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PERFORMING (FEMALE) MASCULINITY IN THE EARLY MODERN IBERO-ATLANTIC WORLD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MUJER VARONIL IN GENDER AND GENRE

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE *MUJER VARONIL* IN GENDER AND GENRE**

BY

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B.A., Psychology, University of Montana, 2005

M.A. Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, 2008

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ABSTRACT

The following dissertation on the trope of the *mujer varonil*¹ employs bibliographical research in literary criticism and historiography to identify and describe socio-historic attitudes about gender. In particular, this dissertation examines gender as communicated by texts that use the *mujer varonil*, or “masculine woman”, characterization to either praise or vilify exceptional female subjects in ways that highlight normative limits for masculine and feminine gender expression. Four texts are examined: a male author writes each and each represents a literary genre that was significant in early modern Spain and Spanish America. These genres are the hagiography, the *relación*, the inquisition proceeding, and the *comedia*. These texts communicate important attitudes about gender-bending that are associated with cultural

¹ The term *mujer varonil* is employed provisionally here. In the language of the times, the word *mujer* in most contexts did not include virgens. In further research, I plan to address this issue of terminology as it applies to the masculine female in the religious orders. That is outside the scope of this present work.

limits for gender expression, which inform boundaries that demarcate three normative gender roles: male, female and *third gender*.

The selected texts are didactic because they communicate limits for gender-bending by exceptional females that ultimately reinforce an androcentric social structure and its associated normative gender roles. These texts use the *mujer varonil* trope to portray their subjects in ways that communicate the limits for female agency.

Simultaneously, the texts allow for some agency by praising certain forms of transition to a male identity by people identified as female at birth. The texts and genres explored in this dissertation thus raise important questions about socio-historic limits for normative gender expression in early modern Spain and Spanish America while also providing answers that resolve the ambiguities that they explore. They do this in ways that support the imperial project and the social stability necessary for its success.

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INTRODUCTION

The label of the *mujer varonil*, which was used in a variety of the popular literary genres of early modern Spain, is illuminated by an investigation into exemplary masculinity and femininity. Analysis of the texts identified below facilitates an examination of the *mujer varonil* as portrayed by male authors in the transatlantic Hispanic context during the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries:

Hernando Ortego, Francisco Javier, and Carlos de la Hoz García, eds. *Las relaciones topográficas de Felipe II: Relaciones inéditas de la provincia de Madrid* [ca. 1573]. Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Madrileños, 1987. Print.

Cano Fernández, Sara, Irene López Santana, Alejandro Martínez Pérez, Beatriz Rodrigo Quejigo, and Alvaro Vázquez Chimeno, eds. *La máscara infame: Actas de la inquisición a Eleno de Céspedes* [1588]. Madrid: La Tinta del Calamar Ediciones, 2010.

Vega, Lope de. *La vengadora de las mujeres* [1621]. Kindle ed., Fundación Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2012.

Siria, Antonio de. *Vida admirable y prodigiosas virtudes de la venerable sierva de Dios doña Anna Guerra de Jesus* [1716]. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Universitaria, 1925.

Popular books and plays, such as those studied in this dissertation, communicated cultural expectations for gender roles that were connected to codes and mores for a normative national identity. The Spanish cultural elite connected these expectations to

idealized notions of virility. Printed materials facilitated the communication of the gender roles that the men and women of the reading public were expected to admire, imitate and defend. The boom in publishing that followed the invention of the printing press and the increased access of the public—including women—to printed material was enormously significant to the early modern sociocultural landscape in Europe and the Americas. The printing press facilitated the dissemination of ideas that characterized the shared identities of groups and nations.

Texts such those analyzed in this dissertation contributed toward the social stability that supported Spain's imperial mission by communicating and clarifying cultural norms regarding role expectations for normative gender. They did this by portraying their gender-bending subjects either as heroes to be emulated or antiheroes to be abhorred. The male authors of these texts fulfilled a social function as gatekeepers for the cultural elite, interpreting for the reader the significance of the lives of their subjects. Specifically, these authors decide for their readers whether their subjects should be praised for transcending gender role expectations for men and women—for becoming a combination of culturally idealized traits for both, for becoming *mujer varonil*—or punished for living fraudulently as male imposters. In doing so, these texts communicate three culturally sanctioned options for normative gender roles: male, female and *third gender*.

The research presented in this dissertation bridges gaps in scholarship with regard to the application of the concept of the *third gender* to Hispanic literature. Theoretical concepts are used to explain the cultural construction of gender roles and associated notions of exemplarity as they relate to portrayals of the *mujer varonil* in the above-

described corpus (see terminology section below). Scholars such as Jacqueline Murray have used the concept of the *third gender* to analyze medieval hagiographic literature; however, this concept, it has not yet been applied in more than preliminary form to early modern Hispanic texts or to other genres of Hispanic texts².

Modern theoretical concepts such as the *third gender* can be used to interpret the *mujer varonil* in socio-historic context and to explain cultural attitudes towards normative gender as they are communicated and evaluated by texts representative of the genres described above. The present analysis employs tools from feminist theory, queer theory and performance theory and uses them to illuminate these texts in the early modern Hispanic world. Doing so allows for an exploration of the efficacy and applicability of the concept of the *third gender* to early modern Hispanic literature. This process facilitates a dialogue between the texts and key elements of the modern theories employed for analysis. A key objective of this work is to contextualize and apply elements from contemporary theorists whose work analyzes the communication of gender identity and relationships of power and control in order to understand female masculinity in context. The primary texts chosen for this analysis participate in a discourse about

² These preliminary studies include:

Horswell, Michael J. *Decolonizing the Sodomite: Queer Tropes of Sexuality in Colonial Andean Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Sierra, Horacio. *Sanctified Subversives: Nuns in Early Modern English and Spanish Literature*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

Dangler, Jean. *Mediating Fictions: Literature, Women Healers, and the Go-between in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*. Bucknell UP, 2001.

gender in ways that were significant against their historical backdrop and that represented and replied to several key preoccupations of the Spanish culture of the times.

These representative texts participate in a larger discursive project sanctioned by the Catholic Church that was complementary to Spain's imperial and transatlantic mission. This project depended on the social stability facilitated by clearly-defined gender roles. These roles were non-threatening to hegemony and they communicated idealized, gendered expectations for behavior that were understood to represent the best of Hispanic culture and society. The *third gender* role was useful to the imperial project for two reasons: a) it perpetuated the authority of the Catholic Church³, and b) at the same time, it normalized the behaviors of certain gender-bending individuals in ways that ultimately supported the religious and imperialistic discourses of church and state.

Each chapter of this dissertation situates a primary text in its respective genre and describes how the label of *mujer varonil* describes its exceptional female subject in ways that pass judgment on her masculinity. The evolution of the use of the *mujer varonil* label from medieval to early modern literary context is described. The didactic function of this label is to communicate gender role expectations. This function is illuminated by relating it to the process of the cultural construction of hero and anti-hero figures that supported the imperial project in Spain and Spanish America. The primary texts analyzed portray gender-bending individuals in ways that reify certain abstract cultural ideas about and

³ Murray identifies the medieval clergy (both male and female) as a social group that functioned as a *third gender*. She argues that they were *third gender* because the norms for this social role explicitly decoupled "biological sex and socially constructed gender" in a way that was uniquely circumscribed (35).

expectations for behavior connected to gender roles that promoted the social stability benefitting hegemony. The chapters that follow analyze how texts that describe and clarify these gender roles had a significant social impact and how influential male authors used the concept of cultural heroes and antiheroes in ways that benefitted hegemony.

In summary, the texts and genres analyzed in this dissertation helped maintain the uniqueness and cultural significance of three normative social roles against a shifting historical backdrop in ways that supported stability through the reification of a gendered social order. This backdrop included the destabilizing effects of the Protestant Reformation and also increasing options for gender role fluidity made accessible to women as a result of increased access to printed material and literacy. The normative gender roles of male, female and *third gender* clarified by the corpus analyzed reify a hierarchical and androcentric social order that supported the Crown's need to maintain imperial control in a transatlantic context by promoting stability and known boundaries for transgressive behavior with regard to gender. In this corpus, the exemplary female subject is either shown ultimately to conform to one of the three normative gender roles identified above—for which she is celebrated—or she is punished and vilified for impersonating a man.

Below is a list of key terms that are used throughout this dissertation and that are contextualized to be to applicable early modern cultural and historic circumstance:

Terminology

Cisgender: A person whose sex-assigned-at-birth and gender align according to cultural expectations (Teich 15).

Gender: A term describing part of a person's identity that contains two elements, which are socially and personally significant: *gender identity* and *gender expression* (see definitions below).

Gender-bending person: Individuals who “transcended the contemporary gender system” (Murray 35) by means of some communication of gender identity that did not neatly conform to normative notions of masculinity and femininity or whose gender expression did not correlate with cultural expectations for assigned sex.

Gender expression: A person's outward communication of gender identity. It is “typically communicated through...[culturally- and historically-specific, stereotypical and representative] feminine or masculine behaviors [or verbal communication or choice of profession or dress] and [other social] signals...such as movement” (Teich 6).

Gender identity: A person's internal conception of gendered self.

Gender role: The gendered social niche that an individual is expected to occupy in society (Teich 6) according to socio-cultural conventions for masculinity and femininity.

Identity: A personal, social, and gendered story that is communicated (performed) by individuals within certain social parameters.

Mujer varonil: A phrase that literally means “masculine woman” that is used in Hispanic literature to describe a person who transitions from female to male and who then becomes more than either binary by surpassing gender expectations for both.

Performance: A term that refers to a “broad spectrum” or “continuum of human actions” including “everyday life performances . . . [and the] enactment of social, professional, gender, race and class roles” (Schechner, ch. 1). Specifically, “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance” (Schechner, ch. 1).

Phallic: This term refers to the symbolic function of an object that can be understood as having masculine qualities (Dor 87).

Phallogocentric: A system, such as language, that is constructed of binary terms: for example, male and female. In such a binary system, certain terms, for example, “male,” are privileged because they are associated with positive cultural values. The complementary term of a binary pair, in this case, “female,” is not privileged. In relationship to the privileged term, it is assigned a value connotation of imperfect, lacking, or negative (Klages 98). In this type of binary system, the complementary and opposite term (in this case, female) has a very important function, which is to define the privileged (male) term through difference, which must by necessity be well established

and unambiguous. The complementary term in such as system describes, maintains or reifies the term that has positive or preferred cultural value by clearly identifying what the privileged term is not.

Third gender: a term introduced in 1975 by *The Transgender Studies Reader* to describe “behaviors that transcended or challenged dyadic male-female codes or norms” (668).

Transgender: A person whose *sex-assigned-at-birth* does not align with expectations for their *gender*.

Queer reading: explores a text from an unaccustomed angle with the aim of provoking more critical questions than providing answers: methods of analysis themselves can become an object of scrutiny.

Queer subject: A person whose identity calls into question the neat boundaries between normative categories of existence. This definition is expanded upon and placed in socio-historic context in Chapter 2.

Reify: a term that describes the act of representing an abstract concept or idea as something concrete and real (Miriam Webster).

A summary of the chapters follows below. The first chapter analyzes the only religious text of the selected corpus: the life story of Anna Guerra de Jesús. Chapter 1

lays the groundwork for understanding the trope of the *mujer varonil* as communicated by early modern Hispanic literature by outlining the template for the characteristics of the *mujer varonil* that will be used for comparison/contrast throughout the dissertation. Siria's text functions well in this context because of the frequency with which he repeats the label *mujer varonil* and similar phrases throughout his *vida*. Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation treat the *mujer varonil* as she was portrayed outside the realm of religious life, describing similarities and differences to the pattern used by Antonio de Siria in describing Anna Guerra. The final chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 3, describes the function of the *mujer varonil* trope within the realm of fiction by analyzing a popular work of Golden Age drama: Lope de Vega's *La vengadora de las mujeres*.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1

Transgender Transcendence: Anna Guerra de Jesús and the Tradition of the Hagiographic Hero/ine

The Dominican tertiary and mystic, doña Anna Guerra de Jesús (1639 - 1713), was portrayed as virile and exemplary by the male author of her *Vida* [1716], Antonio de Siria. He describes his female subject using martial and masculine language such as “una mujer varonil . . . que desmintiendo la delicadeza y melindres de su sexo emprendió muy gloriosas hazañas” (36). Siria's spiritual biography of Anna Guerra's is both significant to and representative of the hagiographic genre. It is recognized as an influential and

celebrated Latin American text, as noted in the studies by C. R. Boxer (44) and Beatrice Espejo (9).

Siria's description of Anna Guerra as *mujer varonil* is part of a larger cultural trend that described spiritual exemplarity as a type of transgender spiritual transcendence. This trend continued from the Middle Ages into early modernity, as Chapter 1 documents. Siria places the trope of the *mujer varonil* in Catholic context by describing Anna Guerra as someone who achieved spiritual greatness by overcoming the physical and psychological debilities associated with one binary end of the sex/gender spectrum (femininity) and who also transcended the other binary of the sex/gender spectrum (masculinity). Specifically, Siria uses the label *mujer varonil* to place Anna in the middle ground of the spectrum, ultimately describing his subject as a member of the revered *third gender* social role, which was reserved only for members of the spiritual orders. In Siria's text, descriptions of Anna's transcendence are used to define and reify normative male and female gender roles at the same time that they affirm the androcentric social structure that created and promoted them. Anna's heroism is connected to her movement from femininity towards masculinity in a culturally sanctioned manner. The textual analysis provided in Chapter 1 describes Siria's use of terminology equivalent to the *third gender* concept and also examines his portrayal of Anna's movement from femininity to masculinity.

Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús is a significant text because it represents the importance of exemplary female religious figures to Spain's imperialistic endeavor. The discussions of Chapter 1 show how admired female religious figures such as Anna were important to the cultural and political project of supporting the hegemonic dominance of

the Catholic Church in Spain and Spanish America. As such, the maintenance and emulation of traditional gender roles supported Spain's imperial project. Texts such as Siria's were an important part of this maintenance and they consciously encouraged the emulation of the three normative gender roles that they clarify through the use of the *mujer varonil* concept.

Electa Arenal and Stacey Schau describe that the symbolic function of Colonial convents was especially significant culturally in comparison to Peninsular ones:

The woman of colonial convents took on greater symbolic and political importance than their Peninsular sisters, because the image of their Marian purity represented Spain's providential transatlantic mission. Since convents generally were closer to centers of power in the colonies than in Spain, their social function was also more significant. (291)

Arenal and Schlau provide only a brief discussion of the symbolic and political significance of religious women in their text, *Untold Sisters*. This chapter adds to this scholarship by providing theoretical analyses, close readings, and contextualization that furthers the discussions begun by these scholars. Additionally, it builds on research from medieval studies by employing the concept of the *third gender* to illuminate how the *mujer varonil* trope communicates important cultural attitudes about men, women and exemplarity in popular texts like Siria's *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* and the hagiographic genre that they represent.

Chapter 2

Heroes and Anti-Heroes: Female Masculinity and Exemplary Identity in Early Modern Spain

The primary texts examined in this chapter—*Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II* [1573] and *Actas de la inquisición a Elena de Céspedes* [1588]—respectively praise or condemn their exceptional female subjects for gender-bending in the secular realm.⁴ These two Peninsular sources, which represent the genres of the *relación* and the Inquisition proceeding, label a subject either as *mujer varonil*—a marvelous model of masculinity—or as a criminal condemned for male impersonation. Thus, an exceptional female subject received one of two oppositional labels for transitioning from female to male social roles: this subject was either praised as a cultural hero or vilified as an antihero. The modern term *transgender* is employed in this dissertation to describe Esteban⁵ de Valderecete, who was praised for transitioning from female to male, and to describe Eleno de Céspedes, who was publicly punished for undertaking a similar transition. Esteban and Eleno share several characteristics and life events as relating to how they expressed their preferred gender (male), for example, the occupations they pursued were generally considered to be masculine ones. This chapter offers an explanation of why Eleno was

⁴ Chapter 2 contextualizes the term *gender-bending*.

⁵ This discussion uses the male versions of their names, since this corresponds to what appears to be their preferred gender (male), except when, for reasons of clarity, the discussion treats periods in their lives before they began living a male gender role.

judged very differently from Esteban by authorities and why this is socially and historically significant.

Esteban's social success as evidenced by his portrayal in a *relación* as a local hero occurs because his masculinity was interpreted by cultural gatekeepers as representative of a cultural model in vogue during the time: the bellicose knight. This was a type of normative male gender role that was widely admired and connected to the imperial project. Specifically, it is understood to embody a rural, military and Christian masculinity connected to the re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the subsequent conquest of the New World. Also significantly, Esteban is described in ways referencing the *cristiano viejo* social identity, while Eleno is portrayed as a former slave and ethnic/religious *other*. Authorities approve Esteban de Valdarecete's choice of male gender role because he is ultimately interpreted as embodying a normative social identity: thus, he emerges triumphant from accusations of dishonor, monstrosity and deviancy. In contrast, subjects like Eleno de Céspedes, who embody multiple minority identities that intersect in ways significant to socio-historic circumstance, are ultimately doomed to social failure, even after they have exhibited agency in order to receive some sort of smaller-scale desirable outcome. The term *queer subject* describes Eleno because his gender identity is ambiguous, calling into question normative identity categories that hegemony tried to establish as monolithic, natural, and desirable because they maintained social stability.

Relaciones topográficas describes the life and deeds of Esteban de Valdarecete, a fencing master from a province near Madrid. A *relación* is a compendium of notable personages and events written with the intent of informing the ruler about the state of the

realm and its subjects. A *relación* describes its notable people in ways that communicate attitudes and values of the hegemonic elite. Chapter 2 relates the concept of the *third gender* and the label of the *mujer varonil* to cultural interpretations of and sanctioned options for the transcendent gender-bending of masculine females not associated with the religious orders. These subjects, like Anna Guerra de Jesús and others ascribed *third gender* role, were praised by authorities for surpassing binary expectations by becoming more than a woman and more than a man: for becoming a *mujer varonil*.

The primary texts analyzed in this chapter consist of a *relación*, which praises Esteban de Valderecete's masculinity, and an Inquisition proceeding, which condemns Eleno de Céspedes' masculinity. This chapter identifies and describes key elements of Esteban's and Eleno's feminine and masculine sex and gender as they are represented in their texts, which were written by male cultural gatekeepers and which contain didactic qualities. Additionally, this chapter compares and contrasts these examples of female masculinity in secular context with examples from *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* by Antonio de Siria, which interprets female masculinity in religious context. Moreover, the present chapter analyzes Esteban's and Eleno's masculinity within their socio-historic context by using terminology of contemporary identity discourse, including discourses of performance theory and queer theory, in order to illuminate their early modern texts from a new, queer angle.

Primary texts

The *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*, which describes the life of Esteban de Valderecete, is a collection of accounts begun in approximately 1575 (Cleminson and

Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42). Its different volumes describe the state of the realm at that time and also interesting and representative persons encountered in the various provinces. The information was collected in the following manner: each village in Spain was instructed to answer a questionnaire about a wide variety of topics deemed important culturally and/or historically. The 44th question of the questionnaire asked about people and occurrences that were regarded as significant to each village's history and identity (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42). Esteban was included because his transcendence of expectations for both normative male and female gender roles was interpreted to be miraculous and admirable. For this, the *relación* labels Esteban as *mujer varonil* and it describes how he was allowed to choose between living the rest of his life as a male or a female (he chose a male gender role). The *third gender* role was not available to him because he was not affiliated with a religious order. It is clear that the author of the *Relaciones topográficas* constructs Esteban as a cultural hero because his masculinity was interpreted to be normative. The person who would become Esteban transitioned legally from female to male as a teenager and he later held public offices, had a socially and ecclesiastically recognized marriage of more than ten years to a woman, taught the exercise of arms to other males, and even distinguished himself in military feats against professional soldiers from Emperor Carlos V's retinue. Esteban's success story provides a stark contrast to the story of Eleno Cépedes.

Actas de la inquisición a Elena de Céspedes is an archival source that describes the trial of a person labeled as female at birth who, like Esteban de Valderecete, also had a connection to the profession of arms. Like Esteban, Eleno lived during distinct periods

of life as woman and as a man. However, unlike Esteban, Eleno was married, sequentially, to a man and a woman. When living as a woman married to a man, Elena de Céspedes gave birth to a child. Eleno de Céspedes was ultimately condemned by the Inquisition as a cultural antihero for not fitting into any normative gender role category: neither male, nor female, nor *third gender*. He argued in court that he was a hermaphrodite and, as such, he should be allowed to choose the male gender role. However, Eleno, unlike Esteban, was not allowed to choose to live the rest of his life as his preferred gender. Instead, he was found guilty of sodomy and witchcraft (using the dark arts to impersonate a man) and publically punished.

Chapter 2 also analyzes representative examples of female masculinity in a secular⁶ context, continuing the conversation on exemplary masculinity begun in Chapter 1, which discusses the *mujer varonil* label as it is used in religious literature. These discussions of Esteban as hero and Eleno as antihero are informed by an analysis of the predominant early modern paradigm of sex and gender, according to which three recognized and sanctioned options for sex were understood to exist: male, female, and hermaphrodite. Under this paradigm, a male or female gender role was generally expected to correspond. Also, this chapter references and expands upon discussions of the concept of the *third gender* that began in Chapter 1.

⁶ For the sake of simplicity, keeping in mind the profound interconnectedness of the Church with nearly all aspects of daily life in early modern context, the secular realm is discussed herein as that pertaining to life outside of the religious orders.

Chapter 3

Female Masculinity in Theater: Staging the Negotiation of Normative Gender

La vengadora de las mujeres by Lope de Vega is an example of a canonical Peninsular *comedia*, a genre of theater that was very popular during the early modern period. This chapter describes the evolution of the theater in Spain, focusing in particular on the creation of a national theater tradition under the influence of playwright Lope de Vega. The chapter pays specific attention to the place of women in the theater and, especially, to the significance of the *mujer varonil* character within it.

The *comedia* is rich in themes that lend themselves to cultural and theoretical discussions that can be illuminated by feminist, queer, and performance theory. *La vengadora de las mujeres*—along with the representative texts from other genres that comprise the corpus analyzed—participates in a larger cultural project that identified, described and maintained three normative gender roles and the social stability that these roles facilitated and maintained. In this function, *La vengadora de las mujeres* and other texts like it can be understood as a type of social relief valve: they appear to allow for gender-bending and agency on the part of exceptional females, yet they also safely control this gender-bending and agency within the strict plot structure associated with the familiar and entertaining *mujer varonil* stock character. For example, the ending of *La vengadora de las mujeres* follows a predictable pattern that both restores and celebrates the type of androcentric social equilibrium promoted by the cultural elite as a safeguard of social stability. This was valued by dominant Spanish culture because of the backdrop

of fluidity and uncertainty that characterized the sociocultural landscape of early modern Spain, Spanish America, and wider Europe. Further contextualization provided in Chapter 3 describes cultural preoccupations with increased literacy and women's education following the invention of the printing press and the boom in publications. It also describes and explains how these and other socio-historic factors—including the ideological inheritance of the Reconquest—were connected to a rise in nationalism. Benedict Anderson defines and explains nationalism in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* as the creation of shared and imagined group identity that is dependent on processes of *othering* for its creation and maintenance. Ultimately, this chapter presents how processes of *othering* relate to the definition and maintenance of a normative masculinity that was inexorably tied up with Spanish national consciousness during the early modern period, and that depended on continual contrast with cultural *others*, including the *other* as defined by the concept of femininity.

Chapter 3 interprets *La vengadora de las mujeres* as an exploration of possibilities for gender expression and a clarification of the cultural boundaries for choices of gender expression and gender roles that the rise in book printing and literacy—among other socio-historic factors—made available or potentially available to the educated woman. Laura, the protagonist of the play, critiques the state of affairs of women and achieves social mobility as relating to gendered social constraints deciding to occupy a normative male social role for a time. During the first part of the play, Laura is understood to occupy a normative female gender role and the males in her life express great consternation and worry because she does not fully comply with the expectations of this

role. Laura later switches to a normative male gender role and performs it better than the males surrounding her. However, by the end of the play, Laura decides to return to—and fully and willingly occupy—a normative female gender role in order to marry the man she has come to love: her persistent suitor, Prince Federico. Laura’s vacillation between normative female and male gender roles is representative of a Baroque fascination with the themes of appearance versus reality. The resolution of the play conforms to the neoplatonic ideology that characterized the early modern period, in which love and marriage represent the culmination of a divine, natural, and androcentric social order.

Like the other exceptional individuals portrayed in the texts of the selected corpus by male authors, Laura exceeds the gender role expectations for females as well as for males. The spoken descriptions of Laura by other characters in the play can be related to descriptions of the transgender transcendence of Anna Guerra de Jesús and Esteban de Valderecete, using this comparison to support the argument that the *mujer varonil* model was used in texts written by male authors to describe and maintain normative gender roles while also normalizing the activities of certain exceptional gender-bending individuals who displayed masculine traits and behaviors. *La vengadora de las mujeres*, then, is a text that functions didactically as a site for the negotiation of boundaries between normative gender roles. As such, the play both raises and answers questions of significant cultural importance about relationships between men and women in society and the social stability or instability that results from choices made by women.

La vengadora de las mujeres, like the other chosen texts, plays a part in a larger cultural discourse comprised of texts written in various genres by the male cultural elite that acknowledge and respond to potentially disruptive gender-bending activities by

exceptional women. The end of Chapter 3 explores Laura's feminism as portrayed in a work of literature that can be described as an androtext. Specifically, scholars can locate evidence of ideology communicated by the text's male author with regard to gender relations between men and women as they are depicted in a work of literature, and can contribute toward our understanding of gender roles and associated expectations for the behavior of men and women as they were understood and valued in the early modern Hispanic context.

Methodology, Theory and Significance

The analyses herein combine elements of queer theory and performance theory to illuminate the selected texts. Specifically, they contextualize and apply selected elements from contemporary theorists such as Judith Butler, J. Jack Halberstam, and Richard Schechner, whose work analyzes the communication of identity (which is always gendered in one form or another) within matrices of power and hegemonic control. The primary texts participate in an important social discourse about gender roles that was significant to early modern Hispanic context. They do this by constructing heroes who are exemplary of their respective gender roles. The male authors of the stories of Anna Guerra de Jesús, Esteban de Valderecete, Eleno de Céspedes, and Laura hold their subjects up to the reader for either admiration or admonishment, depending on how they are interpreted and portrayed according to cultural and historic standards that are made to seem natural, monolithic and admirable.

Concepts from queer theory can be used to examine the transition from female to male gender roles that is undergone by the discursive subjects of my primary texts. For example, the modern terms *third gender* and *transgender* can be fruitfully used in early

modern context to analyze the portrayals of my gender-bending subjects and to explain the construction of normative gender as it is communicated by my corpus. Work from theorist J. Jack Halberstam serves as a starting point to explain the social failure of Eleno de Céspedes in relation to the success of Esteban de Valderecete with regard to living as one's preferred gender. In these discussions, the concepts of *low theory* and *failure* are useful to interrogate and deconstruct the associated concept of social success, which is generally assumed to be the most salient and interesting outcome of analyzing personal agency on the part of a subaltern subject. A queer subject, such as Eleno de Céspedes, does not usually enjoy a successful outcome and this especially makes him a fruitful subject for the analysis of social norms. A comparison of his failure against the backdrop of Esteban's success illuminates which cultural attitudes towards minority identity were most significant to their socio-historic context.

As the subjects of the texts examined transitioned from a female gender role to a male one, they moved from a role that was socially subordinate (the female gender role) to occupy places in society that would challenge the androcentric social structure. Anna Guerra, Esteban, and Laura all transcended expectations for both the normative female gender role and expectations for normative masculinity, sequentially. Because Anna Guerra was affiliated with a religious order, her biographer described her in ways that were characteristic of the *third gender*. Because neither Esteban nor Laura was affiliated with a religious order, *third gender* status was not available to them. They had to choose at critical points of their lives whether to continue to occupy a male gender role for the rest of their lives. Esteban chose a normative male gender role and Laura chose a normative female gender role. Thus, their potentially subversive social role ambiguities

were resolved. Eleno de Céspedes was not allowed a similar choice because his gender-bending behaviors were not interpreted by authorities as transcendent of normative femininity or normative masculinity. He was instead condemned as a social deviant.

The socio-historic contextualization of notions of sex and gender are informed by the work of Murray as concerns the medieval notion of the fluidity of the sex/gender continuum that continued to inform the ideological inheritance of early modern Europe. The selected texts provide representative portraits of people labeled female at birth who were regarded as belonging to normative female, male, and *third gender* identities during distinct periods of their lives. The analyses correlate with medieval and early modern socio-historic conceptions of sex and gender, according to which three sexes were understood to exist (male, female, and hermaphrodite) and gender identity was fixed not at birth but according to social convention and ritual (Vázquez García 218).

