

2

BECOMING A MAN IN YNDIAS

The Mediations of Catalina de Erauso,
The Lieutenant Nun¹

Marcia Ochoa

Señor, todo esto que he referido a Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima no es así; la verdad es ésta: que soi muger, que nací en tal parte, hija de fulano y sutana; 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 fuí a tal parte, me desnudé, me vestí, me corté el cabello, partí allí, i acullá; me embarqué, aporté, trahiné, maté, herí, malee, correee, hasta venir a parar en lo presente i a los pies de Su Señoría Ilustrísima.
—catalina de Erauso, *Vida i Sucesos de la Monja Alférez*

We begin with a confession, a transformation, and many bad deeds. This is how Doña Catalina de Erauso narrated her life to her confessor Fray Agustín de Carvajal, bishop of Guamanga in the Viceroyalty of Peru, around the year 1618. This confession, made after the bishop's intervention in Erauso's² arrest, concluded some fifteen years of roaming through the colony dressed as a man and making a living as a soldier, troublemaker, gambler, businessman, murderer, and traveler. Erauso's habit of seeking sanctuary in the Church whenever his luck ran out brings him to this moment, where he is forced to reveal to Carvajal that he was a woman who had lived the past twenty or so years as a man, as a conquistador. Erauso gained fame in Spain and Spanish America as La

Monja Alférez, or the Lieutenant Nun. Her story traveled through letters, oral accounts, a play, and news pamphlets called *relaciones*. Erauso's own efforts were central to the circulation of his fame, through the publication of the memoir *Vida i Sucesos de la Monja Alférez*,³ his appearances before Philip IV, the King of Spain, and Pope Urban VIII, and his acquaintanceships with writers and painters of the time. Two copies of the manuscript of the memoir attributed to her, *Vida i Sucesos*, are known; one is known of but has not been found. The rest of what we have about him comes from official documents: petitions to the king and letters in support of his petitions attesting to his battlefield accomplishments and royal service.

The question that fuels my investigation into Erauso's life has to do with why she was allowed to survive, even celebrated after she disclosed her birth gender to Agustín de Carvajal, a man known for his zealotry against indigenous idolatry (Erauso 1992: 108n2). While it does not surprise me that a religious man in the Spanish Empire would "make an exception" for the behavior of an elite, I am surprised that given Erauso's vulnerability to criticism and the history of persecution of transvestites, Carvajal found this case exceptional. Although (and probably because) cross-dressing women at the time were "imaginable" to both the public and the authorities (the Catholic Church and the monarchy), there were prohibitions against women wearing men's clothing. That Erauso commits acts of cross-dressing, much less the murder, robbery, and gambling which are described with relish in her narrative, is fascinating in itself. Still more fascinating is that he avoided the Inquisition, successfully petitioned Philip IV for a pension, and was reportedly given a dispensation by the pope to continue wearing men's clothing. After receiving her pension in 1626, she settled in Mexico and reportedly died around 1650, living out the rest of her life as a trader and muleteer (she was an *arriero*, a merchant-class occupation).

Although there are some doubts as to the veracity of the *Vida*, or its authorship, the text is taken to be the representation of an extraordinary life, a historical case that proves different points for different people: the power of women, the superiority of the Basque nation, the historical existence of transgender people, the Spanish heritage of Latin America.⁴ It is not known if the *Vida* is in Erauso's own words, if it was dictated to a scribe, or if another person wrote it. What is known through the exist-

ing documentation is that a person named Catalina de Erauso existed, from Guipúzcoa, of elite Basque lineage (Erauso 1992: 32n2), who fled from the convent, who gained fame as “La Monja Alférez,” or the Lieutenant Nun, who was recognized for his “valor” in the campaigns against the Araucano people in what is now Chile, who submitted petitions to the court of Philip IV, who passed through Piedmont where he attested that he had been robbed and used the name Alférez Antonio de Erauso, who returned to New Spain with a monthly pension of five hundred pesos and an *encomienda* (Erauso 1992:147).

The twentieth century produced significant literature⁵ around the case, initially related to feminist or nationalist appropriations. More recently, the case has been appropriated as an example of the fluidity or inversion of gender—a transgender ancestor or at least an example of Butlerian “gendering” and gender transgression (Perry 1999; Erauso 1996; Feinberg 1996). I also became interested in the case because it documented the existence of a transgender man or a transvestite during this historical period. My interest deepened when I began to see the complexity of the case. Erauso is a very difficult character to celebrate or recover. But for the study of mediations,⁶ particularly from the point of view of an *antinormative* subject, the Erauso case provides various opportunities to consider the relationships between media, power, subjectivity, and ideology.

This essay vacillates in various counterpoints between Latinidad, queer studies, communication studies, cultural studies, and studies of coloniality in the Americas. I situate myself (at times uneasily) at the confluence of these different approaches, sometimes stretching to keep them together. It is this continuous *contrapunteo* that I identify as emblematic of the way my work is marked by and embedded within Latinidad—not just Latina/o studies in a U.S. context, but the experience of negotiating U.S. race, gender, and class relations as a Latina and a Latina of a particular migration (the brain drain of the 1960s and 1970s). Ultimately I locate my project within what Juana María Rodríguez calls “queer Latinidad”:

As an object of study, queer *latinidad* demands a practice that moves across geographic, linguistic, and imaginary borders, not simply because it is more provocative to do so, but because the very disciplines that divide Latin

American from North American, music from literature, politics from performance, or queer studies from Latino studies have been based on paradigms constituted through our marginalization. (Rodríguez 2003: 30)

More specifically, the case of Erauso allows me to engage the ideas of mediation, colony, and nation through the lens of queer *Latinidad*. It allows me to question the use of this figure to recuperate or validate identities, and yet my invocation of Erauso's story puts out in the world yet again that people have transgressed gender in many different ways and at many different times. As an ethnographer of media, I am interested in the social practices of representation that frame both Erauso's survival and how we come to know about her existence. As a researcher on transgender lives in Latin America, I want to explore how categories of gender apply to this case. In terms of both mediation and gender, what is important about considering Erauso is the question of technology. Erauso had different technologies of gender transformation and representation available to him. Considering this case will perhaps allow me to sidestep much of the technological mysticism that currently surrounds both fields.

