing his play, Montalbán drew on his knowledge of the case, perhaps even having a first-hand encounter with Erauso, in order to write the play. While Erauso’s name appears in the list of characters at the beginning of the play, the only character in the play is Guzmán; the protagonist is never referred to as Erauso and we do not witness the

134 For a detailed version of Erauso’s life, please see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
transformation of Erauso into Guzmán. This detail is significant for two reasons: first of all, it supposes that the audience is familiar enough with the play to not require an explicit explanation of why Erauso will be called Guzmán throughout the play; and second of all, Guzmán is, consequently, a *mujer varonil* from the start of the play to the finish. In other words, this, like the other texts examined in this chapter, is not a case of a female protagonist who becomes a *mujer varonil* when she decides, for motives related to a central plot conflict, to temporarily adopt a masculine disguise. Guzmán’s cross-dressing is not motivated by a romantic conflict and, furthermore, his love interest is not a male character, but a woman, doña Ana, who is also in love with Guzmán.\(^{135}\)

Guzmán, doña Ana, and don Diego, Guzmán’s good friend, are all in Lima at the opening of the play, but we learn that Guzmán has joined the army and is planning to leave, because, as he says: “Mi natural / inclinación es marcial / y vivo en la paz violento” (Act I). To complicate matters, we also learn that Miguel de Erauso, Guzmán’s brother, has received a letter from his father explaining Catalina’s escape and disappearance. Guzmán and Erauso meet by chance when Guzmán, always on the lookout for an opportunity to fight, intercedes to defend Erauso from the insults thrown at him by another character, called el Nuevo Cid. At this point, Erauso begins to suspect that Guzmán is his sister in disguise, and Guzmán, recognizing Erauso, is careful not to come close, lest the disguise be discovered. The conflict of *La monja*

\(^{135}\) The sexuality of Guzmán has been analyzed by Velasco (*Lesbians* and *The Lieutenant Nun*) as well as Camacho Platero, in her introduction to *La monja alférez*. I do not engage with this aspect of her character at great length here, namely because, as I emphasized in the previous chapter, female homosexuality is not one of the characteristics that Huarte and his contemporaries list as the traits of women who had originally been men, though it is included in discussions of men who had originally been women.
alférez arises when don Diego tricks doña Ana into believing he is Guzmán, whom doña Ana awaited in her bedroom. Don Diego seduces Ana, but accidentally leaves behind a pair of gloves that Guzmán had given him. As if this betrayal were not enough misfortune for Guzmán, Erauso asks him to another duel with el nuevo Cid, which the adventure-seeking protagonist cannot resist, but before the fight takes place, Erauso confronts Guzmán about his true identity, causing Guzmán to attack and fatally wound his brother.

In the second act, which takes place three years later, Guzmán returns to Lima. There, doña Ana explains what happened when don Diego, whose identity has remained a secret to her, tricked her into sleeping with him, so that Guzmán might take the necessary action to restore her honor. Guzmán, recognizing the gloves he had given don Diego, immediately knows who was responsible, and confronts don Diego, insisting that he marry doña Ana. Don Diego is reluctant, pointing out that doña Ana is in love with Guzmán. In order to convince don Diego that he should not consider Guzmán a threat to his marriage to doña Ana, Guzmán confesses that he is a woman. Though don Diego swears himself to secrecy, after Guzmán is arrested for killing el nuevo Cid, don Diego makes a last-minute appeal to the viceroy, exposing Guzmán’s true sex in the process, in the hopes that this detail will earn Guzmán some leniency in the court. In the third act, Guzmán is forced to dress as a woman, to prove don Diego’s rationale for petitioning the viceroy to set her free.

Guzmán’s varonilidad is a constant point of discussion throughout the play; character upon character, Guzmán included, remarks on it. Oftentimes, these comments can be read as subtle references to the circulating beliefs on sex and gender that I have referenced extensively throughout this dissertation. For instance, in a
confrontation between el nuevo Cid and Guzmán, el Nuevo Cid challenges Guzmán’s masculinity, drawing a connection between physical strength and anatomy:

Diga, ¿en quién se fía?