Queer theory and performance theory, as they are used in Chapter 3, incorporate key ideas from Judith Butler that are related to the concept of gender as a type of identity that is ritually performed and read according to circumscribed social standards. Chapter 3 analyses the role that gender played in the social stability requisite for the Spanish imperial project is supported by Butler's scholarship that indicates that "categories that are often assumed to be 'natural,' like gender, sexuality, and the body, have always been defined to serve particular political agendas" (61). Using Butler as a starting point, Chapter 3 shows that these gender roles are inextricably linked to power differentials. This supports the argument that there were three normative gender roles in early modern Hispanic society that were significant to a larger discursive project complementary to Spain's providential, imperialistic mission.

Butler's work is particularly useful in the context of this project because she is well known for her excellent work in identifying and analyzing "how conceptions of the body itself have been shaped by philosophical assumptions about gender, sexuality, and subjectivity" (Smedman 61). Each of the primary texts deals with the presentation of the human body in ways that are interpreted in relationship to socio-historic standards for gender as male, female, both or neither. Butler argues that people perform gender—they express gender according to pre-established cultural norms—as a daily ritual, and that these behaviors are not innate but learned. Consequently, texts such as those examined in this dissertation consciously portrayed cultural heroes and antiheroes in ways that taught their readers not only how to perform gender according to hegemonic expectations, but they also taught readers that the roles they described were real and natural, instead of what they really were: socio-political conventions in need of continual clarification and maintenance. In summary, this study employs concepts from Butler and other contemporary theorists in order to examine the portrayal of gender in my corpus and to illuminate the didactic nature of the representative works that I analyze. My primary texts were created, at least in part, to educate readers about cultural options for appropriate and inappropriate gender expression and to inspire the emulation of the behaviors of individuals held up as cultural heroes.

Butler's scholarship is also significant to this project for its recognition as a model for successful interdisciplinary application of theory: she combines feminist theory, structuralist theory, psychoanalytic theory, and deconstructive theory in ways that allow for the application of her arguments to works from various genres (Smedman 61). One of Butler's key objectives that are employed in this study is to use "postmodern theories and

methodologies to analyze the political effects of ... systems of representation and knowledge” (Smedman 61). Butler’s work suggests connections between feminist theory, queer theory, and performance theory that this dissertation employs and contextualizes by using them to examine the label of the *mujer varonil* as it is used in four genres significant to the early modern literary context of Spain and Spanish America.

Discussions in Chapter 3 involving performance theory focus on deconstructing representative descriptions of gendered behaviors and personal characteristics as they are communicated by the male authors of the works examined. By so doing, they explore underlying cultural tensions regarding gender role expectations and personal identity as represented in my corpus. Concepts from Richard Schechner and Judith Butler guide reading performances of gender in the four primary texts.

This concept of *performance* advances the argument that subject position can be constructed, modified, and deconstructed by certain actions and behaviors (performances) on the part of the subject. Subject position can also be affected by reactions to the performances and these performances may be adapted to achieve certain desired outcomes, as is demonstrated in the analysis of *La vengadora de las mujeres*. This analysis of the *mujer varonil* trope views gender as a personal and social narrative that is enacted and interpreted according to social conventions corresponding to the normative gender roles associated with male, female, and *third gender* identities.

* * *

This study, then, bridges gaps in scholarship on the concept of the *third gender* in the early modern Hispanic context. Murray and the scholars cited in the literature review of her chapter in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives* apply

the concept of the *third gender* to medieval socio-historical religious context in England, France and Germany, but not to Spain or New World. Francisco Vázquez García's work, "La imposible fusión. Claves para una genealogía del cuerpo andrógino," describes the evolution of cultural paradigms involving a sex/gender continuum. However, it does not apply the concept of the *third gender* to early modern Hispanic context and neither does any other scholar found for this study. This dissertation, therefore, continues work begun by other scholars by applying the concept of the *third gender* to early modern Hispanic context. Analyses of the trope of the *mujer varonil* that employ the *third gender concept* explain how descriptions of gender differences and notions of gendered exemplarity were ultimately used to normalize gender-bending by exemplary females in ways that supported hegemony and the imperial project.

This study also employs a transatlantic approach in order to best facilitate a comparison of common elements of the *mujer varonil* across genres and continents during early modernity. The transatlantic lens takes into account the geographic and social circumstances of where the texts of my corpus were written and read, and under what circumstances. Previously, transatlantic scholars had focused "primarily on the movement of people and goods" (Morgan and Greene 14). In their chapter on the evolution of and current state of transatlantic history, Phillip P. Morgan and Jack P. Greene call on contemporary scholars to address the gaps they identify by providing research that "explore[s] more fully the exchange of values in the circulation of ideas" (14). This dissertation on the use of the *mujer varonil* trope answers this call to action, examining how cultural attitudes towards women communicated by the core texts functioned to construct cultural heroes or antiheroes that should be admired or abhorred

by the texts' readers. In this way, this research participates in a relatively new field. The didactic function of the selected texts serve as their clarification of a cultural ideology of gender and associated roles in a transatlantic context and their dissemination of values for (gendered) living according to these roles. The construction of gender through difference and the communication of expectations for gender roles are tied to the maintenance of hegemonic stability and that this process is intimately connected with many aspects of public and private life, both within and outside of the religious orders.

The methodology used here offers an interdisciplinary perspective capable of facilitating dialogue between the fields of early modern Hispanic studies, performance studies, and queer studies. This study presents the theoretical discussions on historical contextualization and close-readings of the chosen primary texts adding to an emerging trend in academia, which is the use of contemporary queer and performance theory to dialogue with early modern texts in the hope of illuminating them, facilitating a process in which the texts themselves critically interrogate theory and history.

Throughout, this dissertation identifies, interrogates, and adapts concepts from contemporary theoretical discourse as applied to analyses of how the cultural concept of the masculine woman is applied by male authors to describe and interpret to the life stories of four exceptional gender-bending individuals in socio-historical context. This dissertation offers a pervasive examination of attitudes towards women, socio-historic conceptions of manliness, and the associated limits for gender roles as they are communicated by and evaluated by primary texts from popular genres of the time.

CHAPTER 1: TRANSGENDER TRANSCENDENCE

Anna Guerra de Jesús and the Tradition of the Hagiographic Hero/ine

Introduction

Antonio de Siria, a Tlaxcaltecan priest of the Jesuit order, published his account of the life story the Salvadoreñan beata doña Anna Guerra de Jesús in 1716. Anna lived from 1639-1713 (Rubial García, *Profetistas y solitarios* 89). In *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*, Siria describes Anna as an exceptional woman who confronted intense spiritual and corporeal trials with manly virtue, exceeding gender role expectations for both women and men. For example, Anna is portrayed as a model for the virtues of humility and modesty. Siria's text and those like it communicate these virtues as desirable and appropriate for females, and in this way the cultural elite disseminated important cultural expectations for all laywomen throughout life stages of virgin, wife, and widow. Siria's work contributes to the tradition of religious men who wrote about religious women's lives in a certain way: their texts portray female subjects as exemplary by describing them as masculine according to conventions⁷ of the *mujer varonil* trope.

This chapter analyzes Siria's portrayal of female masculinity as part of a larger cultural discourse describing spiritual exemplarity as transgender transcendence. Drawing on stock phrases from the *mujer varonil* trope that characterize exceptional women with masculine attributes, behaviors and attitudes, Siria places the trope of the *mujer varonil* in Catholic context: he describes Anna Guerra as someone who achieved spiritual greatness by overcoming the physical and psychological debilities associated with one binary end

⁷ These conventions are described in later discussions.

of the sex/gender spectrum—femininity—and moving toward the other—masculinity. To this end, Siria places Anna in the middle ground of the spectrum, describing her as a transgender person (“*mujer varonil*” (Siria 2) and not a male person, according to socio-cultural norms. Anna’s masculinity is an adjective that describes and modifies her femininity.

In addition to being described by Siria as exemplary during her own lifetime, Anna is also regarded by contemporary scholars as a significant cultural icon worthy of analysis. For example, Antonio Rubial García describes her as a representative example of the social role *beata casada* (*Profetistas y solitarios* 32) and she is compared with her Spanish American predecessor, Rosa of Lima (1586-1617),⁸ by Kristine Ibsen. This dissertation responds to a gap in scholarship by offering an analysis of Anna Guerra and thus placing her alongside those better known in her cohort, such as Rosa of Lima. Moreover, this chapter contributes to the field by providing a detailed analysis of the *mujer varonil* trope as it appears in Anna Guerra’s *Vida* by Siria.

The focus of this study is to contextualize the *mujer varonil* trope in hagiographic literature via the theoretical concept of the *third gender*. It relates the modern concept of the *third gender* to the tradition of the hagiographic heroine from the middle ages to the early modern period. Additionally, it contextualizes hagiographies like Siria’s that use masculine language to describe exceptional females within the discursive context of Spanish imperialism. To this end, this chapter describes how the *mujer varonil* trope functioned as part of a larger, homogenizing discourse dealing with gender-bending in

⁸ Ibsen compares the “discourse of virtues” of Rosa of Lima and Anna Guerra de Jesús, according to their biographers (*Spiritual Autobiography* 65).

which representative instances of female-to-male transgenderism were normalized in ways that complemented traditional gender roles and supported androcentrism. Such normalization served to support rather than to subvert the social structure and thus benefitted hegemonic norms.

Discourses of gender normalization are not unique to hagiographies that employ the *mujer varonil* trope. Early modern Hispanic texts from certain secular genres also helped to facilitate a similar normalizing function because they communicated to readers a shared understanding of normative social roles and inspired the imitation of these roles by creating cultural heroes and antiheroes. These roles were necessarily gendered. Representative examples of secular texts of this type are analyzed in other chapters of this dissertation. The present chapter analyses Antonio de Siria's hagiography of Anna Guerra de Jesús in a way that supports my larger argument that there were three normative gender roles in early modern Spanish and Spanish American society—masculine, feminine and *third gender*—and that discourses of cultural heroes and antiheroes constructed around these roles served a significant normalizing function in society, reifying the androcentric social structure by defining its parameters and also the acceptable ways of surpassing them.

The Life of Anna Guerra⁹

Anna Guerra was born in 1639 in the Villa San Vicente de Austria in the province of San Salvador in Guatemala. She was the fourth of eight children in a creole family. Her

⁹ This section of the dissertation summarizes the biographical information about Anna provided by Siria.

father, Don Juan Jovel Guerra, was born in the Canary Islands and was of *hidalgo* class. Doña Beatriz López de Pineda, her mother, was from a poor but honorable family from the Spanish American province of Honduras (Siria 3).

Siria describes Anna as a woman chosen by God to be exceptional. Accordingly, she did and was expected to consistently conform to the expectations associated with her social role, even from a very young age. For example, she was a precocious child who brought pleasure to her parents and who also demonstrated uncommon religious fervor at five years old, when she began to fast rigorously. At six or seven years of age, Anna became gravely ill and had her first of many mystical visions. She described to her mother a beautiful girl (the Virgin Mary) who took her hand and commanded her to get up out of her sickbed. When Anna was eight, her mother died and the young girl described visions of her mother in purgatory and later in heaven.

At ten years old, Anna became an orphan. She moved several times and endured extreme poverty and harsh working conditions for the next six years. Siria describes the grace and composure that Anna consistently demonstrated under adverse circumstances; specifically, he describes how Anna accepted her suffering gladly and how these trials helped with her spiritual development. According to Siria, Anna was also a model family and community member. She worked for almost a year as a servant to a harsh countrywoman and then went to live with her eldest sister Juana. This sister's husband became extremely jealous of Anna, to the point that the girl's life was in danger. Anna was rescued unexpectedly by a mysterious stranger and taken to live with her mother's cousin. Unfortunately, this cousin treated Anna not as a relative but as a type of slave. Although Anna endured “*penosas tareas, . . . injurias, baldones y desprecios, hambre,*

incomodidad y desnudez” (Siria 16), she gladly accepted these trials and did not complain, although she suffered greatly.

When Anna was sixteen, her aunt accepted an offer of marriage for the girl. This offer came from a respectable, good man. However, a few days before this man was expected to arrive, the aunt reneged on her promise and instead married Anna to another man who had meanwhile proposed. Diego Hernández Vicente, Anna’s new fiancée, proved to be a source of great torment to Anna. As his wife, she suffered beatings and threats of murder from him, in addition to constant poverty. Siria portrays these episodes as trials that God permitted in order to facilitate Anna’s spiritual growth:

[E]l Marido, que podía servirle de algun alivio, fue instrumento que tomó Dios para atormentarle el cuerpo y más combatirle el Espiritu: era muy ardiente de natural...muy bronco en el trato, ageno de toda prudencia y sin algun cultivo de razón o de policia¹⁰. (18)

Anna lived with Diego for sixteen years and during that time, gave birth to seven children, five of whom died during infancy. The two surviving children were named Vicente and Catharina. Throughout her adversity, Anna consistently behaved as an ideal wife and mother. She had a variety of spiritual visions during this period of her life, several of which related to the deaths of her children. After sixteen years of marriage, Diego moved his impoverished family to the Ciudad de Guatemala in 1669. Less than a year later, he unexpectedly left Anna and their two surviving children. Since no news of him reached his family for many years, Anna believed that she was a widow.

¹⁰ This dissertation adjusts quoted text from Siria and other early modern authors by adding accent marks and modernizing spelling, as appropriate, for consistency and clarity throughout the present work.

While living with her sister in the Ciudad de Guatemala, Anna's visions communicated to her with increasing frequency that she was called to spiritual life. For example, one day while Anna was sewing with her sister and other female acquaintances, Anna suddenly Anna heard a noise at the outer doors to the street. She felt her soul leave her body and go to the doors, where she saw Jesus enter, carrying his cross. Anna heard Him say to her, "ábreme las puertas de tu corazón" (39). As time passed, Anna's visions became more and more insistent.

Anna decided to move away from the city to a nearby *pueblo* in order to retire from the "comercio humano" (Siria 44) so that she could focus on her spiritual instruction with her Jesuit Confessor, Juan Cerón. Juan arranged for Anna to live in a recently founded *recogimiento*, where she would to be an example for young women in matters of spiritual devotion. Although this *recogimiento* did not ultimately last, throughout the years she was there, Anna demonstrated exceptional obedience to her confessors, dedication to a lifestyle of asceticism and poverty, and great virtue of character (Siria 152). Because of this, Anna's daughter Catharina was accepted into the Recogimiento de las Beatas Betlemitas (Siria 44)¹¹. Anna herself greatly desired to be a nun. Although she

¹¹ A *recogimiento* was a space within colonial society for women of approximately 16 years of age or older who were orphans, wives abandoned by their husbands, repentant of a sinful lifestyle, refugees, or dropped off there for other reasons. These women received religious instruction and also generally received practical education in a skill such as nursing that contributed towards the mission of the institution (Andreo y Guardia 141-42).

The City of Guatemala had three Beaterios, the third of which was that of Betlen. The first two were of the Order of Santo Domingo and of these, the first was founded by Saint Rosa of Lima, for "gente blanca"; the other was for "Indias" (Juarros 188). The Betlemitas were Beatas of the Third Order

had not received any word from or news about her husband Diego and so believed him to be dead, God communicated to her that her husband was not dead and that she was still bound by the vows of matrimony.

Finally, Diego returned in 1682 and declared that he wanted to serve God. When he took the habit of *donado* of the Dominican Order, Anna interpreted this as God liberating her from obligations of matrimony and facilitating her own desire to enter the religious orders. That same year, her son Vicente entered the institution of Santo Domingo de Guatemala, joining his father there. The young man would later become the R.P. Fray Vicente Guerra. In 1686, Diego became Hermano Fray Diego Hernández. Anna continued to practice her uncommonly strong religious devotion and accordingly received the following message from God: “que con tiempo la haría hija de San Ignacio” (152). In 1689, Anna fully renounced the world and entered religious life. Although she could not profess as a nun of either the white or the black veil, with the consent of her confessor and the permission of church superiors, she was allowed to take the habit of the Compañía de Jesús and live accordingly. Siria states that in this way, Anna became a model for other virtuous lay women and opened up a path to religious life for them (Siria 153). According to Morgan, this portrayal of Anna Guerra connects her to the similar model of Rosa of Lima (1586-1617), the first Spanish American saint, who was portrayed

of Saint Francis. They were founded to nurse poor women who had become sick or disabled, since during that time women were not permitted by social authorities to enter the local hospital.

Interestingly, the women of the order of Betlen were permitted to wear the same religious habit as the men of this order (Juarros 190).

as an example for uncloistered creole women to imitate and who, in this way, opened up a new and significant hagiographic paradigm in Spanish America (16).

Throughout his hagiography detailing Anna Guerra's life and character, Siria describes her exemplary qualities and gives detailed examples describing her path to spiritual greatness that are meant to inspire and direct women pursuing a similar social role. Three years after Anna's death at 75 years of age in 1713, *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* was published. The objectives of Siria's *Vida* are clearly described in its paratext, which is the related material surrounding the main text (Brown 61). This had become a standard element of the hagiographic genre by the 17th-century (Morgan 30). One purpose of the paratext is to guarantee to the reader the appropriateness and didactic quality of the *vida* as spiritual biography. This is communicated through sworn statements by qualified clergyman that precede the main text, such as the one below from Fray Gabriel de Artiga, an official of the Inquisition who approved *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* for publication:

La obra [*Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*], señor, es por todos títulos dignísima de pública luz en las prensas, para gloria de Dios, para honra de su Sierva, para común edificación y estímulo a la santidad. Estas puntualmente son las tres calidades que pide la sabiduría y santidad encreada Cristo Jesús en las obras de sus Siervos para que puedan ellas salir en público a ser luz de el mundo. (n.pag.)¹²

¹² See page 16 of Siria's *Vida*: Page numbers start with the story of Anna Guerra's life written by Siria and so there is no pagination for the opening statements by Siria to the officials of censure nor for the statements from these officials approving the text.

Another standard element of the paratext of a published hagiography, “Carta al lector/Al que leyere, identifies other significant themes. This section is written by the author of the main text and gives directions to the reader for interpreting the *Vida*. As described in the quotations below from the *Al que leyere* section of *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*, Antonio de Siria published his biography of Anna for the following reasons: to edify the public, to promote Anna Guerra as a cultural model to be imitated, and to set this exemplary creole woman on the path to beatification and sainthood. These are all objectives that are standard to the hagiographic genre during this time period. In Siria’s words:

[E]sta Sierva suya [Anna Guerra] . . . supo corresponder y cooperar tan gloriosamente a la divina gracia. Y resultara, por ultimo, grande edificacion al pueblo cristiano, poniendosele a la vista ejemplar tan excelente, a quien pueda con seguro seguir y fructuosamente imitar. (n.pag.)¹³

It is evident that Antonio de Siria and the male cultural elite—as represented by Siria’s superiors and other church officials of approval and censure—regarded Anna Guerra to be an excellent social example who should be imitated by other women. Anna’s designation as cultural icon and hero to be imitated is related to the symbolic role of the convent in representations of Spanish America within the discourse of Spanish imperialism. The discussions below describe the hagiographic genre and its social function in Spain and Spanish America. Specifically, the following pages center on the role and significance of the trope of the *mujer varonil* in this genre.

¹³ See the 25th page of Siria’s *Vida*.

Hagiographic Tradition and Female Masculinity

Siria's portrayal of Anna Guerra as an idealized woman symbolic of the best of her culture is not a new literary technique in hagiographic context. European culture had become increasingly penitential during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. During this time, male clergy began to dedicate themselves in increasing numbers to the spiritual guidance of devout women. They carefully recorded the lives of women who they regarded to be particularly virtuous and declared them to be models for imitation (Bilinkoff 111). During the early modern period, hagiographic literature experienced a resurgence of popularity in the New and Old Worlds. The invention of the printing press meant greater literacy and a parallel surge in the production and distribution of hagiographic literature (Bilinkoff 111).

The great popularity of hagiographic texts was fueled both by reactions to Protestantism and the colonization of the New World (Bilinkoff 111). Significantly, the Iberian Peninsula had experienced a specific type of religious renewal that resulted from the end of the Reconquest, that was not limited to the religious elite and that resulted in significantly greater numbers of literate laypeople (Weber 150). Many *vidas* of exceptional religious women, such as the life story of Saint Teresa of Ávila, were so popular that they were printed in multiple editions (Bilinkoff 97). These texts communicated many cultural attitudes about women in their portrayals of heroines to be imitated.

Representations of exemplary Spanish American religious women and colonial convents by local male elite referenced and rewrote discourses of colonialism (Ross 44).

These women were represented as symbolic treasures of the New World who brought honor not only to their local religious institutions, but also more importantly, to the Spanish Empire itself, because they were symbols of the success of providential conquest (Ross 61). In this way, creole writers like as Antonio de Siria responded to shifting power relationships within trans-Atlantic colonial discourse (Ross 40) while at the same time paying homage to imperial hegemony. Biographers such as Siria both acknowledged and reified imperial hegemonic discourse, which is described below as also being an androcentric discourse, by portraying exceptional females as honorary males (*mujer varonil*). As explored below, this is a continuation of the virile woman trope found in medieval hagiographies.¹⁴ The male cultural elite used the descriptions of the *mujer varonil* to portray exceptional females in ways that appeared to allow for agency through gender-bending but that ultimately reified an androcentric social structure that supported the hegemonic fabric of the empire. Thus, the hagiography became an important voice in the discourse of empire.

Hagiographies written by and about religious women had a very large readership that transcended languages and national borders. The female subjects of these texts were well known, widely venerated, and widely imitated in both the Old and New Worlds (Bilinkoff 97-98) by religious women and laywomen alike. Accordingly, the task of deciding which *vidas* should be published and for what reasons was important for the officials of censure. The network of publication blossomed in Spanish America during the 17th and 18th centuries as local nuns, *beatas*, and tertiaries were recognized for their holiness and praised in written form by their enthusiastic confessors and/or devotees.

¹⁴ See Barbara Newman's *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ*.

While some Spanish American hagiographies were published in Spain, most were printed in Mexico City, Puebla, Lima or other burgeoning cities (Bilinkoff 98). These life stories, such as that of Saint Rosa of Lima, circulated widely throughout Europe and the Americas and a significant number of their subjects became widely-known cultural icons.

Antonio de Siria constructs Anna Guerra's role as cultural icon early in the text of his hagiography. For example, he describes her as a wonder of the Indies, or in his own words, "amazona cristiana y fuerte mujer de las Indias, a quien Dios escuadrónó como un entero ejército de su virtud" (2). Descriptions such as this allude to the symbolic and political importance of Anna and others like her in larger social discourse related to empire. Hagiographic texts about religious heroines in the colonies had a social function that was distinct from that of *vidas* produced about peninsular female religious figures. Spanish American heroines were an important part of imperial discourse that described the successful and providential conquest in the New World.

The women of colonial convents took on greater symbolic and political importance than their peninsular sisters because the image of their Marian purity represented Spain's providential transatlantic mission. Since convents generally were closer to centers of power in the colonies than convents were in Spain, their social function was more significant (Arenal and Schlau 291). The symbolic and political importance of colonial sisters is connected to the definitions of two key terms of this chapter: colonialism and imperialism. Significantly, they are related to concepts of center and periphery:

The concept 'colonialism' as it relates to 'colony' (in non-self-governing territory and people, i.e., the periphery) refers specifically to the condition of a territory

and its people that have been absorbed by and are under the political control of an imperial state.... A 'colony' is a subordinate political structure... 'Colonialism', as it relates to 'imperialism', describes the impact of being a colony governed by imperial policies... (Echávez-Solano and Dworkin y Méndez xv)

Colonial convents were associated with cultural and political centers of power in New Spain and participated, through their symbolic and didactic functions, as significant forces promoting the social and religious unification, homogenization, and regulation of culture in the New World. Cultural discourses surrounding exemplary holy women were important within this context. In Antonio de Siria's text, Anna Guerra's portrayal as cultural hero gives her a symbolic function within imperial and religious cultural discourse. Siria describes her as "... esta varonil mujer, que nacía para honra y ornamento de este Nuevo Mundo" (Siria 3). As such, she is a woman who was chosen at birth by God to bring honor to the New World and serve as its ornament. Siria describes how she does this in ways that communicate important cultural attitudes about gender. First, Anna models exemplary femininity, then she transcends it to embody exemplary masculinity, and then she transcends even ideal masculinity to become *third gender*: more than a man and more than a woman.

Catholic teachings about individual spirituality were highly gender-specific during the Counter-Reformation (Meyers 13). As part of the legacy of Urban VIII, who was pope from 1623-1644, saints were promoted as "symbols of unification" (Graziano 120). This discourse of the creation and emulation of cultural heroes was especially important to the Spanish empire due to the danger posed by the spread of Protestantism (Bilinkoff 33). The success of Spanish rule in the colonies depended on the re-articulation of social,

religious, and political institutions in that setting and the participation of New World subjects in these institutions. This participation was brought about, at least in part, by these subjects internalizing expectations for gendered social roles and choosing to reproduce them. Gender role expectations and associated cultural beliefs about ideal masculinity and femininity were communicated through sociocultural symbols, such as the Catholic Saints. They were also communicated by hagiographic portrayals of those exemplary religious persons on the path to potentially becoming saints, like Anna Guerra de Jesús. Heroines like Anna provided laypeople with hope and inspiration for participating in religious life that could bring them spiritual transcendence as well as social recognition and acceptance, which are all things recognizable by creole subjects as important benefits.

Accordingly, the life stories of exceptional religious women were carefully written by their male biographers to fit within certain cultural and discursive parameters. One way that these authors accomplished this was by using the *mujer varonil* trope. Eighteenth-century hagiographies written about Spanish American women by their confessors were profoundly influenced by medieval models, including that of the masculine religious woman. Biographers such as Antonio de Siria drew upon discursive tradition as they interpreted their female subjects' lives and visions within a recognizable narrative structure (Rubial García, "La obediencia ciega" 88). By employing the *mujer varonil* trope, writers like Siria drew from a rich medieval tradition of representing exceptional religious women as masculine according to established cultural and religious literary norms.

The following section describes the *mujer varonil* model as portrayed in hagiographic discourse from medieval to early modern transatlantic context. The modern theoretical concept of the *third gender* is used to analyze the special and revered social role of exceptional religious figures that were praised for exhibiting both masculine and feminine behaviors and traits, transcending binary gender expectations.

Transcending the Binary: The Hagiographic Heroine as Honorary Man

The term *third gender* describes the “behavior, activities, or mode of life” of types of people that “appear to have deviated from the common gender roles ascribed to men and women” (Murray 34–35). Scholars such as Murray have contextualized the modern theoretical concept of the *third gender* and applied it to the analysis of medieval hagiographies about gender-bending subjects. The discussions that follow expand upon this discourse by applying the concept of the *third gender* to the early modern hagiography as represented by *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*. The concept of the *third gender* is shown to be useful tool for analysis when it is placed within socio-historic parameters and contextualized within the parameters of genre.

Some writers of biographical religious texts, such as Antonio de Siria, communicate exemplarity by using transgender language, for example, the description *mujer varonil*. The term *transgender language* is used in this chapter to analyze literary descriptions that contained masculine and feminine elements, such as “*mujer varonil*” (Siria 2, 3, 6). These descriptions both reference and transcend binary cultural oppositions that were understood to exist between male and female characteristics and social roles. Siria uses the label *mujer varonil* to characterize Anna Guerra throughout the

vida. Longer descriptive phrases referencing the *mujer varonil* trope also occur throughout the text, such as the following example: “. . . la invencible fortaleza y constancia varonil de que la naturaleza había dotado liberal a esta paciente mujer [Anna Guerra]” (Siria 111).

The transgender language used by Antonio de Siria to describe Anna Guerra is contextualized below. First, he describes pertinent cultural ideology about gender that the European medieval and early modern cultural elite inherited from discourses of pre-Christian antiquity is described. This cultural ideology was informed by discourses of Greek medicine and philosophy. These ideologies, which describe a sex/gender spectrum and ascribe associated hierarchies of privilege to sex/gender difference, were complementary to Spanish religious and imperial discourses that both defined and reified categories of social difference through the creation and maintenance of normative gender roles. This information is used by the discussions below to contextualize hagiographic discourse using the *mujer varonil* trope.

One of the most prominent pre-Christian discourses that influenced medieval and early modern understandings of sex and gender is the philosophical and medical tradition inherited from Aristotle. As a result of this intellectual tradition, differences between female and male were considered in European culture to be not only biological but moral as well. These differences were associated with binary hierarchies of socio-cultural value that ascribed positive cultural connotations to the strength and activity associated with masculinity and negative cultural connotations to the weakness and passivity associated with femininity. As shown, below, these “norms of a male-dominated hierarchy”

significantly impacted how exemplary behavior was described through gendered language in hagiographic tradition (Perkins 109).