Although it appears to be an obscure case, the story of the Lieutenant Nun has had its share of academic, folkloric, and even media attention (a movie was made starring María Félix as Erauso!). The story circulated through different media: letters, testimonials from people who knew her, plays, *relaciones*, the attributed autobiography (hereafter referred to as the *Vida*), appropriations or fictionalizations of this text, and most certainly through gossip and story. What is certain is that we know of Erauso today because of his *mediations*, the ways that the man became a message that circulated and still circulates. To me, the resounding questions of the case are very basic—they have to do with its conditions of possibility: Why wasn't he killed? Why wasn't she handed over to the Inquisition? Why, rather than being punished or eliminated, was he celebrated and given a reward? In this essay, I argue that the fame that Erauso cultivated in her day was one of the things that saved her life. This fame, and certainly his success as a conquistador before his confession, depended on the circuits of information and power between the colony and the metropolis, and on the possibilities of both gender and genre that existed in the colony.

THE QUESTION OF ERAUSO'S GENDER

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 hoi se usa. En efecto, parece más capón, que muger. Viste de hombre a la Española; trahe la espada bien ceñida, i 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 i carnosas, i robustas i fuertes, bien que las mueve algo como muger. —description of Erauso by Pedro de La Valle, *Vida i Sucesos de la Monja Alférez*

The use of terms like *transgender* or *transsexual* is clearly presentist and anachronistic in this case—these words have only been with us since the latter half of the twentieth century—however, I recognize them as part of my reading.⁷ In truth, Erauso complicates a bit our usage of these terms, mostly due to differences in technology between now and her time. Was Erauso transgender, transsexual, transvestite, or something else? My sense is that Erauso was, above all, unique, and that it was this uniqueness and ambiguity that facilitated his survival. I do understand her, ahistorically, as transgender. I define *transgender* broadly, as a person who employs identitarian, surgical, or medical interventions to live as a member of a gender that does not correspond to the gender assigned at birth by the social context. Instead of understanding “transgender” as an identity category, I have found it useful to consider it a set of behaviors; thus it is not necessary to impose a particular kind of identity on people in order to consider them transgender—they can be seen to be transgender from their actions, while they themselves may have another name or way of considering their identity (I believe Erauso’s was most likely *varón*—male—or *alférez*—lieutenant—based on his testimony before the court of King Philip IV).

I avoid the use of *transsexual* to refer to Erauso because of the necessity of psychiatric diagnosis and surgical “sex change” to the definition—technologies not even remotely contemporary with Erauso’s reality. *Travesti*, or *transvestite*, is perhaps the most historically accurate word that could be used to describe her, given that there have been many other documented cases of transvestites contemporary with Erauso. Mary Elizabeth

Perry (1999: 414n3) notes the documentation of cases of cross-dressed women and “mujeres varoniles” in the Siglo de Oro, but also says that Erauso’s case is different.

Erauso certainly used gender to his advantage and presented himself, in characteristically opportunistic fashion, as a member of the gender that was most advantageous for his situation at the moment. Although it might be said that Erauso problematizes a binary gender system by transgressing the norms of the gender she was assigned at birth, in fact her performance of masculinity is quite in line with the dictates of the binary. In the end, Erauso’s petitions elide his gender transgression in favor of emphasizing his loyalty to the crown and the project of colonizing the Americas. This is how she narrates her petition to the crown: not by presenting herself as an exception of gender but rather as an exemplary conquistador. What I find most interesting about the case is the ways it conflates the territory of gender and genre (both *género* in Spanish⁸): it allows us to consider the multiple genres of people Erauso inhabited. I would like to parse out some of the genders that Erauso employed, according to the *Vida* and supporting documentation. These would include: girl, novice, pageboy, young male noble (in the persona of his own brother), man, woman, virgin, *mujer varonil*, or virile woman, gambler, swordsman, traveler, and merchant.

Erauso’s ability to inhabit these gender, labor, and class positions worked in a matrix of mentalities, colonial relations, and technologies of the time. In this essay, I will discuss the conditions of possibility of the case, using the *Vida* and other sources for historical context. I situate my engagement with these texts in two key concepts, which I describe in the section immediately following this one. Then I will review the history of reproduction of this narrative. I go on to describe the circuits of information and power in the colony and the way Erauso used these to exercise social power. Finally, I discuss the possibilities of gender/genre, specifically the kinds of texts and masculinities with which Erauso was necessarily in dialogue.

MEDIATIONS, POWER, AND INTIMACY

Throughout this investigation, two main concepts have informed my analysis of the genre and gender of this case: Jesús Martín-Barbero’s

concept of “mediations” and a Foucauldian feminist consideration of the intimate dimensions of power, particularly in Ann Laura Stoler’s concept of the “internal frontiers” of the colony and Beatriz González Stephan’s study of the “design of the citizen’s body.” I will briefly outline these two concepts here, then explore them in relation to Erauso’s situation.