Más barba, amigo, y menos valentía

sepa que a mí me llaman por mal nombre

el nuevo Cid, y él es apenas hombre

porque es razón que note

que el vigor se deriva del bigote. (Act I)

On a superficial level, el nuevo Cid questions Guzmán’s maleness; it is true that men have facial hair, and on the basis of Guzmán’s lack of facial hair, el nuevo Cid insinuates that he is not a man, at least, not a real man. However, what he actually says is that Guzmán is physically weak because he is missing an anatomical attribute that simultaneously denotes maleness and provides those who possess it with masculine physical strength. In other words, el nuevo Cid suggests that Guzmán is not fully male, a possibility that was permitted by contemporary medical theories that insisted that male- and female-ness was spectral, rather than binary, by drawing a connection between an anatomical feature and an insinuated lack of physical force.

It is true that in medieval and early modern Iberian literature, beards are traditionally used to demonstrate a male character’s honor and superiority. For example, the emphasis on the long beard of the Cid—the original Cid—is a constant reminder of his masculinity and honor. Plucking another man’s beard is traditionally viewed as an affront to the beard-wearer. However, in addition to this traditional connotation, in Guzmán’s response to el nuevo Cid’s insult, we find a clear reference to the notion that men and women’s possessed the same anatomy, but in different
locations. Guzmán replies that indeed, he does have a “bigotes” (maleness, and therefore masculinity), but that it is internal: “Pues porque esté el vigor más en su centro / hecho yo los bigotes hacia dentro” (Act I). Read alongside the model of sex difference offered by Huarte, this comment can be interpreted as an acknowledgment that Guzmán’s male anatomy, his markers of masculinity, are internal, much like Huarte would explain that women possessed internally the same reproductive organs as men. Like the descriptions of women who retain vestigial characteristics of their original male sex found in early modern medical treatises, or the women whose reproductive organs had fallen slightly, but not entirely, from their original “female” location, Guzmán’s “bigotes”, he claims, are internal, but not entirely absent, and are present enough to give him some degree of masculinity.

The frank discussion of Guzmán’s masculinity and anatomy might have resonated with an audience who not only shared the popular early modern beliefs about sex and gender, but would also have been familiar with the case of Erauso, who had exemplified nearly every trait associated with women who had experienced a sudden change of sex. The references to Guzmán’s sex and gender do not only concern his maleness and masculinity, but his femaleness and femininity as well, making it impossible to read Guzmán as man or woman. In fact, as Mujica points out, the subject of Guzmán’s sex is present throughout the text; the entire play is rife with references to Guzmán’s beardlessness and “certain psychological characteristics associated in the seventeenth-century with women”, such as stubbornness. According to Mujica, “These constant reminders of Guzmán’s feminine characteristics keep spectators aware of his biological sex” (“A New Anthology…” 558). Furthermore, the combination of the reminders of his masculinity, juxtaposed with the frequent
references to his beardlessness, make Guzmán both man and woman, male and female: a *mujer varonil* in every sense of the term.

In the second act, don Diego makes a similar reference to Guzmán’s masculinity, this time attributing it to Nature, much like Gila’s cousin, Madalena, blamed Nature for making Gila a woman: “Y ya que naturaleza / tan gran milagro haya hecho” (Act II). When don Diego asks for an explanation of Guzmán’s masculinity, Guzmán responds:

> En la edad, pues, si se escucha
> que es cuando la lengua apenas
dicciones distintas forma
juzgaba naturaleza
violentá en mí, pues desnuda
de la mujeril flaqueza
en acciones varoniles
me ocupaba… (Act II)