In the Aristotelian tradition, sex/gender is understood as a spectrum. Males were located at one end: they are characterized by elements of hotness and dryness according to biological humors that were understood to influence bodily composition. These humors caused males to develop into complete human beings with fully developed sex organs and a stronger moral composition, as compared to women. Women were characterized by elements of coldness and wetness. Because of the developmental effects of their biological humors, women were regarded as incomplete or underdeveloped human beings both biologically and morally. Women occupied the opposite end of the sex/gender spectrum in relationship to men. The middle part of the spectrum was considered to be a dangerous and unattractive place due to its ambiguity. Here, morally suspect individuals of dubious biological and social identification were relegated (Murray 38–40).

Aristotelian tradition meshed in significant ways with complicated and, at times, contradictory Christian ideology surrounding sex and gender. One significant result of this mixing had to do with how the middle ground of the continuum came to be understood: it ended up being split in two by Christian ideology. One section of the middle ground was still understood to be a dangerous place where certain gender-bending social deviants were relegated, such as sodomites and certain types of hermaphrodites (Murray 47–48). This non-normative middle ground was marked in cultural discourse as the realm of the negatively exemplary and the monstrous. This was the realm of the *other*,¹⁵

¹⁵ Subsequent chapters of this dissertation examine the concept of the *other*.

the type of person who, through difference, defined and reified normative identity. There was also a normative middle ground: this space was understood to be positively exemplary and was reserved for those culturally-revered members of the religious orders who were described using transgender language as more than a woman and more than a man. This was the realm of the *third gender*. These religious men and women were known for spiritual feats that transcended cultural limitations associated with masculinity or femininity. The *third gender* unique to Christian religious tradition came to be associated with its own unique gender role expectations and revered place in society.

A significant role expectation for members of the religious orders was the achievement of spiritual transgenderism. Achieving spiritual perfection came to be associated with the transcendence of maleness and femaleness. In other words, a significant goal for both men and women in the religious orders was to vanquish the physiological and psychological weaknesses¹⁶ associated with their attributed sex/gender (male or female) and move towards the other end of the spectrum. By subsequently transcending the limits of the opposite sex/gender, the individual was able to move toward the transcendent middle ground: to use modern terminology, the goal was to become a transgender individual. For example, in order to become more spiritually perfect, male individuals were expected to become more feminine and female individuals were expected to become more masculine in character and deed (Murray 42). That is the part that modern individuals would understand as gender. As described below, physical changes in the body could also be expected to correlate with movement towards spiritual

¹⁶ These debilities are described in the following paragraph.

transgenderism. That is the part that a modern person would understand as corresponding to sex. As described in detail in Chapter 2, sex and gender were understood in the medieval and early modern time periods somewhat differently than the predominant modern paradigm teaches.

Expectations for the *third gender* social role resulted from the melding of notions of value-laden difference from Christian creation stories and from Aristotelian philosophy. In the resultant mix, “men and women were not so much equal as *capable* of becoming more similar as they moved along the continuum...[this notion] was most frequently used to suggest that women should, and would as they became more spiritual, move toward the masculine and [of the continuum]” (Murray 42; emphasis mine).

Consider the following examples. Men were understood as naturally predisposed towards virile heat. Thus, men were expected to have a natural weakness to pollution in the form of lust. In their spiritual progress, religious men were expected to demonstrate movement towards the colder or more feminine end of the sex/gender spectrum. Tonsure (the ritual cutting of the hair of men entering the monastic orders) was symbolic of moving towards transgender transcendence because a hairy body was seen as more virile and thus was typically associated with spiritual pollution or weakness in religious men (Murray 44).

In contrast, as religious women moved toward a state of greater holiness, they were expected to undergo both masculine physical changes (such as acquiring facial hair) and psychological changes (Murray 46–47), such as the acquisition of a virile disposition like the one ascribed by Antonio de Siria to Anna Guerra de Jesús.¹⁷ These changes were interpreted as manifestations of a woman’s movement towards the masculine end of the

¹⁷ Murray describes the medieval European tradition of bearded female saints on page 47 of her book.

continuum and her achievement of greater degrees of spiritual perfection. To facilitate this progress, religious women would typically mortify their bodies in ways understood to facilitate their movement towards the opposite end of the sex/gender spectrum. For example, Catherine of Siena ritually applied boiling water to her flesh. This is because the application of heat to the naturally cold biological constitution of a woman was understood to engender spiritual progress. For each sex “the appropriate way to tame their body was through an excess of the characteristic that was by nature weaker” (Murray 46). Rather than applying excessive heat to their flesh, men typically mortified their bodies with excessive cold (Murray 45–46).

The suffering of the female religious person—whether in the form of physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual anguish—was understood to facilitate the above-described journey toward spiritual perfection. As is communicated by Siria in *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*, the female body, with its associated and inherent weaknesses attributed to feminine sex/gender, was understood to be “a personal battleground as well as a vehicle for transcendence” (Murray 206). For example, in the following passage Antonio de Siria praises Anna Guerra for her endurance of great suffering and her resultant transcendence of the natural fragility of the female body and its associated psychological weaknesses.

Siria writes:

Y cuanto tuvo de que gloriarse esta gracia, viendo empleada en los heroicos actos de el sufrimiento la invencible fortaleza y constancia varonil de que la naturaleza habia dotado liberal a esta paciente mujer! Pues comunicando Dios esta gracia a manos llenas a su alma en inauditas tribulaciones, terribles dudas, crecidas congojas, horrendos desamparos y crueles tentaciones, ferozmente asaltada del

demonio y de los vicios contra Dios y su poder; quiso ahora de nuevo participarle tambien la misma gracia de el padecer a su cuerpo para hacerlo mas agradable y depurando sus naturales imperfecciones volverlo bello y agraciado a sus purisimos ojos. (111)

As this passage from *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* describes, Anna transcended her femininity through an arduous process of corporeal, mental, spiritual, and emotional suffering that was associated with trial and temptation. For this, she was praised as manly and identified by Antonio de Siria as a spiritual exemplar. In the passage cited above, Anna's increasing degree of spiritual perfection is indicated by her achievement of the qualities of strength (a masculine characteristic) and a virile disposition. These qualities resulted from a long and difficult process of taming of her female body. According to Siria's narration, Anna's constant suffering and fortitude helped her to move ever closer to spiritual transcendence by moving first to masculinity, then as she exceeded cultural expectations for even the manliest of men, she moved to the celebrated middle ground of the sex/gender spectrum: the *third gender* role of the transcendently heroic religious person.

Both the process of suffering described above and its expected results were well-known culturally due to the wide popularity of the hagiographic genre: "Both mystic women and their spiritual directors expected that corporal 'diminishment' and 'erasure' of the [female] body would 'enhance' and 'augment' the woman's spiritual body and consciousness" (Eich 206). This socio-historic expectation for women is communicated by Antonio de Siria's *vida* of Anna Guerra: "para su biógrafo Antonio de Siria la virtud de la que dependían todas las demás...[era someter la propia voluntad y] conseguir ... el

total abatimiento de su persona” (Rubial García, *Profetistas y solitarios* 167).

Extraordinary religious women were labeled *mujer varonil* by their male biographers when they were understood as having diminished their feminine characteristics through heroic manly spiritual feats. Women such as Anna Guerra were praised in hagiographies such as Siria’s, celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic, and widely imitated throughout the Spanish empire for their achievements of transcendent transgenderism.

The paragraphs that follow more fully contextualize the trope of the virile woman in hagiographic literature from the middle ages. These medieval portrayals of female masculinity strongly influenced the portrayal of Anna Guerra and others like her by their male biographers. Gender-specific choices, dilemmas, and ways of being all formed and informed religious women's daily reality during the period of approximately 1100–1500 CE. During this time, certain models of gender-bending were communicated by the male cultural elite as the only acceptable alternatives to normative femininity. Specifically, there were two masculine models available to holy women: the *virago* (virile woman) model and the *woman Christ* model.¹⁸ In the second model, religious women imitated Christ's suffering (*imitatio Christi*) with feminine flair. Anna Guerra’s portrayal as *mujer varonil* by Siria is a continuation of the first model. Siria portrays Anna as having transcended both the female and the male genders to become an early modern example *virago* as defined by Newman (3–5). According to the *virago* model, the exceptional religious woman was:

[P]urified by fasting and illumined by prayer, learned to live as an “angel in the body,” transcending both the defilement of sex and the limitations of gender to

¹⁸ See *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ* by Newman.

become a passionless, Spirit-filled, miracle working source of life of holiness for Christians still mired in the flesh. (Newman 4)

A comparison of the *virago* model as described above with the following description of Anna Guerra from the “Al que leyere” section of Siria’s hagiography is representative of the connection between them. Siria describes Anna as: “Una mujer que lo fue solo en el sexo, pero muy varonil en el ánimo y más que humana en el espíritu . . .” (n.pag). In Siria’s hagiography, the *mujer varonil* trope communicates to the reader cultural hierarchies of difference and value that depend on clear designations of gender to establish this difference. The text teaches a lesson common to the hagiographic genre and in the process, reifies androcentric social structure: through his praise of Anna Guerra, Siria communicates that “female is to male as body is to spirit” (Newman 4). The parameters of this hierarchy are communicated by the relationship between the three gender roles considered normative in medieval and early modern Hispanic society. Listed in order of lowest socio-historic value and privilege to highest, these roles are: feminine role → masculine role → *third gender* role. According to the Christian theologian Jerome. As cited in Newman, “As long as a woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. When she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, she will cease to be a woman, and will be called man” (4). Specifically, she will be called *mujer varonil*, with her spiritual greatness achieved through a culturally acceptable form of transgenderism, or in other words, by her successful performance of *third gender* role expectations as they were identified and communicated by the male cultural elite.

Siria's hagiography communicates Anna's greatness by showing her exceptional conformity to normative gender by describing her as exceeding expectations for all two normative roles—female and male—to arrive at the third, the *third gender* role. First, Anna lived according to the normative feminine role by being an ideal daughter, family member, virgin, wife, and later widow (when her husband was believed to be dead). She consistently demonstrated a dutiful and obedient nature to her superiors, including her parents, her relatives, others with whom she lived after becoming orphaned, and to her husband. Throughout the portion of her life spent in the feminine role, Anna dedicated herself to spiritual devotion, continuing farther and farther along the path to spiritual growth to the point where her desire to enter into religious life was finally rewarded and she became a model for not only her husband, who later became a monk, but for many other women both within and outside of the religious orders:

Tal fue la obediencia que profesó inviolablemente a sus Confesores la Sierva de Dios Doña Anna Guerra de Jesus. Y viendo esta virtud el caracter . . . para desempeñar sin duda aquella su divina palabra con que en correspondencia de los fervorosos desseos que mostraba tener de assemjarse a los verdaderos hijos de la Compañia le prometio: que con el tiempo la haria hija de San Ygnacio. Y esto se cumplio, o se acabó de cumplir el año de 1689 en que renunciando totalmente a el Mundo, ya que no podia seguir la dichosa suerte de el estado Religioso que tres años antes había profesado en la Santisima familia de Predicadores el hermano Fray Diego Hernandez su Marido, quiso imitarle en quanto pudo vistiendo con el consentimiento de su Confesor, y expresa licencia de Nuestros Superiores como la gala de sus mayores aprecios la humilde ropa de la Compañia de Jesús: siendo

una de las primeras que con su exemplo abrieron camino a otras muchas nobles, piadosas, y devotas Doncelas, que imitándola en el traje practican en los peligros de el Mundo la perfección mas heroóca de una vida ajustada y Religiosa. (Siria 153)

With the permission of church superiors, Anna Guerra was allowed to enter religious life. She continued to blossom in her spirituality by displaying characteristically male attributes and performing masculine heroic spiritual acts. As described below, she became even more manly than celebrated male heroes, such as Hercules. By becoming more than a woman and more than a man, Anna attained the status of *third gender* as indicated by the ultimate laudatory and descriptive label of *mujer varonil* used throughout her life story that was published as a model for other women to follow. The phrase *mujer varonil* describes Anna Guerra as an ideal representation of normative, gendered traits from both ends of the sex/gender spectrum, and also as a transcendent *third gender* that is not limited by expectations for either end of the binary. Antonio de Siria summarizes Anna's idealized traits and virtues at the beginning of his *vida* in a way that clarifies and reifies cultural expectations for both males and females:

Dios, . . . escogiéndola . . . por muy suya . . . quiso que sirviesen de fundamento los mismos dones de que la había dotado, dándole una condición blanda y apacible, un ingenio facil y docil para sujetarse sin resistencia al parecer ajeno, un entendimiento maduro y muy despierto para percibir y explicar las peregrinas visiones que para su propia enseñanza le había de manifestar el cielo, un juicio quieto y reportado, con una natural modestia, medida varonil y seriedad afable. (Siria 4–5)

In this passage, Anna is described by her biographer as chosen by God because of her gentle, calm, modest and obedient nature (ideal feminine traits) and her mature reason, good sense and pleasing steadfastness (ideal masculine traits). Anna's identity is carefully established from the beginning of Siria's hagiography as transcendently non-binary: she is more than a man and more than a woman, a *mujer varonil*, as described in the following passage that begins her *vida*:

Esta...amazona cristiana y fuerte mujer de las Indias, a quien Dios escuadrónó como un entero ejercito de su virtud...ejercitó siempre las más bizarras empresas que ha celebrado el valor, porque asegurándose de aquella fragilidad bastarda que es propia del mujeril sexo, fortaleció con el temor de Dios a su alma y con eso infundió robustos bríos a su espíritu, rindió sus desmayos, avivó sus esfuerzos para coronarse de sus mismos triunfos, reprimiendo valerosamente los apetitos, sujetando a la razón sus atrevidos impulsos hasta quedar gallardamente victoriosa de sí misma, pudiendo así con generoso denuedo derribar la cabeza al más altivo gigante, que es el demonio, y poner a sus pies el más pomposo aparato de la gloria ufana de el mundo. (Siria 2–3)

In the above passage, Antonio de Siria characterizes Anna Guerra as a strong and manly woman who consistently exhibited a valorous and virile constitution by suppressing and subjecting the impulses and appetites of her feminine body to the masculine faculty of reason. In this manner, Anna was able to vanquish the devil by conquering the debilities of her feminine psychological and corporeal state. As we see from examples from *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesus* by Siria, the *virago* model that was

significant during the middle ages remained significant in early modern hagiographic discourse.

The *mujer varonil* social role facilitated a certain type of agency and social mobility for women in the religious sphere, since the *virago* model provided a socially sanctioned option for gender-bending as relating to the objective of achieving the *third gender* role. The label *mujer varonil* established for women, at least discursively, a certain type of cultural authority in the religious sphere and gave them, and potentially their imitators, revered social status. Conformity to the *third gender* social role allowed for a woman's transcendence of some social limitations based on sex/gender, race, class, and other social constraints. However, this transcendence was limited in significant ways by its very nature as a discursive construct employed by males of the cultural elite to describe females in ways that they regarded as appropriate for other females to imitate. Ultimately, the *mujer varonil* model was used in ways that reified the essentially androcentric structure of the social fabric and, specifically, the institution of the Catholic Church. In this way, the model safely contained exceptional women while appearing to offer them more options than a traditional female gender role.

Significantly, it was not uncommon for male writers of *vidas* to use *mujer varonil* trope, while female writers did not. Female biographic writers more frequently used the rhetorical strategy of self-abasing representations of themselves or their subjects (Eich 206). This made their portrayals and, by extension their female authors, non-threatening to the hegemonic elite because in this way they paid homage to the androcentric social structure and associated hierarchies of power manifest in the censure and publication processes. Male and female authors interacted with the structures of language differently,

since subject position was determined by gender and gender was associated with power differentials. The gendered subject position of a hagiographic author affected which rhetorical strategies were available for their use, since strategies were understood to be more or less appropriate according to the author's gender and this also affected the appropriateness of a text for its readers. This is one of the many ways that cultural values were communicated through the construction of idealized hero/ine figures in literature, figures whose gender was communicated according to strict standards.

The *third gender* role appeared to transcend binaries, yet it ultimately functioned to reify gendered hierarchies of difference that in turn supported the social fabric that bound people and institutions together. For example, it contributed towards an understanding of maleness and femaleness as binary poles in opposition and helped to more clearly define where the boundaries were understood to exist between the two. The *third gender* role had another significant function: it created a special, revered, removed social space with its own expectations for gender identity from which the Church could communicate its authority and also its moral superiority to all of society. Hagiographies about members of the *third gender* influenced and even promoted how the normative male and the normative female gender roles were to be understood culturally by describing the exact nature of the binary opposites transcended by the exceptional holy person.

Didactic discourses such as Siria's hagiography helped to clarify and communicate three normative gender roles and by doing so, they contributed to the social stability necessary for the establishment and maintenance of empire in geological and cultural centers and peripheries. Texts such as Siria's also contributed to social processes of homogenization and the associated, gendered cultural normativity that bound imperial

subjects and institutions together. The following section contextualizes this process of homogenization and social control as a legacy of the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula. This legacy functioned to safely contain gender variance within limits by describing certain types of gender-bending women as heroic and worthy of imitation (such as Anna Guerra) and labeling others as monsters or social deviants in league with the devil (anti-heroes).¹⁹

Didactic Dominance: The *mujer varonil* and Imperial Discourse

The discovery of the New World in 1492 and its subsequent conquest were influenced by political and religious policies of cultural unification and homogenization that were both the impetus and legacy of the Reconquest of Iberia. The strong desire for homogenization that drove the Reconquest was exemplified by the expulsion of the Jews by the Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando in 1492. It culminated with the expulsion of the *Moriscos* from Spain beginning in 1609. Cultural homogenization was both supported and facilitated by social discourses of normalization in addition to military victories. Both of these are characteristic of the Reconquest, of its aftermath in Iberia, and of its ideological legacy: colonization in the New World. Texts that praised the feats of cultural heroes, such as *Cantar de mio Cid* and *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* formed a significant part of the discourse of conquest and colonization, since they influenced how conquered

¹⁹ See other chapters of this dissertation, where cultural anti-heroes are discussed. For example, Chapter 2 analyzes the trial of Elena/o de Céspedes.

people and lands were to be understood as part of the larger shared culture of the Spanish Empire.

Key aspects of shared cultural ideology—normalized, gendered social roles and their associated social expectations—were communicated to individuals and social groups by didactic texts produced by or approved by the male cultural elite. These texts included official governmental documents like the decrees of expulsion of 1492 and 1609, *relaciones*, inquisitional proceedings, and hagiographies like Anna Guerra's *Vida* by Antonio de Siria. These texts are didactic in nature because they disseminated common cultural expectations and attitudes, often through their portrayals of individuals or groups as either positive or negative examples, as heroes or antiheroes to be either emulated or abhorred by the readers of the texts. Often in these texts, attention was drawn to the positive consequences for conformity to a normative social role: for example, readers of Siria's text are told that they can expect to acquire a close spiritual relationship with God by imitating Anna Guerra. The female reader would understand this imitation as either conforming to a normative female gender role in society or by aspiring to *third gender* status within the structure of religious life.

Male authors, such as Antonio de Siria, who wrote hagiographies about holy women and the officials of censure who approved their texts for publication intended for the cultural heroes who were the subjects of these texts to be widely imitated. For example, Marcos de Samoza, the *catedrático de Prima de Teología y Prefecio de Estudios mayores en el Collegio de la Compañía de Jesús de Guatemala* endorsed Siria's hagiography of Anna Guerra to the Vicar-general with these words:

La obra, señor, es por todos títulos dignísima de pública luz en las prensas, para gloria de Dios, para honra de su Sierva, para común edificación y estímulo a la santidad. (n.pag.)²⁰

An objective for the publication of such a text was that the normative identities described in it would be widely imitated and thus the text would contribute to a type of social homogenization in which gendered identities both inside and outside of religious institutions would fit together like the matching pieces of a quilt. The quilted pieces of normative social and personal identities that were communicated by didactic texts, including hagiographies, functioned to support the hierarchical structure of hegemony. This structure was androcentric and depended on gender difference and the associated cultural values and expectations.

The process of canonization was of great social significance in early modern Spain and Spanish America because it transferred “symbolic ownership” (Graziano 122) of a cultural icon, such as Anna Guerra or predecessor, Rosa of Lima, from her local, lay followers into the authority of hegemonic structures of Church and state. The approval of Siria’s hagiography for publication was an important piece of Anna’s institutional legitimization and thus a significant element of the social control on which hegemony depended. As a mystic and laywoman, Anna had emerged without institutional authorization outside of the bureaucracy as it was represented by priests, bishops, and even by nuns of the black or white veil (Graziano 121). The approval of the Siria’s hagiography by the officials of censure authorized it as a true representative discourse of social normalization. In this way, the Church chose and legitimated Anna as one of their

²⁰ See the 19th page of Siria's *Vida*.

cultural icons, a hero symbolic of virtues and values to be venerated and imitated by the public who read her life story. In this way, the Spanish culture reproduced and reified itself in the colonies of the New World and beyond.

Discourses of normalization were important to the governance of the New World for the same reasons that they were important to the political climate of the Reconquest and its aftermath in Spain. Castilian authorities promoted a unificatory—in other words, normative—national identity in order to combat the social and religious diversity they feared, which they saw as a threat to political stability and social control (Ordóñez 34). This national identity was supported by three normative gender roles in society: masculine, feminine, and *third gender*. Hegemonic dominance was expressed and reified both in the New and Old Worlds through a shared cultural base that included a common language (Castilian) and a common understanding of, and expectations for, gendered social roles.

Didactic literature is a type of literature that communicates socio-historic values and attitudes about types of individuals and groups. It communicates what type of person is to be regarded as exemplary by a society and under what circumstances. The cultivation of cultural models according to their association with normative gender roles—masculine, feminine and *third gender*—was a vital part of the establishment and re-articulation of Castilian culture and its associated socio-governmental structures, such as the Church, in Spanish America. Texts that celebrated cultural heroes were a significant part of the social ties that supported the political, religious and economic structures that held empire together by promoting a participation in—and celebration of—a shared cultural imaginary:

The notion of Spain as “empire” connoted, above all, an economic and religious enterprise that was attained, maintained, and defended through military might in a substantial, constantly replanted...colonial and religious bureaucracy. (Echávez-Solano and Dworkin y Méndez xiii)

The process of approval (censorship) for the publication of a hagiographic text such as *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* engaged an important discourse of the Spanish empire as described in the quote above. The male cultural elite in charge of censure established which individuals “came to be certified as possessing heroic virtues and deserving of veneration by the culture at large” (Bilinkoff 32). In this way, cultural models were identified and promoted for emulation. *Vidas* were chosen for publication when their exceptional subjects were portrayed in ways that supported the hegemony of the Church and associated social structures.

An important part of the portrayal of cultural heroes is the descriptive phrases used to identify their virtues. The discussions below focus on a fuller analysis of descriptive phrases such as *mujer varonil*, which are described as political as well as didactic. Specific types of descriptions are repeated throughout a hagiographic text such as Siria’s to describe the exemplary biographical subject. Phrases such as *mujer varonil* both reference and draw upon a rich cultural tradition that perpetuates certain socio-cultural attitudes, values and ideologies. The paragraphs elaborate a connection between imperial discourse and the transgender language associated with the *mujer varonil* trope that was used to describe an exceptional religious woman as exceptional.

Language and empire are fundamentally connected. Antonio de Nebrija noted this in 1492 with the publication of his standard Castilian grammar:

[Siempre] la lengua fue compañera del imperio; y de tal manera lo siguió, que juntamente comenzaron, crecieron y florecieron, y después junta fue la caída de entrambos. (Nebrija 9)

This quote from Nebrija draws attention to the connection between language and homogeneity in the achievement of the type of social cohesion associated with a well-functioning empire as well as with its collapse or demise. Specifically, Nebrija describes how standards for communication are significant to empire building and maintenance. Male writers of hagiographies use specific phrases to describe exemplary female subjects as *mujer varonil* and this is evident in the *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*. The standard language associated with the *mujer varonil* trope fulfills the same type of cultural purpose as the standard Castilian grammar that is described in the quote above from Nebrija. Masculine descriptions of Anna Guerra by Antonio de Siria promoted cultural homogeneity by communicating cultural attitudes about women that privileged men and masculinity, the type of attitudes associated with the androcentric institutions of the Spanish Empire. As described by Nebrija, language itself is inherently political. Language associated with the trope of the *mujer varonil* is not only political but, more specifically, it is phallogocentric.

The feminist theorist Helene Cixous describes some symbolic systems, such as language, as *phallogocentric* (see the Terminology section of the Introduction). Her theoretical lens can be used to analyze discourses that support and maintain masculine privilege, such *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* by Siria. The binary characteristic of a phallogocentric system, and associated values communicating cultural hierarchy and privilege, is evident in the descriptive language found in Antonio de Siria's *vida*. In the

example below, Siria labels his subject as exemplary, summarizing for the reader the impressive spiritual progress that makes her special. He does this by labeling Anna as more than female: as a masculine female, or *mujer varonil*. Like in other representative parts of his *Vida*, Siria communicates that masculinity is a privileged cultural concept by contrasting it with femininity and by praising Anna for overcoming her femininity in order to achieve greater spiritual progress:

[A]quel precioso tesoro [era]...Una mujer varonil...que pudo ser ejemplar... asegurándose de aquella fragilidad bastarda que es propia del mujeril sexo, fortaleció con el temor de Dios a su alma...hasta quedar gallardamente victoriosa de sí misma...fácilmente pudo jugar las armas contra...de otra manera incontrastables enemigos, ciñendo...la fortaleza y esgrimiendo con alientos sagrados la espada de la divina virtud para dejar, como dejó, vencidos a todos los vicios: desempeñando así en esta espiritual conquista los progresos de su vida, que sólo se redujo a un campo de batalla y a conflictos de milicia, porque no se condenase de ocioso el apellido de *Guerra*, que siendo herencia de sus mayores, fué no menos el especioso carácter con que quiso dar a conocer a la V. sierva de Dios doña Anna Guerra de Jesús la Gracia. (Siria 2–3)

In the above passage, Siria identifies a negative cultural value (fragility) and associates it with femininity: “aquella fragilidad bastarda que es propia del mujeril sexo” (Siria 2). He then describes how this undesirable weakness is vanquished by military combat, which is an activity associated with masculinity and given high cultural value. The feminine and the masculine are combined in the label *mujer varonil*, which characterizes the hero/ine, Anna Guerra as exemplary throughout the *vida* because,

through becoming more masculine Anna moved attained greater degrees of spiritual perfection.

The sets of binary terms that constitute a *phallogocentric* system and their associated, cultural connotations of privilege and relative value are not merely intellectual concepts that pertain solely to the realm of literature. Significantly, they become connected to people and practices when they “extend to the positioning of bodies in society and to the codification of sexual difference found in . . . symbolic practices . . . [such as] major discourses governing society” (Conley 56). In the hagiographic discourse of the male biographer, the term *mujer varonil* communicates that spiritual exemplarity is achieved by the combination of and then transcendence of binary opposites: femininity and masculinity. However, the descriptive term *mujer varonil* also implicitly communicates that the subject labeled thus is still a woman in some manner, albeit an exceptional woman. In this way, the symbolic realm meets the daily realm. Although Anna Guerra is now associated discursively and symbolically with the *third gender* role, the feminine descriptor “*mujer*” remains part of the label of praise she is accorded for this. In the phrase *mujer varonil*, the word “woman” (*mujer*) is used to qualify the value of the adjective “manly” (*varonil*). In Antonio de Siria’s text and others like it that draw from the medieval tradition of the *virile* woman, the label *mujer varonil* communicates limitations for the relative worth of the female gender at the same time that it urges readers to transcend limitations of both genders in their quest for spiritual purification.