Mediation

By *mediation* I understand two distinct but related processes: first, the conversion of a being or happening into a message—what Stuart Hall calls “encoding” (1994); and second, the “function of a medium, that mass culture accomplishes day by day: the communication of the real with the imaginary” (Martín-Barbero 1987: 66), effectively, the link between ideology and practice. In *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to Mediations* (1996), discussing what he calls the “historical matrices of mass mediation,” Martín-Barbero highlights the connections between conditions of production, the social practices of reading, the form of texts, and the development of genres in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Although Barbero studies television, a twentieth-century mass medium, he affirms the need to understand mediations in their historical and technological contexts. His study of Spanish *cordel* literature details what he calls the “long process of enculturation” to serialization, through which the reader/consumer becomes accustomed to the production, circulation, and form of serialized texts, the antecedents of the radionovelas and telenovelas of Latin America. I apply the idea of mediations to Erauso’s case to historicize two things that are currently seen—and that I saw—as profoundly (post)modern, without a deep past: mass media and “trans” lives. It was almost impossible for me to imagine the two without the technologies in which they are immersed: television, film, hormones, sex changes. What is mass media without radio, film, or television, or trans without sex change? In the case of Erauso, we find two sites of articulation with the theory of mediations. First, in the possibilities of *genre* related to the case, including technologies of production and circulation as well as practices of reading and writing—the relationship between the historical person (Erauso) and his imaginary projection (his fame and legend). The second site of mediation is in the possibilities of *gender*, including the technologies and practices of its accomplishment: the relationship of the physical person (Erauso) to

her embodiment and external gender (her masculinity and strategic use of her birth gender).

Power and Intimacy

The second concept I employ here is an analysis of power from a Foucauldian feminist perspective. This analysis is preoccupied with the management of alterity and difference. The “interior frontiers of the colony” were articulated by Ann Laura Stoler in a 1997 essay. Stoler identifies a mechanism of differentiation in colonial and national processes. She is concerned with “the construction of colonial categories and national identities and with those people who ambiguously straddled, crossed, and threatened these imperial divides” (Stoler 1997: 198). She defines the “interior frontier” as

the sense of internal distinctions within a territory (or empire); at the level of the individual . . . the moral predicates by which a subject retains his or her national identity despite location outside the national frontier and despite heterogeneity within the nation-state. (1997: 199)

This definition presents us with a problem: Stoler treats colonial categories and national identities as if they were similar. Is it possible that a subject of a monarchy, as was Erauso, can be interpellated through a nation-building process? The *Vida* and Erauso’s petitions demonstrated sentiments that I identified as nationalist: loyalty to a flag, Basque national identity, solidarity with his countrymen, an ideology of racial superiority that underlay the foundation of a nationality—for example, an episode from the *Vida*, in which Erauso fiercely defends her king’s flag (Erauso 1992: 57–58).

But two key elements are missing to define Erauso as a national subject: a modern nation-state and a print capitalist media infrastructure to create what Benedict Anderson (1983) calls an “imagined community.” Mass mediation, mass production, and mass circulation were missing. So, although we can say that Erauso’s narrative and the representation of his memoir demonstrate ideologies and practices that could be considered “nationalist,” in the sense that she has a strong sense of affiliation and identification with an imagined community (actually, two: the Basque and the Spanish), the political and technological conditions of

mass affiliation were not in place to qualify Erauso's politics of affiliation as "nationalism." So what do we do between the colony and the nation?

Stoler studies the colonialisms of northern European countries (the Netherlands, England, and France) in Asia, a process that was informed by the colonization of Latin America and that began in earnest after the colonization of Latin America had been institutionalized, at about the time of Erauso's life (c. 1592–1635). Stoler focuses on *empire*, a mechanism that can be seen working in multiple processes that produce different kinds of subjects: national, colonial, premodern, mediated, global, and others. Although the time period of interest here is pre-national because the modern nation-state does not exist until the latter half of the following century, during this time period there is another "long process of enculturation" (Martín-Barbero 1987: 96) going on that will eventually produce the national subject, its citizenship emerging out of the colonial categories employed in Erauso's time. These worldviews differentiated between the "civilized" and "savage," the "active" agents of history and the "passive" continents upon which they would be written (Juárez 1995).⁹

Erauso's position within these worldviews was quite clear: her sexual otherness did not prevent her participation in conquest. In fact, it facilitated it. In these processes of enculturation we can see the identity practices that preceded nineteenth-century national identity formation. According to González Stephan, difference is not only produced through administration, symbolism, or juridical means—it is produced over bodies themselves: disgust, care, nausea, shame, charity, vice, dislike, *fracaso*, illegibility, and the entire universe of feeling and corporality (González Stephan 1996: 21). These, identified as "structures of feeling" by Raymond Williams, are not imposed overnight; they are the effects of the aforementioned long process of enculturation. The "machine of otherness" (*maquina de otredades*) is the production of this universe of feeling, with both social and corporeal consequences. Although we cannot project "nationalism" onto the case of la Monja Alférez, just as we cannot project "transsexual" over his body (in other words, to recuperate our own present), we can see in his case the management of internal frontiers, the "machine of otherness" *of his time*.

More than a desire to "understand" the case, I am interested in how Erauso *complicates* the relationship between alterity and authority. In

González Stephan's argument, the process of differentiation marginalizes: that which stays on the margin, that which the law does not name, or that the rules punish is put in a subaltern position. But there also exists the possibility that those who fall into the "discursive gaps" of alterity find their own ways to traffic in power and that alterity, in and of itself, does not predetermine the "other's" marginality—every once in a while, that which is marginalized finds a way to center itself completely within this mechanism of othering. Here we can understand the case of Erauso and her management of the colonial politics of affiliation that become determinant of national categories later on.