In both cases, the speakers implicate Nature as the driving force behind Guzmán’s masculinity, coinciding with Huarte and his fellow medical authors in the view that Nature’s intervention was the cause for an individual’s sex and gender, as well as for changes in his or her sex and gender. It is important to note that here Guzmán does not claim to not be a woman; while he questions his sex (“¿Cómo / podrá decir mi lengua / que nací mujer?”), he does not reject it outright and he never claims to be a
man. Rather, Guzmán acknowledges that masculinity resides in his female body (Act II).\textsuperscript{136}

In the previous chapter I suggested that it was not Erauso’s masculinity that made her so famous and noteworthy, but rather, the polarized of two identities—lieutenant and nun—that were simultaneously present in one individual and exaggerated by those around her to bring notoriety to her case. The same is true for Guzmán, who is somewhat noteworthy as a \textit{mujer varonil}, but more than anything, as a female soldier and lieutenant nun, as another character describes:

Ser una mujer soldado
y una Monja Alférez es 
el prodigio más extraño
que en estos tiempos se ha visto. (Act III)

In these lines, Montalbán makes clear that Guzmán (and by extension, Erauso) was unique because he was simultaneously a nun, a status that connotes purity, holiness, seclusion from society and religious devotion, and a soldier, a profession associated with adventure and violence. It was these two identities, more than the trait of being a \textit{mujer varonil}, that made him such an oddity. In this light, it is almost suggested that to be a \textit{mujer varonil} was not so strange at all. The play closes with a reference to the real Catalina de Erauso:

Con aquesto, y pidiendo

\textsuperscript{136} Only when his femaleness is used against him as an insult does Guzmán claim that he is not a woman. This occurs at the end of Act III, when don Juan insinuates that a woman would be incapable of challenging a man, in this case, don Diego, who claims that Guzmán has insulted him and must be punished. To this, Guzmán responds: “no soy mujer / mientras empuño este acero / que ha vencido tantos hombres” (Act III), suggesting that his skillful use of a sword outweighs any underlying femininity (and consequently, femaleness).
perdón, tenga fin aquí
este caso verdadero
donde llega la comedia
han llegado los sucesos;
que hoy está el Alférez Monja
en Roma, y si casos nuevos
dieren materia a la pluma
segunda parte os prometo. (Act III)

At the closing of the play, the audience is reminded that the character that they have seen on stage is based in a historical reality, near to them both chronologically and geographically, and is not simply a fictional creation designed to heighten audience interest in the play. And, as Velasco emphasizes, there is no suggestion that Guzmán will begin to dress or live as a woman, like the previous protagonists, such a change would not constitute a “return” to a traditional feminine gender role, since there was, as far as the audience has seen, no departure from such a role, as Guzmán was always masculine and male.

I have mentioned previously in this chapter that these four protagonists, arguably four of the most varonil of the mujer varonil character type, are particularly intriguing because of their ties to a historical-legendary figure in Spanish history, thus placing them into a realm of believability that might not apply to them were they purely fictional creations. I am not suggesting that these playwrights set out to

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137 “La obra no termina con el encerramiento de la mujer, ni en la casa ni en el convento, sino con un final (el verdadero) abiertamente transgresivo: ella sigue viviendo en el papel de hombre libre, incluso con la aprobación del rey Felipe IV y del papa Urbano VIII” (“La primera dama” 125).
carefully document the lives of the historical figures upon whom their protagonists were based, as this is certainly not the case. Camacho Platero, for example, has documented the discrepancies between the life of the historical Catalina de Erauso and Montalbán’s Guzmán (18-27), though, as Velasco notes, Montalbán did not have the freedom to stray too far from the facts, as his audience would have been familiar with Erauso’s story (Lesbians 70). Despite the fictionalization of some elements and characters in the play, audiences would have been aware that they were watching a relatively realistic story unfold before them—realistic because, as they would have known that, at its core, this was a story that had actually happened. In addition to the figures of Maria Pérez, the Serrana de la Vera, and Catalina de Erauso, stories of other masculine and cross-dressing women circulated in early modern Spain, as well. For example, Queen Christina of Sweden, due in large part to her intellect, her preference for men’s clothing and her predilection for horseback riding and hunting was the subject of rumors, relaciones de sucesos, and even an autosacramental by Calderón de la Barca: La protestación de la fe.\textsuperscript{138}

