

SHE AS HE: CROSS-DRESSING, THEATER, AND “IN-BETWEENS” IN EARLY
MODERN SPAIN

By

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To my parents.

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CHAPTER 1

She as He: An Introduction

In 1615, Tirso de Molina's Doña Juana stepped onto the stage and pretended to be a man with green breeches named Don Gil, wooing women and angering men in a character so convincing that by the play's end, there would be three more characters pretending to be Don Gil. Nine years later, Catalina de Erauso, a Basque novice who had spent most of her adulthood as a man fighting on behalf of the Spanish empire in Chile, returned to Spain a celebrity and prepared to make her way to Rome to seek permission from the Pope to continue living as a man (permission that she obtained). Roughly ten years after that, Pedro Calderón de la Barca published *La vida es sueño*, opening the play with protagonist Rosaura cursing a horse and wielding a sword in pursuit of her lost honor, all the while dressed as a man.

Female cross-dressing was an extremely popular phenomenon of the Golden Age *comedia*, appearing in every major playwright's repertoire. Lope de Vega, the undisputed "father" of the art form, includes the device in over 100 of his plays, as recorded by Carmen Bravo-Villasante. The tone of the female cross-dresser can be playful (as in the case of Doña Juana/Don Gil) or quite serious, as with Rosaura. Ana Caro's Leonor (of *Valor, agravio y mujer*) defines the act in terms of life and death. Regardless of the character's seriousness, as Lope mentions in his foundational treatise *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, the female cross-dresser was an audience favorite, though the convention was technically banned at several points throughout the early modern

theater's history due to complaints by moralists. As the story of Catalina de Erauso demonstrates, cross-dressing also occupied a marginal space in seventeenth-century Spanish reality.

This dissertation argues that Spanish theater's treatment of the female cross-dresser in the seventeenth century offers a paradigm for understanding the creative self-consciousness that made both early modern society theatrical and early modern art unique. While Diego Velazquez's *Las meninas* and Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote* serve as the prominent examples of seventeenth-century Spanish artistic self-reference in the areas of painting and narrative, respectively, I propose the female cross-dresser as symptomatic of a specifically theatrical self-consciousness that captivated public attention within and outside the theater. The mass public's equal fascination with the discursive representation of "real" cross-dressers and the theatrical creation of cross-dressing characters on stage reveal an overall concern with the limits of representation, as the presence of cross-dressing pushed boundaries of language and the self to unintelligibility. Through transvestism, early modern society asked, dramatically, about its own theatrical nature through a fascination with role-play and disrupted binaries (primarily that of male/female). This game of equivocation is visual and linguistic, its own theater, and a ruse that defines early modern dramatics from within the bounds of the *comedia* and beyond.

This type of self-reference serves as one example in a growing body of self-aware artistic expression during the period, rooted in a newfound sense of self-consciousness that emerged during the Renaissance. The interest in cross-dressing's power of distortion connects with a general artistic desire to innovate form and find ways to surpass that

which came before. Each artist of the seventeenth-century seems determined to break free in some regard from the tradition that he or she inherits, opting instead to forge new styles and art forms in the areas of painting, narrative, poetry, and theater. A new version of time characterized by violent ruptures among periods, initiated the century prior, engenders a renewed consciousness on the part of the artist as related to his own temporal positioning, as well as the making and receiving of his art. As this awareness gives way to innovation, these elements (creator, creation, and reception) become part of the often-competitive revolution, making their way into the painter's frame, the author's page, and onto the dramatist's stage.

Seventeenth-century Spanish artists, faced with the pressure to surpass the tradition they inherit, strive in each genre to engender a new art form, be it a more realist version of narrative, an Italianate poetic form, or a non-classical dramatic structure. The expansion of the female cross-dresser's manipulative capabilities and dramatic powers during the seventeenth century harnesses a type of creative genius from the stage that responds to anxieties surrounding the newfound early modern consciousness of social status and the artist's specific temporal position in the context of innovation, genre formation, and artistic precedent. Dramatists created a character that became something more than a character and, in her metatheatrical performance, more than a figurative director. An authorial, creative power was fashioned that could not be surpassed, fully replicated, or even comprehended during the course of the play. The physical and temporal space of the play opens a window for the temporary "besting" of any limitations placed upon the early modern subject. By examining how the commercial theater incorporated female transvestism into its productions, we may see the way in which early

modern Spanish dramatics attempted not only to surpass its predecessors, but also to go beyond the categorical limits, whether social, stylistic, or chronological, that conditioned its presence and prominence.

Various Hispanists interested in the phenomenon of the female cross-dressed heroines of the *comedia* have noted the tie between the figure's gender-bending antics and the broader Baroque aesthetic in formation at the time. The search for extremes, as well as the celebration of paradoxical realities and the "monstrous," all characteristic of seventeenth-century artistic expression, coalesce in the figure of the woman dressed as man. As Henry Sullivan points out, this character further offers an avenue for testing the limits of unity via representation, or rather, "Los individuos buscaban principios de unidad donde pudiesen, creando en el arte aquel extraño sentido de la belleza que rompe los límites del control que ahora denominamos el barroco" ("Tirso" 817). By changing genders, the female cross-dresser shows herself to be in control of chaos, given that she orchestrates the theatricality of gender identity. As articulated by Bravo-Villasante and Melveena McKendrick, through the blend of feminine and masculine identities presented on the stage, dramatists could express an artistic ambiguity that kept audience members guessing while questioning the "truth" expressed by the work at hand. The transvestite character labors as an agent of the *desengaño* conceit that reveals the deceptions of reality and interrogates the stability of appearances. The female cross-dresser is certainly a piece of the overall artistic puzzle of the Baroque, but we may ask to what extent these Baroque effects she carries out connect to a specifically dramatic awareness of the fleeting nature of time, the pressure to override the artistic giants of the past, and an increasing consciousness of the fragility of the social positions that cemented early modern

hierarchy. From such a perspective, the theatrical depiction of the female cross-dresser more closely links the Baroque aesthetic of testing the limits of appearances and celebrating paradox realities with the seventeenth century explosion of self-conscious art fueled by an intense sense of competition and need for novelty.

Our knowledge of cross-dressing's specific function stems from two concrete pieces of information about seventeenth-century staging and theater-going practices. First, we know that audience members enjoyed the figure greatly, given that Lope remarks upon the character's popularity with audiences in *El arte nuevo*: "Las damas no desdigan su nombre, / y si mudaran traje, sea de modo / que pueda perdonarse, porque suele / el disfraz varonil agradar mucho" (280-83). Our information about early modern costuming suggests the reasoning behind this fascination, given that the male costume would have revealed more of the female form, thus enticing male audience members from the stage with the rare glimpse of a bare ankle or clearly delineated feminine form not visible in the more shapeless female costumes.¹ These details suggest the voyeuristic nature of the *mujer vestida de hombre* phenomenon during the *comedia*'s heyday, as well as the series of moralistic objections that arose surrounding the stage practice.² Despite

¹ For a more detailed discussion of costuming and the *comedia*, see Laura Bass's discussion of teaching *El vergonzoso en palacio*. As she points out, clothing played a major communicative role in early modern Spain in both daily life and theater, made only more transparent by stage transvestism.

² The anonymous *Diálogo de las comedias*, published in 1620, which elaborates the moral and social ills of the commercial theater through the dialogic structure of a conversation between a *corregidor* and *teólogo*, identifies the participation of women and their lascivious effect on the enterprise as one of the primary problems with the cultural practice of theater during the seventeenth century. Certainly, the custom of women donning male attire fueled the claim of the theater's sexual depravity. Behind the immoral leering provoked by male dress, however, lurked a deeper danger. During the second of six "dialogues," the Regidor expresses the fear that the various reversals and *burlas* of the *comedia* could be taken as reality rather than fantasy as their effects register

the female cross-dresser's seemingly feminist objectives within individual plays, her visual spectacle implies a motive, far from liberating, that posits her as object of the male spectator's gaze. Ursula K. Heise, in her comparison of early modern English and Spanish stage transvestism, adds that Spain avoided the male cross-dressing so fundamental to Jacobean stagings so as to protect from any possible emasculation that would threaten the masculinity of the actors involved, implying a clear relationship between the costuming of the *comedia* and the sexualization of its actors. Stemming from these arguments, then, it follows that questions of gender identity and sexuality were at the heart of the stage cross-dresser's ubiquitous presence in the *corrales* from the time of Lope de Vega to Calderón de la Barca.

These details surrounding the female cross-dresser's popularity further suggest that her status was rooted in a specifically performance-based context. The particulars of her staging, or rather, the visual effect of the character in action, prompted the attention that gave playwrights a commercial incentive to repeat their use of the character in their plays. I propose, however, the existence of a broader imagination of theatrical transvestism in which this figure took part that does not depend solely on stage-based performance. Such an imagining of female cross-dressing, while still appropriating the individual gender-bending subject as object of a broader public spectacle and creative interpretation of identity, does not rely exclusively upon the question of a literal gaze, or

with spectators: "Pues y a la imaginación o fantasía es tan peligroso el asalto, ¿qué alma podía estar tanto tiempo en centinela, para defender tantas entradas? Y así solemos salir de aquellos juegos tan olvidados de que son burlas, que no hablamos ni tratamos de otra cosa: repetimos el dicho y rumiamos las razones, alabamos las agudezas y quedamos como los embriagados que todo se les va en loar el vino" (63). Despite the eventual undoing of all those tricks played over the course of the play, does the spirit of their ingenuity linger?

formal staging practices, to create theatrical spectacle. The fascination with the idea of gender-bending, and specifically the crossing of gender-based identity, expressed itself in various mediums, such as the trials of the Inquisition, courtly portraiture, colonial historiography, poetic discourse, and, of course, the *comedia*. Despite the particularities of genre and the vast difference in the actual gender and sexual practices that inspired these creative expressions, these forms of representation routinely search for the theatrical deception of the woman posing as man so frequently represented from the stage.

If we consider, for example, José de Ribera's portrait of Magdalena Ventura, we may see the early modern fascination with theater, identity, and gender-bending all merge outside the formal confines of the *corral*. In 1631, at the behest of the Duke of Alcalá, Ribera created the portrait *La mujer barbuda*, intermingling masculine and feminine elements with the artistic self-consciousness that defined seventeenth-century artistic production. Greg Felton and William B. Jordan point out that the Duke's request for the painting was a probable response to another "bearded lady" portrait created in 1603 of Brígida del Río, who visited the court of Madrid in 1590 (130).³ Clearly, the curiosity surrounding gender-bending routinely led to representation and creative interpretation. Once authority figures took note of these individuals, a need arose to capture their image and make their story a part of public discourse. In this sense, the hermaphrodite's subjectivity becomes the basis for a public musing on gendered identity.

³ A drawing from Goya's *Black-edged Sketchbook* features another "bearded lady" nursing a child. The inscription references Ribera's portrait: "This woman was painted in Naples by José Ribera known as Spagnoletto, c.1640" but Victor I. Stoichita and Anna Maria Coderech suspect the inscription to be false and added later since "In all probability, his bearded lady is not the same as Ribera's" (58). In any case, the fascination with depicting gender-bending subjects continues.

On the one hand, this impulse seems to reflect the intent to parody and ridicule for the sake of entertainment. As Barry Wind explains in his discussion of bodily deformity and Baroque art, one may trace a general correlation between *terata*, or “the malformed and the deviant” and entertainment from antiquity and leading all the way into the early modern era (1). Negative and prejudiced attitudes toward dwarfism, for example, made their way into theatrical and artistic representation, turning the abnormal into a source of farcical folly for the spectator. To a certain extent Ribera’s portrait, as well as its predecessor, form a part of this tradition in their exhibition of a physical appearance that blends features of both genders. The painting also contains a seemingly purposeful element of shock, given the stark contrast of the subject’s mostly masculine characteristics coupled with the exposed breast. As W. Michael G. Tunbridge signals in his discussion of the portrait, Magdalena’s physicality is deliberately distorted: “The breast is not natural in its position or appearance and Ribera was too good a painter not to have done this deliberately” (734).

Ribera’s version of the bearded lady, nevertheless, melds this voyeuristic curiosity with a specific sense of his own artistry, as well as an emphasis on story-telling as related to the gender-bending figure he aims to depict. His exploration of gender identity, the stark contrast of feminine and masculine biological aspects, juxtaposes with a written inscription within the frame of the painting beside Magdalena that narrates the particularities of her story. Unlike other paintings of *terata* in his repertoire, Ribera’s portrait of the bearded lady comes with a lengthy Latin epithet that reads:

Look, a great miracle of nature. Magdalena Ventura from the town of Accumulus in Samnium, in the vulgar tongue Abruzzo in the Kingdom of Naples, aged 52 and what is unusual is when she was in her 37th year she began to go through puberty and thus a full growth of beard appeared such that it seems rather that of a

bearded gentleman than a woman who had previously lost three sons whom she had borne to her husband, Felici de Amici, whom you see next to her. Joseph de Ribera, a Spaniard, marked by the cross of Christ, a second Apelles of his own time, by order of Duke Ferdinand II of Alcala, Viceroy at Naples, depicted in a marvelously lifelike way. 17th February 1631. (Tunbridge 733)

First, we may note how Ribera directs us to read Magdalena primarily as a woman posing, or deceiving us, as a man. In the description, he refers to her with feminine pronouns and focuses on her role as wife and mother. Tunbridge explains that the image of the breast in the painting reinforces this prioritization of gender traits: “It would seem [...] likely that the artist has added the engorged breast and infant to the picture to emphasize Magdalena’s true underlying feminine nature despite her masculine features” (173). While Ribera gives the subject of his painting a predominantly masculine physical appearance challenged by the abnormally placed breast, his narrative description of Magdalena emphasizes a feminine basis for gender identification. In other words, the epithet constructs a narrative about a woman who becomes something like a man. Her masculinity, in the form of the beard, covers over her primarily feminine being, such that the biologically masculine features serve as a kind of ruse or overlay. Magdalena, according to this description, is not a man but seems to be (“seems to be rather that of a gentleman”); she poses as he through the strategic stroke of the creator’s brush.

The painter’s inscription, then, guides us to read the image as deception, and to give priority to one sex-based identification over the other. As Ribera plays with the visual disorientation possible through combining physical demarcations of gender, he makes himself indispensable in the process through the use of the epithet. The self-awareness of the game created through the inscription does not stop with the reference to Magdalena, as it also mentions the scene of painting itself, and Ribera the artist. Ribera

enters the frame in word, painting himself as part of the written explanation that aids the spectator. He reassures us of his authority at the same time that he makes himself a player in the unfolding scene. The multi-layered nature of the portrait's expression of gender allows the painter to imagine himself as a type of authority figure, inside and outside the frame, that holds all of the pieces together. As such, the gender-bending portrayed through Magdalena's image becomes a lens to examine the boundaries of truth and fiction, as the individual subject serves as the point of departure for a theatrical manipulation that heightens the viewer's awareness of the process behind the product, as well as the defiance of binary classification made possible through a creative exploration of Magdalena's story.

This example of gender-bending and artistic representation outside of the official realm of the commercial theater suggests an appeal to the representation of female transvestism beyond the literal, finite gaze of the female figure. In addition to her sexual appeal, she gave form to an intricate type of trickery and an evasion of category that played upon early modern theatrical notions of identity. As we see in the example of *La mujer barbuda*, she allowed the artist a chance to link himself to such creative power, as Ribera positions himself as the puppet master in charge of directing and making sense of the confusion created by Magdalena's image and corresponding story. The suggestion of Magdalena's specifically feminine transvestism further serves to give order to a potential free-for-all of mixed gender traits while still tricking the viewer through the cross of image and word. As evidenced by the anatomical distortion of Magdalena's body within the painting, Ribera clearly did not make great effort to accurately portray his subject, but

instead used the basic facts of her life to craft a multi-faceted artistic (and dramatic) questioning of the borders of masculine and feminine gender-based identification.

The search for the artistic potential of the female transvestite did not just interest artists and playwrights. The public at large similarly craved access to the transvestite narratives of real-life gender-benders. The stories of Eleno/a de Céspedes and Catalina de Erauso, for example, repeat this pattern in which the particularities or individual complexities of gendered and sexual practices lose relevance as their personas become the fodder for public discourse. Part and parcel to the construction of this discourse is the theatrical mentality of public spectacle and the image of cross-dressing. In other words, rather than see figures such as Céspedes and Erauso for who they really were, notions of male impersonation and theatrical characterization informed a representation of their stories that made them more like cross-dressing characters.

Eleno de Céspedes, born Elena, faced Inquisitorial charges of “sodomy, bigamy, impersonating a man, mocking matrimony, [and] having a pact with the devil” in 1587 after rumors spread throughout his town of Ciempozuelos of his alleged female identity (Vollendorf 13). Born a Moorish slave, Céspedes had enjoyed an entire former life as a female married to a man named Cristóbal de Lombardo, with whom she had a child. Following the death of Céspedes’s husband, she began living as a man and became licensed as a surgeon, marrying María del Cano in 1586. The assumption of a male identity allowed him to take on various roles, or rather, travel and work in a variety of trades, including as a farmhand, shepherd, and soldier. Ultimately, the Inquisition regarded Eleno’s defense as what Vollendorf refers to as “Céspedes’s charade of male impersonation,” and he was separated from his wife and forced to adopt a female identity

(24). Inquisitional authorities adopted a notably theatrical approach to airing Céspedes's transgressions when issuing punishment, and the public took note. Ordered to work at a hospital, Céspedes was eventually discharged due to the overwhelming number of visitors eager to glimpse the figure behind the now famous case of gender reversal.

A more victorious (and salacious) female cross-dressing narrative of the seventeenth century involves Catalina de Erauso, the Basque "warrior-nun" who escaped the convent at the age of fifteen and lived out the majority of her life as a man. Traveling throughout Spain as a page and then in South America as a soldier on behalf of Spain's imperial efforts, Erauso earned international notoriety when her biological identity was uncovered and she was forced to return to Spain to face monarchal and religious authority. An autobiographical text later emerged, *Historia de la monja alférez, Catalina de Erauso, escrita por ella misma*, detailing her transformation and her subsequent sexual and military exploits, though scholars have questioned the veracity and authorship of the text. The public attention given to the "lieutenant nun" did not stop with this memoir. Erauso's story was also the subject of a *comedia* by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, as well as a 1944 Mexican film, directed by Emilio Gómez Muriel and starring the famous Mexican actress María Félix, and a 1986 Spanish film directed by Javier Aguirre.

The interest in these two individuals highlights the social power they wielded. This power derives from their ability to recognize the theatrical nature of identity, and then use it to their advantage. Both of these stories also demonstrate the limiting nature of the collective reaction to their individual lives and the erasure enacted by this reaction, given that the Inquisition uses the veil of "male impersonation" to ignore Céspedes's more complicated account of her gendered and sexual identity, while Erauso becomes an

actual cross-dressing character in a play. The flip side to this limitation, however, is the general threat to order posed by both of these stories with regard to their distortion of the firm boundaries surrounding identity and the relative opportunity and mobility as determined by one's gendered, classed, and race-based social status. By taking on male privilege, both of these individuals were able to travel, work in a variety of trades, and change their romantic and domestic partners as they wished. Céspedes's and Erauso's stories indicate the manner in which an awareness of one's highly categorized and policed position within early modern Spanish society offered the potential to make pliable those edges that seemingly held together a hierarchical order of persons. This stepping out and crossing of categories, then, resonated with the early modern subject at the same time that it became a form of *terata* that could function as a potential source of entertainment.

The female cross-dresser of the stage similarly plays upon this social power that created such fascinating stories outside of the theater. As Jonathan Thacker highlights in *Role-Play and the World as Stage in the Comedia*, the everyday life of early modern Spain was theatrical, given that each citizen acted out a given role based on his or her social class, gender, race, and religion. As a result, spectators could recognize and relate to role-play as presented from the stage. When characters left their designated roles and entered into new ones (the stage cross-dresser being one example of this), playwrights delivered social critiques in which early modern subjects made subversive use of role-play to change their standing and thus question the original order. Though lacking in a formal stage, the interrogations and reactions to the stories of Céspedes and Erauso similarly ignited interest through this form of strategic or subversive role-play that re-

worked the early modern subject's normalized vision of the self and the possibilities within that subject position. The movement and degree of change possible in their stories offer another level of "production value" in this regard beyond the visual appeal of the woman in a male costume. Through the popularity of these transvestite narratives that existed outside of the theater, we may see some of the dramatic potential and collective energy that artists, playwrights, and authorities alike attempted to extract through the filter of transvestism. This same potential lies at the heart of the female transvestite so popular and essential to the *comedia* of the early modern period, and has much to do with the genre's success and advancement over the course of the seventeenth century.

Female cross-dressing plots follow a basic pattern: a female character finds herself dishonored by a male character who has moved on to a new love interest. The dishonored woman, faced with the options of the convent or death, opts to dress as a man and create an alternative identity. With this new identity, the character is able to interfere with the play's events, particularly those related to her former suitor's new amorous pursuits. She stages various levels of deception that the audience tracks. On one level, the audience understands the character to be a woman who has chosen to pose as a man (she either states or enacts this transformation in a monologue on stage). The audience then watches this same character pass within the created reality of the play as a man, with both levels of identity remaining "true" for the work's duration. Even within the basic outlines of the repeated plot line, the character acts out an ability to create multiple levels of seemingly incongruent yet simultaneous levels of knowledge.

Through explorations of female cross-dressing, audience members could experience the theatricality of their own identities as a transformative power, and artists

could position themselves at the helm of this potential. The figure of the female transvestite offered a form of ingenuity at the social and stylistic level that coincided with an explosion of self-conscious art striving to tout the power of representation and the artist who wields such a power. The proximity of Ribera to his monstrous creation, and his eagerness to immortalize and praise himself in the painting, offers us one example of a broader artistic environment in flourish that aimed for greatness and discovery that could overshadow the past and position the artist or writer as victor. In what follows, I will provide a brief sketch of how the seventeenth-century author's self-consciousness manifested itself in each genre (poetry, narrative, and drama) in order then to situate female cross-dressing as a unique tool used to override those pressing concerns that propelled new modes of expression in each form of writing during Spain's Golden Age, while indulging the public's fascination with the theatrical play of identity.

When seventeenth-century artists approached the task of depicting life, they did so with a strong sense of their own aesthetic prowess, as well as that of their chosen genre. Diego Velázquez's *Las meninas* (1656) perhaps serves as the example *par excellence* of self-reference during Spain's Baroque era of the seventeenth century. *Las meninas*, like *La mujer barbuda*, makes use of what was regarded as physical abnormality through the inclusion of a dwarf among the ladies-in-waiting. As Wind also makes clear, however, the mockery typically accompanying such imagery was not precisely the attitude with which Velázquez approached his portraits of dwarfs, often avoiding the nods to the ridicule, folly, and voyeuristic fascination that defined the representation of *terata* over the centuries. His inclusion of the ladies-in-waiting of his masterpiece seems to be instead an attempt to bring to light art's totalizing quality, rather

than subsuming their personhood into a spectacle of the abnormal for the normalized spectator. In this painting, Velázquez incorporates the figure of the dwarf to show the exact breadth of his art form, the way in which he can sum up “all facets of nature, ranging from the lower life-forms—the dog, Bárbola, and Pertusato—to the august—the *infanta*, and the king and queen” (89).

In addition to exploring the various antitheses that allow the artistic medium its all-encompassing quality, Velázquez also considers himself as part of the creation. The painter enters the frame and his subject appears in a reflection, inserting the artistic process as the work’s primary focus and inverting the primacy of the thing painted—it is a simulacrum, a mirror even of the reality represented within the frame. Concomitant to the artist’s presence in the painting is the increased mindfulness of the spectator, he who consumes the artist’s work. In addition to the many onlookers of the portrait itself, those of us who view the image become increasingly implicated, as we presumably occupy the position of the artist’s gaze, glimpsing the refracted image of the painting along with those depicted. The artistic self-reflexivity of the painting encompasses multiple levels: the individual figure of the artist, the process of creation, and the reception of the final product. The reflected image of the artist’s noble subject matter further reminds us that this type of meta-contemplation will not leave the overall product unaffected, as the painting comes to encapsulate the shift in frame and the resultant multiplication in perspective. Through this complex depiction of the artist at work, Velázquez seems to be painting himself, or rather, asserting himself in his role as artist via the depiction of his method, or as Edward Friedman explains, “Velázquez unquestionably wants to cultivate

an individual style, and he dissociates himself from the Renaissance and even from those artists, like Caravaggio, who most keenly have influenced him” (“Afterword” 289).

This defiant or competitive attitude toward artistic forerunners, coupled with the distortion and complexity of the work itself, function as key elements of seventeenth-century Spanish self-reference. As the artist places himself in his work and points to himself and his process by and through this same method, a new attitude surrounding artistic precedent takes hold and the expected relationship between content and form warps, with form often conquering or pre-empting content. In each of the three major genres of the seventeenth century, poetry, narrative, and drama, these self-referential elements accompany an attempt to generate something new in the art work that is different from the past, with the contemplation of representation, the artist, and the consumer serving as key elements of this “breakthrough” in each category. The artist’s awareness of his creation and his anxious, defiant, and/or competitive attitude as related to its relationship to past works, though seemingly a departure from Renaissance odes to the classics, in many ways can be said to only inherit and intensify this very relationship.

As Matei Calinescu explains in his discussion of the development of modernity, the dawn of the Renaissance brought with it a new notion of practical, as opposed to theological, time, and the discovery of “periods” such as antiquity, the Middle Ages, and, of course, modernity. Petrarch, for example, introduces the image of the “dark age,” realizing his position in time as distinct from that of previous artists, or rather, “To Petrarch and then to the next generation of humanists, history no longer appeared as a continuum but rather as a succession of sharply distinct ages, black and white, dark and bright. History seemed to proceed by dramatic ruptures” (21). The artist becomes aware

of his relationship to the past, and artistic periods form through their severing from anterior ones. The Renaissance artist looks to the classics for inspiration and a basis for advancement. This relationship to antiquity, nevertheless, develops from a counter-identification to it, creating the central paradox of Renaissance art, or, as Calinescu puts it, “Here we are faced with an obvious paradox, namely, that the Renaissance’s much discussed activist optimism and cult of energy emanate from a vision of world history that is essentially catastrophic [...] To speak of the immediate past [...] as “dark” and at the same time posit the certainty of a “luminous” future [...] involves a *revolutionary* way of thinking” (21).

Elias Rivers uses this same word to describe the move made by Boscán and Garcilaso in 1543 with the publication of *Las obras de Boscán y algunas de Garcilaso*, when on page 38 they introduce the break from the *cancionero* tradition and begin to try their hand at Italian forms, “a poetic revolution that had been brewing since 1526” (14). Boscán specifically refers to the Italian style as better, or rather, “más grave y de más artificio y mucho mejor” (14). When the two poets begin to imitate Italian poetic forms, they simultaneously adopt the artist’s paradoxical attitude toward his own temporal positioning, an attitude formulated by their new source of inspiration, Petrarch. While on the one hand they acknowledge the superiority of the forms they choose to incorporate, in doing so they depart somewhat abruptly from their own poetic inheritance. In effect they carry on the tradition of rupture whose imagery Petrarch himself cultivated. The “carpe diem” theme of Garcilaso’s “Soneto XXIII” reflects this knowledge of fleeting time, particularly in the last stanza, in which “todo lo mudará la edad ligera / por no hacer

mudanza en su costumbre”⁴ (13-14). As poets of the seventeenth century then inherit this form and take on the specific theme introduced to the Spanish tradition by Garcilaso, their awareness of the chain of influence, as well as the tradition of rupture that comes along with it, intensifies from within the formal confines of the sonnet itself. Góngora’s take on the poem transforms the natural metaphors used to describe female beauty into a competition, in which the idealized *dama* triumphs over nature, yet cannot, as in Garcilaso’s version, overcome the pulverizing nature of time, as “se vuelva, más tu y ello juntamente / en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada” (13-14).

Sor Juana, continuing with this intertextual tradition, directly targets the art object as that piece of deception that erases the effects of time, “en quien la lisonja ha pretendido / excusar de los años los horrores, / y venciendo del tiempo los rigors, / triunfar de la vejez y del olvido” (5-8). Here, artistic representation replaces feminine beauty as the poet’s primary subject and her awareness of her own fleeting presence in comparison to this object reaches its pinnacle of cynicism: “es cadaver, es polvo, es sombra, es nada” (14). Rivers marks this as the effective end of the Baroque in terms of poetry, since “disillusion is the only subject matter left for poetry, until disillusion itself collapses, leaving nothing” (23). The poet’s awareness of his position in time begins as a way to introduce new forms of creation and linguistic experimentation, then intensifies toward its own destruction. As Quevedo remarks in his sonnet “Representase la brevedad de lo que se vive y cuán nada parece lo que se vivió,”: “hoy se está yendo sin parar un punto; / soy un fue, y un será y un es cansado” (10-11). Here the poet’s presence within the sonnet binds with the temporal preoccupation; it is what defines him and what

⁴ All poetry is from Rivers’s *Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain* unless otherwise noted.

destroys him, fragmenting his sense of self between the past, present, and future. His final image does not offer much more optimism than Sor Juana's: "he quedado / presentes sucesiones de difunto" (14).

The intertextual chain of influence inherent to the "carpe diem" theme that runs through Renaissance and Baroque Spanish poetry creates an echo between different artists over the two centuries. The poet shows his own sense of himself within the poem indirectly by recognizing the tradition of his art form that he then manipulates and re-works. A more direct acknowledgement of this process may be seen in Lope de Vega's "Soneto de repente," in which he both inserts himself as poet and makes the writing of the sonnet itself the subject matter of the poem. This playful nod to the formal conventions that marked the Spanish Renaissance's poetic revolution preserves the sense of anxiety that came with it, here in a light-hearted manner: "Yo pensé que no hallara consonante / y estoy a la mitad de otro cuarteto, / mas si me veo en el primer terceto, / no hay cosa en los cuartetos que me espante" (5-8). Here, there is less preoccupation with time, and the self-referential element deals more with the relationship between artist and work. In each stanza, Lope speaks in the first person, literally inhabiting his poem: "estoy a la mitad de otro cuarteto," "Por el primer terceto voy entrando," "Ya estoy en el segundo," etc. Creation is a matter of hitting certain marks, or rather, fitting the model, such that he knows he has finished by successfully reaching the fourteenth verse: "contad si son catorce y está hecho" (14). Here Lope makes light of notions of repetition and re-creation of form, laughing at himself as the reigning champion of his own rushed work.

While the adoption of the Petrarchan sonnet creates a series of poems that grapple with the implications of this legacy, Góngora's "Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea" engages

more directly with the classics, taking up the story of Ovid's Polyphemus, while maintaining the *octava* form of Garcilaso's *églogas*. As Friedman points out, the sense of competition occurs on multiple levels, binding form and content in a series of battles: "Once more, the motif of rivalry covers the poetic and the extrapoetic: the contest for Galatea, the battle to supersede the intertext, and the quest for critical recognition, for victory over one's peers" (286). Although Góngora does not directly dwell in his poem the way that Lope does in "Soneto de repente," he makes his voice known in the opening stanzas of the work, calling attention to his creation and asking for it to be heard. He begins with mention of the verses themselves, "Estas que me dictó rimas sonoras, / culta sí, aunque bucólica, Talía" (1-2). Góngora constructs another level of competition in these first three stanzas, in which he must appeal to the Count of Niebla to turn his attention from the hunt and onto his poem. In the second stanza, he expresses this clash metonymically through a rivalry between the hunter's *cuerno* and the poet's *cítara*: "Y al cuerno, al fin, la cítara suceda" (16). As the story of the poem progresses, Góngora makes continued use of hyperbaton, metonymy, and extended metaphor to heighten the linguistic complexity of a fairly simple set of events, such that the poetry of the story supplants its content. In stanzas 46-58, Góngora introduces another poet into the poem, when Polifemo futilely attempts to address Galatea in an imitation of his creator. Góngora quickly strikes him down, however, immediately making mention of "su horrenda voz," at the end of his speech, or as Friedman more nicely puts it, "roaring and awe-inspiring but noticeably, and studiedly, less eloquent than his creator's" ("Afterword" 286). By establishing this relationship of poetic inheritance within his own

poem, Góngora can reverse the same tradition of rupture and competition in which he participates, further championing himself through his own art.

Throughout early modern poetry, one can trace the progression of a certain anxiety of influence that renovates poetic form while also allowing each individual poet to contemplate his or her positioning within a newly acquired sense of time. An entrance into and contemplation of the art form becomes a matter of self-assertion, and in the case of Góngora, personal triumph on each of the multiple levels of discourse created by the breaking of frame. Ultimately, however, the relationship to art object and artistic tradition constitutes surrender in the case of Sor Juana and Quevedo's poetic musings on the deceptive qualities of art in this regard. Whereas Sor Juana's assertion of "nada" seems to close off her inherited period of creative production, in narrative, Cervantes initiates a rupture of his own, deliberately breaking free of the popular idealist literature of pastoral and chivalric romance that dominated reading practices at the time and asserting new narrative principles through *Don Quijote*.

If Velázquez's *Las meninas* is the most recognizable example of self-reference in painting, and perhaps even just the most recognizable example of Baroque painting in general, the same can of course be said of Cervantes's *Don Quijote* in the area of literature. While Cervantes may not be looking to renew the classics when he pens his novel, he does take the past into account as he crafts a new genre, critiquing ideal forms of literature for their lack of a verisimilar basis and then ultimately competing with inferior imitations of his own work when the falsified second part of the novel emerges in 1614. The various elements of self-consciousness that appear in seventeenth-century poetry can be seen to converge immediately in Cervantes's novel. The prologue to Part 1

contains the same awareness on the part of the artist of his relationship to his creation and the entrance of the creative process itself into the novel. In this introductory passage, “Cervantes” the author seems to be speaking, as he crafts a voice that presumably reflects his preoccupations as author of Don Quijote’s story, which in effect sets the satirical and autoreferential tone of the narrative, as he explains to a friend: “le dije que pensaba en el prólogo que había de hacer a la historia de don Quijote, y que me tenía de suerte que ni quería hacerle, ni menos sacar a luz las hazañas de tan noble caballero” (7). In what follows, this “Cervantes” projected by the author discusses with his friend the question of how he should go about dealing with precedent in his novel, with the ultimate conclusion being that he should part ways with it, given his overall aim to criticize sentimental forms of literature: “este vuestro libro no tiene necesidad de ninguna cosa que aquellas que vos decís que le falta, porque todo él es una invectiva contra los libro de caballerías, de quien nunca se acordó Aristóteles” (11). The prologue ends up being about how to write a prologue, much like the strategy employed in “Soneto de repente,” with the difference that Cervantes simultaneously plants the seed of his theory of the novel, stating his critique that will serve as the vehicle for the various commentaries on art that will follow (all of this happening in the midst of, of course, a commentary on art).

This same authorial voice first poses the question of his relationship to the book itself, asserting that “aunque parezco padre, soy padrastro de don Quijote” (7). Before the story can even happen, the author must clarify his relationship to the text and its central player. Whereas Góngora slaps down Polifemo’s attempt at poetry, Cervantes distances himself from his creation, thereby referencing the remaining level of self-consciousness running through seventeenth century art: the work’s reception. Cervantes directly

interpelates the reader, explaining that his distanced relationship to Quijote will allow him or her the reaction of choice, “y así puedes decir de la historia todo aquello que te pareciere, sin temor que te calunien por el mal, ni te premien por el bien que dijeres della” (7). Ironically, then, Cervantes introduces a version of himself as author in the work in order to create distance from the character he fashions.

When Don Quijote dies at the end of Part 2, Cervantes firmly seals off the possibility of any other false versions, but certainly opens the way for the development of the modern novel through his turn to realist representation, his presence within the novel, interpellation of the reader, and reflections on the nature of the relationship between art and history. The commercial theater that flourished in the seventeenth century, however, does not share the same relationship with self-reflexive gestures, in the sense that their intensification over the course of the century marks the genre’s demise. As Jonathan Thacker comments in his guide to the *comedia*, “The inevitable fate of any genre that becomes too familiar is a developing consciousness of its internal machinery that often becomes the object of parody” (*A Companion* 117). Through self-reflexive gesture, in this sense, the second generation of dramatists have their own dramatic form to look back on: “If the overworked norms of the sixteenth-century romance of chivalry were ridiculed and abused by Cervantes’s metafictional *Don Quijote*, the *comedia nueva*, in its later years, at least had the consolation of being able to mock itself” (*A Companion* 117).

Before the *comedia* became the object of its own ridicule via self-gesture, the art form itself was fairly self-consciously created in a break from pre-existing dramatic precepts. Though not a *comedia* itself, Lope’s *El arte nuevo* reflects upon these changes, establishing a set of new parameters for the creation of theater in Spain. Setting aside

neoclassical insistence on the three unities, Lope focuses instead on the importance of pleasing the mass public as the guiding principle for writing plays as opposed to an imitation or inheritance of the classics. Rather than a strict division of tragedy and comedy, the two should be blended, since “Buen ejemplo nos da naturaleza, / que por tal variedad tiene belleza” (179-80). He further completes his sketch of the art form through a brief elaboration of types and verse forms for different dramatic situations. This treatise offers us a glimpse into Lope’s relationship to his dramatic heritage, as well as his creative process, as he draws for us the scene of writing: “y cuando he de escribir una comedia, / encierro los preceptos con seis llaves, / saco a Terencio y Plauto de mi estudio / para que no me den voces, que suele / dar gritos la verdad en libros mudos, / y escribo por el arte que inventaron / los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron” (40-6). Though his tone may be tongue-and-cheek and his treatise full of irony, Lope places himself as an artist firmly in the present; what concerns him are ticket sales and the immediate reaction that is produced through live theater.

Whether it be the *cancionero* tradition, sentimental literature, or neoclassical precepts, seventeenth-century Spanish writers aimed to separate themselves from their literary heritage in favor of more novel approaches in their respective genres: poetry, narrative, and theater. The awareness of periods and the fleeting nature of time that motivates this break coincides with a sense of self on the part of the artist that, when projected into the work, initiates an “art within art” motif evident in each type of literary expression. On the one hand, authors of the *comedia* take part in this practice over time, referencing other playwrights and plays as a way to acknowledge the conventions of the form and to maintain fresh interest despite their repetition. Unlike their poetic and

narrative counterparts, however, the *dramaturgos* of early modern Spain could not themselves enter and exit their works so easily. Their genre simply lacked the convenience of a prologue in which to insert themselves and challenge fiction's most basic precepts. This is not to say, however, that early modern theater did not question the boundaries between art and fiction, or that authors did not interrogate their role, and well as the nature of their "product" from within. It is instead the case that this happened through dramatic self-consciousness. One need only look as far as Calderón's universally renowned *La vida es sueño*, particularly its closing speech of Act 2, to find the questioning of perception and representation at stage center. Lionel Abel even marks Segismundo's character plot as the emblematic overhauling of genre, or rather, "The tragedy fails. Basilio's play succeeds. Metatheatre has replaced tragedy" (72).

According to Abel, who uses Calderón's *comedia* to elaborate the birth of metatheater, Segismundo succeeds because his father, Basilio, possesses a dramatic sense of self, such that he prevents the same fate that he predicts for his son and uses theatrical tactics to save him from the prophecy he dramatically re-tells in Act 1. Basilio's seemingly innate awareness of his own dramatic position resonates with the early modern self-consciousness that makes classical tragedy impossible and metatheater inevitable, as argued by Abel. He crafts the term "metatheater" to describe the type of drama that emerged during the early modern period, citing England's Shakespeare and Spain's Calderón, both staples of the commercial theater, as founders of this new kind of play. Early modern playwrights, Abel argues, cannot be authors of tragedy, but only metatheater, plays in which characters act not by divine force but rather by theatrical impulse, an impulse fueled by a sense of self that did not stop with the stage. Artists had

become aware of themselves and the weight of their artistic contribution as related to tradition and the division of periods, while daily life took on a theatrical nature as citizens aimed to fulfill given roles based on their gender, race, religion, and social standing.

While the *comedia nueva* that Lope creates may not immediately make the intense self-reflexive gestures that only become possible over time, many of the genre's first set of writers create characters who possess a keen awareness of their own dramatic positions, and metatheater becomes a key element of the art form. The *comedia's* use of role-play connects directly with its interest in ticket sales, since it created a point of connection between the *vulgo* and the characters on stage. As Jonathan Thacker explains, "Meta-theatre, in the Golden Age, makes manifest the constructed, predictable nature of social life, by demonstrating the ease with which society can be deceived by characters' self-dramatization, their metatheatrical strategies" (*Role-Play* 18). The critique only works, he argues, because it builds off of the role-play inherent to everyday life. Members of the audience, aware of their own roles and positions in society, can recognize, contemplate, and enjoy the manipulation of this same system as presented on stage: "It can do this because the 'real' society is also theatrical, because the conventions of drama are related to the conventions of social life, because metatheatre is a play-within-a-play-within-a-play" (18). In this sense, as the *comedia* makes reference to its drama through its character's various metatheatrical exploits, it implicitly implicates its spectators, re-arranging the roles with which they identify from the stage to challenge social precepts (all prior to a normative ending, of course).

Within Golden Age theater, when characters find themselves up against a wall, they turn to role-play to manipulate themselves out of the undesirable situation. In Lope's

El Caballero de Olmedo, for example, Doña Inés does just this when she faces an unwanted courtship with Don Rodrigo. Rather than remain in her position as the play's resident *dama* character who must go with the *galán*, she tells her father she wants to become a nun, which will allow her access to Tello and Fabia, agents in her secret courtship with Don Alonso who pose as tutors that can help prepare her for this new role. In this instance, the effects of the role-play are fairly limited, particularly given Don Alonso's fixed tragic fate from the play's outset. Inés's creative move, nevertheless, points to the way in which characters could become their own playwrights, referencing their genre and those consuming it all at once.

The stage cross-dresser is, of course, a key example of the intensification of this type of role-play, particularly as related to the dramatic, and social, problem of damaged honor. In Tirso de Molina's *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, for example, Don Martín takes on a new identity (that of Don Gil) to escape his obligations to Doña Juana and freely pursue Doña Inés. Doña Juana, confronted with her own dishonored status, copies Don Martín's invention, and then surpasses it. Tirso, as a kind of transitional figure between the two "halves" of the *comedia*'s popularity (the Lopean and Calderonian phases, respectively), dramatizes the artist's increasingly competitive relationship to the concept of emulation through the play's cross-dressing metatheater. Juana is a better, more appealing Don Gil than Martín is (not to mention a more fashionable one, given that the green breeches are her addition, as she herself points out in Act 3). Surpassing the original, Doña Juana's Don Gil breeds more copies, creating imitation of imitation, or what Ellen Frye terms "meta-imitation," when "a character attempts to mimic another character precisely, but that other character is him-or herself already an imitation" (129).

As Don Juan, Don Martín, and Doña Clara all attempt to emulate her character, Don Gil, the levels of fiction increase within the play. This reaches its height when Don Martín reacts to Doña Juana's supposed death, thus confusing Don Juan into thinking it has something to do with him: "¿Qué es esto? ¿Yo Doña Juana? / ¿Yo difunto? ¿Yo alma en pena?" (2895-96). As these characters reference their own dramatic position, then, a competition forms in which the copy attempts, here rather successfully, to innovate and surpass the original.

As artists wrote and painted in an atmosphere of competition, the dramatist's transvestite creation competed within the frame of the play, broadening the depth and complexity of the genre's already-metatheatrical basis. How does the cross-dresser arrive at such an exaggeration of the basic mechanisms of metatheater inherent to any early modern form of drama? The answer lies in her modes of deception, or rather, the way in which she synthesizes the visual and narrative aspects of role-play that define early modern theatricality. To illustrate this point, I will take as an example Cervantes's "El retablo de las maravillas." In this *entremés*, the entire objective is to deceive those on stage in a puppet show, a literal play-within-a-play, in order to critique the public theater as well as the ideal of the "old Christian" through the ploy of two actors, Chanfalla and Chirinos. They arrive in town with a spectacular show that may only be viewed by those who are in no way "illegitimate," and if so, "despídase de ver las cosas, jamás vistas ni oídas, de mi retablo," as Chanfalla proclaims. Pitted against them are a range of characters, from the governor to the more general "otra gente del pueblo," mirroring the audience of the work and enhancing the theatrical critique, as the audience is presented with nothing, and then sees what it is told to see. The charade, of course, works at another

level, as everyone wants to prove their racial and religious “authenticity.” The masters of the trick prevail, as Chanfalla proclaims, “El suceso ha sido extraordinario; la virtud del retablo se queda en su punto, y mañana lo podemos mostrar al pueblo.”

Chanfalla and Chirino’s parodic version of theater points out the tools of deception that serve to entertain the early modern public. On the one hand, their “retablo” offers a visual spectacle in which the townspeople look to see something and also make a theatrical mockery of themselves in the process. The show that they watch, nevertheless, cannot exist on its own. The two “playwrights” must narrate what the audience is supposed to see, spinning a story and guiding everyone to follow along and respond to it. This structures the other characters’ reactions and maintains Chanfalla and Chirino’s authority: the townspeople cannot just see any old thing, they need to see what Chanfalla and Chirino tell them to see. Initiating this process, Chanfalla makes reference to the work itself, acknowledging his role as the key player in the game: “¡Oh tú, quienquiera que fuiste, que fabricaste este retablo con tan maravilloso artificio, que alcanzó renombre de las Maravillas por la virtud que en él se encierra, te conjuro, apremio y mando que luego incontinentemente muestres a estos señores algunas de las tus maravillosas maravillas, para que se regocijen y tomen placer sin escándalo alguno!” From there, they invent amusing images for their audience to react to: “ratones que allá va decendiendo por línea recta,” “agua, que con tanta priesa se deja descolgar de las nubes,” “dos docenas de leones rampantes y de osos colmeneros,” etc. The narrative and visual modes of deception work side by side, literally, as Chanfalla and Chirinos supplement their artistic product at the same time they are a part of it: without their narration, the “retablo” does not exist.

The deception played out by the playwrights of Cervantes's *entremés*, both entertaining and effective in its execution, draws our attention to the key verbal and visual elements of metatheater that the cross-dressing character makes succinct. Whereas Chanfalla and Chirinos stand next to their visual deceit, the female cross-dresser's two levels of deception are simultaneous. In the same moment that she plays a visual trick on the audience, she may also tell them a story that shapes this visual effect. The efficacy of this melding then intensifies the levels of control and layers of confusion the character enacts. Returning to the example of *Don Gil*, the levels of imitation may be carried to the extreme, such that when Doña Juana sits at the side of her own created theater, it is the confluence of several different stories she has told all merging together in one humorous scene. The female cross-dresser takes the dramatic self-awareness so innate to early modern drama and plays it out to the extreme, synthesizing manipulative modes that other characters must string together and make adjacent.

Outside of the *corral*, authors, painters, authority figures and the "audience members" to their efforts carried the same theatrical consciousness that dictated the flourishing of metatheater from the stage. In the case of Juan de Ribera's *La mujer barbuda*, his painting strives to re-create the elements of deception at play in Cervantes's "El retablo" and Tirso's *Don Gil*, namely, the visual and narrative codes that intersect and play off of one another toward an overall effect of confusion. The painting, of course, only approximates the simultaneity of elements as presented by the cross-dressing character. The narrative story sits in the background as Ribera's words interpret his subject beside the image. Without the specific medium of theater, the efficiency is lost, and the cross-dressed character's "self-telling" turns into an overt competition between

word and image in the overall effect of the painting. In the image's approximation, however, he achieves a theatrical effect, striving to recreate the female cross-dresser's fully actualized metatheater just as Chanfalla and Chirinos do.