But before you start taking me too seriously, let us understand that Erauso complicates alterity because he is an other within privilege: he has constructed his masculinity completely within his privilege as a Basque, as an elite, and as a conquistador. I maintain that *for Erauso it would have been less possible to become a man without a New World in which to do so*. A woman who did not wish to conform to her society's expectations—piety, purity, reproductive and marital availability—Erauso made decisions to avoid a destiny she did not desire. As with many women of his time, his parents handed him, along with his three sisters, over to the Convento de San Sebastián el Antiguo in Guipúzcoa so he could take his vows. She remained in the convent for her novitiate year and fled just before taking her vows. As with many men of his time, he went to the colony to seek his fortune—and found it. His decisions to flee the convent, live as a man, and beyond that, as a Basque man in the conquest, stealing, killing, and roaming the colony—placed him on the "margin" of society in certain respects. But in these margins she exercised a great deal of power.

ERAUSO IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

This story, as much the *Vida* as its adaptations, has been published with some regularity over the last 350 years. Its permanence is due to various appropriations, as mentioned earlier: nationalist, Americanist, feminist, and transgender. It is also due to an interest in abnormalities (Merrim 1994)—considering Erauso as an extraordinary case. The most recent

spate of reproductions and engagements with the case began after 1992, when he drew attention for his part in the conquest. From there the case was analyzed in Latin Americanist literary contexts (Erauso 1992; Castillo Lara 1992; Juárez 1995, 1997) and in the context of feminism and queer theory (Cartagena Calderón 1998; Velasco 2000; Perry 1999; Martínez Carbajo 2000; Merrim 1994). During this time, the case was translated into English and presented as an autobiography of an extraordinary woman or transgender ancestor (Erauso 1996). Velasco deals with the appropriations of the Lieutenant Nun in the twentieth century in a manner that is far more complete than what is possible here. What is of interest in this piece is the history of the *Vida*, the conditions of its production and reproduction during Erauso's time.¹⁰

Erauso lived in an era prior to the age of mechanical reproduction that Walter Benjamin writes about, in which print becomes a mass medium. During Erauso's time, manuscripts were printed in much more limited quantities. Although in the scholarship, the "aura" of the original remains important—we cannot definitively say the *Vida* is Erauso's autobiography until we can establish a link (a sort of contagious magic) between the copies in existence and the "original" bearing Erauso's signature, here there is a relationship between the "original" (both Erauso as well as the manuscript that his hands touched) and the copies of this original, which would be the various "mediations" of the story through *cartas* and *relaciones* as well as the copies made by hand or in print of the manuscript. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we see a change in the technologies of reproduction: the very beginnings of mass printing, both in the form of books and *relaciones*. Books, which were copied by hand or reproduced only for a few elites, began to be issued as printed editions for wider audiences (Chartier 1999). In Erauso's case we see two technologies of reproduction employed: hand-copied manuscripts and printed *relaciones*.

The copies of the manuscript that exist are made by hand from an original. The most well known is a copy made by royal historian Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1784. This copy was a copy of the one made by writer Cándido María Trigueros, from the original, that was held by the family of Juan de Urquiza during that time. In 1829 the Basque expatriate intellectual Joaquín María de Ferrer (Erauso 1992: 29n24) published a printed edition of *Vida i Sucesos* in Paris entitled *Historia de la Monja*

Alférez, Doña Catalina de Erauso, Escrita Por Ella Misma. This print edition was based on the copy made by Muñoz (that was, in effect, a copy of a copy of a copy). We are at least two steps away from establishing a lineage between the Muñoz manuscript and the hands or lips of Catalina de Erauso. This later becomes important to create a link between the historical figure and the *Vida*. With the Ferrer edition, the *Vida* passes from manual copy to “mechanical reproduction.” By this time, it has already floated off course from what could be called the original: dates and names have been changed, perhaps it has been “improved” a bit to give it the “novelistic character” that Vallbona detects.

There are doubts about the authorship of the *Vida*—and these change the possibilities of interpretation and the meaning of the text. Did Erauso write it or not? In order to read the text, this is of little importance—it exists, it was written, and it can be evaluated as such. By itself, the *Vida* can be read as an account of an experience that corroborates with the life of a person who existed. It may also be seen as a (somewhat unreliable) document of practices of travel, work, and conquest in the Americas (Juárez 1997), without linking these practices to any particular actor. In terms of practice, it is important whether or not Erauso participated in the production of the manuscript. If she did, then this is a thing done by a person who lived her life in a gender not assigned to her at birth. Vallbona puts forward the theory that Erauso dictated the story to a scribe, which seems feasible given the level of detail provided in the autobiography.

Various investigators of the case have taken their positions about this concern. Castillo Lara treats the manuscript’s authorship as fact: “arrancada de los propios labios de la protagonista” (1992: 8)—a story “ripped from the protagonist’s own lips.” He then goes on to embellish the story in the manuscript with what he imagines to be the context surrounding each incident narrated, based on his historical research and perhaps how he thinks someone would react in Erauso’s situation. This results in flowery passages describing Erauso’s interactions with the landscape, or dramatic attention to fight scenes, but surprisingly little embellishment in the “romantic” episodes described in the narrative, which appear to be unimaginable to Castillo Lara. For Castillo Lara, it is important to insist on the certainty of the manuscript’s authorship, because he bases his interpretation of the text and contributions to the story on the idea that Erauso was a real historical figure. But unequivocally attaching Erauso’s

hand to the manuscript allows Castillo Lara to narrate his interpretation of the *Vida* as if it were historical truth—the story contained in the manuscript is far more interesting, adventuresome, and detailed than that contained in the petitions or letters, for example. It allows us to more completely imagine this character.

