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36. AGN, Bienes Nacionales, Leg. 697, Testamento de Felipe de la Vega.
37. AGN, Leg. 350, exp. 12 (1738), Testamento de la Condesa del Valle de Orizaba, Doña Maria Graciana de Velasco Ríbera y Pereda (11 November 1739); GSU, Reel 243-173. Notary Tomás de Ovendain, Guadalajara (1698-1705). Ana Urrutia de Vergara, widow of Antonio Alonso Flores de Valdés, knight of Calatrava, left a hefty estate in 1699. She gave careful attention to the distribution of a number of personal objects. A grandson would receive a special gift of 800 pesos in silver jewelry chosen by his parents from her belongings. Her granddaughters also received choice jewelry; her son was willed her coach. A desk and a religious painting went to her sister and another oil was destined for a special friend. Several of her orphan protegés were left money. See AGN, Bienes Nacionales, Leg 694, Testamento of Ana Urrutia de Vergara, 1699.

Catalina de Erauso: From Anomaly to Icon

It is I, Eugenia. What do you admire?
What astonishes you? What frightens you?
What perturbs you? What silences you—
if not looking at your own blindness
upon seeing that
on a throne which is both an altar
and a court bench,
I am at once the deity and the delinquent?
—Pedro Calderón de la Barca, El justo de las mujeres

The seventeenth century in Spain has frequently been viewed not only as a conflictive age, but also as an age of magnificent contradictions. In the baroque chiaroscuro of the times, law and lawlessness, overweening morality and base licentiousness, the spirit and the flesh, virtue and vice, the deity and the delinquent all coexisted and were equally exalted. Paradox, antithesis, and incongruity informed both cultural realities and rhetorical figures. As testimony to this dimension of the Baroque Age, I offer the following study of Catalina de Erauso, the cross-dressing Monja/Alférez [Nun/Ensign], who became a legend in her own times. I will examine from a largely cultural point of view the enigmas, antitheses, and contradictions (Baroque and otherwise) bound up in the phenomenon of Catalina de Erauso, in her beneficidal fame, by exploring the reception accorded the Monja Alférez in the Hispanic Baroque worlds as well as the nuances and resonances of her history in seventeenth-century texts.

Leo Braudy, in his The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History (1986), notes that fame "sits at the crossroads of the familiar and the unprecedented, where personal psychology, social context and historical tradition meet" (15). All of Braudy's broad considerations regarding fame will come into play here, and even into conflict, particularly as I focus on the following conundrum with its
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feminist inquiry: that Catalina de Erauso’s daring, participation in the male order, and accomplishments rendered her anomalous, even transgressive, for her society. Though an anomaly, she nonetheless achieved renown and autonomy; from an anomaly she became a cultural icon—as we have said, a legend in her own time. In other words, we shall explore here the puzzle of how, against apparent odds, Erauso was captivated—and in important ways, captivated herself—from anomaly to icon and so doing achieved autonomy. Admittedly, this is a rather predictable feminist line of investigation. Yet the fact that both the feminist and the cultural chords of the study do eventually play together will, I believe, at once revealingly contextualize the former and establish the significance of the phenomenon of Catalina de Erauso with regard to the contradictory Age of the Baroque in the Hispanic worlds.

For any society, and particularly for the regulated world of seventeenth-century Spain, even the bare bones of Catalina de Erauso’s life story are wonderfully shocking. Born in San Sebastian, Vizcaya, toward the end of the sixteenth century, Erauso was raised from a young age in a convent, from which she escaped at age fifteen. She immediately cut off her hair and fashioned her habit into male garb, shedding her identity as a female with the same alacrity as she shed her female dress. After traveling around Spain under several assumed male names and serving a variety of masters, Erauso traveled to the New World, where she seems to have passed as a eunuch. The famed travel writer Pedro del Valle described Erauso in 1626 as being:

tall and robust in figure, basically masculine in appearance, with no more bust than a young girl. She told me that she had employed some kind of remedy to make it disappear. . . . She looks more like a eunuch than a woman. She dresses as a man, Spanish style: she bears her sword as bravely as her life. . . .

As del Valle’s reference to her bravo and sword suggest, Erauso became a fighter and a soldier. Feisty, contentious, and incorrigibly aggressive, she committed many crimes, often being saved from ruin by the political influence of her fellow Basques. She also acquired herself bravely as a mercenary soldier in several battles of the Araucanian wars, serving, unbeknownst to him, under her own brother, and was awarded the minor title of Alferez. Her sexual preference seems to have been for women; little wonder, then, that when under dire circumstances Erauso finally disclosed her true gender to a bishop in Peru, she was found to be a virgin. Refusing to spend her life in the convent to which she was remanded, and having become a popular sensation, Erauso returned to

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Europe where, remarkably enough, she was granted dispensation from both the Spanish Crown and Pope Urbano VIII to spend her life dressed as a man, to be the Monja Alferez. The former soldier enjoyed her newfound celebrity for a while and soon returned to Mexico. She spent the latter years of her life as a merchant-muleteer under the name of Antonio de Erauso and died in 1650.

Many historical documents establish these facts. Indeed, a whole tangle of contemporaneous accounts, which have come down to us, both attested to and enhanced her considerable celebrity. Principal among these documents, which form the backbone of my study, figure Erauso’s own petitions to the Crown requesting an annuity for her military services and compensation for a robbery to which she fell victim in France, a good number of eye-witnesses’ certificaciones (testimonial certifications) backing up Erauso’s petitions, two relaciones or accounts of her exploits published in 1635 in Spain, and three published in Mexico. These broadsides, sold to the public, tell Erauso’s life in installments. The first two Mexican relaciones duplicate those published in Spain, while the third, dating from 1633, follows Erauso’s life up to her death. All three relaciones are by different (anonymous) authors. So famous had Erauso become that the relaciones do not even mention her name.2

None of these rich documents, however, is as tantalizing and controversial as Erauso’s alleged autobiography, originally titled Vida y sucesos de la Monja Alferez escrita por ella misma (Life and occurrences of the Nun Ensign written by herself) and published in modern editions as the Historia de la Monja Alferez escrita por ella misma (The story of the Nun Ensign written by herself). The principal question, still to me knowledge entirely unresolved, that has arisen around this text is whether it was in fact and in toto written by Erauso. This is due, first and foremost, to the fact that we possess no autograph or original printed copies of the work, which was deposited for publication in the printing house of Bernardino de Guzmán in 1635. An alleged transcription of the original with eighteenth-century calligraphy but seventeenth-century orthography and morpho-syntax ( Vallbona 1981, 150), now housed in the Real Academia in Madrid, has served as the basis for the first modern (by Joaquín Maria Ferrer in 1839) and subsequent editions. The weighty problems surrounding the manuscript of the Historia, to which we shall return, have thoroughly preoccupied scholars and, with good reason, stymied literary analysis of the text in its own right.3 Yet beyond these concrete textual issues, the very nature of the Historia, that is, its purportedly shocking nature, inspires equal skepticism with respect to its authorship. For, as Rima de Vallbona has noted, it is difficult to understand how Erauso could have written such scandalous pages at the same time that she
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presented her case to the Crown for reward (236). Leaving aside, for now the question of the text's authenticity, let us look at Erasmo as she is presented in the Historia—for a Monja/Alférez, masculine/feminine—in a text that aggressively mines the shock potential, the difference, inherent in Erasmo's title and life.

A central passage from the Historia conveys the tone and stuff of the narrative. Here the character Erasmo recounts how when finally disclosing her gender she summarized to the bishop of Guananga her life as a nun turned cross-dresser:

My Lord, all that I have told your Lordship is true; the truth is this that I am a woman, that I was born in such-and-such a place, daughter of So-and-So and So-and-So that I was placed at such-and-such an age in such-and-such a convent with my aunt So-and-So, that I was educated there, took the habit, became a novice, and was about to be professed when, for such-and-such reasons, I ran away, that I went to such-and-such a place, stripped, dressed up, and cut my hair, went hither and thither, embarked, went into port, took to roving, slew, wounded, embezzled, and roamed about till the present moment, when I place myself at the feet of your most illustrious Lordship. (1928, 114–13)

In colloquial language, with a matter-of-fact tone that but heightens the impact of her crimes, Erasmo (for the sake of convenience, I'll say that Erasmo wrote the text) unflinchingly parades her sins before the bishop and the reader. The staccato spate of harsh verbs at the end of the passage hammers them in, encapsulating the confession. Erasmo's confession, however, hardly signals the beginning of her repentance and reform, for she remains unrepentant and true to herself to the end. In fact, the text, in its theme and structure, is more of an exposé than a confession. The Historia's largely formalistic chapters showcase Erasmo's transgressions with surprisingly little attention to her heroism (Vallbona 1981, 210–11, 294). Condensed, selective, highly emplotted with a compressed novelistic causality, the chapters focus with relentless singularity of purpose on the dire entanglements of a woman who has adopted male garb in order, as she says, to "love and see the world" (30). Typically they begin with brief background or filler material, then succinctly set forth whatever problematic situation the protagonist has brought upon herself, and end with Erasmo escaping from the situation, unable or unwilling to resolve it. From chapter to chapter the protag Erasmo rapidly changes roles, but not character: a thief, a war-mongering soldier, an inveterate gambler, a shameless murderer, she persists, undeterred by many arrests, in "roving, killing, wounding, embezzling and roaming."