The female cross-dresser most efficaciously brings creator and audience closer to manipulations that threaten not only to disorient, but also distort, the senses. A fascination with a defiance of categories seems to dictate the early modern sense of theatricality embodied by the female cross-dresser and those attempts to invoke her dramatic capabilities through representations of real-life gender benders. While the commonly held explanation that women in men's clothing offered a more detailed view of the feminine body provides a practical explanation for the figure's popularity, a specific affinity for the confusion of gender and sexual identity that occurs as a result of this cross-dressing remains unexplained within such an analysis. Why did audiences like watching the blurring of sexuality and perhaps even that of identity itself?

The field of psychoanalysis, and particularly feminist contributions to this area of study, presents a useful framework for approaching this question. The developmental process by which human beings become constituted as subjects through culture has served as a central point of interest for both psychoanalysis and feminist criticism. Theories of human sexuality and gender formation are, at the core, theories about how the "self" is constituted through certain linguistic and cultural structures. Feminist readings of psychoanalysis highlight the collective cultural fantasies that regulate this process. Judith Butler, for example, posits sex (in contradistinction to gender) as a fantasy or "phantasmatic field that constitutes the very terrain of cultural intelligibility" (*Bodies* 5). In other words, as the unrecoverable site that pre-dates gender, sex functions as a

fiction to which we have no direct access but upon which we rely to understand gender identity. Jacqueline Rose also explores notions of collective fantasy in her reading of origin stories, arguing that primal fantasies emerge as a way to explain universal questions that derive from traumatic loss (Sedinger 67). Major enigmas of human experience become dramaticized as moments of emergence, or the beginning of a history. Tracey Sedinger uses these interpretations of primal fantasies to create an argument about the theatrical cross-dresser of the London stage, positing the cross-dresser as a structure that marks and dramaticizes (literally) one of these enigmatic moments, here the incongruence between knowledge and visibility (challenging positivist epistemological thinking). In other words, the woman who adopts a male identity creates a dramatic irony in which what the audience sees is not the same as what the audience knows. Within this structure of rupture, cross-dressing stages a form of desire that arises from the failure of the visible.

Early modern theatrical cross-dressing produced a pleasurable confusion as it staged the rupture behind the regulatory fantasies of class and gender identity. This reading of the cross-dressing figure, rooted in psychoanalytic thinking, suggests that part of the reason audiences enjoyed cross-dressing had to do with the way it allowed for a pleasure rooted in not only queer desire but also the failure of a knowable society with highly visible and easily definable social roles. Sedinger's analysis, though pertaining to the context of the early modern London boy actor, speaks to the cross-dressing of Spanish *comedia* and its link with questions of social mobility. This fantasy of a "visible and knowable society" (and the corresponding rupture that prompts it) also regulates the world depicted in Spanish drama of the period (Sedinger 71). Carmen Bravo-Villasante,

in her study of the seventeenth-century Spanish cross-dressers of the *comedia*, hints upon the connection between this pleasure and the aesthetics of the era, defining the audience's interest as symptomatic of Baroque artistic sensibility: "Es un equívoco donde continuamente se juega con la identidad de la disfrazada. Es mujer y aparente ser hombre. Aparece como hombre y, sin embargo, dudan de que lo sea. Lo cierto y lo incierto" (*La mujer* 73). As she argues, the seventeenth-century affinity for the transvestite character went beyond its immediate practical benefits and highlights a deeper proclivity for paradoxes: the temporary permanence of the certainty of uncertainty and the breakdown of knowable distinctions.

As would follow from Sedinger and Bravo-Villasante's treatments of early modern transvestism, the stage figure reveals an affinity for the in-between: the collapse of those distinctions that make society intelligible in its various hierarchical distinctions as well as the aesthetic rendering of opposites that defines Baroque artistry. The character unites the social and artistic aspects of categorical collapse: she confuses both a culturally and theatrically based identification. Who is the man/woman and who is protagonist? The figure introduces a kind of interminable play, a temporary freezing of the distinctions that make subjectivity and dramatic conclusion clear, one that audiences liked watching and artists enjoyed creating. The category collapse, in this sense, also speaks to a specifically dramatic self-consciousness fashioned during the period that sought to overcome those constraints that wrought the innovation and breaking from tradition that defined poetry, narrative, and theater. If early modern artists were concerned with the fleeting nature of time and their ability to create new forms of expression that asserted their mastery, the

female cross-dresser also suggests an escape from the conditions that define their artistic endeavor.

In non-dramatic mediums, we understand artistic self-consciousness in the context of competition and the anxiety of influence. The artist fashions a version of himself as part of the work (Velázquez's entrance into *Las meninas*, Cervantes' authorial "self" in the prologue of *Don Quijote*) and competes, either internally with his own creation (as in Polifemo's attempt at poetry and song) or externally with those artistic styles from which he aims to break free. In drama, the creator of the play cannot craft a voice that goes unembodied (actors will play the roles), yet he will not step into any himself. Dramatists instead may use the figure of the female cross-dresser to double theater upon itself, to take up the sense of one's (fleeting) temporal and historical position and mirror it back, responding to theatrical consciousness with more theater, until there is no innovation possible other than Castaño's (of Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa*) frank admission: "Dama habrá en el auditorio / que diga a su compañera: / 'Mariquita, aqueste bobo al Tapado representa'" (2468-70). When Castaño makes use of female dress, the metatheatricality of the convention has been so explored that he can only break the frame entirely. The competition happens through the transvestite character's trickery on stage, against not only the playwright but also the other creative components that allow her to thrive: the eager audience, and the work into which she fits. Always testing these limits, a reversal of gender becomes a questioning of category. Both Cervantes and Velázquez aim to create a total reality through fiction, showing all levels of society in all manner of situation. The cross-dresser produces this same type of reality by replicating roles that allow her movement within the play. During her time on stage, the female cross-dresser

defies any number of restrictions: first, of course, those of gender, but then also of professional placement, religious affiliation, theatrical classification, and even generic placement.

Bravo-Villasante's detailed account of the development of the female cross-dressed character over time reveals how she became a vessel to explore interests beyond those of her initial source material. As she explains, the figure, like the *comedia* itself, draws from Italian source material, most notably Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and *Orlando innamorato*, to introduce two different *mujeres vestidas de hombre*: *la mujer enamorada*, who dresses as a man for reasons of love, or rather, to follow her husband into battle, and *la heroica guerrera*, who displays a natural affinity for the masculine and dresses accordingly. Authors such as Jorge de Montemayor (in *Los Siete Libros de la Diana*) and playwright Lope de Rueda (in the short play *Los engañados*) copy these types, drawing directly from their Italian sources. Spanish dramatists then copied the copies, as Bravo-Villasante explains: "Los dramaturgos posteriores del siglo XVII en lugar de acudir a la primitiva fuente italiana, como hicieron Rueda y Montemayor, prefieren inspirarse para sus obras en modelos españoles más al alcance de la mano y difundidos. Indirectamente, sin embargo, la literatura italiana sigue influyendo a través de las versiones españolas" (30). In this sense, initially, cross-dressing, as adopted by Rueda and Lope, mostly involves maintaining romantic relationships, and this core does not greatly evolve over the course of the *comedia*'s development. (Consider, for example, Rosaura's ardent desire to recuperate her honor after Astolfo's abandonment.) Mobility remains the primary motivating factor that guides the woman dressed as man from the stage.

This is not to say that the figure does not become more nuanced and complex. Playwrights begin to put their own unique spin on the figure, as part of their new, and better, brand of theater, the *comedia nueva*. Indeed, an odd shift occurs, for example, when Tirso de Molina publishes *El vergonzoso en palacio*, which features a cross-dressed character, Serafina, who cross-dresses because she likes doing it, and she likes theater. Her scenes of transvestism are theater rehearsals where she acts out different male parts to two captive audiences, the immediate Doña Juana and the public crowded in the *corral* to see the play. Here, a sheer affinity for theatrics motivates the disguise, making the early modern self-consciousness explicit while directly referencing the medium from within. Other cross-dressed characters, though not as overtly self-referential, continue using the male disguise for practical purposes, but the mobility and possibility for change greatly increases as the character's manipulative powers expand. As discussed, the female cross-dresser, by nature of her design, harnesses a manipulative power double that of her theatrical counterparts in any given play. Playwrights such as Lope, Guillén de Castro, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón invented new and more original situations for cross-dressing that both celebrated the sport of deception and connected its destabilization of gender with other areas of identity and social structure.

The early modern female cross-dresser becomes a kind of transformative force that unleashes a unique form of dramatics that talks about itself in an imagination of mobility and progression. The undoing of boundaries and limitations taken on by the cross-dresser implies a temporarily invincible nature unique to the act of transvestism. In her discussion of the cultural function and significance of cross-dressing across the centuries, Marjorie Garber argues that the cross-dresser is not a third sex, but rather “a

mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility” that “questions binary thinking and introduces crisis” (11). When a person takes on the identity of another gender, he or she ceases to be either one or the other, but rather one as the other, effectively disrupting the strict binaries that stabilize Western culture. As a result, the cross-dresser invokes and embodies a crisis of category, serving as a useful tool within theater as related to the *mundo al revés* often created through metatheatrical manipulation. This idea of cross-dressing as a mode, rather than a third gendered- or sexual- identity, finds its parallel for Garber in the third actor of Greek drama and the Symbolic of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The third actor, neither protagonist or antagonist, plays a variety of roles, such that while there could only be three persons on stage at any time, the list of characters could be greater than three. The third actor “is not itself a third one; it is rather something that challenges the possibility of harmonious and stable binary symmetry” (12). Lacan’s Symbolic analogously links the Imaginary, in which human subjects imagine themselves and their relations to others as per the mirror image, and the Real, to which we have “no unmediated relation,” serving as “the register of language, hierarchy, law and power—the world “out there” to which the human subject must come to relate [...] through immersion in the codes and constraints of culture” (12). The emphasis here is on contextualization, breaking up a dual relation and making it “an element in a large chain,” which would be represented by the father within the incest taboo narrative (12). Given the reliance of Western society on binary relations, this deconstruction of the dyad relation makes transvestism “a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself” (17).

Garber's reading of the cross-dresser, then, would suggest a vastly devastating effect on the static hierarchical organization of identity during the early modern period. Certainly, the benefits of a retrospective critical gaze show us that the female cross-dressing characters of the *comedia* enacted no such pulverization of gender, race, class, or religious-based affiliations that shaped a person's identity. A look to the real-life gender-benders who captivated public attention, nevertheless, reveals the public's continual effort to fashion this figure, to examine this power as it emerges in their stories. In the example of Ribera's *La mujer barbuda*, the attempt to cross the viewer's sight of Magdalena with the words that define her story mimic the sensorial impasse described by Sedingler as related to the stage figure. The stories of Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes further exemplify the public's interest in extracting an image of the female cross-dresser from the facts of their lives. While Erauso and Céspedes lived very different lives marked by vastly different gender practices (Erauso in her memoir describes changing clothes and adopting a male identity, while Céspedes recounts gaining a penis during childbirth), their stories unite around the theme of mobility and male privilege—the way in which their adoption of a male identity allowed them to change their profession, geographical location, and marital status. Catalina de Erauso's memoir, for example, makes repeated mention of various romantic liaisons and violent clashes with fellow male soldiers (including her brother). Once Céspedes begins publicly living as a man, he works in a variety of professions and re-marries a woman. Although Céspedes provides a biological basis for her explanation of this transformation, the Inquisition charges her with "male impersonation," suggesting an element of play-acting as the source of this series of dramatic changes. The capacity for movement and change

inherent to the stories, then, catches communal attention and becomes the basis for public interrogations and creative considerations that contribute to a kind of non-stage-oriented theater of transvestism.

The model provided by the female cross-dresser resonated with an aspect of early modern subjectivity, namely the interplay of static and dynamic forces that defined identity and the status of the Spanish nation. The opening, of course, is followed by a closing. While the public may have expressed a hungry fascination with the different types of movement present in Céspedes's and Erauso's stories, the outcome of this fascination reinforced those same norms challenged by the crossing of generic and sexual identities. Céspedes, for example, did not emerge victorious in her fight with Inquisitional authorities and had to give up the male identity he had claimed. The *comedia* inspired by Catalina de Erauso's story, *La monja alférez*, ends with the Erauso character's emphatic denunciation of maleness and proclamation of a new, female identity. Similarly, the *comedia* generally did not create characters who would continue cross-dressing past the play's denouement, nor did the act always follow through on its subversive potential. Leonor of Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer*, for example, reneges on her initial plans to murder Don Juan, despite using her male identity, Leonardo, to provoke him to do battle for a major portion of the play.

One must question, then, the extent to which the female cross-dresser invoked a true destabilization of binaries. Did she not, in the end, actually create a reinforcement of norms in a pattern of reversal and reinforcement akin to carnivalesque discourse? The crisis of category invoked by the female cross-dresser starts with gender, a fitting place given its status as a performative reliant on repetition/re-iteration as its constituting

factor. Gender theorist Judith Butler has emphasized the lack of a pre-discursive reality as related to gendered and sexual identity. Butler, in her discussion of Michel Foucault's treatment of the French hermaphrodite Herculine, seems to agree with Garber's characterization of transvestite identity, arguing that "Herculine's anatomy does not fall outside the categories of sex, but confuses and redistributes the constitutive elements of those categories" (*Gender* 136).⁵ Butler warns, however, against viewing this categorical confusion as somehow outside the law, or is "in no way the bucolic innocence that thrives and proliferates prior to the imposition of a juridical law" (*Gender* 144). As such, the category crisis instigated by the transvestite figure does not signal an escape from the law that builds such categories, or rather, there is no complete rebellion or radical agency generated through this act. Given Herculine's suicide, even the categorical confusion that threatens binary systems ultimately does not disrupt the juridical law governing these same symptoms. Herculine's rebellion, then, demonstrates "the law's uncanny ability to produce only those rebellions that it can guarantee will—out of fidelity—defeat themselves and those subjects who, utterly subjected, have no choice but to reiterate the law of their genesis" (*Gender* 144). Butler's emphasis on the nature of Herculine's "rebellion" rings true of the Spanish cross-dresser, given that at the close of the play, her "true" identity is often revealed in order to restore patriarchal, heteronormative order. The two famous "real-life" cross-dressers of the time, Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes, were similarly forced to define themselves to state apparatuses under the guise

⁵ Foucault provides the introduction for the 1980 English translation of Herculine's memoirs, which catalogue her transformation from woman to man in 1860 at the behest of a judge to prevent a same-sex union. The story would later offer the basis for Jeffrey Eugenides' 2002 novel *Middlesex*.

of normativity, with Céspedes being forced to give up her male identity and return to living as a woman, despite her biological defense as a hermaphrodite.

While Butler's discussion of Herculine draws out the way in which gender manipulations do not pre-empt the law in this regard, I will interrogate the generative or creative element of these manipulations. At the same time that the movement between categories re-iterates the law, the corresponding discourse that emerges preserves, and repeats, the moment of confusion and redistribution mentioned by Butler, such that early modern and contemporary audiences experience them as the "play" of theater. In other words, the reversals and challenging of binaries enacted by the female cross-dresser, though ultimately undone, constitute the theatricality, or the dramatic energy, of a given play. Without the elements of deception and fascination proffered by her temporary crisis of category, the play loses its force and must end. As Lope asserts in *El arte nuevo*, once a play's conclusion has become clear to any audience, the playwright would be well advised to wrap things up as quickly as possible, given that those in attendance will not stick around once uncertainty and intrigue have subsided.⁶ The female cross-dresser provides a zenith of such ambiguity, given that the basic stalemate of her dramatic identity as well as the multiple deceptive plots it produces all center upon a cross between visual and narrative forms of story-telling, or rather, a moment of intense re-ordering. In this sense, the uncertainty and undoing of finite designations, or rather, the "becoming" signaled by the cross-dresser's crisis of category represents a creative moment that sustains representation. Given the sheer number of *comedias* produced over the century

⁶ As he explains, "pero la solución no la permita / hasta que llegue a la postrera escena; / porque en sabiendo el vulgo el fin que tiene / vuelve el rostro a la puerta y las espaldas / al que esperó tres horas cara a cara; / que no hay más que saber que en lo que para" (234-39).

(with 400 of those belonging to Lope de Vega, at minimum), the public clearly enjoyed the theatrical aspects of this liminality, which repeated over and over again to entertain them.

If the female cross-dresser enacts a crisis of category, it is a temporary one, but one that holds innate theatrical value, the only form of “being” that counted for theatergoers. The triumph of this series of in-betweens and its inevitable undoing mirrors, in miniature, the general predicament of early modern creative efforts. The audience’s interest and applause, and perhaps more importantly, its money, determined what happened on the stage, but not without a certain level of censure from institutional authority. Seventeenth-century writers had to respond to these two sometimes opposed sets of expectations. They confronted the strengthening of empire and nationalism through overseas expansion and institutional control as well as the simultaneous potential chaos of social mobility and migratory practices spurred by increased urbanization and an early form of capitalism. They captured these dual forces in their art, often questioning the normative fantasies of blood purity and class division pushed forth by religious and royal institutions in subtle but effective ways. These authors lived as members of what was arguably the first mass public within a newly self-aware nation, or rather, “the early mass phase of an early modern society that assembled an abundant population or perhaps a population incorporated and made present as never before,” as described by José Antonio Maravall in his foundational study of Baroque culture (88). Art forms opened up to this public in commercial patterns with the emergence of the printing press and the first *corrales* in Madrid, such that authors could broadcast their message to the literate “masses.”

Their message, of course, also faced religious and State censure. Maravall, the first to detail in depth the effects of the social, political, and economic changes that transformed early modern Spanish society during the seventeenth century, offers a highly conservative assessment of Spain's Baroque era, asserting that dominant institutional interests controlled all levels of cultural life so as to protect against the threat posed by a rapidly changing and growing society. Within this reading, genres such as the picaresque and the public theater can be said to push forward national and religious values while condemning vagrancy and materialism. Nieves Romero-Díaz, in her reading of the post-Cervantine novella, however, stresses an important concession on the part of Maravall, not adequately captured in Terry Cochran's translation of *La cultura del barroco*, that essentially constitutes the tension of early modern art as well as the so-called "crisis of the Baroque." Romero-Díaz cites the following passage of Maravall's original text: "[E]sto no quiere decir que no se produzcan casos, y aun muy frecuentes, de repulsa de lo que se propone. Y ahí está todo ese fondo conflictivo y de oposición en el siglo XVII, sin tener presente el cual—también en esto hay que insistir—no se puede comprender nada" (166). As Romero-Díaz points out, it is this opposition between "control and opposition, containment and freedom" that constitutes not just the broader cultural crisis but also the approach of writers who reflected on this culture in their novels, poems, and plays (166-67). As members of a diverse and changing society, they could poke holes in normative fantasies of Christianity and European superiority, but often only within these same normative parameters. Literature, in this sense, becomes the site of a certain ambivalence, towing the line of dominant discourse while taking up marginal perspectives to challenge the principles of a veritable culture in crisis.

While early modern Spanish literature teeters perpetually between conflicting artistic, commercial, and normative interests, the commercial theater offers a fairly straightforward model for such a negotiation. The play begins and ends with recognizable types and social configurations, all of which are thoroughly questioned, upended, and parodied for the play's duration. Lope shows this relationship clearly in *Fuenteovejuna*, a work that uses a historical event, the 1476 murdering of an overlord in the Spanish town of the play's namesake, to explore the power dynamics of such an act from the perspective of the peasants who carried it out. Here, history becomes the basis of fiction. Perhaps most indicative of the play's vacillation between normative and subversive viewpoints is the variety of political readings that have been affixed to it, as noted by William Blue: "The play has been seen as a fervent cry for monarchy, for democracy, for socialism, even for communism" (296). In this sense, the play reflects on the nature of politics in a way that opens up the questioning of hierarchal power relations but then closes this same potential for dialogue with the arrival of the monarchs at the play's conclusion, since they promise to replace the murdered Comendador. As Friedman explains, "When, in early modern Spanish plays, peasants kill abusive noblemen, for example, something in the end negates the act of rebellion. King Fernando and Lope's *Fuenteovejuna* makes it clear to the townspeople who appear before him that the murder of the Comendador is indefensible" ("Afterword" 297). Much like the marriage endings that pair a dishonored woman with her unfaithful suitor, things end here without any real systematic re-ordering of the political power structure.

The play cannot happen by the Comendador's murder and king's reaction alone, however, as this would not make for a very interesting or profound play. Instead, the

majority of *Fuenteovejuna*'s focus centers on the peasant's organized rebellion. The town's inhabitants take center stage, making the disadvantaged group the center of the play's primary action. In Act 3, for example, it is Laurencia's impassioned speech that motivates and unites the town to murder the Comendador. The townspeople follow her call to arms to its bloody end. Even the play's comic relief, Mengo, hears this message and straightens up, stating the project simply: "Ir a matarle sin orden. / Juntad el pueblo a una voz; / que todos están conformes / en que los tiranos mueran" (30-34). He further shuns his comedic role when interrogated, refusing to name a culprit, emphasizing the strength of the uprising for the audience, or as Blue explains, "If the *gracioso* [...] can resist, who can fail?" (308-09). Prior to the arrival of the king and queen, then, the bulk of the play underscores the concerns and triumphs of the peasant class while demonstrating the mutability of order, given their collective rebellion. Though this cannot last, and the promise of a new Comendador ensures that the system will not ultimately change, Lope uses his play to counterbalance dominant ideology with the voices of those within its grip.

While interpolated stories allowed narrative mediums to weave socially marginalized characters and perspectives into the development of the novel, the commercial theater fashioned a more straightforward model to express the dual interests that would determine its success and survival. In this middle space in which playwrights could challenge those normative moments that begin and end their work, the female cross-dresser allowed for a strengthening of the artist's imaginative power, not just challenging dominant perspective, but fully distorting perspective itself in its visual and

stylistic forms, creating tropes upon tropes, deceiving deception and blurring the lines that defined early modern subjectivity.

Research surrounding the mobility and creative flexibility of female cross-dressing posits that the act, and its discursive counterpart, has always been necessary for authors to move beyond separate feminine and masculine models for story-telling, producing texts rife with cultural contradictions and ambiguity. Female cross-dressing in particular made for the best solution to this dilemma since it provided a useful combination of binary destabilization and male social privilege. Valerie R. Hotchkiss, for example, explores the phenomenon as it appears in medieval religious and secular texts. Given the prevalence of this appropriation of male literary models and social privilege, Hotchkiss signals that traditional gender roles were perhaps never sufficient for Western thinkers and writers. She highlights the manner in which the female transvestite combined an approbation of masculinity as a culturally preferable model of being with the nuances and complexity of the hero archetype not available to feminine characters. This literary pursuit, whether secular or religious, created contradictory literary realities, given the strong assertion of female heroism but only through a decidedly masculine social, cultural, and literary paradigm that often resulted in a version of maleness that surpassed the one reached by men. While these female heroes seem to prove the constructed, transferable nature of gender, they too ultimately pass up their disguise: “The general acceptance of gender traits as teachable, transferable, is counterbalanced, however, by the overriding concern for exposing the female body, both in hints within the disguise narrative and in the ultimate revelation of closure” (126). While gender transgression must be tempered with recourse to the original (insufficient) binary model,

the disguise functions as the impetus for a blurring that produces these diametrically opposed messages. As Hotchkiss concludes of the texts of her study: “It is the ambivalence of disguise that invites examination of assumptions about sex and gender” (126).

The seemingly Baroque contradictions of the female transvestite as she appears in the *comedia*, then, begin long before the seventeenth century, and even on occasion draw from these medieval predecessors. The transvestite saint Euphrosyne, for example, who flees home to become the monk Smaragdus, serves as the source material for Calderón’s *El Josef de las mujeres*. The need to blur the distinctions that cement identity, and the literary inadequacy of traditional feminine roles as applied to storytelling, necessitate a crossing of boundaries. The act of female cross-dressing harnesses a basic creative power that has proved a powerful generator of nuanced character and plot development that could be pushed to its limit in the Baroque era. What the seventeenth century has to offer is the first version of a mass public, as articulated by Maravall, that can witness and experience this figure. There emerges a theatrical society that will experience these contradictions and confusions theatrically, whether on or off the stage. The same theatrical society yields real-life instances of cross-dressing, given the broader shifts in social makeup that created an increased movement of persons to urban centers and the possibilities of social mobility promised by colonization projects. While there were always cases of transvestism and intersexuality, the specific conditions of the seventeenth century allowed for the formation of a public narrative surrounding these practices. When Catalina de Erauso and Eleno/a de Céspedes take advantage of male privilege in this context, there is a unified body of persons who are present to bear witness to this action,

and a set of public institutions still organizing society in relatively hierarchical patterns to try and temper or re-code how this mass public experiences their stories.

The figure of the female cross-dresser, as collectively imagined by dramatists, audiences members, and authority figures alike, heralds the arrival and development of a theatrical mass culture and its self-aware form of dramatics. A combined look at seventeenth-century Spain's creative relationship to real-life stories of transvestism and its production of cross-dressing characters reveals how early modern society thought about the self (through a fascination with its distortion) and how this gave way to a unique form of drama based on the crossing of conventions as well as generic boundaries.

In this dissertation, I will discuss female cross-dressing from two vantage points. First, I will refer to the female cross-dressing *figure* or *character*, the embodied persona, originally a literary construct, who appears on stage and carries out certain physical and illocutionary acts for a live audience. This character or figure then enacts a cross-dressing or transvestite *effect*, the binary destabilization and liminal sensorial manipulation enabled by the in-between position this character inhabits on stage. The creative potential of this effect then helps to found and evolve a novel dramatic aesthetic for seventeenth-century dramatics and their theater-going public. As I will detail in more depth in the next chapter, the public searched for this same effect and its potential for social mobility in the stories of real-life cross-dressing figures.

My dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. In the three chapters, I discuss how the *comedia*, through the female cross-dresser, reflects upon audience, play, and dramatist, respectively, in an effort to sublimate those limitations that define the dramatic endeavor. In Chapter 2, I use the examples of three

real-life cases of female cross-dressing adapted into *comedias*, those of stage-actress Francisca Baltasara, “warrior-nun” Catalina de Erauso, and Queen Christina of Sweden, to highlight the dual public desire for the spectacle of transvestism and the impossibility of the subversive potential behind such gender-bending practices. In this chapter, I analyze *La Baltasara* by Luis Vélez de Guevara, Antonio Coello, and Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *La monja alférez*, by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, and *Afectos de odio y amor*, by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. In these plays, the character based on the famed historical cross-dresser gives up the practice, effectively taking away what the audience likely would have craved in the original stories. Until now, these works have been read for the degree and nature of adaptation involved in crafting the female heroine. In my analysis, I trace the emergence of the character of an anguished, desperate spectator as the plays dramatize the loss of the transvestite narrative. In effect, these plays stage the dependency of early modern subjectivity on transvestite theater, and the dialectic between spectator and cross-dresser that constitutes the overall transvestite persona that enchanted both dramatists and their audience within the early modern cultural milieu. Having removed the cross-dressing from this dynamic, the plays also signal the danger of representing this power as it existed in actual social life, a danger observable in the theatrical and artistic treatment of other cases of gender-bending such as those of Eleno/a de Céspedes and her hermaphroditic counterpart in Sebastián de Covarrubias’s *Emblemas morales*. While the audience playwrights aimed to please expected, and even relied on, theatrical gender deception and reversal, the religious and institutional authorities that oversaw cultural practices proscribed the mobility inherent to defying a strict division of gender roles. These opposing, and equally necessary, sets of interests position fictional transvestite

characters of the *comedia*, discussed in the second and third chapters, as the ideal agents of the social and artistic power revered and feared by audiences and authorities, respectively.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the *comedia*'s reflection on play as essential to a given dramatic work as evidenced by the use of female transvestism in the following plays: Tirso de Molina's *El vergonzoso en palacio* and *El Aquiles*, Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*, and Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden*. In these plays, the female cross-dresser calls our attention to what is theatrical: a series of overturnings that make art a mirror to more theater, interminable, yet carefully defined and controlled by the playwright. Early modern Spanish drama has long been distinguished from its Shakespearean counterpart on the basis of its decreased emphasis on characterization and psychological complexity. Alexander A. Parker, for example, in an often-cited commentary on how to interpret the *comedia*, de-emphasizes psychological character development and champions the primacy of theme and poetic justice as the binding thread of the play. These elements then push forth an action in which limited time remains for extensive character development. A reading of the *comedia* with an eye to the female cross-dresser, however, reveals that her strategic role-play often constitutes, and has the power to re-direct, the dramatic development of a given play.

The female cross-dresser of the public theater, then, shines new light on the unique nature of Spain's early modern brand of dramatics. As the cross-dressing act becomes the key vehicle for the discovery of the self, this self is revealed to lie at the heart of the comedic action. In addition to an analysis of the actual cross-dressing character, this approach also allows me to consider the dramatic deficiency of plays that

lack this character, such as in Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*. The echo of the cross-dresser hovers over the play, reminding the audience how she could help it along. By demonstrating the connection between dramatic self-consciousness and dramatic action through the female cross-dresser, I will be able to propose a view of the *comedia* as preoccupied with the question of role-play and founded upon the crossing of categories.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I explore the female cross-dresser of the *comedia* as an extension of the playwright, a creative force within the play immune to questions of time and space whose deceptions ultimately allow the genre to evolve in metatheatrical complexity. I focus on the development of a central, highly deceptive transvestite figure through a discussion of Cervantes's *El laberinto de amor*, Lope de Vega's *El lacayo fingido*, and Tirso de Molina's *La mujer por fuerza* and *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*. I discuss how the cross-dresser evolves the genre of *comedia* as a whole, in order to demonstrate the ways in which her advanced form of self-consciousness develops and makes more profound the visual and verbal complexity of the art form. The characters that I analyze represent highly developed and complex versions of the cross-dressing feature in order to consider the limits of the cross-dresser's theatrical power. My aim is to demonstrate that the limit is, in fact, a breaking of limits, or rather, that the female cross-dresser begins to distort the frame of her own artistic medium as playwrights expand their use of the figure and move away from their Italian source material.

The *comedia*'s development is marked by increased visual spectacle, heightened poetic language, and metatheatrical, self-reflexive gestures. In effect, then, as playwrights advance their art form, plays expand upon their visual and verbal potential while

becoming more “aware” of themselves in terms of their repetition of convention. The female cross-dresser makes succinct these two modes of expression in her own evolution as one of these repeated conventions herself. She progresses her genre by taking up the gap between narrative and dramatic discourse, temporarily sustaining an opening of “generic” possibilities. At a basic level, from a theatrical perspective, cross-dressing, in its social, historical, and dramatic contexts, involves story-telling in the sense that the transvestite must explain, either to authorities or to other characters on stage, how his/her crossed identity came about. As the figure advances over time within each dramatist’s repertoire, the levels of manipulation become more involved, such that the gap expands between these two sides of knowledge. What the characters know and see becomes radically different from the public’s reception of the events happening on stage until the play arrives at a full-on celebration of the breakdown of sensorial perception. The cross-dressed protagonist inches closer to the audience, taking on a more central role in sorting out the mess that she has created in the space between the metatheater on stage and the audience.

This dissertation, then, aims to draw attention to the significance of female transvestism within Spanish *comedia* as indicative of a collaborative effort on the part of playwrights and play-goers alike to imagine and experience dramatic creativity as beyond the social and artistic preoccupations that defined seventeenth-century cultural life. Overall, this study re-situates the female cross-dresser of Spanish *comedia* from a popular convention to a constitutive force that helps us to understand the singular nature of Spain’s commercial drama as well as the trajectory of its growth. Early modern society’s collective search for her in the real-life stories of “La Baltasara,” Catalina de Erauso, and

queen Christina of Sweden, among others, further reveals the manner in which the seventeenth-century Spanish subject sought himself by seeking theater, or more specifically, a theater rooted in transvestism.

CHAPTER 2

Staging the Spectator in the Hermaphroditic and Cross-Dressed Culture of Early Modern Spain

Early modern Spanish drama, through the use of female cross-dressing, explores creative or strategic forms of role-play in order to test stylistic and social boundaries of the genre. This chapter will discuss the social aspect of that investigation of role-play. While from the playwright's point of view, the deception of the female cross-dresser allows for a confounding of sensorial perception and a combining of narrative and visually-based forms of story-telling, from the audience's perspective, this same theatrical play offers a strong commentary on the interchangeable nature of social roles. The spectator's positive or negative reception of the cross-dresser's creative self-consciousness had a direct impact on the success or failure of the commercial theater. Early modern Spanish society inherited a Renaissance mentality defined by a practical version of time that emphasized the transitory nature of any artistic endeavor. Pressured by the realization of art's time bound-ness, playwrights of the seventeenth century worked to make a meaningful aesthetic contribution while surpassing the artistic "giants" of the past. Aside from the abstract pressures facing the early modern dramatist, more functional, commercial concerns equally contributed to the development of the *comedia nueva*. Playwriting was perhaps first and foremost a matter of turning a profit, as hundreds of *comedias* recycled over the course of the seventeenth century in order to keep audiences happily entertained and dramatists pleasingly employed. Lope de Vega, of course, targets the *vulgo* in his discussion of the art form, making clear that its interests

should reign supreme as opposed to clinging to the classical precepts of the past. Given the importance of the financial viability of theatrical productions, one could speak not just of representing the interests of the public, but even feeding or indulging them, so that the creation of a play facilitates the consumption of drama. The audience member maintains a vital position in the overall process of theater, propelling its creation and making possible its transformation into a successful performance.

The pressure to make one's mark derived from both a vision of artistic periods separated by moments of rupture and the ability to feed the curiosity of the receptor. The same theater-going public found itself enchanted by the real stories of larger-than-life cross-dressers who challenged fixed notions of social role-play. Actress Francisca Baltasara's tendency to play the part of the woman dressed as man on stage made her famous off the stage. The strength of her public image, created through her stage habit of transvestism, meant a microscopic focus on her personal life as part of a more ample cultural narrative. Her eventual exit from the commercial theater to devote time to spiritual pursuits became a public move as a result, as well as the subject of a play. The "warrior-nun" Catalina de Erauso, who cross-dressed to escape the convent and then participated in the Spanish conquest using a male alias, brought back from South America a story of international travel, national heroism, and religious piety, all initiated by a change in gender. From abroad, news of Queen Christina of Sweden's male attire, skill on horseback, and reticence to take a husband (in addition to her famed conversion to Catholicism) made her a notable personality in the Spanish public eye. Dramatists capitalized on these women's transvestite fame by writing plays inspired by their stories. The importance of the public attention afforded the women in real life that led to the

crafting of the plays did not go unnoticed in the theatrical product of these writers' labor. Playwrights staged these dramas metatheatrically, including the public's reception as an integral part of the story. In this chapter, I discuss the image of the theater-goer as he emerges in three plays that focus on each of these historical protagonists known by the public for her habit of dressing as a man, *La Baltasara* by Luis Vélez de Guevara, Antonio Coello, and Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *La monja alférez* by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, and *Afectos de odio y amor* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Through this viewer-character, these plays follow the eager public, hungry for the cross-dressing persona and desperate when this personality proves inaccessible. During the hunt, we also glimpse the emerging break between the public image these women acquired and their individual, private notion of themselves. As the early modern subject pays attention to the questioning of social role-play and the commercial theater takes up that curiosity from the stage, the overall dramatic experience transitions to encompass a more fluid, collaborative relationship between social and stage drama, as both spectator and creator looked to the same strategic role-play for inspiration and guidance. Through the adaptation of these historical figures, early modern dramatists stage the theater-goer's search for the same sort of individual ingenuity and creativity behind the cross-dressing act to explore the changing, and highly theatrical, nature of social identity.

By definition, any effective theatrical experience necessitates an active relationship between social life and on-stage spectacle. Victor Turner, in his theory of liminal play as it relates to social ritual and stage drama, explains that theatrical performance thrives not as distinct or cut off from cultural life, but as a commentary upon its drama, or rather, "The stage drama, when it is meant to do more than entertain—

though entertainment is always one of its vital aims—is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting, on the major social dramas of its social context (wars, revolution, scandals, institutional changes” (108). Stage drama, as it brings to life and comments upon social dramas, interacts with them, forming a dialectic between art and life that is ever modifying, “a matricial mirror; at each exchange something new is added, something old is lost or discarded” (108). As the two alter one another, the spectator experiences theater in their point of contact, or rather, drama “happens” for the public in a meaningful way in their collaboration: “Human beings learn through experience, though all too often they repress painful experience, and perhaps the deepest experience is through drama; *not* through social drama, or stage drama (or its equivalent) *alone*, but in the circulatory or oscillatory process of their mutual and incessant modification” (108). Only in the negotiation between art and life, the meeting of social dramas and their theatrical imagining, can one derive meaning from the dramatic experience.

The spectator positions himself, literally and figuratively, at the meeting point of these two sides of the play-going experience, inhabiting an in-between that holds together the overall dynamic. How human beings fit into their social roles and relate to the stories unfolding before them in politics and culture, Turner explains, impacts the way society regards theater’s dramatic purpose. In the Renaissance, for example, when one’s social role (through occupation, which would be determined by other factors such as class standing, religious affiliation, or racial background) was tantamount to one’s person, watching such roles on stage constituted no real change of pace, which leads Turner to signal the important connection between social persona and spectatorship: “Thus, the great *collective* which articulated *personae* in hierarchical or segmentary structures was

the real protagonist, both in life and ritual” (113). As “post Renaissance, pre-totalitarian” society begins to industrialize, however, the social subject divides into the persona who works and the individual who plays. The theater becomes an arena to peel back those false, public layers of the self toward a more “real” representation of human experience. Paradoxically, then, theater is regarded as more authentic and “it is the *mundane* world that is false, illusory, the home of the *persona*, and theatre that is real, the world of the *individual*, and by its very existence representing a standing critique of the hypocrisy of all social structure which shape human beings [...]” (116). Turner goes on to mention that theater of course continues to express normative viewpoints as well, but at least harbors the potential to offer effective critiques of society.

Early modern subjects could be said to vacillate between the two versions of theater-goers suggested in Turner’s analysis, given that the seventeenth century marks the onset of a self-consciousness that heightens the awareness of the individual and the possibility of his movement, but still within an environment in which social role was considered the defining factor of a person’s being. It is this tension that the *comedia* articulates when it searches for its leading players and dramatic conflict. The “great collective which articulated personae” still found itself the protagonist from the stage, but made its appearance as interested in its undoing. The “play” of the work lodges critiques as related to social issues such as the mania surrounding blood purity, as well as political ones like the question of monarchical rule, which would challenge the fixity of social designations that produce hierarchy. In this sense, the dramatic moment of the seventeenth century follows the initiation of a breakdown of social roles, and a transition to more individualized perspectives. Just as the artist discovers himself in the break from

a medieval, cyclical notion of time, the receptor of his art similarly experiences the rupture of his seemingly straightforward place within social organization and cultural life.

Our clear image of the spectator in these three plays owes largely to the downplayed portrait of the historical protagonist, whose real-life status jump complicated the process of theatrical adaptation. Outside the theater, those who discovered ways to step outside their roles attracted attention, both negative and positive. In particular, women who dressed as men gained notoriety for their radical transformations and the social privilege their new identity afforded them. The public attention then gave way to public theater, as playwrights wrote *comedias* inspired by these famous cross-dressers. Stories such as those of Eleno/a de Céspedes and Catalina de Erauso reveal the public excitement surrounding the re-ordering of role-play, but also the institutional censure that aimed to restrict the individual's sense of himself outside his pre-existing class, race, and gender-based designations. While I would argue that the public ultimately looks to the *persona* and not the individual when it consumes these two stories, the interest in this character or personality stems from the manipulation of roles enacted by the cross-dressing act. If the social drama of the individual allows for a more politicized stage practice, ultimately giving way to a theatrical experience with the potential to offer up critiques, capturing the social mobility of these narratives poses a threat that would have attracted censure. As pointed out by Marjorie Garber, the cross-dressing act enacts a crisis of category by finding a third subject position that, according to the Western binary system, should not exist. Playwrights faced a set of crossed interests in staging the historical cross-dressing protagonist: they brought to life a set of stories that would be sure to pique the interest of their primary market, but in doing so, risked staging a

progress narrative all the more “real” given its historical basis. In short, they chanced creating a dramatic experience that would position theater to more directly engage with, and critique, the changing society being represented from the stage.

It is no surprise, then, that the theatrical versions of the three famed protagonists, Francisca Baltasara, Catalina de Erauso, and Christina of Sweden, enact radical transformations that largely undo the transvestite-related facets of their original fame. As far as their heroines go, these plays temper the potential for social mobility and focus on the separation of the spectating public from these three famous personalities. In the process of dramatizing these stories, then, playwrights point to the social limitations of their own creative process. The normative concerns of religious and state authority also impacted the stories told from the stage, due to the *comedia*'s central cultural position. Even the female cross-dresser, distorted in the three plays discussed in this chapter due to the potency of her real-life basis, is only one side of the gender-bending that artists of the seventeenth century showed an interest in recreating. A look at writers' experimentation with, and authoritative censure of, a more complete breakdown of gender as manifested in the figure of the hermaphrodite elucidates the moral and hierarchical limitations that lead dramatists to the female cross-dressing character, as well as the alteration of fictional versions of historical female transvestites. I will briefly examine three appearances of the hermaphrodite in early modern Spanish culture to highlight the tension between creative, artistic interest in the collapse of gender and the state and religious condemnation of this gender play, both of which factor into, as well as limit, dramatic representation of the real-life transvestite.

The use of the female transvestite protagonist is herself a reduction of the creative challenging of gender that artists often turned to as a source of inspiration for transformation and creative power. Take, for example, the *criado* Batín's comments in Act 2 of Lope de Vega's *El castigo sin venganza* (1631). He offers the following observation regarding his master Federico's anguished state over Casandra, whom he loves but cannot have given her marriage to his father the Duke:

Según eso, ni tú quieres
vivir, Conde, ni morir,
que entre morir y vivir
como hermafrodita eres;
que como aquél se compone
de hombre y mujer, tú de muerte
y vida, que de tal suerte
la tristeza te dispone,
que ni eres muerte ni vida
(1216-24)

Batín's remarks prefigure a lengthy poetic exchange between the two clandestine lovers, who will use the same imagery of life and death to describe the dual impossibility and necessity of their feelings toward one another. Federico closes the act proposing immortality in death, or rather, "Y yo, aunque muerto, esto y tal / que me alegro, con perderte, / que sea el alma immortal, / por no dejar de quererte" (207). This play between limitlessness and the agony of boundaries begins with Batín's initial remarks on the Count's hermaphrodite-like state, giving rise to the other two characters' subsequent poetic production. The play itself, one of the notable works of the "wife-murder" genre, ostensibly has nothing to do with cross-dressing and its bloody finale is a far cry from the playful marriage pairings invoked by Tirso's Doña Juana/Don Gil or Lope's own cross-dressed heroines. The figure of the hermaphrodite and the indeterminability of gender (s)he invokes, however, provide the basis for Batín's simile. The prevalence of the

hermaphroditic figure gives way to trope, such that the repetition of character type makes possible a transformation into figure of speech.

Here, it is the figure of the hermaphrodite, and not the female cross-dresser, that offers a point of departure for the characters to develop a metaphor by evading the male/female binary to capture their tortured position. The symbolic value of the in-between of genders sustains and enhances the aesthetic quality of the work by invoking an otherwise inaccessible experience and supports the emotional impact of the characters' plight. In short, in this scene, the image of the hermaphrodite fuels the play, expanding the symbolic complexity of the work. The dramatization of an actual hermaphrodite, however, proved a more complicated endeavor, given that the full-on defiance of a clear, sex-based identification and the confusion to normative ideas of gender this represented.

Much like Baltasara, Erauso, and Christina, Eleno/a de Céspedes shocked and attracted crowds for the adoption of a male identity. S/he faced a bevy of accusations from the Inquisition, including “sodomy, bigamy, impersonating a man, mocking matrimony, [and] having a pact with the devil” (Vollendorf 13). Céspedes, however, for all intents and purposes, is not really a cross-dresser and her story never makes it to the stage. Céspedes describes himself as a hermaphrodite, and his account of his bodily identity implies intersexuality. It is the Inquisition's refusal to recognize this definition, and its portrayal of Céspedes through the “safer” lens of the female cross-dresser, that reveal the reticence to recognize the full breakdown of sexual identity on the part of institutional authority. Suzanna Kessler, in *Lessons from the Intersexed*, suggests that Céspedes had “a common form of intersexuality or another condition that ‘masculinized’ the clitoris prematurely,’ such as CAH (congenital adrenal hyperplasia)” (qtd. in

Vollendorf 17). In contrast to Catalina de Erauso's unquestioned biological identity as female, Céspedes provides a detailed and complicated account of her anatomy to Inquisitors that involves both female and male parts: she gives birth to a child, and in doing so, acquires a penis that then gets cancer and has to be removed. During his testimony, he explains that he feels he possesses both a female and male nature that determined his social and sexual practices at different points in his life, whereas at her most personal, Catalina de Erauso explains feeling tired of the enclosed space of the convent.

Céspedes defends her biological identity in a legal trial, but struggles to adequately explain it to Inquisitional authorities given her self-definition as a hermaphrodite. The trial focuses intensely on the question of Céspedes' claims to dual male and female anatomy, which materializes largely as the question of Céspedes' missing penis. He explains to the court that during childbirth, his phallus emerged, and that he was able to perform all the corresponding bodily functions attached to it, but that prior to the trial, it had become infected with cancer "to the point that his penis began to atrophy. He applied various cures to it, but nothing helped. Eventually, he began to clip his penis and testicles off little by little each day" (Vollendorf 17-18). These statements were heard much more loudly than his self-reference as a hermaphrodite. Lisa Vollendorf highlights, "the attention given to the penis during the trial cannot fail to impress anybody who reads the documents [...] Inquisitors, witnesses, and defendants alike discussed the form, function, and changeability of Céspedes's penis" (23). This included testimony from several doctors as well as Céspedes's wife, who is asked to attest in detail to their married life. Without an actual physical penis to produce for the Inquisition,

however, Céspedes could not hope to convince the Inquisitors. The attention to Céspedes's penis marks one side of the trial's focus, the other being Céspedes's actual defensive strategy. Richard Kagan and Abigail Dyer note that Céspedes shifts between days one and two in terms of her gendered self-portrait. On the first day, for example, Eleno/a tries to accentuate her female identity and explains her male cross-dressing as a defense mechanism, something she did out of necessity in order to protect herself in an isolated incident with a pimp (54). On the second day of her trial, however, Céspedes presents himself as a hermaphrodite, arguing that he possesses both a female and male "nature": "Dijo que en realidad de verdad ésta es y fue hermafrodito que tuvo y tiene dos naturas, una de hombre y otra de mujer" (Vollendorf 14). This aspect of Céspedes's testimony gives a sense of how the linguistic battle between individual cross-dresser and Inquisitional authority yields a product that simply does not fit. Céspedes plays on several binaries to make her point. The status of the hermaphrodite, for example, challenges the idea of a singular gendered essence as dictated by an easily mapped bodily identity. On the other hand, this "natural" force coincides with more normative notions of a predetermined sex identity. Céspedes forges the natural and unnatural to present herself as someone who can neither be pigeonholed exclusively as man nor woman, defying the division of this category and producing the linguistically "crossed" figure subject to Inquisitional censure and public curiosity.