In addition to the figures that are known to us, some scholars have argued that the number of documented cases of cross-dressing women in early modern Western Europe is only the tip of the iceberg, and that there were likely many more cases that simply were not documented, or whose written evidence has been lost. Other figures

\textsuperscript{138} According to Velasco: “By the mid-seventeenth century, Spaniards had received word of Queen Christina’s non-traditional gender and sexual preferences. hen Spanish ambassadors and church officials became instrumental in the Swedish monarch’s conversion to Catholicism, Queen Christina soon became a favorite subject of gossip and popular theatrical performance in Madrid. Philip IV, who had also been a big fan of the Lieutenant Nun years earlier, seemed unconcerned about rumors of her affairs with other women. He commissioned a portrait of Christina and continued to show great interest in all of her activities” (68-9).
that inspired literary representations in early modern theater include Joan of Arc, María de Estrada, a woman warrior who lived in present-day Mexico, and Isabel Barreto, believed to have been the captain of a Spanish fleet that sailed to the Philippines. Camacho Platero suggests: “fueron muchos más los casos de travestismo, que no detectaron ni la justicia ni la sociedad y de los que no tenemos información alguna debido a que vivieron sin dejar constancia escrita de su existencia y experiencias” (“Intro” 7). For this reason, the mujer varonil, especially those to which I have referred in this chapter, is more meaningful than a whimsical convention of the theater because she corresponded to a reality that was familiar to her public and perhaps much more common than we have tended to think.

It was not only the cross-dressing women themselves who constitute a historical reality for early modern Spanish audiences, but the actresses. The actresses who interpreted the roles of the mujer varonil characters were real people—real women—who necessarily engaged in the behaviors and exhibited the traits of their characters. Mujica has pointed out the physical requirements of Golden Age actresses, particularly those playing mujer varonil roles, which would have required them to engage in sword fights and hand-to-hand combat, ride horses, climb ladders, and jump, among other physical feats. In fact, the scholar acknowledged that women’s age often played a role in their eligibility for theatrical roles, not only because they could no longer pass as young women, but because they could not meet the physical demands of the mujer varonil character. In other words, the theatrical

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139 Camacho Platero offers a more detailed description of these figures and their feats (“Gender and Political…” 2).
140 Mujica addressed these elements of women in theater in a talk entitled “Actresses, Athletes, and Acrobats” at the 2016 MLA Convention.

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representation of manly women required actresses who possessed many of the characteristics inherent to the *mujer varonil*. The physical capability of the *mujer varonil*, which often constituted a large portion of her masculinity, was also the physical capability of the actress who played the role. Thus, the audience and the playwrights alike were made familiar with actresses whose dexterity with a sword and physical strength were very real.

These individual actresses were often well-known among the playwrights themselves and the audience as well. Vélez de Guevara, for example, states explicitly in the manuscript of *La serrana de la Vera* that he has written the role for Jusepa Vaca (Act I) and at one point, gives directions for Gila, who should be: “poniéndole la escopeta a la vista, que lo hará muy bien la señora Jusepa” (Act I), suggesting that Vaca was in possession of certain masculine characteristics that would allow her to handle weapons in a convincing, natural manner. Similarly, Mujica notes the especially unconventional life of Luisa de Robles, who played Guzmán in *La monja alférez*:

Robles was married to an actor named Juan Labadia, whom she believed had died in a shipwreck, but who was actually captured by Moorish pirates and sold into captivity. She then married Alonso Olmedo Rufino, a well-known actor and theater producer. When Labadia unexpectedly returned to Spain, Olmedo accepted the situation with resignation and agreed to leave Robles, however, she decided not to live with either of the two men, although all three remained friends. Audiences would have been intrigued not only by Robles’s unconventional lifestyle, but also by her reputation for daring and ingenuity. In a 1623 production of Alarcón’s *El anticristo*, the lead actor suddenly took
fright at the prospect of using a tramoya to stage an ascent into Heaven. The intrepid Luisa grabbed his crown and robe and flew up to Heaven in his place, much to the delight of the audience, an incident described by the poet Góngora in a sonnet. (“A New Anthology…” 557)

With regards to Robles’ reputation, Velasco links her personal and professional life to that of Erauso: “Lo que Robles y Erauso parecen tener en común es una capacidad de exceder a los hombres en actividades generalmente consideradas "varoniles" y más apropiadas para los varones que para mujeres, según los pape les que la tradición asigna a cada uno” (“La primera dama” 120). Thus, while the particular characters represented on stage were theatrical creations, albeit creations that, in the cases I describe in this chapter, had ties to historical figures, the actresses who played the roles were very real, and their capacity for the required physical feats, as well as the details about their lives that challenged prescribed gender roles, add an element of reality to the mujer varonil figure.

As these texts show, early modern audiences were exposed to female theatrical characters whose masculinity defines them from the beginning of the play until its closing scenes. In these cases that I have outlined above, such characters are grounded in the collective knowledge of an early modern audience familiar with figures like Erauso, María Pérez and la Serrana de la Vera. Furthermore, as I have shown in the first chapter of this dissertation, popular beliefs concerning sex and gender likely informed how an early modern audience would have understood a figure like that of the manly woman: as a woman who was not entirely female, either because she had once been male, leaving her with vestigial traces of maleness and masculinity, or perhaps because her reproductive organs had fallen slightly from their
original location, causing her to exhibit traits considered inherent to the male sex. In these examples, we have cases of the *mujer varonil* in which the character in question clearly share many traits with the women described in early modern Spanish medical treatises whose sex and gender is, for one reason or another, non-binary. Therefore, the gender and sexual transgression of the *mujer varonil* that are represented in the Spanish *comedia* cannot be so easily undone at the closing of the play. Future scholarship on the *mujer varonil* should take into consideration the historical reality to which these characters corresponded, and recognize the significance of the continued exposure of early modern audiences to the theatrical representation of masculine women.
Conclusion: Explaining Masculine Women in Early Modern Spain

The belief that one’s sex could suddenly change—or that it had done so prenatally—circulated in early modern Spain, thanks, in part, to its treatment in medical treatises published by authors like Juan Huarte de San Juan, Juan Calvo, and their contemporaries. Such a phenomenon was believed to be possible because, as these authors assure us, men and women differ only in the location of their reproductive organs. This model of sex difference, which Laqueur has termed the “one-sex model” were defended both by medical and philosophical theories, as well as anecdotal stories of individuals who had undergone such transformations. Consequently, individuals whose sex or gender did not adhere to a strict binary could be understood as the natural consequence of shifts in humoral balances, which, by causing a change of anatomical sex, also effected changes in the individual’s gender, or the external and social manifestation of biological sex, as it was understood. While one finds more reports of women who suddenly turned into men, the possibility for sudden sex changes is applied equally to men and women, with the sole distinction that, according to medical authors, men who had originally been female are more likely to engage in homosexual relations, while no parallel conclusion is drawn about women who had originally been male.