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Although action here predominates over psychology, a striking portrait of Erasmo's iconoclastic and unabashedly masculine persona nonetheless emerges from the text. Most astounding for the times, the protagonist on several occasions displays her disrespect for religion: consistently and opportunistically claiming her right to asylum in a church to escape arrest or death ("There was a tumult and everyone was scandalized, calling me a heretic" [88]), mocking the priest about to hang her (72), and resisting a life of enclosure in a convent ("I told him that I had no order nor religion, ..." [124]). Erasmo, like Jesus Palancares, set in Elena Poniatowska's Hasta no verte Jesús mío (Until I see you, My Jesus), styles herself as an incorrigible individualist who rejects conventional religion, and as a violent peleona (female fighter) and marimacha (masculine woman) who scorns female behavior. It being a natural outgrowth of her entrenched aggressiveness, as a soldier she also embodies exemplary male valor. Moreover, Erasmo's assumed gender and role as a soldier configures the genre of autobiography—for the Historia displays not only the content but several traits of the soldier's autobiography in the Golden Age. As in the autobiographies of Alonso Contreras and César de Pasamonte (see Levisi 1984), the almost complete lack of interiority and of expressions of emotion or remorse substantially reduce the "I" in the Historia to the res gestae, a locus of external events. The author abounds documents such events, with an attention to dates and names similar to that of soldier's relaciones de servicios y méritos (official accounts of services and merits; petitions for reward). Further, as we saw in the passage cited above, the language of the Historia assumes a quintessentially or conventionally masculine tone—laconic, understated, wry, and eminently macho.

Erasmo's rejection of the feminine and her iconoclastic macho voice come into play in the Historia's scabrous ending. Now celebrated for her cross-dressing and military exploits, Erasmo finds herself in Naples where two prostitutes mock her, saying: "Lady Catalina, where are you going?" She replies: "To give you a hundred thumps on the scruff of your necks, my lady strumpets, and a hundred slaps to anybody who tries to defend you" (144). I'm not sure how much one should read into this passage, but coming at the end of the text it does take on the shape of an emblematic moment: now wearing male clothing Erasmo takes umbrage at being addressed as "Lady," and in a none too ladylike language she rails at the prostitutes—her antithetical doubles, women as transgressive as she but who, from their marginalized position and unlike Erasmo herself, have subordinated themselves to male desire. "The hell with you," in essence, she says to this kind of woman and perhaps to women in general. The prostitutes, reads the last line of the work, "held their tongues and slunk off" (144). For once in the
text others leave and Erasmo stays, having displaced this type of female, negated the feminine in herself, and now claiming her own territory as male.

In her actions and attitudes the character Erasmo may reject the feminine, but the text by no means obliterates Erasmo's dual nature as both masculine and feminine. Rather, it exploits her difference, titillating the reader with the character's sexual ambiguity. Erasmo's effective disguise as a man fuels the drama of the text. As in a *drama de capa y espada* (cloak and dagger play, a popular Golden Age genre), Erasmo's mother, father, and even the brother at whose side she served for three years implausibly fail to recognize her. The text allows Erasmo to maintain her disguise until her chosen moment of self-disclosure at the same time that it teases the reader: whenever she is injured and required to undress, priests presumably sworn to secrecy cure her wounds. Even more provocative are the numerous erotically suspenseful episodes, so cleverly framed that they bear recounting. For example, in Chapter 3, reminiscent of *La sartrillo de Tormes'* final adulterous episode, her employer beseaches Erasmo to marry his lover Beatriz, who at one point looks Catholica in a room, vowing that Erasmo "should please her whether the devil liked it or not" (21). In a cunningly double-edged section of Chapter 7, Erasmo states, first, that clergyman Antonio Cervantes "took a fancy to me, courted me, flattered me, and invited me to dinner several times" (egged on, we note, by the opportunistic Erasmo) and then, "finally came to declare himself, saying that he had a niece at home and that he had determined to marry her to me, which would also please him" (48). Erasmo also makes a thinly veiled reference to her homosexual inclinations, anathema to the times, complaining that a young woman offered to her in marriage, "was very dark and as ugly as the devil—the very opposite of my taste, which has always been for pretty faces" (47). Although much emphasis is placed on Erasmo's virginity when she discloses her sex, the implication of homosexual attraction adds yet another layer of ambiguous titillation to the text as it erotizes the many, even apparently innocent, encounters with other females (one example among many, "I came out of my retreat, settled my accounts, and often visited my nun and her mother and the others there, who, in their gratitude, entertained me handsomely" (81)).

An extraordinary stylistic feature of the *Historia* also persistently assails the reader with Erasmo's masculine/feminine difference. As one cannot but notice, the "you" alternates between feminine and masculine adjectives in describing herself. In his introduction to Ferrer's version of the manuscript, José María Heredia says of these alternations: "She refers to herself in the feminine but a few times; only in desperate situations, in moments of supreme anguish, when she

faces death and fears hell" (vii). Ferrer's edition (new printings of which are the *Historia* we have used up until now), for reasons unstated and perhaps beyond his control, suppresses many of the feminine adjectival forms present in the manuscript, rendering the largely random alternations systematic. It is conceivable that, due to the absence of grammatical gender in her native Basque tongue, Erasmo paid little attention to such matters. Equally conceivable and in keeping with the rest of the *Historia* is the possibility that its author contrived the adjectival instability for its shock value, to position the text in the space of difference.

II

As the foregoing discussion of the *Historia* has made clear, if Erasmo's life was transgressive, her alleged text is even more so—even militantly so, on several fronts. Despite this, along with the dispensation from the pope and the Spanish Crown to spend her life in male garb, Philip IV also awarded Erasmo an encomienda or land grant and an allowance in perpetuity. Such facts, together with the *Historia* and Erasmo's life, raise a burning question that runs in tandem with that of the text's authorship: How could Erasmo have lived as she did, made it known in a public way, and still have been officially sanctioned and rewarded? Although I cannot pretend to offer definitive answers to the question, I will engage in some detailed speculation, revolving around the ways in which Erasmo's life and texts spoke to various quarters of the Baroque world and world-view.

Central to my argument is Erasmo's own rough petition to the Crown seeking reward for her signal services, as told to a scribe in 1655. The key portions of the Petition read as follows:

**Petition**

Sir. The Ensign Doña Catalina de Erasmo, resident and native of the town of San Sebastián, in the province of Guipúzcoa, says: that of the last nineteen years, she has spent fifteen in the service of Your Majesty in the wars of the kingdom of Chile and the Indians of Peru, having travelled to those parts in men's garb owing to her particular inclination to take up arms in defense of the Catholic faith and in the service of Your Majesty, without being known in the aforesaid kingdom of Chile, during the entire time she spent there, as other than a man. Only some years later, in the lands of Peru, was it discovered under circumstances unfitting to mention here that she was a woman. And, being under the command in the Kingdom of Chile of the Ensign Miguel de Erasmo, her legitimate brother, she never revealed herself to
him, though she knew that she was her brother; she denied their blood ties to avoid being recognized. In all the time that she served with him, as well as under the command of the Field Marshal Don Diego Bravo de Sarabia, she withstood the discomforts of military service like the strongest man, known only as such in every battle. Her deeds earned her the right to carry Your Majesty’s flag, serving as she did as Ensign of the infantry company of Captain Gonzalo Rodríguez under the assumed name of Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán. In that period she distinguished herself with great courage and valor, suffering wounds, particularly in the battle of Peru. The troops having been reorganized, she moved to the company of Captain Guillén de Casanova, governor of the castle of Arauco, and was chosen as a valiant and fine soldier to go out and do battle with the enemy.