Although his wife attested to their love-making during the interrogations against Eleno, this evidence, in combination with the various physical examinations he underwent, as well as his own testimony, does not convince the Inquisitors. His description of the physical trajectory of his penis is complicated, but not implausible.

Like Catalina de Erauso, Eleno describes the way in which he modified his body in order to make it fit with his true “nature” at the time. After the appearance of his phallus during childbirth, Céspedes describes attempting intercourse with the wife of a linen merchant he was working for, finding it difficult to have penetrative intercourse with her (47). From here, Eleno develops a detailed explanation of the physical extraction of his penis by a doctor in San Lúcar (47). This surgery allows Eleno to have more successful intercourse with his wife thereafter. At the time of the trial, however, he explains that he cannot produce this same penis because it had recently become diseased and he slowly removed it himself (49). Without the phallus and concrete proof of his former husband’s death, Céspedes ultimately cannot defend the charges brought against him.

Another major “bodily” distinction troubles Céspedes’s success during the trial, emblemized by the mark on her face where she was branded at birth. Born a Moorish slave, Céspedes’s racial identity greatly affected her public reception. As Israel Burshatin makes clear in his discussion of the trial, her freedom at age ten, when she also acquires the name Elena de Céspedes (the name of the mistress of the household where she was a slave) marks her first major physical transition, in that “in acquiring the late mistress’s name, the young Elena also gained title to her own body” (421). This changes the way in which she is received and portrayed by state authorities in contrast to Erauso. While Erauso can align herself with the white colonialist mentality of the Spanish empire when she presents herself to Felipe IV, the Inquisitional forces were able to portray Céspedes as a type of sexual predator who duped other women through impersonation, playing off of racial bias. Though the deliberations of Eleno’s case focused on her biological and

sexual identity, the reception of such an identity could not be separated from pre-established racial prejudices, already inscribed on Eleno's flesh.

It is still possible to discuss the Céspedes case in terms of cross-dressing, nevertheless, in the sense of her adoption of a male identity beyond the anatomical change she allegedly undergoes. There is an element of "passing" involved in her transition, given that early modern society would not be open (and was not, as her trial proves) to the drastic identity shift she enacts and the consequent male privilege it produces. Burshatin, in fact, uses the term when discussing this aspect of her story: "By cross-dressing and acting male, Eleno repositioned *himself* [...], thereby crossing the boundaries erected in order to keep slaves, women, Moriscos, crypto-Jews, and other excluded groups in their subordinate positions in Habsburg Spain" (422). This cross-dressing narrative, however, differs from its contemporaries given Céspedes's intersexuality: "But unlike any ordinary cross-dresser, Eleno's transformation was, in her own words, a classic example of the female-to-hermaphrodite metamorphosis that could be validated by appealing to natural history" (422-23). Certainly, a number of boundaries are "crossed" when Céspedes transitions from a female to male identity, and the resulting acquisition of male privilege allows for a comparable professional and social mobility to that of other famous cross-dressers of the time.

Céspedes's explanation combines the socially subversive mobility that made cross-dressing narratives uncomfortable for state authority with a biological identity entirely out of synch with normative definitions of sex, gender, and race. As a result, Céspedes' story had to be reshaped and publicly re-narrated by authorities. The deceptive, theatrical qualities of the female-as-male trickster fit the bill for the task of

demonizing her. In “Gender and the Monstrous in *El burlador de Sevilla*,” Elizabeth Rhodes even likens the Inquisition’s portrayal of Eleno/a to a fictional character when she discusses Tirso’s Don Juan as hermaphroditic. Don Juan manages such an identity in that he “performs negative cultural assignments of Woman while executing the positive features of Man, with the result that the feminine traits of his character assure his damnation and his masculine properties render him heroic for posterity” (268). Don Juan, in this reading, inhabits a position of indeterminable gender, acting out socially condemned aspects of femininity while taking advantage of male privilege. He does all of this, however, without repeating the visual elements or plot points of the cross-dressing “type.” Gender-bending allows for a structuring of Don Juan’s characterization, or rather, as a linguistic flourish, “writes” or “inscribes” Don Juan. Rhodes likens Don Juan to Céspedes, arguing that the two are linked by the term *burlador*, given that Inquisitional authorities portrayed Eleno/a as a kind of sexual trickster, luring women into sexual acts with another biological female under the pretense of a male identity. The term *burlador* here stands for cross-dressed trickery, and labels both figures accordingly. The line between fiction and reality wavers as Rhodes describes the way in which both Eleno/a de Céspedes and Don Juan perform aspects of two supposedly separated and natural genders in order to deceive others. And yet, it was not how Eleno/a de Céspedes did or did not act but instead how she was portrayed to have acted, how the Inquisition affixed the image of gender-bending through medical testimony, as explained by Israel Burshatin: “Medical experts in Eleno’s trial expressed concern for certain *burladoras* ‘female tricksters’ from Toledo. Eleno was one of those *burladoras* who fashioned *artificios* ‘dildoes’ for themselves out of sheepskin” (450). In this sense, Eleno/a functions as the vessel for a

certain portrayal held up for public attention, labeled or “written” by the *burladora* epithet that embodies the idea of woman posing as man, here toward sexually predatory ends.

The end result of Eleno de Céspedes’s trial is a reduction of her identity to “woman,” but the specifics of this punishment carried more (theatrical) detail. She was sentenced to two hundred lashes and had to attend an *auto de fe* (a ritual religious performance) on December 18, 1588. Burshatin stresses that both of these punishments were specifically tailored for a highly publicized, dramatic effect. Inquisitors aimed to draw attention to Céspedes and showcase their ability to control her gendered and sexual identity. As he explains, the lashes were assigned in two parts: one set of 100 to be administered in Toledo and the second set to be given in her hometown of Ciempozuelos. This second set of lashes was to be accompanied by a public textual display of the punishment “on a Sunday or suitable feast day, so as to draw as large an audience as possible” (429). As he goes on to explain, the Inquisition often desired the maximum public attention for transgressions: “This concern for attendance was characteristic of the Inquisition’s way with urban spectacles, which were mounted on an increasingly lavish scale, the better to capture public opinion” (429). Following a conviction, Inquisitional forces made a deliberate attempt to include the general public in their policing efforts, using the format of drama as a vehicle to enforce regulatory fictions of identity. While the spectacle of Eleno’s punishment may have been typical, the Inquisition’s inclusion of her deviant sexuality was not. As Burshatin notes, the Inquisition made the uncharacteristic decision to broadcast these initial punishments in a “peak a boo nature,” portraying Elena as a female Don Juan who deceived her female sexual partners through the crime of male

impersonation, a move undoubtedly motivated and facilitated by the aforementioned racial prejudices held against Eleno/a and his life (429).⁷

The story of Eleno/a de Céspedes reveals the political potency of the hermaphrodite narrative when it appears outside the poetic arena of Lope's anguished lovers. Finding her recounting of male sexual virility and dual sexual natures unutterable, state authorities seem more comfortable with a female-as-male tale of deception. The specific preference for female-to-male transitions becomes even more apparent in Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco's treatment of the epicene being. He includes the figure of the hermaphrodite in his 1610 *Emblemas morales*, a series of moral epithets constructed vis-à-vis epigraphs grouped with narrative explanations of the images, often referring to myth to arrive at a pedagogical meaning. Emblem 64 features an image of what appears to be a bearded man in feminine dress, accompanied by the following text:

Soy hic, y haec, y hoc. Yo me declaro,
Soy varón, soy mujer, soy un tercero,
Que no es uno ni otro, ni está claro
Cual de estas cosas sea. Soy terrero
De los q como monstro horrendo y raro.
Me tienen por siniestro, y mal agüero
Advierta cada cual que me ha mirado
Que es otro yo, si vive afeminado.⁸

⁷The highly public, dramatic nature of the Inquisition's punishment (ironically) troubled the definitive nature of its own decision to turn Eleno/a into Elena. After receiving her punishment, Elena attempted to resume her life as a woman, working at the Hospital del Rey in Toledo as a surgeon. Her story had garnered such attention, however, that visitors hoping to meet the famous hermaphrodite, Eleno/a de Céspedes, soon overran the hospital. She had to be transported twice, finally ending up in Puente del Arzobispo, a small town outside Toledo (Kagan and Dyer 55).

⁸ Sherry Velasco notes that the image paired with this text is based on Juan Sánchez Cotán's portrait of Brígida del Río painted in 1590. This painting also likely motivated the Duke of Alcalá's request for a portrait of Magdalena Ventura, which would become José de Ribera's *La mujer barbuda* in 1631 (Felton and Jordan 130). As Velasco explains, "In fact, Brígida became so well-known for her hirsutism that she and other women like her inspired the saying, 'The Bearded Lady is best greeted from afar' [A la

On the following page, Covarrubias summarizes the Ovidian myth of Hermaphroditus, in which the female nymph Salmacis melds with the male Hermaphroditus after passionately embracing him out of uncontrollable desire. Of this story, Covarrubias comments, “la fábula tiene mucho de historia natural y moral, porque entre otras cosas prodigiosas de la naturaleza notamos esta que suele hacer una criatura con ambos sexos a la qual llamamos Androgyno, que vale tanto como varón y mujer, ... digo con Cicero i.3 de las Tusculanas: Néestturpius aut nequius efeminato viro” (165). Covarrubias’s interpretive remarks position the inclusion of the myth to carry out a specific political objective. According to Michael Horswell, Covarrubias departs from Plato’s original notion of the Androgyne: “Whereas Plato imagined the Androgyne as an ideal state of unity and wholeness, Covarrubias marginalizes him/her as a freak of nature, a monster. Again, it is the effeminate qualities that he wishes to erase” (64). Like in the inscription of the etching, the moral message of the emblem ends with a warning against effeminate men, produced through the initial danger of the hermaphroditic self. While Covarrubias avoids explicitly labeling his image as a womanly man, opting instead for the term “mujer barbuda,” again invoking the image of the woman dressed as man as in those portraits by Cotán, Ribera, and Goya, his narrative insertion steers us to a negative identification with the opposite form of gender play, the effeminate male.⁹ Victor I. Stoichita and Anna Maria Coderech point out that unlike the bearded lady portraits by

muger Barbuda, de lexos la Saluda]” (*Male* 101). Such a saying seems fairly ironic given the repeated attempts to bring the hermaphrodite and her life’s story even closer through artistic renderings.

⁹ As Stephen Orgel explains in his comparison of the emblem to a 1605 depiction of Henri III as a hermaphrodite, “Representing the effeminate king as a woman in drag, however, was unquestioningly less inflammatory than representing him as a womanish man would have been” (112).

Cotán, Ribera, and Goya, Covarrubias washes over the miraculous shock value of his hermaphroditic subject in order to deliver a moral message. With his textual addition, “The ‘miracle’ could not have been turned more completely—or more wrongly—into a sermon” (55). What originally appears as an equal mixture of male and female quickly becomes a male destroyed by the feminine and left to the worst possible fate imaginable in the context of seventeenth-century Spanish gender politics: the effeminate male.

This transformation, realized through the clear rhetorical strategy of the artist that curates the overlaying image, story, and myth, departs from the initial idea of an evasion of gender categories inherent to the mix of feminine and masculine in the illustration, the ventriloquized proclamation of the etching, and the narration of Salmacis’s leap into the arms of Hermaphroditus, as well as the mention of Androgyne, who “vale tanto como varón y mujer.” All of these moments of blurring of category get sorted out and organized as the author imparts to us the proper moral message and informs us of the invasion of the female over the male that poses the threat. The text accompanying the etching speaks for itself, of course, in a kind of soliloquy to the reader that immediately distorts our sense of identification with the narrative voice. Horswell signals, “The binary is broken. The unknown “unnatural” steps into the liminal position between the two “natural” categories. The identity is confusion: “I am *hic*, and *haec*, and *hoc*. Nonsense” (66).

While Horswell interprets this initial confusion as a way to call upon a general fear of the unknown, I would add that a principal curiosity accompanies this apprehension. A fascination with the possibilities inherent to the “identity as confusion” initiates Covarrubias’s repeated warning against the dangers of the feminine. The first

three and a half verses of the epithet show no immediate sign of the negativity or destruction that follow, but instead interrogate the relationship between gender categories, self-consciousness, and the creative evasion of the senses: “Yo me declaro, / Soy varón, soy mujer, soy un tercero, / Que no es uno ni otro, ni está claro / Cuál de estas cosas sea.” This proclamation begins with an awareness of one’s self, the knowledge that one may, and must, declare an identity, which immediately ties to the gender-based options available for this essential public act. The speaker then associates his/her choice of “un tercero” not with the deceptive overlay of male contaminated by female (eventually described as the “mal agüero” of his/her being) but instead with the notion of distortion and disorientation, since its primary quality is its indistinguishable nature. The effect of this defiance, the “nonsense” mentioned by Horswell, holds possibilities ultimately extinguished by the rearrangement of the speaker’s original configuration, since the lack of clarity resolves when he/she explains: “Advierta cada cual que me ha mirado / Que es otro yo, si vive afeminado.” Readers drawn in by the initial irreverence for female/male designations find themselves implicated: if they identify with this voice, they have not discovered the initial evasion of identification but rather have fallen victim to an unfathomable accusation of effeminacy. The speaker plays a trick on its reader, ultimately delivering up something other than what is promised in the initial verses.

What may begin as a deceptively playful or intriguing consideration of category confusion cannot stay, and as argued by Horswell, the overall effect of the emblem serves to castigate the feminine by associating the hermaphroditic trope explored in early modern art with a certain type of monstrosity actually entirely distinct from it—to evade gender, in Covarrubias’s imagining, is to contaminate ideal maleness with femininity.

From the stories of Eleno/a de Céspedes and Covarrubias's *emblema*, then, we can see the way in which institutional and religious authorities worked to cover over the subversive potential of the gender-bending that situated itself beyond a male or female, or even male-as-female, female-as-male, designation. The body public, nevertheless, jumped at the chance to consume Céspedes's narrative, eager for a chance to see her, to somehow be close to an individual whose story confounded solid perceptions of the gendered, and sexed, self. Covarrubias takes advantage of this same curiosity when he lures the observer of his emblem with the promise of a confused identity that is ultimately thwarted by the presentation of an effeminate male. When it came to cashing in on such frenzy, the female cross-dresser was a more stable compromise in the face of the hermaphrodite, as Céspedes's story did not find a formal theatrical articulation on stage.

Female transvestite narratives, nevertheless, still proved threatening given the mobility available through male privilege, and the connection to the category confusion inherent to the "hic y haec" of Céspedes's testimony and his emblematic counterpart. Within those dramatic adaptations of historical transvestism that did make it to the stage, we find a consistent withholding of the cross-dressing itself, as well as the category crossing it made possible. We see instead the debut of another protagonist, the one watching and searching for that absent persona. As the spectator agonizes over the split between the individual person and the public persona that eludes him, dramatists depict the discovery of creative self-consciousness, but also its inaccessibility and ineffable nature. The spectator tries to find something he can never really possess, the agency held by the female cross-dressing persona who does not fully make her way from street to stage. The potential strain on the playwright's adaptation becomes the agony of the

receptor-character: neither can fully experience the supposed star of the show in all her glory. These plays stage the drama of the spectator as they draw out the inseparability of art and life, the hold of the social over the stage, through their fictionalization of “real” female cross-dressers. Their dramas push back, however, given the prominence of the early modern subject who makes the loss of this consciousness potent and an indispensable element of the dramatic intrigue. In effect, the cross-dressing narratives act out or elaborate from the stage, in miniature, early modern theater’s crossing of social and stage drama, as dramatic art strives to evolve past the simplistic replication of social role-play from the stage.

Heretofore, critics have maintained a strict separation between studies of theatrical cross-dressing characters and cases of “real life” transvestism given the vast differences between the two. Carmen Bravo-Villasante and M. Romera-Navarro cite the historical infrequency and possibility of women’s cross-dressing in Spain toward this conclusion. Romera-Navarro rightly points out the consistency with which female *comedia* characters produce a convincing disguise, and the manner in which this success would not be possible with such regularity in seventeenth-century Madrid. He in particular notes the various physical obstacles of anatomical difference (131). Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol also concede in their study of Dutch transvestites and early modern European transvestism the lack of information regarding “how they hid and dealt with their menstruation, which must have been difficult in a crowded forecandle or barracks” and the consistent concealment of sexual organs (15). Indeed, the physical barriers suggest the impossible nature of the task of effectively changing one’s gender for

an extended period of time, and such a transformation did not represent a daily norm for Spanish women, nor for women throughout Europe.

Furthermore, many secondary accounts of cross-dressing during this period in Spain are of questionable validity. Bravo-Villasante considers Mme. D'Aulnoy's *Viaje por España* and its accounts of a courtesan dressing as a man in order to wound her love, as well as of a woman aiding her lover in a bullfight through her male garb, but highlights the author's clear slant toward portraying "las fantasías más extravagantes sobre la vida española" (*La mujer* 190). It therefore seems likely that the author created these stories (190). Romera-Navarro cites the testimony of Father Juan Ferrer in 1613, who, as part of a larger moral backlash against the theater, describes the effect of the cross-dressing woman on stage on its women spectators:

Otro daño es también el atrevimiento y desvergüenza que en nuestros tiempos se ha visto en muchas, y es andar algunas mujeres disimuladas en hábito de hombres por las calles y por las casas, con tanto daño de sus almas y de las ajenas. Claro es que en tiempos atrás no había de esto tanto, con mucho, como en nuestros tiempos se ha visto y por nuestros pecados se ve, sino que al verse cada día en las comedias mujeres representar en hábito de hombre, ha hecho perder el miedo y la vergüenza a cosa en que tanta la había de tener de buena razón. (130)

Father Ferrer here frightfully explains the radical effect of the cross-dressing figure on the viewing public, specifically women, but Romera-Navarro rejects the validity of his claims based on their singularity amidst the moral debate (191). Indeed, it seems very likely that stage cross-dressing did not draw extensively from the lives of ordinary Spanish citizens, nor does cross-dressing happen in plays in ways that seem entirely plausible. For this reason, cases of female cross-dressing and other deviant forms of gender-bending have been studied with an eye to what they reveal about gender—how it was defined, policed, and represented during the seventeenth-century. As Lisa Vollendorf

rightly points out in her discussion of Eleno/a de Céspedes, at the margins, when gender definitions have been challenged and stretched to their limits, the various mechanisms that work to define normativity become more transparent.

Instances of “real” cross-dressing, as well as hermaphroditism, nevertheless, find their way into a variety of celebratory written discourses during the seventeenth-century. Both Bravo-Villasante and Velasco record a number of these cases in their studies of early modern transvestism. While figures such as Christina of Sweden, Catalina de Erauso, and Eleno/a de Céspedes dominated headlines and captivated public attention, other female soldiers who dressed as men to participate in Spanish colonial efforts, such as Inés Suárez and María de Estrada, earn praise in the chronicles of Marino de Lobera and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, respectively (Velasco, *The Lieutenant*, 34). Various actresses of the *comedia* also garnered notoriety for their tendency to portray cross-dressed characters and even to take the stage practice into the street, such as Francisca Baltasara, Bárbara Coronel, and Jusepa Vaca. As Velasco outlines, the actress who portrayed Catalina de Erauso in Montalbán’s dramatization of her story, Luisa de Robles, gained attention for her fearlessness during rehearsals, and in this sense, matched the audacity of the character she portrayed: “What Erauso and Robles seemed to have in common was their ability to outperform men in activities traditionally considered more suitable for daring males. Like Erauso’s fearless acts in her military career, Robles proved that she was able capable of doing a ‘man’s job’ better than another man” (*The Lieutenant* 41). In all of these cases, the generally positive attitude expressed in the recounting of the acts happens through an emphasis on the possession of a masculine trait. As Velasco signals in her study of representations of male pregnancy during the

seventeenth century, the female cross-dresser offered a safe alternative to male cross-dressing, given that at least in the instance of female to male transvestism, the transvestite figure reaches for social privilege, conforming to a “superior” model of subjectivity (*Male* 37-39).

This element of social “upping” explains the positive attention afforded by chroniclers and dramatists. Several scholars have made similar observations regarding the popularity of female cross-dressing narratives. Vern L. Bullough, for example, argues in his discussion of medieval transvestism that its acceptability correlates directly with “status concepts” as related to gender, or rather, dressing as the more highly valued sex constitutes a rise in social status, and hence becomes more socially acceptable (1382). Garber makes a similar argument about the way in which Western culture justifies instances of cross-dressing by encoding them as part of a broader “progress narrative” in which an emphasis on increased social mobility tempers the threat of the gender-bending practice (67-92). In other words, if the cross-dresser engaged in the act of transvestism to gain something (a better job or other forms of social privilege), the threat to social hierarchies organized around gender neutralizes. In the early modern context, female cross-dressing threatens social order, but can also be “read” as an exaltation of male values, making it less horrifying than its male-to-female counterpart.

Given the stark differences between stage and street practice, so to speak, as well as the prevailing cultural attitudes that determined the prevalence of a discourse of female transvestism, cross-dressing as it existed offstage has been examined to learn more about gender. Scholars such as Lisa Vollendorf, Sherry Velasco, Mary Elizabeth Perry, and Israel Burshatin, among others, have studied the cases of Erauso and Céspedes with an

eye to how they resonate with attitudes toward various factors of identity of the period, such as gender and race. By studying the state's confrontation with the borders of gendered identity, we learn something of how this identity came to be defined. A similar approach characterizes the analysis of the autobiography that emerges from this confrontation (in the case of Erauso). Ángel Esteban and Barbara Mujica further signal how the developing genre of the picaresque as well as the colonialist, historiographic discourse shape the genesis of Erauso's memoir. Within this type of approach, the focus is on how these cases are products of their environment, and what they tell us about early modern society's vision of subjectivity. In my discussion, I will focus on the dramatic fiction produced from these historical cases, and how this fiction allowed for the *comedia's* staging of the social drama of changing notions of early modern identity.

There is a decidedly theatrical nature to all of these cases, and their popularity transformed into theater. Luis Vélez de Guevara, Antonio Coello, and Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, who collaborated on three plays during their careers, penned a *comedia* specifically for Francisca Baltasara, entitled *La Baltasara*. Francisca, *primera dama* of the Company of Heredia, was well known and beloved by audiences for her cross-dressing roles and masculine bravado.¹⁰ The play, first published in 1652 and speculated to have been written around 1630 when audiences would have still been familiar with the actress and her celebrity, was first performed in 1634 as confirmed in a letter uncovered by Shirley B. Whitaker, written by Bernardo Monanni, a Tuscan ambassador. A rousing success with audiences, the play also initiated a series of other adaptations of the famous actress's persona. Another letter written by Monanni on March 17, 1635, confirms the

¹⁰ We see her fame evidenced by the popular refrain, "Todo lo tiene bueno la Baltasara, / Todo lo tiene bueno, también la cara" (Pellicer 51).

production of a puppet show version of the work at court “during the following Lenten season, when the regular companies of plays were inactive” (204). In 1852, Miguel Agustín Príncipe, Antonio Gil de Zárate, and Antonio García Gutiérrez composed another *La Baltasara*, this time departing significantly from the facts of the leading lady’s life to focus on “un Don Juan femenino, de un extraordinario élan vital y de una seducción irresistible” (Castilla 373). Guilio Rospigliosi, who probably learned of the story during his travels in Spain in 1626 and 1644, created an operatic version of the original play, described by Kate Brown as “shorter, tighter, cutting various rather repetitive episodes in Acts II and III [...] chiefly to emphasize the spiritual aspects of the story” (“Baltasara and Rospigliosi”).

The “spiritual aspect” referred to by Brown involves Francisca’s conversion from the stage. Married to the Heredia company’s *gracioso*, Miguel, Baltasara abruptly cut her theater career short in order to live the rest of her life in seclusion at a hermitage near Cartagena. This decision earned her public adulation given the general disapproval of actresses at the time by moralists who objected to the general licentiousness of the public theater.¹¹ As Pellicer mentions in his history of the *comedia*, the following “versos epicúreos” reflect the exemplar status she earns for her spiritual conversion: “Pero, amigos, amemos y vivamos / Mientras la edad por mozas nos declara; / Que despues querra el cielo que seamos / Lo mismo que ayer fue la Baltasara” (52). The *comedia* based on her person makes this life-changing decision the subject of its first act, featuring its title character acting in a play entitled *La gran comedia del Saladino*. Baltasara plays

¹¹ Merveena McKendrick notes that Francisca Baltasara is one in a string of popular actresses who abandoned the early modern stage for spiritual reasons, including Isabel Hernández, María Agueda, Josefa Locabo, and Miarana Romero. For more information surrounding life for early modern stage actresses, see “Representing their Sex” (76-77).

Rosa Solimana, Suleiman's wife, who supports him during his conquest of Jerusalem. She enters the play on horseback, announcing herself and her husband's power, but the play-within-a-play begins to break its fourth wall when the Baltasara character abruptly announces her conversion and the end of her artistic career from the stage (within the stage). Without a lead actress, the play is over. The second act follows Baltasara on her hermitage, with her former lover Don Álvaro making a pact with the devil to win her back. Baltasara swiftly resists his offers, while also rebuffing the pleading of her husband and fellow castmate Iusefa to return to the company. Álvaro (actually the devil in disguise) continues to haunt the famous actress into the third act, threatening suicide should she not return to him. The relentless and impassioned begging eventually drives Baltasara to martyrdom on the eve of St. John's Day. The play ends with the image of her bloodied corpse and an exaltation of her piety, a far cry from the ferocious protagonist Baltasara originally enters the *corral* (within the *corral*) to portray.

The play has been analyzed largely for the details it provides us about seventeenth-century theater given its metatheatrical first act. Beyond the common practice of dramatizing a historical event or figure, Vélez's first act stages a play of its own which purportedly takes place in an actual *corral*, *El corral de la Olivera*, located in Valencia. Almudena García González explores the question of space within the play, pointing out the suggested "fusión del espacio dramático con el escénico" (116). Vélez spatially conflates reality and fiction as he creates a fictional account of his historical subject. The initial staging of *El Saladino* further confirms matters of audience taste. Both Anita K. Stoll ("La gran comedia") and Hugo Albert Rennert indicate that the start of *El Saladino* reflects typical practices such as the placement of a poster announcing that

night's play and the hocking of snacks prior to the play's start. Stoll and Bravo-Villasante further highlight the way in which this *comedia* caters to popular conventions prized by audiences, namely, the *mujer varonil* who performs male tasks in male garb, fulfilled by Baltasara's appearance on horseback. For Melveena McKendrick, the character fits into the Amazon archetype, due to frequent references to Palas (*Woman* 290). As she goes on to explain, the historical female warrior/leader offered a feminist character closest to Spanish reality: "Filling as they did the normal masculine role, they were the *mujeres varoniles* of real life, exceptions to the norm understandably found more often within royal families or the ranks of the aristocracy, where powerful personalities have always had greater opportunities to blossom into influence [...]" (*Woman* 296). The collaboration of Vélez and Rojas was no mistake in this regard, given that both playwrights "were much attracted to sensational subjects; both enjoyed portraying extraordinary characters; both had a weakness for creating startling or extravagant theatrical effects" (Mackenzie 183).

The first act of the joint collaboration of Vélez, Rojas, and Coello, with its faux-staging of its own kind of theater, confirms our understanding of staging practices and the public spectacle and excitement surrounding *comedia* during the period. The play as a whole also provides us with a broader sense of how playwrights worked through questions of reality and representation through the figure of the transvestite. While the play's title, *La Baltasara, comedia famosa*, would imply the centrality of its historically-based protagonist, I would suggest that the character presented by these dramatists represents more precisely the cross-dressed persona, completed, or dramatically balanced out, only by the presence of the spectating public (characters like Miguel, Iusefa, and

Álvaro). These two halves create the “whole” of the “Baltasara” in the title. One cannot exist without the other, and the play explores this predicament upon Francisca’s departure from the stage for good. The three acts of the play continually stage the public need for “La Baltasara,” as well as the void left by her absence when she abandons the theater and decides she prefers solitude. Like *Quijote*’s Marcela, the shepherdess who tires of the pastoral laments of her suitors, the character of Francisca wants only to be left alone, but cannot seem to escape at any turn those spectators who seem incapable of continuing without her (just as Don Quijote pursues Marcela into the woods even after he tells everyone else to leave her to herself).

The first scene of the first act immediately begins to construct this persona by withholding the character herself from both sets of audiences (the one within the play and the one watching Vélez’s first act). As Don Rodrigo and Don Álvaro stand outside the theater waiting for the poster that will announce that night’s show, we learn that we are in effect waiting for Baltasara. As Rodrigo explains, the poster arrives late because “No sabía / la Baltasara el papel” (f. 1). From the outset, everything theatrical revolves around the famous lead actress, from start to finish. She delays the placement of the poster, and, upon announcing her retirement from the theater at the end of the first act, *El Saladino* ends, as announced by her husband Miguel: “Y aqui acabó la Comedia” (f. 7). Having established the innate connection between the play’s title character and the theater itself, the subsequent wait for the poster takes on new meaning: it means waiting for both plays to be set in motion. The spectators cannot continue at either level of theater without their star player.

Once the men see the title of the play announced on the poster, they turn their discussion to Francisca. Before the audience can ever see the play's title character, the other actors on stage work to construct her persona, which she may then step into upon arrival. In this sense, the public's version of "La Baltasara" may always be present through a continual discourse surrounding the stage actress. Álvaro initiates the commentary, furthering the "buzz" around the lead actress's appearance: "Es muger notable, y rara, / y desigual, Don Rodrigo" (f. 1). Álvaro makes direct allusion to the change in demeanor caused by Baltasara's recent visit to Cartagena (which inspires her impending conversion). His comments work at a second level to suggest to us the particular appeal of the famed actress, namely, her eccentricity as an attractive woman dressed as a man. Since neither the play nor the play-within-a-play can happen without its cross-dressed heroine, Álvaro begins discursively anticipating the pending dramatic events, as well as their agent, prior to her arrival.

The story-telling attempts to fill the void left by Baltasara's initial absence coincide with the public's need to establish the object of their gaze, with or without the individual who inspires it. This version of Baltasara created by the play's initial dialogue proves consistently insufficient, as Álvaro laments Francisca's lack of attention: "ni me estima, ni aborrece, / ni me despide, ni admite [...] si algunas obligaciones / la acuerdo que ha de deverme, / en vez de satisfacerme, / me paga en desatenciones" (f. 1). He cannot be still without her favor, and the rejection evokes great instability: "Y quando mas la pretendo / examinar sus pasiones, / quedando en mas confusions, / ni la entiendo, ni me entiendo" (f. 1). To not understand Francisca is to not understand himself. While this disoriented, desperate plea draws from the poetic discourse of unrequited love, in the

context of the impending play-within-a-play, it also sets the tone for the frantic relationship between Baltasara, the persona spearheaded by her fame, and the business of commercial theater which requires her presence.

The audience inches closer to chancing upon the lead actress when her husband Miguel, the company's resident *gracioso*, arrives. Álvaro announces him, emphasizing the two relevant aspects of his identity: "Este que hiende, y desgarrar / es Miguel Ruiz, gracioso, / marido de Baltasara" (f. 2). Miguel only matters to the play in his capacity as theatrical player and as link to Francisca. Perfectly aware of this fact, his first lines in the play attempt to lay claim to the actress that everyone has been clamoring to see: "Baltasara es cosa mía, / y adonde pone los pies / no ay Elena, ni Cleopatra, / que es en su comparación" (f. 2). Like Rodrigo and Álvaro, Miguel immediately begins building an aura around his wife and creating her presence through poetic comparison. He implicitly recognizes his only relevance to the unfolding events by maintaining the emphasized points of his identity as introduced by Álvaro. Miguel further sets up the heavily theatrical basis of her persona by anticipating elements of the impending play: "Yo imagino / que ay lo del cavallo, y reto, / que en esto suele ser rara / como en todo, Baltasara" (f. 2). As Bravo-Villasante points out, Miguel's mentioning of the "cavallo y reto" suggests that these stage antics were typical of the real-life actress, as fitting with her popularity as a woman dressed as man (150). They also seek to restrict our understanding of the Baltasara character to her dramatic profession such that the character and the façade factor more so than the individual behind them as far as the players waiting for the play are concerned.

La Baltasara's first act begins with an emphasis on a famous theatrical figure and the public's insatiable desire for her cross-dressed playacting. The dramatic conflict of the work centers on the impossible, but also essential, nature of this relationship between Francisca Baltasara and her audience. The theatergoers need to be near their star actress, but her appearance would cause potential censure. Despite all of the clamoring for her entrance, when we finally glimpse the company's lead *dama*, she speaks only of her desire to leave the profession behind. Her first words in the play confirm her disinterest in stepping into the role that has so far been constructed for her in this first act: "No he venido a la Comedia / jamás con tan poco gusto, / todo me cansa, y altera" (f. 3). When fellow company members Leonor and Iusepa try to coax her out of her haze, she announces a new object of her own gaze. Vélez sets the stage, literally, for Francisca's conversion by juxtaposing separate secular and religious idols. Rather than worship the theater, catering to the audience, Baltasara announces her devotion to John the Baptist: "porque yo soy muy devote / del Bautista" (f. 3). The person begins to separate from the persona, effectively denying the commercial enterprise something it desperately needs: the figure able to inspire curiosity, ignite character transformation, and, ultimately, sell tickets. Furthermore, though Baltasara seems to have recognized her individual identity separate from her theatrical fame, those around her do not comprehend such a splitting. Leonor, for example, entreats Francisca to remember her old dramatic ways: "Mas como te olvidas ya, / Baltasara de lo que eras? [...] que si yo mal no me acuerdo / pudiera dezir proezas / de tu valor, y hermosura" (f. 4). Leonor defines what Baltasara "is" through the comments made about her valor and beauty: that discourse surrounding her stage persona constitutes her from the outside perspective. This brief exchange between the three

women prior to the opening of *El Saladino* introduces the chief dynamic of the play as a whole: the need for Francisca to uphold her cross-dressed play-acting and the constant desire on the part of the audience to be acknowledged, and somehow validated, by this theatrical version of her person.

Vélez, aware of the impossible dialectic he creates, stages the breaking point metatheatrically, given that Francisca announces her departure from the theater while acting in a play-within-a-play. As Francisca steps out of her role as Suleiman's wife, she simultaneously chooses to leave behind "La Baltasara," the famous cross-dressing figure, which of course existed in the real-life commercial theater circuit and would be recognizable to *La Baltasara's* viewers. At the same time that Vélez plants the question of the theater-going public's need for a transvestite theater, he uses a discourse of theatrical cross-dressing to extend the questioning of reality and representation at multiple levels. The fourth wall breaks again when Baltasara takes the stage and delivers a speech that should have come at the end of the play. The actor playing Suleiman makes the mistake known: "No echa de ver Baltasara, / no se acuerda, no conoce / que es al fin de la comedia / el reto?" (f. 4) He does not bother to address her in any character other than the one of the play's namesake. Though primarily concerned with the flow of the play and his own part, Suleiman unwittingly asks a deeper question regarding the type of cross-dressing plot moments away from unfolding. As he points out, Baltasara has started at the end, in more ways than one. With her renunciation of the theater and dramatic persona, Francisca will begin with the reversal typical of *comedia* endings. Vélez symbolizes this plot inversion through metatheater, given that while playing the character of her final *comedia* she also begins at the close.

Baltasara's response to her opposite lead expands upon the suggested agency of her initial exchange with Leonor and Iusefa. She explains her change of heart and the involuntary nature of her conversion: "que ando con unas pasiones / estos dias, que me traen / dandome cruel garrote / a la memoria" (f. 4). Even as she performs on stage, giving the audience what they want, she dramatizes her distance from representation and her need for another way of life. Certainly Francisca's spiritual conversion, occurring on a stage, speaks to both the facts of the historical figure's life as well as the moral uproar appeased by her exemplar moment of piety. The inclusion of *comedia* within *comedia* as the venue for the dramatic representation of Francisca's conversion suggests that Vélez also uses the moment of denial to ask questions about society's relationship to the stage, and how cross-dressing elucidates this interaction. As Baltasara moves in and out of character within the premiere of *El Saladino*, she acknowledges the disappointment she causes and the confusion produced by her identity crisis: "La compañía me cansa, / mi alegría son los montes, / mas que digo? estoy en mi? / Segunda vez me perdone" (f. 4). She is right to worry about the outward reaction to her internal spiritual probing, since it will serve as the primary conflict of the rest of the work. By the end of the first act, Baltasara has collapsed the expectations carefully built up in the opening scenes while setting the stage to fulfill those of disapproving moralists.

Vélez's contribution to the *comedia* paying homage to Francisca Baltasara initiates the split between person and character through an abandonment of theater that made Baltasara the glowing example for those critics of the seventeenth-century commercial theater who despised the concept of stage transvestism. While on the one hand, the play chooses to focus on her spiritual journey and path to martyrdom, the

highly theatrical nature of this first act points our attention to the parallel drama played out between the various facets of Baltasara's identity and the public that seems to need her so much. Acts 2 and 3 pick up on this relationship between character and public as all those around her struggle to pull her back into the persona of her former fame. The emphasis on the dueling sides of Baltasara's identity that makes this struggle possible allows for an exploration of the relationship between society and stage, and the degree to which the *corral* functioned as an arbitrary barrier between the two. Once Francisca leaves the stage at the end of Act 1, for example, the *vejete* comments on her departure, serving as a kind of observant chorus: "Ay prodigio mas extraño? / aqui se acabó la historia / Baltasara como agora, / Dios te os lleve adelante, / muger resuelta" (f. 6). Prior to *El Saladino*'s drama is that of the play's lead *dama*. She functions as the primary focus of all those in attendance, regardless of the relevance of such a gaze as related to the play before them. La Baltasara opens the window to those reversals, upheavals, and marvels that offer an escape from the highly organized nature of social life as well as an indulgence in the emerging potential for mobility that threatened religious and political hierarchy.

The reconstruction of the *comedia* happening within the play itself also directs our attention to the figure of the playwright, given that Vélez not only recreates a version of a real-life character, but also simulates the world of his own craft in the process. He suggests his artistic task as capable of a totalizing reality while hinting at his own creative role in bringing this desirable subject (La Baltasara) to audiences (via a representation of this same desire). In this sense, like the lurking figure of Ribera in *La mujer barbuda*, Vélez stands just outside the frame, considering the relationship between reality and

representation through his eponymous heroine while hinting at his own role in negotiating such a dynamic. Also like *La mujer barbuda*, however, Vélez dramatizes an attempt at harnessing the power of the stage cross-dresser that always remains slightly out of reach. Since both Ribera and Vélez use real-life gender benders as their subject matter, they must grapple with the overcrossing of their imagined heroine, the woman dressed as man, and the facts surrounding the individual that complicate, as they inspire, such a vision.

During the second act of the play, Álvaro unwaveringly stalks Francisca, unable to accept her distancing herself from the theater and the loss of their former relationship. During the first scene of the act, when the devil asks him: “Que es lo que más deseas?” he responds succinctly: “El ver a Baltasara” (f. 7). The verb “to see” figures significantly as it codifies him not just as a lover but also as an eager spectator who wishes for the theater of “La Baltasara” to continue. In his desperate search for the persona, however, Francisca will continually reiterate her individualized identity, separating herself from the figure that Álvaro, Miguel, and Iusefa seek to recover. During their initial exchange in this act, Francisca actively denies Álvaro the proximity he attempts to recreate: “Dexa tu loca porfia, / y no me persigas mas; / repara que ciego estas / con esta necia osadia” (f. 7). Álvaro begs only to be able to see, and Francisca informs him that even after encountering her, he is blind. She refuses to acknowledge his coveted role as spectator, reasserting instead her newfound, non-theatrical identity. When their argument intensifies into a series of exclamations (gradually growing in syllable count for emphasis), the motif of sight appears to close off their standoff:

Alv. Miralo bien.
Bal. Ya lo miro

Alv. Y que dizes?
Bal. Que me dexes,
que te vayas, que te alexes
Alv. De tus rigoes me admiro?
Balt. No te admires, porque ya
no soy quien antes solia
(f. 8)

Baltasara maintains her position as the enlightened one who can see as compared to Álvaro's blindness. She accompanies her assertion of sight with the continued plea for distance from the scene that introduced her to the play as a whole, arguing that she has put that character to rest. Álvaro, unable to accept this, will continue to pursue her for the rest of the play, even threatening to commit suicide if she does not return to him since, as established at the start of the play, Álvaro views Baltasara as constitutive of his own person.

While Álvaro's pleadings with Francisca highlight the way in which her cross-dressed character plays a role in the spectator's own subjectivity, the pleadings of her husband and castmate Iusefa offer a lighter, commercially-based side to the need for the transvestite heroine. As the two follow Baltasara on her hermitage, they offer moments of comic relief as well as insight into her more logistical role in the company. First, Miguel jokes with Francisca about her abrupt transformation, attempting to tie it back to their former profession: "Di, para que te has vestido / este saco de Hermitana? / Quieres en la Compañia / hazer el papel de barba?" (f. 8). Miguel, like Álvaro, views the actions of his wife through the lens of *comedia*, refusing to properly see her transformation and instead encoding it as part of the theater. His comments serve as a testament both to the staying power of the cross-dressed persona as well as the lack of division between dramatic and non-dramatic spaces as related to seventeenth-century Spanish society. Unlike Álvaro, however, Miguel and Iusefa look to Francisca not with the longing of a lover but instead

with the material need of co-workers eager to resuscitate their business enterprise. Iusefa makes their commercial motivation known without any attempt to veil her economic motives: “Buelvete a la Compania, / q hemos de hazer gra ganancias” (f. 8). Miguel adds to this specific quantities that they can expect: “Pues, y la fiesta del Corpus, / y la Octava de Paltrana? / dos mil reales tengo a cuenta / no estés conmigo tirana” (f. 8). Baltasara the stage actress provides wonder and excitement but she also makes bank, a fact that ties her closely with the overall organization of the commercial theater and one that her partners will not let go of or easily allow her to forget.

By the close of the third act, the pressure from the audience has exhausted Baltasara, and she becomes increasingly exasperated by Álvaro’s (or rather, the devil’s) persistence. Losing her patience, she confronts Álvaro with this grief: “Quando acabarás, ingrato, / de perseguirme y matarme, / de inquietarme, y estorvarme, / pues no me dexas un rato?” (f. 14). Baltasara realizes that she cannot have any time to herself; both her time and space perpetually belong to the theater. The material and immaterial levels of need for the stage persona edge out the secluded space she has tried to carve for her own private identity and spiritual reflection. At the same time that Baltasara struggles to resist the pleading for her return, the *comedia* itself must find a way to substitute her in the last two acts. To this end, castmate Leonor takes on the role of cross-dressed heroine. Shortly after Baltasara’s dramatic exit from the stage, Leonor forswears Christianity and becomes “Zorayda,” a Moorish warrior, who then replaces her murdered husband Tafer as the leader of his army. Like the company members performing *El Saladino*, the audience to *La Baltasara* needs the same excitement and entertainment offered by the female transvestite character. In the absence of Suleiman’s wife, Leonor takes on such a role and

keeps radical transformations and adventure from fully disappearing from the work. In contrast to Francisca's personal trajectory, Leonor's series of changes has no resonance with real life, and as such, her transvestite narrative can find its articulation within the confines of the *comedia*.

In the end, the persona so longed for by all the secondary characters of the play must be removed, even if it means the death of the lead character. While such a loss would constitute a tragedy for a character like Álvaro, whose need to gaze upon "La Baltasara" comprises his whole being, for Francisca it represents a much longed-for solution and the only liberation that remains given the strength of her dramatic past on her spiritual present. Baltasara, exhausted and undone by the persistent desperation and demands of Álvaro (along with those of her husband and castmate), looks to martyrdom as the remaining path of enlightenment. Her final suicide, meant to complete the story of her spiritual journey, also comments upon the obsessive relationship between theatrical persona and spectator that coincides with Francisca's religiously-motivated departure from the stage. As she aims to keep herself free of the devil's constant temptations, Baltasara also tries to ward off, once and for all, the constant call of the commercial theater. Eager to escape the need for her presence as "La Baltasara," seemingly the only option is to end her life, implying the impossibility of any real separation between her individual identity and the stage figure she became through her cross-dressing roles in the *comedia*. In her last scene in the play, Baltasara presents her bloodied and battered body ("Sale Baltasara la cara ensangrentada y las manos"), suggesting it as the final remedy of her condition: "Asi cuerpo castigado / apagareis con dolor / los efectos, que al temor / vuestros ojos han causado, / sin duda fuiste culpado, / y fui deslumbrada ofensa" (f. 15).

Here we note the way in which Francisca uses a discourse of sight and visual spectacle as indicative of her problematic existence; she dazzles as her eyes cause the problem that only the destruction of her body can solve.

Prior to Francisca's complete self-destruction, she successfully convinces Leonor of a spiritual conversion away from her stage antics as well. Baltasara's final move to rid the play of its play (via transvestism) goes beyond her individual narrative while reflecting her metatheatrical consciousness of the attempts to replace her after her exit in Act 1. Having presented her mutilated body to the audience, Leonor takes note of Francisca's voice, as each woman regards the words of the other as a rare echo whose full meaning eludes the other character. Leonor first notes the paradoxical dual closeness and fleeting quality to the words she has just heard: "Connmigo habla esta voz. / que son ilusiones locas: / voz para que me provocas, / y te huyes tan veloz?" (f. 14). Though Baltasara addresses the audience to explain her plans of martyrdom, Leonor situates herself as the recipient, forging the connection between the two and anticipating her own impending conversion. The sound of Baltasara's voice confounds her, beginning to break down her sense of surety and obligating an increasing focus (and dependency) on finding out her intentions: "Voz, eco, sombra, ilusion, / que me quieres? no respondes? / donde está? Donde te escondes, / con tan grande confusion?" (f. 14). The mere sense of Baltasara's presence drives Leonor to a frantic state reminiscent of Álvaro's delusion. Having Francisca's company only in the aural sense, Leonor longs to see her, to be a spectator to a presence to which she feels oddly connected. As she slowly transforms into the spiritual, non-theatrical self that Baltasara encourages her to be, she cannot escape also becoming another audience member eager to "see" "La Baltasara." Furthering the

connection between Leonor and Alvaro, as Francisca attempts to convert her, Leonor describes herself as blind: “No me quiero arrepentir, / que puesto que loca, y ciega, / los antojos de mi vida he seguido con tal fuerza” (f. 14). Baltasara eventually convinces Leonor, thereby successfully removing the remaining presence of stage transvestism from the play. Through her conversion, Leonor becomes a full echo of Francisca and the transformation she herself underwent at the beginning of the play (and in real life). In the process, however, Leonor’s echo also positions her as yet another subject searching for guidance and discovery in the image of Baltasara, yearning to be cured of blindness in visual spectacle.