As described in earlier sections of this chapter, the transgender language associated with the trope of the *mujer varonil* is a significant element of hagiographic discourse with roots in a tradition from the Middle Ages. This tradition continued into the

early modern period because of it was useful and practical: it safely contained gender-bending on the part of women, offered exceptional women acceptable ways of transcending the normative female gender role, and at the same time, it reified an androcentric social structure that supported (and was supported by) institutions of empire, such as the Church. Androcentrism benefits from the discursive establishment of a woman as a type of man (*mujer varonil*) in order for her to be considered appropriately virtuous within cultural constraints that privileged masculinity. It is well known that masculinity was privileged in medieval and early modern Spanish cultural context: “the etymological correlation between virtue and masculinity needs no elaboration” (Weber, *Teresa of Ávila* 18). To prove this point, Alison Weber invites readers to contemplate the linguistic similarity between the words *virtue* and *virile*: the root *vir* is Latin for “man” and it may alternately be translated as “hero.” In the passage below, Antonio de Siria describes Anna Guerra as virtuous and virile. He compares her to the great male hero, Hercules, who was widely known and venerated for his exceptional masculinity:

[V]aliente fue sin duda el animoso espíritu de dona Anna Guerra ... tuvo un corazon tan sagradamente osado y arriscado a lo divino, que pudo con mayor denuedo que el Alcides de la fama, domar mas horrendos monstruos de vicios, harpías y centauros, rendir serpientes más formidables, hidras de más cabezas, domeñar más insuperables tiranos; triunfar con paciencia invencible de más trabajosas fatigas, y lo que es mas, luchar a brazo partido no con el cancerbero, sino en muchas y repetidas ocasiones con un soberbio y descomunal Espíritu de el infierno, cuya altivez abatió, habiendole admitido el desafio con más que mujerial denuedo, hasta llegar a estrujarlo entre las manos y pisarlo con los pies. (Siria 17)

In the passage above, Anna Guerra's spirit is described as valiant and her heart as daring and audacious. Significantly, her courage is compared to that of Alcides (Hercules)—one of the most recognized and praised examples of manly strength, courage, and enterprise—and her spiritual trials are described as battles. Siria not only compares his female subject to a widely recognized icon of manliness, Hercules, but he says that Anna surpassed the heroism even of this (pagan) hero in her courageous battles with spiritual tribulation. The implicit reference to paganism is significant to the New World context, in which evangelization efforts continued during the time period in which Siria wrote. In the passage above, Antonio de Siria repeatedly draws attention to the valor exhibited by Anna Guerra. Near the end of the citation, Siria describes Anna as a person who, through displays of valor, has moved past the feminine end of the sex/gender spectrum and towards the masculine side: she is a person who acts with “*más que mujeril denuedo.*” A special type of circular relationship is expounded here, as elsewhere, in Siria's text: Anna Guerra is virtuous, therefore manly; because she is manly, she is virtuous. Because she is also more than manly, surpassing even Hercules, Anna is eligible for *third gender* status.

Siria's description of the body as battleground and his comparison of Anna with a mythic figure are standard elements of hagiographic tradition that uses the *mujer varonil* trope. In this tradition, virile behavior is often linked to the religious woman's dedication to penitential asceticism (Graziano 126). This type of behavior is associated with transcendence of the inherent weaknesses of the female body and its associated psychological disposition towards fragility. Fray Gabriel de Artigas describes Anna

Guerra according to the above-described discursive norms in the *censura* section that precedes Antonio de Siria's *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesus*. In Fray Gabriel's words:

[E]sta mujer débil [es] tan llena de penitencias, asperezas y mortificaciones con que adornó de tantas labores de excelentes y heroicas virtudes el templo de su alma. (n.pag.)

Siria describes Anna's asceticism in detail in the selection quoted below:

traía de ordinario doce cilicios de alambre, repartidos por todo el cuerpo, y dos cruces de hoja de lata con muy agudas puntas, una en el pecho y otra en la espalda, y para más aumentar con la variedad el tormento, solía remudarlos y ponerse un saco de cerda, entretejido de espinas, con el cual fuertemente se apretaba. Continuó el cotidiano rigor de sus ayunos, sin tomar en muchos años otro alimento que una yerbas mal cocidas y un pequeño pan de salvado que de limosna le enviaban algunas personas conocidas, y porque con la continuación de el tiempo se había ya acostumbrado a dormir sobre las puntas de los palos nudosos y torcidos, que dijimos arriba, por negarle todo alivio a su cuerpo aun cuando descansaba, los pocos ratos que dormía era sobre una tabla de poco más de cuarta de ancha y otras veces en pie, arrimada a una cruz muy angosta. (Siria 51–52)

In quotation from Siria above, the author provides a detailed inventory of the specific actions that Anna repeatedly took to mortify her body in order to facilitate greater spiritual purification. The detail would have been helpful to other women seeking to imitate Anna Guerra's example. Significantly, Siria describes Anna's imitation of Jesus by using a cross to aid in her ascetic acts of penitence. This example from the text

further highlights Anna's exemplarity by showing her conformity to the other subtype of the *mujer varonil* model as described by Newman: the model of the *woman Christ*.²¹

Throughout *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*, Antonio de Siria describes how Anna Guerra's rigorous aestheticism brought her closer and closer to spiritual perfection. For example, it helped her to dominate her body and conquer her vices one by one:

"estudiaba medios como afligirse y domeñar con todos su resabios a el enemigo de su cuerpo" (Siria 52). In Siria's hagiography, Anna's body is described as a spiritual battleground and she herself is portrayed as a virile warrior chosen by God to combat vice and temptation. These standard elements of hagiographic tradition using the *mujer varonil* trope are present in the passage below from *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*:

[D]e antemano se lo habia Dios manifestado con particulares misteriosas representaciones que sirvieron para animarla a la pelea y podrán ser de grande provecho a las almas afligidas de la tentación; y como la había escogido su Majestad para que pelease cuerpo a cuerpo con los vicios hasta vencer todas las pasiones que nacen de ellos como otras tantas viboras de sus venenosas madres, quiso prevenirla mucho tiempo antes, dandole armas para la batalla y muy prontas sus ayudas para la victoria; pues a pocos días que habia entrado a la dirección de la Compañía de Jesús, estando en la oración, se vido a si misma metida en la fragua de un herrero y advirtió que a toda prisa disponia un alfange y que habiendolo quitado de el yunque y sacandolo de la fragua, lo arrojó a sus pies, diciéndole: *tú eres esto*: en lo cual entendió tres cosas que quiso Dios significarle, la primera, que habia entrado en poder de su nuevo confessor como aquel alfange

²¹ See Newman's *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*.

bruto para que lo puliese y lo limase. La segunda, que no temiese cuando se le daban armas de el cielo para su defensa y la tercera, que su alma habia de ser como aquel alfange cortador, cercenado como otras tantas cabezas de la hidra los vicios todos y las pasiones, porque era el brazo fuerte de la divina omnipotencia quien lo gobernaba. (Siria 55)

In the passage above, Anna's masculinity is evident. She is explicitly compared to a type of sword (alfange/alfanje) that is forged, hardened, given a sharp edge and polished in order to fulfill its purpose, which is to cut down evil. Sin is represented as a hydra—a mythical creature with many serpent-like heads—and the heads in this case represent the passions and vices that Anna, the heroic virile warrior, combats with weapons provided to her by God.

A phallic reading of the passage cited above is clearly appropriate. As noted in the Terminology section of the Introduction, Lacanian analysis defines *phallic* as the symbolic function of an object that can be understood as having masculine qualities (Dor 87). In this case, the masculine member (the sword) and its masculine function (to cut down evil) symbolize masculinity as they can be associated with the male phallus as symbol and the active use of a masculine object such as the phallus/sword in manly activity. Symbols and metaphors such as the sword legitimize Anna Guerra's status as a type of honorary man and a person who is more than a man / more than a woman more throughout Antonio de Siria's text. The martial valor with which Anna Guerra wields her sword also justifies the praise she receives for moving closer to the male end of the sex/gender spectrum: in the passage above, Siria not only depicts Anna with a characteristically male object but legitimizes her manhood by praising her active

employment of this male object in a vigorous and characteristically masculine activity (battle).

The passage above by Siria is also significant because it references the tradition of the militant mystic, which is a discursive style that uses active and martial language to describe the spiritual trials of an exceptional holy person. This tradition was associated with the *mujer varonil* trope from the Middle Ages onward. The martial and virile language associated with descriptive phrases characteristic of the *mujer varonil* trope established a link between spiritual battles undertaken by exemplary religious women such as Anna Guerra and physical battles of conquest and reconquest that were occurring or that had occurred in Peninsular and Spanish American context. In this way, Anna Guerra is implicitly compared to brave Christian soldiers who defended the Catholic faith (and with it, Castilian cultural, moral and imperial superiority) from rival groups, such as Muslims and Jews, in the Iberian Peninsula and abroad. According to Graziano, the body of the mystic woman was understood in socio-historic discursive context to represent a spiritual battlefield and this was a significant part of her symbolic importance culturally as a type of revered hero figure:

In a tradition of ‘active, ardent, militant’ mysticism, the body was the battleground where one's will and arsenal were tested. The victor and the vanquished shared one being in which the spirit and the flesh went to war.

(Graziano 127)

Hagiographies written about the lives of New World religious women such as Anna Guerra contain discursive elements that specifically mark their exceptional female subjects as New World symbols. For example, the militarized and masculine language

used by male biographers such as Siria associate exceptional female subjects with the Amazons of classic myth. In this way, older stories that were well known parts of popular culture and that had contemporary cultural and political resonance were “revived and adapted” to the New World setting (Graziano 127). Another example of this is Antonio de Siria’s comparison of Anna Guerra with the mythic hero Hercules. Another example is the description by Rosa of Lima’s male biographer describing her as an “Amazon saint” (Graziano 127). Each of the characterizations cited in this paragraph portray the exemplary woman subject as a marvel of the New World and connect her symbolic importance to the imperial project of the providential conquest of Spanish America. As potential new world saints, religious women such as Anna Guerra and Rosa of Lima were discursively constructed by the male cultural elite to be symbols for cultural unification and homogenization that were capable of inspiring public veneration and imitation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Conclusion

In the context of conquest, governance, and the Counter-Reformation, the teaching of cultural attitudes and values, and the associated socialization of women into appropriately normative, gendered socio-cultural roles, was a significant aspect of Spain’s imperialism. This is because it reified the androcentric social structure that supported the stability of empire. As described in this chapter, there were three normative gender roles in early modern Spanish and Spanish American society: male, female, and *third gender*. Masculinity was privileged culturally, as we have seen from passages from Antonio de

Siria's text that communicate this cultural value. Descriptions by Siria similar authors that describe female and *third gender* roles were significant culturally because in their difference, they defined what the privileged (male) term of the binary was and was not, and also they reified the social privileging of it this term.

CHAPTER 2: HEROES AND ANTI-HEROES

Female Masculinity and Exemplary Identity in Early Modern Spain

Introduction

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language is world-making²². Human experience, past and present, has consistently been a gendered experience described in binary and value-laden language according to socio-historic standards. This chapter examines cultural meanings, values and attitudes invested in the process of labeling gender expression as normative or non-normative in early modern Spain. It also analyzes associated processes of the creation and dissimulation of narratives written about cultural heroes and anti-heroes.

The primary texts analyzed in this dissertation praise or condemn individuals whose gender expression and social role included gender-bending in the form of transitioning from female to male. The subjects of the two texts examined in this chapter were described as being regarded as female at birth and later transitioned to a male gender role. One text celebrates its subject as a marvelous model and heroic transcendence of masculinity; the other presents its protagonist as a monstrous aberration of manliness, an antihero who fraudulently impersonated men. This chapter explores the

²² Language shapes the ways in which individuals and societies understand and describe human experience (Kovecses 34).

opposite ways in which representative instances of female-to-male transgenderism²³ outside of the religious orders were understood. It analyzes representative texts from two genres: the *relación* and the Inquisition proceeding. The modern term *transgender* is used to describe Estebanía/Esteban de Valderecete, who was praised for transitioning socially and legally from a female to a male sex/gender, and to describe Elena/Eleno de Céspedes²⁴, who was punished for living as a male. These two subjects had similar physical and personality characteristics and acted in similar ways as they transitioned from female to male. For example, their masculine personal presentation, actions and occupations were similar in significant ways. Cultural gatekeepers judged the masculine gender expression of Esteban de Valderecete and that of Eleno de Céspedes very differently.

This chapter engages the scholarship of Francisco Vázquez García and Richard Cleminson,²⁵ and also theoretical concepts from J. Jack Halberstam, to illuminate the

²³ This chapter defines and contextualizes this term so that it is applicable to early modern socio-historic circumstances.

²⁴ The masculine versions of these subjects' names are used in this dissertation, since these correspond to what appears to be their preferred gender (male), except when, for reasons of clarity, early periods in their lives are discussed (before they began living as socially-recognized males).

²⁵ Previous to publications by Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García in 2009 and 2012 (see Works Cited), next to nothing had been written about the topics of sex change and gender identity in the context of Spain and Portugal. However, the topic was well studied as relating to other parts of Europe, such as England, France, Germany, and Italy (Barragán 322). This dissertation attempts to help fill this gap in scholarship.

selected texts in socio-historic context. The terms *transgender* and the concepts of *low theory* and *failure* are used to illuminate descriptions of female masculinity in early modern Iberian secular context. In the process, markers of gender normativity are identified and examined. These markers are identified by the selected primary texts as culturally and historically significant. The present chapter compares them and the discursive subjects that communicate them—Esteban de Valderecete and Eleno de Céspedes—to Anna Guerra de Jesús as she is portrayed by Antonio de Siria in his hagiography telling her life story.

The present chapter analyzes representative examples of female masculinity in secular²⁶ contexts, continuing the conversation on exemplary gender expression begun in Chapter 1 about the *mujer varonil* in hagiographic literature. The predominant early modern paradigm of sex and gender is related to an analysis of Esteban de Valderecete as a person who was discursively constructed as a cultural hero and to Eleno de Céspedes, who was represented as a cultural antihero. According to this paradigm, three recognized and sanctioned options for *sex* were understood to exist: (male, female and hermaphrodite²⁷). Under this same paradigm, a normative male or female *gender identity* / *gender expression* were expected to correspond, with one significant exception in the form of the *third gender*, as will be explained²⁸.

²⁶ For the sake of simplicity, keeping in mind the profound interconnectedness of the Church with nearly all aspects of daily life in early modern context, I identify the secular realm as that pertaining to life outside of the religious orders.

²⁷ See the definition and contextualization of the terms *sex* and *gender* in the following discussions.

²⁸ This exception relates to Chapter 1 above.

The present chapter uses primary text analysis and contextualization to show that according to the above described *sex/gender* paradigm, the concept of gender was understood to have a relative fluidity within certain cultural parameters. These parameters are communicated by texts such as those selected here for analysis. These texts are described in this dissertation as didactic vehicles for the creation and dissemination of cultural attitudes and values through the symbols of cultural heroes and anti-heroes. This chapter references and expands upon earlier discussions of the concept of the *third gender* and the trope of the *mujer varonil*, which were begun in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 relates the concept of the *third gender* and the label the *mujer varonil* to cultural interpretations of and sanctioned options for the transcendent transgenderism of masculine females not associated with the religious orders and yet who, like Anna Guerra de Jesús and other members of the *third gender* role, were praised by cultural gatekeepers for surpassing binary expectations by becoming more than a woman and more than a man: for becoming a *mujer varonil*.

The primary texts analyzed in this chapter consist of a *relación*, which praises Esteban de Valderecete's masculinity, and an Inquisition proceeding, which condemns Eleno de Céspedes' masculinity. This chapter identifies and describes key elements of Esteban's and Eleno's feminine and masculine sex and gender as they are represented in their texts, which were written by male cultural gatekeepers and which contain didactic qualities. Additionally, this chapter compares and contrasts these examples of female masculinity in secular context with examples from *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* by Antonio de Siria, which interprets female masculinity in religious context. Additionally, the present chapter analyzes Esteban's and Eleno's masculinity within their socio-historic

context by using terminology of contemporary identity discourse, including discourses of performance theory and queer theory, in order to illuminate their early modern texts from an unaccustomed (queer) and advantageous angle.

Primary texts

The *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*, which describes the life of Esteban de Valderecete, is a collection of accounts begun in approximately 1575 (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42). Its different volumes describe the state of the realm. Interesting and representative persons encountered from the provinces are also described. The information was collected in the following manner: each village in Spain was instructed to answer a questionnaire about a wide variety of topics deemed important culturally and/or historically. The 44th question of the questionnaire asked about people and occurrences that were regarded as significant to each village's history and identity (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42). King Felipe II's secretary compiled the results of the questionnaires and they were eventually published in the eight volumes that comprised the *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*.

In Volume 2 of the *Relaciones topográficas*, a certain "Esteban, alias Estebanía" (Esguerra 769), fencing master, is described as a marvelous and exemplary person from the village of Valderecete, which was located near Madrid. Interestingly, this individual, who was renowned for his martial skill and valor, was assigned the sex of female at birth. Estebanía de Valderecete had been regarded by society as a female person until the age of 25, although a female whose gender expression was characteristically male. Until the age

of 25, Estebanía's gender expression, which was male, consistently did not fit the type of normative gender expression that was expected to match her assigned sex, which was female. With time, the incongruity between Estebanía's sex and gender grew increasingly pronounced and disconcerting. As the *Relaciones topográficas* describes, Estebanía's gender expression finally drew the attention and subsequent judgment of the cultural elite, as represented by men comprising the Chancillería of Granada.

As the *Relaciones topográficas* describe, the girl, Estebanía, had consistently shown interest in and also excelled at activities that were typically associated with a normative male gender role. She was consistently more successful at these activities than her male peers. This situation had been drawing an increasing amount of social attention and consternation. Eventually, the Chancillería of Granada decided to resolve this potentially subversive case of sex/gender discordance according to the legal standards of the time. At the age of 25, the leaders of the Chancillería summoned Estebanía de Valderecete to Granada. After a physical examination, Estebanía was labeled not as a female person but as a hermaphrodite²⁹ according to the anatomical characteristics that were visible to examiners. The legal designation of the sex of hermaphrodite permitted Estebanía the choice of either a normative female gender role or a normative male gender

²⁹ In early modern times, the word hermaphrodite was used to label *intersex* individuals. The following page has a definition of the term *intersex*. Contemporary social justice advocates recommend using the term *intersex* instead of *hermaphrodite* because they consider *hermaphrodite* to be a stigmatizing and misleading label. For example, the *hermaphrodite* is a word that is mythological in origin and it “implies that a person is both fully male and fully female”, which is not possible biologically (Intersex Society of North America “On the Word Hermaphrodite,” “Is a Person who is Intersex a Hermaphrodite?”).

role. When told by the authorities to choose whether to live as a man or a woman for the rest of her life, Estebanía responded that he wanted to live as a man. Thus, “she” (Estebanía) became a “he” (Esteban) and thus his society resolved the sex/gender ambiguity that he initially represented. For the remainder of his life, Esteban de Valderecete fully, consistently and exceptionally occupied a normative, traditional male gender role. For example, the *Relaciones topográficas* praise Esteban for his occupation as a fencing master. He had his own school and he often defeated other men in contests of military skill. The *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II* related that Esteban married a woman according to the social and legal standards of the times, and that she adored him.

Actas de la inquisición a Eleno de Céspedes (1588) is the other primary text examined in this chapter. It describes the trial of an individual labeled female at birth (Elena de Céspedes) who, like Esteban de Valderecete, had a connection to the profession of arms and who lived during distinct periods of life as a woman and as a man. In contrast to Esteban, Eleno was condemned for occupying a male gender role because his masculinity was judged to be feigned—a result of conspiring with the devil—and thus subversive and monstrous. Found guilty of “desprecio del matrimonio y tener pacto con el demonio” by the Inquisition in 1588 (Cano Fernández 77), Eleno de Céspedes was publicly whipped, sentenced to punitive labor in a hospital and forced to revert back to occupying a female gender role in terms of occupation, appearance and behavior. Significantly, his text never refers to Eleno as a *mujer varonil* but instead as a woman, using female pronouns and the feminine form of his name, Elena. In contrast, Esteban de Valderecete is called *mujer varonil* and the male form of his name, Esteban, is used in the text.

This chapter analyzes both the similarities and the differences between Esteban's and Eleno's stories as they are portrayed in the genres of the *relación* and the Inquisition proceeding. It also compares and contrasts significant elements of these texts with the *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* by Antonio de Siria. Esteban's and Eleno's texts, which were written and published by the male cultural elite, like Anna Guerra's text, communicate cultural standards for gender expression and associated gender roles. I argue that these texts fulfill a similar social function as Anna Guerra's by portraying their subjects conforming to one of two discursive models: the hero story or the cautionary tale. The genres of the *relación* and Inquisition proceeding are recognized as culturally significant and I will explain how they relate to each other in important ways. For example, both genres functioned to identify, describe and praise representative instances of gendered exemplarity—like Anna Guerra's hagiography does—in this way creating heroes to be emulated or monsters to be despised and feared. In this capacity, the genres of the hagiography, the *relación*, the Inquisition proceeding and, explained in Chapter 4, all function as technique of power-knowledge connected to a project of the maintenance of hegemonic control. Consider the following description by Cleminson and Vázquez García:

The *Relaciones [topográficas] de Felipe II* are the first example of an enquête³⁰ to take place in Spain on a grand scale ... [they were] a technique of power-

³⁰ This is a legal term referring to “an examination of witnesses...taken down in writing” in an authorized manner so as to gather testimony (*Law Dictionary* n.p.).

knowledge by which the monarch attempted to garner a mass of information about ... his realm. (*Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42)

In its function as an instrument of information gathering, interpretation and judgment, the *Relaciones topográficas* that contained the life story of Esteban de Valderecete fulfilled a similar social function as the genre of the Inquisition proceeding, which communicates the cautionary tale of the life of Eleno de Céspedes. For these reasons, the genres of the *relación* and the Inquisition proceeding were chosen for comparison/contrast of discursive portrayal of representative instances of gender-bending in the form of female-to-male transgenderism. An analysis of this gender-bending is facilitated by an examination of the portrayal of two exceptional individuals living outside of the religious orders: Eleno de Céspedes and Esteban de Valderecete.

Exemplary Esteban

Although the description of the life and death of Estebanía/Esteban de Valdarecete is brief in the *Relaciones topográficas* (it is two pages of typed transcription), this account provides the reader with sufficient information to support the conclusion that Esteban was considered exemplary both during his lifetime and for many years after. He was so heroically representative of the best of his society's (gendered) values that that he was still regarded as significant to his village's reputation nearly one hundred years after his birth. Esteban was born in 1496 and the officials of Valderecete wrote enthusiastically about him in response to Felipe II's questionnaire in November of 1580 (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 42).

Significantly, the *Relaciones topográficas* describe which parts of Esteban's life and which of his personal characteristics were considered worthy of praise for being transcendent of social expectations. These expectations were strictly gendered, and the characteristics and actions for which Esteban was praised were many. For example, Esteban held several civil offices, had a socially and ecclesiastically-recognized marriage to a woman who adored him, was a fencing master of considerable skill and renown, taught the exercise of arms to other males in his own school as a fencing master, and he is noted for distinguishing himself in martial contests against professional soldiers from Emperor Carlos V's retinue when these soldiers passed through his village.

The *Relaciones topográficas* introduce Esteban de Valdarecete to the reader in the following manner:

[N]ació en esta villa de Valdarecete una mujer que tuvo por nombre Estebanía, la cual cuando llegó a tener veinte años era tan suelta y tan ligera y jugaba la pelota con tanta presteza y desenvoltura que en su tiempo ningún mancebo la igualaba...era cosa notable de ver a la dicha correr sueltos sus cabellos largos y rubios en gran manera y discurriendo por muchas partes hizo muchas cosas notables. (Esguerra 769)

According to this passage, Esteban's *sex-assigned-at-birth* was female. Assigned sex is a label that would have been given in early modern times, as it still is today, according to the observable presence or absence of the male phallus as noted at birth. In early modern times, as in modern ones, a person's *sex* (male, female or intersex³¹) is expected to align

³¹ The contemporary term *intersex* describes "people born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female" according to cultural and historical concepts of normalcy (Intersex Society of

with a corresponding *gender* (male or female). In early modern times as in contemporary ones, expectations for a person's *gender expression* have connected to a person's assigned sex with conformity to corresponding masculine or feminine *gender role*.

The *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II* clearly communicate that there was a distinct, persistent and disconcerting opposition between Estebanía's assigned sex (female) and gender expression (male). For example, the account in the *Relaciones* communicate a sense of wonder, awe and even surprise that a beautiful girl with long blond hair would be so consistently involved in activities that were understood to be typically male, and also that she would be so good at them. Indeed, the text relates Estebanía defeated all of the males-assigned-at-birth in her peer group at physical contests.³²

Significantly, the *Relaciones topográficas* as well as *Actas de la inquisición a Elena de Céspedes* identify and distinguish between two significant culturally- and socially-recognized elements of human identity: *sex-assigned-at-birth* and *gender*. These elements of identity are also significant and contested in contemporary times, as the current social and legal discourses surrounding the rights of transgender people indicate. With appropriate contextualization, modern terminology for parts of identity and

North America). Modern science recognizes that humankind has a spectrum natural variance in genitalia and hormonal and chromosomal composition. However, in the past and in contemporary times, many societies teach that all bodies should be expected to fit neatly in categories of male and female. The term *intersex* has replaced its older version, *hermaphrodite*, since in contemporary times that word is considered offensive.

³² Using contemporary terminology to describe this situation, Estebanía was a *transgender* person as opposed to a *cisgender* one.

concepts from the field of queer studies can be used to analyze descriptions of concepts *sex* and *gender* in early modern texts such as the *Relaciones topográficas*. This aids in the endeavor of analyzing the social judgments communicated through literature about the cultural values ascribed to activities interpreted as non-normative: in the context of this dissertation, activities and forms of personal presentation understood as gender-bending.

By the time Estebanía de Valderecete was 25 years old, it had become apparent that this person not only participated regularly in activities typical of the male gender but that she did this consistently and extremely well. Her *gender expression* was unlikely to change and this was making society uneasy. Estebanía was not conforming to the *gender role* expected of her due to her *sex-assigned-at-birth* of female. This led to Estebanía being reported to the authorities as represented by the Chancillería. Her sex/gender discrepancy would have to be resolved according to the cultural standards of the times so that the stability of the social order could be maintained. Apparently, Estebanía's ambiguity called into question key elements of social stability. After news of Estebanía's sex/gender discordance reached the Officials of the Chancillería, and they summoned her to Granada in order to review her case and to pass judgment on her:

[S]e dio noticia de [Estebanía]... a los señores de Chancillería y ante ellos fue puesta y les pareció que una mujer no podía hacer cosas tan heroicas. (Esguerra 769)

When the officials of the Chancillería became aware of Estebanía's male gender expression, it became clear to them that they would need to pass some sort of judgment in order to make sense of the unsettling social paradox she represented. As the text cited above states, it seemed to the officials that a woman would not be capable of the

(masculine) feats that Estebanía had accomplished, yet Estebanía de Valderecete had been assigned the sex of female at birth. The ambiguousness of Estebanía's sex/gender relationship described in the *Relaciones topográficas*. Consider the following passage in which Estebanía is described as “tan suelta y tan ligera y jugaba la pelota con tanta presteza y desenvoltura.” The author remarks, as if compelled to qualify the previous statement, “era cosa notable de ver a la dicha correr sueltos sus cabellos largos y rubios” (Esguerra 769). The author of the *Relaciones topográficas* juxtaposes descriptions of Estebanía's exceptional masculinity (i.e. feats of physical prowess in male activities) with descriptions of her attributes that were characteristic of femininity (her beautiful long, blonde hair and sex-assigned-at-birth).

The Chancillería felt compelled to pass a judgment that would either authorize or condemn Estebanía's masculine gender expression and, in doing so, resolve the obvious discordance between her sex and gender in a way that made sense culturally and that preserved the social order and with it, the normative gender roles upon which social stability depended. As an agent of social control and an institution representative institution of hegemonic power, the Chancillería of Granada³³ was charged with the responsibility of identifying and resolving potentially disruptive discordances in social order, including, as the *Relaciones* indicates, ambiguities in subjects' performance of gender roles. Ambiguities relating to gender role were understood to have a destabilizing effect on social order and, thus, they were dangerous because they could weaken the

³³ The chancillería was a powerful Castilian judicial body that was legally authorized to conduct a “ceremonial *electio* of sex” in cases where the sex of the person in question was difficult to determine (Cleminson and Vazquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites* 43).

control of the hegemony. In their official capacity as representatives of the crown, the men of the Chancillería judged whether the paradox represented by Estebanía de Valderecete could be understood as fitting into any of the socially sanctioned gender roles and how this could be understood as relating harmoniously with her sex.

As a first step in the process of the Chancillería's official determination and judgment, cultural authorities physically examined Estebanía:

[L]a mandaron ver y examinar por matronas y parteras para ver su participación del sexo viril, y fue hallada ser hermafrodita. (Esguerra 769)

Upon official examination, Estebanía's physical body was found to correspond with the sex of hermaphrodite,³⁴ according to how three options for sex was understood under the cultural paradigm of the times. This paradigm taught that the options for sex were male, female and hermaphrodite. According to the *Tesoro de la lengua española* (1611), the term *hermaphrodite* was used to describe a person who was androgynous, that is to say, who had physical characteristics of both sexes: "el que tiene ambos sexos de hombre y mujer." According to early modern cultural and legal parameters, the assigned sex of hermaphrodite could correspond with a male gender or a female gender. However,

³⁴ From the Middle Ages to the seventeenth-century, three versions of *sex* were understood to be possible: male, female and hermaphrodite (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *La imposible fusión* 218). The definition of the term *andrógeno* in the *Tesoro de la lengua española* of 1611 says that the word is synonymous with the term hermaphrodite (Real Academia Española). According to Covarrubias' *Tesoro*, the medical model of the time explains the natural but rare phenomenon of the hermaphrodite in the following manner. The uterus of a woman has three sections: left, right, and middle. Males are produced from one side, females are produced from the other, and from the center section of the womb come hermaphrodites.

as the two texts examined in this chapter indicate, whether hermaphrodite or not, a person could not occupy both a male gender role and a female gender role at the same time. For example, social stability depended on Estebanía choosing one *gender role* or the other and sticking with it. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance in Europe, there existed a legal option for adult hermaphrodites to choose the *gender role* they wanted, provided that they stayed with that choice for the rest of their lives. This option was not commonly made available to the public. It was only permitted by certain legal traditions and even then, only in exceptional cases (Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Hermaphroditism* 31).