She begs that Your Majesty be pleased to order that her services and long wanderings and valiant deeds be rewarded, thereby showing his greatness, rewarding her for the worthiness of her deeds and for the singularity and prodigiousness of her life/story (por la singularidad y prodigio que viene a tener su discurso), mindful that she is the daughter of noble and principal citizens in the town of San Sebastián; and for the rectitude and sincerity in which she has lived and lives, to which many have borne testimony; for which she would be honored to receive a yearly stipend of seventy pesos appor tioned in twenty-two quilates per month in the city of Cartagena de las Indias, and funds to travel there, rewards that she hopes Your Majesty in his greatness will provide. (Ferrer, 122–23, 125)

On the most immediate level, Erazo presents herself here as a warrior, as a woman who has dressed as a man to serve Crown and Church. Her argument also calls to mind, intentionally or not, the incredibly popular theme in Baroque drama of the woman dressed as a man, all of which compels us to address the thorny question of whether Erazo was indeed an anomaly. In other words, was the woman dressed as a man a social reality and was it the social reality that gave rise to the literary morìf Fos, needless to say, if Erazo’s cross-dressing was less than anomalous in Spain, so was her reward.

Social history of recent years has brought to light a strong seventeenth-century presence of cross-dressing women and female warriors in European countries other than Spain; legal cases as well as a wealth of other documents confirm that the rich ballad tradition in several European countries of the woman dressed as a man in fact had its basis in reality. According to social historians, transgressive and modern as cross-dressing in the seventeenth century may appear to our eyes, for compelling reasons it was fairly routine in its own context. Natalie Zemon Davis’s influential chapter on “The Reasons of Misrule” in her Society and Culture in Early Modern France (1975) discusses the

French phenomenon of cross-dressing in carnival situations. On a larger scale, Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte G. van de Pol, in The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe (1989) establish that

in the early modern era passing oneself off as a man was a real and viable option for women who had fallen into bad times and were struggling to overcome their difficult circumstances. This tradition existed throughout Europe, but was strongest by far in the north-west, in the Netherlands, England and Germany. (1–2)

And Diane Dugaw’s Warrior Woman and Popular Balladry, 1650–1850 (1989) convincingly argues with reference to England that “when we take steps to reconstruct the world to which the Female Warrior ballads speak, we find that they celebrate a heroine who displays and idealizes the same resilience, vigor and initiative that circumstances in the early modern world routinely required of lower-class women” (131). The latter two works attribute the current of cross-dressing female warriors not only to the economic penury of the times, but also to lax conscription methods occasioned by long-term strife that facilitated women’s entry into the military. When women assumed male dress for patriotic, rather than prurient reasons (such as legally to marry another woman), their actions generally resulted in reward rather than censure (see Dekker and van de Pol 1989, chap. 5; Dugaw 1989, 175).

The situation in Spain regarding female cross-dressing, insofar as I have been able to piece it together, is hardly as clear—due, perhaps, to the lack of such cross-dressing women or to less specific interest in the subject on the part of historians—or as favorable. With regard to the large picture and in brief (for this is an enormous subject), it is difficult to tell if Spanish women of the seventeenth century were more or less restricted than their European counterparts. Mme d’Anthon, a not entirely reliable French author who wrote of her travels to Spain, found Spanish women freer than French in amorous matters (Deleito y Píñuel 1946, 15). Mariló Vigil, in La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVII y XVII (Women’s lives in the 16th and 17th centuries, 1986, 24–38; also see McKendrick 1974, 31ff.) asserts interestingly that the rash of ascetic treatises harshly restricting women’s lives responded to growing female licentiousness, for example, to the famed tapas, women who concealed their identity by wearing cloaks in order to wander the streets. Still, these same many treatises—manifestations of the regulated society of the Baroque—tethered with the deeply rooted Spanish-Arabic tradition of seclusion of women, and with other descriptions of the times both literary and nonfictional (for example, Deleito y Píñuel 1948), strongly
suggest that the kind of freedom of movement we find in other parts of early modern Europe did not obtain in Spain. Even in terms of lower-class women, purportedly the model for women warriors elsewhere, Vigil observes that "it would be simplistic to think that town women had more freedom than city women. Social control was probably more strict in the countryside, although women had more freedom of movement" (27). The scanty popular ballad tradition in Spain of the woman warrior, a strong presence of which might argue for the reality of the theme in the lower classes, supports Vigil's assertion: only four seventeenth-century ballads of this sort appear in Agustín Durán's authoritative ballad collection, his *Romancero general*,21 and these so clearly echo other European ballads as to suggest foreign models.

Literary scholars have directly addressed our question of the social reality of the woman-dressed-as-a-man motif. Karl Vosler concludes that the literary theme would not have been as popular as it was had women had less confining lives (cited in Bravo-Villasante 1995, 184–85). Rima de Vallbona and others have unearthed a few isolated cases of the phenomenon, notably that of Felíciana Enríquez de Guzmán, who attended the university dressed as a man in pursuit of her lover (Vallbona 1981, 241; also Deleito y Pituella 1946, 41–42). And Carmen Bravo-Villasante in her *La mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro español* (The woman disguised as a man in Spanish theater [1995]) strongly maintains that women who did dress as men took their cue from literary models, and not the other way around (see 183–202). Bravo-Villasante also makes the important points that the Church objected vehemently to this custom (209) and that Golden Age theater only allowed women to dress as men in service of an honorable cause and not for strictly salacious purposes (51). (Melvena McKendrick's 1974 study complements the latter point, for she shows that the mujer varonil or "manly woman" always marries in the end; see 104 and passim.)

Returning to the Monja Alférez herself along these same lines, curiously enough it is a theatrical piece that signals the transgressive abnormality of Catalina de Erauso's taking up arms as a woman warrior. In his *La monja Alférez*, written while Catalina was in Rome (1662), Juan Pérez de Montalbán conventionally depicts Erauso as a mujer varonil, as a woman who temporarily flies her socially determined role (and her gender) only to give in to both at the end. Directly contradicting the reality that was taking place almost as he wrote, Pérez de Montalbán imposes an entirely fictional, but much more socially and dramatically acceptable, chapter onto the life of the unregenerate Erauso. The play culminates in Erauso's anguished acknowledgment of her sex, which wins her high praise. The Visconde exclaims, "Nunca ha mostrado el valor/Como ahora, de tu pecho" (Never before have you demonstrated your heart's valor as you do now), and Sebastián adds, "Más has-ganado vencida—/De ti misma, que venciendo/ Ejércitos de enemigos" (You have achieved a greater victory in conquering yourself than in conquering armies of enemies [Fitzmaurice-Kelly 1988, 287]). Moreover, earlier in the drama we find this very telling comment from Sebastián: "Ser una mujer soldado, / Y una monja alférez, es/ El prodigio más estrano/ Que en estos tiempos se ha visto" (To be a woman soldier, and a nun ensign, is the strangest prodigy ever seen in these times [237]). However self-serving this remark may have been in terms of enhancing the play's appeal, it, and indeed the entire stir created by Erauso, points to the singularity of her life as a cross-dressing woman warrior.

In the petition Erauso follows a dual line of argumentation, highlighting at the same time her anomaly and her exemplarity. She focuses on her exemplary military service as well, rather than suppressing it, as on her life as a woman who passed as a man. With regard to the first line of defense, Erauso couches her petition in the conventional terms of a *relación de méritos y servicios*, adjusting her account to the Crown's interests. None of Erauso's crimes, so prominently featured in the *Historia*, figures in the Petition, which pays up her service, her wounds, her valor, and her "manly" actions. Four *certificaciones* from military superiors, who are amazed but seemingly unperturbed by her true sex, back up Erauso's claims. The longest testimonial, by field marshal Juan Recio de León, swears to having seen her "respond with manly (varonil) efforts to all that was required of her in the military, suffering its hardships" and to having known her "great virtue and [moral] cleanliness . . . which makes her worthy of Your Majesty's favor" (Ferrer, 137). The compelling defense of her military service mounted by Erauso in her well-orchestrated case was apparently, or ostensibly, what won her reward. A summary of Erauso's case, including the recommendations passed on to the king by the Council of the Indies, informs us that, "it is the view of the Council that although dressing as a man is forbidden, since it has already transpired, and in this state she has served for so many years and with such valor in so persistent and continuous a war, and been wounded, it would behoove Your Majesty to do her the honor of providing her with a means of sustenance . . ." (Tiribio Medina 1965, 227).