Gabriel and Michelle Stepto, translators of the most recent version of the *Vida* into English, follow Castillo Lara in asserting the fulfillment of Lejeune's "autobiographical pact" that author, narrator and protagonist are the same person (Juárez 1995: 185). They, as well as Marjorie Garber in the introduction to the text, consider the *Vida* to be an autobiography. Perry recognizes that the manuscript may not have been written by Erauso but uses the *Vida* as an example of the practices that construct gender. This is closer to the way I understand the text: as a representation of some daily practices (such as writing, traveling, etc.) that construct the character's masculinity. I would separate that textual level of analysis from the actual practices performed by a "trans" person of this time period until authorship has been established.

Juárez is skeptical about the issue of authorship, following Vallbona, but argues that there are several characteristics that mark the text as autobiographical within its social context (Juárez 1995). She, like Vallbona, says that the likelihood of Erauso being the author of the manuscript is "very plausible" (1995: 185) based on its similarity to other soldiers' autobiographies written during Spain's Siglo de Oro. These autobiographies are written about a hundred years prior to Rousseau, who heralds, according to Juárez, the beginning of "authentic autobiography." These early modern, pre-Rousseauian autobiographies are characterized by "narrations of external events with little or no self-reflection" (1995: 186).¹¹ Juárez asserts that Erauso's motive in setting down his life story was, in effect, a need to get things off his chest:

Catalina de Erauso wrote the history of her life spurred on by the need to narrate the process of a total personality change, having adopted, at a young age, a masculine identity with which she sets up the rest of her life. At the moment in which her case, through years of anguished silence, becomes public, the Lieutenant Nun investigates her past to justify her present. With this goal in mind, both the structure of the work with other selected elements, including those considered fictitious, serve to build the author's self-concept. (1995: 186, translation mine)

Her characterization of the *Vida* as a search for identity and justification seems very much in line with the kind of reflexivity Juárez claims is *absent* from the narrative. I agree with Juárez that the narrative is devoid of self-reflection. In fact, I find the manuscript rather boastful and unconcerned with negative evaluations of the narrator. Erauso (the protagonist) appears to have absolutely no shame in narrating the events of the *Vida*, including stealing, gambling, murdering, attacking *indigenas*, romancing and deceiving ladies, and fleeing the law. But even if we were to establish that Erauso (the protagonist and narrator) was also Erauso (the author), there are several arguments to contradict Juárez's reading of Erauso's "incitement to discourse." First, we know very little about what Erauso thought of herself. To imagine we have access to his interiority lends the manuscript a kind of sincerity that it neither requests nor requires. Second, Juárez represents silence here as "excruciating," but Erauso had in fact benefited from silence up to the time of his confession, and the manuscript never invokes the need to break any silence or suggests that the narrator's suffering happens in silence. It does represent "close calls," where Erauso's birth gender may be called out, putting an end to what she considers a favorable situation. Third, Juárez's argument concerning transformation lingers on the fact of gender transgression, while if we read Erauso (the protagonist and narrator) as a *normative* figure, that is, as a man, the process of change is something that occupies relatively little space in the memoir. Gender transformation is described in most detail when Erauso flees the convent. More attention is given to narrating Erauso's exploits and travels than his transformation over the course of the rest of the memoir.

Vallbona maintains that although it is possible that Erauso wrote the manuscript, doubt is cast on this possibility because of chronological errors and apocryphal assertions made in the text. This doubt is augmented by the absence of the original manuscript (Erauso 1992: 11). The manuscript has various chronological discrepancies. For example, the protagonist's birth year is listed as 1585, but Catalina de Erauso's baptism, which occurred shortly after birth, is recorded in 1592. The manuscript itself is said to have been produced "en 18 de Noviembre de 1646 bolviendo de las Yndias a España en el galeón San Josef" (1992: 31), when logs consulted by Vallbona show that this galleon arrived in Cádiz on November 1, 1624, and that by 1646, Erauso had already filed

and been granted her petition before the crown and returned to New Spain. These discrepancies have been used by Ferrer to suggest that Erauso could not possibly have been the author of the text and that the true author of the manuscript is the poet Cándido María Trigueros (1737–1801), in whose collection is included the copy most copied and reproduced. If this is the case, Trigueros would have had to do incredible research on the details of daily life of the time period, as well as place names and travel times that coincide with historical figures mentioned throughout the manuscript. Vallbona, Berruezo (Erauso: 1956), and Castillo Lara have undertaken projects to “triangulate” the narrative using these details and have been fairly satisfied of the veracity of the manuscript. Vallbona rejects the theory that Trigueros invented the manuscript and takes an intermediate position:

The foundation of the text *Vida i sucesos* is supported by an original manuscript written by Catalina de Erauso (or the story of her adventures, as told by herself), expanded and interspersed with incredible narrative sequences, which have not been sustained through documents relative to the time or the actual Monja Alférez. These sequences contribute to the fictionalization of the discourse; in addition, this is also sustained by the story line itself, completely open and full of cynicism, which fits more into the model of the picaresque novel than into the autobiographical pact. (1992: 8, translation mine)