As I showed in Chapter 1, this topic is treated not only in medical texts, but in popular literature, such as Antonio de Torquemada’s *Jardin de flores curiosas*, as well as philosophical treatises, like Antonio de Fuentelapeña’s *El ente dilucidado*:
Tratado de monstruos y fantasmas. The prolific treatment of this topic speaks to the relevance of the issue for the authors who write about it, as well as the relevance it holds for their perceived audience. Furthermore, as I demonstrated, not all authors interpreted the one-sex model identically. Some authors, like Huarte and Fragoso, are willing to conclude that any individual is susceptible to a sudden change of sex following a drastic change in temperature. Calvo, on the other hand, is much more skeptical, insisting that the only individuals who might suddenly change sex are those who were already born with traits of the opposite sex, and, he says, even then, they would be susceptible not to complete sex changes, but rather, slight slippage of their reproductive organs. Thus, in his skepticism, he suggests the existence of individuals who do not fit neatly in either category of male or female.

The ideas presented by the authors of medical treatises in early modern Spain are re-iterated in texts of a less-scientific nature, such as Antonio de Torquemada’s Jardín de flores curiosas and Antonio de Fuentelapeña’s El ente dilucidado. Both authors offer similar ideas about the possibility of sudden sex changes and Fuentelapeña in particular delves into theories about humans with non-binary sex. The presence of these topics in literature of a more popular nature—texts like Torquemada’s in particular, were written not only to educate but also to entertain readers—suggests that discussions about sex and gender were not limited to the realm of scientific and medical professionals, but rather, that such topics were of interest

141 “aunque Fragoso en su glosa dice que una muger puede tener tanto calor en las partes genitales que le salgan los testiculos fuera y que de muger se vuelva hombre y en confirmación de esto trae muchas historias, empero yo tengo por imposible muchas cosas que trae allí, aunque bien puede ser que una muger nazca tan robusta y varonil que por el mucho calor le vengan a salir los testiculos algún tanto fuera, empero decir que alzando un gran peso una monja se convirtió en hombre, lo tengo por fabuloso” (498).
and importance to the public at large. Given the circulation of this information, we should consider the possibility that early modern Spaniards were not only interested in understanding sex difference, but that they were influenced by the one-sex model and the possibilities it offered for understanding non-binary sex and gender.

In the second chapter, I suggested that the prevailing model of sex difference in early modern Spain might explain how individuals with non-binary sex and gender were understood by their peers. In my analysis of the medical texts in Chapter 1, I argued that the model of sex difference offered in these texts was, in a way, more permissive than the strict sex and gender binary that replaced it centuries later, given that it naturalized cases of sex and gender anomalies by explaining that they were the logical consequence of Nature’s will, which can be understood as the implementation of God’s divine will. Therefore, it is plausible to conclude that this understanding of non-binary sex would have primed early modern Spaniards to react in a more tolerant manner toward individuals who did not adhere to a strict sex and/or gender binary.

In order to make this argument, I turned toward documents written by and about Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes. In reading the documents written about Erauso, I was looking for evidence that she was understood to be a manly woman, not a man, nor a woman disguised as a man. In many of the texts written about her, it is evident that those who met her were unable to place her into one category or the other, and even those who met her while she was disguised as a man describe her as a manly woman, instead of referring to her as a man.142 Furthermore

142 In this chapter, I suggest that if those who met her while she was dressed as a man had truly been convinced of her maleness, they would have incurred in the kinds of pronoun mixing seen in the descriptions of women who turned into men or in the letter written about Magdalena Muñoz. In these cases, the speaker is unable to repress his original impression of
their descriptions of her were reminiscent of the descriptions offered by Huarte and his contemporaries of women who had at one time been male, but, following a sudden sex change, became women with vestigial masculine traits. I suggest that Erauso may well have been understood as a woman of this sort. Furthermore, a close reading of the Historia leads one to question how it would have been possible for her to hide her true sex from everyone she encountered throughout her travels in the New World. I argue that a far more likely explanation is that many who encountered her were aware that she was a woman dressed as a man, but, given the unproblematic nature of such a situation, were not inclined to denounce her to the authorities. In fact, the original prologuist of the Historia makes explicit reference to the one-sex model in order to explain how an individual like Erauso could have come to be.