Despite their favorable recommendation, the Council of the Indies clearly was given pause by the matter of Erauso's cross-dressing. In fact, it advised the king that her petition to continue wearing male dress be denied ("It is advisable that she resume woman's garb") (Tiribio Medina 1965, 227). Therefore we should ask: Would not Erauso's second line of argumentation in the Petition,
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highlighting her transvestism, have dangerously undermined her worthiness in the eyes of the Crown? In order to respond to this question, let us register Eraso’s insistence that she had been known only as a man in the last fifteen years, the emphasis in several certificaciones on her “manly” (varonil) actions, the seeming calm with which her military superiors accepted her true sex, and the significant presence in Recio de León’s testimony of two words, “varonil” and “virtud” (virtue). Interpreting the textual evidence, I suggest that on a level deeper than that of the superficial disquiet incurred by the transgression of her social role as a woman, Eraso’s cross-dressing struck a positive chord from the androcentric perspective of seventeenth-century males, she has transcended her lowly condition as a woman and acceded to the superior realm of masculinity. Deldker and van de Pol have stated with reference to the generally favorable legal reception accorded to women warriors in the Netherlands, “[it] was judged that a woman who became a man strove to become something better, higher, than she had been, and that was considered an understandable and commendable effort in itself. If she was successful, one had to admire her.” (1989, 74). The symbolic etymological connection between vir (man) and virtus had permeated the Western moral tradition, making the word “manly” a positive adjective regardless of gender.13 M. P. McDermott, noting that the use of the adjective varonil as a standard of excellence became widespread in the seventeenth century (1987, 23), submits that for the theater of the times “women who departed from the norm in an admirable, positive or at least forgivable way, are varoniles; those who do so in a totally reprehensible way are just wicked women” (62). Jardín de las nobles doncellas (Garden of noble damsels), a manual written for the education of Isabel la Católica, accumulates examples of “manly women” from Antiquity, even including “Amazonas” (Bravo-Villaseñor 1955, 101). Santa Teresa exhorted her nuns with words that speak directly to our point: “I would prefer, my daughters, that in no way you be women, nor resemble them in the least, but rather strong men, for if women behave as they should the Lord will make them so manly [varoniles] that they will inspire terror even in men” (1930, 79). In view of the exaltation of the masculine found here we can surmise that much as socially prescriptive theater such as Pérez de Montalbán’s would have his audience believe that Eraso had achieved her greatest victory in foregoing her manliness, to a significant degree the opposite may well have been the case.

Had the situation been the other way around, had a man dressed as a woman, the outcome would likely have been quite different. Male homosexuality, the “pecado nefando” (abominable crime) was considered most highly objectionable. In 1497 the Catholic kings decreed punishment by burning for the

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crime; Philip II revalidated the decree in 1598 (Deleito y Pintue 1942, 77). Seventeenth-century annals, such as Barrenchea’s Avisos (Notices: 1654–1658) in Spain and Robles’s Diario de sucesos notables (Diary of notable events: 1655–1703) in Mexico, record many autos de fe of “sodomites.” Most revealing is a case from 1530 noted by Rima Valbona of a soldier who had fought bravely dressed as a woman in the conquest of Mexico; despite his admirable service to the Crown, he was condemned to death by burning (237). All of this further bolsters the conclusion that with regard to homosexuality in the seventeenth century, “[t]he man was demeaned, while the woman strove for something higher” (Deldker and van de Pol 1989, 49).

That higher thing which promoted Eraso’s sanction may be something even higher, as it were, than masculinity. In the Tercera relación (Third account; 1653) and elsewhere29 we find a rather confounding and presumably true anecdote describing Pope Urban VIII’s reaction to Eraso. Reportedly, after the pope had granted her permission to dress as a man.

That the pope himself, even in the face of criticism, should unwaveringly defend Eraso intimates that her life held some religious as well as civic value. We have seen Eraso assert in the Petition her desire to defend the Catholic faith. Further, in the portion I omitted from the Petition due to its length, Eraso portrays herself as being on a religious pilgrimage to Rome when she fell victim to a robbery (for which she also seeks compensation); “in 1625 she attempted to go to the Roman court to kiss the feet of His Holiness, it being a holy year . . .” (Ferrer 134). Despite the fact that none of the testimonials that accompanied this portion of the case (Toribio Medina 1965, 233–38) describes her trip as religiously motivated, and despite the notable irreverence for religion encountered in the Historia, Eraso here depicts herself as a pilgrim possessed of religious zeal.

Her Petition, the Historia, and various of the certificaciones also strike a chord of enormous religious resonance in emphasizing Eraso’s virginity, and the “rectitude and rare purity in which she has lived and lives” (Petition). Virginity, together with association of masculinity and virtue which underlies Eraso’s self-defense, forms the cornerstone of a Catholic tradition of transvestite female saints which dates from the fifth century. Although the Old Testament specifically forbids cross-dressing in either sex,4 the desire to imi-
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tate—the male—Christ and to maintain one's virginity and thus larger virtue incited a series of women to assume masculine-dress in service—to use John Anson's phrase, of an ideal of androgynous perfection (1775, 9). Anson observes, supporting our earlier discussion of the connection between vir and virtus, that these women purified and elevated themselves by merging with the male, by becoming androgynous (9). Following the pattern of Thecla rendered in the Acts of Paul, Saint Margaret of Antioch, Saint Theodora of Appollonia, Anastasia of Antioch, Hilaria, Theodora of Alexandria, Matriona of Perge and Eugenia of Alexandria (the Eugenia of our epigraph) all followed the transvestite path to perfection (see Warner 1981, 151–32). Eugenia—who abandoned her pagan roots to become a Christian, dressed as a man, and eventually became provost of a monastery—justified her actions along lines uncannily evocative of Eruaso's, saying, "out of the faith I have in Christ, not wishing to be a woman but to preserve an immaculate virginity, I have steadfastly acted as a man" (Anson 1975, 23).

Calderón wrote a play based on the life of Eugenia which was published in 1660. Although the playwright casts Eugenia in the mold of a "mujer docta or learned woman, his El José de las mujeres (The Joseph of women) demonstrates that the tradition of female transvestite saints had not disappeared from view in seventeenth-century Spain. The most famous inheritor of the so-called monachopathetic tradition of transvestite saints, Joan of Arc, also enjoyed a certain veneration in the seventeenth century. During this period in France according to Marina Warner, she came to represent not a heretic but the personification of virtue (see 1981, chap. 31). In Spain, Joan of Arc inspired Lope de Vega's play, Puella de Orleans (Damsel of Orleans, now lost), later imitated by Antonio Zamora in his Ponzella de Orleans.

The legend of Joan of Arc conflates the woman warrior with the transvestite saint, the latter dignifying the former. Echoes of the warrior-saint conflation which underlines and authorizes Eruaso's petition help elucidate the fabulous hagiographic version of Eruaso's life found in the second volume of the Historia general del reino de Chile (General history of the kingdom of Chile; 1837–76, reproduced in Toribio Medina 1965, 221–35) by the Madrid Jesuit Diego de Rosales. Rosales bases his version on the now, lamentably, lost chapter on Eruaso by her and his contemporary, a certain Romay, "who wrote up this case" (Toribio Medina 1965, 223). The degree to which Rosales' account reproduces that of Romay can only be conjectured; some thing or things in the original, however, must have provided Rosales with the fodder for his rendition. Whatever the content of the original, Rosales's document is certainly worthy of note for its radical metamorphosis of Eruaso's persona.  

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Rosales's account builds features of warrior-saint legend into a more familiar story, of the prodigal son, of "a sinner saved" (223). In his version, Catalina, began as a fervent nun, but succumbing to the temptation to stray from the path of piety, she fled the convent and became a soldier. Characteristics familiar from the warrior-saint story surface in the depiction of this portion of Eruaso's life, as soldiering provides the stage for purification and is a metaphor for spiritual struggle. Eruaso's years as a soldier become a period of inner torment in that she resists the word of God, "fleeing from herself, for she could neither bear nor hold out against so harsh a battle" (222). She definitively assumes a male identity, using the name of Francisco de Noyola (sic), "a name she never abandoned" (222), and comports herself "with many [varoniles] actions and a boldness so befitting a soldier that no one judged her to be a woman..." (223)—both of which matters remind us of Eruaso's Petition. Similarly, according to Rosales, Eruaso "always kept her virginity, with signal virtue" (222), being "always cloaked in the veil of virginal modesty" (223). And, in an incredible addition to the Eruaso legend, Rosales states that she mortified her flesh when not engaged in military battle. Of Eruaso's war wounds, Rosales writes, "it was her divine husband who was principally responsible for these wounds; he wounded her in the breast to pierce her heart with the wound of the love she had so forgotten" (223). In the end this "sorely wounded deer" (223), "wounded deer," and "weeping turtledove" (224) reportedly sobs to the divine Word and insists on professing as a nun.