The trace of theatrical spectatorship inherent to Leonor’s final interaction with Francisca calls our attention to the manner in which even in death she continues offering the appeal she tries to escape. The desire for a public display that followed her in life finds a way to continue in death through the admiration and astonishment at the discovery of her dead body. In the final moments of the play, when the remaining characters discover her mutilated corpse, the exhibition continues as they marvel at its sight: “Este es sobrenatural / prodigio que nos enseña / a vivir en este mundo” Rodrigo comments, marking Francisca’s body as a didactic, supernatural phenomenon, to which the Capitán replies, “O me ha mentido la idea; / o los ojos me han mentido, / o está Baltasara muerta” (f. 16). Even in death, Baltasara continues manipulating sight and captivating her audience; here she confounds the senses of those around her through an exposition of her dead body. The theater of “La Baltasara” persists until the end, never letting Francisca Baltasara fully escape into the tranquil hermitage she desires. At the same time, the overall action of the play works to destroy theatrical transvestism as it removes her from

the stage and eventually transforms her into a battered corpse, on display and never to act again. Her only task prior to vanishing is to inspire a similar movement in the character of Leonor, whose manly antics have sufficed up until this final scene to compensate for Francisca's abrupt abandonment of her commercial theater pastime.

The joint effort of *La Baltasara* follows the basic aspects of her life story without much modification. Owing to the fact that Francisca's exit from the stage made her controversial, her spiritual conversion provides the basis for a conservative story about enlightenment beyond the theater. Her stage identity, however, no one can give up. The same clingy reaction occurs in another *comedia* based on a historical cross-dresser, Catalina de Erauso. Her story, in contrast to that of Francisca Baltasara, requires much more tweaking before it can make it to the stage.

What we know of Catalina de Erauso comes to us in pieces, namely a multitude of historical documents, as summarized by Velasco: "her request for a soldier's petition, letters written by those who knew her, *relaciones* or news pamphlets published in Spain and Mexico, visual and literary portraits, an autobiography attributed to Erauso, a theatrical representation, and an episode in a 1637 picaresque novel" (*The Lieutenant* 46). Erauso's memoir presents perhaps the most studied text of these various documents, though its authorship remains dubious. The original manuscript, submitted to Bernardino de Guzmán in 1625, remains lost. Instead, currently we rely on two manuscripts that appeared centuries later: "an alleged transcription of the original with eighteenth-century calligraphy but seventeenth century orthography and morpho-syntax" and a modernized version based on this manuscript, published by Joaquín María Ferrer in 1829 (Merrim 179). The memoir itself tells the story of a Basque novitiate, born in 1592 in San

Sebastián, who, at the age of 15, escapes the convent and begins living as a man. Initially, he travels throughout Spain working for various masters as a page in Vitoria, Valladolid, and Bilbao. After returning to San Sebastián, he decides to travel to the New World in 1610 and, upon arrival, continues serving various masters in Paita, Trujillo, and Lima. In 1613 he arrives in Chile to participate in the wars against the *araucanos* under the authority of his own brother, Captain Miguel de Erauso, and after having driven back Indian forces, he wins the title of lieutenant.

Erauso narrates the story in an episodic structure with a surprising amount of violence that infiltrates almost every encounter she has. She even murders her own brother, hides in a convent, and then returns to Peru. Her most violent act involves killing the “Nuevo Cid,” another infamous bandit of ill repute, at age 31. In contrast to the other brawls and killings she recounts in the memoir, here the consequences are more far-reaching, as she is imprisoned and sentenced to death. In order to save herself, she confesses her “true” sex, holding up her virginity as proof of her chastity and religious devotion. Her revelation proves effective, and within a few years she is granted permission to return to Spain and present her case to Felipe IV. She then makes her way to Rome to obtain further permission from the Pope to continue living as a man. While in Rome, Erauso confesses to a cleric, Pedro del Valle, who provides us with our only definite physical description of her: “Sólo en las manos se le puede conocer que es mujer, porque las tiene abultadas i carnosas, i robustas i fuertes, bien que las mueve algo como mujer” (Perry 410). While he emphasizes the mix of feminine and masculine attributes that contribute to Erauso’s appearance, her formal portrait, painted by Francisco Pacheco in 1630, focuses on only the masculine aspect of her profile.

One fairly less accurate portrayal of Erauso and her transvestite narrative appears far later, in 1947, when famous Mexican actress María Félix played the warrior-nun in a film adaptation of Erauso's story. The film adaptation begins at the end of the lieutenant-nun narrative: Catalina tells the story of her life to her confessor from a cell, which leads us back to her childhood and the explanation of her masculine disposition. The movie fabricates the back-story of a masculine upbringing in her early years, including a scene in which she fences with her father. These contextual elements guide her later actions upon escaping the convent. The relationship to her father, ended by his untimely death, serves to explain her predilection for masculine clothing and habits. Having lost this paternal influence, the Erauso character enters a convent, which she will of course ultimately escape. Though the film features her getaway and the violence of her masculine persona, it does not include her military career, and instead, we follow her romance with a childhood friend, Juan. Unlike its early modern dramatic counterpart, the film takes advantage of the conventions of the theatrical transvestite throughout Erauso's courtship with Juan. When he shows interest in another woman, Elvira, Erauso sets about courting her new competitor as "Don Alonso" in order to prevent a relationship between Elvira and Juan. Like the character of Don Gil of Tirso de Molina's *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, "Don Alonso" is always the "best" man in the scene, attracting all other female characters.

This filmic imagination of the Catalina de Erauso story takes great liberties with the original facts of the case, and its visual interpretation of Erauso reflects this interpretive license. María Félix, the movie's star actress, appears throughout the film essentially as a woman, and as Velasco notes: "At no point is it possible for the audience

to mistake María Félix for a man” (*The Lieutenant* 122). This creative license displayed by the twentieth-century film underscores how the Catalina de Erauso story transforms into a cultural symbol or label to be filled creatively according to the artistic tastes and cultural needs of the given time period. Sherry Velasco’s comprehensive study of this development analyzes the transformation of the “warrior-nun” into a cultural label, pleasing the Baroque aesthetic of the seventeenth century with its hybrid, “monstrous” aspect and then transforming into anti-heroine in the nineteenth, or rather, a cautionary tale used to profligate a chaste, asexual image of womanhood: “While Catalina de Erauso represented a hybrid spectacle that produced admiration, titillation and shock during the seventeenth century, the nineteenth century was highly critical of the lesbian celebrity” (*The Lieutenant* 87). Using the examples of *La monja alférez*, a zarzuela by Carlos Coelho, and *La monja alférez* by Juan A. Mateo, Velasco explains that the nineteenth-century interpretations of the lieutenant-nun narrative eliminate the lesbian sexuality expressed in Erauso’s original memoir, creating instead a “heterosexual or asexual figure” (*The Lieutenant* 88). While these incarnations of Catalina’s story look to create a reactionary response, more contemporary versions of her tale focus on the warrior/nun dichotomy of her identity as well as the same-sex desire that characterized the memoir. According to Velasco, the reappearance of the original warrior-nun story reflected changing attitudes at the end of Franco’s dictatorship in Spain: “The reappearance of a lesbian Lieutenant Nun in Spain is indicative of an eagerness during the post-Franco era to explore those themes previously prohibited during the dictatorship” (*The Lieutenant* 167). Since the seventeenth century, Catalina de Erauso has been celebrated as a monster, censured as an anti-mother, and finally rediscovered as a curious, suppressed relic from a

nation's censured past. The fusion of opposing factors, from Erauso's dual female chastity and violent masculinity to the story's real life and representational dynamics, propel the story on and make it flexible to these mutations.

Erauso's original popularity similar draws from the blending of binary oppositions, as signaled by Perry: "What attracted these people who wanted to see the Nun-Lieutenant was his inclusiveness as a hyphenate. Neither simply woman nor man, she was both and all, a sexual anomaly, a circus freak, a symbol of nature undone and amazed, a paradox of boundaries violated but hymen intact" (407). From the beginning, nevertheless, to "see" the warrior-nun was to gaze upon those representations of her in *relaciones*, painting, theater, or narrative discourse. Spectators could only glimpse the story through a series of representational filters that inevitably colored the lines between reality and fiction with their own agenda. Even the memoir, purportedly written by Erauso herself, reflects a number of novelistic and colonialist influences shaping its structure and content. Critics such as Ángel Esteban, Belén Castro Morales, and Bárbara Mujica have all pointed out the influence of the picaresque genre on the memoir, namely its episodic structure and direction to an authority figure (here, the King). Mujica mentions the way in which Erauso narrates her story as a series of adventures, likening herself to "el que sale de su casa a buscar su camino en el mundo, viaja de un lugar a otro, sirve a un amo tras otro y conoce a personas de diversos ambientes económicos y sociales" (158). The social climbing and quest for self-discovery, or rather, the narrative of making one's way in the world, common in popular picaresque novels such as *Lazarillo de Tormes*, holds thematic influence over the memoir. Erauso's additional use of masculine privilege fits nicely into this framework, as pointed out by Aránzazu

Borrachero. In contrast to the “underdog” narrative of Lázaro, however, Esteban highlights Erauso’s heightened social privilege, given her parents’ classification as *hidalgos* and her constant association with other Basques throughout the course of the memoir. While the picaresque influences help to explain the document’s structure, Borrachero discusses how Erauso’s colonialist aims keep the focus of the tale on her military merits. The desire for power, for example, could explain her claim to have murdered her brother, given that “el asesinato de Miguel se presenta como la realización de una fantasía: la eliminación de la figura que ocupa el lugar de preeminencia social y familiar que Erauso desea para sí” (492). Morales and Esteban both note that Erauso uses the violent episodes of the memoir to construct herself as a wartime hero, with the winning of her lieutenant title serving as “la apoteosis heroica de la amazona” (Morales 235). In this way, the prefixed identities of military hero and deviant (yet privileged) *pícaro* condition both the structure and style of Erauso’s recounting of her life’s events.

Though Juan Pérez de Montalbán clearly writes *La monja alférez* to capitalize on the dramatic potential of Erauso’s story in conjunction with the lucrative commercial opportunity given the public’s interest in her story (the play was first performed in 1626 while Erauso was in Spain seeking recognition for her military achievements, as mentioned by Luzmila Camacho Platero), the real-life/literary crossroad proves fairly limiting to his theatrical project. The facts of Erauso’s story and the public’s awareness of these details bear down on the dramatic plot Montalbán crafts, making it difficult for Erauso to inhabit any recognizable type of the *comedia*. Though the play relies upon Erauso’s “real-life” narrative, the subversive elements of this same story impede a dramatic development in which the Erauso character (named Guzmán) could fit

comfortably. The Erauso character instead becomes an ousted third, identifiable neither through her original warrior-nun moniker nor through the traditional roles of the *comedia*. Whereas a fictional cross-dressing character dominates, and usurps, the *galán* role in order to reclaim her social position as an honored woman, Montalbán crafts a narrative in which Guzmán must forfeit such dramatic agency in order to allow a normative, heterosexual marriage to occur between the two non cross-dressed characters, Doña Ana and Don Diego. It seems that any deception or desire carried out on the part of Guzmán becomes more “real” given the play’s source material, thus creating a play that works against the typical cross-dressing plot to eliminate the same dynamism that made the play seem like a good dramatic venture in the first place.

Catalina de Erauso has an immediate presence in *La monja alférez*, and yet, as Melveena McKendrick signals, the theatrical piece is quick to erase the identity of her namesake. *La monja alférez* systematically negates the categories with which the theatrical character might hope to identify to become more intelligible as a person for the audience. The exclusion works not by way of a negation of recognizable, socially deviant roles but instead through the anticipated character types of the *comedia*. First, Erauso's real-life warrior identity is erased, excluding the *alférez* of her nickname. The story told by Montalbán does not stage her military exploits and diminishes this aspect of her personage: "Catalina's undoubted gift for war, well-proven in the course of over sixteen years spent fighting in South America, is reduced in the play to two street duels" (*Woman* 213). This negation seemingly makes way for the more traditional character type of the *comedia*, a *guerrera* figure who is sexually attractive and part of "the fairy-tale world of chivalry, romance and adventure," or perhaps a hybrid of this type with the

more traditional male *galán* who woos and courts the central female character (*Woman* 217).

Such a characterization, however, does not come to fruition, as the *mujer varonil* type is never fully realized. McKendrick argues that the character of Catalina de Erauso cannot fill the role of the *galán* given the need to erase homoerotic tension in the work. Denise Walen, for example, mentions in her discussion of transvestism and homoeroticism that cross-dressing is a useful way to explore homoerotics on the early modern stage without the same threat to sexual norms given that "the attraction can be excused as error rather than intent" (412). In the case of Erauso, however, her use of the male identity shows no signs of stopping. Unlike other female characters, the character of Erauso is based upon an actual woman who successfully transformed into a man and continued to do so for the rest of her life with permission from the Pope. The image of her courting a woman, then, carries a certain seriousness that the ephemeral flirtations of other cross-dressing characters may not evoke, and as McKendrick and Foster stress, such a suggestion would not sit well with inquisitorial authority. Furthermore, McKendrick also emphasizes Erauso's real life reputation of possessing masculine physical features that would have impeded her identification with the "slight, through attractive figures" of the *mujer guerrera* type who precedes her on the stage (217). While the play's traditional structure successfully excludes Erauso's identity as a real-life warrior, she also cannot become the *mujer varonil* "type" that the comedy demands.

Though impossible for Erauso to be the *guerrera* or *galán* that the play in one sense suggests by way of her insertion into the *capa y espada* plot, in another sense her honest courting of Doña Ana is also denied in order to underscore her status as a social

climber. Rather than lament his feelings for Doña Ana, Guzmán (Erauso's character) focuses much of his attention on extracting money from her for his exploits. Rather than discuss his romantic or sexual interest in her, Guzmán explores his financial motivations when he addresses the relationship. It is instead Doña Ana who professes to desire his presence and looks to him as the protector of her honor. The first scene of the play establishes this contrast of interests. Doña Ana laments Guzmán's plans to leave Lima in emotional terms, making direct mention of her devotion to Guzmán as well as her position as an object of exchange: "¿Pude yo (siendo quien soy) / darte señales más claras / de mi amor? ¿y tú estimaras / los favores que te doy, / si te entregase liviana / la posesión de mi pecho?" (72). Guzmán, however, focuses on his imminent departure, emphasizing even in his placation the distance that this movement will bring: "Ya no hay remedio, ya es hecho, / mas alivie, mi doña Ana, / (si mi ausencia te lastima) / el mal que sintiendo estás, / ver que dos leguas no más / dista el Callao de Lima" (72). Guzmán is not a real lover to Doña Ana; in the moment that the play introduces their relationship he is already leaving her and expounding this approaching space between them. The negation of Guzmán as a failed *mujer varonil* type underscores his perpetual movement, a movement that resonates with Erauso's real life transatlantic exploits and with the growing anxiety surrounding this type of mobility in seventeenth century Spanish society.

But Guzmán does not *just* want to move around. In a later conversation with Machín, his servant, Guzmán discusses his plans to ask Doña Ana for money and reveals that this will not be the first time, "pero la noche viene, y el dinero / de la cadena ha dado fin, y quiero, / pedir otro socorro a mi doña Ana" (88), and in the next scene he does so.

Doña Ana, aware of the way in which she serves Guzmán's financial interests, offers an emotional plea to Guzmán: "No despido, antes te pido / que no pongas en olvido / los favores que me pides" (92). Here she cements her position as both the emotional side of the relationship as well as the economic provider that allows Guzmán his freedom. The relationship between the two, then, is openly non-erotic, centered more on economic exchange and distanced longing than the kind of passion that would threaten the sexual norms that the play eventually enforces.

The traditional loss of honor and marriage complication that defines this type of *comedia* also leaves out this relationship of exchange between Guzmán and Doña Ana. Instead, Guzmán becomes a third-party to the marriage arrangement of Doña Ana and Don Diego after Diego deceptively dishonors Ana by using Guzmán's gloves to confuse her about his identity. Guzmán must take up the task of restoring this honor by confronting Diego with his transgression and arranging a marriage between the two parties. There is a marriage, but it does not involve Guzmán. The play keeps Guzmán from the institution of marriage while also fully placing the Catalina de Erauso figure outside of sexual identity. As a thwarted *guerrera* figure, there is a lack of homoerotic tension between Guzmán and Doña Ana while Diego displaces Guzmán as the *galán* who will consummate the suggested heterosexual relationship of their courtship. The play establishes a set of potential roles or classificatory possibilities for Guzmán and then excludes him from them.

Guzmán's attempted murder of his brother, Don Miguel de Erauso, fully expels Guzmán from the family, another social group with which the audience could identify him. While a marriage to Doña Ana might have allowed Guzmán to reconstruct his social

identity as husband, his relationship with his brother offers another opportunity for him to recuperate a solid placement within the traditional familial structure as brother. Guzmán denies this opportunity in favor of protecting the secret of his original biological identity. Aware of the weight of this decision after (almost) killing Miguel, he shares this burden with the audience in an aside: "(Aparte) ¡Ay de mí! ya me lastima / el amor de hermano" (104). Camacho Platero interprets Montalbán's presentation of this scene as a way to avoid painting Guzmán's murder as fratricide. He duels his brother out of practical obligation and self-defense, and, through a reversal later in the work, learns that he has not actually killed him. Just as Erauso's figure cannot suggest any type of real homoerotic desire within the public arena, Platero explains that she also cannot kill her own brother as described in the memoir: "Simplemente, Guzmán/Catalina no podía cometer fratricidio" (24). Although the play may censure the actual fratricide of the work, the way in which Guzmán is willing to battle his own brother in defense of his identity transformation shows that he does not regard the importance of family ties (as he acknowledges) over the gender difference he has created for himself.

In the end, the only solid base for Erauso's theatrical identity is this difference, his identity as a transvestite, or rather, his acquired and performed male identity. Paradoxically, this monstrous persona, though socially marginal, is the one way in which audience members may solidly understand Guzmán as a human being. Even his marginalized identity, however, is erased at the end of the work by Guzmán himself when he openly confesses and adopts his original biological identity. "[S]egunda vez os confieso, / que soy mujer" (171), (s)he proclaims, saving Ana's honor and removing herself from the potential complications of their relationship. Guzmán, then, is not

willing to admit his transvestite identity to his brother, but he will for the sake of Ana's honor. While this may be read as proof of his devotion for her, it also reveals the logic behind Guzmán's barbarous representation. His decisions as related to his original identity shift, so as to consistently leave him out of the institutions of marriage and family.

The theatrical translation of Catalina de Erauso, *La monja alférez*, does not allow Guzmán to be what Catalina de Erauso was in real life, nor does it allow him what he should purportedly be in the play itself. Guzmán is not warrior, lesbian, brother, or even transvestite by the play's end. He further evades the traditional theatrical structures with which the playwright attempts to contain the mythic story of Catalina de Erauso. He does not fully assimilate to the *mujer varonil* type that precedes him nor does he find himself entrenched in the traditional honor-to-marriage plot development that defines the *capa y espada* genre. The presence of this development elsewhere in the play, however, emphasizes the exclusion Erauso undergoes in the process of translation. At the play's close, the only "group" with which the audience can identify Guzmán is that of "woman," the one thing that neither the historical figure nor the theatrical character ever wanted to be. In this sense, the play strips the original Catalina de Erauso figure of an identity, making unrecognizable the fragments of her preservation in the character of Guzmán. What that was once hybrid and subversive is erased and in its place the audience receives a streamlined woman who has cast aside the threatening freedom of movement offered by her previous male gender.

The play's conclusion carefully emphasizes Guzmán's concession of character. He not only announces himself as woman but further kneels before Ana and Diego,

humbling himself to their union: “rindiéndome a vuestros pies, / y confesándome en ellos vencida, y que a merced vuestra / vivo, pues quedáis con esto, / mucho más que con matarme, / ventajoso, y satisfecho” (171). Instead of using his closing speech of reversal to confirm all that he has achieved, the Erauso character details the loss of those characters whose favor he once held, bowing out gracefully so that the play can end on a fully conservative note. Though Guzmán’s final compromise of his male identity appears to deconstruct everything about the warrior-nun of the play’s namesake, in terms of dramatic expectation, it leaves the story somewhat incomplete. Whereas normally *comedia* endings tie up all loose ends (partner-wise), this one lets Erauso the woman stay unmarried. Having just announced her womanhood, there remains no one who offers to wed her and hence create a complete comedic ending to the piece. On the one hand, this ending further highlights the inverted cross-dressing plot—Guzmán begins the play in control and by the end has acquiesced to an exclusion from marriage and male privilege. At the same time, Montalbán gives a wink to spectators’ knowledge of the real-life Erauso narrative, since she used her biological identity as a woman to save herself and ultimately managed to continue living as a man with express permission from the Pope.

Catalina de Erauso’s real-life story thoroughly permeates the play’s development, hiding Erauso and stripping away the agency that captivated audiences through the character of Guzmán. At the same time that the play obscures the *monja alférez*, it also searches for her, seemingly aware of its own suppression. The character of Erauso’s brother, Miguel de Erauso, literally must look for her at the play’s start, having become aware of her escape from the convent. While the audience immediately gets a glimpse of the Erauso figure, Miguel does not. He instead receives a letter and a portrait that,

combined, stand in for her as they inform him of her getaway. The letter, from their father, expresses an awareness of Erauso's cross-dressing and its subsequent freeing effect on her as well as the need to limit such potential: "Mas ahora por haber entendido que pasó a esos Reinos en traje de varón, por el deseo de su remedio, atropello vuestro sentimiento" (79). With it, a portrait supplies an additional visual element. From within the play, Miguel, like those watching on the outside, experiences the "nun-warrior" phenomenon in pieces, finding her only through disjointed representations: first in word, then in vision.

Miguel reacts to the news of his sister with disbelief, questioning both his own senses and the audacity of his sibling. First, he cannot believe what he has read: "¿Cómo es posible que haya yo leído / estos renglones sin haber perdido, / si no la vida el seso?" (80). His reading experience coincides with doubt over his own sanity. Here we may note the Baroque effect of his reception of the transvestite narrative: it marvels to the point of bewilderment. After ripping the letter out of frustration, Miguel turns to the portrait, addressing it directly. Through this picture, he hopes to find his sister: "y tú, retrato, si también del dueño, / que representas por la semejanza / la fealdad, y engaño no te alcanza, / libra mi honor de tan infame empeño, / verdad me informa, porque conocerla / pueda por ti, si acaso llego a verla" (80). Miguel makes himself subservient to the image, reaffirming its power just as his father emphasized in the letter. Since Erauso (Guzmán) has disrupted the order of things, he poses a threat to Miguel, and only through his knowledge of the story via Erauso's artistic rendering may he regain control.

Apart from the familial anger and frustration guiding Miguel's sense of betrayal as an outraged sibling, this initial scene also posits him as another spectator vying for the

chance to get a glimpse of the “real” warrior-nun. Like those who viewed *La mujer barbuda* and other representations of hermaphrodites and transvestites, Miguel must access the monstrous gender-bending figure through the filter of an artist who has crafted both vision and word to his liking. As such, Miguel’s reception of the Erauso narrative within the play calls our attention to representation’s filter of reality, displacing Miguel at the same time that it brings him closer to his sister’s story, or rather, the “figure” of his sister that has become inseparable from her person. The play as a whole, unable to accurately replicate Erauso as a singular character, also works to recreate those conditions by which the public experiences her in real life. Though Pacheco did not paint his portrait of Erauso until 1630, four years after Montalbán staged his *comedia*, the play acknowledges the artistic efforts to represent transvestite figures. By incorporating an image of the eager spectator, Montalbán creates a theater within a theater rooted in the “raw material” of Erauso’s off-stage dramatic entrance into the public arena.

As Guzmán becomes increasingly entangled in the love triangle with Doña Ana and Don Diego, Miguel continues in his quest to find him and uncover his “true” identity. The sense of disbelief in his own senses continues when, shortly after receiving the news from his father of his sister’s transformation, he comes face to face with his transvestite sibling. Unlike in the case of most cross-dressing plots, where the cross-dresser manages to deceive family members and new acquaintances alike, Miguel immediately suspects Guzmán to be his sister. In order to confirm his suspicions, however, he has to make use of the portrait, which, ironically, has become a medium for deciphering truth and deceit: “[...] mas me parece / que las facciones que su rostro ofrece / las del retrato son, quiero miralle / unas con otras partes confirriendo” (84). Here again we may note the desire to

gaze upon the transvestite, to go beyond those representations that have made her accessible. At this venture, Miguel still cannot fully believe that someone as valiant as Guzmán could be a woman, regarding such an idea as madness: “Mas...¿qué locura acreditar pretendo? / si es este Alonso de Guzmán, deshecha / no deja su valor cualquier sospecha” (84).

As astonished audience member to the Erauso story, Miguel reiterates this disbelief later in Act 2, commenting on the incredible combination of female and male attributes that unite in the figure of Guzmán. Like those *relaciones* that define the wonders of her story through her admirable ability to demonstrate male qualities, Miguel’s approbation also grounds itself in an elevation of the male. Beyond the social commentary his speech offers as related to gender, his more general wonderment at the thought of this odd combination calls our attention to his articulation of a fascination with an intermingling of supposedly separated qualities. The majority of his speech takes the form of an aside, so that he speaks to the public as one audience member to another, more overtly crossing the life/art boundary already made fluid by his metatheatrical reception of Erauso’s story:

¿Cómo es possible que viva
en un pecho mujeril
tan varonil osadía
si cuantos espada empuñan
en la Guerra, y paz afirman
que salir a un desafío
es la mayor valentía
mas si cuentan las historias,
ya modernas, y ya antiguas,
tantas matronas, jamás
de humanas fuerzas vencidas,
que mucho que las iguale
una mujer vizcaína,
engendada entre las duras

montañas, que el hierro crían? (100)

Miguel's remarks echo the surprise and curiosity surrounding Erauso's transvestite narrative that led to the presentation of the dramatic piece. In this sense, he plays the role of those in their seats, and gestures to this role-playing from the stage, pointing out their implication in the play's construction and continuation.

Miguel continues in this role as fascinated spectator as the scene continues, leading to the close of the second act. Rather than speculate and react from afar, Miguel directly confronts Guzmán, hoping to uncover the mythical lieutenant-nun figure. This scene, unlike most others of the *comedia*, contains specific blocking that deliberately creates a physical space between the two siblings: "Siéntase Miguel a una parte del teatro y Guzmán a la otra lejos de él" (101). As they wait for the arrival of their opponent, El Nuevo Cid, Miguel entreats Guzmán for details, first questioning the distance between them: "¿por qué os asentáis tan lejos? / que mientras vienen querría, / que vuestra patria, y discurso, / me contéis de vuestra vida" (101). Overly eager for this information, which Guzmán has no intention of sharing, Miguel then approaches him, trying to close the space between them, literally and figuratively. The more Miguel pushes for information, however, the more the figure of Erauso pulls away, as he backs up and denies Miguel such intimacy. Frustrated, Miguel then confronts Guzmán with his knowledge of his sister's deceit. As evidence, he mentions the story in the way that he received it, or rather, he presents Guzmán with the representative elements that have formed his persona: "[...] hablemos claro / yo tengo cierta noticia de vuestro mentido traje, / de Vizcaya me lo avisan / con señas, y con retratos, / que vuestro engaño averiguan" (103). From within the play, Montalbán makes clear the separation of person and persona, but then forces the

two to confront one another as Miguel presents Guzmán with the written and painted representations of himself: “aquí los traje, que quiero, / que entre los dos se decida, / el remedio con secreto, / poned en esto la mira” (103). In his capacity as a version of audience to the story, what Miguel demands is an interweaving of story and reality, and he feels that this confrontation will yield the solution, or “remedy” to Erauso/Guzmán’s cross-dressed treachery.

Guzmán responds only with distance, endeavoring to protect himself from his brother’s possibly murderous intent. He responds that Miguel has missed the mark entirely: “Ni entiendo vuestros intentos, / ni alcanzo vuestras enigmas. / Mas pues las razones muestran / que vuestro pecho delira, / quiero dejaros por loco” (103). With each verse, Guzmán reiterates that it is Miguel who has misunderstood. His accusations against Guzmán are an “intento,” “enigma”; he is delirious and crazy. Like Francisca’s assertion that Álvaro walks blindly by searching for himself in “La Baltasara,” Guzmán reacts to Miguel’s interest in uncovering the truth of the “monja alférez” with a rejection that positions him as a duped, overeager spectator. In the face of such a rebuff, Miguel only wants to get closer, as the stage directions reflect: “Quiere irse, y la detiene”(103). Miguel, addressing Guzmán as Catalina, entreats her to come back, refusing to accept the distance Guzmán asserts so as to protect his disguise. It is this disguise that Miguel tries to grasp, but with an end goal of eliminating the ambiguity made possible by Erauso’s play between subject positions: “Vuelve, vuelve, Catalina, / que no te he sacado aquí / para dejar indecisa la cuestión” (103). Miguel wants to revert Guzmán to Catalina and censure the entire cross-dressing project: “en un convento de Lima / he de partir a encerrarte, / o he de quitarte la vida, / porque no hagas más afrenta / a la nación vizcaína”

(104). Considering his plan a matter of national integrity, Miguel aggressively pursues his hunch that Guzmán is really his sister, causing Guzmán to attack. Though Miguel does not actually perish as in Erauso's autobiography, the moment of violence demonstrates the impermeable barrier between the cross-dressed persona and the subject who tries to uncover the "secret" behind this disguise. At the same time, the falsity of the murder (it is later revealed that Miguel survived the incident) reminds us of the normative gender politics that motivate Miguel and limit the theatrical depiction of Guzmán. His violence cannot be "real" just as he cannot inhabit any of the subject positions that originally defined his place in the "warrior-nun" narrative.

In due course, it is Guzmán and not Miguel who ends up providing a meaningful reflection on the nature of the warrior-nun's fame. During Act 3, once his alias has been uncovered and he faces the awaiting public, he ruminates over what the fuss will be if he will not even be appearing cross-dressed: "Que en el otro, ¿qué hay que ver? / ¿es por ventura milagro / ver una mujer vestida / de mujer?" (154). Guzmán asks a key question: is it about the gaze? Sebastián answers him that it is not the literal sight of his body dressed one way or the other, but the story that goes with his appearance that will cause the stir: "Sí, cuando ha dado / tanta material a la fama, / con hechos tan señalados, / que ellos, no el disfraz, le mueven / a querer veros, y hablaros" (154). Sebastián hits upon the crux of the entire early modern frenzy for the female gender-bender: having heard such a wondrous story, the public finds itself eager to meet the real-life embodiment of all those details, to see acted out that which they have only heard about. Montalbán further brings to light the linguistic aspect of this performance when Guzmán mistakenly refers to himself with a masculine past participle, "Estoy tan acostumbrado," which Machín

quickly corrects: “Acostrumbrada” (155). At the same time that *La monja alférez* does not allow Erauso to be any of the things she was in real life, the public hunt for the cross-dressed figure does open a dialogue about the nature of the transvestite’s fame, and how the cross-dresser gives the early modern spectator a chance to glimpse theater from the street based on the strategic use of the same role-play that defines each individual’s public identity. The character of Erauso herself, however, does not accumulate much of an identity, given that most aspects of her real-life persona were too controversial to be tempered by their fictional nature when staged for the early modern public.

Another public figure that also wowed the early modern Spanish public was Queen Christina of Sweden, who, despite not living in the country, became a point of interest as much for news of her horseback riding and male attire as for her pivotal conversion to Catholicism upon abdicating the Swedish throne in 1654. Due to the lack of a male heir, Christina’s father made sure she received an accelerated education usually reserved only for male royalty, and her participation in European intellectual life made her a prominent and rare case. As Carlos Clavería details in his discussion of the famous queen, Spain grappled with the larger-than-life images of Christina and her father. After Sweden’s victory over Germany in the Thirty Years War, Spain had to face the fact of “el poderío de una nación lejana y desconocida que lucha contra la Europa católica en defensa de la herejía luterana” (104). The religious threat of the spread of Protestantism, along with the undeniable prowess of Gustavo Afolfo’s military leadership, made the king an object of dual admiration and scorn in the eyes of Spanish writers. Gustavo, for example, earned titles such as “el monstruo de Stocolmia” (Quevedo and Moles), “tirano de Suecia” (Palafox, Pellicer, and Adam de la Parra) and “fiera del Norte” (father

Ambrosio Bautista) and was even sometimes referred to as the antichrist (106-7). After his death, however, poets and biographers were more willing to express their sympathy and admiration for the military hero.¹² Quevedo perhaps best encapsulates the contrasting attitudes surrounding Christina's father in a letter to a friend in 1632: "Su vida y su muerte se deben (y pueden) escribir, mas no su vida ni su muerte se pueden y deven imitar" (119). Clearly, Gustavo's military success set the stage for the fascination with the Queen of Sweden as news of his triumphs translated onto the page in the form of adulation and contempt.

While Gustavo may have enjoyed more political and military success as leader of Sweden, Queen Christina captivated Spanish attention when she abdicated the throne and converted to Catholicism, with Spanish clerics aiding in the process and serving as her confessor. In contrast to the images of Gustavo constructed by those writers who imagined him through news of his exploits abroad, various accounts of actual interactions with Christina help us to understand the Spanish fascination with the famous Swedish leader. Notable among these commentaries is first the emphasis on her masculine appearance and valiant attitude. Don Antonio Pimentel describes her along these lines according to his encounters with her during his stay at the Swedish court from 1652-1654:

Me ha parecido sería cosa de gusto el escribir lo que he visto acerca de la persona, vida y costumbres de la reina de Suecia a quien he tratado mucho. Es chica de cuerpo, tiene la frente muy abierta, los ojos grandes y bellos y de todo punto amables, la nariz aguda, la boca pequeña y hermosa, no tiene nada de mujer, sino

¹² Clavería explains that many biographers interpreted his death as a type of liberation for his enemies. See, for example, Ambrosio Bautista, *El breve discurso de las miserias de la vida humana* (1635), Juan Adam de la Parra, *Conspiratio Heretico-Christianissima* (1634), and Joseph Pellicer de Tovar y Abarca, *La Fama Austriaca o Historia Panegirica de la vida y hechos del Emperador Ferdinando Segundo* (1945).

el sexo. Su voz parece de hombre, como también el gesto; venla cada día a caballo, y aunque como las mujeres suelen, sin embargo, se está de modo que a no verla muy de cerca se dijera ser caballero muy plático. Trae un sombrero entonces y un jubón a la española y por sólo su pollera se echa de ver que es mujer. No suele tener más de un pie en el estribo y, sin embargo, corre con tanta velocidad que no hay quien la pueda alcanzar. El Rey nuestro Señor ha pedido su retrato a caballo; cuando hace este ejercicio trae un vestido de tan poco valor, que no llegará a cinco escudos en todo; cuando está en Palacio lo trae mui vulgar, y jamás he visto cosa de oro o plata en su cabeza o garganta, si no es una sortija en un dedo. [...] Y cuando trata de cosas y oye embajadores de reyes vuelve a cobrar tanta majestad que los más intrépidos tienen miedo. Yo me acuerdo haberla visto salir de una conversación de este género y luego ponerse tan grave que pasando de un extremo a otro no podía acabar de entender lo que veía por mis propios ojos...” (126-27)

In addition to her custom of wearing male clothing (a disguise that helped her to escape Sweden to Flanders after abdicating the throne), Pimentel emphasizes masculine physical traits such as her voice and gesture, reinforced by Sébastien Bourdon’s portrait, *Cristina de Suecia a caballo* in 1653. Pimentel provides us with another verbal portrait of Christina on horseback, describing her reaction to a fire breaking out: “en un caballo español, con sombrero y una canha en la mano, tan de buen aire y majestuosa, que no es posible explicar, el caballo tan resuelto y obediente al buen dueño que la seguía, entraba por el fuego como si no lo hubiera” (127). Certainly, Christina’s dexterous horseback riding skills and valiant attitude helped to build a popular image for the queen that would be read as masculine and invite eager spectators and fans. Indeed, Christina’s rare level of education and intellectual ability, combined with her refusal to marry and masculine dress all contributed to a larger-than-life persona that attracted attention. This led to a theatrical-like following, reflected in the observations of Don Baltasar Mercader, writing to his brother, the Count of Buñol, about his various encounters with the queen. Of a chance meeting between Cristina and the Queen of Denmark, who passed by each other without recognition due to their corresponding disguises, he remarks: “Parezen cosas de

comedia las que estoy viendo [...]. Es una comedia, y todo lo que está sucediendo lo parece” (133). The conflation of art and life in Mercader’s observation of the scene suggests both the excitement and fancy with which onlookers met the Queen and the persona behind such enthusiasm, a composite of paintings, *relaciones*, poems, letters, and portraiture.

The interest in Cristina de Suecia, owing as much to her strong personality as her conversion to Catholicism and possible political alliance with Spain, yielded two formal pieces of theater by Calderón, an *auto sacramental*, *La protestación de la fe*, and a *comedia palaciega*, *Afectos de odio y amor*, as well as *¿Quién es quien premia al amor?* by Francisco Bances Candamo. While Calderón’s *auto* focuses on Cristina’s famed conversion to Catholicism, the *comedia*, of primary interest here, takes several liberties with reality in fashioning a typical *comedia de capa y espada*. Published in 1687, the play is set in the fictional Suevia, and opens with Russian Duke Casimiro recounting in anguish to his sister Auristela how he defeated King Gustavus Adolphus, only to fall in love with Gustavus’s daughter Cristerna. Cristerna, for her part, has vowed to marry anyone of her station who will avenge her father’s death by killing Casimiro. Motivated by his love for the Swedish ruler, Casimiro disguises himself as a Spanish soldier and travels to Suevia to protect Cristerna from a developing dispute with Segismundo, Prince of Gocia, who wants to pass through Sweden in order to marry Auristela. Once Casimiro has saved Cristerna’s life and she discovers his true identity, she finds herself divided between the love and hate she has for the man who both saved her life and took her father’s. Ultimately, she submits to him, reversing her opening feminist stance on female leadership and agreeing to marry Casimiro.

Critics generally agree that the portrait of the queen offered by *Afectos* is utterly fictional with little basis in the historical realities of the figure. Clavería refers to the “Cristerna” of Calderón’s *comedia* as “un producto de fantasía del poeta, aunque tuviera su última raíz en la realidad política europea de entonces” (147-48). The question, then, of what factors influenced this fantastical version of the queen beyond the basics of her real-life persona has dominated critical inquiry into the play. While Ruth Lundelius argues that Calderón uses the queen’s popularity to bring the popular *mujer varonil* convention to the stage, Deborah Compte asserts that Cristerna’s flighty, inconsistent portrayal and ultimate submission of her feminist goals corresponds to a historical shift in the queen’s political favor in Spain after she formed more close ties with France. Compte traces Spain’s changing attitude toward Cristina through the commentaries of Jerónimo de Barrionuevo in his *Avisos*, which announce Philip IV’s banning of Calderón’s *auto* about the young queen in 1656. As she explains, “The break between the Spanish and Swedish monarchs did not abate, and the play was not staged until nearly a century later in 1752 when the news surrounding the Swedish throne no longer raised the red flags of scandalous controversy and diplomatic betrayal” (53). Bravo-Villasante also stresses the disappointment of Spaniards when Christina bypasses Spain and heads straight to Rome: “¡Lo que hubiera sido para las damas y caballeros ver en la realidad, fuera de la escena, una de aquellas familiares figuras disfrazadas!” (*La mujer* 145). In addition to the way in which this shift in favor supports a negative reading of the Cristerna in Calderón’s *comedia*, it also again exemplifies the strong ties between social and political life and theatrical representation, given that to represent the figure of Cristerna on stage would be considered a form of political betrayal. Barbara Matulka points out, however, that

Afecto's plot stems from a long line of thematic treatments of the "hatred versus love" motif, most notably including Guillén de Castro's *Las mocedades del Cid*, as well as Giraldo Cintio's *Gli Hecatommithi* in Italy and Du Perier's *La haine et l'amour d'Arnoul et de Clairemonde* in France (72). As Matulka explains, Calderón's treatment of the theme is actually much more feminist in comparison to his source material, given that "he transformed the character of his heroine by converting her from a pathetic pawn of relentless fate, or the victim of a sad 'duty of honor,' into a seventeenth-century *Belle Dame sans Merci*, a haughty, man-hating beauty, who championed the cause of injured women in general, and decreed laws to make them not only the equals, but the superiors of cruel and domineering men" (75). Clearly, Calderón's version of Queen Christina varies as much as the play's antithetical title, as critical interpretations of the character find her both refreshingly feminist and comically satirized.

All of these investigations of Calderón's *comedia* focus primarily on the image of the famous queen as the central, and highly ambiguous, figure of the play. From this perspective, whether Cristerna can be read as a strong or weak female character determines how Calderón uses fiction to make a point about history, or rather, about the significance or dramatic usefulness of the Queen of Sweden so relevant to Spanish society. I would suggest, however, that the grappling between reality and representation carried out by the play happens not so much around the creation of Cristerna as a character but instead in the dynamic between Cristerna the persona and Casimiro, her captivated subject. Within this relationship we find the equilibrium of two impulsive, inconsistent characters who on the surface deal with a typical, star-crossed love affair that, as Matulka signals, has its precedent in several anterior novels. Beneath this

frivolous back-and-forth of mistaken identities and forsaken feminist goals, nevertheless, lies the intent to snuff out the same insatiable desire plaguing Don Álvaro and Don Miguel in *La Baltasara* and *La monja alférez*, respectively: the need to observe, be privy to, and consume the impressive image of the valiant, perplexing, woman-dressed-as-man that stirs the plot into motion. As with protagonists Francisca and Erauso, Cristerna has complicated the fulfillment of such a longing with her distance: she rules another nation and plans to have Casimiro murdered and then marry his assailant.

The play opens with this predicament. Our first image is of Casimiro sobbing and heaving in a pathetic heap, much to his sister's dismay. She explains that she cannot understand how a triumphant leader who has just destroyed the famed Gustavus Adolphus could be anything other than jubilant. Casimiro replies with the story of his encounter with Cristerna, which overshadows any sense of victory he might have gleaned from his recent battle. From the outset, then, Casimiro faces the primary dramatic conflict of the play: he is like a dishonored protagonist, faced with no options that appeal to him and forced to forsake his own identity in order to write his own conclusion. In the absence of a cross-dressed heroine, the spectator takes up the challenge of making disguise the crux of the play, but only to bring himself closer to the figure he so craves.

The opening exchange between Casimiro and Auristela, in addition to drawing out the destabilizing effect of Cristerna's absence on her primary fan, Casimiro, also builds up a sense of anticipation surrounding the queen as a figure or character who requires lengthy introduction. Casimiro even interrupts his own story, which concerns Cristerna, to elaborate her person in more detail: "Que Cristerna...Pero antes / que llegue a hablarte en Cristerna, / Es bien que te la defina, / Porque lo que diga della / No haya

novedad, sabiendo / En qué condición se asienta” (34). Casimiro here acknowledges the need to be able to experience Cristerna in some way even in the absence of an actual visual. In her absence, he can still “define” her by reproducing a series of labels that craft her image and public persona. As Compte points out, a fair amount of name-calling occurs before we ever meet Calderón’s version of the Queen: “Even before her initial appearance on stage, Cristerna is variously described as *fiera*, *vana*, *soberbia* and *esquiva*” (1057). In Compte’s view, this build-up prior to Cristerna’s entrance serves only as burlesque comedy and heightens her ultimate downfall when she acquiesces to Casimiro’s romantic advances. The hype the play builds around Cristerna also asserts the separation between her individual person and the character owned by the public, the one that Casimiro can call upon to enhance his story and infuse his own character plot with adventure and intrigue. During his digression, he expounds upon her beauty and valor, and her belief that women “ha de ponerlas / En el absoluto imperio / De las armas y las letras” (34). His comments also anticipate the odd figure Calderón cuts of his heroine in that she vacillates somewhere between the *mujer guerrera* and *mujer esquiva* versions of the *mujer varonil* that typically appear on the Golden Age stage. Calderón makes clear from the outset of his play the artifice surrounding Cristerna the public figure and the theatrical nature of the identities proffered by his *comedia*.

Our first actual impression of Cristerna as a living person, which follows this opening exchange between the two royal siblings, gives us a strong, feminist framework with which to identify the famous queen. The scene features Cristerna presenting a series of legal changes as her first act as queen, all of which emphasize women’s liberty and equality. She begins by explaining her political plans within a specifically gender-based

context: “Quiero empezar a mostrar / si tiene o no la mujer / ingenio para aprender / juicio para gobernar / y valor para lidiar” (647-51). While focused on the particulars of women and their chance to rule, be less blamed within the honor code, and to receive an education equal to that of their male peers, she also questions gender labels. Defending woman’s ability to rule, she asserts that the soul has no gender: “¿No vio Roma en sus estrados, / no vio Grecia en sus campañas / mujeres alegar leyes, / mujeres vencer batallas? / pues lidien y estudien, que / ser valientes y ser sabias / es acción del alma, y no es / hombre, ni mujer el alma” (713-20). Her praise of women transitions into a bold statement about the androgynous nature of the soul. In this proclamation, she locates an individual’s ability to achieve success in both arms and letters outside of one’s designation as male or female. According to Cristerna, participation in public life through the filters of education and the military should not be determined by gender because talent in these areas corresponds to an innate aspect of one’s being not touched by these designations. She in effect proposes gender as the kind of outer layer it proves to be in so many cross-dressing plays of the time, here using such an argument to propel women into the public sphere.

Given Cristerna’s comments about gender, the education of women, and their ability to lead as public officials, it would seem that Calderón overturns the tendency of his fellow playwrights to immediately downplay the subversive potential of the adapted, historical protagonist. If Casimiro suffers the absence of this fearless leader, the audience does not. Cristerna takes on a masculine enterprise within her social and political context, and then makes some devastating statements as related to early modern patriarchy. The severity of Cristerna’s defiance, however, quickly makes her an uncompromising,

ineffective leader. As Compte discusses, her unwillingness to concede Segismundo's request to pass through her country ruins a former political alliance and then quickly jeopardizes her entire reign. Cristerna shows herself to be inept in political negotiations and does not live up to the dexterity in battle that women should, according to her own proclamation, purportedly possess. As soon as fighting breaks out over Segismundo's denied request, Cristerna is captured and must be rescued by the recently arrived (and disguised) Casimiro.

If Cristerna's image vacillates between praise and ridicule, Casimiro similarly finds himself in an in-between: he, before Cristerna even enters, describes himself as trapped between hate and love: "Supuesto que yo adore, / Y fuerza que ella aborrezca, / No es tratable a mis desdichas, / Ni olvidarla, ni quererla" (35). He cannot find a viable option that appeals to him or his desired outcome, and so he must turn to disguise.

Casimiro's ingenuity reflects a strong consciousness of his theatrical position, given his anticipation of his plan's results: "Que ver deseo, / Si es verdad que la fortuna / Ayuda al atrevimiento / ¡Vive Dios, o sea locura, / O capricho, o devaneo, / Que he de ver, si valgo yo / con ella mas que yo mesmo!" (39). Notable here is the way in which Casimiro additionally links himself to the Queen ("Que he de ver [...]"), foreseeing not just the possibilities of his dramatic transformation but also his attachment to the figure he has defined, and in a sense brought to life, for the audience. He understands that to modify his circumstance, he must change the categories into which he fits, as he explains: "No hay que encargarte el secreto / De quien soy, puesto que en trage / Pobre, humilde y extranjero / Nadie habrá que me conozca" (39). When he finally meets Cristerna, having traveled to Suevia disguised as a Spanish soldier, he reduces himself to these categories

that make up his identity: “Soldado soy; / Sangre, nombre y apellido / A esto se reduce todo” (42). Despite the love and affection that purportedly drive Casimiro to forsake his entire former life, he knows these social details are the only relevant aspects of his being as concerns Cristerna.