In accord with the relative fluidity afforded by the label of hermaphrodite with respect to options for *gender role*, the officials of the Chancillería ordered Estebanía to decide whether to live as a woman or a man from that point on. Estebanía chose the male gender role, becoming Esteban: “mandaron que escogiese en el hábito que quería vivir y andar y eligió el de hombre” (Esguerra 769). This passage and others like it from the *Relaciones* appear to indicate that Esteban’s *gender identity*³⁵ was male, since not only did Esteban act in ways typical of males his age, but that he chose to live as male for the remainder of his life. The term gender identity describes the internal aspect of gender: it refers to a type of self-concept, a consistently and sincerely held internal conceptualization of gendered self. As outlined in the terminology section of this dissertation’s Introduction, a person’s gender identity may or may not line up with sex assigned at birth or with gender expression, since each of these are individual elements in

³⁵ If Esteban were alive in contemporary times, he would be labeled a *transgender* person.

a matrix of personal and social identity that intersect in meaningful ways but do not necessarily determine one another.

The choice offered to Esteban by the Chancillería allowed him to align, in a socially-recognized and sanctioned manner, his assigned *sex* with the following elements of his personal and social identity: his *gender identity*, *gender expression*, and his *gender role* (all of which were male). Thus, the troubling discordance between *sex* and *gender* that had landed Esteban an audience with the Chancillería was eliminated. Esteban continued to surpass male expectations with regard to gender role and for this he was praised and included in a *relación*. As an institution representative of the hegemonic order, the Chancillería was charged with maintaining the hegemonic status quo, which it did first by labeling Estebanía de Valderecete an *hermaphrodite* and then by offering this person the corresponding legally and socially acceptable choice of *gender role* befitting an adult *hermaphrodite*. In this manner, Esteban de Valderecete, who had been regarded as a potentially subversive person, was officially fitted into a normative gender role that corresponded well with his consistently male gender expression, interests and talents, which had all been previously recognized as notable and successful in relation to those of other males.

In the quotation analyzed above, the word *hábito* is particularly significant: “la mandaron que escogiese en el hábito que quería vivir y andar y eligió el de hombre” (Esguerra 769). According to the *Diccionario de autoridades* (1734), the word *hábito* referred to the “vestido o traje que cada uno trahe segun su estado...” We can infer that the word *hábito* also referred to behaviors regarded as characteristic of a certain (gendered) social identity that were associated with the “vestido o traje”. The expanded

definition of the word *hábito* in the current Real Académica Española includes the following description after the first part of the definition, and this description is shared with the 1734 version: “[m]odo especial de proceder o conducirse adquirido por repetición de actos iguales o semejantes, u originado por tendencias instintivas.” By using of the word *hábito* in relation to Esteban’s choice of *gender role* and its according *gender expression*, the author of the *Relaciones topográficas* communicates that in his culture, people associated a certain type of dress and also certain characteristic and stereotypical behaviors with a female or male *gender role*. In addition to being characteristically gendered, clothing was also assigned according to rank and in some cases, according to religion: for example, Jews were required to wear the Star of David.

Concepts from work of contemporary theorist Judith Butler can be used to further analyze the type of gender categorization indicated by the use of the word *hábito*. According to Butler, *gender* is a type of *performance*. This is not to say that gender expression is necessarily feigned or part of a costume associated with entertainment or fraud. Butler defines *performance* as ritualistic behavior enacted by a person on a daily basis in relation to, and in response to, social constraints in the form of norms about how gender should be communicated in society and by what type of person (Butler 2). The discussions below use Richard Schechner’s definition of the term *performance* to expand earlier examinations of gender expression. They further expand this chapter’s analysis of the enactment of gendered identity by Esteban de Valderecete and Eleno de Céspedes.

This dissertation incorporates performance theory because it facilitates the argument that *subject position* can be constructed, modified and deconstructed by certain actions and behaviors (*performances*) by the subject. A person’s *subject position* can also

be affected by social reactions to his or her performance, for example, of gender. These reactions are social responses, including judgments, about whether the person's *gender expression* is normative (desirable and good according to socio-cultural standards), or not.

The identities of exceptional individuals can be appropriated, interpreted, and represented by the cultural elite and one of the ways this communication happens is through the creation and dissimulation of stories of cultural heroes and antiheroes. This dissertation highlights that performances of identity are significantly gendered and, therefore, they can be interpreted in political ways since predictably normative gender roles support hegemonic stability. Members of society continuously judge the performance of identity by an individual as good or bad and it will later be judged by cultural authorities according to the standards of marvelous or monstrous (heroic or horrible) after it has drawn a certain amount of attention socially and begins to threaten social order. In a judgment, such as Esteban's judgment by the Chancillería of Granada, an individual's performance of gender and social role is judged according to social constraints that ultimately function to uphold the stability of hegemony. These constraints are gendered social conventions built around cultural conceptions of ideal maleness and ideal femaleness: they are binary, gendered ideals that mutually support and define each other through their difference, as explained in Chapter 1. The terms of the androcentric social binary reproduce social stability through the gendered niches in society that they continuously create and maintain. These niches (*gender roles*) are recognizable to members of society and through social conditioning (by didactic texts in the form of hero stories, for example) members of society come to aspire to these roles. Specifically, in

early modernity as well as in the present day, members of society are socialized to aspire to those *gender roles* that dominant culture says correspond to expectations associated with their *assigned sex*. Members of society are expected to admire and emulate cultural heroes of their same *sex/gender* and this was demonstrated to be an objective of the publication of the *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*: that many women would imitate Anna's virtues and actions as they are described in Antonio de Siria's text.

Judith Butler considers the *performance* of gender to be a type of ritual social activity. Significantly, this performance has the function of reifying the very social constraints that both influence its occurrence and contain it within certain culturally acceptable parameters. On the performance of identity, Butler writes:

[N]ot a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not...determining it fully in advance. (95)

According to Butler, normative options for gendered behavior are not naturally occurring phenomena: instead, they are behaviors that are taught, internalized, and subsequently reproduced by members of society as a daily social ritual, sometimes without thinking. *Performances* of gender (*gender expression*) are interpreted on a daily basis by other people and judged according to how well they correspond to shared criteria for social acceptability/value. If an individual's *hábito* comes to deviate too far from what is socially expected/accepted and considered morally good, news of it will eventually reach cultural authorities like the Chancillería or the Inquisition. These institutions represent the conservative social elite who, in their positions of leadership, are necessarily invested

in preserving and protecting the values and attitudes associated with their hegemony. Potentially deviant or scandalous performances of gendered identity can either be sanctioned by authorities--such as in the case of Esteban de Valderecete--or punished, as with the case of Eleno de Céspedes

Esteban's successful outcome happened because his performance of maleness—"participación en el sexo viril" (Esguerra 769)—was found to be acceptable according to recognizable social and legal standards³⁶. His male *gender identity/gender expression* was officially approved and made permanent through a legal ceremony granted to him by the Chancillería. This ceremony is one example of a recognized social rite of passage for adults to funnel them into appropriate *gender roles* and communicate their gender roles to society in order to prevent ambiguity. Through this rite of passage, Estebanía the hermaphrodite became Esteban, and Esteban and was expected to live thereafter in accordance with normative gender expectations for males. The ceremony commanded by the Chancillería effectively undid the assignation of the *sex* of female that Esteban had been given at birth and, accordingly, gone were associated cultural expectations for conformity to female *gender expression* and *gender role*. Interestingly, prior to becoming Esteban, Estebanía had participated in two previous social rites of passage that functioned to identify the participant (set them up for gender expectations) and communicate expectations for a certain gender role. These rites were naming and baptism as a female child (with subsequent gendered rearing practices to prepare the child for a female gender role. These rites were socially/legally-recognized ceremonies of identity

³⁶ The predominant early modern paradigm for *sex/gender* is analyzed below in the section on Eleno de Céspedes.

formation/confirmation and were part of the cultural transmission of expectations for gender. Once Esteban's male gender was conferred and confirmed by the Chancillería, he *performed* gender accordingly to male expectations consistently and well. For example he participated in two significant social rites of passage for males: choosing a masculine profession and excelling at it (he became a fencing instructor), and marrying (he wed a woman, just as a normative man was expected to do). By assigning Esteban de Valderecete a legal sex (male) and corresponding gender role (male) that were in accordance with his dominant gender expression (male), the Chancillería was able to resolve the troubling disconnect between Esteban's previously-assigned sex (female) and his dominant gender expression (male). In this way, the Chancillería's decision facilitated social stability as it was supported by clearly-defined gender roles that corresponded with a person's sex.

In both early modern and contemporary socio-historic circumstances, occupation is a characteristic element of *gender role*. The *Relaciones topográficas* tell us that in early modern Spain, occupations were characteristically gendered as pertaining to the male or female gender role. For example, when the *Relación* refers to Esteban de Valderecete in the context of his occupation of fencing master/teacher, the author uses predominantly male language to describe his discursive subject. This masculine language is indicative of the correlation expected between sex/gender and occupation. In the passage below, which describes Esteban as fencing instructor, representative examples of characteristically male identification appear in italics:

[Esteban] fue *hombre* de mediana estatura, claro de gesto *sin barba* y recio de miembros, fue maestro de esgrima con examen tuvo escuelas y arnés en Granada

y en esta villa en su arte fue tan diestro que ningún hombre jugando con él pudo ganar honra como se pareció cuando pasó por esta villa el rey de Francia preso por Su Majestad del Emperador Carlos Quinto que consigo traía hombres diestros y valientes, los cuales hizo esgrimir en su presencia con el dicho maestre Esteban, alias Estebanía, de los cuales batalló de todas armas y los hirió y señaló él primeramente con la espada. (Ezguerra 770)

The characteristically male language that is preeminent in the passage above communicates that Esteban's *gender expression* corresponded with his male profession of fencing master. There was no longer any ambiguity about his *gender role* and, thus, Esteban de Valderecete received no further social scrutiny. Instead, he received a significant amount of praise for his manliness, to the point where one hundred years after his death his biography appeared in a culturally significant text: the *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*. In this text, Esteban was praised for consistently and successfully *performing* normative male gender. For this reason, and, notably, because he transcended the weakness traditionally associated with the female sex in order to do so—"les pareció [a la Chancillería] que una mujer no podía hacer cosas tan heroicas" (Ezguerra 769)—Esteban was described as an exemplary and marvelous person in the *Relaciones topográficas*. In contrast, as we will see below, Eleno de Céspedes did not consistently or successfully perform normative male gender. Consequently, Eleno was portrayed by the author of his text as an antihero: a male impersonator, sodomite and a person in league with the devil.

Before analyzing Eleno's case, first let us compare the exemplary Esteban with another ideal embodiment of female masculinity: Anna Guerra de Jesús, the subject of

Chapter 1. This comparison will identify and discuss patterns that are consistent between secular and religious models for the *mujer varonil* as they appear in the primary texts, which are representative of the genres of the hagiography and the *relación*.

A Choice of Hero/ines

Esteban de Valderecete, like Anna Guerra de Jesús, was praised for his appropriate (normative) expression of male characteristics and attributes. Specifically, Esteban was labeled as a marvel and not a monster because his female to male transgenderism was judged to be transcendent of the gender binary, not transgressive of it. Esteban's life story, like that of Anna Guerra as told by Antonio de Siria, was sanctioned for publication because it contained a positive and idealized portrait to be praised emulated by other members of society.

The following summary statement from the *Relaciones topográficas* is representative of its marvelous and heroic portrayal of Esteban: "les pareció [a la Chancillería] que una mujer no podía hacer cosas tan heroicas" (Esguerra 769). In a similar fashion, Anna Guerra's biographer, Antonio de Siria, expresses comparable wonder in his text: "[Anna era] [u]na mujer que lo fue solo en el sexo, pero muy varonil en el ánimo y más que humana en el espíritu" (n.pag.³⁷). This passage describes Anna's marvelous transcendence of femaleness to arrive at ideal maleness and also her achievement of a high degree of spiritual perfection by becoming *third gender*: as such, she was regarded as more than human in her surpassing of the gender binary.

³⁷ See the *al que leyere* section of Siria's book.

According to Siria, by the time of her death, Anna Guerra was worthy of the laudatory label of *mujer varonil*, meaning that she had achieved the revered status of *third gender* by becoming more than a woman and also more than an ordinary man. Anna had been assigned the *sex* of female at birth and, throughout her life, she moved closer and closer to ideal masculinity. Anna achieved spiritual transcendence by surpassing expectations for both sexes and thus she was portrayed by Antonio de Siria as representative of the *third gender role* reserved in the religious sphere for the most revered and exemplary holy persons. This *third gender* status is referenced in the label *mujer varonil* that is used to describe Anna throughout Siria's text. This term is itself representative of an ideal and transcendent combination of genders because it combines femaleness and maleness in a one label that is both a combination of these elements and also something transcendently different than the limitations associated with each.

In the *Relaciones topográficas*, Esteban alias Estebanía is also praised for becoming more than a woman and more than a man: in a symbolic sense, at least, he "became" a hermaphrodite by transcending the feminine gender associated with his female *sex*-assigned-at birth and he became even manlier than his male counterparts. Since he was found upon examination at the age of 25 to be a combination of the physical attributes that were then understood to comprise the binary male and female poles for *sex* and *gender*, Esteban was conferred the assigned sex of hermaphrodite. In his text, Esteban de Valderecete, like Anna Guerra de Jesús, is labeled *mujer varonil* because of his manly disposition and actions. The tradition of the virile women in hagiographies allows for the expression of masculine physical characteristics, such as beards, by exceptional religious women and in a similar fashion, the *Relaciones* allows for Esteban's

masculine physical characteristics by relating them to the sex of hermaphrodite, which was assigned to Esteban when he was 25, after he had engaged in masculine activities for years (even though his first assigned sex was female).

Several examples in the *Relaciones topográficas* establish Esteban's superiority to his male peers. For example, the author notes that no male could equal the young or adult Estebanía/Esteban in athletic feats or martial prowess. First, the young Estebanía is shown to be better than all of her male counterparts in sports:

Estebanía...era tan suelta y tan ligera y jugaba la pelota con tanta presteza y desenvoltura que en su tiempo ningún mancebo la igualaba. (Esguerra 769)

Later in the text, the fencing master, Esteban, is described as more skillful in wielding weapons than the men of his village and even the King's professional soldiers. In the selection below, Esteban is praised for defeating men from King Carlos V's guard:

[Esteban] fue tan diestro que ningún hombre jugando con él pudo ganar honra como se pareció cuando pasó por esta villa el rey de Francia preso por Su majestad del Emperador Carlos Quinto que consigo traía hombres diestros y valientes, los cuales hizo esgrimir en su presencia con el dicho maestro Esteban, alias Estbanía, de los cuales batalló de todas armas y los hirió y señaló él primeramente con la espada. (Esguerra 769)

As indicated by selections above from *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*, Esteban de Valderecete was judged to be exemplary at least in part because he was more than a woman and more than a man. His transcendent, transgender qualities are summed up in the laudatory label, "mujer hombre" (Esguerra 769), which corresponds to the term *mujer*

varonil, and which is used near the end of Esteban's biography in the *Relaciones* to summarize his identity and why it was worthy of praise:

[L]o que más fue notable de esta *mujer hombre* fue que en el tiempo de su muerte llevándola a enterrar siendo viva su madre y su mujer en su entierro la una lloraba diciendo ay hija mía y la otra decía ay marido mío, vivió casada más de diez años, tuvo oficios de república, era persona bien nacida. (Esguerra 769; emphasis mine)

In the passage above, the label “mujer hombre” is reminiscent of the label *mujer varonil* and its relationship to the discursive trope of the *mujer varonil* is obvious.

Antonio de Siria, Anna Guerra's biographer, uses an equivalent positive, transgender label to summarize the identity of his heroic hero/ine: the label *mujer varonil*. Similar to the portrayal of Esteban in the *Relaciones*, Anna Guerra is shown by her biographer to be superior to her male counterparts by a comparison of her prowess and valor to a socially recognized and revered representation of idealized and martial masculinity. Anna is described as being more powerfully virile than the legendary Hercules (Alcides):

[V]aliente fue sin duda el animoso espíritu de dona Anna Guerra ... tuvo un corazón tan sagradamente osado y arriscado a lo divino, que pudo con mayor denuedo que el Alcides de la fama, domeñar mas horrendos monstruos de vicios, harpías y centauros, rendir serpientes más formidables, hidras de más cabezas, domeñar más insuperables tiranos; triunfar con paciencia invencible de más trabajosas fatigas, y lo que es más, luchar a brazo partido no con el cancerbero, sino en muchas y repetidas ocasiones con un soberbio y descomunal Espíritu de el infierno, cuya altivez abatió, habiéndole admitido el desafío con más que mujeril denuedo, hasta llegar a estrujarlo entre las manos y pisarlo con los pies. (Siria 17)

In the passages above from the portrayals of Esteban de Valderecete and Anna Guerra de Jesús by representatives of the male cultural elite, the exemplary person labeled as transcendentally transgender—as *mujer varonil/mujer hombre*—and is shown to be so marvelous that she/he surpasses even the most renowned representations of manliness that the biographers can summon: Alcides and the King’s best soldiers. In both the *Relaciones* and *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús*, the subject’s idealized masculinity is at least partially communicated to the reader by the author’s description of an object that symbolizes the male phallus and, thus, masculinity: a sword that is expertly wielded to defeat a number of enemies in martial combat. By comparing the masculinity of the transcendentally non-binary *mujer varonil* with the virility of other (lesser) men, and by describing the *mujer varonil*’s use of the symbolic male phallus (a sword), Antonio de Siria and the author of the *Relaciones topográficas* describe the marvelous and wonderful, transcendentally transgender masculinity of the *mujer varonil* as personified within and outside of religious life by Anna Guerra de Jesús and Esteban de Valderecete.

As described in detail in Chapter 1, Anna Guerra is portrayed as heroically *third gender* because of her ultimate transcendence of cultural expectations for the gender roles of both men and women. Similar descriptions characterize the portrayal of Esteban de Valderecete in the *Relaciones topográficas*. For example, the young Estebanía is described as an excellent athlete (a male ideal) whose feminine beauty is also notable: “era cosa notable de ver a la dicha correr sueltos sus cabellos largos y rubios” (Esguerra 769). Elsewhere in the text, this description of ideal female qualities is juxtaposed with a masculine description. Similarly, Anna Guerra is praised in her text for being an ideal combination of masculine and feminine gender expectations:

Y cuanto tuvo de que gloriarse esta gracia, viendo empleada en los heroicos actos de el sufrimiento la *invencible fortaleza y constancia varonil* de que la naturaleza habia dotado liberal a esta *paciente mujer* [Anna Guerra]! (Siria 111; emphasis mine)

In the selection above, Anna's "invencible fortaleza" is representative of ideal masculinity according to cultural standards. Patience is a representative quality of culturally appropriate femininity that Anna displays in an ideal manner by enduring much suffering.

These and other similarities between descriptions of Anna Guerra and Esteban/Estebanía suggest a common pattern for describing a person found so exemplary that they transcend cultural expectations for both binary genders. Antonio de Siria, a male authority figure, calls his subject, Anna, "mujer varonil" because she miraculously overcomes debilities associated with one binary end of the *sex/gender* spectrum—femininity—and moves toward the other—masculinity. Ultimately, Anna overcomes spiritual expectations for both females and males and becomes an ideal combination of both genders. She is portrayed by Siria as *third gender*: a social role reserved for exceptional individuals in the religious sphere. Like Antonio de Siria, the male author of the *Relaciones topográficas* uses gendered language throughout his account of Esteban/Estebanía that references his subject's movement from one end of the *sex/gender* spectrum towards the other and that also references the subject's transcendence of both binaries. For example, Estebanía is labeled female at birth and at the age of 25, this same person is socially and legally recognized to be a hermaphrodite eligible to choose the male gender role. Feminine descriptive language, identified in italic font below, is more

prominent in the early parts of the *Relaciones topográficas*, where it is used to describe Estebanía before she is summoned to the judgment of the Chancillería:

[N]ació en esta villa de Valdarecete [en 1496] una mujer que tuvo por nombre Estebanía, la cual cuando llegó a tener veinte años era tan suelta y tan ligera y jugaba la pelota con tanta presteza y desenvoltura que en su tiempo ningún mancebo la igualaba...era cosa notable de ver a la dicha correr sueltos sus cabellos largos y rubios.... (Esguerra 769)

Although Esteban de Valdarecete was given approval to live as a man from the age of 25 on, the *Relaciones* uses a combination of feminine and masculine language that references the *mujer varonil* discursive trope to describe Esteban even after the Chancillería allowed him to choose the male gender. This language clearly communicates his transcendentally transgender status and suggests that in his marvelousness, Esteban occupies in secular society something comparative to the *third gender* role that was available to exceptional individuals in religious life. Because there was no official *third gender* role available to individuals outside of the religious orders, it was necessary for the Chancillería establish Esteban's sex as an option that permitted a corresponding male gender role: hermaphrodite. This was necessary to resolve the troubling ambiguity between sex and gender that Esteban had previously represented and to acknowledge how exceptionally he had been performing normative male gender. Thus the Chancillería permitted the hermaphrodite Esteban to live as male for the remainder of his life.

Because Esteban occupied this masculine gender role consistently and very well according to cultural standards, he did not fall under further public scrutiny. Instead, as we have seen from the representative textual examples analyzed above, Esteban received

only social and literary praise as a man and as a transgender person. For example, by the end of the *Relaciones topográficas*, Esteban de Valderecete is described as a male fencing master who, upon his death, was mourned as a daughter by his mother and as a husband by his wife (Esguerra 770). The label *mujer hombre* does not cause the reader to question Esteban's masculinity or its social legitimacy; rather, the label is used according to cultural standards associated with the *mujer varonil* trope to communicate the subject's status as a cultural hero figure. The label references the Esteban's movement along the *sex/gender* spectrum to achieve a type of transcendence of binaries. Specifically, the label *mujer hombre* used to describe Esteban, which is comparable to the label *mujer varonil* used to describe Anna Guerra, indicates Esteban's transcendence of a female identity to become male and later the transcendence even of a male identity. In summary, Esteban de Valderecete is established by the writer of the *Relaciones topográficas* as a heroic person because he is found to be an ideal combination of female and male characteristics and a transcendence of binary expectations for excellence. He is a *mujer hombre*, a type of *mujer varonil* who was celebrated as a cultural hero of the secular realm:

[L]o que fue más notable de esta *mujer hombre* fue que en el tiempo de su muerte llevándola a enterrar siendo viva su madre y su mujer en su entierro la una lloraba diciendo *ay hija mía* y la otra decía *ay marido mío . . .* (Esguerra 770; emphasis mine)

In the above passage, the phrase *mujer hombre* labels Esteban/Estebanía as, ultimately, a transgender individual. The laments from Esteban's wife and mother, describing him as husband and daughter, respectively, do the same. These eulogies, when analyzed in the context of the transgender language used by the biographer, indicate that Esteban

achieved a type of secular *third gender* status associated with his portrayal by the author of the *relación* as a type of hero. Although the culturally-recognized role of *third gender* was formally reserved for those individuals associated with the religious orders who had achieved spiritual transcendence, as discussed in Chapter 1, it makes sense that Esteban's biographer would reference the *mujer varonil* trope to communicate a symbolic connection to the third gender role as a form of praise. This is because *third gender* status was regarded to be the highest order of transcendence achievable to an individual and it would have been familiar to significant numbers of readers due to the popularity of the genre of the hagiography.

As a woman and as a man, and as a transcendent combination of both *sex/gender* binaries, Esteban de Valderecete was described by his biographer as a hero because he represented a conjunction of idealized gender role expectations. Specifically, Esteban was praised because his transcendent transgenderism affirmed the dominant, androcentric, and heterosexual *gender role* paradigm, a paradigm that facilitated social stability and thus upheld hegemonic structure.

Eleno the Ambiguous Antihero

Like Esteban de Valderecete, Eleno de Céspedes was assigned the sex of female at birth and later decided to live, dress, work and marry as a man. In contrast to Esteban, Eleno did not consistently or successfully perform key parts of the *hábito* of normative masculinity, and for that he was judged harshly by cultural gatekeepers as represented by the Inquisition. Eleno's Inquisition record summarizes his life and identifies his gender-bending activities as significant in the first few pages of the text:

[E]n el discurso de su vida [Elena de Céspedes] dejó, tomó y mudó el hábito de hombre y de mujer muchas veces en diferentes tiempos, lugares y ocasiones.

(Cano Fernández 7)

Although Eleno attempted to convince the Inquisition through his testimony that he was a hermaphrodite and thus he should be allowed his legal choice of gender and associated gender role, his petition was denied. Recognition of Eleno's marriage to María del Cano "con la cual ... [había] tratado carnalmente catorce meses... [cometiendo] el delito nefando" (Cano Fernández 61) was also denied. Moreover, Eleno's marital activities with María were labeled as sodomy. Because Eleno was not judged to be a real man—instead an imposter and person in league with the devil—his intimate relations with María were understood to be illicit sexual acts contrary to nature: they were judged to be sodomy, which at that time was punishable by death. Eleno's practice of the profession of *cirujano* was also judged to be illicit because this was a male profession and Eleno was judged to be female: "...siendo Elena de Céspedes *mujer*, sin tener sexo de varón ni rastro de serlo, se vino aquí hace muchos años e *ilícitamente anda en hábito de hombre, obrando como cirujano*" (Cano Fernández 61; emphasis mine).

The following paragraphs argue that Eleno's gender expression was found to be too ambiguous to be associated with normative masculinity for two principal reasons: first, it was not performed consistently and/or convincingly enough, and second, prior to adopting the male *hábito*, Eleno's female gender had already been established and communicated according to certain recognizable social rites of passage: marriage to a man and birthing of a child. Thus, Eleno's performance of masculinity, which according

to the text was relatively successful for periods of time in his personal and professional spheres, was ultimately judged by the Inquisition to be unsuccessful:

Por ende, a Elena de Céspedes y a María del Caño, en cumplimiento del juicio...se las dé por perpetradoras de los delitos por los que se las tiene apresadas *y se las condene a las mayores penas según las leyes...para que sean castigadas como ejemplos, por que otros tomen de no cometer semejantes delitos.* (Cano Fernández 62; emphasis mine)

In contrast to Esteban, Eleno de Céspedes was recorded in history as an antihero according to the portrait of him provided by the authors of his text. As part of this label, he was made a public spectacle so that his punishment would be a warning to others, a threat to anyone else who would contemplate the performance of fraudulent (culturally unsanctioned and non-normative) masculinity. By portraying unsuccessful individuals such as Eleno de Céspedes as antiheroes, the cultural elite created and disseminated cautionary tales that functioned to protect social stability by defining through difference what normative male and female sex/gender and gender roles were. The following passage clearly communicates that Eleno's story should be interpreted by the reader as a cautionary tale:

Dada y pronunciada fue la sentencia...Se celebró auto público de fe en la plaza de Zocodover de esta ciudad de Toledo, el domingo 18 de noviembre de 1588...acabado el auto, Elena de Céspedes abjuró de leví...[y luego] fue vuelta a las cárceles de este Santo Oficio...En Toledo, a 19 de noviembre de 1588, se ejecutó la pena de azotes a que por la dicha sentencia está condenada Elena, por la

calle y puestos de la ciudad. Fue por mano de maese Marcos, verdugo, siendo presente mucha gente. (Cano Fernández 82)

Instead of being praised in a *relación* as a marvelous and wonderful person of the King's realm, like Esteban de Valderecete, Eleno de Céspedes was labeled by the Inquisition as a criminal monstrosity. He was publically whipped with 200 lashes so as to provide a visible example to others, was ordered to take up a female *hábito*, and was sentenced to punitive labor in a hospital for 10 years without pay. This is described in the following quotation from the Inquisition proceeding:

[Elena de Céspedes] [f]ue penitenciada a reclusión de diez años en un hospital para que sirviese sin sueldo en las enfermerías y a salir al auto público de fe que se celebró en la plaza del Zocodover de Toledo el domingo 18 de diciembre de 1588, al que salió en forma de penitente, con corona e insignias que manifestaban su delito, abjuró de leví y se le dieron cien azotes por las calles públicas de Toledo y otros cien por las de Ciempozuelos. (Cano Fernández 77)

In order to understand the judgment of Eleno's sex/gender by Inquisition, it is necessary to further contextualize his case. As mentioned above, the text of Eleno's Inquisition proceeding identifies certain factors that were key to the ruling. For example, the first pages of the text describe significant social rites of passage that were understood to define and communicate a person's gender. Elena de Céspedes was first labeled as female at birth according to anatomical characteristics that were observed by people of social authority. Accordingly, Elena was given a female name and with this name came with expectations for conformity to a normative female gender role. Elena performed a female gender role during the first period of her life. The text describes that her gender

expression was normative for a female into adulthood. Also, the inquisition record draws attention to Elena's employment in female professions, including that of *ama de un clérigo* (Cano Fernández page 78). Importantly, the text describes Elena's marriage to a man and it states that Elena had given birth to a child within the marital relationship.