Two related aspects of Rosales's account deserve further comment. First, that a similarly pious construction of Eruaso's life (minus the warrior-saint reverberations) is to be found at the end of the Mexican Tercera relación of 1653. After graphically recounting her transgressions, the final portion of the relación abruptly introduces a reformed Eruaso who as a lay worshipper voluntarily adopted the religious regime of professed nuns. The relación has Eruaso dying "an exemplary death...to the universal sadness of all those in attendance" (Alamán et al. 1854, 505), proof that God never abandons a sinner. Second, that the same urge found in Rosales and in the Tercera relación—the urge, it would appear, to normalize and naturalize a female figure celebrated for her anomaly—also manifests itself in the case of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (to which we shall return). Sor Juana's Edna y otras posturas (Fame and posthumous works; 1700), the very volume which, as we shall describe, eulogizes her prodigious idiosyncrasies, in a Baroque counterpart also includes Father Diego Calleja's conventionally hagiographic biography of the nun-writer. Calleja makes short shift of Sor Juana's worldly life to concentrate on the period after her supposed conversion. The penitent Sor Juana of his biography so mortifies her flesh that
endangered bastions of Catholic orthodoxy. Popular culture, too, served a regulatory function, capturing the attention of the masses in order to win them over to the society's norms and needs. As José Antonio Maravall has outlined, from these designs there arose a seductive aesthetic and politics of the shocking and peculiar: "The obscure and the difficult, the new and the unknown, the bizarre and the extravagant, the exotic—all of these functions as effective resources of the Baroque precepts that proposed to move the will, suspending, astonishing and exciting it with things never seen before" (1975, 467). In support of his argument Maravall cites López-Pinciano's precept that "novelties delight, the amazing more so, and the prodigious even more so" (423).

Particularly emblematic of this Baroque tendency, and significant for the case of Eraso, is the matter of monsters. Octavio Paz aptly notes that the Baroque intended "to astonish and to amaze," "which is why it sought out and collected all kinds of extreme cases, especially hybrids and monsters" (1976, 14). What did the seventeenth-century Hispanic world understand as monsters? Naturally, the dwarves and midgets so favored by the court and captured in Velázquez's paintings constituted monsters: Barrionuevo's Avisos and other documents of the times also view as "monsters" terrible curiosities such as the alleged individual with the feet of a goat and the face of a man (Barrionuevo 1968, 73). Shockingly hybrid or contradictory phenomena, asserts Roberto González-Echevarría, now from a metaphorical and literary standpoint as well, were considered monstrous and enjoyed an extraordinary popularity. González-Echevarría takes as an example of the hybrid "monster" Calderón's Segismundo, self-described in the play as "a composite of man and beast," which for the critic makes him "a double and contradictory entity in whom two natures coexist simultaneously" (1982, 54). Monsters in the seventeenth century, according to González-Echevarría and others (see Mullney 1983; Park and Daston 1981), were to be displayed—in the theater, in the wonder cabinet, in the public square, in paintings, recalling their etymological root in monstrare (to show), monsters purportedly incited not pity but the "curiosity and wonder of the spectator" (Reed 1988, 176). In precisely these terms, the phenomenon of Catalina de Eraso had something of the "monstrous" to it.

The Baroque penchant for the bizarre made its way into the nascent field of popular journalism and into historiography. "Prodigious events have transpired in this Monarchy," writes Almansa; "Recent days have witnessed miracles and strange wonders," recounts Pellicer; "Portents and near miracles have been seen," declares Barrionuevo—all journalists of the mid-seventeenth century (cited in Maravall 1975, 467). The Anales de Madrid [Annals of Madrid] of León Pinelo are
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packed with tales of miracles, absurd cases, and prodigious matters. Similarly, New World historiographical texts of the period display a sense of the marvellous quite unlike that of the sixteenth century. From the inception of its existence for the Old World, Spanish America had generated reports of exotic and marvellous novelties in response to the insatiable desire for information about the new lands. But whereas in the period of the discovery and conquest it was the "otherly" flora, fauna, and customs of the indigenous peoples that inspired high wonder, in seventeenth-century chronicles such as El carnero (The ram; 1636–38) the improbable and scandalous lives of the colonists were the currency on which chroniclers traded to capture the public's interest. So imbued were these texts with the Baroque love of the perversely marvellous that the nonfictional shades indistinguishably into the fictional, in effect giving rise to the first short fiction of Spanish America.

The relaciones or broadsides which take Eraso as their subject exemplify the Baroque aesthetic we have been discussing as well as its inherently contradictory nature. Here the timeless popular taste for scandal—Eraso would probably be portrayed in similar terms today by tabloids such as the national inquirer—links up with the Baroque aesthetic of the bizarre. Together they further sensationallyize Eraso's already sensational story by working all the extreme angles of her life at once. The Primera relación [first account] promises "wondrous things that inspire awed terror [espanto]" (Tolbio Medina 1956, 213). Filling this criterion, the first two broadsides melodramatically recount how the woman Eraso overcame her "weak nature" and "cowardly soul" to perform the brave deeds of a man and, the sini quen nen of the Baroque, to defend her own honor. At the same time, they engage the reader with details of her gaming, crimes and imprisonment—shockingly presented in the first text, whitewashed in the second. The Tercera relación, as we noted above, abruptly switches from Eraso the sinner to Eraso the saintly.

Rina de Vallauna states that the first two broadsides, written at the same time that the Monja Alférez was presenting her case to the Crown, aimed to support Eraso's petition (198, 81–82, 143), being an expression of popular goodwill toward the prodigious figure. Yet, like the petition but in a much higher gear, they accentuate both Eraso's virtues and her vices the Primera relación, directly derived from the scandalously provocative Historia, duplicates its tone, material, and even actual phrases. A manifestation of the Baroque aesthetic of the bizarre, the relaciones regard Eraso as an anomaly, as something of a monster, and make much of her incongruousness—all the while supposedly serving her cause. This contradiction well speaks to the point that underlies the preceding discussion of

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the Baroque love for the shocking and prodigious. The "monstrous" aesthetic I have described contains in microcosm the contradictions of the times; not only does it accommodate, it even exalts the otherwise antithetical saint and sinner, the law-abiding and the lawless individual, such as Eraso. Therefore, in claiming reward for the "singularity and prodigiosity of her life/story," in spotlighting rather than stifling certain transgressive aspects of her life in the Petition, Eraso capitalizes on the prevailing aesthetic for her own gain.

The Historia de la Monja Alférez utilizes and exaggerates the same strategy just described, being not only more transgressive but also more overtly Baroque in literary terms. With regard to the former, we have seen that the author omits any extraneous material to focus almost exclusively on those events which will arouse shock and titillation in the reader. With regard to the latter, Eraso's roguish life story as presented in the Historia exemplifies the turbulence, mutability, and dynamism so characteristic of Baroque literature in general. Eraso's life also warrants, and the text houses in its understated and under-written way, gestures toward several particular literary modalities of the times. Almost needless to repeat, the entire premise of the book departs from the popular dramatic theme of the woman disguised as a man: as Lope de Vega declared in his Arte nuevo de hacer comedias [New art of playwriting], women dressing as men "tend to please the audience greatly" (1967, 17). In passing from master to master, in evincing a completely malleable identity whose changes are self-consciously marked by changes in clothes, Eraso also figures in the Historia as a picaresca (picaresque heroine) to come. Better, as a picaresca (picaresque heroine), for her insouciant attitude recalls the female picaresque novels such as the Picaresca Justinian (1605) in vogue at the times. If the Historia displays the outer structure of the picaresque, the inner configuration of each chapter uncannily resembles a drama de capa y espada. Each chapter, we suggested at the outset, frames a neat enredo or dramatic tangle. Despite the token descriptions of different Latin American cities which head several chapters, this is not the New World but rather a two-dimensional theatrical world in which characters such as "El nuevo Cid" (the New Cid), "Antonio Cervantes," and "Antonio Calderón" make their appearance. Chapter 13, in which Eraso rescues the adulterous wife of Antonio Calderón from his murderous rage after discovering her in flagrant delicto with a lover, could easily have been taken from the plays of the character's namesake. Eraso's life unwringly imitated art, and the Historia exploits the points of confluence.