Casimiro’s maneuvering of categories confuses and marvels those around him. In Act 2, having saved Cristerna, he must again defend her when his sister Auristela arrives to avenge the capture of Segismundo, her love interest. When Auristela discovers that her captor is actually her brother, she cannot believe her eyes: “Qué oigo y miro? / Sueño o velo a Casimiro? / ¡Cielos! no es este?” (46). His transformation prompts the questioning of her senses and reality itself: she can no longer rely on her perception of the unfolding events. Casimiro does not help matters much when he replies with the very Baroque “No y sí.” Casimiro has become something other than the character we initially meet on stage, but has not completely shed this image, and so he instead inhabits an intermediary position that proves both odd and confusing for those around him.

Casimiro exists as two different characters in the play, and both are equally real to Cristerna, the object of his affection. Although Cristerna possesses less understanding of Casimiro’s tactics than his sister, no one experiences the confusing effect of his role-play more than she. Faced with her undeniable obligation to him once he has saved her, she cannot forget his original identity as her political enemy and her father’s assassin. This causes her to doubt herself. She is not sure of who she is, given that Casimiro has bifurcated his own identity and changed the rules of enacting a singular, recognizable role. Whereas Miguel of *La monja alférez* continually reiterates his disbelief at the news of his sister’s transformation, Casimiro as spectator turns the tables of shock and

disorientation by using the same theatrical alterations of identity to align himself with the desired and famed persona, reversing the sense of disbelief running through the work. Cristerna sees herself not only pursued, but mimicked (and thus challenged). Rather than confront Cristerna, Casimiro presents her with his own persona crafted through strategic role-play, causing her to doubt and question her assumed role: “Pues bien, qué me aflige? Pero / Si aun no me deajo afligir, / ¿Qué he de hacer, (ay de mí!) / Pues no hay mas remedio al sentir, que el sentir?” (52). Unsure of whether to trust her feelings or how to process Casimiro’s double identity, she desperately reaches back to her original *varonil* persona that determined the series of feminist proclamations of her first entrance: “...dónde está / De mi espíritu gentil / La altivez? ¿dónde el denuedo / De mi ánimo varonil?” (52). Now, Cristerna teeters between two dispositions: that of her former “ánimo varonil,” and her newfound interest in the soldier.

Casimiro’s pursuit of the queen that bewitches and immobilizes him at the start of the play yields an impasse when both primary characters of Calderón’s play find themselves divided: Casimiro is his original character as well as his crafted one, and Cristerna is a larger-than-life feminist warrior as well as a humbled and grateful lover. If Calderón begins the play with the basic dilemma of a persona both necessary and unreachable for the public, he complicates the question when Casimiro becomes something metatheatrical and equally necessary, in addition to being the humble and desperate audience member that initiates the work. Neither Cristerna nor Casimiro can determine who will stay in which role, and Auristela ends up having to decide for them. She has no trouble betraying her brother, given that he captured her in order to protect Cristerna. Auristela proposes an end to her brother’s theatricality, but this does not

resolve Cristerna's inner turmoil. Cristerna speaks directly to the audience in an aside, explaining her conflict: "Ay de mí, infeliz! que al verle, / segunda vez del amor / y el odio la duda vuelve" (60). Cristerna cannot be separated from Casimiro, and knows that she must be the one to transform in order to keep him. She proposes a strongly submissive and normative resolution to their theatrical stalemate: "...Estése / El mundo como se estaba, / Y sepan, que las mugeres / Vasallas del hombre nacen; / Pues en sus afectos siempre / Que el odio y amor compiten, / Es el amor el que vence" (61). On the one hand, Cristerna's submission marks the dismantling of yet another cross-dressed heroine of real-life fame, confirming that the power and defiance that made her so captivating will not go on, and the play has staged, through her turbulent relation to Casimiro, the demise of Cristerna of Sweden's image, if not the individual Cristerna who vows to become a subservient wife.

Her final suggestion of giving in to the love she feels for the man she should hate not only breaks down the strong, "manly" side of her public image and private personality in the play. It also tenders a certain tacit recognition of the conventions of the *comedia* itself. Cristerna effectively holds up gender normativity as such as a solution that will bring about the marriage ending necessary to conclude the play. Her offer implicitly gestures to the characters' understanding of their own theatrical position and the deadlock that has come to define their plot lines. Having no recourse to remedy their situation, the extreme nature of her concluding statement seems to acknowledge here that this abrupt transformation is the only way the play can end. It also does not depart from Cristerna's overall unstable characterization, given her equivocation between the extremes of political ambition and domestic helplessness. In place of a finite sense of

who she is, Cristerna possesses instead a solid sense of where she is within the play, aware that at this moment a clear course of action awaits. Read this way, Cristerna's ultimate concession functions less as a misogynistic invective and more as a metatheatrical aside, confirming that her character has no clear framework with which the audience can identify and steering them toward a heightened concept of the play as just that, "play," and now, over.

Although Cristerna defines her concession as romantically motivated, explicit references to the *comedia nueva* pepper Calderón's staging of the famed queen of Sweden through the character of Turín, Casimiro's spy and servant. He consistently makes reference to *comedia*, bringing a direct reminder of theatrical awareness at every turn. In the first act, for example, when he arrives at court to share the news of Cristerna's plans to wed the avenger of her father's murder and Segismundo's impending passage through Suevia, Casimiro sighs at the developing complications, to which Turín replies: "Como si no hiciera / Esto, en un instante estaba / Acabada la comedia, / Y yo me holgara, por ver / una deste autor pequeña" (36). During the second act, he again shows his knowledge of metatheater, this time commenting on the expectations of the part he plays: "Si fuera comedia esta, / Cual estuviera ahora el patio / Tamañito de pensar, / Que habia de cantar de pleno, / Pues vive Dios! que he de ser / Excepción de los lacayos" (48). In the midst of Casimiro's deceptive maneuvering, Turín similarly shows himself to be playing off the expectations of his next move. In the final moments of the play, as Auristela, Cristerna, and Casimiro fret over how to resolve their predicament, Turín's commentaries allow him to become an audience member from the stage when he exclaims, "¿Mas qué fuera, que se viese / Acabar una comedia / Casándose dos

mugeres?" (60). Here he references the titillation and shock produced by the dalliances of his comedic counterparts as they threaten to occupy roles other than those deemed for them by the heteronormative standards of the society in which such roles gather meaning. Through the actions of Turín, the stage is already set for the audience to identify the characters not only for their manipulation of their own social roles, but also their metatheatrical knowledge of these pursuits.

Overall, the tactical use of asides, role-play, disguise, and stock character traits (drawing from the *mujer varonil* tradition) signal Calderón's self-conscious and highly theatrical treatment of a historical celebrity. His *comedia* consistently draws attention to the fact that it is a play, with conventions so tried and true that even the characters know them and search for ways to make them new, and, ultimately, to make the whole thing end. Within this framework of metatheater, Calderón points our attention to the image of the spectator, as Casimiro tries to find a way to reconcile his relationship with Cristerna. Though his version of Christina, Queen of Sweden, offers an odd portrait of a fearless feminist leader turned docile wife, a deeper parody forms around the suggestion of the Spanish public itself as manifested in the opening image of a sobbing Casimiro. Utterly controlled by a character he barely knows, whose image shifts as quickly as becomes necessary for the movement of plot, Casimiro can only bring himself together in pursuit of something elusive, ephemeral, and obliterated in the same moment that he finally achieves this desired union (since Cristerna settles on the role of submissive wife in that moment). His transformation compensates for his distance from Cristerna: one role-playing transformation takes the place of another, as the spectators come closer to a full understanding of creative self-consciousness by enacting it themselves.

The three portraits of the cross-dressed heroines created through these historical adaptations stress different aspects of the transvestite narrative's theatrical potency in early modern society. In particular, our final image of each of the three women makes a strong statement regarding the embedded, politically problematic, and inherently metatheatrical nature of the popular image of cross-dressing within early modern Spanish society. In *La Baltasara*, for example, we are left with Francisca's bloodied and mutilated corpse, a response to the incessant stalking of the theatrical persona that leaves the individual behind it without recourse for spiritual peace or any semblance of a normal life. With Álvaro, Miguel, and Iusefa insistent on her return to the theater, Francisca only escapes her former theatrical self by destroying her body. Even in this death, however, the sport of spectating "La Baltasara" continues, and the theater of her consumption never truly ends. The viewers cannot give up this habit, and the reception of the transvestite figure appears within the *comedia* as a fundamental social practice that defines the progression of Acts 2 and 3. *La monja alférez* perpetuates the gaze, and adds the hesitation involved in bringing a real-life cross-dresser to the stage. Whereas Francisca Baltasara's biography conveniently offers a built-in conservative ending that feeds moralistic objections to the secular commercial theater, Catalina de Erauso's life story is full of the social climbing, criminal violence, same-sex desire, and general challenge to normative notions of gender that, when represented on stage, cannot hope to pass as fictional folly. We watch in the final scene an odd concession to womanhood that has been preceded by a series of negated possibilities for identification. The ambiguity of Erauso's portrait echoes with Calderón's fashioning of Queen Christina of Sweden in the character of Cristerna, whose most dire conflict is choosing between two vastly different

images: that of the queen who proves misogynists wrong and the wife who reifies patriarchal order. The severity of the contrast in roles, as well as the vigor with which Cristerna ultimately submits, suggests a certain metatheatrical awareness that connects the notion of social persona at all times with self-aware dramatic performance. From the stage, we surmise that the early modern subject's interest in the cross-dressing persona is innate, unspeakable, and its own theater within the theater.

On the flip side, we may also trace the evolution of the image of the spectator from a sad shell to an experimental imitator. Beginning with *La Baltasara*, the viewer-character is utterly helpless, and considers himself constituted by the persona that evades him. Álvaro can come up with no other sense of self than as related to Francisca, and is even willing to make a deal with the devil to avoid facing her loss. Miguel, though decidedly less enthusiastic about discovering his cross-dressing sister than Álvaro seems to be about reuniting with Baltasara, captures the amazement and stupefying quality that the change in genders conjures in these plays as he tries to accept, and move closer to, something he cannot believe to be true, yet also cannot look away from. Both Miguel and Álvaro hatch plans to follow their elusive heroine, but neither proves very efficient or successful and both end in a violence that does not secure them Francisca and Guzmán, respectively. In the case of Casimiro, however, the spectator-character takes a step forward, given that despite his initial appearance as a sobbing heap, he formulates a much smarter plan than his comedic counterparts to get closer to the cross-dressed star. By adopting role-play and disguise to his advantage, Casimiro shows himself to be more dramatically self-aware, and to possess a greater understanding of the thing that he seeks (since he imitates it in method). In this way, the distance between spectator and dramatic

persona narrows as the viewer-character realizes the theatrical quality of identity.

Casimiro, nevertheless, ends up no more successful than Álvaro or Miguel, since he achieves a socially-acknowledged union with Cristerna just as she sets aside the masculine aspects of her character for the sake of a normative marriage ending.

In these plays, a central male character mirrors the role of spectator, inching as close as possible to the cross-dressed figure so captivating to early modern audiences, but never fully arrives at grasping the thing he so covets. He may imitate it, he may lament over it, he may even enact violence against it, but he cannot possess it in a satisfying manner.¹³ These three *comedias*, then, preserve the desire for cross-dressing by not satiating it. The search for the female cross-dresser leads the character of the spectator to realize he searches for his own theatrical place, or rather, the knowledge that he too plays a role, as so strongly exemplified by popular transvestite narratives. Through this character and his corresponding journey, we may trace in these plays the effort to discover, and harness, the ingenious, creative response to the heightened awareness of

¹³ William Egginton addresses this desire and the *comedia*'s attempts to fulfill it, explaining that the advent of the "screen" or formal stage space highlights the void on the part of the spectator insofar as he can only experience the performance as appearance, rather than presence: "Whereas before the advent of the screen, a spectator would encounter a performance as a sight to behold and to enjoy in its presence, within the mode of being of theatricality the spectator becomes convinced that what he or she sees, that is, the characters he or she encounters, are, like his or her own 'characters,' merely appearances, and that there exists beyond the screen of appearances an essence that is somehow more real, but that is currently concealed or absent. [...] the *comedia* tried to oblige precisely that desire by making the screen multi-leveled, and opening the rear curtain or trap door in order to effect 'discoveries' that, more often than not, represented the fullest, most substantial possible entities: cadavers or mutilated bodies" (110-11). While Egginton argues that the discovery space on stage seeks to acknowledge and compensate the spectator's desire for presence, I argue that the representation of the spectator-character who searches for the elusive cross-dresser demarcates the creation of this desire, a component of early modern Spanish drama, as part of the self-referential discourse of *comedia*.

one's social role carried out by the individual behind the cross-dressing disguise. At the same time, the distorted images of the heroines themselves remind us of the limits the dramatist faces in bringing these women to the stage. Unlike the stories of Céspedes and Covarrubias's hermaphrodite, they lack the totalizing subversion of sexual identity or the unspeakable nature of male effeminacy, but they share in common with these figures the self-reflexive relationship to social status, and an agency and spectacle not readily accepted, and thus censored, when presented to the play-going public on the commercial stage. As the social limits of normativity and propriety hold back a full-on portrayal of the cross-dressing *mujeres varoniles*, we gain a clearer perspective of the lingering figure of the viewer, always in her midst and essential to the success of the drama. This character reminds us that the search for the creative self-consciousness embodied in the female cross-dresser captivated not only the playwright for its fictional edge in the competition against giants of the past, but also the receptor of his art. Such a receptor determined the success of the play and was equally fascinated in the power of the "in-between" as it related to social placement. If the female cross-dresser fuels the development of the *comedia*, it is because playwrights and play-goers found something in her that resonated, and this something is the theatrical manipulation and disguise that Casimiro finally takes up himself by the time Calderón arrives at reproducing a historical cross-dressing protagonist.

Playwrights, through the historical cross-dressing protagonist, stage the *comedia*'s metacommentary on the seventeenth-century search for social and aesthetic self-consciousness. The metacommentary takes shape in the evolving depiction of the viewer-character on stage, slowly learning about a new version of role-play, and the persona who

embodies conflicting attitudes about the creativity inherent to gender. Without the social strictures that limit the degree to which these playwrights could celebrate their characters' cross-dressing agency, non-historically based transvestites become the ideal agents of a creative genius that increases the layers of theatrical deception and marvels the senses of those privy to the intrigue. In the next two chapters, I will discuss how dramatists follow this potential to its creative limit in their reflections on play and playwright via the female transvestite character.

CHAPTER 3

Play, Transvestism, and the *Comedia*

What effect does stage transvestism have on a play's progress, and what does this tell us about the fashioning of the *comedia* as a whole? An analysis of the use of transvestite disguise in Spanish plays from the early modern period reveals that playwrights of the era infused within their works their own pressure to progress the art of writing plays while proposing an exemplar model of theatrical ingenuity and trickery. The female cross-dresser accomplishes both of these tasks by acting out an accelerated form of creative self-consciousness from the stage. By "creative self-consciousness," I refer to, first, an acute awareness of the theatrical nature of identity and, second, to a creative response to this awareness that takes advantage of the theatricality to enact a radical transformation of self. While the *comedia* is full of unexpected personal transformations, the female cross-dresser acquires something unique as a result of the change in gender that proves key: male privilege. Landing an increased access to language and ability to move (i.e. change geographic location) has fundamental implications for drama, which also happens to be based on a combination of linguistic and bodily signification. As a result, this characters' grip over the drama is enhanced. The female cross-dresser, in her transformation, is able to stage an exaggerated, accelerated reversal of norms that, in its amplification, gives us a clearer sense of how the *comedia* locates its own momentum, its "play," in an about face of the same terms that initiate the drama. Put another way, the female cross-dresser elucidates the *comedia's* use of

reversals as a dynamic form of play that sustains engaging, dramatic entertainment for audiences.

The *comedia* includes both female and male forms of transvestism, and both types of disguise invade normative plot developments and skew the focus of the impending drama. They stage an intervention on those points of initiation that make the drama intelligible, allowing the play to focus on liminal perspectives. Within this general “transvestite effect,” it is the female cross-dresser who promotes a model of innovative imitation that utilizes novelty and ingenuity to create a superior, theatrically efficient form of masculinity. This form of creative imitation ultimately propels dramatic intrigue within the plays, opening possibilities. Just as playwrights imagined the *comedia* as a “new” art form, from within their plays, the female cross-dresser finds a way to break from existing models through a strategic inheritance of masculinity. The plays themselves prescribe a version of innovation and reversal that marks their unique creation through the female cross-dressed character. Playwrights embed their plays with reflections on dramatics and build an implicit discourse about the “new art of writing plays” made explicit, however vaguely, by Lope de Vega.

In Chapter 2, I traced the dramatic representation of an urgent desire on the part of the early modern spectator for the female cross-dressed persona and her theatrical manipulations of social mobility. Institutional and religious pressures kept the historically-based transvestite star from shining in full on the early modern stage, thrusting this desperate spectator-character into the spotlight in the plays by Luis Vélez de Guevara, Antonio Coello, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, Juan Pérez de Montalbán, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca. The representation on the stage of the search for Francisca

Baltasara, Catalina de Erauso, and Queen Christina of Sweden comments, metatheatrically, on an emerging social drama relevant to seventeenth-century dramatists and theater-goers, namely, the fascination with creative forms of role-play undercut by the problem they posed to hierarchical interests in stabilizing class structure and fixed notions of social roles. The theatrical figure of the transvestite that appears on stage, then, calls our attention to changes in society and culture that affect the theater and condition the creative process of dramatists, as well as the theatrical experience for theater-goers.

The *comedia* did not just employ the female cross-dresser to act out problems and limitations plaguing the development and evolution of early modern self-consciousness in the context of drama. It also used her to represent the *possibilities* available through creative self-consciousness, such as the social mobility that stories like those of Catalina de Erauso and Christina of Sweden introduced to the mass public. This more positive exploration worked better with purely fictional protagonists, like those of Tirso de Molina's *El vergonzoso en palacio*, Guillén de Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*, Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, and Tirso's *El Aquiles*, since the troubling of categories carried out by the heroines of these plays did not draw from a real-life occurrence. Consequently, the social gains made by cross-dressing could be glossed over as fictional entertainment rather than be read as the portrayal of exemplar social deviance. In these plays, it is my contention that the social "progress" so worrisome and tampered with in the plays discussed in Chapter 2 becomes *dramatic* progress. The female cross-dresser strengthens the complexity and mobility of plot development (or rather, she makes possible a shifting of perspective on the emerging plotline) and sheds light on the importance of liminality to early modern comedic representation. In this sense, the

“play,” or breaking of categorical classification at the levels of gender, profession, class standing, geographical location, etc. sustains the play, and the cross-dressed character acts out the fundamental liminal aspect of *comedia*.

I aim to draw out in this project as a whole the theatrical contemplation of the key components of dramatic experience (the play-goer, the play, and the playwright) as fostered by the female cross-dresser in early modern Spanish *comedia*. The cross-dresser elucidates these boundaries of the dramatic endeavor by meddling with and surpassing them: she evades and agonizes the spectator (Chapter 2), re-directs the direction of plot development (Chapter 3), and orchestrates entire theaters within the scope of the drama (Chapter 4). Collectively, these manipulations tout a power that derives from her specific brand of creative self-consciousness: a heightened, flexible sense of self, the opening of possibilities that results from bettering one’s social station, and the crossing of visual and verbal deception. This dramatic power responds to the pressures placed on the early modern artist and the structural changes that left the early modern notion of subjectivity in flux, positioning drama as a vehicle to take these points of doubt and uncertainty and make them dynamic and interesting in the space of the commercial theater. This chapter focuses specifically on the *comedia*’s experimentation with cross-dressing as it relates to the progression of a given story. As we will see, these plays propose the competitive, imaginative feature of the transvestite act as capable of fueling, by de-railing, a story. Furthermore, through an emphasis on method, they point to the second essential feature of the female cross-dresser’s dramatic power: the social progress that accelerates dramatic development.

The cross-dresser's mutability coincides with, and fleshes out within plays, the generally increased "changeability" of staging practices in the seventeenth century. William Egginton argues in his study *How the World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* that the *comedias* performed in Madrid reflect a pivotal spatial transition between medieval and early modern forms of dramatic representation. The medieval stage, he explains, is less semiotic, in that rather than having actors signify, or "produce meaning predominantly via reference to other signs that have the same status, that exist in the same space, as themselves," it presents "words as hieroglyphs, ideograms, signs whose meaning would be far less distinguishable from their sensual experience than signifiers are from theirs" (85). Medieval dramatic representations did not concern themselves with a specific notion of time inherent to the representation as distinct or coinciding with the moment of performance, nor did they involve a clearly delineated staging space, with the exception of the altar, which eventually transforms into our modern notion of the proscenium, "screen" style stage. Early modern theater evolves from its medieval predecessor while breaking away from it. Though based on the altar-stage, the early modern secular stage ropes off the performance area and transforms the audience's role into pure spectatorship. A symbolic "screen" separates the two, as the early modern theater-goer relies upon the actors on stage as the primary agents of signification: "the *comedia* was experienced as imitating life via the speech and action of its characters. The sparsity of the set gave it a suppleness that court dramas lacked, as well as allowing it the economic flexibility to reach literally every level of society" (103). Through its closed-off staging space and mimetic

characters, the early modern stage purports to represent an alternate, but viable, reality to its viewers.

Such a theatrical configuration places a greater emphasis on the representational power of art, as it can talk about everything, including itself. Egginton elaborates:

Whereas medieval mimesis partakes of and affects the reality it imitates, theatrical mimesis reproduces it in an alternate realm. Because, as the theorists insisted, this theatrical mimesis potentially imitates the entire world and everything in it, it necessarily imitates the very material of which its imitation is made, namely, the theater. (86)

Early modern theater, in this way, possesses an inherently metatheatrical quality. The simplicity of its material makeup, its “sparsity of set,” enhanced its ability to represent whole social strata and reality in its most totalizing sense, “allowing it the economic flexibility to reach literally every level of society.” The setting, or specific area in which the play is taking place, can change at any moment through a gesture or signal phrase from an actor. For this reason, Egginton speaks of the “telescoping of separable spaces” facilitated by the actors on stage, which “requires audiences to negotiate different levels of reality” (121). Within this configuration, characters themselves become equally flexible, adjusting to transmit the full range of signs possible within this alternate, fabricated reality. In short, the metatheatrical early modern stage became a space that “can always become the place of another stage; and the character on the stage can always portray another character” (87).

The metamorphosis of even the basic layout of the stage distinctly reflects the self-reflexive theatrical discourse wrought by the *comedia* as well as the highly creative, inventive, and mutable nature of the “alternate reality” of the stage in which this discourse took its shape. Within this concept of the early modern stage, the female cross-

dresser acts as an agent that stages, and accelerates, the transformations of space and character so structurally fundamental to the seventeenth-century commercial brand of dramatics. The figure's role in drama, then, functions as one of those constitutive aspects of the theater that must also be acted out as part of the *comedia*'s totalized representation of reality. The plays discussed in this chapter offer a consideration of cross-dressing's role in an individual play's progress as part of the seventeenth-century reality duplicated for audiences. Through this consideration, the *comedia* points to one of its own key features, illustrating from the stage the ideal method of manipulating the art form's liminal structure toward a depiction of multilayered deception and transformation.

The plays I have included build a model for this ideal method that begins with a basic relationship between stage transvestism and personal transformation as evidenced in *El vergonzoso en palacio* and *La fuerza de la costumbre*. The "script" for this model of imitation begins to become more specifically gendered in *La fuerza*, since this play reveals the unequal levels of anxiety that arise around female-as-male and male-as-female gender-bending, since the male-as-female causes much more consternation. *Las manos blancas no ofenden* affords the clearest picture of the way in which the female cross-dresser's disguise holds up the more efficient model of dramatic progress as based on personal transformation, given that the play features two cross-dressing antagonists, César and Lisarda. Through their parallel antics, we may compare the dramatic function of their disguises. For this reason, *Las manos* will be most central to my discussion, as it vividly illustrates female cross-dressing as a mechanism of dramatic progress both in the example of Lisarda and the counterexample of César. As a coda to this discussion, *El*

Aquiles echoes and mythologizes the inefficiency of the male disguise, actually holding its famed protagonist back from a more desirable transformation later in the play.

The implicit discussion of *comedia* fostered by these plays' use of cross-dressing enhances our understanding of the only existing explicit one. *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, Lope de Vega's tongue-and-cheek treatise on the *comedia*, presented to the Academia de Madrid in 1609, has left us with a few key facts surrounding the art form and its basic infrastructure. There are a *galán*, a *dama*, a few key verse forms, a plot rife with *enredos* and honor disputes that must be wrapped up quickly, and very often, a female cross-dresser. The female transvestite, a staple of Lope's plays, proved to be a commercial asset given her popularity with audiences. She soon became a convention, as successful playwrights made use of the figure in their plays. Our information about early modern costuming suggests the reasoning behind this fascination was that the male costume would have revealed more of the female form, thus enticing male audience members from the stage with the rare glimpse of a bare ankle or clearly delineated silhouette not visible in female costumes. These details point to the voyeuristic nature of the *mujer vestida de hombre* phenomenon during the *comedia*'s heyday, as well as the series of moralistic objections that arose surrounding the stage practice. In addition to the sexual thrill, Sherry Velasco signals in her study of representations of male pregnancy during the seventeenth century that the image of the female cross-dresser offered a safe alternative to male cross-dressing, given that at least in the instance of female to male transvestism, the transvestite figure reaches for social privilege, conforming to a "superior" model of subjectivity. As Velasco goes on to point out,

however, the insistence on this upward move belies a deep-seated anxiety and fascination with the alternative, a male-to-female transformation (*Male* 101-05).

From a few brief pieces of information, then, much can be gleaned. The female cross-dresser offers a useful window into early modern attitudes surrounding gender and its construction in seventeenth-century Spanish society. Matthew Stroud, in his examination of queer desire in the *comedia*, explains that stage cross-dressing allowed for the exploration of same-sex desires, so that “the *comedia* raises the fears of sexual fluidity, of transgression, of perversion, of women usurping the power of men, of the traps of sexual expectation, of desire out of control, then calms them [...]” (83). Sidney Donnell interprets female cross-dressing as a form of gender parody that highlights the early modern crisis of masculinity occurring outside the stage stemming from events such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the loss of Iberian unity (47). Provided that the character came to be a kind of fixture of the art form, we might also wonder to what extent she serves as a lens to examine the machinations of the theater itself. She tells us about gender—could she tell us something about theater as well? In this chapter, I demonstrate the way in which the female cross-dressed character infused the *comedia* with an indispensable dramatic energy that formed a key source of character transformation and afforded a greater diversity of frames through which to consider the dramatic action.

The design of the *comedia* suggests the symbiotic relationship between successful dramatic entertainment and transvestite-based intrigue as presented on stage. Victor Turner, who discusses liminality as it relates to social ritual and forms of public entertainment, argues that artists enjoy great freedom to “*play* with the factors of culture

[...] in a much more complicated way than in the liminality of tribal initiations, multiplying specialized genres of artistic and popular entertainments, mass culture, pop culture, folk culture, high culture, counterculture, underground culture, etc.” (40). The very word “entertain” reflects the liminal essence of representation, since it derives “from O.F. *entretenir*, to ‘hold apart,’ that is, to create a liminal or liminoid space in which performances may take place” (41). Dramatists enact this play, or rearrangement of cultural elements, in the middle of the *comedia*, prior to a normative marriage ending. Since the *comedia* starts and ends on a conservative note, the middle space of the work’s conflict often encompasses an ephemeral challenging of those bookended, normative precepts. The cross-dressing character accelerates the “play” inherent to this challenging by inserting another in-between, here, of gender identification (appearing not as man or woman but woman-as-man), within the liminal structure that facilitates entertainment.

If the female cross-dresser is a type, a repeated convention within a given play, why should she be any more revelatory than others, such as the *gracioso* or the *galán* and *dama*, who always appear and form the backbone of any play? Though popular, the cross-dresser is not constitutive in the sense that plays happen without her presence, and they happen to great success. It is helpful from the outset to consider the figure less as representative of a formal type that makes up the *comedia*, and more as a force introduced into plays in order to defy types. The female cross-dresser, rather than fitting classificatory marks, evades them. She plays the role of *galán* in order to become a proper *dama* by the work’s close, fragmenting the formula presented by Lope in which boy chases girl. Marjorie Garber argues that cross-dressing in general offers this liminal power to dismantle categories within Western culture. Neither man nor woman, the

image of the cross-dresser offers “a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility” that “questions binary thinking and introduces crisis” (11). We can think of the cross-dressed character, then, as introducing a certain method of category destabilization essential for, but not limited to, the *comedia* that allows for an intensified experience of theatrical reversals and carnivalesque overturnings.

The plays discussed in this chapter are particularly well-suited to illustrate the ways in which the cross-dressed character creates a transvestite effect beyond the realm of gender identity due to each playwright’s innovative use of the figure. As Carmen Bravo-Villasante notes, though the female transvestite character draws from Italian source material (both the *comedia dell’arte* and Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*), Spanish playwrights eventually moved beyond these models in order to explore other dramatic possibilities available through the cross-dressing figure (*La mujer*). These plays all represent distinctive additions made by such playwrights. Tirso contributes an array of unique cross-dressed heroines to the *comedia*, including *El vergonzoso*’s Serafina, whose only motivation for the act is an affinity for the theater, a clear symptom of the Baroque aesthetic in formation during the period. Castro’s play further acknowledges the popular stage convention not by its inclusion but by its potent absence, pointing to cross-dressing’s transcendence of character or plot as a source of comedic intrigue and personal evolution. These plays evolve past the basic conflicts of gender and the honor code to signal cross-dressing’s unique theatrical capacities. Calderón’s *Las manos blancas no ofenden* and Tirso’s *El Aquiles* offer more specifically gendered portraits of cross-dressing given their inclusion of both male and female versions of the act. The depiction of cross-dressing in these plays centers less on the deceptive effects transvestism enacts

on other characters but instead on the method of disguise, and what it affords the subject who carries it out. In all the plays discussed, a dialogue develops around transvestism and its relationship to theater, or rather, what role cross-dressing plays on the early modern stage.

Certainly, cross-dressing fits as one piece of an elaborate puzzle of deceptive behavior staged by the *comedia*. In Spanish *comedias* of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, self-discovery and transformation often emerge as products of the role-play, disguise, and trickery that constitute the metatheatrical elements of a given play. In Tirso's *El vergonzoso en palacio*, for example, the protagonist, Mireno, ultimately discovers his noble lineage, or rather, becomes "Tirso's *impeasanted noble*" after working at court disguised as a secretary (Wilttrout 189). Edward Friedman points out in his discussion of the play that Mireno's quest to find himself connects with the same self-searching of other genres, given that "No sabe, como don Quijote (I, 5) quién es, y sí sabe que está por descubrirse, que es un hombre en el proceso de hacerse" ("Resonancias" 20) As early modern society adjusted to an early form of capitalism and the discovery of the New World, its static class structure began to become more fluid, opening new possibilities for changing one's occupation and social standing, thus creating a space for the type of subject-in-process that appears in Tirso's play and Cervantes's novel.¹⁴ Despite these new opportunities, early modern subjects still lived in a society that placed great value on fulfilling designated social roles. As such, a tension may be noted in literature and theater of the period between a more fluid, interior

¹⁴ Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano* also deals with this theme, given its protagonist's last minute, albeit falsified, claim to nobility. For a comparison of the two plays, see Friedman ("Resonancias") and Dixon.

exploration of selfhood and the pressure of broader, exterior social and culture forces to close off said exploration. Disguises, in this sense, function as an agent to temporarily offset the latter while indulging the former. Cross-dressing serves as a powerful disguise to this end, eliminating boundaries at the heart of personal and social identity (those of gender). Another play from the period, Castro's *La fuerza de la costumbre*, demonstrates the social and dramatic need for this figure, ironically, through its lack, as its central characters remain trapped in roles of the opposite gender, unable to overcome "la fuerza de la costumbre" without recourse to cross-dressing's manipulations. First, I will use *El vergonzoso en palacio* and *La fuerza de la costumbre* as counterexamples that point specifically to the theatrical cross-dressing act as a central, dynamic force that facilitates the metatheatrical breakdown and rebuilding of identity. In the first play, this occurs by way of its presence, and, in the second, through its absence, with both dramatic works effectively pointing to the theatrical cross-dresser as an agent of category crisis with the unique power to transform identity.

In the next two plays, *Las manos blancas no ofenden* and *El Aquiles*, I discuss the difference in the use of female and male forms of transvestism, and the way in which female cross-dressing offers us a version of dramatic progress that builds off of the social jump the female transvestite subject carries out through the male disguise. Male transvestism, in contrast, stalls forward movement for the character and impedes the advancement of a deceptive, complicated plot line. Female cross-dressing, in this sense, intricately weaves into drama, and calls our attention to, a key model of creativity and ingenuity founded on a moment of innovation on past models: an imitation that surpasses its reference point through self-conscious performance.

By revealing more of her body in masculine garb, the female cross-dresser appealed to male audience members, but a look at these plays reveals its deeper dramatic and social purpose. The disruption of the binary gender division carried out by the cross-dresser allows characters to step out of their designated roles, and, in metatheatrical ploys, to inhabit other in-betweens, namely that of the gap between reality and fiction. Friedman, in his discussion of Tirso's use of metatheater, signals the way in which it interrogates the relationship between discourse and reality, or rather, "Tirso rechaza la diferenciación a favor de la fusión de elementos, subrayando así la inevitable confusión que resulta de una dialéctica sin fin. El espectáculo señala la confrontación del ser humano con lo real y lo imaginario, que, como los sueños, no tienen límites" ("Resonancias" 20). The limitless effect of Tirso's theater within a theater begins with the collapse of a binary division: that of the real and the imagined. Cross-dressing's manipulation of category, as argued by Garber, initiates such a breakdown. When a person takes on the identity of another gender, he or she ceases to be either one or the other, but rather one as the other, effectively disrupting the strict binaries that stabilize Western culture. As a result, the cross-dresser invokes and embodies a crisis of category, serving as a useful tool within theater as related to the *mundo al revés* often created through metatheatrical manipulation. As evidenced in both Tirso's and Castro's *comedias*, the presence of cross-dressing is necessary to ignite category crisis. While in Mireno's case, the performance carried out does not include cross-dressing, the character of Serafina uses the device to express the same type of dissatisfaction and desire for change. This tool, instrumental in its manifestation in Tirso's play, proves the crucial missing element for Hipólita and Pedro in Castro's play.

In Tirso de Molina's *El vergonzoso en palacio*, two characters, Mireno and Serafina, feel themselves to "be" something other than the identities that they occupy at the play's start. Both characters adopt a change in clothing as a reaction to this inkling of lack. As it turns out, peasant Mireno wears the trappings of a nobleman quite well, while Serafina's rendition of masculinity in male attire stirs unexpected passion in her friend Juana. In the end, both characters follow the same pattern of changing clothing, and acting a new part, as a solution to their original, discontented status. If we delve further into how these two new appearances advance through the play, however, the mechanisms of subterfuge and their employment become much more dissimilar. In Mireno's drama of disguise, for example, he becomes secretary to his love interest Magdalena, and struggles to find a way to speak to her. This hesitance prompts the iteration of the play's title. Serafina, for her part, unabashedly rehearses her male identity (as part of a broader interest in theater), setting off a chain of events that culminate in her falling in love with a portrait that (unbeknownst to her) is actually her, as a man, a rendition inspired by her cross-dressed rehearsal of masculinity. The transvestite disguise, as opposed to the one rooted simply in new professional attire, proves itself more capable of multiplying transformation and confusion, and hence, more dramatic frames through which to consider the action of the work.

In his discussion of *El vergonzoso en palacio*, Raymond Conlon argues that Tirso establishes three female sexual types, "a narcissist, a heterosexual, and a latent lesbian," whose unconscious sexual desires fuel their behavior (55). While Mireno progresses toward a new social status, Serafina, Magdalena and Juana depict "a spectrum of female sexual types" (55). As Conlon emphasizes, the development of this theme arises as a

result of a series of confrontations each female character has, or rather, “All three begin in a state of apparent ignorance of their sexual natures, then encounter some figure who, despite their emotional resistance, stirs up buried sexual desires which eventually prove so overwhelming that the three women are driven to some sort of sexual expression with the figure” (66). In the case of the two sisters, these encounters will ultimately serve as an agent of transformation with regard to their marital status (the suggestion of lesbianism will not find its proper expressive outlet for a few more centuries). Regardless of the tangible outcome wrought by each of these self-discoveries, according to Conlon, the women seem propelled by “some preconscious, irrational power influencing their actions, and, by implication, human actions generally,” the theatrical representation of which marks Tirso’s achievement as a dramatist (66). What remains unanalyzed in Conlon’s discussion is the role that transvestism plays in carrying out these moments of recognition, or rather, the way in which cross-dressing serves as the vehicle by which Serafina and Juana (and, subsequently, the audience) may tap into this power of influence or force that guides their sexuality. Cross-dressing, I argue, makes this force dynamic within Tirso’s dramatization, allowing Serafina to gain access to “the unconscious male aspect of her personality so long repressed,” given that through this act, she is able “to incorporate her male self into her female body” (64). This indirectly enables Juana’s sexual discovery, given that once Serafina has done this, Juana must grapple with the attraction stirred up by Serafina’s performance.

Tirso anticipates the dynamism offered by this performance through the character of Mireno. Serafina’s gender transformation runs parallel to the class-climbing achieved by Mireno, who, even prior to finding out his true identity, senses that he is not where he

belongs. In Act 1, when he proposes his plan to Tarso, Mireno mentions this feeling: “Mil veces, estando a solas / le he preguntado si acaso / el mundo, que a cada paso / honras anega en sus olas, / le sublimó en su alto asiento / y derribó del lugar / que intenta otra vez cobrar / mi atrevido pensamiento; / porque el ser advenedizo / aquí anima mi opinión” (368-76). Long before Serafina gives her cross-dressed performance, Mireno introduces the themes of social mobility and self-fashioning and thus cements the dramatic possibilities contained in the work via category climbing. Foreswearing his position within the strict early modern hierarchy, Mireno recognizes his place outside the binaries that characterize his culture. His invitation to Tarso reflects this new consciousness: “Si quieres participar de mis males o mis bienes, / buena ocasión, Tarso, tienes” (403-05). He can define himself and his plan as neither one nor the other, an intermediary position that propels both the play and his journey within that play.

As Conlon explains, when Serafina presents herself to Juana dressed as a man, Juana seems fairly openly attracted to her. According to Conlon’s reading, Juana can more overtly express her desire for Serafina the woman by articulating it as attraction to Serafina the man. I argue, however, that such a reading looks through Serafina the cross-dresser, and that she is neither man nor woman in this moment on stage. Just as Mireno juxtaposes his “bienes” and “males,” Serafina immediately clarifies to Juana that she is still a woman while her appearance simultaneously contradicts this fact: “no te asombre / que apetezca el traje de hombre, / ya que no lo puedo ser” (764). The emphasis on the in-between and the use of contrast then extends to Serafina’s metatheatrical discussion, as she mentions several opposing elements that make up the theater: “Para el alegre, ¿no hay risa? / Para el triste, ¿no hay tristeza? / Para el agudo, ¿agudeza? [...] / ¿No hay guerra

para el valiente, / consejos para el prudente, / y autoridad para el grave?” (764-65).

Having established the intermediary nature of Serafina’s theatrically composed identity and its link with the theater itself, a performance can then follow in which Serafina continually confuses reality and dramatic artifice, forgetting herself and pulling Juana into her performance. From Serafina’s position not as man or woman but as woman posing as man, a breakdown of several categories occurs: it becomes impossible to define Juana’s desire as strictly hetero or homosexual, and the layers of performance and reality multiply and intersect.

In addition to the overlapping and blurring of these categories, Serafina’s cross-dressed performance with Juana then makes possible the next moment of recognition, given that this performance inspires the portrait Antonio has requested. As Melveena McKendrick points out, the portrait was another popular theatrical device that facilitated Baroque contemplations of art within art as well as imitation and identity. Portraits also indulged the fascination with “the shifting interplay of illusion and reality, image and self-image, self-expression and socio-sexual role-play” given the neo-platonic notion of them “as a combination of image and idea [...] paintings of the mind as well as of the eye” (*Identities* 152). Here, Tirso takes advantage of the liminal nature of the portrait to reflect to Serafina a figure that evades gendered divisions. The composition of this portrait perpetuates the blended gender identity Serafina has cultivated, and the text again emphasizes this combination when Antonio consults with the painter. When the painter asks, “En fin: ¿quieres que de hombre / la pinte?” Antonio responds “Sí; que deseo / contemplar en este traje / lo que agora visto habemos” (1058-62). When Antonio requests a portrait of his love interest, we are reminded that said portrait will not be her but her as

a man. Once Serafina then falls in love with this portrait, her repeated commentary on its likeness to her may not be so much narcissism as another reminder for the audience to keep the image out of any designated binary category. The identity, or entity, that defies categorization then makes possible another theatrical ruse and manipulation of identity, since Antonio must divide himself to accommodate for Serafina's new interest: "Don Dionís he de ser yo / de noche, y de día el conde / de Penela; y deste suerte, / si amor su ayuda me da, / mi industria me entregará / lo que espero" (1084-87). One bifurcated identity begets another, as Serafina and Antonio become both self and other. The cross-dressing act both causes and energizes these divisions and confusions, and for as long as Mireno, Juana, Serafina, and Antonio can remain beyond the realm of binary identifications, the play may continue.

Whereas in *El vergonzoso en palacio*, Tirso de Molina presents us with a series of characters who get somewhere by way of cross-dressing, Guillén de Castro demonstrates the importance of stage transvestism through a pair of characters who get nowhere without it. *La fuerza de la costumbre*, described by Melveena McKendrick as "one of the most charming comedies the *siglo de oro* produced," has not garnered the same critical attention as Tirso's *comedia*, but delivers a powerful message as related to the importance of role-play in early modern society (*Woman* 98). McKendrick summarizes the plot as follows:

After twenty years in Flanders, Don Pedro returns to his wife, now that her hostile father is dead, bringing with him their daughter Hipólita. She has been reared by him and has lived at his side as a fellow soldier. Doña Costanza for her part has brought up as a girl the son she was left with twenty years before. She has kept him firmly tied to her apron strings and his world is that of his mother's *estrado*. The central action involves Don Pedro's efforts to make his son Félix a worthy man, but this procedure has its comic parallel in the conversion of Hipólita into a woman. (*Woman* 99)

For McKendrick, the transformative force that ultimately reverses “la fuerza de la costumbre” for Hipólita is love, here presented through a sexual encounter with her suitor, and in this sense, Guillén de Castro combines the dramatic potential of a rebellious heroine with the more commonplace ideology of his time: “In his concept of love as the essence of femininity and his belief in its unstoppable force, Guillén de Castro differs from other seventeenth-century dramatists only in his realistic inclusion of the precipitating power of sex” (*Woman* 102). As Jonathan Thacker stresses, however, this transformation comes at the very end of the work, whereas the parental figures spend most of the play struggling, unsuccessfully, to undo the gendered habits and traits their children have acquired. Given that Castro uses the play to emphasize the embedded nature of role-play, such that transformation seems basically impossible, the sudden recourse to “natural” sexual roles as the determinant for social ones seems “a belated attempt to find a way to feminize her” (*Role-Play* 33). In Thacker’s reading, rather than cementing biological determinism through what he regards as a *deus ex machina* to Hipólita’s character plot, Castro lays the falseness of such determinism bare, creating “an inexplicable (parodic) gap between woman as she is portrayed on stage for the vast majority of the play, and woman as she appears in the textbooks” (*Role-Play* 35). The continuous struggle for both Félix and Hipólita to change out of their preferred feminine and masculine roles, respectively, coupled with the unlikely ending of Hipólita’s transformation, has the overall effect of stressing the importance of role-play in early modern society while exposing its deeply patriarchal tenants.

Indeed, the play’s gendered discourse makes clear a set of norms that Félix and Hipólita threaten in their cross-gendered identifications. We may glean the normative

cultural precepts guiding the play's development through the parental censure offered by Pedro and Costanza. Costanza desires for Hipólita to be less talkative, less open about her romantic interests, and more concerned with her honor as a function of amorous involvement as opposed to violent conflict. In short, she imagines a more passive, linguistically limited Hipólita. Pedro, for his part, tries to impose on his son a model of masculinity steeped in confrontation, aggression, and possessiveness toward women. Though both parents create models of the masculine and feminine through their proposed changes for their children, the reaction to Félix's effeminacy provokes much more outrage on the part of Pedro. While it will be unsuitable for Hipólita to maintain her male privilege, at least she has aimed higher. Félix, for his part, absolutely cannot emulate a woman, and hence, the quest for forced conversions begins. The notion of a "correct" way to inhabit a biologically male or female body, and the stratified nature of the two approved forms of behavior, evidenced in the parents' instructions, serve as a key motivating force for the duration of the work.

In addition to social critique, *La fuerza de la costumbre*'s emphasis on role-play also points to the theatrical difficulty of its unavailability. As such, the importance of role-play does not just impact the members of its society, but at a theatrical level, its absence impedes the dramatic character development so desired by Félix and Hipólita's parents. Although Félix and Hipólita begin the play cross-dressed, they are not theatrical cross-dressers in the sense that they do not actively take on a new identity before the audience and use it to their manipulative advantage. Instead, they spend most of the play stuck firmly in their established identities, leaving their parents to try and pick up the dramatic slack, as it were, mimicking the actions they would take were they to embody

the popular cross-dressing trope. The central conflict of the play, then, is the dramatic deficiency that arises from a lack of the innovative self-fashioning offered by the cross-dressing plot.

Ironically, this theme develops in a play whose central characters begin dressed as the opposite gender. Adding to this irony is the fact that the work opens with Félix commenting on the remarkable, and forced, set of changes he has undergone in order to properly greet the arrival of his long-lost father. His implorations to his mother about the forced rearrangement of his identity serve as the play's introduction: "¿Qué novedades son estas, / mi señora? ¿Qué mudanzas? / [...] ¡Hasta en mi nombre hay mudanza! / ¿Ayer Feliciano, y hoy / don Félix?" (39). Félix's initial editorializing will be short-lived, however, as his reticence to speak (echoing women's incomplete access to language) during his attempted masculinization will function as one of his continuing marks of femininity. His initial exposition is quickly overshadowed by his mother's subsequent lengthy explanation of the familial history that has led to the changes he mentions. Later, when Pedro asks Félix why he is dressed in a long robe like a priest, his mother answers for him, explaining that "nunca su ánimo dispuse / a que mudara el vestido" (43). Shortly thereafter, Pedro inquires again about Félix's dispositions, and his tutor gives another account in place of Félix's own self-description.

As the opening sequence offers an ironic introduction to its primary theme, its presentation of characters also plays upon our dramatic expectations by setting up protagonists who have no luster or motivation to confront the conflict guiding the development of the comedic intrigue. Although the play introduces us to the central pair of protagonists, Félix and Hipólita, we are also given a sense of how much of the action

will happen around them, as largely static, rather than dynamic, figures. The secondary characters, Pedro and Costanza, will have to try to find a way to infuse the necessary energy to provoke the expected transformation. During their discussion of the gender switch, both Pedro and Costanza repeat the same refrain in a reference to the play's title that anticipates the difficulty they will face in bringing about the changes they desire in their children: "Milagros que suele hacer / *la fuerza de la costumbre*" (43). The refrain that linguistically connects them also marks them as the agents who will have to compensate for this force that makes the gender transition so seemingly impossible, and that simultaneously forms the work's social critique of early modern patriarchy.