The officials of the Inquisition condemned Eleno's masculinity for the following reasons. First, they interpreted a female gender identity as having already been established before the marriage to Maria del Cano took place. As described above, Eleno had already performed female *hábito*. For example, Eleno had behaved in two very important ways where understood to confirm female gender: one action confirmed female identity according to social/religious law (marriage) and a later action that confirmed female identity by natural law (childbirth). Further, I argue that two other elements of Eleno's social identity—race and class, as contextualized below--contributed in significant ways to the condemning judgment handed down by the Inquisition in this case. All of these factors came together in the opinion of the Inquisition to paint the portrait of Eleno de Céspedes as a social deviant. Eleno's male identity was labeled by the Inquisition to be diabolic and contrary to nature. In the passage below, female adjectives describe the person of Elena de Céspedes, who was first instigated by the devil and who added crime upon crime to her list of accomplishments. The female language starkly highlights the description of Céspedes as a fraud who took up the *hábito* of a male and advertised herself to be one in order to commit these crimes, which are acts clearly connected to Céspedes' gender expression of maleness. In the words of the Inquisition, Elena de Céspedes:

[I]nstigada del demonio, añadiendo delito a delito...en hábito de hombre y diciendo serlo, [Elena de Céspedes] procuró casarse con una doncella; con falsa relación y probanza hizo averiguación que era hombre y no mujer...con cautelosa malicia, no consintió que [las autoridades que la examinaron físicamente] la mirasen por detrás porque no le viesen su natura de mujer, y por sus embustes y embelesamientos [estas autoridades] juraron que era hombre y tenía los requisitos necesarios para poder casarse y engendrar. (Cano Fernández 7)

In response to the charges, Eleno attempted to convince social gatekeepers that he was a hermaphrodite and thus should be permitted to choose the *hábito* of a man. As such, Eleno should be allowed to legally inhabit a male *hábito*, performing a male gender role in his personal and professional lives. In Eleno's words, he never faked being a man because he was, in fact, a man. Specifically, he was an androgynous person (an hermaphrodite) whose body had characteristics of both sexes, but his particular body was predominantly male:

[N]unca me fingí hombre para casarme con mujer...Lo que pasa es que, como en este mundo mucha veces se han visto personas que son andróginos—que por otro nombre se llaman hermafroditos—que tienen entrambos sexos, también he sido uno de estos. Al tiempo que me pretendí casar, prevalecía más en el sexo masculino. Naturalmente era hombre y tenía todo lo necesario de hombre para poderme casar. (Cano Fernández 72)

Eleno insisted that his *viril* nature--“sexo masculino”, “tenía todo lo necesario de hombre”—was confirmed by the authorities who examined him: “medico y cirujanos, los cuales me vieron y tentaron” (Cano Fernández 72). Eleno also drew attention to the fact

that he had been granted legal permission to marry Maria del Cano by a judge: “me casé por hombre y con licencia del juez competente” (Cano Fernández 72). Eleno’s argument rested on the assertion that although hermaphroditism is uncommon, it is not contrary to nature. Thus, as a hermaphrodite, Eleno’s male nature, which he claimed to be dominant, apparent, and sufficient to afford him male privileges such as marriage to a woman, should be judged by social authorities to be real and natural, not feigned or invalid:

[N]o obstante lo que dicen...los...testigos...—que naturalmente yo no he podido ser hombre, sino que si lo he parecido ha sido por ilusión del demonio—esto les parece y así hablan de parecer y vanas creencias, y no me dañan porque yo naturalmente he sido hombre y mujer, y, aunque esto sea cosa prodigiosa y rara que a pocas veces se ve, no son los hermafroditos, como yo lo he sido, contra naturaleza. (Cano Fernández 73)

Ultimately, however, the Inquisition rejected Eleno’s argument. As with the case of Esteban de Valderecete, part of the trial process was a physical examination by authorities chosen by the ruling body. Significantly, the most recent examination of Eleno’s anatomy found a female sex, not the sex of hermaphrodite. As described earlier in this chapter, Esteban’s physical examination as ordered by the Chancillería de Granada confirmed the sex of hermaphrodite. Judged to be a female person rather than a hermaphrodite based on the visible anatomical characteristics that were evaluated, Eleno de Céspedes was condemned as a fake man, as a fraud. He was denied the legal choice to perform male *hábito* and live as a man for the remainder of his life. As a consequence, his marriage to María del Cano was condemned and his intimate physical relations with

her were labeled as sodomy: as deviant sexual acts contrary to nature and punishable by death.

A key phrase in the passage of primary text from the Inquisition case that is examined above contains the words “contra naturaleza” (contrary to nature). I will now explain the cultural and historical context of this phrase in relation to hermaphroditism as it was understood during the time of Eleno’s and Esteban’s trials. From the time of the ancient Greeks up until the 18th century, it was widely believed that there was, in fact, one sex (male). Then, as is the case now in modern times, the terms *sex* and *gender* as they were understood culturally were conflated in significant ways. The one sex concept was interpreted socially in the following manner: the male sex was understood as made up of various gradients, according to how fully (or not) it was realized in an individual. For example, the most perfect realization of male nature (human nature), was seen in the type of person known as the *virile man*: the manly man. In this description, the adjective *virile* can refer to the male reproductive capacity (a biological phenomenon pertaining to the realm of the cultural concept of *sex*) or other manly character/actions pertaining less to biology and more to social relationships, such as characteristics pertaining to *gender* like a male profession or masculine personality characteristics. In contrast, the most imperfect realization of the one (male) human nature corresponded to that of the *feminine woman*. This is a term that also mixed *sex* and *gender* characteristics as they were understood and valued in socio-historic context (Murray 38–49; Orejudo 89–90).

The main point of this discussion is the following: according to cultural, legal and medical paradigms popular in early modern Iberia, although there was technically just one *sex* (male), three options for *sex* (three normative variations of the one base sex)

were recognized socially according to how fully realized the male sex was realized in a given individual. The three options for sex were: male, female and hermaphrodite (Orejudo 89). Culturally recognized options for biological *sex* were expected in early modernity, as in present times, to correlate with normative options for *gender identity* and *gender expression*. Normative gender roles were expected to correlate with sex and gender expression according to cultural norms. During early modernity, several categories of androgyny in gender were recognized as unusual but not unexpected, and they could be considered normative within certain cultural constraints. Although rare and potentially dangerous, the recognized options for androgyny were not considered to be, in themselves, contrary to nature:

[L]a naturaleza ofrecía un amplio abanico e posibilidades más o menos *masculinas*: las viragos o mujeres *varoniles*, los hombres *afeminados*, los varones *menstruantes*, los que daban el pecho, las mujeres *barbudas* y el hombre *hermafrodita*, llamado también *andrógino*. (Orejudo 90; emphasis mine)

As described above in the explanation from Orejudo, a person's sex/gender was understood to be located along various points in a culturally recognized continuum. Options for sex/gender were conceived to be something with a basis in anatomy (the visible presence, size and/or or lack of the male sex organ) and also as something that to be established over time according to a person's behavior and participation in society, including in that society's recognized and gender-specific rituals³⁸. Thus, the establishment and communication of a person's sex/gender identity had a significant social component that related to the individual's consistent and successful (or not)

³⁸ Examples of these rituals included as baptism, marriage (Vázquez García, *Cuerpo andrógino* 218), and childbirth.

performance of a gendered *hábito*. The ways that an individual's performance of gender were received socially were also very important to that individual's success or failure in the social sphere and the associated avoidance of legal repercussions.

The cultural paradigm of sex/gender and associated socio-historic values are communicated by the texts that portray Esteban de Valderecete and Eleno de Céspedes as a hero and as an antihero, respectively. A main point of this comparison of early modern and modern sex/gender paradigms is that then as now, gender was understood to have both a biological and social component. The big difference between the paradigms of the two time periods is the following: during early modernity, the social component of gender was of more primary importance. As Esteban's text indicates, it was possible for a gender-bending individual to receive a culturally-sanctioned option for living within the paradigm of normativity. With the change between early modernity and modernity came the rise of the medical model of sex/gender. Specifically, an important shift in the dominant European paradigm with regard to sex and gender occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries. This caused dominant cultural understandings of sex/gender to change in significant ways that continue to be relevant socially and politically. At that time in history, the Western world began to adopt the following interpretation of sex/gender: people are born either biologically male or female. This sex is interpreted/assigned by a medical professional at the time of birth and cannot/should not change. Accordingly, gender is also understood to only occur according to natural law (read moral law here) as binary options of either male or female. Significantly, gender identity/expression is expected to correspond with assigned sex from birth into adulthood, and gender role is also expected to correspond in a normative fashion. The shift in paradigm that occurred

between the 18th and 19th centuries was evident first in the burgeoning medical discourse of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and later it was confirmed and validated culturally by representative juridical proceedings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Vázquez García, *Cuerpo Andrógino* 218).

The following discussion examines Eleno's failure at performing normative masculinity. Here as elsewhere, the term *performance* is used within the context provided by Judith Butler and Richard Schechner, as described earlier in this dissertation. The lenses of queer and intersectional theory are employed to examine Eleno's *subject positions*, describe their significance, and explain how they intersect in important ways as minority identities and how this affected the interpretations of his male identity as non-normative by the male cultural elite as represented by the Inquisition. Below, analysis of Eleno's intersecting identities and his social failure are facilitated by the use of the label *queer subject*. The paragraphs below explain and contextualize the use of the contemporary label of *queer* in relation to Eleno de Céspedes rather than the label *mujer varonil*, which has been used in previous discussions to describe cultural heroes like Esteban de Valderecete and Anna Guerra de Jesús.

Eleno's Queer Art of Failure³⁹

This section provides a queer reading⁴⁰ of the trial of Eleno de Céspedes that explores connections between hegemonic control and the official sanction or demonization of

³⁹ This chapter heading references J. Jack Halberstam's book by the same name: *The Queer Art of Failure*.

gender expression. Instead of focusing on the social and discursive construction of a symbolic cultural hero figure, as provided by previous analyses of Esteban de Valderecete's text and Antonio de Siria's portrayal of Anna Guerra de Jesús, this section will more appropriately focus on the concept of *failure* as relates to the social and official reception of Eleno de Céspedes' performance of normative male gender.

This section discusses an alternative way to analyze subject position and personal agency in socio-historic context. This is a type of analysis that is most suited to a *queer subject*⁴¹ like as Eleno de Céspedes. Using work from theorist J. Jack Halberstam as a starting point, I employ the concepts of *low theory* and *failure* to interrogate and deconstruct the concept of social success, which is generally assumed to be the most salient and interesting outcome of personal agency, but which is usually not the outcome experienced by the queer subject, for reasons that I will explain below.

The term *subject position* is defined as “an analytical bridge between the social and the personal . . . [it] denotes a way of enacting oneself that is made available in a particular social situation” (Kirschner and Martin 94). A connection with performance theory as it relates to gender is apparent here. The reader will recall Richard Schechner's

⁴⁰ As stated in the terminology section of the Introduction of this dissertation, a *queer reading* explores a text from an unaccustomed angle with the aim of provoking more critical questions than providing answers: methods of analysis themselves can become an object of scrutiny.

⁴¹ The term *queer* in everyday conversation is an adjective describing something as strange or unusual. More specifically, it is a label used for minorities of sexual orientation or gender expression. Additionally, the term may be used to describe a person whose identity does not fit neatly into any socially-recognized category for normative or minority groups. All of these definitions can apply to Eleno de Céspedes.

definition of performance from earlier in this dissertation: according to Schechner, performance is a “broad spectrum” or “continuum of human actions” including “everyday life performance ...[and the] enactment of social, professional, gender, race and class roles” (Chapter 1). Specifically according to Schechner: “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance” (Chapter 1). As explained earlier, Judith Butler applies performance theory directly to gender studies in ways significant to the analysis of the primary texts examined in this dissertation: of particular significance to the present study, Butler writes that, “categories that are often assumed to be ‘natural,’ like gender, sexuality, and the body, have always been defined to serve particular political agendas (qtd in Smedman “Judith Butler”). .” The following paragraphs build upon discussions by Butler and Schechner of the performativity of gender by adding the concept of intersectionality, contextualizing them on the socio-historic circumstance that affected the life of Eleno de Céspedes.

Intersectional theory deals with subject position. It describes how a person’s identity is composed of various subcomponents. This theoretical lens explores how and when a person chooses to reveal parts of their identity and how this determines the resulting social consequences in a manner that is socially successful or unsuccessful for the subject. The discussions below use concepts from queer and intersectional theory to add another perspective to discussions of the politics of gender, of imperialism and of associated discourses of exemplarity and cultural homogeneity as they relate to the topic of *mujer varonil* as examined in this dissertation.

J. Jack Halberstam defines low theory as an alternate way of examining the process of knowledge production. The processes of creating cultural hero figures and of publishing

the didactic texts that portray them as symbolic vehicles for the transmission of cultural values and attitudes are examples of processes of knowledge production. These processes have, throughout history, had the tendency to condemn queer subjects like Eleno de Céspedes to failure and to the realm of anti-heroes. Low theory provides a way of exploring “the in-between spaces...of binary formulations” and its aim is not to provide answers, but rather, to “push through...divisions... [to arrive at] a more chaotic realm of knowing and unknowing” (Halberstam 2). This is the realm of the queer subject, who by nature does not fit neatly into normative, binary categories binary cause the identity of this subject calls into question the natural-ness and validity of these very binary categories themselves. In the process, hegemony itself can be called into question, because its stability depends in significant ways on the general social acceptance of binary categories, their naturalness (rather than their true nature as political constructs) and the cultural values and attitudes that are built around them.

According to Halberstam, the queer subject is doomed to social failure, sooner or later, by the very nature of the queer subject. This is because it is ultimately impossible for this subject to supersede or evade the structures of the dominant hegemony within which he or she must live and communicate, but within which he or she does not fit. Indeed, the very existence of the queer subject threatens these structures unless the subject is appropriately labeled and controlled by hegemony. Hegemonic institutions and other structures of social constraint are designed to limit and contain the marginalized subject, because by identifying and upholding the division between normative and deviant, hegemony defines and reifies not only the structures of its social control but also its own, normative identity and associated values. By analyzing the nature of failure

within such a system, it is also possible to identify and discuss the “logics of success” (Halberstam 2) built into that very system, by which the system perpetuates itself. Analysis of the inevitable failure of the queer subject under these circumstances illuminates shared, imagined cultural boundaries that an established hegemony endeavors to portray as clean, monolithic, and ultimately real (Halberstam 1). These boundaries are communicated through didactic texts, such as those analyzed in this dissertation, and especially by texts that employ the cultural symbol of the hero or antihero to transmit the social values and attitudes of dominant culture.

What is meant by the *logics of success*? Social success or failure is established by and measured against standards set by the group in power. Hegemonic structure rewards those subjects who can be regarded as living and communicating in ways that support and reproduce existing hegemonic values, attitudes, and supporting social structure. This structure is threatened by behaviors regarded as ambiguous or non-normative (deviant). Hegemonic subjects who thrive within these social constraints, such as Esteban de Valderecete, are held up as cultural heroes. A hero figure is symbolic in the sense that this person is in some way understood as representative of normative group values and is portrayed by the cultural elite as someone who should be admired and imitated. Significantly, the conditions under which success can be won are designed to reproduce the existing power structure. For example, consider Esteban de Valderecete as portrayed in the *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*. His type of masculinity is representative of a cultural paradigm en vogue during his socio-historical circumstances because it was useful in the conquest of the New World. Esteban de Valderecete escapes accusations of dishonor, monstrosity or deviancy because his masculinity can be related to the “military

masculinities of imperial Spain” (Cleminson and Vásquez García, *Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodies* 44–45). Esteban represents the type of masculinity culturally associated with the bellicose model of the knight, a subject that embodies a rural and military, Christian masculinity.

In contrast, subjects such as Eleno de Céspedes, whose gender identity is ambiguous and not normative, are ultimately doomed to *failure* even when they exhibit agency in order to receive some sort of smaller-scale desirable outcome, such choosing a desired profession (for example, Eleno becoming a surgeon) or marriage (for example, Eleno marrying María del Cano). In the big picture of social reality, the norms and structures upholding hegemony are designed to keep queer subjects in a designated place of social *other*, where they can be safely contained and no longer be threatening to social stability. Subjects like Eleno, who are identified as negatively exemplary (as anti-heroes) in the texts describing them, are portrayed in ways that accentuate their differences from the normative Self (represented by the hero, who in turn represents cultural strengths, values, and attitudes). When officials or institutions that are representative of hegemony, such as the Inquisition or the Chancillería, are called upon to make intelligible the intersubjective spaces called into question by the activities and identities of potentially ambiguous subjects, such as Eleno de Céspedes and Esteban de Valderecete, these officials/institutions fulfill their social function by passing judgments that praise or condemn these subjects. The judgments handed down by cultural gatekeepers support the control of hegemony because they reproduce “power and cultural relations that...naturalize the already known. [Through] suppression and denial of the *other* [these judgments end up]...constituting the existence of the Self” (Cobb 176).

Eleno de Céspedes' identity was dangerously ambiguous because it had several subcomponents that were, in their singularity, potentially negatively charged. When combined in an individual, they were potentially disastrous according to cultural values: in Eleno's case, the most significant elements of minority identity were female masculinity, class and *race*⁴². In the person of Eleno, these subcomponents were understood to intersect in ways that painted the picture of a dangerous non-normativity, and this resulted in a judgment of condemnation from the Inquisition. Intersectional theory helps to explain this. This theoretical lens has been used to analyze modern court proceedings. The intersectional approach can also be used appropriately and fruitfully to analyze early modern legal situations, such as Eleno de Céspedes' trial, in order to identify and explain which components of a defendant's identity draw attention and contribute towards positive or negative judgment. According to intersectional theory, in legal situations, certain defenses are available to people depending on which facets of identity are visible and significant according to socio cultural standards and social situation. A subject may be able to control the visibility of some personal identity characteristics and not others (for example, race or gender) and some of these characteristics may be more salient in certain social situations than in others. Intersectional theory teaches that when one or more minority identity elements converge in an individual, that individual is more likely to be marginalized, threatened or punished by other individuals or institutions representative of dominant culture.

⁴² Below this term is contextualized in early modern socio-historic circumstance.

Eleno's *race* and *gender* were two significant minority components of his identity that lead to his condemnation by the Inquisition. Eleno was determined by authorities to be doubly transgressive because he was understood by cultural gatekeepers to embody a monstrous, threatening racial and somatic *other*. The term *race* is a contemporary one that was an emergent concept in early modern Iberia (Patton 2). In 17th century Spain and Spanish America, the proto-concept of what we now call *race* was comprised of historical, national and visible markers of social difference such as class, dress, mannerisms, religious/ethnic heritage (*pureza de sangre*) and occupation. For the purposes of this discussion, the term *race* will signify these markers of difference in early modern Ibero-Atlantic context, noting that the specific term *race* existed, but it had different meanings. Significantly, in early modern times, the concept of *race*, like the concepts of *sex* and *gender*, did not always correspond with neat biological categories (Cleminson and Vázquez García *Imposible fusión* 45). For example, the cultural concept known as *pureza de sangre* was comprised of ethnic, social, historical, national and religious subcomponents. Significantly, the concept of *pureza de sangre* is present in both Eleno's and Esteban's texts and it is one of the deciding factors that contributed towards the negative judgment that Eleno received.

The term *race*, as defined and contextualized in this chapter, can illuminate the social reality that contributed towards Eleno de Céspedes' judgment and caused it to be different from Esteban's. Specifically, in early modern Ibero-Atlantic context, *race* was used by hegemony to identify Self (the cultural group in power) and separate it from the *other* (the deviant/monstrous/bad opposite of Self). The Christian culture that emerged victorious from the Reconquest was "fixated on promoting its homogeneity" (Patton 3)

in Spain and Spanish America. It did this in part through implementing legal mechanisms of control to “identify and insulate subjects whose social status merited certain political and economic rights” (Patton 5). This “persistent delineation of the racial Other in somatic, spatial, or regulatory terms ...resided firmly in [stereotypes and judgments made about] the appearance, locations, and behaviors of the visible human body” (Patton 5). These judgments included and related to judgments about how a particular body communicated normative gender (or not).

Race is a factor of significant difference between Eleno and Esteban, as their texts note. For example, Esteban is described in ways that suggest that he had the revered, normative social identity of *cristiano viejo*: “[era una] persona bien nacida” and he was “claro de gesto” (Esguerra 770). In contrast, Eleno de Céspedes’ status as former slave and ethnic/religious other is repeatedly described throughout his Inquisition proceeding, such as in this representative example: “[Elena era] [n]atural de Alhama, esclava y después libre” (Cano Fernández 77). The capture of the rich and strategic Moorish stronghold of Alhama was significant to the crusade of the Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando in their project of reconquest, which was completed in 1492 with the fall of Granada. Alhama had been conquered by the Christian forces in March of 1482 (O’Callaghan 130–31). This event took place around 100 years before the trial of Eleno de Céspedes and it would have been still fresh in cultural memory. The successful siege of Alhama was a major stroke leading to the conquest of Granada, the last Moorish kingdom remaining to be won. Thus, the conquest Alhama remained significant in Iberian cultural memory for a long time, which is evidenced by the popularity of the romances composed about the event.

Wars against the *moriscos*, the ethnic and cultural descendants of the Moors, took place within Eleno's lifetime. Because of this, and because of activities of conquest and homogenization taking place in the New World, the Reconquest also continued to occupy a fresh and significant space in cultural memory. Interestingly, Eleno de Céspedes participated in the campaigns against the *moriscos* in the occupation of male surgeon. However, this service was not enough to protect him from allegations of heresy or to sufficiently separate him from his background of former slave and suspected *monft*⁴³ to be of use in his trial by the Inquisition for occupying a male role in society. In contrast to what happened with Esteban, who notably established a sword fighting school in Granada, Eleno de Céspedes' particular social and somatic "peculiarities became related to questions of racial identity" (Cleminson and Vázquez García 45). As Patton describes, "somatic differences...were perceived sometimes as wondrous, often as threatening, and ...[possibly as] inferior" (Patton 2). Eleno is a representative example of someone whose somatic difference was interpreted by cultural gatekeepers as both inferior and threatening, while Esteban's somatic difference was interpreted as wondrous, superior and worthy of praise.

In summary, Eleno's *race* was understood culturally to be "a network of interdependent [perceived social] characteristics" (Cleminson and Vázquez García 45), including those of *hábito*, age group, experience, ethnic and religious group affiliation. These socially and historically significant elements of Eleno's identity were interpreted by the Inquisition as intersecting in a meaningful way with other pertinent elements of Eleno's social identity—his ambiguous *sex* and *gender*—to paint the portrait of a social deviant. Because of the intersections of minority elements in his identity, Eleno de

⁴³ This is a word used for a *morisco* refugee (Real Academia Española).

Céspedes was condemned as a criminal: he was found by the Inquisition to be a *queer* and present danger to social stability. Esteban de Valderecete experienced an opposite outcome, even though he shared some identity characteristics with Eleno. In contrast to Eleno, Esteban's perceived *race*—which included his noble family lineage, status as *cristiano viejo* and his normative *hábito*—intersected in a significant but opposite way with his *sex* and *gender* to paint the portrait of a wondrous individual rather than a deviant one. In summary, when combined with his *race*, Esteban's subcomponents identity that had previously been dangerously ambiguous were judged to best correspond with a normative male gender role. Esteban succeeded where Eleno failed because Esteban could be interpreted as a cultural hero, as a wondrous person whose social transition to a male identity could be understood as representative of the ideals of the dominant culture and, thus, as supportive of hegemony.

Social success, though desired by the *queer* subject, such as Eleno, is ultimately unattainable according to the standards provided by and legitimized by the hegemony. The marginalized subject is understood to be *queer* because his or her identity is perceived to exist in opposition to the norm⁴⁴ or perceived as pertaining to the ambiguous grey areas between categories of normativity. The task of the *queer* subject, and, indeed, the only success he or she is capable of achieving through any amount of agency in such a system, is to “stay out of the archives...out of [cultural methods of news reporting]...and below the radar of authorities” (Scott 64) for as long as possible, perhaps enjoying some relative, though often limited and time-bound, types of success.

⁴⁴ The term *queer* is often associated with non-normative sexuality but its definition does not limit it to sexuality.

Eleno de Céspedes achieved temporal periods of relative success for parts of his life before coming under the scrutiny of the Inquisition. The text relates that after the death of her husband, Elena de Céspedes left Granada for the frontier and began living as a man. During this time, Eleno's gender expression was sometimes read socially as male and sometimes it was not. However, more often than not, Eleno succeeded in performing masculinity to the point that he was able to engage in traditionally male occupations such as those of tailor, laborer, soldier and surgeon. In summary, for over 15 years, Eleno de Céspedes' gender-bending activities were generally overlooked/ignored, believed, or met with relatively slight reprimand, as the text describes:

Determinó de andar en hábito de hombre...[Eleno] dejó el de mujer que hasta allí había siempre traído. En hábito de hombre se fue a Arcos, donde asentó por mozo de labranza llamándose Céspedes...y después asentó con Jabeola y le sirvió de pastor y, sospechando que era monfi, la prendieron y, reconociéndola el corregidor de allí, la soltó y la mandó poner en su hábito de mujer. Sucediendo entonces la guerra de los moriscos de Granada, se fue allá y se tornó a vestir de hábito de hombre, llamándose siempre Céspedes, y fue soldado hasta que se acabó aquella jornada y, desecha su compañía en Arcos, tornó en hábito de hombre a hacer públicamente oficio de sastrero y se examinó en el dicho oficio en Jerez de la Frontera, aunque en el título pusieron "sastra" por conocer que era mujer. Volvió por segunda vez a la guerra de Granada y, acabada, anduvo...haciendo el oficio de sastrero . . . hará como doce años . . . en Andalucía] tomó amistad con un valenciano cirujano [y] . . . viendo de aquel oficio le era de provecho, dejó del todo el oficio de sastrero y comenzó a usar el de cirugía . . .

practicando como tres años . . . se vino a la Corte, donde se examinó y sacó dos títulos, para poder sangrar y purgar, y para cirugía. (Cano Fernández 80-2)

In summary, during a period of time spanning more than fifteen years, Eleno integrated himself socially to a greater and greater extent as a man. For example, he even took examinations for the office of surgeon and practiced this male occupation in the court hospital. Eventually, Eleno arrived in the village of Ciempozuelos, where a surgeon was needed, and there he asked permission according to established social and religious protocol to legally wed María del Cano. Eleno was granted a marriage license after a physical examination that confirmed his virility. This examination was requested because there was some level of public outcry that Eleno was both a man and a woman.

Eventually Eleno came under the social radar in a much more problematic way after moving to Ocaña with his wife, María. He was imprisoned there by the village governor and held for judgment by the Inquisition:

Anduvo haciendo oficio de cirujano seis años y, en fin, vino a parar a Ciempozuelos, donde, aficionado a una doncella [María del Cano], trató de casarse con ella. . .le pusieron [el] impedimento, que era pública voz que era varón y hembra. . .[pero Eleno logró casarse después de examinación médica]. [Después de mudarse con su esposa a Ocaña, donde había necesidad de un cirujano,] reconociéndola algunas personas que la habían visto en la guerra de Granada, decían que era tenida de unos por varón y de otros por hembra. Así, el gobernador de aquella villa la hizo presa, de donde la habían traído presa. . .[al] Santo Oficio. (Cano Fernández 79–80)

Eleno's male *gender expression* was only socially accepted up to a certain point, as the passage above illustrates. He clearly desired to live according to the normative male

gender role, but this was ultimately denied him. Citing Lacan's theory of desire, Halberstam describes the desire of the queer subject as something that is not capable of being totally fulfilled because only certain types of desire can be successfully achieved within a framework designed to benefit only individuals with normative characteristics. Within these social constraints, normative identity categories are established, communicated and reified by dominant culture: once a *queer* person begins to live (perform identity) in a way that calls into question the boundaries between normative categories of existence, and once that person falls under a sufficient amount of public scrutiny for doing so, that person is called to judgment. At that time, the *queer* individual will be judged to be either normative or deviant, since further ambiguity will not be tolerated. One significant way that normative gender identities are identified and described by the cultural elite as natural and desirable is through didactic cultural texts praising cultural heroes such as Esteban de Valderecete and Anna Guerra de Jesús or condemning cultural antiheroes such as Eleno de Céspedes. These texts urge the public to emulate heroic figures as portrayed by the cultural elite in didactic texts, or to abhor and avoid expression of identity characteristics like those of persons constructed discursively as cultural antiheroes, such as Eleno de Céspedes.