Did, then, Eraso write this text, so attuned to Baroque culture and to the "smoking gun" and other aspects of her own Petition? Beyond its transgressive nature and the question of the manuscript, the Historia's tight emplotment and
literary echoes cast doubt on Erazo's authorship, for it is unlikely that she possessed such skills. Sporadic factual errors and anachronisms (including an incorrect birthdate and misidentification of her brother's title) also argue against Erazo having written the text. The overriding historical veracity of the work and its author's intimate familiarity with circumstantial minutiae, along with the points of connection with her known writings that we have analyzed, on the other hand, support Erazo's participation in the genesis of the work. Scholars, in the main, have proposed three quite plausible theories in answer to the question of authorship. First, that Erazo herself wrote the work, which is entirely her own. Second, that Erazo told her story to a more cultivated author, who then wrote it down, giving it form. In other words, that Erazo may have commissioned or authorized a ghost-writer to immortalize her story. I myself am inclined to accept this alternative, especially in view of the many mentions in the Historia of Catalina telling her tale. It is interesting to note that if indeed the second alternative was the case, we can consider the Historia an early form of testimonial literature, as was the Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez (Misfortunes of Alonso Ramírez, 1636) of Mexican Baroque author Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora with which it shares several features. A third possibility would have it that a later author elaborated on Erazo's original, interpolating episodes. This would explain the literary resonances as well as what I call the "copycat" chapters, that is, the several chapters (11-16) after Erazo leaves military service and before her confession to the bishop, each of which finds her being blamed for crimes she did not commit. All of this leads us to conclude that even if the Historia is not entirely of Erazo's making, she did have a direct hand in it. Moreover, to my mind of equal importance, the text reflects—be it metaphorically or metonymically—Erazo's larger strategy vis-à-vis her own anomaly. And that strategy entailed her actively seeking to convert anomaly into notoriety, notoriety into celebrity. The Petition flaunts her anomaly, the Historia even more so. These textual strategies find their complement in her extratextual actions. The Erazo we have seen is a woman eminently capable of mounting an astute self-defense and of what Leo Braudy calls "self-naming," that is, of greasing the machinery of her own renown. A theatrical woman with a flair for the dramatic, Erazo openly courted notoriety: she sat for at least two portraits with famous artists, wrote several official appeals to the Crown without trepidation, never ceased her increasingly public transgressions, and told the story of her life literally and you. The Historia alone has her telling her tale on at least four separate occasions. Royal historian Gil González Dávila describes a visit Erazo paid him (Ferrer 1829, xxi) and

Pedro del Valle recalls that Erazo "speak to me of diverse affairs and incidents from her life, all very strange; I have recounted only the most notable and certain ones here, as [the testimony] of a strange person of our time" (Ferrer 1818, 115), confirming her predilection for sensational self-disclosure.

From notoriety Erazo reaped the considerable fruits of fame. In this regard, the Historia provides both an emphatic testimony to her celebrity and, in effect, a prescriptive blueprint for the continued good treatment she hopes to receive. The Historia narrates in considerable detail how the bishop of Guamanga responded to Erazo's confession: "While my story lasted—that is till one o'clock—the saintly Bishop sat in amazement, listening to me, without saying a word or blinking an eyelid; and when I had finished, he still sat speechless, shedding scalding tears" (115). After receiving proof of Erazo's virginity, he pledges his respect—"I venerate you as one of the remarkable people in this world" (117)—and promises his support. Her story quickly becomes public: "The news of this event spread everywhere, and throughout the Indies those who before and afterwards heard of my story, were amazed" (119; my emphasis). The last-chapters of the Historia show Erazo basking in her sudden fame and preferential treatment, which have spread from the New World to the Old. Having secured her dispensation from the pope, Erazo writes, "My case became notorious in Rome, and I found myself surounded by a remarkable crowd of great personages: princes, bishops and cardinals—and every door was thrown open to me; so that, during the month and a half I spent in Rome, there was seldom a day that I was not invited and entertained by princes..." (140).

Society has opened its doors to her; Erazo has become a cultural icon. In trading on her anomaly which, as we have seen, unexpectedly spoke to the State, Church, and populace, Erazo has found an escape valve from the rigidity of a regulated society. The sensational corpus of her life and works, so consistent with the sensationalizing aesthetic of the body politic, has unlocked that zone of permissiveness and flexibility reserved for the prodigious and unusual. That is to say, in writing herself as a man and in mining her own masculine/feminine difference, Erazo has achieved fame, a space which in the Baroque Age, thanks to its penchant for the bizarre, lay beyond the pale of normative social codes.

IV

The familiar and the unprecedented, personal psychology, social context, and historical tradition, all join forces in distinctively Baroque ways to enable
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Erasmo's fame and autonomy. As further proof of the nature and efficacy of this Baroque fame, with its implicit benefits for women as well as other marginalized individuals, let me conclude with a discussion of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's celebrity, surprisingly similar to Erasmo's. In fact, I will argue that what Catalina de Erasmo accomplished in the milieu of the Spanish Baroque world in part by tapping the resources of mass culture, Sor Juana negotiated, using similar means and successfully for a time, in the sphere of Mexican Baroque court culture.

Given the extraordinary complexity of Sor Juana's mind, her tactics will be at once more elaborate, more apparent, and more anguished than Erasmo's. And given the extraordinary complexity of the subject, which warrants a study unto itself, my discussion will be more schematic than the issue merits.

Sor Juana's acute self-awareness shines through from beneath the Baroque acrobatics of her works. Poems like "Finjamos que soy feliz, triste pensamiento" (Let us pretend, sad thought, that I am happy) (Romanza #2) with its searing analysis of her own intelligence, show us a woman supremely in touch with her self and her problematic place in the world. As such, Sor Juana did not fail to recognize the incongruity of her position as a woman; a nun; an intellectual, and a writer. More than merely recognizing her anomaly, Sor Juana drew attention to it. In a variety of genres, and in registers ranging from the light to the mortally serious, many of Sor Juana's works openly address the defining circumstances of her life. For example, her first comedia, Los empeños de una casa (The trials of a noble house), has the character Leonor declaim Sor Juana's life story of intellectual prodigiosity, beauty, and whirlwind celebrity. That Sor Juana was melodramatizing her own life could not have been lost on the court audience. As I have contended elsewhere, Sor Juana encodes her dilemma as a daring creative woman into all of her comedias, and not just into Los empeños.22

Treating a serious theme in a jocular tone, Sor Juana's Romance #8 "Respuestas un caballero del Perú que le envio unos barros diciendole que se volveis hombre" (Replying to a gentleman from Peru who had sent her some clay vessels, telling her she should become a man!) frits with the ideal of androgynous perfection as discussed above, erasing her difference. She glosses the notion that "si es que soy mujer/ ninguno lo verifique ..." (that if I am a woman, let no one find it out) with the provocative declaration: "yo solo se que mi cuerpo/ sin que a uno u otro se incline/ es neutro, o abstracto, cuanto/ solo el alma deposite" (and I only know that my body, without inclining to one sex or another, is neutral or abstract, serving only to house the Soul). Passing from body to mind, the Primero sueño (First dream) inserts Sor Juana's "I" into a magnificently erudite portrait of the soul's daring nocturnal quest for knowledge. Finally, in

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her twin autobiographical documents, the "Autodefensa espiritual" (Spiritual self-defense) (1681) and the Respuesta a Sor Filotes de la Cruz (Reply to Sister Filotes de la Cruz (1691)—the first in a tone of high invective, the second with subdued and reasoned militance—the embattled Sor Juana magnifies her life story into an object lesson, to argue for all women's right to knowledge. Ever more analytically and explicitly she has exposed the incongruity of her own situation to the public eye.

The anomaly that Sor Juana so openly acknowledged united with her singular literary achievements to feed rather than diminish her fame. Georgina Sabat-Rivers incisively remarks, "We may wonder whether the glory accorded to this woman in her own day ... was due to her genius itself or to those Baroque ideas of being unusual, extraordinary, and amazing in a topsy-turvy world" (1991, 144). Sor Juana's fame spread throughout the New World and to the Old, to Spain, where it gained a particularly strong hold.23 The weighty scaffolding of panegyrics that framed her works, all published in Spain, celebrate Sor Juana's prodigious singularity in no uncertain terms. Among the 105 (!) pages of laudatory poems in the Fama y obras postumas (Fame and posthumous works) we find titles such as "Pondering the singularity of the poetess, who learned to read at age three"; "Pondering the erudition of Mother Juana Inés, from such an early age"; "For having acquired such wide knowledge without the aid of teachers"; "To the incomprehensible elevation of the miraculous intelligence of the Singular Muse, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz." Epithets like the "Santo Museo" or "Mother Juana Inés de la Cruz, professed nun in the convent of San Jerónimo de Mexico: Phoenix of erudition in all bodies of knowledge: Rival of the most refined minds: Immortal glory of New Spain" (epigraph to Silva #35), further confirm Sor Juana's status as an anomaly aun or que cultural icon. Even today we are astonished at the extraordinary prominence and recognition accorded the transgressive nun in her own times.