In order to fill the gap left by Félix and Hipólita's contentment in their supposedly gender-crossed selves, Pedro and Costanza embark on their transformative project, utilizing the tools of the theatrical cross-dresser along their way to infuse the necessary movement of plot. They begin by suggesting a sartorial change for both children that, as more typical protagonists, they might have taken on of their own volition. They use the concept of cross-dressing, or rather, an appropriation of a material object to reconfigure identity, to re-inscribe and predetermine the signification of each object as related to their needs. Representation precedes reality as both parents try to create a dramatic energy that can sustain a reversal. While Costanza attempts to put Hipólita in feminine dress, Pedro introduces Félix to the sword. In both instances, the parental figure attempts to recode the object, creating a new set of associations that fit the change in gender. When Hipólita enters the room in her new outfit, a servant follows close behind with the arms she previously bore. Hipólita, still identifying with her masculinized upbringing, shows more linguistic entitlement than her feminized brother in denouncing this sartorial switch:

“Reniego los chapines, / del vestido y del tocado [...]” (45). She then delivers a speech praising, and lamenting the loss of, her sword, taking it from the servant. Don Pedro follows this up with another tribute to the sword, trying to re-signify it for Félix as an object that defines his honor, and by extension, his masculinity. Here, Don Pedro chooses the material accessory to introduce the same social concept that he will spend the rest of the play provoking his son to care about and defend, arguing, “Es la espada, al lado asida, / en el que tiene valor, / un respeto del honor / y un resguardo de la vida; / y no ha de darla rendida / aunque vea peligrar / la vida que ha de guardar; / porque aunque no le convenga a la vida, es bien que tenga / la honra el primer lugar” (46). In contrast to Hipólita’s bravado, Félix shows little affinity for the sword, and chooses a brief, apologetic response that maintains his feminine stance. While both parents choose outward wares as the key to initiating a reversal of gender and social role, trying to inscribe them with the proper meaning for each child, these efforts prove fairly fruitless as each protagonist seems destined to remain stagnant.

After attempting a literal cross-dressing of Hipólita and Félix, Costanza and Pedro move on to metatheatrical deception. Rather than encourage their children to develop manipulative schemes, they form them themselves, making Félix and Hipólita the objects, rather than the agents, of the play’s *enredo*. Making up for the lack of comedic intrigue normally produced by the effects of a cross-dresser’s newly formed and integrated identity, Don Pedro, with the help of other characters, coaxes Félix to retrieve the glove of his love interest, Doña Inés, during Acts 2 and 3. Getting Félix to properly care and then act on this possible affront to his honor proves difficult. During the third act, Don Pedro and Don Luis are still clarifying the connection between violence and

honor. Luis presents this option to Félix: “Matar su contrario haga de noche con una daga, o con un palo de día,” to which Félix responds “Y ¿podré cobrar así yo la opinión que he perdido?” (65). The female characters of the play similarly try to make Hipólita feel affronted as well by suggesting that her love interest, Luis, has married another woman. Whereas normally this type of dishonoring would provoke a radical character change, born out of necessity to recuperate social credibility, Hipólita continues to interpret this news with the code still proving so evasive to Félix. In her reaction to Don Luis’s supposed betrayal, Hipólita specifically contrasts the opposing terms she can use to define her emotional response: “¿qué ha sido? / afrentas son, aunque parecen celos” (68). Though the female conspirators who design the ruse hope Hipólita will take the bait and opt for “celos,” she defines Luis’s offense with the term “afrentas,” maintaining the masculine interpretation that Félix is only slowly beginning to grasp. Late in the game, Pedro and Costanza have made little progress.

Desperate for social (and theatrical) normalcy, the parental figures of *La fuerza de la costumbre* try to coax their children into cross-dressing back to the genders implied by their biological identity by using theatrical cross-dressing techniques: first a sartorial switch and then a metatheatrical ruse. For the most part, these efforts do not seem to have their intended effect until the conventional ending of the play takes hold. Furthermore, once they do, the last-minute reversals are of an ambiguous nature. On the one hand, Félix returns Doña Inés’s glove and then utters the play’s refrain, thus reclaiming his social and dramatic agency. Nevertheless, the play’s ending does little to reverse the disparity in the two siblings’ access to language. In addition to the “deus ex machina” feel of Hipólita’s transformation as argued by Thacker, Hipólita does not seem to lose the

linguistic license of narration even in confirming her gender reversal, elaborating her sexual encounter to her mother, as well as the events leading up to it. In this speech, she continues to outwardly and openly express her interest in Luis (a habit her mother tried to break throughout the play and scolded her for) while eschewing the feminine pose of silence. Both her narrative mode and the content produced by this mode imply a certain preservation of her former masculine self. Félix's relationship similarly marks the remnants of his previous feminine pose, given that he does not narrate his moment of transformation like Hipólita. Instead, the Capitán enters to give a lengthy account of the moment for the other characters and the audience. The play does not dramatize either metamorphosis, and instead uses the necessary narration of these moments to signal the gap in either character's supposed return to a masculine or feminine gender role.

Without the typical enthusiasm for self-fashioning exhibited by the cross-dressed heroine, the characters of *La fuerza de la costumbre* find it difficult to bring about change and the play follows them in their attempt to create play and movement despite the cross-dresser's absence. Lacking the creative act of this heroine and her negotiation between categories, even the strict necessities of patriarchal society cannot undo what Félix and Hipólita have become. By mimicking the dramatic tactics of a cross-dresser, their parents do ultimately push them towards transformation. In the end, Félix and Hipólita become heterogeneous figures due to their relationships with language and the manner in which they communicate themselves to the audience. This blurred, incomplete gender identity signals the way in which Costanza and Pedro's prodding produces an in-between of subjectivity fitting with the moving-out-and-around of categories implied by their cross-dressing strategy. If the female cross-dresser was the key, missing piece of Castro's play,

all four characters have done their best to reproduce her by its close, with Hipólita and Félix embodying her ability to break down binary separations.

In a play in which so much goes awry, one aspect of identity remains firmly normative: the desires expressed by Hipólita and Félix. Despite their crisscrossed gender identifications, both siblings possess starkly heterosexual desires throughout the play. In the first act, shortly after attempting to follow their parents' instructions of transformation, they each meet a prospective love interest. Luis begins pursuing Hipólita, impressed by her fighting abilities, and Félix finds himself spellbound by Leonor. While on the one hand, their masculine and feminine behavior (respectively) create a discourse of something akin to same-sex desire, from a material perspective, what we know to be two biological men fall in love with two biological women without any hesitation or mistaken identity. In contrast to the erotic tension between Serafina and Juana in Tirso's *El vergonzoso*, as well as any number of other plays featuring cross-dressed characters, neither Hipólita nor Félix attract their same sex, which would facilitate the depiction of a thinly veiled homoerotic, but ultimately indeterminate, desire. Félix, though thoroughly confused about how to interpret the honor code, has no trouble immediately adopting the poetic language of a tortured courtier to establish his romantic inclinations, exclaiming "¡Oh, quien pudiese / en los brazos y en el alma / recogerla otras mil veces!" after catching a fainting Leonor (49). During this same exchange, Luis confirms his desire for Hipólita. Though both siblings struggle with the proper behavior to convey within these courtships, Castro leaves no doubt surrounding the basic facets of their desire. Without the allure of the new, unknown male (actually a female cross-dresser) who arrives to compete with the play's *galán*, same-sex desire has no veil to make it safe. As a

consequence, one normally confused result of gender-bending remains clarified: the play does not dally in the blurring of normative sexuality.

In addition to tantalizing male audience members, the female cross-dresser makes movement and discovery possible, temporarily suspending the divisions that kept early modern subjects in place and generating uncategorizable desires and deceptions for them to play off of to their advantage. In Castro's play, she becomes the absent hero, a phantom lingering in the background as the unspoken missing element that could re-make Hipólita and Félix. In the end, Pedro and Costanza's efforts to compensate for this figure yield the in-between of their missing heroine. This same in-between propels Juana's desires, Serafina's self-conception, and Antonio's pursuit of Serafina in Tirso's play. In both cases, cross-dressing functions as a dramatic vehicle of personal transformation, indispensable and called upon in the case of its absence. A closer look at the function of transvestism in both plays reveals the manner in which playwrights used the figure, and its ability to confuse categories, as a lens to examine and refract the early modern subject as represented on stage.

In both Tirso's and Castro's plays, the female cross-dressing figure proves essential, and the breakdown of categories offered by her deception goes beyond that of the man/woman divide. Her move between genders is, in reality, the basis for a crisis of category at all levels, with personal character transformation as one of its results, as is the case in both plays examined here. In *La fuerza de la costumbre*, the end product for Hipólita and Félix, an in-between of gender roles marked by individual relationships to language, cannot be separated from the play's form, such that style and content enmesh just as the genders do. As the boundaries of self loosen, so do those separating the

characters from their implied author. In *El vergonzoso*, a series of divided characters emerge after Serafina's cross-dressed performance, generating an obscuring of the categories defining sexuality, personality, and reality (as distinguished from representation). At the same time that Serafina contemplates theater and loses herself in it, she, while posing as a "he," unravels the representational hold the work places on its subjects, allowing them to reinvent themselves and making them entertaining to the audience. The dynamism of the figure, then, rests on her ability to re-create the creative process that produced the play and the characters in the first place. As Friedman explains, "En la metanovela, la metapintura y el metadrama hay una representación figurada del método del artista y del proceso de la creación" ("Resonancias" 21). In these plays, this representation occurs by and through the female cross-dressing trope and its profound ability to suspend the categorical limitations that cement identity. Within this process, she both imitates and suspends representation's constitutive hold on reality, pointing out to viewers of the *comedia* the construction of the early modern play and the early modern person as she re-constructs them, and herself.

El vergonzoso and *La fuerza de la costumbre* give us "good" and "bad" examples of the theatrical possibilities of transvestism, respectively. Cross-dressing's self-motivated use can inspire change, while its lazy acquisition from an exterior force instigates a minimum amount of action. *La fuerza*, in particular, builds up two potentially radical protagonists that disappointingly accomplish very little during their time on stage. Furthermore, the efforts of Félix and Hipólita's parents call our attention to cross-dressing's two levels of deception: the visual change in appearance and manipulation of the signification of sartorial elements, and then the narrative re-telling of one's identity

and place in the dramatic action. In Castro's play, the basic mechanisms of the proposed cross-dressing act appear to be the same for each (would-be) protagonist. The level of outrage over Félix's effeminacy does, however, give a greater sense of urgency to his transformation over that of Hipólita, evidenced in the disproportionate level of stage time afforded Félix's character plot. Since neither character really adopts the practice, however, a specific sense of how the act of theatrical transvestism would differ according to gender remains an open question in Castro's metonymic treatment of the topic. Another play written later in the seventeenth century by Calderón, *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, takes up a very similar initial predicament with its dual, misidentified protagonists, but challenges further the idea of how to overcome "la fuerza de la costumbre" so impossible to breach in Castro's version.

Here, the maternal and paternal influence on the male and female characters, respectively, actually prepares each figure for the cross-dressing act. In *Las manos*, we have the ferocious Lisarda, who describes how growing up with her father after her mother died in childbirth has conditioned her to successfully dress as a man and recuperate the honor she lost when Federico abandoned her. César, for his part, having grown up at court around ladies and under the watchful eye of his mother, can easily pass as lady-in-waiting "Celia" to Serafina, his love interest, whom he hopes to (and does) steer away from competing suitors Carlos and Federico.

Because these two characters go where Félix and Hipólita do not venture on their own in *La fuerza*, the relative difference in the strategies of male and female cross-dressing become more apparent. The play, like Castro's, focuses mostly on César, especially in his role as "Celia." Lisarda's transformation into "César," rival suitor to

Federico and Carlos, though less dramatically prominent, offers a sharp contrast that comments on the link between the kind of dramatic progress evidenced in *El vergonzoso* and cross-dressing as an acceleration of mobility and creativity, made possible in the initial status jump from male to female. From the contrast in the dramatic efficiency of the two versions of transvestite theater, we may glean the model of creativity most celebrated by dramatists of the commercial theater, one that is based on the competitive surpassing of previous forms.

Historically, male transvestism appears far less than female-to-male transformations. As both Ursula K. Heise and Sherry Velasco have pointed out, the early modern concern of emasculation and male-to-female transformation represented a preoccupation that manifested in a complicated set of artistic discourses and theatrical practices. Heise explains that whereas the English stage deliberately excluded female actresses, Spanish authorities feared the possible cultural message of men playing women, viewing it as a threat to a strong image of masculinity and reflective of the anxieties surrounding sodomy. Elizabeth Rhodes adds to this argument that in the context of theater, the negative view of femininity did not lend itself to resolving problems, given “the Spanish preoccupation with the damaging effects on character that were wielded by *anyone*’s performance of the Feminine as an acceptable means to resolve a plot” (272). Early modern Spanish attitudes toward the mutation of traditional masculinity, nevertheless, were not entirely unthinkable or prohibitive, as evidenced by the repeated visual representation of hermaphrodites and pregnant men in painting, as well as the *entremés* “El parto de Juan Rana” by Lanini Sagredo. As Velasco signals in her study of this *entremés* and the early modern treatment of male pregnancy, the representation of the

pregnant man “is paradoxically both fantasy and nightmare. By eliminating the need for women in human reproduction, the pregnant man gains complete control over procreation and paternity. Simultaneously, this image reveals the fear of the logical evolution of gender-bending and same-sex desire between men” (*Male* xiv).

Although Calderón’s experimentation with the male transvestite does not delve into the question of male domination of procreation as it is explored in “El parto de Juan Rana,” I mention these issues to illustrate the opposing set of interests he engages when he stages his figure: on one hand, he indulges a fascination with the power of gender-bending, and the possible gains made by a man appropriating the feminine. Calderón exposes the body public to a verifiable cultural taboo that would surely incite excitement. On the other hand, however, the play faces greater institutional censure for tapping into one of the deepest anxiety-ridden forms of gender play possible in the early modern Spanish context. In response to this tense position, the images of cross-dressing as carried out by a male and female character differ greatly. César stumbles upon the act while Lisarda consciously chooses it and maneuvers its deceptive advantage aptly.

In the hands of Calderón’s protagonists, the dramatic potential so emphasized in Castro’s play finds its way to the stage through the strategic use of transvestism. The two characters take advantage of their pre-dispositions to their opposite gender, which arise as a result of being brought up by the opposite parent. They actually act out that gender for the purposes of their own personal advantage. In Lisarda’s case, her cross-dressing manipulations come as a result of creative imitation after her suitor, Federico, leaves her. Following his ambulant lead, she uses an advanced form of dramatic role-play to escape her own social disadvantage. Her male transvestite counterpart, César, takes up female

dress at the suggestion of a comrade. Musical and dramatic performances, as well as the mythic content of these performances (references to Hercules and Achilles), accompany his appearances as “Celia” in order to coat his donning of the female garment in discourse: his act of cross-dressing always hides itself in further layers of play and alternate modes of story-telling.

Despite the differences in the cross-dressing tactic as played out by the female and male characters of the play, both stage the same type of intervention on the *comedia*'s supposed “conventional” dramatic setup: as the *galán* Federico pursues the *dama* Serafina, Lisarda impedes Federico's courting by offering Serafina a superior suitor and César attempts to throw a wrench in things by manipulating Serafina's judgment of her prospects. The play, though positing the battle for Serafina's hand as the primary concern of all characters who appear on stage, uses César and Lisarda's intervention to establish another level of dramatic conflict in the work: the interruption and distortion of this battle is, in the final analysis, the real “work” of the play, or rather, it is the focus we take as we follow the collective romantic pursuit of Serafina from our seats. The focal point ends up being on the players at the outskirts. We watch them watch, and meddle with, the “action,” but this outer intrigue proves the ultimate sustaining force of the work.

The first scene of *Las manos blancas no ofenden* plants the problem of movement with its first words. Lisarda and her *criada* Nise confront the issue of Federico's mobility by asking the following of his servant Patacón: “¿Cuándo parte tu señor?” Lisarda, by posing this question, starts the play as she brings us to a point of anticipation, which Patacón fuels even further with his reply: “Dentro de una hora se irá” (1080). The impending nature of Federico's departure equates our sense of the play's dramatic

impetus with an actual geographical journey, subsequently encoded as problematic for Lisarda. Since she depends on him for her honor, his ability to move, abandon, and change course threatens to wreak a certain chaos on her personal circumstance, a circumstance that is our only access to the conflicts taking shape in this first scene. Patacón states the problem as another question, here rhetorical: “¿Qué le hemos de hacer, si tiene / espíritu ambulativo? / El no puede estar parado” (1080). Federico’s freedom of movement, and insistence on shifting positions, highlights the gap in relative levels of social privilege as determined by gender: he can travel while Lisarda waits anxiously for a resolution. Nise, Lisarda’s servant, makes this inequality explicit: “Malo era para mujer” (1080).

At another level, the dialogue that introduces his “espíritu ambulativo” linguistically constructs him as a relevant character to the play while locating him outside any visible, embodied structure in the scene. He is an idea, one that cannot be located temporally (“Dentro de una hora se irá”) or, more importantly, in any spatial sense, as Patacón mentions: “él salió; / no sé dónde ha ido” (1080). Lisarda contrasts this assertion with her firm placement within the scene: “Búscale y dile que aquí estoy” (1080). Here, two characters counter one another in both their position within the early modern social strata as well as their spatial relationship to the scene. Federico can be present without actual embodied presence, whereas Lisarda both inhabits the scene and reiterates this location within the dialogue of the scene. The play’s discourse in this opening exchange makes clear the dual social and dramatic disadvantage Lisarda faces as a result of her lack of movement, her lack of *progress*, made all the more explicit by Federico’s ability to inhabit the scene in his own absence.

The juxtaposition of static and dynamic dramatic positions, nevertheless, serves to create a sense of order that will be disrupted and upended. Lisarda immediately shows herself to be inventive in her immobilized position, prepared to use techniques of concealment and subterfuge to work around, and ultimately build off of, Federico's model of the *advenedizo*. She announces her plan to Patacón and Nise: "le espero / retirada; que no quiero / dar a la desdicha mía otro testigo" (1081). Lisarda remains unmoving; her plan is to wait. This waiting, however, is strategic, in that she will place herself in such a way that she can gain information to use to her advantage. When Federico eventually arrives on the scene, he offers a lengthy elaboration of his personal history, punctuated by various shifts in geographical location. His story is one of thwarted ascension, since he had hoped to inherit the throne of Ursino, only to find himself "el más pobre escudero / de su casa" (1082). In response to this loss of fortune and power, Federico made another life for himself in Milan, where he met and wooed Lisarda. Having heard that Serafina plans to wed, however, he has abandoned Lisarda in order to reclaim his desired position of power. While all of this information more concretely establishes for the audience the specifics of the impasse between Lisarda and Federico (the reason she began the play so desperate for his whereabouts), it also feeds into her stagnant strategy. Listening to this information gives Lisarda both raw material she can use for her benefit, as well as a *model* she can play off of to better her circumstance. Given that Federico's privileged position began in the (relative) depths of poverty, he unknowingly offers to Lisarda the answer to her similar problem when he details his creative reaction to his bad fortune, his willingness to play other parts in other places.

Lisarda reacts to all of this information theatrically. The fallout from Federico's proclamation takes the form of two "destroyed" props: a locket and a letter. Federico explains that after having saved Serafina from a fire, he retained her locket in the hopes of later proving himself to her and thus earning her favor and his station as king of Ursino. At the end of his speech, Lisarda grabs the locket from him, and "throws" it into the audience. Federico retaliates by ripping up a letter of apology he had written to Lisarda. He then takes away the presence defined so crucial at the start of the play: "a no más ver / de tu hermosura me ausento" (1086). The two actions seem to mirror each other, as both characters take a prop that means something to the other and destroy it to symbolic ends. Once Federico has angrily stomped off stage in a huff, however, Lisarda reveals that she has retained the locket and only *pretended* to get rid of it.

In effect, she signals how her creative role-play will build off of the model introduced by Federico. While he offers a framework of fluid identity and physical positioning that Lisarda will use to recuperate her dramatic advantage over the course of the play, she also communicates on another dramatic level when she feigns the destruction of the locket. She introduces a mode of acting beyond that of the immediate dynamic between characters, deceiving them in a way that simultaneously necessitates the presence of the audience to read her second level of signification. We watch her fake the locket throw, conscious of this theatricality in a way that the other characters are not. She has to make them aware, explaining her deceptive action. When Nise asks what she plans to do next, Lisarda replies: "No sé; mas sí sé, pues tengo / esta joya en que fundar / mis engaños" (1086). Before having done anything, Lisarda affords herself a seemingly impossible position of both knowing and not knowing. The locket, as it has been

metatheatrically crafted by Lisarda, evokes all the possibilities inherent to a combination of role-play and creative self-consciousness. This fusion holds infinite generative possibilities, made explicit by Lisarda: “¡ea, ingenio! / a nueva fábula sea / mi vida asunto.” Lisarda describes the impending events as a “nueva fábula” wrought by her “ingenio” (1086). The changes in identity to follow represent their own form of theatricality that crafts a story and constructs its own created reality within that of the play itself. Lisarda links her ingenuity to literary tradition, identifying her strategy as fitting into such lineage: “puesto / que de celosas locuras / están tantos libros llenos, / no hará escándalo una más” (1086). She thus conditions her response to social disadvantage beyond the question of mere class jumping (as in the speech of Federico), finding in the process of restitution an aesthetic, literary element. As Lisarda imagines a new story for herself, she shows an awareness of other stories, as well as her act of insertion into a discursive tradition.

Though Lisarda first references books, her literary consciousness does not exclude a specifically dramatic bent. At this moment, Lisarda leaves the specifics of her plan vague, telling Nise simply that she should follow her because “si no hubiera extrañeza / en los humanos afectos, / la admiración se quedara / inútil al mundo; puesto / que no hubiera que admirar maravillas y portentos de un hombre con desengaños / y de una mujer con celos” (1087). The vagueness of Lisarda’s next move mirrors the way in which Federico evades a specific physical presence in the opening moments of the play. In practice, Lisarda shows herself to have picked up on the power that can be gleaned from such a position. Instead of elaborating her course of action, she opts to talk about the potential theatrical loss at stake: not being able to “admirar maravillas y portentos.”

Her concern here seems to be about the story, and her responsibility to deliver a type of story telling propelled by and for spectatorship. She must produce something marvelous that otherwise will not enter the intrigue. While we eventually see that she envisions cross-dressing and its manipulations as the ideal venue for expanding upon her initial deceptive, metatheatrical gesture, she concludes this initial sequence on a coy note, only giving us a sense of the plan's discursive importance. In the process, her comments prioritize ambiguity and evasiveness as agents of suspense as she defines herself as a creative, strategic receptor of the social climbing introduced by the ever so unlikeable Federico.

Although Lisarda does not give us much in the way of strategy, prior to the close of the scene, she offers up a logic regarding her masculine disposition similar to that of *La fuerza de la costumbre*. She explains to Nise that since her mother died during childbirth and she grew up primarily in the care of her father, “¿Segunda naturaleza / la costumbre no me ha hecho / tan varonil que la espada / rijo y el bridón manejo?” (1086-87) Maternal absence begets a predisposition to masculine disguise and positions Lisarda to carry off a convincing rendition of masculinity later in the play. Her comments also anticipate the theme of the play's next sequence: César's effeminacy, which results from his close relationship with his mother. As in Castro's play, Calderón backs his pair of would-be transvestite protagonists with a series of frames with which to understand their subsequent antics. First, he explains their impending acts of deception as conditioned by custom. He further layers César's feminine attributes in myth and artistic discourse. His introduction to the play happens by way of music. Two *damas* sing of Achilles as César contemplates the hero's story and its implications for his own character. The final

segment of the song hits on the key issue of cross-dressing: “Tetis, su madre, temiendo / que entre dos muertes peligre, [...] / para que sirva a Deidamia / traje de mujer le viste” (1087). Another level of artistic expression, here music, mediates the audience’s reception of César’s own womanly ways as well as his impending act of transvestism. The song creates a distance between César’s character and the social taboo of male effeminacy, emphasizing instead the fictional nature of the portrayal. The entertaining song feeds to the audience, and to César, the basic circumstances of its second protagonist, inscribing them in musical folly as well as myth. In contrast to Lisardar’s planned attack, César’s version of cross-dressing heavily reduces his own complicity in the act. Within the myth invoked to mirror César’s predicament, Achilles’s mother, Thetis, not only comes up with the idea of the “traje de mujer,” but also imposes it on him, “le viste.” Even the grammar of this moment of the song disconnects the male cross-dresser with his transvestite act: it is imposed by an external force for reasons of protection.

When introducing César, Calderón is careful to explain away his depiction of an effeminate male and create as much distance between César and the cross-dressing plot that he will eventually maneuver as possible. The insertion of the Achilles myth communicates to the audience that César himself, like Achilles, will not “naturally” opt to dress or act as a woman, but instead will find himself temporarily forced to do so. (As I will discuss, Tirso de Molina’s rendition of the myth, *El Aquiles*, makes Achilles’s abandonment of imposed female dress and romantic pursuits in favor of military exploits the crux of the entire play). Once the song has ended, César himself points out the connection between the mythical hero as the two *damas* have portrayed him and his own

effeminacy. His recap reproduces the shifting of agency to the maternal figure: “pues en él me ofrece [...] / que presume que soy yo / quien en mujer transformó / su madre” (1087). Prior to any material acts of transvestism, an extensive discussion of the idea filters our reception of César’s relationship to effeminacy and creative self-consciousness. He is self-aware, but the depiction of his awareness separates him from his own “unconventional” behavior and eventual cross-dressed appearance.

Despite this awareness, like Achilles, César will not actively take up a disguise of his own volition. He instead describes his personal conflict (he, like Federico, is in love with Serafina and eager to earn her hand) in hopeless terms: “Mas ¿dónde he de ir si, criando / entre meninas y damas, / sé de tocados y flores / más que de caballos y armas?” (1090) Like Félix of Castro’s play, César has been raised amongst the company of women, and therefore he does not possess the masculine knowledge that will make him a viable candidate for Serafina. Additionally, he lacks the theatrical wherewithal to devise any kind of plan to get around this limitation. As with Achilles and Félix before him, César gets help from a third party (his servant Teodoro). He first proposes to César the movement that allowed Federico his advantage over Lisarda in the first sequence (“Como interesado / soy en que tú a Ursino vayas”) (1090). Later, he even takes full credit for the transplant (much like Achilles’s mother forced his sartorial switch) when he tells César, “Vente conmigo, que yo / te pondré en Ursino casa” (1091). Beyond location, César even looks to him for the temporal specifics of the plan when he asks “¿cuándo quieres que me vaya?” to which Teodoro responds “Esta noche; y pues yo tengo / llave que a tu cuarto pasa, abierto estará” (1091). He also offers a specific script for César to follow in carrying out the actual wooing: “Trata de enamorarla tú...” (1091). At this point,

Teodoro has given César a plan very similar to the one Federico has already enacted when the play starts: to leave home and impress Serafina under a new alias. Teodoro first aligns César with the “normative” model of masculinity already established within the realm of the play’s created universe.

César’s plan differs significantly from that of Federico, nevertheless, as César will not participate within the central frame of the play in which male suitors court Serafina. César will instead participate alongside Lisarda to meddle with this frame. His identity change includes a mutation of gender, as he will attempt to woo Serafina from the vantage point of one of her ladies-in-waiting. Unlike Lisarda, however, César cannot be the director of his own metatheatrical tamperings, since that would mean he willingly opted for the feminine as a creative or logical solution to a problem. Instead, the dialogue between César and Teodoro about César’s impending transformation suggests the disguise as a last resort. Having already discussed time, place, and comportment, the one nagging detail that remains is the question of César’s mother: how will he escape without her noticing? Here, Teodoro posits the notion of dress: “¿No habrá un disfraz / con que, a aquella luz escasa / que la queda, no conozca / que tú seas el que pasa?” (1091) First, Teodoro mentions the disguise as just that, a “disfraz,” not specifically pointing César to female or male dress. They then stumble upon the idea of transvestism by way of a conveniently accessible female dress:

CÉSAR: Sí, y el disfraz ha de ser...
TEODORO: ¿Qué?
CÉSAR: Que a la dama de guarda
 Que duerme allí, quitaré...
 (1091)

The suggestion of dressing as a woman comes in two pieces, since Teodoro interrupts César’s coherent articulation of the idea. The dress is an afterthought that César eases

into the dialogue at the last minute, and with that, he is on his way to a cross-dressing intervention in the play. The layers of artifice and outside mediation have worked to explain away, as well as temper the threat of, his effeminacy before it can make its dramatic impact once he dons the feminine disguise.

At this point in Act 1, Calderón has established the impending interventions of Lisarda and César. While César's plan has included more details, thanks to all of the help and guidance from Teodoro, Lisarda leaves the specifics of her idea unspoken. We are given a sense, then, that these two individuals will interrupt Federico's plans with theatrical tactics that build off of, but ultimately fall outside of, his approach to social climbing. After these expository scenes with both characters, we return to the "central" conflict that has plagued every character since the play began: the question of Serafina's favor and the political power that comes with it. The next series of scenes focuses on Serafina and two of her competing suitors, Carlos and Federico, who both try to win her over with the typical rhetoric of courtly love. The play introduces us to these conventional moments of courtship by first showing us the planned interruptions to them, namely, the impending complications of cross-dressing as carried out by César and Lisarda. Once we have returned to the supposed action that needs to be problematized, we experience César and Lisarda's intervention in the most literal way possible: they are heard offstage, crying for help since they have just been thrown off a horse. The commotion stalls Federico and Carlos's advances on Serafina as they must rush offstage and retrieve the two now cross-dressed characters.

Structurally, this *comedia* plays a trick on the viewer before it unleashes its actual tricksters to do their worst. We think we are following the play's "center," since the

scenes of the first act position Lisarda and César's character plots, as well as the initiation of their transvestite theater, as an interruption, and a deviation, that counters the primary tactics of the consummate *galán* who has dishonored Lisarda and now has his eye on Serafina. Lisarda and César stumble into this dynamic, literally, and the rest of the first act erupts into semantic chaos. Since their accident with the horse happens offstage, we come to understand it by the rotating comments of Laura and Clori (ladies-in-waiting to Serafina). Their disjointed reactions give us a fragmented picture of what is happening in the wings:

CLORI: y viendo al joven caer...
 LAURA: y desmayada la dama...
 CLORI: carga en los brazos con él...
 LAURA: con ella carga en los brazos...
 (1094)

Verbal symmetry complements the rotating narration of the rescue, while the interchanging stories pull apart a linear picture of the imagined action. The poetic discourse of the play here imitates the arrival of the work's opposing, yet complementary, antagonists. Once César, "vestido de mujer," and Lisarda, "vestida de hombre," arrive on stage, a series of exclamations accompany the wonder and excitement of this unexpected arrival. Next, as César and Lisarda react to the unreal position in which they have found themselves, the rest of the scene devolves into an almost exclusive rattling off of asides:

LISARDA: (Pero, ¡qué miro!)
 CÉSAR: (Mas, ¿qué es lo que llevo a ver?)
 LISARDA: (¿Federico no es aquéste?)
 CÉSAR: (¿Ésta Serafina no es?)
 FEDERICO: (¡Patacón!)
 PATACÓN: (Nada me digas;
 ya todas tus dudas sé.)
 (1094-95)

None of the characters communicate with each other, and instead comment upon the new series of (mis)recognitions that have overtaken the scene. The structure of the depiction of César and Lisarda's arrival continues losing balance when Federico attempts to dialogue with Patacón in an aside. Patacón responds, thus engaging Federico, but uses his reply to waive off any exchange between the two. The use of the aside, purportedly available to allow for more exclusive communication between the two, serves only to reiterate isolated expression.

The final sequence of Act 1 of *Las manos blancas no ofenden* presents the linguistic chaos caused by the unexpected, disaster-ridden arrival of two cross-dressed characters who plan to interrupt the formulaic pursuit of a *dama* by a *galán*. The interruption, we find out, is the play; it is the angle at which we view the rest of the dramatic conflict on stage. Having shifted to the marginal perspective, the play focuses on the meddlings, as the "wings" take center stage. We arrive at Act 2, however, with varying levels of preparation for such a change in perspective. César's plan, for example, has already been spelled out by Teodoro, down to the time, place, and dress. He has helped César with how he might act and conceal his journey from his overbearing mother. Lisarda, on the other hand, concealed her exact plans in the first act, dangling the locket before us, a sign she uses to represent her creative manipulation of an imitation of Federico.

César acts out his part without surprise; he does as he has been told to do. His performance possesses a fundamentally passive quality, since as lady-in-waiting to Serafina, he mostly collects information that could potentially serve him in his quest to intercept her choosing of a suitor. At the start of Act 2, he listens as Serafina tells him

who she truly fancies. César provides two sets of reactions: one to Serafina and one to the audience: “Pues Carlos (entremos, celos, / en la experiencia primera), / que es quien más fino te sirve” (1098). As his comment reflects, César does not manipulate Serafina, but rather acts as a sponge. The possibly deceptive quality of his use of the feminine disguise is further downplayed by the nature of its “performance.” The audience has already been made aware of all the motivation and machination surrounding the use of the female dress: there is no “surprise” element to the scene that plays out between Serafina and César. All the creative elements find their clear expression well before the actual enactment of his act of transvestism.

Artistic discourse continues to smother César’s cross-dressing, always making it one part of a larger performance that incorporates music, myth, and even more theater. First, he sings at Serafina’s behest, and then Federico attempts to build off of that performance to his advantage. The song, which includes the expected death-in-life imagery of courtly love poetry, offers Federico a useful parallel to his own devotion as he enters the scene. Reacting to César’s performance of the first few verses, he explains, “Sin duda, por mí, oh Hermosa / deidad desta verde esfera, / el concepto se escribió, / pues yo...” (1099). Whereas César acts as a vessel to deliver up the “raw materials” of artistic expression, Federico appropriates them for his own self-definition. He continues to use the metaphysical condition expressed by César in the song to establish himself in the scene and prove his tortured devotion to Serafina. César, having transformed into a veritable prop, mimics the notion of source material within the creative process. His artistic production propels the development of the play, but only insofar as it allows other characters to enhance their own previous plans.

This initial scene of ventriloquism expands at the end of the act when César rehearses a part in a play, and both Carlos and Federico attempt to co-opt authorship of the verses. At the start of this act, Clori and Laura invite César to play the *galán* in a *comedia* they are preparing for Serafina's birthday. When César eventually rehearses his part at the end of the act, we have again been warned well in advance of any advances his gender-bending have afforded him. César then rehearses the part before he performs it in Act 3. He does act strategically here, given that he uses the rehearsal to present a parallel act of male transvestism in order to hint to Serafina his real identity and romantic interest in her. This confession, though mediated/veiled by performance, comes closest to making the feminine an active means to an end, a way to resolve a problem. His acting, however, again encodes his desire in another elaboration of myth, a classical figure who took steps similar to those he has undertaken at Teodoro's behest. Speaking as Hercules (and thus taking on another theatrical role proposed to him earlier in the play), César presents his case to Serafina: "Aunque en traje de mujer / me ves, bien sabe de mí / el correspondido amor / que rey en el orbe fui; / e interesado en el tuyo, / después que tus ojos vi, / huyendo vine el mandar / para lograr el servir" (1109). In the same verses that bring César dangerously close to revealing himself, he speaks through another myth, emphasizing the practical function of the disguise in achieving a heteronormative aim. The performance alarms Serafina, who cries out, "Calla, calla, no prosigas; / que ya no puedo sufrir / de la duda si es aquesto / representar o sentir" (1109). Despite the layering of classical myth, César begins to achieve a liminal performance that threatens to enmesh his marginal, deceptive position with the normative courtships taking place. César's dual

identity as male posing as female begets a questioning of truth and fiction, as Serafina struggles to delineate between feigned sentiment and devotional expression.

As César continues with his performance, however, a crowning moment in the creative process looms: the attribution of the verses to the figure of the author. Just as César is about to reveal that he crafted them, Carlos and Federico intervene:

CÉSAR: (¡Ánimo, amor; que esta vez
 llegó de mi mal el fin!)
 Pues cuanto aquí represento
 y cuanto he dicho es...
Salen CARLOS y FEDERICO
LOS DOS: por mí.
 (1110)

The strategic placement of the aside reminds us of César’s passive, uncreative attitude: he does not want to be found out or gain recognition for his ingenuity. He fears the vulnerability of his performance coming undone and the discovery of his true feelings for Serafina. Federico and Carlos, however, have no problem scrambling for the credit to the poetic rendition Serafina has found so moving, even finishing the verse for him. César reverts to malleable puppet, an actor shifting between subject positions and embodying additional layers of artistic discourse within the play. Serafina affords him a moment of creative invention when she suggests that César should speak for her in responding to Carlos and Federico’s competing claims to the verses, but César denies himself the opportunity to cause problems, feeling that he has missed his chance. He specifically mentions in this aside the way in which they appropriate his words in a way that he has not reciprocated: “que, no hablando yo por ellos, / ellos hablaron por mí” (1110).

In the second act, César uses his transvestite status to become a kind of source, or wealth, of information. He acts onstage as a compliant, ventriloquized body, gathering

and disseminating content within a carefully controlled, pre-established frame. An elaborated plan consistently pre-empts his theatrical maneuvers as “Celia.” His artistic contributions, furthermore, reproduce myth in a possibly novel way that loses creative potential in his grasp, since he misses the chance to claim authorship of his performed verses. In this sense, César imitates and reproduces forms, both the scripts of actions set out by other characters and the musical and poetic expressions of myth that help to veil his transvestite endeavor. Though César functions as a focal point around which more levels of art may enter the work, he does not actively foster a celebration of innovation in his use of the feminine disguise.¹⁵

Lisarda offers an alternative rendition of artistic sensibility as acted out from the stage via cross-dressing by donning a male disguise. While Federico interrupts César’s confession at the close of the act, he also gets interrupted by Lisarda. When Lisarda makes her entrance as “César,” we still do not know exactly what she has up her sleeve. Like in the opening sequence of the play, here she hides and listens to Federico, this time as he presents himself to Serafina. As he is about to explain to Serafina that he is the mysterious *galán* who earlier rescued her from a fire (the one she favors), Lisarda reveals herself and cuts him off, explaining that “he,” “César,” is the one who saved Serafina. Up until this point, the scene takes the form of a direct replication of its counterpart in the first act, but with a reversal of power balance. Federico has lost authority, and now he,

¹⁵ Rosa Almoguera and Kate Regan express a more positive view of César’s version of transvestism and its relationship to music insofar as he uses his unique voice and upbringing to his advantage and ultimately arrives at the conclusion he seeks, marriage with Serafina. His use of musical performance, however, still makes him vulnerable as a kind of creative source-text in the competition with Carlos and Federico. As Almoguera and Regan mention, “Llegado a este momento, la canción es un texto que ofrece interpretaciones distintas según quién lo lea o escuche” (215).

instead of Lisarda, anxiously asks spatially based questions about his opponent:

“(Adónde irá a parar esto?”) (1101). Though the movement he makes reference to is metaphoric, the lament also references Lisarda’s usurping of boundless movement; she has become the category climber whose spatial evasions and linguistic interventions threaten to destabilize order.

But Lisarda does not just imitate Federico. Once she has positioned herself as a competing suitor, “César” proves his authenticity by presenting Serafina with her locket (the one Lisarda stole from Federico in the first rendition of this scene in Act 1). She reveals this locket with a pointed challenge to Federico to counter her deceptive move: “di que te dé Federico / otra joya como ésta” (1101). What Lisarda inherits from planned observation and strategic use of stillness becomes a stepping-off point for further novelty. She adds to this knowledge base, surpassing the model not just by playing it better than Fernando, but also by adding to it. For Lisarda, the cross-dressing act affords the privilege of a progress that encompasses both physical movement and an authorial voice in the development of the play. In places where César receives a plan that he replicates without deceptive maneuver, Lisarda finds herself free to conceal her thoughts from both the other characters on stage and the audience. She guides instead with the prop, which symbolizes from the stage the theatrical consciousness she uses to carry out her plan. Later in the act, Lisarda makes her competitive goals clear to Federico, again referencing this locket as the source of her inventive challenge: “que he de estar, / a tu pesar, compitiendo / tu fineza, deshaciendo / cuanto llegues a intentar / con ella y con Serafina, / de que ya principio fue / la joya, que no arrojé, / y hoy la he entregado” (1106). Lisarda emphasizes her creative manipulation of the jewel with a commentary on her fake-out in

Act 1. Her use of the word “competing” underscores the strong sense of rivalry that drives her rendition of theatrical transvestism within the play.

This interruption paralyzes Federico, who cannot think of anything to say, and instead produces random fragmented thoughts, all interrupted by Serafina’s interrogations. Later, when Serafina again asks him to explain the discrepancy with the locket, which paints him as a liar, he poeticizes his silence: “En un instante me han puesto, / o mi fortuna o mi estrella, / un cordel a la garganta, / una mordaza en la lengua / para no poder hablar” (1103). Stripped of performative speech that can reconfigure his circumstance, Federico attempts to become mysterious and emotional within his paralyzed position. Patacón adds to this attempt, hinting to Serafina the missing pieces of the story in a metaphor: “Sólo te puedo decir, / en metáfora de bestia, / que, aunque tú lo pienses más, / hay más que pensar, que piensas” (1103). His repetition of the verb “pensar” encourages Serafina to use her own ingenuity to understand that of Lisarda, or at least to be aware of its havoc-wreaking presence. Lisarda’s interruption of Federico’s plan reproduces in miniature the chaotic discursive effects of the close of Act 1, as Federico and Patacón lose control over their own speech and ability to communicate with Serafina.

While it would seem from these initial movements that Lisarda towers over César with her version of cross-dressing, the limits of her creative potential quickly present themselves. Lisarda, after all, is feigning male privilege. Unlike Federico, Lisarda’s decision to shift positions, in both the geographical and identity-based sense, challenges the inscribed place of women in early modern society and comes with retribution. The paternal policing that squashes the full thriving of Lisarda’s plan, however, arrives in the

form of maternal concern for César. Lisarda's father arrives, searching not for his daughter, but instead for César, whose mother is terribly preoccupied by his sudden absence. Serafina and the other characters on stage, however, direct him not to the real César, who they believe to be "Celia," and instead to Lisarda's performance of "César," Serafina's rescuer. It is, in fact, César who transfers this problem to Lisarda when the two cross paths. As Lisarda explains, she faces the danger of being found out by her father when he finally tracks down "César." She then asks the real César to help her escape by lying about her whereabouts. Lisarda does not have free reign in her disguise; she has to carefully regulate and calculate her new mobility so as to properly distance herself from her original identity.

In addition to denoting the limits of Lisarda's mobility, the crossing of paths of the two cross-dressed characters in this scene, which occurs mid-way through the play, also ensures that the intrigue can continue. Since their resistance to Serafina and Federico constitutes the dramatic conflict of the work, César's message to Lisarda allows their interventions to remain problematic, and hence, to continue. Lisarda, having quickly mastered her creation of a rival suitor to Federico, needs a new challenge. She must better maneuver her mobility, and she must also find a way to "best" another competitor in the game: César. César, still posing as "Celia," explains that "she" has a stake in the fight against Federico's courtship of Serafina, making Lisarda realize that Celia must also harbor feelings for Federico that could get in the way of her eventual union with him. Much like in *El vergonzoso*, the two character's use of transvestism has ignited moments of confusion that propel further conflict.

These revelations make the third act largely a matter of Lisarda hiding from her father while trying to still sidestep Federico's advances on Serafina, all the while impeding her new competitor Celia. When Federico attempts to pick up Serafina's glove and Lisarda hits him, she arrives at the limits of the power of her disguise. Serafina, along with the other characters in the scene, expect Federico to retaliate to "César's" affront, but Federico, knowing it is actually Lisarda, has to avoid the question. This leads Serafina to push the issue even further, and with Lisarda's father trailing her, she goes into hiding. The rest of the act continues in Lisarda's absence. Having vacated the play, Lisarda achieves the evasion presented as so powerful when wielded by Federico at the start of the work. At the same time, however, her seclusion cuts her off from any further interfering, her reason for being in the play. Lisarda's cross-dressed position yields an ambivalent amount of freedom: she has achieved both the pinnacle and the nadir of rebellion as compared to her original, disadvantaged status.

Las manos blancas no ofenden similarly leaves its other transvestite character in a cloudy state of semi-subversion. César continues serving Serafina, and amazes her with his ability to "play" a man at her behest. His astounding "rendition" of masculinity makes it easy for him to ultimately reveal himself at the close of the play to Serafina as an actual man. As Matthew Stroud points out in his analysis of the play, Calderón rewards "real" identities and downplays the potential of fake ones. The identities each character chooses, he argues, are always "theatrical," and both find validation only through their "true" identities as revealed at the end of the play. The verisimilitude with which César can carry off maleness in the eyes of Serafina and her other ladies-in-waiting would support Stroud's assertion, since we know he is actually a man and hence not performing. César's

improvised “performance” of masculinity, nevertheless, also marks the way in which César and Lisarda’s chaotic arrival as transvestites at the end of Act 1 has fully upended the perceived signifiers of truth and falsity within the play’s created reality: César’s cross-dressed identity has become real and his male self has transformed into the feigned, deceptive entity used for strategic advantage at Serafina’s behest.

The play, in effect, always proffers a possibility and a limitation in its portrayal of the temporary liminal overtaking of a heteronormative marriage plot. As Stroud suggests, the middle space of the play in which Lisarda and César cross-dress deconstructs without undoing:

Calderón thoroughly and consistently undermines the presumed effortlessness of heterosexuality, thus opening up the possibility that those of us looking at the majority culture from the outside may not find ourselves openly depicted in the *comedia*, but we can take some comfort in Calderón’s views of the infinite problems that men and women have in getting together. More to the point here, Calderón, with some effort, is able to delineate the outlines of alternative approaches to sex and sexuality toward which his plots veer before returning to the safe harbor of conventionality. (84)

According to this reading, the play meditates on how its characters will get together through the dissonance, the “infinite problems,” they face in their interactions with one another. As Stroud rightly points out, between the male privilege and the normative marriage pairings that bookend the work, the play “veers” to explore representations of men and women in every possible pairing and gendered identity other than the one with which they will end up. In this regard, the play is no different from most of its *comedia* counterparts in the seventeenth-century canon that use the space of the play to challenge dominant viewpoints before returning to them as the restorative forces of order and that signify the close of the play for the audience. I would suggest that the play specifically focuses and expounds on the moment of the veering, on the mechanisms that make

possible the shift from one to the other, stalling on the question of this turning away as its primary focus. In this sense, *Las manos* does not focus on the question of union so much as it thrives on disconnection and the thwarting of goals.