Merrim (1994: 196) also provides a convincing argument for accepting the “ghostwriter” theory. All signs point to the resolution of this question in the magic of the original manuscript, and perhaps this would answer many questions. However, we can’t ignore the possibility that even if Erauso did write the *Vida*, it still has its elements of fiction—not necessarily more nor less than if it were dictated to a scribe. The theory that most makes sense to me is that Erauso produced (dictated or partially wrote) the *Vida* with the help of one or several intermediaries who helped him structure the narrative to conform to literary conventions of the time, giving it the novelistic character noted by Vallbona. And of course it is possible that Erauso might have done this all by himself, although probably not likely. Several elements support this “ghostwriter” theory: the discrepancies in Erauso’s name and birth date, as well as the date of the manuscript, Erauso’s relationship to writing, and, as Vallbona

points out, the fact that Erauso's native language was not Castilian but Euskera, the Basque language. The dates could have been copyist's (or ghostwriter's) error, but not likely made if Erauso had written the manuscript on his own. Erauso's name is presented as "Catalina de Araujo," a hispanization of her name, which is in Basque language. Although there is evidence in the manuscript that Erauso did engage in reading and writing practices, we cannot make the mistake of tying this to Erauso (the historical figure). Of the historical figure, we have very little actual writing—the petitions before the crown are prepared by a scribe—outside of Erauso's signature, which appears both on the petitions and on the portraits he sat for. Vallbona asserts that Erauso's native language was Euskera and that it is very likely that Erauso was raised monolingual in this language to an early age, as were many people in Basque country. According to Vallbona, this would have affected Erauso's usage of Castilian and the linguistic character of the manuscript if it had not been intervened. It is also notable, then, that the manuscript was produced in Castilian Spanish and not in Euskera or Latin—another trait that speaks to its publicitary ends, or at least to its intended audience.

COLONIAL CIRCUITS OF INFORMATION AND POWER

Yo que vi que duraba mucho este negocio y más la fortuna en perseguirme. . . .determiné, consultándolo primero con la Grajal, de pasarme a Indias con ella y ver si mudando mundo y tierra mejoraría mi suerte. Y fueme peor, como V. Md. verá en la segunda parte, pues nunca mejora su estado quien muda solamente de lugar y no de vida y costumbres. —Francisco de Quevedo, *Historia de la Vida del Buscón Llamado don Pablos*

According to the *Vida*, Erauso leaves Spain for the Americas sometime around 1603, after having run away from her convent just before she was to take her final vows and having worked for a while in the Basque region as a page for Spanish nobles (Erauso 1992: 36–38). To avoid a return to the convent and continue his life as a young man, Erauso distances himself from the destiny of a daughter of a privileged family. She makes her way working within the society she knows, wherever she finds

work that suits her. He, like his four sisters, was raised in the convent, in preparation to marry or take his vows; these were the options available for the women of his society. Three of her sisters took their vows and another was married. His brothers and father were all officials of the king's army. All four brothers died in the conquest. Although it can be said that Erauso successfully avoided the fate of a daughter in her family, she followed to the letter the fate of a son of this family—with the exception that she garnered far more success than her brothers.¹²

This we know from historical research. As for the manuscript, it too provides some social context for Erauso's masculinity, particularly with respect to travel and place. Most of the *Vida* takes place in Yndias—the name of the Spanish colony at the time. The episodes of life in the convent and Erauso's time in Spain before leaving for Yndias occupy only two folios of the manuscript. These describe his travels through San Sebastián to Cádiz (some three years), roaming from one town to another, finding work and shelter, stealing clothes and money, fighting with other youths. As for motive for the trip to Yndias, the manuscript only reports that she has found room on a galleon captained by an uncle of her¹³ (Erauso 1992: 41). In other words, there is nothing about the decision to go to Yndias in the narrative that requires justification or even mention—it is completely natural and logical that a young man would travel to Yndias to make his fortune.

Throughout the sixteenth century, the profile of immigrants to Yndias changed: initially we find young men on military expeditions and very few women. Toward mid-century the numbers of unemployed men had decreased, and there was an increase in the numbers of professional men, artisans, and women with children traveling to reunite with their husbands. Boyd-Bowman (1976) affirms that by 1560, the immigration of itinerant men was not favored—it was considered that the colony was shamefully full of them (1976: 583). By the end of the century, women reached 28.5 percent of all migrants, and men who migrated tended to be bureaucrats, not the brash conquistador characters who composed the first migrations. Basque migration, although always smaller than Andalusian, tended to be more influential because of its contribution to high-ranking positions such as captains of fleets, merchants, and sailors. The Basque areas of Spain contributed proportionally more merchants to the migration than any other Spanish region (Boyd-Bowman 1976:

593). Of the Basque regions, Guipúzcoa stood out for its contribution of merchants. By 1600, 640 (documented) Guipúzcoanos had immigrated to Yndias. It is interesting to note that this migration was exceedingly masculine: only 1 percent of women who were documented to have traveled to Yndias in the sixteenth century were Basque.

The colonization of Yndias changes the ways that Spaniards seek and accomplish social status. While in Spain, lineage and nobility dictated access to riches and privilege, in Yndias there is incredible social mobility for merchants, artisans, *petit bourgeois*, and soldiers. In Yndias, these men become “hijos d’ algo,” sons of something (Rama 1984: 23). The colony is the site of production of privileged men who do not fit in the metropolis. This change in social mobility produces a transatlantic resentment and a rejection of those who become men in Yndias, initiating a criollo crisis of legitimacy:

The Spanish aristocracy refused to acknowledge the colonials as equals and were especially contemptuous of their descendants, known as creoles. As early as the second half of the sixteenth century, Spanish aristocrats were characterizing the American-born offspring of Spaniards as lazy, racially inferior, mentally deficient, and physically degenerate. (Seed 1995: 21)¹⁴

In this context, Erauso functions perfectly as a *hidalgo* and thus has the privilege to make himself a man in Yndias—something that would pose different challenges in Spain due to the high possibility of being discovered and returned to his family. Twinam affirms that “those men distinguished as *hijosdalgo*, or ‘men of importance,’ were exempt from some taxes and punishments and positively recognized because of their lineage” (1999: 41). In Yndias, Erauso has all the space and the right to become a man, just as many other Spanish men did. And the man she becomes is very charismatic and desirable, according to the *Vida*—the narrator must evade various proposals for marriage with women, she gets away with practically everything, including murder, and he receives the admiration and compliments of her compatriots. Even without the *Vida*, the fact that Erauso receives a royal pension rather than being burned at the stake indicates that the king approved of his service, and the letters provided to support his claim also demonstrate the admiration of his peers. Being class appropriate is at least as important to Erauso’s continued survival as seamlessly accomplishing her masculinity.