Sor Juana's own relationship to her fame, however, is a slippery and problematic issue. Much evidence supports the fact that she actively fomented her fame, encouraging patrons to publish her works and participating in their publication. According to Octavio Paz, in view of this evidence the many works in which Sor Juana states her reticence to publish and laments the burdens of undeserved celebrity would take on a hypocritical edge. "In the Reply" Paz writes, "she affirms that she never wrote 'except when compelled and constrained, and then only to give pleasure to others' a surprising declaration if one recalls the effort she put into having her works published" (1988, 416).

To my mind this seeming paradox, of desire and disdain for fame, has a
practical explanation. On the one hand, Sor Juana, like Catalina de Erauso, clearly needed fame to maintain her autonomy, her freedom to pursue a life of the mind despite her gender and her status as a nun. Fame was her bulwark; she had to cultivate and promote it in any way possible. Hence, Sor Juana had her works published, maintained extensive correspondence with other savants, and entertained important guests in the salonlike atmosphere of the convent's locutorio. The importance for Sor Juana of maintaining her good name comes critically to the fore in the "Autodefensa espiritual" where she breaks with her confessor, Antonio Núñez, specifically in response to his slander of her person. She accuses him of "denouncing my actions with such bitter exaggeration as to create a public scandal" (Cruz 1986a, 15). On the other hand and on a very personal level, fame may well have been anathema to Sor Juana: we can take her at her word. As a nun, indoctrinated to resist the pride which in her Ejercicios devotos (Devout exercises) she herself termed "the foremost of sins" (Cruz 1976, 4379), and as a woman writer encumbered by a discernible anxiety of authorship, Sor Juana balked at a fame which inevitably, at least in her context, bore the implication of vainglory. Much as the nun's poems inveighing against fame coalesce with the world-view and topos of the Baroque, we can still detect a certain authentic candor in lines such as (addressing Fate in Sonnet #50):

> Bringing me applause, you stirred up envy's ire,  
> Raising me up, you knew how hard I'd fall.  
> No doubt it was your treachery saddled me  
> with troubles far beyond misfortune's call,  
> that, seeing the store you gave me of your blessings  
> no one would guess the cost of each and all.  

(Trudee 1988, 98–99)

At the same time, and circularly, in making an issue of her fame Sor Juana underscored and enhanced it.

The fact that Sor Juana coached conflicts as personal as her attitude toward fame in the conventionalized language of the Baroque is indicative of the keen awareness and expert manipulation of cultural structures that so marked her life and works. Fully cognizant, as one can conclude from the "Autodefensa" and the Respuesta, of the precariousness of her fame and anomaly, Sor Juana literally wrote herself into the aesthetic and structures of the ruling order. We have seen how, like Erauso, she played on the Baroque cult of the bizarre by drawing attention to her anomaly and fame. Eminently well read and a member of the cultural elite, Sor Juana also systematically essayed all the major poetic and dramatic genres in vogue during the Baroque period: sonnets, silvas, oríjefos, romances, villancicos, ensaladas, comedias, eucharistic plays, and so on. The rather perplexing compendiumlike nature of her works, I would suggest, is no accident or mere display of virtuosity. By undertaking all the genres of the ruling discourse, Sor Juana legitimated her writings and effectively rendered herself the quintessential of the Baroque.

Moreover, in so doing she rendered herself indispensable to the court, to the ruling class. It is well known that Sor Juana cultivated her court alliances: more than two-thirds of her work is occasional or commissioned. The Neptuno Alegórico (Allegorical Neptune), the scores of villancicos and religious ceremonies, the comedias and eucharistic dramas, as well as her reams of encomiastic poetry, all fulfilled crucial societal functions while serving her personal needs. Through them, from her marginalized position, Sor Juana became a pillar of Mexican court society, its unofficial official poet. When—and here in particular I am schematizing a highly complex situation—for reasons beyond her control these protective structures collapsed, when she found herself bereft of the court contacts she had so zealously cultivated, her fame and marginality worked against her. From a cultural icon she saw herself plummeting to a pariah. It was then, to forestall her undoing, that Sor Juana surrendered her difference to become a model or conventional nun.

Inept as Sor Juana’s handling of her own anomaly proved to be in absolute terms, this tragic ending does not diminish her accomplishments. Nor, I hope, does it take away from the arguments I have made here regarding the manner in which two women of the Baroque Age manipulated the dominant culture’s very mechanisms to legitimate their personal anomaly and to gain themselves autonomy. By exploiting rather than effacing their own generic difference and trespasses in order to attract fame, both Catalina de Erauso and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz attempted a space beyond what Gilbert and Gubar have called “uni-forms” (1989; see chap. 8).

Erauso’s motivation and interiority, I must admit even after careful study, still remain elusive, open to speculation. Sor Juana’s trenchant awareness of both her self and her circumstances, on the other hand, provides us with an apt statement of what I believe to have been the Baroque pragmatics of fame which favored both women. In her last poem, later entitled “To the matchless pens of Europe, whose praises only enhanced her works. Lines found unfinished,” Sor Juana observes that in the eyes of those who would praise her, the extraordinary has replaced the perfect: “Si no es que el sueño” she states with uncanny insight, “ha podido/o ha querido hacer, por raro/que el lugar de lo perfecto/obtenga lo extraordinario” (Might it be the surprise of my sex/that explains why you are
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willing to allow an unusual case to pass itself off as perfection? Romance #5; Trueblood 1988, 108–9). Her statement dovetails with our epigraph, which read in light of the preceding pages suggests that for the contradictory Age of the Baroque, what inspired admiration, astonished, frightened, perturbed, and silenced the tongue could occasion a blindness—and a fame—that undercut antitheses such as the deity versus the delinquent.

Notes

In compiling and conceptualizing the material for this study, with its many facets, I have profited from the generous aid of several colleagues. Rima de Vallbona shared her excellent materials and thoughts; Eduardo Perazetti-Bressi gave useful feedback; Luis Fernández Cifuentes, Enrique Pupo-Walker, and Mercedes Viqueque kindly obtained texts for me. The responses to the initial version of the paper, presented at the Five College Symposium, “Reflections of Social Reality: Writings in Colonial Latin America” in April of 1990, especially of Amanda Powell and Roslyn Frank, were of great help. I am most grateful to Antonio Carreño, a true colleague, for his interest-and bibliographical suggestions throughout the long process of gestation. A small corner of this study, geared to non-specialists and entitled “Catalina de Erauso: Prodigy of the Baroque Age,” has been published in Review 43 (December 1996): 37–41.


2. The Spanish relaciones as well as many other documents regarding Erauso have been reproduced by José Toribio Medina in his Biblioteca Hispano-Chilena (1976, 298–40), which also lists additional works in which the Spanish broadsides can be found; the Mexican relaciones were republished in volume 5 of Lucas Alamán et al., Diccionario universal de historias y geografías (Universal dictionary of history and geography; 1826, 499–501), in volume 3 of Ignacio Cumpillo’s Ilustración Mexicana (1823, 643–44), and elsewhere. I quote from the former source. In the bibliography to her admirable dissertation, Rima de Vallbona provides full references—too cumbersome to enter into here—for the titles and the various editions of the texts surrounding Erauso.

Vallbona maintains, in chapters 1 and 3 of her study, that the relaciones were rhetorically embellished and sensationalizing synopses of Erauso’s Vida. The similarities in information and even in language between the relaciones and the Historia, as well as the fact that the Spanish broadsides were issued from the same publishing house in which the original of the Historia was deposited, all support Vallbona’s argument. Why the relaciones (the first of which, as I note in the article, duplicates the tone and material of the Historia) were published, and the Historia perhaps not, is an interesting issue to ponder.

3. Though Erauso has remained a legend and a folk heroine for the Basques and the Mexicans, at the writing of this article the Historia had hardly been studied as a literary text. What work had been done on Erauso was almost entirely of a historical nature or were fictional adaptations of her life. As the reader will notice, in evolving a strategy for this article, I have tried to contend with the problems of analyzing what is most likely (at least in part) an apocryphal text.