A primary objective of hegemonic discourse is the establishment of rigid, though culturally imagined and agreed upon, normative categories of identity that are made to seem natural, good, and desirable. This is an objective of cultural discourses of hegemony, such as *vidas, relaciones* and Inquisition proceedings. In these texts, negatively charged representations of personal identity are given to individuals judged as non-normative. Such people are not portrayed as marvels and heroes, but as monsters

with sub-identities of those of slave, former slave, heretic or sodomite. These categories of non-normative or deviant social identity function culturally to define what normativity and goodness are *not*. Options for identity are communicated by institutional discourses, such as that of the Inquisition, in ways that produce, reproduce and disseminate cultural values and attitudes. The writing and publication of texts like the hagiography, the *relación*, the Inquisition proceeding and the play (as will be explored in the next chapter) is a profoundly political process. Eleno de Céspedes' Inquisition trial is representative of a hegemonic and institutional project whose aim was to maintain identities in neat binary divisions, with one part of the binary pair held up as positively exemplary and the other part as negatively exemplary. As explained above, this project was tied first with the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula and later with the conquest of the New World, as well as with associated projects of cultural homogenization. All of these projects were supported by cultural control on gender expression and gender role.

According to Foucault, systems of power such as the Inquisition are “systems of social and discursive relations that reproduce themselves by reducing persons in subordinate positions to docile bodies upon which the law [conventions of the hegemonic order] is inscribed” (135–69). The task of the Inquisition in response to the cultural outcry about the dangerous ambiguity represented by Eleno de Céspedes' gender expression was to reduce Eleno to a docile body, thus making his identity easily legible: that is to say, recognizable within the value-charged categories of normative or non-normative identity as understood in socio-historic context. Eleno's agency is found in his personal choice of a masculine social identity and living that identity for over 15 years, and also in his defense of this identity in the Inquisition record. However, even though

Eleno was able to participate in these ways in society as his preferred gender (male), he was doomed to failure from the start because the conditions of the hegemonic social structure in which he lived—the “logics of success”—were not built for him. Instead, these social constraints were constructed to contain and, ultimately, to condemn *queer* subjects like him.

Conclusion

The *relación* and the Inquisition proceeding that portray Esteban de Valderecete and Eleno de Céspedes, respectively, make a number of socially and historically important distinctions between elements of identity: between *sex* and *gender* as they were understood in socio-historic context and between the associated identity labels of positive or negative person, of hero or antihero. The *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II* and *Actas de la inquisición a Elena de Céspedes* can be understood as didactic texts of cultural significance because they construct heroes and anti-heroes that provide models for the public to emulate or threatening examples for the public to loath and fear.

This chapter has shown how patterns of the representation of the *mujer hombre* (Esteban) in a secular text parallel those of representation of the *mujer varonil* in a religious text: the *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* by Antonio de Siria. Additionally, it has shown that the portrayals of female masculinity in the *Relaciones topográficas*, *Actas de la inquisition* and *Vida de Anna Guerra* can all be understood as being part of a larger, homogenizing discourse that either normalized or vilified an ambiguous (and potentially dangerous) subject. In the process, this chapter related the stories of these exceptional persons—as they have been constructed by the male cultural elite—to a shared,

normative, imagined cultural ideal of manliness that was communicated through didactic texts and that supported the imperial project, both in the Iberian Peninsula and the New World.

CHAPTER 3: FEMALE MASCULINITY IN THEATER

Staging the Negotiation of Normative Gender

Los teóricos del nacionalismo, independientemente de su postura ideológica, concuerdan en que la identidad de las comunidades nacionales se construye y se define por negociación respecto al ‘otro’ u ‘otros’, es decir, todos aquellos que quedan afuera de los límites simbólicos de la comunidad.

- Veronika Ryjik
Lope de Vega y la invención de España (169)

Introduction

This chapter analyzes *La vengadora de las mujeres* (1621) by Lope de Vega as an entertaining exploration of possibilities for gender expression and a communication of cultural limits for gender-bending by exceptional women. It explores female agency as it relates to pursuit of education and career in ways that engage cultural preoccupations and that ultimately, in a socially conservative and entertaining manner, resolve the very questions they raise. In this function, *La vengadora de las mujeres*, like the other texts examined in this dissertation, participated in a larger cultural discourse that acknowledged and responded to the early modern fascination and preoccupation with fluidity of gender expression and associated social roles.

While texts like *La vengadora de las mujeres*, *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesús* and *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II* appear to praise their female subjects, who transcend their conscribed social roles to live as males, other texts such as *Actas de la inquisición a elena de céspedes* condemn transition from female to male. All of these

texts clarify cultural expectations for normative gender roles in ways that support the social and political stability of dominant cultural groups in early modern Spain and Spanish America. This chapter contextualizes the socio-historic backdrop that contributed to the Golden Age fascination with the character of the *mujer varonil* in drama. It describes the evolution of drama as a literary genre to culminate in the *comedia nueva* and the birth of national theater in Spain due to the contribution of Lope de Vega. The *mujer varonil* concept is discussed as typical of the Baroque aesthetic. Thus, the chapter engages Baroque as it is described by Spadaccini and Martin-Estudillo: “as [both an] aesthetic category and as [a] historical/cultural problem” (xii). Finally, this chapter describes and analyzes the place of the masculine woman as literary character and as real-life phenomenon in discourses of idealized masculinity that were linked with national consciousness and imperialism in Spain.

The Divine *Comedia* of National Consciousness in Spain

Previous to the rise of the *comedia nueva*, a national and public theater did not exist in Spain. Instead, plays were written for and consumed by private audiences. Drama itself did exist before the *comedia nueva*, but it was limited to the sub-genres of literature, ritual, and instruction (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 41). In the early modern period, “complex cultural and social circumstances” contributed toward the rise of Spanish theater as a national institution (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 6).

While the first part of the seventeenth century in Spain was characterized by “unsurpassed literary brilliance,” (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 3), circumstances had changed by the end of the century. A decline in the moral standards of the court had

affected Spain's international politics and also threatened the control and internal stability exercised by the crown on the previously independent kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, Catalonia and Navarre, which had come together under the Catholic Monarchs during the previous century. Inside of Spain, the population suffered the effects of war, famine, poverty and pestilence. In response to social unrest, Madrid conducted renewed centralizing efforts, which were met by revolt in Catalonia and an attempted succession by Aragon in 1640 (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 4). These factors—in addition to the continued destabilizing effects of the Protestant Revolution both nationally and internationally—culminated in a sense of insecurity that was felt by the Spanish cultural elite and also by the general populace (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 2–3). As Jeremy Robbins explains:

It was a fact recognized by Spaniards themselves that over the seventeenth century the balance of power in Europe shifted inexorably from Spain to France. On the most basic of levels Spaniards had to watch as their world empire, formed over the course of the previous century, was threatened and eroded. (16)

Dominant Spanish culture responded to the growing sense of insecurity with an even greater focus on religion, display, rank and self-image (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 4). This focus was evident in the literature of the times, in particular the literature of the national theater. The roots of the public theater in Spain are in medieval religious processions, pageants, morality plays and mystery plays (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 6). By the sixteenth century, Spanish theater had evolved into an art form characterized by performances that were conducted by professional actors in secular settings. Between 1540–1580, the prolific author and playwright Lope de Vega rose to prominence and

created Spanish national theater by establishing the parameters for the *comedia nueva*. Lope de Vega's influence on the genre of the theater was profound: he used themes, topics and values that characterized Spanish culture to create a new form of national theater that would be further developed by other prominent authors such as Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina (Ryjik 1). *La vengadora de las mujeres* is one of Lope de Vega's several popular plays that explores seventeenth-century Spanish codes and mores vis-à-vis a strong female protagonist who challenges her relationships with men and the patriarchal social order.

The term *comedia nueva* refers both to the new form of Spanish theater described by Lope de Vega and also to a period in the development of the theater that was characterized by experimentation. This experimentation included the introduction of new elements to the genre, such as public playhouses. The unified tendencies and standards as laid out in Lope's *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* would dominate the genre of the *comedia* for the next hundred years. In this highly influential treatise, which was written in the form of a poem directed to the Academia de Madrid, Lope replied to resurgence in the defense of classical norms, such as those of Aristotle, for the theater. Rather than appealing to the authorities of the past, Lope "abandoned" them in order to describe a new set of rules that were more applicable to his times and to the function of the theater in those times (McKendrick, *Theater in Spain* 112). *El arte nuevo* provides justifications to explain the unclassical style that characterizes the romantic drama of Golden Age Spain. It does this so effectively that it sets the precedents that came to define this genre. Specifically, in *El arte nuevo* Lope describes the conventions and principles of a type of drama that would eventually be called national because of its

“close identification with the social values and emotional responses of the age” (“Lope de Vega”).

Significant social values and emotional responses that were preeminent in the culture of early modern Spain were influenced by the heritage of the past and, thus, a continued importance was placed on a virile, bellicose and idealized type of masculinity that was linked with the Spanish national consciousness. Although the battle for the Iberian Peninsula had been won with the expulsion of the Muslims, the process of *othering* continued to be significant in order to build Spain’s national consciousness and to support imperial endeavors. As Maraval explains:

Although the absolute state, with the relative newness of its sovereign power, was to a certain extent a modern creation, it was imposed upon a complex of inherited circumstances, upon the continued existence of traditional political forms (*Culture of the Baroque* 145).

Maraval explains that consequently, during the Baroque period Spanish culture was characterized by a renewed cultural obsession with the “crusade ideal” of conquering and reconquering in the name of Christianity and the contemplation and transformation of elements of “knightly culture” into the early modern socio-political context (*Culture of the Baroque* 145).

After the *other* in the form of the Muslim had been conquered and expelled from peninsular Spain, the cultural elite turned to another phase of *othering* that supported the Inquisition’s enforced cultural and religious homogenization. They focused on groups of *others* both inside the country and abroad: these included gypsies, new Christians, and *negros* (Ryjik 169). This process of *othering* also included individuals whose expressions

of gender and/or sexual identity were ambiguous, fluid, or otherwise interpreted by cultural gatekeepers as deviant from normative standards for Spanish identity. These identities were understood to threaten social stability and the hegemonic order that it supported.⁴⁵

A new battlefield had been opened up by the Protestant Reformation. The “battle for men’s minds” raged, and Spain, the self-appointed defender of the Catholic faith, responded with arms and letters (Anderson 40). Printed works of literature—including

⁴⁵ The process of *othering* was central to the ideology of the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula and to the emerging national consciousness of what would become Spain. This is because it helped to define the essential components of group culture by simultaneously defining what it was not. *Othering* continued to find expression in the institution of the Spanish Inquisition long after the Reconquest ended. The identification and communication of notions of “us” and “them”/ “friend” and “enemy” and the associated, enforced social order and social heterodoxy that characterized the Spanish Inquisition was communicated by the literature of the Middle Ages and, later, that of early modernity. The literature of early modern Spain and Spanish America—including the genre of the theater and the other popular genres that are studied in this dissertation—continued the elaboration of *self* and *other* that was preeminent in the formation of a Spanish national consciousness. Significantly, literature ascribed binary cultural values and judgements to both terms and also to the individuals and groups they were applied to. For example, “self” was associated with attractive, virile, moral qualities. It was the label of the hegemonic elite and bound up with national identity. *Other* was associated with undesirable, effeminate, and immoral qualities. It was used to designate socially lower or undesirable individual groups in relationship to the cultural elite. *Self* was defined by its difference from the *other*. These dialogues of *self* and *other* characterize works from many genres popular in early modern Spain and Spanish America because of their importance to the establishment and maintenance of social order and hierarchy. Discussions of this topic are central to Post Colonial Theory. See *Orientalism* by Said.

drama—helped to disseminate the cultural discourses on identity and nationhood that characterized early modern Europe. The invention of the printing press and the boom in publishing was central to the rise in national consciousness that was a key element of the early modern period. The new religious war of the battle for the mind replaced the war of Reconquest as a central preoccupation of the Spanish cultural elite, as described below in the quoted selection from Benedict Anderson. In this passage, Anderson identifies the Protestant Reformation as a fundamental element that contributed to the rise in nationalism that characterized the sociocultural landscape of early modern Europe, including Spain:

Where Luther led, others quickly followed, opening the colossal religious propaganda war that raged across Europe.... In this titantic 'battle for men's minds,' Protestantism was always fundamentally on the offensive, precisely because it knew how to make use of the expanding vernacular print-market being created by capitalism. (Anderson 40)

One aspect of this battle for the mind was establishing the limits for normative gender expression. Increased access to printed material had opened up new possibilities for gender roles. The popularity of the figure of the *mujer varonil* across literary genres is evidence of the important part she played in the Spanish culture of the early modern period. The male authors of her life stories used her to explore the limits of binary gender roles and the cultural contradictions that emerged upon their examination. In Spain, "art and literature were one of the principal ways of confronting ... various changes and new ideas, whether in an attempt to explore and assimilate them, or to reject and repudiate them" (Robbins 13). The Baroque period in Europe was characterized by a fascination

with contradictions, such as that of appearance versus reality. Baroque Spain was also characterized by a profound sense of uncertainty, due to the shift in power away from Spain (Robbins 13) and the other socio-political factors described above. Significantly, it was this context that “drove Spain to create the greatest works of art, prose, theatre and poetry that it has ever produced” (Robbins 13).

The character of the manly woman, or *mujer varonil*, was very popular in Golden Age Theater because it allowed for entertaining and engaging explorations of contradictions that obsessed Baroque writers, such as that of appearance versus reality (Smith 18), as well as other cultural contradictions and mores with regard to gender expression and gender roles. Other thematic “obsessions” (Robbins 14) of the Baroque period in Spain included those of *engaño* (deceit) and *parecer* (surface appearances). Appearances were regarded with a deep and general sense of distrust (Robbins 14). Explorations of these themes were facilitated by the use of the *mujer varonil* character in multiple literary genres, including the theater, in which she was immensely popular.

The Cultural Drama of the *mujer varonil*

By the sixteenth-century in Spain, the topic of women’s education had become “a subject for debate and reform” (McKendrick *Woman and Society* 5–6). Sixteenth-century Europe was characterized by a distrust of novelty⁴⁶ and that included novelty in the form the new possibilities for gender expression and gender roles that were opened up by increased access by women to education. The cultural elite responded by trying to exclude novelty “from all manifestations of collective life that might affect the fundamental order” and by

⁴⁶ See Maraval’s *Culture of the Baroque*, page 226.

trying to confine it to “those areas judged to be innocuous or at least of no consequence for the political order” (Maraval, *Culture of the Baroque* 226). This explanation by Maraval represents the “containment” element of typical Baroque aesthetic, which is juxtaposed by Spadaccini and Martin-Estudillo against the epoch’s “transgressive or liberating aspects” (ix). Throughout, this chapter identifies and analyzes examples from *La vengadora de las mujeres* by Lope de Vega that embody both the containment aspect and the transgressive aspect that characterize the art forms of the Hispanic Baroque as embodied by the protagonist Laura, a classic example of the *mujer varonil* character in theater.

La vengadora de las mujeres was written and performed in an age where women's access to printed material was growing significantly and new possibilities for behavior were thus made increasingly accessible, as described by discussions of the printing press in the introduction of this dissertation. Literature from the cultural elite expressed grave preoccupations about the possible disruptions to social stability that might result from educated females departing from the strict expectations of normative female gender. The number of popular books across various genres that addressed the themes of women's education and the differences between the sexes is evidence of this strong preoccupation of the hegemonic elite.⁴⁷ Significantly, Baroque writers, including Lope de Vega,

⁴⁷ See:

Huarte de San Juan, Juan. *Examen de Ingenious para las ciencias*, edited by Rodrigo Sanz, Madrid:

Imprenta la Rafa, 1930.

León, Luís de. *La perfecta casada* [1583]. Pontevedra, 1906.

Vives, Luís. *Instruccion a la muger christiana*, translated by Juan Justiniano, Madrid: don Benito Cano, 1793.

frequently engaged the theme of novelty that preoccupied their epoch, because it was “a way to provide for the smooth ingestion (‘pleasing,’ according to the norm of the Horacian precept) of an entire system reinforcing the monarchical-seignorial tradition” (Maraval, *Culture of the Baroque* 227).

This concern about the effects of educating women found expression in the theater of seventeenth-century Spain in the form of plays depicting a *mujer varonil* character, such as *La vengadora de las mujeres* by Lope de Vega. In the literary traditions that were prominent in early modern Spain, women were either idolized—for example, in medieval traditions of courtly love, novels of chivalry and in the pastoral genre—or they were vilified. These antithetical cultural models for women as either angel or devil had their origins in Christian models of the Virgin Mary and of Eve (Smith 21). Cultural expectations for women's upbringing and education had become a significant theme of social discourse by the sixteenth century. This was due in part to the rise of the prominence of secular humanists and the influence of Erasmian reformers with religious ties, such as Juan Luis Vives and Fray Luis de León, who wrote widely read texts that instructed their readers about how they should raise female children in concordance with social expectations for females and associated gender roles and obligations. Juan Huarte de San Juan's treatise about the differences between the sexes was another popular and influential text. In this way, male authors described and clarified normative gender role expectations for women and men in ways that supported social stability against a backdrop of cultural uncertainty and preoccupation with order.

At the same time, the genre of the *comedia* was gaining popularity in Spain. This genre was noted for its depiction of characters representing idealized notions of masculinity and femininity. For example, Spanish drama made ample use of the image of the *caballero español*: he was portrayed as a type of super-hero character who is greatly admired by women and is unsurpassable in martial prowess (Ryjik 177). The image of idealized Spanish masculinity that this character type communicated was significantly connected with the imperial project. It was a representation of the shared and idealized notion of *self* that was understood by the hegemonic elite to represent the type of Spanish national identity that they envisioned as a cultural ideal. Although this idealized and virile national identity was depicted as natural, monolithic and even divinely ordained in the literature of the times, it in fact depended on the establishment and elaboration of cultural *others*. These *others*—such as Muslims or Eleno de Céspedes—were represented in ways that described what normative masculinity was by making evident what it was not.⁴⁸

The Spanish *comedia* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is characterized by an “astonishing abundance” of female characters (Smith, Dawn 17). All of them

⁴⁸ Normative Spanish masculinity represented a shared idea of an *us* that was part of a *self/ other* binary equation. This Spanish “self” was depicted as formidable, virile, admirable and virtuous in contrast to an *other* that was weak, effeminate and immoral. According to Ryjik, “Esta construcción del ‘yo’ como prototipo de hombre, por supuesto, sólo es posible gracias al proceso simultáneo de la feminización del ‘otro’...” (177). In summary, the *other* defined the virile *self* of Spanish national consciousness by contrast. Examples of the *others* of this binary equation include both normative and deviant femininity. Additional representative examples of the *other* were continually sought out and described out both inside the Iberian Peninsula and in the American colonies. Real and imagined *others* were held up for public recognition and sometimes for public condemnation in multiple literary genres, including those studied in this dissertation.

challenge the men in their lives in some way and they even challenge at times the patriarchal setting within which they live (Smith 19). This rich variety of female characters, however, exists within strict parameters. Not insignificantly, the female characters of the *comedia* were organized according to a distinct and limited range of character types. According to Catherine Larson, this range included the following: “the ... beautiful *dama* [lady], the *mujer esquiva* [the disdainful woman], the religious woman, the *mujer vestida de hombre* [woman dressed as a man], and the married woman and victim of the wife-murder plays” (33). One of the most culturally significant and popular of these character types was that of the *mujer varonil*, who is sometimes labeled as the *mujer vestida de hombre*. Women characters were given the most complex and full characterization in the *comedia* as compared to other works of Golden Age literature (D. Smith 20). Thus, any study of the *mujer varonil* in early modern Hispanic context should include a discussion of her representation in Spanish national theater.

In her seminal study of the portrayal of women in the drama of the Spanish Golden Age, Malveena McKendrick focuses on the *mujer varonil*. She identifies six standard versions of this character type, devoting a chapter in her book to each one and describing each one in social and literary context. The sub-types of the *mujer varonil* that are described by McKendrick are as follows: the *bandolera*, the *mujer esquiva*, the amazon/leader/warrior, the scholar/career woman, and the avenger. The paragraphs below briefly summarize each one of these types. Later discussions describe how Lope de Vega references several of these character types in his portrayal of Laura in *La vengadora de las mujeres*.

The *bandolera* character type is that of the female bandit. The *bandolera* is arguably the most violent and rebellious version of the Golden Age *mujer varonil* because she chooses open confrontation in response to internal and external pressures (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 109–41). The *mujer esquiva* is the most popular of the subtypes of the *mujer varonil*. Interestingly, the phrase *mujer esquiva* defies a succinct description in English because no direct translation is available. McKendrick uses a combination of the adjectives “disdainful, elusive, distant, shy, cold” to describe this character subtype (*Woman and Society* 142). The *mujer esquiva* rejects normative expectations for love and marriage. She may, as a consequence, shun men as well (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 142–73). Another subtype of the *mujer varonil* is that of the amazon/leader/warrior. According to McKendrick, the amazon/leader/warrior shares certain characteristics of other subtypes of the *mujer varonil*: like the *bella cazadora*, she has been raised in the greater freedom of the wilds and shuns and distains men. Like the *bandolera*, she has chosen to fight openly in response to pressures from dominant society as represented by men (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 174–217). The scholar/career woman was the least popular of the subtypes of the *mujer varonil*. She was only occasionally portrayed in Golden Age Theater. Importantly, this type of learned female character differs from the *mujer esquiva* in a significant way: her intellectualism and/or aspirations for career are not presented as justification for her *esquivez*. Also, by the end of the play, she is not taught the error of her ways, such as what occurs in plots involving other character types of the *mujer varonil*, especially the *mujer esquiva* (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 218–41). The *bella cazadora*, like the amazon/leader/warrior character subtype, has been raised apart from society and in

relative freedom. Because of her unconventional upbringing, she has developed a masculine skillset, such as hunting (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 242–60). The last subtype of the *mujer varonil* is the avenger. She has chosen action rather than the passivity that characterizes the normative female gender role. The avenger openly seeks retribution for the wrongs committed against her (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 261–75).

By portraying his exceptional female protagonist, Laura, using the trope of the *mujer varonil*, Lope de Vega participates in a larger cultural dialogue that explored which behaviors characteristic of gender expression should be praised and remembered and which should be forgotten, ridiculed or even banished to the realm of the cautionary tale. In this way, playwrights such as Lope de Vega contributed to the construction and communication of cultural heroes and antiheroes. This process of the description of normative gender role expectations for men and women was important because the “variety of experience...open to women, against the drabber back-cloth of the norm” (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 43) opened up more choices for behavior and social role on the part of females. This increasing availability of choices, combined with increased access to books and education for women, was seen by the cultural elite as threatening to the social stability that was dependent—at least in part—on shared cultural expectations for the distinct behavior of men and women in society. McKendrick’s research supports the argument that portrayals of female masculinity by the cultural elite had a didactic function because male authors tended to sort their gender-bending subjects into categories of “good” and “bad”, describing them as worthy of praise or meriting punishment. Art influenced, or had the ability to influence, reality, so to speak:

It is impossible to conclude that the dramatists were merely holding up their mirrors to nature in their depiction of the *mujer varonil*. . . . Most of the incidents involving women in masculine dress . . . belong to the period when their dramatic counterparts were already well-established stage characters. It is not impossible that the theater inspired some real-life *mujeres varoniles* to take action or at least suggested to them the form that action might take. (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* 43)

The label *mujer varonil* was used to describe a woman who departed “in any significant way from the feminine norm of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (McKendrick, *Woman and Society* ix). The adjective *varonil*, when used to modify the noun *mujer*, “covers a wide range of behavior and intention” (ix), including the wearing of men's clothes, the expression of characteristically male personality traits, and also the pursuit of traditionally masculine endeavors.

A preoccupation with gender was not unique to Spanish culture during the early modern period due to the significant degree of cultural interchange that was present at the time: “it was a matter of concern and fluidity in early modern Europe” (Stoll and Smith 10). The figure of the hermaphrodite, of the person of ambiguous gender, and/or the figure of the cross-dressed woman or man was a recurrent one in the cultural discourses of the time, including those of “literature, philosophy, art and religious treatises” and this was evidence of significant cultural anxieties about gender roles (Stoll and Smith 10). Writers such as Luis de León (*La perfecta casada*), Juan Luis Vives (*Instrucción a la muger christiana*) and Huarte de San Juan (*Examen de ingenios*), whose works were widely read and translated, addressed the general questioning and concern about gender

roles that characterized early modernity. The Spanish theater of the Golden Age also responded to the cultural preoccupation of gender. Interestingly, there were no prohibitions against women actors in Spanish drama (Stoll and Smith 10–11). The theme of cross-dressing was an element that was included in hundreds of the popular plays of the times and the figure of the woman-dressed-as-a-man was a popular feature.

The Vengeance of a Virtuous Virago

In *La vengadora de las mujeres*, Laura is portrayed by Lope de Vega as an embodiment of general and specific characteristics associated with the *mujer varonil* descriptive label. For example, during different parts of the play, she wears typically masculine clothes, expresses the typically masculine personality traits of intelligence, ambition and independence, and she pursues traditionally masculine endeavors such as swordplay, jousting and literary authorship⁴⁹. The ending of the play returns Laura to a normative female gender role. In doing so, Lope de Vega communicates to the audience that Laura's masculinity is a passing performance. It is a costume that can be put on and later discarded, because underneath it, her true feminine nature remains and this cannot be denied forever. Laura's true nature is evidenced by her growing attraction to a man, Lisardo, who is really her persistent suitor, Prince Federico, in disguise as a servant. Laura eventually chooses the normative female gender role that is requisite for her to be able to live happily ever after with Federico after their true identities are revealed at the end of the play.

In *La vengadora de las mujeres*, the female protagonist's body is a symbolic and discursive site for the negotiation of cultural codes and mores. Laura performs various

⁴⁹ See the plot summary in the introduction of this dissertation.

options for normative masculine and feminine behavior and at times she embodies idealistic expectations for both genders. *La vengadora de las mujeres* appears to allow for female agency and gender fluidity with regard to social relationships and even career choice by a female. It portrays an exceptional woman, Laura, who in proto-feminist fashion, critiques the current state of affairs of women and blames it on the influence of men. For example, Laura responds angrily to the gross exaggeration or erasure of realistic female subjects in canonical texts by male authors. She decides to abandon the traditional female gender role that she has been groomed for as a princess and, instead, she pursues and achieves social mobility by living as a man. As a man, Laura's performance of normative male gender role expectations is so successful that she, like Estebanía de Valderecete, bests all of her male peers at contests of arms. Ironically, the contest of arms that Laura wins at the end of the play is for her own hand in marriage.

We are introduced to Laura at the beginning of *La vengadora de las mujeres* by means of a conversation with her brother, Prince Arnardo, who is her caretaker. They are discussing a letter that has recently arrived from the Duke of Transylvania. The Duke is one of the many suitors interested in marrying the attractive Laura. In Duke Federico's perception, Laura represents a version of the Golden Age stock character of the beautiful *dama*, as described by Larson (33). This is evidenced by Federico's words in his letter. The *dama* character type is representative of idealized femininity and the associated social roles. The enamored Duke holds Laura in such high esteem that he writes, "Bien sé que no hay en el mundo quien merezca el divino valor de la princesa Laura" (Lope de Vega 4). As described in the play, Laura has a number of typical *dama* traits: she is

physically stunning, she attracts many suitors, she is of noble lineage, and she has been groomed for marriage to a noble man.