Erauso's masculinity is a nostalgic one, performed in a time when masculinity and socioeconomic status are transforming from a military model that privileges brute force and plunder to a more genteel, urban model that privileges participation in the bureaucracy (Cartagena Calderón 1998). In *Vida i sucesos*, Erauso is presented as a picaro, a rascal who manages to get away with murder and much else, while always coming out on top in the seedy fringes of decent Spanish society. Although transgressive, unlike the typical picaro Erauso is not a peasant making his fortune. She enjoys the protections afforded to Spanish nobles in the Americas. In a sense, Erauso gets the "best" of both worlds: abusing and cavorting with impunity while avoiding punishment or arrest when he gets caught, and being entitled to reward because of his elite status. Although Michelle Stepto, one of the translators of the 1996 English version, classifies Erauso as a member of the "itinerant underclass" of Peru, Erauso was only subaltern in the military sense upon her arrival in Yndias. A vision of power that understands power in the center and subalternity in the margins does not account for the way in which Erauso managed power. It might be more appropriate to say that another important element of the masculinity that Erauso produced was precisely the discontinuity of the margin and the colony. It stands to reason, then, that Erauso winds up distinguishing himself as a man and a soldier in one of the places that most fiercely resisted Spanish colonization, the Arauco province in southern Chile, on the margin of colonial institutionality.

In these discontinuities and margins exist what I understand to be "discursive gaps"—where the disciplining of the subject is negotiated, and reinvents and abstracts itself. Where the hand of the state does not reach, it is supposed that biopower reaches (as well as Stoler's intimate practices of power), but where these discursive gaps exist—silences, crossed lines—discipline is reinterpreted, interrupted, changed, perverted. Discontinuity is crucial to the narration of the *Vida*. In it, Erauso-as-narrator abruptly leaves bad situations (betrayals, rivalries, promises, and encounters with authority), roving from one end to another of the colony. We see this from the beginning of the story: she runs from the convent, then from the houses of priests and masters, from ships, from promises to marry, from business partners. The manuscript is ordered through its trajectory in space: "7. Desembarca en Sanlúcar, va a Sevilla,

buelve a Sanlúcar i embárcase”; “Capítulo XII: Parte de las Charcas a Piscobamba.” Erauso’s ability to leave at the drop of a hat is part of his masculinity in the narrative. She becomes a man upon voyaging.

I see these gaps, the space between places, between fiction and truth, the “itinerant underclass,” the inconsistent application of law, the vacillation between legitimacy and bastardry as intrinsically related. They are mutually informative places where definitions blur, where rules are unenforced, where people are invented. Not in the imagination of a writer, but in the possibilities of existence. In the things that could be imagined by a fourteen-year-old girl cloistered in a convent.

NOTES

1. This paper is dedicated to Gwen Amber Rose Araujo, murdered on October 2, 2002, at the age of seventeen in Newark, California, after four men discovered she was anatomically male.

2. The question of how to refer to Erauso has been dealt with in several publications (Velasco 2000; Perry 1999; Merrim 1994). Following Perry, I will use the name “Erauso” to refer to this person, and in terms of pronouns, these will alternate with each sentence.

3. The definitive edition of the manuscripts, *relaciones*, and some official documents regarding the case, including an extensive bibliography, were edited by Rima de Vallbona and published in 1992. This edition is cited as (Erauso 1992) in the text.

4. See Velasco (2000) for an extensive consideration of the appropriations of this character.

5. See the bibliography in Erauso (1992) and Velasco (2000).

6. See Martín-Barbero (1993).

7. Here I am informed by Judith Halberstam’s idea of “perverse presentism,” which she suggests be used strategically to invent the queer present. While Halberstam’s use of this idea encourages a recuperative project, I wish to project queer readings into the past in order to accomplish an antinormative reading of mediation and technology in the early modern period and explore the perversions of power in the Spanish colonial project. See Halberstam 1999.

8. The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* has recently circulated its evaluation of the term “género” in Spanish and determined that the appropri-

ate translation for “gender” is “sexo”: “las palabras tienen *género* (y no *sexo*), mientras que los seres vivos tienen *sexo* (y no *género*).” Citing a different tradition of usage for both words: “en la tradición cultural española la palabra *sexo* no reduce su sentido al aspecto meramente biológico.”

9. Many thanks to Encarnación Juárez for generously sharing her articles with me as I was writing this essay.

10. In a longer version of this chapter, I expand this argument with a detailed accounting of the conditions of publication recovery and re-publication of the manuscript. Vallbona’s bibliography (Erauso 1992) serves as the source of this synopsis.

11. “Narraciones de eventos externos con escasas o nulas reflexiones sobre la interioridad de la persona.” Translation mine.

12. See Castillo Lara (1992: 24–25) for a synopsis of Erauso’s family history and her brothers’ fates. According to the manuscript, Erauso killed one of her brothers in a duel.

13. “plaza de grumete en un galeón del Capitán Esteban Ciguino, tío mío . . .” (Erauso 1992: 41, translation mine).