While this article was in press two significant works regarding Erauso were published:

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Rima de Vallbona’s superb critical edition of the Historia, Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alféres (Tempe, Arizona State University Press, 1992) (which includes an excellent introduction, many of the documents regarding Erauso cited in this study, and Fizmaurice-Kelly’s translation of the Historia), and Mary Elizabeth Perry’s valuable discussion of Erauso in her Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Lamentably, I have not been able to include information or references from these works in my article.

4. Although I have based my own readings on the Hércules and earlier editions of the Historia, citations of this text in the article are taken from the Fizmaurice-Kelly translation (1990), with sometimes substantial modifications to suit the context and modern usage. All other translations, except those of Sor Juana’s poetry attributed to Alan S. Trueblood, are mine.

5. At the end of chapter 23, Erauso states, “Meanwhile, several experiences befell me at the capital which I omit as trifling” (levas, 76), which suggests that, taking little interest in what is “levas,” the text concentrates on weighty and dramatic matters.

6. I am grateful to María Dolores Reyero-Fernandez, a graduate student at Brown, for pointing out some of the connections with the soldier’s autobiography. See Vallbona 1981, 65 and 185 for further discussion of the subject, including her observations that strict adherence to the truth was not necessarily expected of soldiers’ autobiographies—which would explain some of the inaccuracies of the Historia if it were Erauso’s own text.

7. Ferrer, in exile in Paris, used a transcription of the manuscript made by copyists in the employment of Juan Bautista Mañar and sent to Ferrer by Francisco Banz. See the Introduction to Fizmaurice-Kelly’s translation, (xxvi–xxvii), for more details. Vallbona, working directly from the manuscript in Madrid, appends a critical edition of the Historia in which she restores the feminine adjectives and notes their predominance.

8. Aside from the arguments developed in the article, let me mention two further possible reasons for Erauso’s reward. (There may well be others.) First, her fellow Basque might have interceded in Erauso’s favor as Erauso states in the Petition and elsewhere, she was from a prominent Basque family; the Basques were particularly influential in the New World. On the latter point, see the “Anonymous Description of Peru (1600–1615)” in Irving A. Leonard, Colonial Travelers in Latin America 1572–161, and Bartolomé Ármas de Osorio y Vela, Tales of Potosí, 1575, xxvi–xxvii. Second, the chauvinistic attitude toward Spain that Erauso displays at the end of the Historia as well as the Tecina relations, and to which attest the witnesses to the robbery in France (who claim that Erauso defended the king from the insults of Frenchmen; see Toribio Medina 1985, 233–38), may also have curried her favor.

9. Dugaw, as well as Dekker and van de Pol, notes that the ballad tradition of the female warrior fell off when the military was centralized and reorganized at the beginning of the Victorian era—which cut off the flexible space for women. The Victorians, Dugaw notes, also mounted a campaign to spread the ethos of feminine delicacy to the lower classes” (1989, 141–42).

10. Aside from the works cited here, on the subject of women in seventeenth-century Spain one may also consult, among other sources: F. W. Bomh, La femme dans l’Espagne du siècle d’or (1550) and Ludwig Flohand, Cultura y costumes del pueblo español en los siglos XVI y XVII (1999).

11. See ballad #320, under the heading “Romances vulgares que tienen de valentías, gueraperas y desafuentes” (Popular ballads treating exploits, bravado and crimes) in Durán 1924, 1926, 16359–67.

It is also unlikely that events in the New World conditioned greater acceptance in Spain.
of women warriors. Carmen Pumar Martínez, for example, documents only a couple of cases (beyond that of Erazo) of women actually assuming military roles in the conquest. See her "Españolas en Indias: Mujeres-soldado, adelantadas y gobernadoras" (1988), especially pp. 78-84.

12. Doger (1986, 152), Warner (1988, 166-167), and Bravo-Villaseñor (1993, 101-102), as well as Mckendrick (as noted) substantiate this point at length. The positive effect of "manliness"—a word that, according to McKendrick, generally refers in Golden Age theater to a "woman's capacity for resolute action" (1974, 55)—could help explain the prevalence in literary works of this seemingly transgressive theme.

13. The final portion of the anecdote can also be found in Vicente Rivera Palacio, México a través de sus siglos, vol. 2, 621-622. This section of Rivera Palacio's history is reproduced in Ferrer, 116-119.

14. "The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 22:5). Interestingly enough, Luis Vives reproduces this biblical injunction against cross-dressing in his Instrucción de la mujer cristiana in 1524-1528, addressing it to women and prefacing it with the remark: "I have only one more thing to say, and I believe that it is hardly necessary to state, which is that women should not dress as men nor wear any men's clothing, nor wear masks or clothes of any kind, and not only ladies of the court, but also noblewomen who wear plumed caps and even daggers in their girdles" (1936, 133-134).

15. It is interesting to note in this connection, as does Warner (1988, 151), that one of Joan of Arc's female voices, Saint Margaret of Antioch, was a transvestite saint.

16. Naturally, there is much to say about other radical metamorphoses of Erazo's personas, especially about her Romantic revival in the nineteenth century by figures such as José María Heredia, Thomas De Quincey, and Ricardo Palma. Ferrer's preface to his first edition of the Historia (1849), with its discussion of nature's "aberrations" and the need for women's education, holds particular interest. I leave this task for another article—or another scholar.

17. That such an attitude persists can be seen in Toribio Medrano's remarks following his presentation of Rosales's text, a wonderful epilogue to this study. Of Rosales's account, Toribio Medrano states: "These events, which bear all the marks of historical truth, should not be questioned. Can one say the same of the autobiography published by Ferrer?" (1969, 223).

18. I word this statement and my discussion of the presence of literary models in the Historia carefully. In chapter 3 of her dissertation, Vallbona readily identifies four "macrosequences" of a literary aspect in the text (picaronesque, chronicle, adventures of capa y espada, popular and folkloric themes) which follow one after the other. What Vallbona sees as the contrivances and systematic nature of the macrosequences support her view that "into the original text were inserted extrapolations of a markedly novelistic cast" (19). The features she notes are certainly present in the Historia. But given the underused and essentially spontaneous tone of the text, as well as my continued uncertainty as to its author, I am only comfortable with stating that the text is highly exploited, rather than overtly encoded, and that it plays up the points of convergence between Erazo's life and the literary modalities.

19. At the end of chapter 1 of her dissertation, Vallbona provides a table of the anachronisms and errors in Vida y sucesos.

20. Vallbona devotes her entire third chapter to critical opinions on the authenticity of the manuscript on which the Historia is based. Rather than recapitulating the whole tangled critical history of the text, I note two points from her discussion particularly relevant to mine. First, that the theory subscribed to by Menéndez Pelayo and Serrano y Sanz, according to which Cándido María Trigüeros, a known imitator of seventeenth-century texts and the transcriber of the Vida from the original, forged the text has been effectively disproved by Fitzmaurice-Kelly; it is therefore unlikely that the text is entirely apocryphal. Second, that both Vallbona and I (as stated above) find convincing the argument put forth by Diego Barros Arana in "La Monja Alférez—Algunas observaciones críticas sobre su historia—Noticias desconocidas acerca de su muerte," Revista de Santiago I (1872), 215-216. Barros Arana states that "the book attributed to the Nun Ensign and published under her name, was not written by her but rather by one of the numerous great minds [genios] of the times . . . to whom doña Catalina recounted her adventures in an orderly fashion" and contends that Erazo's fame would have motivated a practiced author to write her life, "letting it appear to be written by Erazo herself . . ." (215-216). In my own case, I can only point out that, as stated above, I have not been able to consult the article directly.

21. According to this scenario, among the various connections well worth exploring between the Historia, the Infantaria, and modern testimonial literature, the most obviously significant would be that in all three cases a more educated author transcribes and in all like contexts edits the oral tale of a less educated person whose life held literary and/or historical value. The fact that the lives of both Alonso Ramírez and Catalina de Erazo evoked picturesque literature would have motivated both authors. My thanks to Sylvia Santaballa, a graduate student at Brown, for suggesting the relationship with testimonial literature.

22. See Merrin, 1991. As I demonstrate in that article, Sor Juana also builds the split between the daring creative "monster" woman (in Gilbert and Gubar's terms) and the passive "angel" into her sacrificial play, El Divino Narciso.

23. Spain become the stronghold of Sor Juana's fame, as Paz submits (1984, chap. 27), in part due to the efforts of her patrons, the countesses of Fregenal—who was aware of Sor Juana's precarious situation in Mexico. The many panegyrics to Sor Juana included the second edition of her Obras (Seville, 1692) thus speak not only to her fame but also to her need of defense in Mexico.