However, from the first pages of the play, it becomes apparent that Laura is, in fact, most representative of the *mujer varonil* character type. Arnardo expresses confusion because Laura does not respond to the Duke's letter in ways that correspond to the normative female gender role. Arnardo says: "Estoy / confuso; que despreciéis todos cuantos hombres veis" (Lope de Vega 24–25; Act 1). Obviously, the beautiful and noble *dama* should be interested in men, not despise them as Laura says that she does. In her discussion with Arnardo about marriage and suitors, as well as throughout the play, Laura also embodies key elements of several of the subtypes of the *mujer varonil* at once: for example, the scholar/career woman, and the *mujer esquiva*, and then the avenger. Arnardo's quote above describes traits of the *mujer esquiva*. Apparently, Laura's extensive reading has taught her a lot about the repugnant nature of the male sex and as a consequence, she has decided to shun men and not marry. Furthermore, Laura expresses a disdain for the institution of marriage because she understands it to be a social structure representative of limitations that men put on women. Laura also represents the scholar/career woman subtype of the *mujer varonil*. Because of her grave preoccupations about the general state of relations between men and women—which she developed from reading books authored by men about women—Laura has decided to forego marriage for a career avenging the wrongs done to women. In doing so, Laura embodies the avenger character subtype of the *mujer varonil* by stating directly to her brother that she intends to seek vengeance on men by writing about their faults:

[P]ropuse, por vengarme / de no querer bien a alguno, / ni permitir que me hablen,
/ y dándome a los estudios, / quedar suficiente y hábil / para escribir faltas tuyas, /
que algunas en ellos caben, / que ni ellos son todos buenos / ni ellas todas malas
salen. (Lope de Vega 90–98; Act 1)

Laura's extensive studies have led her to the conclusion that men blame women for all of their problems, which is a great injustice. As a consequence, she feels righteously indignant and resists the patriarchal constraints not only of her own relationships but also as represented by social institutions, such as marriage. She is particularly dismayed because in all of her reading, she has not found any realistic literary portrayals of women. Instead, she has found that, in general, male authors grossly misrepresent women in a myriad of inappropriate and inaccurate ways. She has read this in many literary genres, for example: history, poetry, tragedy and love stories. Laura communicates this in the passage of selected text below. She describes:

[Yo] había dado en leer / los libros más principales / de historias y de poesías / y
de tragedias de amantes. / Hallaba en todos los hombres / tan fuertes, tan
arrogantes, / tan señores, tan altivos, / tan libres en todas partes, / que de tristeza
pensé / morirme, y dije una tarde / a una dama a quien solía / comunicar mis
pesares: / «Filida, ¿qué puede ser / que en cualquier parte que traten / de mujeres,
ellas son / las adúlteras, las fáciles, / las locas, las insufribles, / las varias, las
inconstantes, / las que tienen menos ser / y siguen sus libertades»? (Lope de Vega
56–76; Act 1)

According to Laura, male authors exaggerate the positive qualities of male characters and exaggerate the negative qualities of female characters. Furthermore, men have much

more freedom than women, which is unfair and especially unjust due to the inaccurate ways in which men depict the faults of women. As Laura describes, men portray themselves in literature as solely virtuous: “todos buenos” (Lope de Vega 97; Act 1). At the same time, male authors uniformly vilify women: “[de] ellas todas malas salen” (Lope de Vega 98; Act 1). Women exist in literature in stark contrast to men, defining and maintaining masculine virtue through their feminine shortcomings. Here we see that Laura responds with indignation to a pattern of *othering* that was generally used by male authors to praise masculinity by degrading femininity. Laura regards these discursive trends by the male cultural elite as a grave literary injustice and also a significant social injustice. As she describes above, a consequence of all of this is that men can enjoy much more social freedom than women can. From discursive trends come constraints on the lifestyle choices available to women, such as herself. As Laura describes with righteous indignation, women are “las que tienen menos ser y siguen sus libertades” (Lope de Vega Act 1, 75-76). Laura vows vengeance, taking up the mission of a virtuous virago. As the self-proclaimed *vengadora de las mujeres*, Laura comes to fully embody the avenger subtype of the *mujer varonil*.

In Arnardo’s view, which is representative of the ideology of the male cultural elite, Laura’s opinions and ambitions are a source of great preoccupation and confusion. They are simply not appropriate for a female, especially one whose noble upbringing has prepared her since birth for a normative female gender role by entering into the institution of marriage. Moreover, what Laura proposes to do (shun men and refuse marriage) is lunacy because it represents not only an inversion of normative gender expectations for women, but also it is an inversion of nature itself as it was understood culturally to

conform with divine order. Women were expected to desire and marry men. As described in earlier discussions of this chapter, a preoccupation of early modern in Spain and also in wider Europe was the fear that as more women became literate, their pursuit of learning would negatively affect them and impair their judgment. An associated fear was that the increased literacy of women would cause social instability by leading to more flexibility in social roles, including gender roles. According to Arnardo, it is clear that Laura's scholarly pursuits have addled her mind, causing her to think and desire things that are unnatural to females and dangerous to the social relations between males and females:

Si el haber tanto estudiado, / para haceros singular, / de donde vengo a entender /
hace tan soberbio al hombre, / será locura en mujer. (Lope de Vega 31–39; Act 1).

Arnardo believes that intensive academic study can cause a certain effect in a man: “hace tan soberbio al hombre.” The word “soberbio” can mean either arrogance or magnificence (*Diccionario de la lengua española*). Arnardo uses this word to warn Laura that reading books can lead to either a positive or negative outcome, at least in a man. Here, the character of Arnardo again voices the concerns of the hegemonic elite when he warns his sister and ward, Laura, that intensive academic pursuit in a woman can only result in one (undesirable) outcome, which is lunacy: “locura en mujer” (Lope de Vega 39; Act 1). Arnardo believes due to reading too many books, Laura has become crazy, or at least she is acting that way. He blames her extensive studies on the fact that she has come to hate and shun men, and reject marriage. Because these behaviors go against established gender expectations for females, Arnardo considers Laura's feminist ideology to be unnatural, undesirable and dangerous.

Laura's opinions and associated lifestyle choices are incomprehensible to Arnardo and also to her suitor, Federico, the Prince of Transylvania. Federico, like Arnardo, is representative of the values and attitudes of the hegemonic elite. In the selection of text below, Federico passes moral judgment on Laura's behavior of hating men. He has spent a lot of time observing Laura from the vantage point of his disguise as the servant, Lisardo. He explains to his own servant, Alejandro, that beautiful women can have many virtues and great actions, and thus Laura can righteously defend them. However, Federico makes it clear that Laura's strange and singular behavior of hating men is certainly not a virtue and it is not defensible:

Bien pudiera defender / Laura, Alejandro, las bellas / mujeres, pues hay en ellas /
muchas que lo pueden ser / por virtudes, por hazañas / y por otras mil razones, /
pero no con opiniones / tan singulares y estrañas / y dando en aborrecer / los
hombres. (Lope de Vega 246–56; Act 2)

Throughout the play, the words of Federico and Arnardo reveal that they represent the attitudes towards women of the dominant androcentric culture. Consequently, they describe the normative expectations they have for the female gender role that women should embody. Federico and Arnardo both express great confusion and distress when Laura, who otherwise exemplifies idealized femininity (she is beautiful and of a noble upbringing), does not want to behave according to the other social expectations for normative female gender. Arnardo himself represents traditional male gender role of head of household as steward of his sister. He has tried very hard to facilitate her marriage, which corresponds to an obligation of his social role. Federico plays the role of suitor to the beautiful *dama*, Laura. Throughout the play, the rebellious and enigmatic Laura lives

out cultural preoccupations relating to female agency to their logical and inevitable ends (as Lope saw them). She experiences various relationship conflicts with males representing androcentric expectations, attitudes constraints and institutions. In summary, Arnardo and Federico each represent key elements of the patriarchal social hierarchy within which the women of Laura's historical times had circumscribed social roles and associated expectations.

Laura as the protagonist of *La vengadora de las mujeres* represents a troubling ambiguity and fluidity in gender, especially in her relationships with Arnardo and Federico. On the one hand, she embodies qualities associated with normative female gender: for example, her beauty, nobility and a certain dependence on her male steward. On the other hand, she displays masculine qualities that make her gender expression socially ambiguous: she is ambitious, opinionated, intellectual, willful and quite skilled in martial arts. Indeed, like Anna Guerra de Jesús and Esteban de Valderecete, Laura surpasses gender expectations for men after she transitions to a male social role. For example, while living clandestinely as a man, Laura defeats several skilled men in feats of arms, including Federico, thereby winning a prestigious tournament. At the beginning of Act III, Laura's servant, Julio, summarizes her virtues as he helps her disarm after she has defeated all of the other (male) contestants of the tournament for her own hand in marriage: "¡oh, Laura hermosa!, que iguales / en las armas y la ciencia." (Lope de Vega 1–15; Act 3) Julio praises Laura for her ideal masculinity. Specifically, according to Julio, Laura is equally talented in arms and letters. That is to say, Laura conforms to cultural expectations for ideal manliness both as a scholar and a warrior. Julio also praises her daring, an idealized masculine quality. The reader will recall similar passages

in *Vida de Anna Guerra de Jesus*, for example “valiente fue sin duda el animoso espíritu de doña Anna Guerra” (Siria 17). Descriptions of the manly daring displayed by Esteban de Valderecete also occur in *Relaciones topográficas de Felipe II*, for example, the author describes how Esteban was the first to brandish his sword (a display of great manly daring and valor) in a fencing contest with professional soldier’s from the emperor’s retinue:

[P]asó por esta villa el rey de Francia preso por Su Majestad del Emperador Carlos Quinto que consigo traía hombres diestros y valientes, los cuales hizo esgrimir en su presencia con *el dicho maestro* Esteban, alias Estebanía, de los cuales batalló de todas armas y los hirió y señaló él primeramente con la espada. (Ezguerra 770)

For her part, Laura, like Anna Guerra and Esteban de Valderecete, is praised for the daring and prowess that she has displayed in a martial conflict and in comparison to other men of skill and daring. Laura replies to Julio’s compliment on her bravery that she has dared to do what she has done is because of the great obligation she feels to seek vengeance for women in retribution for the wrongs that have been done to them by men.

Flirting with Feminism: Staging a Socio-Feminist Approach to Androtexts

In *La vengadora de las mujeres*, Laura's mixture of masculine and feminine qualities as portrayed within the *mujer varonil* character type allows for a socially acceptable and entertaining exploration of the potentially subversive topics of female literacy and female agency. At issue in this present chapter and in the larger dissertation is how to fruitfully and appropriately examine texts written by male authors about male-female relationships

and gender norms, while keeping in mind that these norms and relationships would have been understood according to different standards than those of contemporary times.

The part played by the author of a text is a piece of the equation. Examining the ideology that a text communicates in relationship to the subject position of the author can provide a useful point of entry into an analysis of the text as cultural artifact and communicator of cultural norms. As Larson attests, the seventeenth century male playwright is a product of his socialization and, thus, he is “undoubtedly influenced by the mores of his age” (33). The writers and artists of Baroque Spain felt “provoked and challenged” by the socio-political context of the world that surrounded them. They, in turn, used their art to provoke and challenge, seeking as their primary objective to “incite a reaction...[using as means to do so] shocking...subject matter, and striking juxtapositions of antithetical concepts” (Robbins 15). Significant to the scope of this dissertation, the driving force behind Baroque authors’ use of provocative subject matter is identified by Robbins as a desire to “force the individual to question his or her assumptions and priorities, and to correct and realign them if necessary” (15). This is clearly evident in *La vengadora de las mujeres* by Lope de Vega: throughout the play, Laura continually provokes her male counterparts to question their assumptions and priorities with regard to gender roles. However, by the end of the play, Laura herself has been forced to confront her own assumptions about men that have turned out to be in error. As a consequence, she realigns her ideology and gender expression with traditionally conservative expectations for females. This aspect of *La vengadora de las mujeres* clearly aligns with the “profoundly moralistic” trend of Baroque culture (Robbins 15).

Given that Lope de Vega was influenced by his socialization as a normative Spanish male, given that his subject position makes him a spokesperson for the perspective of the dominant cultural elite, and given that subject matter of *La vengadora de las mujeres* is female agency, we may analyze *La vengadora de las mujeres* as a response to a crisis in masculinity that was a well-documented problem in seventeenth-century Spain.⁵⁰ Lope de Vega's text offers both an examination of factors precipitating this crisis in masculinity and a solution that restored explorations of gender fluidity back to traditional roles associated with social stability. In this way, *La vengadora de las mujeres* upholds as well as praises the androcentric social hierarchy of dominant Spanish culture and its associated normative gender roles. Lope de Vega's text exemplifies the Baroque trend of addressing the type of novelty that was understood to threaten social stability by integrating it into the traditional social order. As Maraval explains, the hegemonic elite responded to the threats of novelty and cultural uncertainty by endeavoring to direct human behavior in ways that reached the extra rational levels of individuals, from there moving and integrating individuals "into the supporting groups of the prevailing social system" (*Culture of the Baroque* 227). One of the most important techniques for accomplishing this was to attract attention by suspending novelty. Lope de Vega does this by first fascinating and intriguing the reader with Laura's outlandish behavior with regard to gender expression, then by showing that she is in the end reintegrated into society in a way that upholds its traditional social structure with its traditional social roles for men and women. Maraval summarizes this technique employed by Lope de Vega in *La vengadora de las mujeres*:

⁵⁰ Later discussions in this chapter will describe and contextualize this crisis in masculinity.

The new pleased, the never-before-seen attracted...but this would only be permitted in apparent challenges that would not affect the underlying foundation of beliefs holding up the absolute monarchy's social framework (Maraval, *Culture of the Baroque* 227).

In *La vengadora de las mujeres*, Lope de Vega addresses the growing preoccupation with masculinity that characterized seventeenth-century Spain. This preoccupation is documented by José Cartagena Calderón as a crisis of virility that was understood by the hegemonic elite of Spanish culture to be causing the decline experienced by the country. As Calderón summarizes: “La opinión cada vez extendida era que el imperio se había ido irremediamente a la ruina por haberse presuntamente desvirilizado” (9). Maraval clarifies that feminization of Spanish society was understood to have a strong moral component. Specifically, the state of cultural and political decline and ruin in Spain and the Spanish Empire was due to a cultural feminization, which was itself ultimately linked to a state of “relajación moral” (Maraval, *La cultura del barroco* 94). In fact, Sancho de Moncada, a prominent Spanish economist, wrote in 1616 that the country's problems had resulted directly from the efeminization of Spanish society. In Moncada's words, “la gente ...[es] tan regalada y afeminada” (quoted in Maraval, *La cultura del barroco* 93–94).

Male writers, who were socialized as members of the cultural elite, responded to the social and moral crisis of Spain's decline in characteristic ways. According to José Antonio Maraval:

Everywhere, the seventeenth-century theater reflected (although not necessarily in a direct way) the forms of life, the feelings, and the moral values of the code

established in monarchical-nobiliary society....on the level of sublimation deemed effective for accomplishing the defense of this society in the midst of the tensions of the time (*Culture of the Baroque* 143).

Across popular genres, they addressed cultural concerns about the fluidity of gender roles. One way of doing this was by using the *mujer varonil* concept to explore social relationships between the sexes and to clarify gender role expectations for men and women. Complicated and shifting relationships of power are inherent to the concept of masculinity itself and how it functions in socio-historic context. According to Maurice Berger, “the category of masculinity should be seen as always ambivalent, always complicated, always...mediated by other social factors, including race, sexuality, nationality, and class” (3). Earlier discussions of this chapter have described how the process of reducing people and groups to labels that exist in binary opposition to each other is a process that defines identity through difference. In this process one term—for example, masculinity—is privileged and given more social worth as well as increased moral value. Another term of the equation—femininity—exists in opposition to the privileged term and it is continually used in cultural discourses of *othering* in order to define the privileged term and to clarify what it is not. What results is an androcentric cultural ideology and an associated social hierarchy. Laura, the protagonist of *La vengadora de las mujeres*, both challenges this hierarchy as a woman and operates successfully as a man from within it. Before discussing further, it is useful to examine the related concept of *masculine hegemony*.

According to historian John Tosh, “masculine hegemony” is a term that communicates the heavy ideological weight that is inherent to processes of making

cultural distinctions not only between men and women, but also between different categories of men (192). Given that masculinity itself is a culturally imagined and shared concept, it is inherently unstable (Tosh 192). Thus, it is in constantly need of being defined and redefined by difference. That is to say, its very existence depends on processes of othering. The notion of Spanish virility was also connected an assumed morality that justified the country's imperial project. This is because virility was associated with Spanish national identity and moral worth. Tosh affirms that this type of hegemonic masculinity depends on a type of social recognition that is in itself always contentious. It is achieved and maintained with difficulty (Tosh 192). In order for a society to maintain hegemonic masculinity, its cultural elite must ensure social stability by continuously searching for and describing a continual supply of cultural others—for example, women and other social subordinates—in ways that make the masculinity of the hegemonic elite seem natural, monolithic, praiseworthy and moral. To this end, the hegemonic elite of early modern Spain and Spanish America continually engaged in literary discourses that functioned socially to define and maintain the three normative gender roles of male, female and third gender. The texts and genres analyzed in this dissertation are representative of this process. As Maraval describes:

The...art of the [Baroque] epoch...strove...to integrate the public that contemplated it into the system of values of the nobiliary society in whose service its activity unfolded (*Culture of the Baroque* 143).

La vengadora de las mujeres, like the other texts examined in this dissertation, portrays its exceptional female at different times as embodying traits characteristic of male gender, female gender and idealized combination of the two (third gender or *mujer*

varonil). In this way, Lope de Vega's play is representative of Baroque aesthetic, which represented a "culture of challenges and questions" (Robbins 15). By giving her qualities that reference the character type of the beautiful *dama*, Lope uses Laura to represent aspects of normative femininity. By placing Laura fully into the role of the *dama* at the end of the play, Lope de Vega's text affirms not only the naturalness of this role for a person assigned female at birth, but also the desirability of the normative female gender role for all females. Lope de Vega does this in an entertaining, engaging and enjoyable manner because he, as well as other Baroque writers, followed the tradition of Horace, the Latin poet, who taught that "art should both please and instruct" (Robbins 15). McKendrick asserts that Lope de Vega consciously exploited the known popularity of the *mujer vestida de hombre* character because he knew that she could pack a theater (*Woman and Society* 312–13). In particular, Lope de Vega used the *mujer varonil* character in his works to investigate the type of social responses that her challenges of patriarchy could elicit (*Woman and Society* 313).

As was noted in Chapter 2, other aspects of identity that intersect with a person's gender—such as race and class—can influence how that person's performance of gender is read socially. *La vengadora de las mujeres* explores the bending of class as well as gender. For example, Prince Federico's disguise as a servant is revealed at the same time that Princess Laura reveals that she has performed a male social identity. The following dialogue occurs after Laura (disguised as a nobleman) has won the contest for her own hand in marriage:

“ARNALDO: ¿Qué dices? /

LISARDO: Que he ganado / el premio que está propuesto.

ARNARDO: ¿Pues cómo, no eres Lisardo?

LISARDO: Para ganar esta empresa / con ese nombre me llamó. /

ARNARDO: ¿Pues quién eres? /

LISARDO: Federico, el príncipe transilvano; / y porque veáis que fui / el
vitorioso en el campo, aquesta es la banda azul [...].

LAURA: Con mentira no. Que yo, / por mostraros que ha llegado / el valor de las
mujeres, / al más vitorioso lauro, / armada en blanco salí / a venceros y a
mostraros / cómo salí con mi intento.” (Lope de Vega 733–57; Act 3)

At the end of the passage quoted above, the *mujer varonil* Laura makes clear that she is the one who has emerged victorious on many levels, despite what appearances may lead the men to conclude. This is clearly an engagement by Lope de Vega of the Baroque theme of appearance versus reality and of the associated themes of *desengaño* and *parecer*. While Lope de Vega uses the character of Laura to highlight and explore cultural contradictions with regard to gender roles and expectations, by the end of his play, he carefully restores the balance and harmony of the social order that Laura formerly turned upside-down. The social advantages to maintaining the normative female gender role to society are clearly implied by *La Vengadora de las Mujeres*: all of the stress and instability that was caused by Laura’s gender-bending activities and feminist ideology is relieved by her placement into a normative female gender role for the rest of her life. This makes personal and social stability through marriage possible.

This ending of *La vengadora de las mujeres* represents a confirmation of the ideology that the cultural elite held with regard to social order. The seventeenth century was characterized by a neoplatonic intellectualism in which love is understood to be an

essential part of the maintenance of universal harmony. According to this view, the world is understood to be a reflection of God's will and as such, it has a natural order and balance to it that facilitates the well-being of humankind, including the relationships between the sexes. This harmony is established and maintained through a hierarchy of authority that flows down from God to king and to from king the authority figure of each family (the head of household). Marriage is understood to be an essential element of this order of androcentric hierarchy, stability, and harmony. According to McKendrick, seventeenth century dramatists such as Lope de Vega used marriage at the end of a play in order to restore order and the natural hierarchy in concordance with neoplatonic ideas. This is evidenced from the passage of primary text below, spoken by the servant Lucela. The selection is from the conclusion of *La vengadora de las mujeres*, in which the love between Laura and Federico is praised and celebrated because it has undone Laura's masculine desires and ambitions, which are understood to be unnatural to a person of the female sex:

¡Dulces vitorias de amor! / ¡Levantad blasones altos!, / pues nunca se han visto
faltos / de nobleza y de valor. / ¿Para qué Laura blasona / y lo que enseña no hace,
/ y al amor que la deshace / hoy sus triunfos no perdona? / A me, pues nació
mujer, / pües solo por amar / han venido a sujetar. / muchas reinas su poder.
(Lope de Vega 465–75; Act 3)

As we see from examining the passage above in context, Laura's marriage to Federico is not merely a plot convention. It is a manifestation of the worldview of the seventeenth century hegemonic elite that order and stability (social, political and divine) is dependent on the security that results from the previously described social hierarchy

(McKendrick 172–73). This social order depended on the stability of the culturally sanctioned social roles of male, female and *third gender*. Because Laura does not enter the religious orders where the *third gender* role is socially acceptable, she must choose one of the other two socially acceptable roles of male or female. While Esteban de Valderecete chose the male gender role that allowed him to wed a woman, Laura, in contrast, chooses the female gender role that allows her to wed the man she has fallen in love with. Thus, by the end of *La vengadora de las mujeres*, love has restored order to all things earthly and divine.

In summary, Laura's gender ambiguity and the social problems it causes are easily and effectively resolved by her own choice of a normative female gender role and associated marriage to a man. She has fallen in love with her persistent suitor, Federico, the Prince of Transylvania and she decides to fully embody normative female gender role in order to wed him, renouncing her earlier philosophy and vows of vengeance. In this way, the play *La vengadora de las mujeres* ultimately reifies normative gender roles, the androcentric social structure that they supported, and the associated institution of marriage. In the beginning of the play, these were all targets for Laura's righteous feminist indignation. By the end, Laura has changed her mind and decided to willingly represent them. In her own words, she has given up because she cannot resist the demands of her true feminine nature:

Yo me he rendido, senado, / y pues vivir no es posible / sin hombres, yo me caso.

No pierda *La vengadora / de las mujeres*, pues tanto / cuanto aborrecerlos quise, /

tanto los estimo y amo. (Lope de Vega 842–48; Act 3)

Laura expresses at the conclusion of the play that she can no longer hate and shun men because she has come to admire and love them. She has succumbed to her female nature, as summarized by the servant Diana: “Laura...en fin / mujer, ama Laura ya ... / basta saber / que edificios de mujer / duran poco tiempo firmes.” (Lope de Vega Act III, 440-444). Laura—former *mujer esquiva*, scholar/career woman and self-proclaimed avenger of women—has recognized the error of her ways and embraced femininity. In the end she has chosen, of her own volition, to live the normative female gender role. Thus, Laura affirms the desirability and naturalness of the very social and cultural values that she called into question when she first rebelled against the portrayal of women in literature written by men.

Conclusion

La vengadora de las mujeres participates in a significant trend of the genre of Golden Age Spanish drama: it explores of the idea of the woman who doesn't accept the natural female gender role expectation of marriage. This play is representative of a larger trend in the theater that keeps the exceptional female protagonist within the confines of the *mujer varonil* stock character. Thus, although the play explores cultural concerns about the mutability of femininity and masculinity and the social construction of gender roles, the conclusion of the play both affirms and communicates dominant cultural values and attitudes about the female gender by returning the protagonist to a traditional female social role (marriage to a man).

This chapter has examined Lope de Vega's *La vengadora de las mujeres* as both the acknowledgment and restraint of an emerging proto-feminist cultural dialogue that

was significant to the historical times in which the play was written and performed. By safely containing Laura within the *mujer varonil* trope and ultimately affirming the social status-quo by the nature of its ending, *La vengadora de las mujeres* belongs to a larger body of texts that contribute to the description and maintenance of normative gender roles and the androcentric social hierarchy that they supported. These texts create order (in the form of clearly described expectations for normative gender roles) out of perceived or potential chaos, they define the identity of the cultural elite through difference (*othering*), and they communicate the superiority and dominance of the hegemonic elite and their associated social structure by portraying normative gender roles in ways that inspire admiration and imitation by the reading public.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has compared and contrasted portrayals of exceptional people who were assigned the sex of female at birth and who were from diverse social spheres. Some, such as Anna Guerra de Jesús and Esteban de Valderecete, were portrayed as cultural heroes by the male authors of their life stories. Laura, the protagonist of *La vengadora de las mujeres*, was portrayed as an attractive combination of idealized masculine and feminine traits, and most importantly, as a *mujer esquiva* who realizes the error of her ways and returns to a normative female gender role. In contrast, Eleno de Céspedes, who shared significant aspects of masculine behavior with the others but whose minority identities of ethnicity and class clashed with cultural conceptions for normative male gender, as was portrayed as a social deviant and a fraud. Rather than being praised as a marvel of miraculous masculinity like Anna Guerra, Esteban and Laura--a virtuous virago--Eleno was tried and punished by the Inquisition for transitioning to a male gender role. Female-to-male individuals who were praised by the male authors of their life stories were portrayed by these authors as *mujer varonil*. Eleno de Céspedes, in contrast, was not given the label *mujer varonil* but was instead portrayed as a diabolical, lying and deviant imposter of a man.

This dissertation has argued that the Spanish imperial project was supported by social stability, which resulted from the identification, description and clarification of three normative gender roles: male, female and *third gender*. This occurred against a historical backdrop characterized by a preoccupation about Protestantism, a Baroque fascination with contradictions and appearance versus reality, and a neoplatonic idealization of normative male / female gender roles that culminated in relationships of

love and marriage as manifestations of a natural and divine harmony and stable social order. These three normative gender roles are implicitly or explicitly referenced in and described by the selected texts.

The texts analyzed in this dissertation judge gender-bending activities, including the embodiment of a male social role by a person labeled female at birth, as either exemplary or monstrous. The popular genres of the hagiography, the *relación*, the Inquisition proceeding, and the *comedia* all supported early modern Spain's transatlantic and imperial mission by identifying, describing and urging the emulation of desirable models for normatively-gendered behavior according to three acceptable social roles. This transmission of cultural norms supported social stability in Spain and Spanish America. Gender roles were the "sum total of qualities, mannerisms, duties, and cultural expectations" (Bornstein 50) for men and women that supported social stability and, thus, facilitated the imperial project in the Americas. While the texts in the corpus used appear to provide exceptional women with some mobility as relating to androcentric social constraints, at the same time they reify the androcentric social structure by defining and supporting normative masculinity. In this way, they contribute toward advancing the imperial project by maintaining the social controls necessary for its success and by safely containing within familiar labels behaviors by exceptional females that could otherwise threaten the social order.

The value distinctions made in social discourses, such as the selected texts, between gender roles and expectations are examples of communications of social power that are not simply descriptive but productive. They generate cultural knowledge by affecting the options available to members of society for their gender expression. They

also affect how members of society interpret and value key aspects of identity and the behaviors that communicate them. Specifically, this dissertation has described how the value distinctions communicated by the selected texts as relating to gender roles and gendered behaviors affected how performances of identity (as the word *performance* is defined by Judith Butler and Richard Schechner) were read socially in early modernity Spain and Spanish America. By making distinctions between normative and non-normative gender roles and assigning positive or negative cultural value to them, societies past and present have approved or condemned the ways in which individuals labeled female at birth have expressed their gender and interacted socially in personal and professional spheres. Stories about the masculine woman—*mujer varonil*—as she is interpreted in cultural and historical context have been told and retold in various genres from the middle ages to early modernity and beyond. These stories create and evaluate cultural heroes and antiheroes and in this capacity, the texts serve a significant normalizing function by reifying hegemonic structure and social control through processes of *othering* that define cultural standards for normative masculinity that are inextricably tied to the identity of the cultural elite as it defines itself. This identity of the cultural “self” is a shared, imagined group affiliation bound up with processes of the formation and maintenance of a shared national consciousness. As such, normative masculinity is not monolithic, natural and divinely-ordained as it made to seem by that cultural discourses that communicate it: rather, both in the early modern Hispanic world and the modern one, it is a cultural concept in need of continual reification by means of its contrast with established cultural *others*.⁵¹

⁵¹ The *comedia*, as well as the other popular literary genres analyzed in this dissertation,

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communicated important information to society about cultural norms. This included norms for gender expression and corresponding gender roles. Texts from these genres were didactic in the sense that they described expectations for gender expression and associated roles by identifying and describing cultural lines of division between “self” and “other”. Examples of “self” (people who performed normative gender) were portrayed as heroic, virile and admirable. “Others” were depicted as effeminate, monstrous and deviant. The selection of representative examples of “self” and “other” was related to the imperial search for “others” in transatlantic context. The Spanish empire promoted a shared and imagined conception of national identity through processes that established of difference, dominance and moral superiority. This process of identity is based on reducing people and groups into binary categories that are understood to exist in opposition to each other. This process of “othering” is a socially constructed and engineered process that allows for the elaboration of a shared national consciousness (Reyjik 167).

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