14. For another look at this crisis of legitimacy, see Twinam (1999).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1989. “La Obra de Arte en la época de Su Reproductibilidad Técnica.” In *Discursos Interrumpidos I*. Buenos Aires: Taurus.
- Boyd-Bowman, Peter. 1976. “Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the Indies Until 1600.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 56 (4): 580–604.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cartagena Calderón, José R. 1998. “‘No Se Nace Hombre, Se Llega a Serlo’: La Construcción de la Masculinidad en la Autobiografía de Una Travesti del Siglo XVII, *Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez*.” Presented at the 3rd Annual Conference on Women Writers of Medieval and Early Modern Spain and Colonial Latin America: “(Re)capturing the Female Hispanic Body: Cultural Representations and Discourse.” Los Angeles, CA: Loyola Marymount University, September 17–19.
- Castillo Lara, Lucas G. 1992. *La Monja Alférez*. Caracas: Editorial Planeta, Biblioteca Andina.

- Chartier, Roger. 1994. *The Order of Books*. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 1999. "Reading Matter and 'Popular' Reading: From the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century." In *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Caballo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Erauso, Catalina de. 1625. "Petition of Catalina de Erauso to the Spanish Crown, 1625." Trans. Stephanie Merrim. In *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, 43 (1990): 37. (copy of the original in: José Toribio Medina, *Biblioteca Hispano-Chilena*, 1523–1817. Vol. 1. Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1965).
- . 1918. *La Historia de la Monja Alférez*. Autobiography attributed to Catalina de Erauso, Joaquin Maria de Ferrer edition. Madrid: Tipografía Renovación.
- . 1956. *Historia de la Monja Alférez Doña Catalina de Erauso: Con la Última y Tercera Relación en que se Hace Historia de los Últimos Años y Muerte de Este Personaje*. José Berruezo edition, with Prologue by José Berruezo. Pamplona: Editorial Gómez.
- . 1992. *Vida i Sucesos de la Monja Alférez*. Autobiography attributed to Catalina de Erauso; edition, introduction, and Notes by Rima de Vallbona edition with introduction and notes by Rima de Villbona. Tempe: Arizona State University Center for Latin American Studies.
- . 1996. *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*. Translation by Michele Stepto and Gabriel Stepto; introduction by Marjorie Garber. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Foster, George M. 1960. *Culture and Conquest: America's Spanish Heritage*. New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.
- González Stephan, Beatriz. 1996. *Cultura y Tercer Mundo*. Caracas: Nueva Sociedad.
- Halberstam, Judith. 1998. *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hall, Stuart. 1994. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Media Texts: Authors and Readers*. D. Graddel and O. B. Barrett, eds. Milton Keynes: Open University Press and Multilingual Metters.
- Juárez, Encarnación. 1995. "Señora Catalina, ¿dónde es el camino?: La Autobiografía Como Búsqueda y Afirmación de Identidad." In *Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez* in Paolini, Claire J., ed. *La Chispa '95. Selected Proceedings*. New Orleans, LA: Tulane University.
- . 1997. "La Mujer Militar en la América Colonial: El Caso de la Monja Alférez." *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Literatures*, 10 & 11.

- Martín-Barbero, Jesús. 1987. *De los medios a las mediaciones: Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía*. Mexico, DF: Ediciones G. Gili.
- . 2000. "Comunicación Fin de Siglo." In *Innovarium [en línea]*, Caracas, Venezuela: Innovatec-Innovarium Inteligencia del Entorno (cited January 12, 2003). Available at: www.innovarium.com/Investigacion/ComJMB.htm.
- Merrim, Stephanie. 1994. "Catalina de Erauso: From Anomaly to Icon." In *Coded Encounters: Writing, Gender and Ethnicity in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Francisco Javier Cevallos-Candau, 177–205. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Martínez-Carbajo, A. Paloma. 2000. "The (Mis)Adventures of Catalina de Erauso." *Prism: Crossing Borders [en línea]*. Tacoma, WA: Primavera 2000, vol. XIII. (cited April 20, 2001) Available at: www.plu.edu/~prism/carbajo.html.
- Perry, Mary Elizabeth. 1999. "From Convent to Battlefield: Cross-Dressing and Gendering the Self in the New World of Imperial Spain." In *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Quevedo, Francisco de. 1994. [1626] *Historia de la Vida del Buscón Llamado don Pablos*. Barcelona: Edicomunicación.
- Rama, Angel. 1984. *La Ciudad Letrada*. Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte.
- . 1996. *The Lettered City*. Trans. John Charles Chasteen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Real Academia Española. 2000. "Informe de la Real Academia Española sobre la Expresión *Violencia de Género*," Madrid. (cited May 19, 2004). Available at: [www.rae.es/rae/gestores/gespub000001.nsf/\(voAnexos\)/arch5DEC0D566ABE48B2C1256EA20041D0DB/\\$FILE/Violenciadeg%E9nero.htm](http://www.rae.es/rae/gestores/gespub000001.nsf/(voAnexos)/arch5DEC0D566ABE48B2C1256EA20041D0DB/$FILE/Violenciadeg%E9nero.htm).
- Rodríguez, Juana María. 2003. *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*. New York: New York University Press.
- Rull Sabater, Alberto. 1991. *Diccionario Sucinto de Ministros de Hacienda (s.XIX–XX)*. Madrid. Instituto de Estudios Fiscales.
- Sampson Vera Tudela, Elisa. 2000. *Colonial Angels: Narratives of Gender and Spirituality in Mexico, 1580–1750*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Seed, Patricia. 1995. *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492–1640*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 1996. "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power." In *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 1997. "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia." In *Tensions of*

Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, ed. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Twinam, Ann. 1999. *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Velasco, Sherry M. 2000. *The Lieutenant Nun: Transgenderism, Lesbian Desire, and Catalina de Erauso*. Austin: University of Texas Press.