Las manos blancas no ofenden, unlike other plays that include cross-dressing such as *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* and *La mujer por fuerza*, does not explore the absurd realities possible through creative role-play or the Baroque contradictions that can extend from the female cross-dressing character (and that will be discussed in Chapter 3). The emphasis here is on the execution, or rather, the specific use or method employed, evidenced in the focus on two very different renditions of transvestism in the same play. The gendered politics that so heavily condition how César can succeed as “Celia” introduce a very different method of “passing” than the one Lisarda employs. The lingering attention afforded to the two agents of interruption, reversal, and upheaval within the work, César and Celia, then, fosters a contemplation of two opposing models of creation. Given the negative conceptions of the feminine as a marring of the culturally-superior masculine, César adopts his feminine identity passively. His own transvestite narrative encompasses other forms of representation and performance within the story. In this regard, male transvestism facilitates a richer interweaving of multiple artistic discourses, a greater questioning of the lines between truth and fiction, and a more extensive linking of the play’s story with anterior literary traditions (through the evocation of myth). None of this, however, directly impedes or actively distorts the normative plot “Celia” hopes to problematize. Rather than become an agent of deception, “Celia” quickly becomes a source for Federico and Carlos to reenter the game, to regain, and interrupt with, the kind of raw material deprived of them by Lisarda’s insertion of a

competing suitor. His most effective performance, as highlighted by Stroud, is being himself, with the disguise allowing him to bide time until the opportune moment to simply present himself to Serafina once circumstances have shifted to his favor.

Lisarda, for her part, shows herself capable of re-arranging such circumstances. She alters the playing field in a quantifiable manner with her more active approach to transvestite deception. Initially Lisarda acts just as César does, gathering up information that might be useful for her own romantic plans. While this constitutes the entirety of César's strategy, for Lisarda, it is the jumping off point for creative additions to Federico's version of social climbing. Lisarda moves up the social strata when she changes gender. As woman posing as man, Lisarda can work strategically with this rise in status. As "César," she repeats her tactic of hiding, just like she did as a woman, but then uses the subsequent interruption to usurp Federico's place. When Lisarda acts as a man, she does so with a consistent sense of the power of theatrical trickery: she knows that she can re-inscribe Federico's key prop if she too is willing to enact another role within the play. Lisarda takes advantage of the mutable nature of the dramatic framework in which she plays out her dramatic conflict, but finds more frames with which to distort the play's outcome than the other characters. Lisarda's social progress, in this sense, becomes a vehicle for dramatic creativity.

In *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, Calderón presents us with two very different portraits of cross-dressing. Although in both cases, the characters in question (César and Lisarda) stage a joint intervention on the play's "normative" plot line, and their crossing of paths mid-play fuels further intrigue and dramatic complication, each character's specific use of disguise indicates the direct correlation between social and dramatic

progress. The primary contrasting factor between the two cases is, of course, gender. The nature of the switch from one gender to the other then directly impacts what kind of innovation may follow from the transvestite disguise. In terms of the stratified nature of gender identity, César's move from male to male-as-female constitutes a dip in social status. He does not acquire privilege; he loses it. This exactly correlates with the degree of dramatic progress that he effects during his time on stage. His possibilities for physical and verbal deception decrease, and his impact on the development of the play's intrigue is reduced. This is not to say that his rendition of disguise serves no purpose. The various veils that attempt to condition and cover over his deliberate predilection for the feminine heighten the literary value of the work, as well as its entertainment value.

It is in the case of Lisarda, nonetheless, that we see the way in which cross-dressing may breed an accelerated social mobility that translates to dramatic movement. Her greater access to physical movement and speech propels her from a helpless figure eager for Federico's whereabouts to an elusive, superior suitor who thwarts his plans. She combines her newfound ability to travel and interrupt Federico's courtship under the guise of a male voice with a heightened dramatic awareness that innovates beyond the models of masculinity present at the start of the work. The creative model suggested by Lisarda's use of cross-dressing, then, suggests the theatrical usefulness of an innovative form of imitation that adds, and exceeds, that of its predecessor. In essence, the intense focus on an exaggerated, accelerated form of role-play reveals to us an essential element of seventeenth-century commercial drama. Only this version of transvestism affects the progression and complication of plot that constitutes the intrigue of Calderón's play, as well as the heart of *comedias* from the period.

The contrast between Lisarda's and César's approaches to theatrical transvestism gives us access to the intricate link between social and dramatic forms of progress. The key status jump Lisarda carries off excels the play into new territories of confusion that de-rail the purported focus of the drama to deliver a new kind of plot, one focused on the interruption of normative marriage pairings. The play's use of transvestism fosters an implicit, metadiscourse about the relationship between gender and theatricality, as well as artistic and social sensibilities. This dialogue does not just exist within the play, but connects intertextually to the work of other dramatists ironing out these same questions through a cross-dressed character. One such dramatist, Tirso de Molina, offers the rare presence of a mythologically-based *comedia*, centered around the figure of Achilles. His use of male transvestism reinforces my assertion of the crucial difference between female and male use of creative self-consciousness.¹⁶

The play follows its eponymous hero from his domestic courtship of Deidamia to his decision to join the fight against Troy. The play opens with Ulysses's parallel dilemma of whether or not to abandon his wife and child in favor of more bellicose endeavors. Achilles's mother, Thetis, similarly frets over the fate of her beloved son, who shows clear predilection for war due to his ferocious skills as a hunter. Her fears are alleviated, however, when he meets Deidamia in the woods and instantly falls in love with her. Thetis, eager to keep Achilles off the battlefield and alive, convinces him to

¹⁶ As Anita K. Stoll makes clear in her discussion of the Achilles myth in Golden Age *comedia*, Tirso's play influences Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden* and *El monstruo de los jardines* ("Achilles" 118). While she discusses *El Aquiles* and *Las manos blancas* in chronological order to highlight the progression of the mythological figure, I analyze *El Aquiles* last in order to read the more subtle suggestions of the differences in male vs. female transvestism in Tirso's play in light of Calderón's more expansive exploration of these same models of cross-dressing.

dress as a woman in order to get closer to, and woo, Deidamia. Once Achilles has convinced her to be his wife through a series of theatrical “rehearsals” of their respective masculine and feminine roles, Ulysses devises a plan to call Achilles to the battlefield with him. Realizing that his true fate awaits him in the war against Troy, Achilles leaves both his mother and his wife. In the final scene, Achilles meets and falls in love with Policena. Little does he know, however, that his wife has followed him, disguised as a man. The play ends with Deidamia confronting him under her male alias, vowing to avenge his betrayal. Achilles wonders who this aggressive stranger might be as s/he promises the resolution to these impending conflicts in a second part to the play, which never surfaces.

With *El Aquiles*, Tirso makes a unique contribution to the Spanish canon given the rare dramatization of classical myth it affords the early modern commercial stage. Scholars have keyed in on which aspect of Tirso’s fashioning of the Achilles story makes it aesthetically valuable. Everett W. Hesse and William C. McCrary argue that the play has been wrongly devalued in the canon (referred to by Doña Blanca de los Ríos as “una farsa”), and that its focus on Achilles’s transformation from hermaphroditic child to warrior and man, of universal literary value, aligns Tirso’s version of the narrative with other staple renditions of the mythical story, “in Statius [...] in Hyginus, Apollodorus, Ovid and Philostratus the Younger” (138). As Nina Maria Shecktor signals, however, Tirso’s rendition also distinguishes itself through its insertion of metatheater. No other version besides *El Aquiles* contains the coy theater rehearsal of Act 2 in which Achilles, disguised as a woman, “plays” the role of a *galán* while Deidamia pretends to be the corresponding *dama* (a more detailed discussion of this scene will follow). As can be

gleaned from these two approaches to the *comedia*, Tirso crafts a dramatic work about a fundamental transformation in its title character that makes use of playful theatrical deception along the way. I will discuss how cross-dressing makes possible both these elements of the story.

When Achilles enters the play, he has already been forced to dress as a woman, but his dress clashes vividly with his hyper masculine disposition. The stage directions describe his appearance in the following manner: “Salen Aquiles, que ha de hacer una mujer vestida de pieles con un britón” (503). He complains about this clash, explaining that he has not been raised to be anything other than a ferocious hunter. Yet again, the *comedia* reinforces the notion that a child acquires his or her gender identity through the presence or absence of a paternal figure. Aquiles fits poorly into his female garb since Quirón raised him to be masculine: “Tú tienes la culpa de eso; / desde niño me criaste, / Quirón, robusto y travieso; / con leche me alimentasate / de una onza, así profeso / el natural heredero / de la leche que mamé” (503-05). Animal milk replaces that of the female breast, metonymically suggesting the absence of the maternal excess that led to Félix and César’s effeminate disposition. Through these comments to Quirón, Aquiles links his blended appearance as a hunter, awkwardly painted female, to an odd paradoxical gender ideology: though these texts present the formation of gender identity as solidly environmental, the process remains “natural.” Achilles describes himself as the “natural” heir to this animal’s milk. He is not confused about his gender identity. When Deidamia first encounters him in the woods, he assures her, “Hechizo que el viento excedes, / detén el curso y temor; / hombre soy” (586-88).

While Achilles presents himself as assured of his masculine identity and the imposed, misplaced nature of the imposed feminine garb, Deidamia sees him differently. Though he has clearly stated who he is, it does not hold the weight that most deceptive transvestite identities pull in the more typical *mujer vestida de hombre* plots. She verbally imposes an in-between that Achilles will eventually accept in order to “win” her as his wife. When he pleads with her to see him through his own interpretation of his identity, she replies, “Monstruo, mas no digo bien, / [...] que no hallo decente nombre / que cuadre a tu rostro hermoso” (610-14). Though Achilles has vehemently denied the kind of mixed or flexible identity that Deidamia proposes, the force of love seemingly convinces him to be amenable to this option. He even uses this terminology in his response: “Los tigres y leones, / sin que mi lucha esperen, / huyendo con bramidos / me aplauden más valiente. / Tú sola, victoriosa, / trofeos grabar puedes / en broncees inmortales, / pues sola tú me vences” (658-65). Maintaining the metaphoric framework of the hunt, Achilles retains a sense of his original self that will prove crucial to the play’s overturn and transition to a supposed sequel at the end.

Furthermore, his mother still has to convince him that dressing as a woman will be the solution to his newfound love for Deidamia. Here, the theatrical element of the transvestite act, and its usefulness for sustaining an entertaining dramatic plotline, becomes explicit. Like Félix, Achilles is already dressed as a woman, so initially Thetis’ solution seems terribly repetitive and unoriginal. What she proposes, however, is not so much the disguise as a newfound *use* for it. Like Lisarda, Thetis links the act to a tradition of invention and strategic ingenuity: “Siempre el amor inventó / galas, disfraces y hechizos; / mas, pues no quieres usallos, procura olvidar, si puedes/ a la hija de

Licomedes” (71-75).¹⁷ Without it, Achilles will have difficulty gaining access to his love interest, and so, despite his misgivings about accepting the feminine so antithetical to his own masculinity, he acquiesces. What changes is not so much the disguise itself (though he does modify it) but rather his use of it, the theatrical *performance* he is willing to give now that he may gain something from it. This performance becomes the topic of the play until Achilles has met his goal of winning over Deidamia.

Once *El Aquiles* has established the theatrical nature of Achilles’s transvestite plot, he faces the task of actually wooing Deidamia within a still purportedly heterosexual framework while dressed as a woman. While we already know that he aims to carry out his transvestism as a kind of theatrical means to an end, within that dramatic pursuit, he then doubly employs theater by asking Deidamia to “rehearse” with him a set of roles: “Finge que dama eres / y yo tu galán” (653-54). From there, he models for Deidamia a man that she can imagine herself loving. The performance seems strikingly real, as Deidamia questions whether or not all of this is a game: “Paso, prima, que parece / que va esto de versa” (788-89), “¿No jugábamos?” (792). Fiction and mythical reference itself give Achilles the answer to Deidamia’s question, as he uses prior instances of male cross-dressing to stand in place of his own: “Tiresias fue primero hombre / y después se vio mujer. / Haz cuenta, pues, que hombre soy” (807-9). The layering of performance and references to exterior frames of representation increasingly replaces our sense of the

¹⁷ Thetis further glosses over the possible emasculation of Achilles’ use of the feminine disguise by referencing Hercules as an analogous example with which her son should be able to identify: “Cuando a Hércules se iguale / el que disfrazo tu ser, / y en hábito de mujer / le contemples con Onfale, / dejarás de ser confuso; / pues no te aconsejo yo / que, si Hércules hiló” (21-27). Here Thetis further shifts the agency away from her son, making clear to both him and the audience that he participates in a specific mythic tradition that codifies male transvestism as exempt from what might be labeled subversive or defiant behavior.

scene's original created reality. The "rehearsed" situation becomes the "real" that clashes with the original premise (Achilles as a lady-in-waiting to Deidamia). Having practiced for Deidamia his desired role, he reveals himself to her, and eventually convinces her to be his wife.

Achilles has essentially carried out the same task as César in *Las manos blancas no ofenden*. He poses as a woman, hides behind a veil of references to mask the effeminacy implied by this decision, and then uses performance to introduce his "true" identity and intentions to the desired female. This plot line, however, occurs within another one that concerns the war against Troy. Though Achilles uses his female alias strategically to win over Deidamia, he merely distracts himself from the original purpose of his feminine dress: to keep him from his fate at battle. Again, strategic role-play has derailed the purported task at hand and veered the play's supposed focus off course. Rather than watch Achilles' entrance onto the battlefield, we have become transfixed by what he does while waiting. Creative self-consciousness here again makes possible a shift in the primary focus of the work that peels back the layers of "truth" and "fiction," even within the created reality of the work.

The third act, however, pulls Achilles out of his amorous, cross-dressed reverie. Now that he has been successful in wooing Deidamia, he lacks an excuse for prolonging his avoidance of the battlefield. Ulysses arrives on the scene to shame Achilles out of this position, zeroing in on the effeminacy underneath the references to Hercules and theatrical usefulness of his dress. This materializes in the form of a chorus that targets this cultural taboo in its song: "En el regazo de Omphale / el tebano vencedor / de aquellos doce trabajos / que le intitularon Dios, afeminado infamaba / la piel del Nemeo

león, / que por inmortal trofeo / corona y se viste el sol” (240-47). External influences worked until this point in the play to shield Achilles from any responsibility he might hold for his transvestite acts, but here the song pushes the play’s hero to an active admission of culpability. Frightened, he says to Deidamia, “¿No ves cómo reprehende / mi amujerado valor, / y en nombre ajeno me injuria / su tácita reprensión?” (258-63). Though he has not been named, he makes the connection, sure that the chorus speaks to his shameful “amujerado valor.” Though Deidamia tries to reassure him that he need not take offense, as the song continues, Achilles cannot bear the similarity, crying out “¿Afuera torpe afición; / vengad injurias cantadas / y volved, honra, por vos!” (305-7). The musical references to male transvestism so crucial to César’s presence in Calderón’s *comedia* and Thetis’ justification of Achilles’ disguise come back to haunt him, as the identification with the feminine becomes unbearable.

Theatrical transvestism has served until this point as a diversion, something that prolonged an alternate intrigue to the one originally put into play at the start of the work. The opening scene of the play features Ulysses in his dilemma over his conflicting domestic and militaristic obligations, with Thetis’ parallel drama of what to do about her son. By the end of Act 1, nevertheless, coy “rehearsals” of a *dama* and *galán* falling for one another have thoroughly distracted from this mythical origin. In this way, theatrical transvestism allows Tirso to evolve the Achilles myth and infuse it with the unique elements of the Spanish *comedia* before returning to them in Act 3. Once the work goes back to the original, broader frame of events at stake, the intrigue initiated by Achilles’s cross-dressed wooing of Deidamia will infiltrate the mythical side of the drama. Once Achilles sets aside his courtship and joins Ulysses on the battlefield, Deidamia decides to

dress as a man and follow him. Yet again, one liminal performance begets another, as she makes the play's digression a part of its new focus.

While on the one hand, Achilles's ultimate willingness to take on the theatrical version of his disguise as proposed by Thetis opens new possibilities for the direction of the drama and Tirso's specific imprint on classical myth, this transitional moment in the play also counters our image of the usefulness of the male transvestite disguise.

Achilles's employment of the female garb has held him back from his true fate. As far as his character development is concerned, it has limited him, rather than opened up new horizons. Since he has not acquired any social privilege, and instead has lost some by dressing as a woman, he moves further away from the new, innovative possibilities awaiting his character. By shedding his female disguise and the domestic pursuits attached to it, he gets these possibilities back. Once he chooses to join Ulysses, he has a new love interest awaiting him on the battlefield, Policena. During the final scene of the third act, she references his transvestite past, making clear that only its strategic nature protects him from its status as a cultural taboo: "Si amor, absoluto en todo, / y no el temor, como he oído, / le disfrazó, no me espanto, / que es invencible, aunque niño" (693-96). Her comments reveal that Achilles has gained a reputation of weakness for having dressed as a woman and avoided the war. Only a passive, practical decision on his part, in which love "le disfrazó" works to maintain his status as a viable romantic option for the play's new *dama*.

Ostensibly, Calderón and Tirso present two different versions of male transvestism. In Calderón's rendering, the male-to-female transvestism coincides with an effeminacy resulting from maternal excess that enhances César's ability to "pass." From

the outset, the musical discourse that qualifies his impending transformation also makes clear that César possesses womanly traits. In contrast, Tirso's play presents Achilles' female garb as anything but natural to a bred hunter destined for battle. The environmental influences on these two protagonists could not be more different, and yet, the mechanics and competence of their disguise agree. While in both cases, the transvestite disguise forges a "middle" that distracts from the originally established points of emphasis for both works, the characters stage this derailing without being fully complicit in the undertaking, and without the ability to make the disguise fully serve them.

In the final moments of the play, once Deidamia has learned of Achilles's betrayal, another prop takes center stage (her glove) to symbolize the lingering intervention promised by her cross-dressed strategy. Under her new male alias, Deidamia threatens Achilles, promising to kill them both prior to allowing him to threaten her honor: "Yo he de matarme contigo / antes que el guante te dé" (882-83). Her threat prompts Achilles to ask a very potent question in reply: "¿Quién eres, hombre atrevido?" (884). Unknowingly, Achilles brings up the issue of Deidamia's layered identity, as has been made explicit to the audience, if not to the other characters in the play. The reference to the conflicting levels of knowledge gestures to Deidamia's impending power of persuasion. Deidamia fuels this sense of dramatic impetus with her response: "Sabráslo si me buscares" (885). Shortly after this threat, the play ends with Ulysses's promise of a second part ("Dar fin a esta parte quiso / nuestro autor; con la segunda / mañana os convida Tirso" (892-94). In this way, the play seems to move through one set of motions inspired by male transvestism: Achilles's diversion from war and eventual

moment of recognition as a born fighter. Propelled into his “destined” place by giving up the transvestite disguise, Deidamia then finds her own dramatic momentum by taking on the male disguise, dangling the promise of a new set of conflicts for a second part to the drama.

This second part never surfaces, of course, and the play ends up being a study of opposing forces: the limits of the female disguise when worn by men weighed against the promise of the male one when donned by members of the opposite gender. Within the scope of Tirso’s play, we are left with a firm sense that transvestism in its dual forms relates to dramatic progress and also that there could be much more to the story than what we see as the play concludes. Without an actual second part, the audience is left to wonder exactly what Deidamia’s intrusion will look like. Having secured a space in the play in which she can make a metatheatrical intervention on Achilles’ newfound plan, and the play’s new direction, the question changes. The transvestite characters can, and do, bring the marginal slippage, the disruption of binary classification, to bear on the supposedly “fixed” and normative plot presented to audiences. In the plays discussed here by Castro, Calderón, and Tirso, however, these characters work in pairs, and the discourse centers more on the relative theatrical merits of each form of cross-dressing. The discourse transforms into a meta-discourse about the act itself and its role in the development of the intrigue presented on stage. From this point of view, female cross-dressers come across as more able to orchestrate and de-rail the play’s specific direction. For this reason, the plays included in this chapter provide a detailed look at how social status jumps affect the levels of “play” and overall track of a given work.

In many other plays of the period, the social progress inherent to the female cross-dresser's gender switch takes on a wide range of forms of male privilege. Though united by the same basic elements that qualify as "privilege" in the plays discussed here, the specific shape of this same concept varies and supplies endless fodder for shifts in power dynamics. While the aforementioned plays deal with more broad notions of self-discovery, other plays such as Guillén de Castro's *El Cerco de Tremecén* target more specific components of identity, namely race and religion. The play, which draws from Guzmán de Alfarache's *Ozmín y Daraja* (but modifies it notably), focuses on the cross-dressing of its Moorish protagonist, Aliarda, who passes as a Moorish man, and then slave, then ends the play announcing her conversion to Christianity to marry fellow Christian Tristán. Whereas in Alfarache's story, more focus is given to Ozmín's various changes in identity and attempts to be closer to Daraja, the "crossing" of Castro's play turns to the developing and increasingly popular female cross-dresser to synthesize various forms of dramatic movement. The cross-dressing act here coincides with a progression that is first geographical, in that she crosses over between Moorish and Christian territory, with the *cercos* marking the boundary between the two "sides" of the play. From a dramatic standpoint, Aliarda connects two separate groups of characters, those of the Moorish and Christian camps, and brings them into contact with one another (given that Galván, Moorish brother to the king, will follow her and unsuccessfully try to win her back). In terms of staging, the characters of the play move according to this division, crossing back and forth. In addition to this concrete movement that effects both the play's development and staging, Aliarda's change of identity blends, in increments, a number of forms of "difference" within her performance. After crossing her gender, she

then changes her class standing, posing as a slave, and then, at the end of the work, crosses religions. She makes fluid these various elements of identity by putting them on and off as if they were clothes. Aliarda also leads the play to a normative, “acceptable” ending, in which the Christians have triumphed and she has found a gendered, religious, and class-based identity that matches such a triumph.

We may further trace the links between personal and dramatic dynamism through those plays that tie cross-dressing to a change in profession. Within these plays, the female cross-dresser acquires a professional identity normally held exclusively by men. This first challenges the gendered nature of professional status, mutating an early modern reading of social status as related to profession through a prior alteration of gender. This transformation also has implications for the overall development of the play. A change in professional status affects the character’s level of control over his/her personal circumstance, which then drastically alters the resolution of the play. In Lope de Vega’s *El juez en su causa*, for example, King Albano decides he wants to murder his wife, Leonida, so that he can marry a princess, Arminda, whom he meets while traveling to marry off his brother and sister-in-law. Having gotten wind of the planned assassination, Leonida initially disguises herself as a man to save her life, but eventually acquires the position of judge within this identity, and presides over the trial of her own murder. Her act of cross-dressing, which then allows for a change in profession, determines the play’s outcome, as Leonida presides over Albano and decides whether he will live or die (he lives, and they get married).

In these plays, as in many others, social progress extends to encompass a wider range of privileges that situate the female cross-dressed character to intervene in a variety

of ways that routinely throw off the supposed “center” of the plays’ discourse. In *El Cerco*, this happens in a literal, spatial manner given the crossing of borders that Aliarda initiates, while Leonida shifts the locus of political power, which ultimately determines the play’s *denouement*. The female cross-dresser’s progress, in short, allows for the play to purport to be about one thing, then bifurcate its own structure to introduce unexpected, and deceptive, layers of dramatic conflict. The acquisition of various types of social privilege allows playwrights a multitude of approaches to this formula. The plays analyzed in this chapter—*El vergonzoso*, *La fuerza*, *Las manos*, and *El Aquiles*—zero in on the mechanics of this link between social and dramatic play, developing an implicit discussion of how drama works as their characters begin to explore what cross-dressing changes for them, and, simultaneously, what it changes for the play. There turns out to be a vast difference between how female and male transitions operate in this regard, as personal transformation (and consequently, theatrical momentum) cannot seem to happen when a male character takes on a feminine identity. The status jump staged by female-to-male transformations enacts a breaking “free and away,” however temporary, that coincides with the project of re-shaping drama in a secular, commercial format while surpassing those literary giants of the past.

The female cross-dresser’s acceleration of creative self-consciousness, her ability to so radically reconfigure her personal circumstance, and then as a result, the theatrical focus of the play, makes clearer in its intensified form the play of perspective inherent to *comedias* as a whole. Returning to the example of *Fuenteovejuna* as discussed in the Introduction, the *comedia* routinely focuses on a variety of marginalized voices and perspectives that intervene and complicate a purely hegemonic presentation of social

conflicts and their resolution. The character of the female cross-dresser embodies the promise and ambition of this interference, the expression of drama as a deceptive contradiction, or cross, of those terms that establish, and make intelligible, the presentation of the fiction itself. What makes a stage and its characters discernible at the start, the *dama*, the *galán*, the unlikeable leader absorbed in how he will be received by other authority figures, can be overturned by an excess of drama: for example, a unified linguistic appropriation stirred by the female voice's usurping of public and dramatic agency. Though this overturning of dominant perspective does not last in full, it is the "stuff" of the drama. While Lope offers the skeleton of his formula in his treatise, the female cross-dresser acts out another elaboration of the *comedia's* approach to crafting a new, relevant, and engaging form of drama for the early modern audience.

At the close of *El Aquiles*, Deidamia has taken on a male identity and made a vague promise for vengeance against Achilles due to his infidelity. Similar to Lisarda at the start of *Las manos blancas*, she remains silent on the specifics of how she plans to carry out her attack, and since the second part of the *comedia* never surfaces, the play leaves us in total suspense as to what this interference might look like, and what effect it will have on the dramatic situation. The plays I have discussed in this chapter, nonetheless, make us privy to the basic idea of what Deidamia has in store, and how it will tamper with the focus, the purported "center" of the drama: the battle against Troy. Playwrights's intense focus on method in these plays has allowed them to vividly portray the cross-dresser's effect on, and illumination of, the early modern secular drama's liminal fashioning of plot. We might next ask, though, what the picture looks like when playwrights meditate less on method and more on the full deceptive potential of the

transformation at hand. In Chapter 4, I will explore such plays to trace the female cross-dresser's facilitation of an imagination of creative genius outside the bounds of the temporal and sensorial limitations plaguing the early modern playwright.

CHAPTER 4

Playwrights of Mayhem

In Chapters 2 and 3, I discussed the way in which the figure of the female cross-dresser introduced a model of creative self-consciousness fascinating to, and perhaps even constitutive for, spectators, and crucial for mapping the progression of individual plays crafted by seventeenth-century dramatists. Within their works, dramatists created a reflection on play and playgoer as components of the theatrical experience rooted in the power of creative self-consciousness through the representation of the female cross-dresser on stage. Aside from the need of the onlooker, and the effect on the plot, these questions remain: what happens to the character herself? Furthermore, how does the final figure of the creative process, the author, appear in this implanted representation of the theatrical process?

In Calderón's *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, the use of cross-dressing within the play engenders two contrasting creative models: first, that of César, who functions as a source of creative material to be appropriated by others, and, second, that of Lisarda, who imitates those around her, but always with innovation, building off of available models and using them to her advantage. Lisarda's model shows great potential in terms of theatrical trickery, but she is cut short by a combination of her own socially disadvantaged position as a woman and the play's overall prioritization of method and plot movement. This play, as well as the others studied in Chapter 3, use cross-dressing to reflect upon the overall structure of the *comedia*, or rather, its "play" within the confines

of normative starts and finishes. Another series of plays that employ the female cross-dresser zero in on the figure herself, giving her central purpose and control to explore the potential only suggested in a character such as *Las manos*'s Lisarda. The question becomes: What can this kind of creative model do in the hands of a female cross-dressing character? Through an analysis of Cervantes's *El laberinto de amor*, Lope de Vega's *El lacayo fingido*, and Tirso de Molina's *La mujer por fuerza* and *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, I will explore this question.

The answer, in short form, is that borders cross at the generic and sensorial level thanks to her unique brand of dramatic narrativity. The female cross-dresser, in her performance in these plays, tests limits of perception, and employs narrative techniques in the process. These actions correspond with her two levels of transformation: the way her appearance defies what we "know" of her identity, and the story she tells with her newfound, increased access to language. The character breeds new theaters, exerts unique control, and earns consistent praise and adulation. The plays that feature these characters shape a growing reflection on the creator, the playwright who writes with the pressure of the giants at his back. Unlike those authors penning plays for the stage, however, the cross-dresser can tinker with elements of time, sight, sound, and vision inside the fictional worlds of the *comedia*. She weaves stories that reference other genres, as well as the key techniques of narrative. Having loosened and learned to play with the defining characteristics of gender, she finds herself free to defy other categorical distinctions.

The female cross-dressing plot of Golden Age *comedia* binds together aesthetic, cultural, and social concerns through a visual and verbal reversal of norms and the subsequent theatrical intrigue shaped by such deception. The female cross-dresser first

temporarily challenges naturalized views of gender, in which “male” and “female” are inherent traits as opposed to attributed qualities, by performing them to her satisfaction. As Anita K. Stoll puts it, “[...] the *mujer vestida de hombre*, an example of cross-dressing, is a double illusion, a parody of the whole societally dictated binary division of human beings” (“A Feminist” 105). The “appearance as illusion” motif expressed in Tirso de Molina’s *La mujer por fuerza*, as Stoll, Carmen Bravo-Villasante, Charles Ganelin, and Henry Sullivan have all pointed out, for example, connects to a broader concern regarding the skepticism surrounding appearance, a key component of the Baroque aesthetic. The parody of gender, in turn, provides a commentary on subjectivity, given that upon reversing her gender, the female cross-dresser subsequently re-builds the self for an audience of her peers (and elders). Taking into account the theater’s function as a national pastime for a range of Spanish citizens and the frequency with which cross-dressing appeared on its stages, the variety of observations conjured by the female cross-dresser plot makes her a useful starting point for understanding early modern Spanish notions of the page, the play, and the stage. This character, then, is somewhat of a narrator to us, able to tell us more about the story in the play, the social tenants it draws its meaning from, and the stage conventions subverted to earn this position. By making her manipulations privy to the audience, she shows us something of the process that leads to product from these various perspectives. In addition to her manipulations of gender, a closer inspection of the female cross-dresser’s use of narrative, or rather, her “narrativity,” within a given play, reveals the way in which she also transcends genre, forging dramatic and novelistic impulses.

The treachery of the cross-dresser, or rather, her deception, always lies on two distinct but concurrent planes: she deceives in appearance and in word, and both levels bind to form the audience's experience of the dramatic irony of her plot. By what they see and hear, audience members interpret the ruse. In this sense, the *mujer vestida de hombre* not only appropriates gender identity and the discourse of honor to her own ends, but at a broader level, she melds genres as well. Her plot employs both dramatic and narrative-based deception: she must act the part of a man, visually deceiving her fellow characters (the drama) while telling a story that re-constitutes herself and implicates the other characters of the play (the narrative). Critical studies of the female cross-dresser during the early modern period have focused largely on the visual aspects of her project. Tracey Sedinger's account of the cross-dresser in early modern English theater, for example, argues that the figure created a form of desire rooted in the failure of the visible, given that the gap between what the audience sees and knows continually leaves them in a kind of pleasurable "in between" of knowledge and visibility. Furthermore, appearance as illusion, as mentioned, forms one of the key elements of Baroque art, ranging from Segismundo's famous soliloquy in *La vida es sueño* to Velázquez's manipulation of the artistic frame in *Las meninas*. The trick of the eye, however, gains meaning through language, as the cross-dressed character makes her unintelligibility transparent through a series of incongruent stories; first, when she describes herself in private, and second, in the various identities she will claim to have to other characters in the play. Through narrative, a questioning of the visual aspects of the drama becomes possible, as the two fuse to create the optimal level of sensorial instability for the delight of the audience. The

dramatic and narrative modes of communication form a dialectical ruse, harnessed by the female cross-dresser on stage.

The distortion of frame and the play of perception common in various forms of early modern Spanish art also connect with the narrative side of the cross-dresser's project within a given play. A focus on the narrative aspects of the female cross-dresser plot, such as her story-telling and manipulation of point of view, complements and completes our understanding of the full range of her influence on the play's development. Our retrospective position as critics allows us to explore this other side of the coin, so to speak, thanks to the rise of the novel and narratology. As Friedman argues in "Theorizing the *Comedia*: The Impact of Narratology," contemporary theory in a poststructural context allows us blend critical tools, trading those of one generic trade for another. In the case of drama and narrative, this amounts to "looking at drama as 'defective narrative' and at narrative as 'defective drama'" so as to "more fully [...] comprehend the conventions of each genre, and [...] to observe how drama and narrative endeavor to naturalize (or, alternatively, to foreground) convention" (76). Read as narrative, drama lacks a crucial component: the omniscient narrator who can provide "metacommentary on art, on its own terms or within the art/life dichotomy" (80). To compensate for this lack, however, the characters themselves can demonstrate a certain awareness of their dramatic position, creating layers of metatheater, or rather, "the proliferation not only of perspectives but also of potential frames, frames which in much of baroque literature, as in much of postmodern literature, seem made to be broken" (81). The female cross-dresser maximizes this multiplying of frames by telling two stories: one to the audience and one to the other characters on stage, all the while also deceiving in appearance. The

broader narrative spun outside the frame of the play, then, acknowledges and engages with the life/art dichotomy invoked by the character's use of metatheater.

Cross-dressing in the early modern Spanish context, as a real and theatrical practice, possesses a fundamentally narrative-based component. Our knowledge of women who lived as men during the seventeenth century, for example, stems from the narratives they created to define themselves in the face of state and papal authority. These stories are inevitably layered and complex, offering a number of frames that leave the reader at the crossroads of fiction and non-fiction, female and male, and, in the case of Catalina de Erauso, a Basque novitiate who escaped the convent by dressing as a man and participated in Spain's colonizing efforts overseas, novel and drama. While Catalina de Erauso's memoir combines male-dominated colonial and picaresque discourse to tell her story of transformation, the *comedia* based on her story transforms her back into a woman. At a more basic level, the story Catalina tells bears a double narrative impulse similar to that of the theatrical cross-dresser: she must narrate to the public the events of her overall transformation, while, within the memoir, she repeatedly recounts her male identity to those around her. Another story of gender transformation, that of Eleno(a) de Céspedes, offers a more straightforward case of interrogation, given that Eleno must tell her story in her own defense against Inquisitional charges of male impersonation and sodomy.¹⁸ As Eleno recounts the events of his life, he builds a narrative that reconstructs his transformation to authorities unwilling to accept its direct questioning of gender boundaries, leaving us in ambivalence regarding the level of distortion on either side of the story. While the dual unreliability and "omniscience" implied by the story-telling

¹⁸ For discussions of the content of Céspedes's trial, see Vollendorf, Burshatin, and Kagan and Dyer.

transvestite in these cases resonates with a novelistic impulse to multiply and confuse perspective, the presence of a captive, live audience privy to these various levels of narration highlights the theatrical effect of this configuration. Similar to these real-life instances of cross-dressing narrativity, the female stage cross-dresser's plight often requires considerable narrative exposition. Consider, for example, Rosaura's lengthy speech near the end of Act 3 of *La vida es sueño*, in which she presents her case to Segismundo, elaborating her transformation and dishonored predicament. Beyond an explanation of the circumstances leading to the act itself, the male disguise requires a kind of self-reflexive narration, both reliable and unreliable for the audience and the other characters, respectively.

The more prominent and intricate the story-telling project of the female cross-dresser, the more the *comedia* promotes a celebration of art from within art through orchestrations of deception. Consider the following estimation by Ellen Anderson of art and gender-bending as propagated by Cervantes in his *comedias*:

This gender-blindness, an inheritance from the *commedia dell'arte*, wherein travesty is common, signifies an essential parity and interchangeability of masculine and feminine in Cervantes's theater. Moreover, both men and women play with language in such a way that they recombine the lexicon and diction of masculine and feminine, and common and aristocratic speech to guide their hearers' interpretation. These visual and aural versions of deceit by means of truth only can be devised and, in turn, discerned through *ingenio* (wit, skill, talent, craftiness). Indeed, the art of discernment (*discreción*) is to the spectator of a Cervantine play as *ingenio* is to the actor and author: the means of discovering and creating order, beauty, and truth in the world of the stage and on the stage of the world by matching the pictures of that world with the contents of each individual's imagination ("Mothers" 3-4)

As Anderson expresses in the above quote, Cervantes's version of the *comedia* relies heavily on role-play that renders the components of early modern identity flexible while fostering a continual exaltation of ingenuity on the part of the spectator, author, and

actor. Cross-dressing serves as one of the key forms of this role-play that magnifies, as it accelerates, the verbal and aural “versions of deceit” mentioned by Anderson. One might call into question, however, the assertion that Cervantes, or any of his fellow playwrights of the seventeenth century, employ transvestism in the plots of male and female characters equally. As has been well documented, playwrights and spectators alike, including Cervantes, favored the female version, and with reason. Aside from the commercial benefits of male voyeurism facilitated by seventeenth-century costuming and sartorial practice, female cross-dressing opened doors due to the inevitable social status jump involved in acquiring male privilege. The diverging social movements, then, create distinct forms of role-play with differing creative payoff.

In order to follow the expansion of the female cross-dresser’s creative faculties in the plays to be discussed, it will first be useful to consider how and to what degree the figure changes. At the start of the seventeenth century, Lope de Rueda pens the short play *Los engañados*, in which the female cross-dresser’s ploy is quite simple: she dons the disguise to follow around her male love interest. By the close of the seventeenth century, Calderón creates an epic antiheroine who uses cross-dressing to pass as her son in order to reclaim her former political power in *La hija del aire*. These highly divergent portraits of the same theatrical device indicate the significant experimentation and evolution that define the trajectory of early modern Spanish theatrical transvestism.

Certainly, the genesis of the Spanish cross-dresser as related to the commercial theater is marked by an inheritance of specific types who initially copy their source material. Carmen Bravo-Villasante’s study of the figure begins with this exchange between the Spanish and Italian traditions. As she explains, popular playwrights such as

Lope, Tirso, Calderón, and even Cervantes, all draw primarily from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, which offers two versions of the cross-dresser: *la mujer enamorada* (Bradamente), who dresses as a man to reunite with her beloved, and *la heroica-guerrera* (Marfisa), whose affinity for male garb corresponds to a natural predisposition and "se queja al cielo de haberla hecho mujer" (*La mujer* 13).

As these figures make their way into the Italian *commedia de' llarte*, a chain of influence forms, when, for example, Lope de Rueda reproduces the anonymously-authored *Gl'Inhannati* in his *Los engañados*, which later influences Calderón de la Barca's *La española en Florencia*, though his version makes more use of the original Italian material than Rueda's version (*La mujer* 27-8). The trickling down of type, nevertheless, eventually gives way to more original creations, particular in the latter half of Lope's career, with such works as *El lacayo fingido*, *El juez en su causa* and *La escolástica fingida*. In these works, the use of cross-dressing moves past its mere motive and allows for the transvestite heroine to manipulate and control other characters and take on male-dominated professions. Despite this evolution, nevertheless, the cross-dressed character works within a fairly predictable frame: s(he) will elaborate the disguise to a secondary character, work toward the restoration of honor, and attract other female characters within the male identity.

Given this framework, scholars such as Barbara Fuchs have followed Bravo-Villasante's delineation of the figure and arrived at the conclusion that the female cross-dresser is conventional and somewhat normative: "Moreover, the relative conventionality of actresses cross-dressing, as evinced by the poet's fantasy in the *Persiles* and by Lope's knowing admonition in his *Arte nuevo*, further limits any real challenge that they might

pose” (20). In contradistinction to the normative conventionality of Lope’s cross-dresser, Fuchs opts for the term “passing” to describe Cervantes’s blurring of identity across “gender, religious, and ethnic lines” (20). The critical move here is to describe something that goes beyond a mere temporary change of clothes and that implicates marginal groups in a more cohesive vision of Spanish nationhood. Read as a type who will always repeat certain patterns of behavior and then reverse them at the end of the play, the cross-dresser cannot hope to do something like this within the scope of her individual play.

Another critical gesture, however, proposes a notion of cross-dressing that is present within theater but not limited to the character type I have described or the stage on which she appears. This concept of transvestism reveals the way in which cross-dressing signals a similar type of transcendence beyond character or type to get at the root of some of early modern Spain’s most theatrical preoccupations. In “Gender and the Monstrous in *El burlador de Sevilla*,” Elizabeth Rhodes compares Tirso’s Don Juan’s fluid gender performance to the public’s reading of real-life hermaphrodite Eleno/a de Céspedes. The likening highlights a theatrical presence of transvestism present within and external to dramatic types. The crossing of generic boundaries, encapsulated by Fuchs in the term “passing,” interrogates the male/female binary through theatrical representation in both cases, exploring the limits of representation upon the subject in his/her social and historical context. Like Guillén de Castro in *La fuerza de la costumbre*, Rhodes conjures the notion of cross-dressing in its absence to describe an equivocation of binary within *El burlador*, a play that seemingly has nothing to do with transvestism in its concrete sense. Its function as a metaphor, however, hovers over her analysis, giving it weight and binding Don Juan’s manipulations to Eleno/a de Céspedes’s interrogation. While early

modern Spanish theater contains many cross-dressing characters in each of its individual plays, cross-dressing as a convention runs throughout its development, interrogating the nature of representation through its ambivalent effects, in some cases even in, and through, its absence.¹⁹

By focusing on transvestism outside its immediate definition as related to plot function, it becomes apparent that its repetition within the *comedia* speaks to a continued interest in the play of subjectivity. Following the basic movements of most female cross-dressers, we find one story, the conventional narrative enumerated by Fuchs. She will lose her honor, cross-dress to regain it, then marry as a woman (or with the general idea that she will return to her original feminine identity). In the middle space of undoing, however, the character tells another. As Friedman articulates: “Comic treatment of role-play more commonly offers a change in tone than a change in perspective; in the comic drama of the Spanish Golden Age, there is no clear deviation from the hierarchical order, no escape from ideology or religious doctrine, no moral vacation. There is, however, a type of vacillation, a consciousness of ambiguity, a theoretical and practical conflict which may be seen in two of Cervantes’s comic plays.” (*The Unifying* 107). Only one thing can come from the presence of female cross-dressing: a marriage pairing different from the one imminent at the start of the play. When I speak of evolution, then, I refer to how and to what stylistic effect the character carries out the interminable play that *comedia* undertakes when it moves away from its enclosing, normative precepts. Just as

¹⁹ In this sense, Anderson’s assertion of the prevalence of travesty on the part of female and male characters rings true, but as I outlined at the beginning of Chapter 1, the female version offered the politically safest option for exploring subjectivity, as contrasted with the more interminable or emasculating versions of gender-bending encapsulated in the figures of the hermaphrodite and male transvestite, respectively.

it changes color, or “tone,” so too does its facilitator. From this perspective, we may trace the flourishing of a creative mode that meddles in narrative and ultimately elevates the innovative imitator.

Returning to the actual characters of the *comedia*, those discussed in the plays focused on in this chapter, all female cross-dressers, possess an implicit knowledge of the *power* inherent in navigating this play of undoing and reversal, and seeing it through to its deceptive and metatheatrical conclusions. We find in these plays a growing interest in exploring an aesthetic power that challenges pace, perception, and perspective. These effects carry an increasingly tenuous tie to the basic driving motivation of the cross-dressing act, which remains largely stagnant in plays that feature the device. In this sense, setting aside motive and marriage as normative markers that contain the cross-dresser’s intrigue, we can trace the building of an aesthetic within an aesthetic, or rather, its acceleration, experimentation, and growth.

A cursory consideration of Cervantes’s *La Numancia*, or the critique of the commercial theater lodged within the acclaimed *Don Quijote*, would seemingly separate the author and his dramatic vision of art from those who achieved more success in the *corrales*. Within Cervantes’s eight *comedias*, however, one may find some of the same conventions, and certainly within a play like *El laberinto de amor*, a reliance on role-play, that Lope touts as essential to the *comedia nueva*.²⁰ Anderson notes that *El laberinto*

²⁰ As Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti explains, Cervantes’s two plays most resembling the comedic conventions of the commercial theater, *El laberinto de amor* and *La casa de los celos*, have not enjoyed favorable reception among critics such as Francisco Ynduráin and Ángel Valbuena Prat (for a more extensive list, see p.2). More recently, however, scholars such as Edward Friedman, Melveena McKendrick, and Ellen Anderson have offered a more positive outlook on the play, given its presentation of strong female characters. See Pérez Fernández for a discussion of the play’s performance.

presents several levels of play-acting that span both gender and class.²¹ The work begins with an honor dispute involving the play's purported heroine, Rosamira. Facing an undesired, arranged marriage, Rosamira's preferred lover, Dagoberto, intervenes and accuses her of dishonor. When confronted with the accusation by her father, she pretends to faint in order to avoid having to respond, and finds herself locked in a tower as retaliation for the accusation. The play's focus then turns to Julia and Porcia, disguised as men, who scheme to capture the attention of Anastasio and Manfredo, respectively, who in turn are trying to win over Rosamira (disguised as students). The cross-dressed pair eventually separate to accompany the male love interests, and their meddlings ultimately yield the desired marriage agreements: Rosamira with Dagoberto, Julia with Manfredo, and Porcia with Anastasio.

Like the plays discussed in Chapter 2, *El laberinto de amor* provides its viewers with an initial premise other than the one they will actually follow for the play's duration. The focal point appears to be Rosamira's honor, as the work opens with Dagoberto's allegations against her, which complicate plans of marriage, and hence the plans of the male leads, Manfredo and Anastasio. Rosamira feigns a most helpless and hopeless *dama*. When accused, she says nothing to defend herself, and then faints, seemingly confirming her own guilt. She is then locked in a tower as punishment for her supposed

²¹ Anderson further signals, nevertheless, the way in which Cervantes affords the two female heroines of the play increased role-playing capabilities as compared with their male counterparts, along with greater metafictional awareness: "First, the two cross-dressing women do not limit themselves to only one masculine—or feminine—disguise or identity. As Porcia's speech attests, they are Protean in their ability to imagine appropriate roles for their purposes, find the right costumes and enact them with skill great enough to deceive their audiences. Second, the ladies play their masculine roles with great attention to their status as a fiction, and are acutely aware of the risk of discovery" ("Refashioning" 167).

crime. Any potential interaction between the *dama* and the *galanes* who want to marry her has been swiftly cut off. Rosamira lacks both physical and verbal agency (ironically, of her own volition). As we know from the example of *Las manos blancas*, this premise alone has virtually nowhere to “go” without interference on behalf of the play’s initially marginalized characters. Rosamira, the central point of interest for all of the central male characters, will not even feed the dialogue of her own plot line.²²

Whereas Rosamira suffers a deprivation of theatrical presence, lacking in speech and, eventually, in physical presence, the two characters who will invade her plot line, Porcia and Julia, find themselves in excess of both. The two “sides” of the drama parallel themselves inversely in this regard: Rosamira has too many suitors and no theatrical inventiveness while Porcia and Julia must put creative self-consciousness to work to remedy their need for marriage partners. Prior to taking advantage of the theatrical gains they have made by cross-dressing, the partners in crime stop and contemplate their own dramatic potential. At this early venture in early modern Spanish theater, the question of the intrusion is not entirely a given. Having already made the initial move toward metatheatrical meddling with their male dress, the pair of antagonists pauses before their actual use of the disguise. Porcia attempts to convince Julia that she is capable of maneuvering the disguise, proclaiming, “Ingenio tienes y brio, / y ocasion tienes tambien / para procurar tu bien, / como yo procuro el mio” (7-10). Here, Cervantes plants the creative model so vital to both the dramatist’s fashioning of the *comedia* as a new art

²² Rosamira’s use of silence, as several scholars have noted, is, of course, strategic, and represents its own form of deceptive strategy within the work. According to Agapita Jurado Santos, Rosamira employs silence as a kind of illocutionary act that helps her negate her disadvantaged position, while for Sara Taddeo, such a strategic linguistic move even distinguishes Cervantes’s brand of heroine from that of Lope.

form, and the cross-dresser's advancement of this model from within individual works as a meta-dramatist more powerful than other characters. The pair, equipped with additional visual and verbal potential for deception (or, more simply put, a consciousness of the theatrical nature of their identity), need only now to be creative and ingenious within this position: to innovate upon the model they have adopted.