Céspedes’ case offers a slightly different perspective. I offer Céspedes as an example of the discrepancy between the reactions of the general public and that of the authority when faced with an individual who eschewed a strict sex and gender binary. Given that Céspedes was able to live for many years amongst friends and neighbors who believed him to be a woman living as a man, it is clear that something was causing early modern Spaniards to react with relative tolerance to such an individual. Of course, this reaction is not echoed in the Inquisitional Tribunal, where Céspedes was found guilty of bigamy, for marrying a woman when his husband was still alive, and witchcraft—Céspedes admitted to using ointments to alter his genitalia.  

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the individual’s sex, and despite believing said individual to be male, for example, continues to use female pronouns. Thus, I argue, had those writing about Erauso really believed her to be male when they met her, it is likely that they would have continued to use male pronouns when describing her years later, once her identity had been revealed.

While Erauso admitted to using an ointment to flatten her chest, she never admits to purposely altering her reproductive organs or genitalia.
Additionally, Céspedes stands as evidence of the extent to which the one-sex model circulated among early modern Spaniards, relying on information about sex difference, hermaphrodites and sex-changes found in early modern Spanish medical texts to explain why he was now living as a man, despite being born a woman. Born a slave to a Moorish mother, Céspedes was eventually able to work as a surgeon and amassed a collection of books, among them, texts on medicine. If an individual like Céspedes, who literally wore a sign of enslavement emblazoned on his face, was able to access these ideas and use them in his defense against the accusations of the Inquisition, we must broaden our notions about who might have been exposed to the information propagated in medical treatises.

In the final chapter, I have drawn connections between the one-sex model, the reception of individuals with non-binary sex and gender, and the theatrical representation of manly women in the Spanish comedia. I believe that these connections help us to better understand the importance of the mujer varonil figure as well as the early modern Spanish audience with whom she was so wildly popular. Moreover, I have sought to show that existing scholarship on the mujer varonil does not adequately take into consideration the impact of cross-dressing women on stage in early modern Spain. In order to do this, I argue, we must learn how early modern audiences understood and reacted toward gender and sex transgressions, particularly with respect to cases of masculine women or women who dressed and even lived as men. In this final chapter, I aimed to demonstrated that the mujer varonil was more than just a theatrical convention whose minor transgressions, if there were any at all, were undone and erased through the imposition of heterosexual marriage at the end of the play.
In order to do this, I considered texts featuring a *mujer varonil* whose masculine characteristics were unquestionably an intrinsic part of her character, and not a temporary disguise or a superficial element of the play’s plot. Interestingly, the characters whose masculine traits were most persistent and far-reaching were also based on historical figures in Spanish history. Thus, the audience who observed these especially masculine women was aware that such women were not fictional creations but rather theatrical representations of women who were part of a collective Spanish history. In the texts I chose, Lope de Vega’s *La varona castellana*, José de Cañizares’ *La señora Mari Pérez*, Luis Velez de Guevara’s *La serrana de la Vera* and Juan Pérez de Montalbán’s *La monja alférez*, the protagonists all demonstrate that the *mujer varonil* character is not limited to the categories proposed by Melveena McKendrick. Rather, some iterations of the *mujer varonil* are best understood in light of Juan Huarte de San Juan’s explanation of women who had originally had male sex. The description that Huarte and his contemporaries offer of such women corresponds to many of the masculine traits seen in the protagonists of these four plays. It is reasonable to suggest that this information may have had some bearing on the representation, and certainly the reception, of such figures.

The knowledge that such characters were based in a historic reality, coupled with the fact that said characters were represented by actresses who were physically capable of carrying out the physical feats required of them should leave no doubt as to whether or not the *mujer varonil* was understood as a feasible character. When we add to this the tolerance with which Erauso and Céspedes were received by their peers and the proliferation of the one-sex model, whose implications likely field said tolerance, it becomes clear that the *mujer varonil* was much more than a popular theatrical
convention. Rather, she embodied circulating beliefs about the spectral nature of sex and gender found in many early modern Spanish texts.
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