At this point in the play, Porcia derives the courage to champion this model from the solidarity of their position: “¿A solas dizes que estás, / quedando con quien podras / contrastar de amor las olas?” (4-6). Indeed, neither character boldly lashes out upon the unfolding intrigue that so inhibits her own options, and in fact, much of the play's charm rests on the pair's willingness to collaborate in shared friendship and cleverly wrought confusion. During Act 2, however, the two characters do actually physically separate, with Porcia pursuing Anastasio and Julia trailing Manfredo. Though the characters are no longer together on stage, they continue implicitly collaborating by experimenting with different aspects of the cross-dresser's creative genius. While Porcia relies heavily on the visual flexibility of her disguise, Julia takes advantage of the increased fictional story-telling capacity she now possesses. Collectively, these manipulations help to steer Rosamira's potential courtships back in the pair's favor.

Structurally, the play presents this divided exploration of deception in a bifurcated fashion, mimicking narrative interpolation. The scenes of the second act switch back and forth between Porcia and Julia's dealings with Anastasio and Manfredo. From this structural perspective, the composition of *El laberinto de amor* is not entirely unlike the first part of *Don Quijote*, which contains multiple digressions from one seemingly extraneous story to another. Here, however, the “side” stories of Porcia and Julia quickly

take over the frame, and stay there. Having established that they can effectively influence the play's focus and outcome with their creativity, the pair split up to explore the power of the visual and verbal aspects of their deceptive potential.

Julia, following Manfredo, takes up the verbal aspect of the journey. Pretending to be his page, she tells him a story about a woman named "Julia" distraught over her unrequited love for Manfredo. Her narrative manipulation of Manfredo, a play for his sympathies, is dramatically significant as much for what she tells as how she tells it. First, in terms of the content of her speech, Julia is able to narratively reproduce and insert herself into a storyline (that of Rosamira and her many suitors) that has thus far been unconcerned with how it might affect her. Beyond the usefulness of this move on a personal level, Julia begins to extend the flexibility of her gender identity within the social schema of the work to other levels of artistic distortion. She takes her initial change in identity (moving from Julia to the page Camilo) and parlays it into full-fledged story telling. The tale itself challenges the borders of "truth" and "fiction" within the artwork, since the story takes the "raw material" or basic facts of her story and molds them into an entirely fictitious and impossible scenario. Julia uses the facts of her story to validate the perspective of a fake persona (Camilo) while introducing a narrative version of herself into the play. The created reality of the play becomes a matter of verbal manipulation, but one that belongs to the transvestite characters exclusively.²³

²³ Pilar Alalde Fernández-Loza similarly notes the way in which confusion becomes textual, caught up in the language of the play so that form and content enter the labyrinth together: "Cervantes nos indica lo deliberado de la confusión puesto que ésta ocupa no solo el argumento, sino también el campo textual y estructural de la obra. Esto nos induce a pensar que la estructura interna de la obra, y la externa de la trama y de los personajes están interrelacionadas de tal manera que solo al final se aclaran ambos aspectos: los

Beyond the power wielded by Julia's mere ability to recreate herself in the story she weaves for Manfredo while serving as his page, her specific method of telling the story highlights the authorial power of her technical skill. While introducing the fictional Julia, the real Julia (as Camilo) repeatedly employs suspense to heighten the importance of the eventual reveal of Julia's identity. When she begins telling the story and narrates the page's chance encounter with a strange and distraught woman, she thwarts a full introduction. Though "Julia" begins to introduce herself, "Yo soy..." Camilo first plays with the voice of "Julia" within the story. Prior to directly explaining who she is, this "Julia" interrupts herself, evading the direct question of who she is with an abstract description of her emotional state that, in its conclusion, finally returns to the concrete question of identification: "Yo soy aquella / a quien persigue su contraria estrella; / yo soy la sinventura / que, a la primera vista de unos ojos, / sin valor ni cordura, / rendi la libertad de los despojos / de la honra y la vida, pues una y otra cuento por perdida; / yo soy Julia, la hija / del duque de Dorlan, cuyo desseo / ya no ay quien le corrija" (21-31). In addition to building a sense of suspense and importance around who this "Julia" is, Camilo also flaunts his narrative control over the scene. In the elaboration of "Julia" and her emotional plight, Camilo uses the narrative technique of suspense to enhance the dramatic experience of her orchestration of deception.

In addition to the extended pauses that she builds into this dramatic moment of story-telling, Julia incorporates another popular narrative impulse while quoting her created version of herself. She makes sure to include a brief elaboration of this "Julia"'s

personajes averiguan la verdad de los hechos, salen del laberinto, y con ello se desembrolla la trama" (193)

origins: “Teniame mi padre / encerrada do el sol entrava apenas, / era muerta mi madre, / y eran mi compañía las almenas / de torres levantadas” (17-21). Although this description lacks both the breadth and depth of the kind of origin stories woven into both chivalric and picaresque novels, Julia does mimic or “quote” in brief this conventional gesture of self-narration, which only further delays an explanation of Julia’s specific predicament as is relevant to the story. In fact, within this initial exchange, Julia never arrives at the actual problem, teasing both Manfredo and the audience at the close of her explanation with the promise of the actual source of anguish. Though we are not allowed to continue, she concludes her story with the promise of more: “Ni aun yo puedo contarte / mas por agora, porque gente viene” (10-11).

If the creative use of cross-dressing enables both visual and verbal modes of manipulation, we find the verbal side temporarily thwarted, and the narrative technique of suspension enhanced, because after Julia hints at the rest of her story, we switch back to Porcia and Anastasio’s storyline. Porcia, having agreed as Anastasio’s page to help him with Rosamira, will now cross-dress back to her original gendered identity as a woman. Much like César of Calderón’s *Las manos blancas*, she winds up feigning her own gender identity at the behest of the one she loves. On the one hand, this moment of total reversal suggests that Porcia’s most effective gender identity is her own, but she herself quickly points out how her initial decision to cross-dress enables a variety of identities and potential professions: “Primeramente pastor me hiziste, y luego estudiante, / y, andando un poco adelante, / me bolviste en Labrador, / para labrar mis desdichas / con yerros de tus marañas:” (24-30). Given the close ties between social standing, profession, and dress, Porcia here highlights a spectrum of *images*, a series of imagined “costume

changes” that she has been able to carve into the story as a result of the liminal gender identity she fashions at the start of the play. Whereas Julia creates multiple “selves” through the story she tells with her words, Porcia accomplishes this task by changing appearances. Thanks to Manfredo’s request, she will now do so again in order to help Rosamira out of her imprisonment and into a marriage arrangement.

After this brief contemplation of the visual side of the coin, the focus changes again to Julia’s temporarily paused story about “Julia” and her anguish over Manfredo. As the perspective shifts between the two separated transvestite companions, the play’s story becomes the interruption of an interruption, and the two variants on the primary narrative (that of Rosamira) interject and interpolate one another. This game of shifting viewpoints implicitly emphasizes the two halves that make the whole in that it binds together the diverging trajectories of each character’s cross-dressed intrigue. A reflection on the “dramatic” side of the cross-dresser’s deceptive capabilities, or rather, the embodied change of appearances that spans a range of male professional identities, punctuates Julia’s experimentation with narrative techniques in her quest to manipulate Manfredo. The second act overall becomes a glimpse of the intermingling of narrative and dramatic-based authorial modes that together comprise the female cross-dresser’s methatheatrical prying.

When attention comes back around to Julia telling her story, she employs another narrative effect typical of Cervantes. The first part of *Don Quijote*, as well as consistently interrupting the pair protagonists’ quests as knight errants, also features the recitation of an entire interpolated novel, *El curioso impertinente*. The inclusion of this novel completely takes over the frame (save for a brief interruption by Don Quijote), and its

length allows for the primary question of Quijote's insanity and the parody of idealist literature to be blurred and marginalized until the interpolated novel's close. Cervantes's play of perspective draws attention to the literary discourse of the work, and its power to filter and control a story. This narrative technique makes its way into *El laberinto* via the transvestite character as she begins to tighten her metatheatrical grip on the story.

Lacking in a narrator, the play must turn to an embodied voice that directs the distracting shift in story. In the case of Julia, she has set the stage by duplicating herself through narrative. In *El laberinto de amor*, a play, Julia capitalizes on the opportunity to tell a new story about herself, then takes this story to the extreme. Her lengthy explanation of "Julia's" story appears as a quote from this invented Julia. Since this voice speaks for so long, elaborating in so much detail the agony of Manfredo's abandonment, it begins to blend with that of the speaking actor, and the invented, falsified story enmeshes in and becomes indiscernible from the primary dramatic enactment at hand.

From a dramatist who harshly criticized the model of the *comedia nueva* comes an important step in the flourishing of female transvestism as a key metatheatrical device and model of creative ingenuity for seventeenth-century dramatics. As Cervantes infuses his narrative experimentation with point of view and interpolation into his dramatic work, the *comedia* acquires new modes of sensorial distortion with which to play. This mode only becomes possible, however, thanks to another one: that of the "in-between" character who uses his/her identity to create outside the female/male binary of gender identification. The resulting play of genre does not remain stagnant. Within Julia's lengthy quote of her fictionalized self, dramatic and narrative-based forms of expression begin to dialogue implicitly. Julia's insertion of narrative interpolation becomes more

complicated and starts imitating drama when she describes how Julia “played” a certain moment, “(y esto cubriendo perlas sus mejillas, / hincandose de nuevo / ante mi, vision bella, de rodillas),” (10-12). Within the story, Julia interjects the narrative frame that has overtaken the play’s focus and paints a highly visual scene of the character’s bodily actions. As the details heighten the emotional impact of Julia’s desperation, a dramatic gesture interjects the digression. When the story finally comes to an end, Manfredo sums up the overall distorting effect of this interchange: “Y tan raro, que no puedo / persuadirme a que es verdad; / aunque amor y liviandad / no se apartan por un dedo” (32-35).

The length and complexity of Julia’s story further flouts her emerging power as an authorial figure within the play. In addition to her ability to recreate herself for Manfredo, writing a character into the play and mixing truth and fiction in the process, she also shows herself to be capable of aesthetic extremes in method. During her initial telling of the story, she relies on suspense and a withholding of information, only to then completely overtake the play with an excess of quotation when the scene switches back from Porcia. As she builds the story, she builds a style that resonates with the Baroque affinity for combining excesses and touting artistic mastery from within the artwork.

In stark contrast to Julia’s innovative strokes of trickery, Rosamira still cannot move or speak. She relies upon Porcia to trick her way out of the false accusation that has landed her in the tower. When Porcia arrives at the tower, “disguised” as a woman, Rosamira finally begins to speak, the first we have heard of her since the play began. Porcia, having established the complexity of her visual changes, now uses them to become a vessel for Rosamira’s own weaving of story. Though Porcia has until now

focused on visually deceiving those around her, her change in appearance here facilitates the kind of narrative techniques formerly in Julia's domain. In this way, dramatic and narrative technique again make contact. As the second act draws to a close, Rosamira hints at the telling of a story, striking an in-between similar to that of Julia's narrative suspense when she introduces "Julia": "Ven, que ya en tu voluntad / está mi vida o mi muerte, / mi Buena o mi mala suerte, / mi prisión o libertad" (3-6) She accompanies the dual speaking/not speaking with a series of oppositions to define her condition. Porcia encourages Rosamira's move here, aware that she makes possible a progression formerly unavailable to the purported protagonist: "Vamos, señora, do quieres, / y de mi dare a entender / que te puedes prometer / aun mas de lo que quisieres: / que desde aqui te consagro / la voluntad y la vida" (7-12).

Porcia's answer, of course, anticipates her portrayal of Rosamira in the third act. After this brief nod to the linguistically-based operations at play in the transvestite plot of the work at the end of Act 2, Porcia continues creating a story of images through changing sartorial signs. Portraying Rosamira, Porcia infiltrates the play's center, gaining a position from which to fully manipulate the rest of the characters in the play not from next to nor outside, but *as* the center. The culmination of manipulation and creative self-consciousness does not, however, leave out the other half of the equation, namely, Julia's story-telling tactics. In fact, as Porcia acts out the part of Rosamira during the third act, the two fully coalesce when "Rosamira" begins to repeat the tale of "Julia," and then quotes her, just as Julia/Camilo had in Act 2. As she speaks for the invented "Julia," she repeats her companion's conventions, beginning with the origin story of the first iteration, as well as the series of poetizations of her identity (29-32, 1-4).

Certainly, Cervantes presents a strong portrait of feminine subjectivity intricately linked to concepts of female solidarity, manipulation of speech, and strategic role-play that posit woman as infinitely more ingenious than man, at least within the created realm of the play's domain. For Anderson and Taddeo, such a portrait ultimately distinguishes Cervantes's version of the *comedia* from that of popular dramatists such as Tirso de Molina and Lope de Vega. For Anderson, *El laberinto*'s departure from Lopean drama may be found in the way that the play interrogates gender and class-based forms of identification, positing the audience as "a collection of individuals capable of reflection, criticism and enjoyment" as opposed to Lope's "undifferentiated mass" ("Refashioning" 180). In Taddeo's view, Cervantes's use of transvestism allows for an exploration of language and subjectivity unmatched by the dramatist's counterparts: "However, for the feminist spectator or critic, Cervantes is of greater interest than Lope because he, like Tirso de Molina, presents heroines who are fully conscious of the power of the word" ("Refashioning" 186).

While I agree that Cervantes crafts an intricate commentary on subjectivity, it is precisely his inclusion of role-play and the linkage between female transvestism and questions of representation and reality that aligns him with the type of popular, comedic drama that played to please. Indeed, Lope's *El lacayo fingido* features a female protagonist with a striking dominance that, through a change of identity via cross-dressing, harnesses both the visual and verbal aspects of theatrical trickery as staged separately by Porcia and Julia.²⁴ The figure of Sancho, actually the Spanish princess

²⁴ Scholars have contested Lope's authorship of this play (see Smyth and Arjona). Although Lope includes a play entitled *El lacayo fingido* on his first *Peregrino* list, analysis of the playtext by the same name later published in *Cuatro comedias famosas de*

Leonora who follows her former lover to France, introduces a more totalizing dominance of metatheatrical deception unparalleled by any other character on stage. He primarily pretends to be the lackey in order to prevent the Duke from marrying Rosarda, but in the process, he ends up controlling everyone. The King of France also has plans to make Rosarda his mistress, but Sancho helps to reveal this information to the Queen while arranging a clandestine marriage for Rosarda and Leonardo, another of Rosarda's suitors in the play. In addition to these plot-based interventions, Sancho has some side projects. From this point of supremacy, Sancho carries out nothing less than a celebration of trickery for deception's sake. As the "feigned lackey," he convinces a deputy that the deputy's wife has given birth to an animal in an act of bestial infidelity, then tricks the rest of the cast of characters into believing to see a magic cloth that does not actually exist. Although Sancho shares a real social need to reverse the impending courtship of Rosarda and the Duke of Rosimundo (and in this sense does not depart in any way from

don Luis de Góngora y Lope de Vega Carpio in 1613 has raised doubts over whether this text is the same, and hence, authored by Lope. Indeed, these inquiries constitute what little attention has been paid to the non-canonical play. Authorship will also be an issue for Tirso's *La mujer por fuerza*, but the scholarly opinion (and evidence) here is more damning. Arjona presents a compelling argument for the text's inconsistencies with Lope's typical patterns of versification and use of rhyme. I disagree, however, with his overall assertion that the play could not be by Lope because it is bad, or in his words, "The language is coarse, poetry is nonexistent, the characters are servile puppets, and the plot is commonplace" (53). Jesús Gómez, Paloma Cuenca, and Carmen Bravo-Villasante provide a more moderate view that some of the rudimentary elements of the story have more to do with its early authorship. In other words, the play sets the stage for later, more nuanced versions of *capa y espada* intrigue, and should not be faulted for a lack of quality that it eventually makes possible. As the play is currently available in editions that continue to attribute it to Lope, I refer to it as his play, with the acknowledgement of the palpable doubt surrounding this claim. For the purposes of my argument, I approach this *comedia* as indicative of a significant self-referential discourse moderated by female transvestism that develops out of the *comedia*, regardless of a specifically Lopean fingerprint. I am less concerned with each individual dramatists' possible evolution as with the diversity and evolution of the use of transvestism within the art form as a whole.

the missions of Porcia, Julia, and the other heroines discussed heretofore), his deceptions show the power of merging deceptive story-telling with a visually flexible presentation of self.

Sancho's superior form of role-play, and the celebration of ingenuity that it ultimately registers in the play's discourse, initially builds its momentum by way of contrast. Lope presents two forms, or levels, of metatheatrical deception in his opening scenes: that of Leonardo and that of Sancho. In the opening sequence of the play, Leonardo rescues Rosarda from a fire at the King's behest. The ruse works on multiple levels: the fire has been orchestrated by the king as a decoy so that Leonardo can abduct Rosarda and stash her elsewhere for the King's desired indiscretions. As Leonardo carries out this plan, however, he reveals that he has his own amorous motives: "No hay, Rosarda, aquí otro fuego / que el fuego en que yo me ardo" (71). While Leonardo obviously does not want the King to get his way, the fire diversion at least interrupts Rosarda's impending marriage with the Duke of Rosimundo. From there, Leonardo plays the Marquis and Duke against each other when they inquire about who started the fire. Leonardo constructs a level of knowledge exclusive to the audience, while deceiving those around him in ways that no one character could fully trace.

In this initial sequence, Lope establishes metatheatrical deception as par for the course, a basic model of behavior for the development of the *comedia*. At the same time that Leonardo creates multiple versions of "knowledge" that implicate the audience and point to the constructedness of the play, however, he progressively reveals himself to be less and less in control of the play he weaves.

In the next scene of the play, we meet Sancho, actually Princess Leonora, recently transplanted from Spain in pursuit of the Duke (he has abandoned her and now plans to marry Rosarda). As Sancho introduces him/herself, a key distinction between his version of trickery and that of Leonardo emerges. Whereas Leonardo's intrigue develops situationally, *en medias res* (in the middle of a fire, no less), Sancho's theater begins with who s/he is. Although Sancho equally manipulates from a point of social disadvantage like Leonardo, the theatrical organization of this manipulation gives priority to another level of control. Sancho appears by himself on stage, introducing himself and his dual identity to the audience. From this vantage point, we see how Leonardo and Sancho operate on different playing fields. Given that Leonardo's alternate level of communication with the audience plays out simultaneously with the action itself, he lacks the distance and control Sancho asserts when he explains himself prior to interacting with anyone else. Alone on stage, he first narrates himself, making clear that he controls the story; the story does not control him.

During this explanation, he repeats the elements of self-narration fundamental to Julia's self-telling in *El laberinto*. Although Sancho describes his predicament in a forthright manner (as opposed to Julia's coy re-creation of herself as Camilo), he starts with his origin: "¡Que siendo de España hija, / por ti a Francia haya venido, / y por hallarte haya sido / mi jornada tan prolija!" (74). Sancho, aware of his authorial position, always locates himself within a narrative; he is *aware* that he is telling himself and weaving an alternate dramatic story within the play. He also makes a gesture similar to the character of Porcia, the other, more visually-based half of the beguiling duo guiding Cervantes's *comedia*. Just as Porcia remarks upon the rapid changes in identity that her

cross-dressing facilitates, Sancho too wonders at the transformation he has undergone since being dishonored: “¡Que siendo dama gentil / me haya hecho un vil lacayo, / con más cintas en el sayo / que ponen a un tamboril” (74).

These two gestures within Sancho’s opening speech, which connect with the tactics of Julia and Porcia, call our attention to an notable shift between Cervantes’s imagining of stage transvestism in *El laberinto de amor* and Lope’s early version in *El lacayo fingido*. The methods of deception previously separated in *El laberinto*, with Julia pursuing the story-telling powers of her altered identity while Porcia warped appearances across class, profession, and ultimately gender (within a switch of gender), meld into one performance through the character of Sancho. The theater he plans to orchestrate will make simultaneous the two levels of deception explored by the dual protagonists in Cervantes’s drama. Where Julia and Porcia tread tepidly in parallel renderings of transvestite-based intrigue, Sancho goes it alone, combining the visual and verbal power of cross-dressing in one metatheatrical plot.²⁵

From this introduction, we glean the way in which Sancho introduces a specific and unique deceptive *mode* not comparable to that of his dramatic peers within *El lacayo fingido*, and more evolved than that of his intertextual neighbors in *El laberinto*. Sancho’s

²⁵ Carmen Bravo-Villasante similarly pinpoints Sancho as one of the first highly developed transvestite characters of the *comedia* in that he is of central importance to the play’s development: “En efecto, en esta comedia de hechura italiana y gracia muy española puede asegurarse que ha entrado de modo definitivo la mujer vestida de hombre y que es la primera donde desde el principio hasta el final la disfrazada de lacayuelo, con el nombre de Sancho, sea móvil de la intriga y objeto de enredos sin cuento. La movilidad e ingenio son portenosos. Sus mentiras son infinitas” (*El lacayo* 12). Juan Cano-Ballesta adds that Sancho’s various deceptions link him with the popular tradition of the *gracioso* that separate the *comedia* from courtly Renaissance theater and allow the *comedia* its mix of high and low comedy: “A través de él, la vieja dualidad cultural (la de la plaza pública y la oficial) que se daba en la corte, en la calle, en las escuelas y en el Mercado, se integran en un espectáculo único” (783).

superior powers of manipulation coincide with a higher form of knowledge: he is more than a character. In contradistinction to Leonardo, who does not quite know how he will end up with what he desires given the King's orders to make Rosarda his mistress, Sancho identifies characters prior to the formal revelation of their identity, enumerates how he will manipulate situations to his advantage, and accelerates sensorial confusion and mistaken identity to an art, a sport that earns him praise even by those fooled and made fools.

Sancho re-writes the course of action of the play, making it about something other than the conflict that has been established. In Chapter 2, I discussed plays that meditated on this moment of re-writing, contemplating the machinations of play that cross-dressing makes possible. Here, however, this veering is a given, and the focus falls more squarely on the *figure* orchestrating the overturning, and the powers introduced by his/her mode of metatheater. A different kind of self-conscious reflection begins to take shape, not on the spectator or play, but rather on the creative force that imagines the play, that ingenious source of unexpected overturnings. On the one hand, we might say the celebration of characters like Sancho points us to a reflection on the playwright, but of a certain kind. The creative figure suggested by characters such as Porcia, Julia, and Sancho projects ingenuity of a particular power. The female transvestite figure sees beyond the limitations of space and time that hinder other characters, and their deception moves forward at a rapid pace that defies the logical sight and sound of those on stage, and off.

As has been signaled by numerous critics, the female cross-dresser of Spanish *comedia* routinely “plays” a rendition of masculinity that surpasses that of the male

characters on stage in terms of likeability, manipulation, and romantic attractiveness.²⁶

These ways in which the female cross-dresser surpasses the male model do not just offer a social commentary on subjectivity, as has been widely argued. The acting out of masculinity on the part of the cross-dresser also constructs a discourse of aesthetics. In essence, the female cross-dresser presents a version of imitation based on innovation that connects strongly with the general predicament of seventeenth-century artistic endeavors. These protagonists project a model of innovation that responds to anxieties surrounding the giants of the past, and the need to rupture existing models.

Unhindered by the need to remain within one identity over the other, and unhinged by the social wronging of the Duke, Sancho does not project concern over his temporal position, or his “rank” within the play. After introducing himself to the audience, he starts in on his first trick, targeting the deputy in charge of Rosarda after her capture. Initially, it appears almost as though Sancho were toying with the Alcalde merely for sport. He also seems to know who the Alcalde is intuitively, simply because the Alcalde fits into his plan. Sancho pinpoints this character before the audience knows who he is and before he speaks for himself: “Este es el Viejo, sin duda, / que a cargo esta quinta tiene.-- / Si quien lo haga no viene, / yo lo hare, si hay en qué acuda” (74). Unlike Leonardo, Sancho knows exactly how to manipulate the Alcalde to get what he wants. He weaves an elaborate story, full of moments of suspense and excessive mythical reference, that leads the Alcalde to believe not only that he has been cuckolded, but worse even in a moment of bestiality that led to the birthing of a donkey.

²⁶ This point has been made most commonly surrounding Ana Caro’s fashioning of the cross-dressing protagonist in *Valor, agravio y mujer*. See Bayliss, McKendrick, Friedman (“Clothes”), Rhodes (“Redressing”), Soufas, and Williamsen.

Here Sancho flexes self-reflexive creative muscles. He first positions himself as an arbiter of knowledge, well-versed in mythology as he lists various monsters that will rival the one in which his own tale will culminate. Amongst these monsters appears the figure of the hermaphrodite: “Jusias, hombre y mujer, / vivió al mundo hermafrodita, / sin otra copa infinita, / que en Plinio se puede ver, / que afirma haber visto Roma / en los ya pasados siglos / mil portentos, mil vestigios /de que el mundo agüeros toma” (74).

Following these classical allusions to another form of gender confusion not entirely disconnected from Sancho’s own identity, as discernible from the audience’s point of view, is a reference to the birth scene that anticipates Sancho’s trick: “Llovió sangre, llovió trigo; también de un hombre y mujer / se vió una mula nacer, / caso que horror trae consigo. / Y aun diz que otra parió un puerco, / sí, y aun no menor que vos” (74). Prior to laying out the trick on the Alcalde, Sancho recreates it as a story that mixes myth and oral hearsay. Sancho’s art mimics his impending theater: just as the hoax about the Alcalde’s wife can happen because of his cross-dressed identity, so too does his tale of the human-birthed animals follow from another mythical story on this same subject matter. Not only does Sancho show off a general knowledge of monsters and stories, he also touts his position as creator. Prior to acting out his trick, he produces a version of it within his story.

Having “birthed” the story of monstrous birth within the confines of his narrative discourse, Sancho then moves on to actually tricking the Alcalde. When he does, he maintains narrative strategies comparable to those of Julia during her rendition of herself to Manfredo. Sancho continually provides just enough information to keep the Alcalde desperate to hear more, and feigns ignorance over the intersections of identities at play.

He tells the story of the Alcalde and his wife as if he does not know that he is speaking with the Alcalde, first asking him if he, perchance, knows him, then eventually pretending to realize the connection: “¿Sois, por ventura, el alcalde?” (75). As he tells the story, the Alcalde increasingly begs for him to continue, now dependent on his words. He pleads to Sancho, “¡Presto, pues, habald!” to which Sancho responds “Ya hablo” (75). The two pieces of dialogue connect polymetrically to form one verse, further emphasizing the dependency Sancho creates through his maneuverings with language. Such desperation reaches its peak as he moves to finally reveal the nature of the wife’s pregnancy:

SANCHO: No era el preñado de tiempo,
mas traía cuando entró
dolores que a mover vino.
Movió...
(Como que habla entre dientes)
ALCALDE: ¿Un qué?
SANCHO: Un pollino.
(75)

Sancho makes a show of telling the story, touting his control over the Alcalde to the point that he can lead him to believe the most ludicrous version of events possible. Having established his plethora of knowledge, he enacts narrative suspense to show that he masters both form and content. Here, form enhances content in that the final revelation becomes all the more potent and incredible given its prior displacement.

We are not left in doubt with respect to how to regard Sancho’s emerging theater. The Alcalde takes notice, and remarks upon Sancho’s skill: “¡No vi hijo de comadre / jamás que supiese tanto!” (75). Indeed, throughout the play, various characters remark upon Sancho’s astonishing control over the action, as well as the power of his accelerated version of role-play. Shortly after this cursory moment of deception, Sancho receives a

visit from Eleandro, his servant, who cannot believe how quickly Sancho, as Leonora, has worked out a strategic advantage from which to remedy her situation, exclaiming, “¿Pues con tanta brevedad se ofreció tan buena traza?” (77). At the end of the first act, when the Alcalde discovers Sancho’s turn of phrase that has made him look like an utter fool, he cannot help but marvel at the trick: “¿diz que un pollino movió, / y era que apartó un pollino! / ¿Hubo en el mundo tal trueco? / ¿Pensó el diablo tal novela?” (82) Later, when Sancho fools everyone with the “magical cloth” that supposedly only non-bastards can see, Leonardo remarks repeatedly that he has carried off an admirable trick: “y si es burla, ella es la burla mayor que en mi vida vi” (97). Leonardo further remarks upon his ingenuity as Sancho helps him in his quest to win Rosarda: “¿Qué ingenio tuvo el rapaz! / Y si él, como ha mostrado, / de mi bien se ha apasionado, / bien lo hará, que es sagaz” (87).

These comments, sprinkled throughout the play, point to the way in which Sancho’s intervention in the play acquires an aesthetic aspect not entirely linked to the social predicament that initially prompts his cross-dressing. His deceptions possess a superficial layer that draws attention to his ability to deceive: his speed and efficiency as well as the breadth and depth of his knowledge in doing so. They become not merely an art, but an art worthy of praise, and even astonishment. A celebration of the strategic role-play wrought by cross-dressing takes shape that emphasizes its authorial, creative qualities. Sancho operates at another level of knowledge and deception as compared to that of the other characters, and he earns recognition for doing so. The play, through its employment of female cross-dressing, lauds this authorial/directorial figure and his/her ability to play out moments of reversal and astonishment.

At the same time that Sancho pulls off his tricks with a certain amount of artistry, they still meet his practical needs. The practical aspect, however, feeds back into the aesthetics of Sancho's mastery. By convincing the Alcalde that his wife has wronged him, Sancho gains access to the king, and hence the whole theatrical realm in which the drama with Rosarda has been playing out. In the process, he manages to publically humiliate the Alcalde (for sport) while also earning his praise. But a bigger aesthetic payoff for Sancho accompanies the Alcalde's petition to the king. When the Alcalde begins to retell the story fed to him by his seemingly helpful friend, he calls upon Sancho to serve as his witness. Here, the logic of Sancho's testimony begins to cross word with sound such that he gains control not only of sensory perception but also sensory distortion, from the purview of the audience. The Alcalde calls upon Sancho to testify to something that he has seen; he asks him to recount a visual experience. Though Sancho purports to do just this, in all reality he repeats a narrative, a juggling of words that we have already seen and know to be false. As the other characters of the play look to him to represent one sensory experience in the absence of any other reliable witness, he fills the space with more (inventive) story-telling. Word stands in for sight, a falsified account that Sancho then morphs into a slippage:

SANCHO: [...] la vi mover un pollino
 ALCALDE: ¿Del lugar?
 SANCHO: ¡Pues del lugar!
 ALCALDE: ¿Que no le movió movido
 sino de una parte?
 SANCHO: A otra.

(80)

The misunderstanding earns Sancho more praise, as he himself laughs at its hilarious implications: “¡Lindo desatino! / ¿Un asno había de parir? / ¡Qué hermoso

entendimiento!” (80). Sancho inches closer to socially strategic advantage while his manipulations breed him more recognition and stylistic control over the representation of sight and sound.

The hilarious gap between the Alcalde’s wife birthing and moving an animal, along with its more serious social implications of infidelity, thrust Sancho onto the King’s radar. From there, he can amplify his control over the other characters of the play. He both serves as a confidante for the King on matters of Rosarda and also arranges a clandestine marriage for Rosarda and Leonardo. At one point during this arrangement, Leonardo even asks Sancho to confirm whether or not he lives, “Sancho mío, ¿vivo o muero?” to which Sancho replies “Yo te daré vida hoy” (100). Sancho becomes a life force for the characters in a way that even they explicitly acknowledge and come to rely upon. Within the confines of the created reality fashioned by Lope, another creative figure emerges, one who can know more and be more than the other characters on stage. The discourse surrounding the powers of strategic role-play builds its momentum until the focus of the theater shifts to become entirely about Sancho’s aims and the championing of his creative power.

Furthering his own efforts, in order to thwart the King’s impending plans to make Rosarda his mistress, Sancho guides the play from this initial premise to another dramatic conflict that he creates, and then stands beside. In order to fully disorient the King’s plans, Sancho relies upon his ability to easily control the Alcalde’s perceptions (a skill clearly established by his first trick). During Act 2, he convinces the Alcalde that the Queen knows about Rosarda’s imprisonment and blames him, spurring a guilt-laden Alcalde to rush to her and inadvertently reveal the entire secret of Rosarda’s capture and

the King's plan for infidelity. As he lets the cat out of the bag, Sancho watches on, detached from, but privy to, the developing intrigue. As the Alcalde begins to realize that he has yet again been duped, he curses Sancho's power over him, feeling he has lost control over his own lived experience: "¡Válgate el Diablo por Sancho! / ¿No hay un árbol, no hay un gancho / de donde me ahorcaré? / ¿No digo yo que éste tiene / de dar fin a mi vejez, / primera y segunda vez?" (93). Like Leonardo, the Alcalde comes to recognize that another more powerful entity controls his being and that he cannot immediately recognize the mechanisms of trickery that make this so.

Sancho watches all of this happen, and delights in the success of the orchestrated misunderstanding, commenting, "¡Qué bien, qué suavemente, / sin tormento ha confesado!" (93).²⁷ In this moment, Sancho separates physically from the conflict he has created, watching it stand on its own and build advantage for him. As the Queen progresses in plans for revenge, all of the characters' scheming works further and further in Sancho's favor. When the Queen arrives to confront the King about his imprisonment of Rosarda, the King has no choice but to sanction the marriage of Leonardo and Rosarda in order to save face and avoid admitting he was planning to be unfaithful with her. Sancho steps in and proposes this alternative, one that he has thought up and carried out without the King's knowledge. Since the marriage has already been carried out, the King need only pretend that he was in on the matrimonial all along to save face with the

²⁷ As we will see, this convention repeats in Tirso's *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, as Doña Juana/Don Gil also plays audience member to his own metatheatrical. Unlike Don Gil, however, Lope's heroine does not create quite as masterful a theater in the sense that s/he eventually has to take responsibility, or at the very least acknowledge, duping the Alcalde, and provide a defense: "¿Esta, pues, tan mala ha sido? / Pues hasta ahora qué os cuesta? / Acabad, no seáis cobarde" (95). In contrast, no one in Tirso's play can recognize or even suspect the agent of their confusion, even when it is the very agent they all aim to either marry or imitate.

Queen. From there, the Duke of Rosimundo has only one other option for marriage: Leonora. Sancho's transformation back to his original feminine identity occurs shockingly and comically fast. Once Leonardo and Rosarda's marriage has been acknowledged by the king, the Duke turns to Sancho, who has successfully passed as a man for the entirety of the play, and asks, "Que conocéis a Leonora? / Quizá Sancho, ahora pago / lo mal que lo hice; mas..." (108). When Sancho confirms this sentiment, he then asks, "¿Eres mi Leonora acaso?" (108). Conveniently enough, Sancho is, in fact, Leonra, just as the Duke has suddenly surmised, and the two make plans to wed.

The ridiculous nature of the Duke's sudden recognition of Sancho as Leonora and his rushed repentance and agreement to wed the woman he had formally slighted clearly mock both the social precepts of the honor code and the conventionality of the genre. The flighty reversal that accompanies a work of absurd tricks and misunderstandings again reminds the audience of the level of folly that has accompanied, but not undermined or diminished the efficacy of, Sancho's more strategic aims. Another such ploy runs throughout the second and third acts, planted in the first act after Sancho meets the King and promises him a magic fabric that will delight and amaze all those of legitimate birth. During the second and third acts, Sancho presents members of the court with the fabric, and everyone pretends to see and marvel at it, then admitting in asides that they do not actually see anything.

This trick, like the play's rapid ending, clearly parodies the ridiculousness of the social mania surrounding honor and "purity" that led to religious and racially-based forms of persecution during Spain's supposed "Golden Age." Cervantes makes this same parody the subject of an entire *entremés*, the much more famous "El retablo de las

Maravillas.” In both cases, however, a metadiscourse also forms around theater and the receptor’s complicity in consuming and sanctioning not only dangerous forms of social prejudice, but also the illusion of the represented reality presented from the stage. As discussed, in the case of “El retablo,” Chirinos and Chanfalla have to carry out their trick in pieces, gesturing to the visual deception and then narrating it from the side. Sancho’s cross-dressing theater unites these two manipulative fronts. Already visually deceiving everyone on stage, Sancho presents the *tela* trick on top of this.

The visual and verbal further entwine, particularly in terms of the audience’s experience of the deception. In the third act, Sancho reveals the cloth to Leonardo offstage, and they come on to narrate this visual experience for the audience. This pattern repeats with several other characters throughout this act. Leonardo, above all others, provides the most detailed reaction to the ruse. He reassures Sancho that he was extremely impressed by what he has seen, and then ruminates to the audience once Sancho leaves about the fact that he actually saw nothing: “Lleváronme a ver la tela: / juro a Dios que no la vi; / pero díjeles que sí, / y djelo con cautela” (97). Leonardo finishes his speech in indecision, determined not to reveal himself as illegitimate but equally doubtful of the entire project: “Si fuere risa, sea risa; / si fuere verdad, verdad; / no soy solo en la ciudad, / qu harta gente la pisa” (97). As is the case at the start of the play, Leonardo serves as a useful foil to Sancho. Above Leonardo, Sancho coordinates the deception, and below him, the other characters receive it with less displayed skepticism and sense that things are not what they seem. They may acknowledge they did not see the *tela*, but they do not expound upon or poeticize what this might imply about the created world around them. Leonardo’s intermediary pose demarcates the privileged

position Sancho creates for himself in navigating perception for other characters. Even when Leonardo occupies the position of describing to the audience something he has seen and they have not, he cannot fully name the experience, and instead presents them with confusion. Words stand in for sight, but they replicate an experience that merely confuses vision. Just as Sancho can create entire separate “theaters” he watches from the sidelines (i.e. when the Alcalde confronts the Queen), he also simulates outside of himself (through Leonardo’s ruminations on the *tela* trick) the visual/verbal cross embodied in his transvestite antics.

The intrigue involving the mysterious cloth is not a tale unique to Lope. In fact, it replicates almost directly Ejemplo XXXII from Juan Manuel’s *El Conde Lucanor*, the medieval dialogic text in which Patronio relates narratives as counsel to the Count Lucanor. Gómez and Paloma Cuenca point out that the trick faithfully replicates its source material while its success breaks down significant power distinctions to make a mockery of the king: “Punto por punto se verifica lo demás del cuento, haciendo dudar al mismo rey de Francia si sería o no hijo legítimo” (X). Lope’s version, nevertheless, features a key update. The singular figure of Sancho replaces the three *pícaros* who fool the king in Juan Manuel’s text. The substitution is significant in the sense that Sancho, in one cross-dressed performance, can perform the task of three in another version of the story, a testament to the accelerated powers of manipulation afforded the transvestite figure within the realm of theater.

Beyond the mere efficiency of Sancho’s version of the *ejemplo*, its inclusion further calls our attention to the stylistic impact of cross-dressing, particularly in terms of its introduction of narrative techniques to the realm of drama. In effect, the figure of

Sancho allows not only for the use of mythological and classical reference, but further, for intertextuality to become a part of the forging of the *comedia nueva*. The *comedia* interpolates a narrative, and in this case, the echo of dialogic structure. The methods of drama and narrative reverberate as Lope features their mutual exchange via Sancho's display of trickery.

None of the characters who participate in this ruse can deny Sancho just how masterfully he carries off the trick, and it serves as yet another example of the ways in which he earns praise even from those he deceives. The play, through the character of Leonardo, further makes sure to give voice to the hierarchy of characters and their creative understanding and ability. Although none of Sancho's ploys within the work ever stray from a practical payoff (he earns money from the King for the *tela* trick, for example), the dramatic discourse surrounding them consistently emphasizes the mastery and *art* of the deception. In this sense, Sancho's cross-dressed presence within the play seems to privilege an aesthetics of deception, spurred on by practical needs but ultimately flourishing for the sake of harnessing creative control and blurring the senses to the wonder and amazement of those duped (and hopefully of those in the audience as well). An elevated creative figure emerges who can anticipate, adapt, and befuddle unlike any other and at an unprecedented rate. Like Porcia, Sancho creates different versions of "self" as needed, and like Julia, tells stories that blur truth and fiction. Within *El lacayo fingido*, deceiving for deception's sake simply counts more, leading to the questioning of reality on the part of the other characters to the extent that they render their lives to Sancho, fully aware of the control they have lost and their inability to understand how.

Sancho reaches a new level of creative power that the play itself is quick to emphasize. He controls other characters, the course of the dramatic conflict, as well as how the audience understands the nature of the conflicts taking place. The aesthetics of deception that his cross-dressing makes possible replicates a distortion of the basic components of his own transformation. Just as Sancho, from his initial identity as Leonora, learns to make fluid his physical appearance, as well as his access to language and story about himself, these same elements begin to form, in their fluidity, a dialectic that defines each ruse.

This dialectic comes across even stronger in another cross-dressing play of the period, Tirso de Molina's *La mujer por fuerza*, which offers a more detailed look at the burgeoning reflexive relationship between appearance and language.²⁸ Like many that came before, the play follows its cross-dressed heroine Finea through a range of amusing deceptions. In addition to their sheer entertainment value, the different forms of trickery stemming from the cross-dressing act offer us a window into various aspects of Spain's rather theatrical early modern society. In *La mujer por fuerza*, the visual aspect of the cross-dressing act, as opposed to this narrative element, appears to reign supreme.

Ganelin offers the following synopsis of the play:

Finea, sister of the Hungarian nobleman Alberto, falls in love with the Neapolitan ambassador Count Federico without his having seen her. As he completes his mission to secure a political marriage between Alberto and the king of Naples's sister he offers, out of a distorted sense of obligation, to marry the unseen Finea. Once Federico initiates his return to Naples, Finea decides to pursue him. In due course she takes on various disguises to reach her goal of marriage: as a *paje* named Celio she enters Federico's service; as one D. Alonso de Aragón, bastard

²⁸ Some doubt surrounds Tirso's authorship of *La mujer por fuerza*, given its inclusion in the *Segunda parte* of his works. As Henry Sullivan points out, nevertheless, the play "bears innumerable Tirsian fingerprints" and certainly reflects skilled comedic sensibility on the part of the playwright (*Tirso* 51).

son of a King Fernando, she woos Florela, Count Federico's beloved in Naples; and as herself before the king of Naples, she accuses Federico of having kidnapped her. (At one point Finea orchestrates the servant Fenisa's disguise as her double). Her efforts are successful, as she undermines Federico's relationship with Florela, and places Federico's noble position at court in jeopardy until Federico agrees to marry Finea. ("Who" 104-05)

The Count's visual faculties become a key source of speculation as well as the central thrust of Finea's deceptive ploy, given that he insists he has never seen the woman whom he has been accused of kidnapping. The play, in fact, centers on the question of vision as related to gender. The first scene opens with Finea lamenting the fact that the Count has not seen her, relating such a problematic position to the general condition of being a woman: "Si el Conde se levantaba / sin que me pudiese ver, / con atención le miraba: / esto, Fabio, es ser mujer" (505). Ganelin comments on this link between perception and gender, noting the way in which cross-dressing allows Finea to escape this disadvantaged, unseen position: "Tirso's play undermines both perceived reality and male control by conferring on Finea keen powers of observation and an enabling invisibility that she manipulates to her advantage. To see without being seen is the position of power rarely conferred on women characters" (105). While the manipulation of visibility, as enabled by cross-dressing, coupled with the challenge to the male gaze that follows, seem to rely most heavily on the "seen" spectacle of cross-dressing, Tirso's female protagonist also re-invents herself through a series of falsified accounts of her male identity. These various narrations of her journey make the play as much about story *telling* as it is about play *acting*, positing the female cross-dresser as an (unreliable) narrator as well as a meta-dramatist. In what follows, I will use the example of Tirso's Finea to draw out the narrative aspects of the *comedia's* cross-dressed heroine in order to demonstrate how the figure taps into an agency that is not only social, but also stylistic.

Although the play focuses a fair amount on the question of eyesight, the central cross-dressed figure also uses several narrative manipulations that prove central to the story's development. The play opens, in fact, with an expository posture in which Finea explains her circumstances to her servant, Fabio. From the outset, Finea establishes herself as a type of omniscient narrator, able to fill Fabio and the audience in on the events prior to the start of the play, setting the stage (literally) for the conflicts that will follow. While Finea proffers up two lengthier speeches, Fabio says very little, emphasizing only the important details that will prove key as the story moves forward, such as “¿Qué nunca el Conde te vio?” (505). On the one hand, Finea seems to have a firm grasp on all the play's happenings. There is one detail, however, that throws the “story” of the play out of, and then back into, her control—the answer to Fabio's question. This leads to Finea's second speech, in which she shares her plans to remedy the flaw in her narrative omniscience: a change of identity, in which she will become entirely unreliable to everyone within the play: “Yo pienso mudar el traje, / sin que me obligue y reporte / la afrenta de mi linaje; / ver de Nápoles la corte, / y en ella servir de paje” (505). Prior to her actual visual transformation to a man, Finea sets the stage verbally, narrating for the audience both the play's broad frame of events and her own manipulation of them.

Finea is, of course, one of many characters who fulfill this type of narrative function prior to the cross-dressing act. Other notable female cross-dressers such as Ana Caro's Leonor and Tirso's Doña Juana also set the stage for audiences through conversations with their *criados*, using narrative to facilitate the resultant dramatic (visual) spectacle. Both aspects of the cross-dressing manipulation offer ample

opportunity to distort and complicate the levels of reality within the play. Doña Juana, for example, fakes her own death in word while simultaneously competing with Martín's Don Gil in appearance. Like Juana, Finea also narratively manipulates herself, faking a story of her own kidnapping to the king. Finea, however, further exploits her initial narrative position concurrently with her visual disguise, changing her identity continually in both senses. While her basic visual appearance as a man remains stagnant, through self-narration, Finea changes the circumstances of her male persona to offer a range of vignettes both to her fellow characters and to the audience. In other words, within the same (false) appearance as a man, Finea becomes different men through narrative modification. As such, Finea may expand upon her initial visual distortion through various narrative ones, introducing the network of frames mentioned by Friedman, which will of course inevitably be broken. In order to describe the victims of Finea's ruse, Ganelin coins the term "spectatee" (a play on "narratee"): "A spectatee (a singular or a collective entity) is both a witting viewer and an unaware dupe of Finea's machinations much as Vuestra Merced is both part of and duped by Lázaro's life story" ("Designing" 137). As he goes on to explain, this dynamic then creates the multi-frame deception, or rather "an outer frame of the theatrical event within the event (Finea's role-playing), and an inner frame of audiences within the event" (137).

Notable within this series of narrative distortions is the range of social positions Finea may occupy. She moves from page to illegitimate son of a king, both equally real and unreal to those within and outside of the frame, respectively. Given the high value placed upon social status, Finea's move reflects the heights of power possible through her disguise. This power is only possible through the combination of her two deceptive

faculties. Her social mobility stems from her initial visual distortion, which then allows for various narrative elaborations. Finea first constructs Celio to become Federico's page: "Con alguna a Italia vengo, / pero casos de fortuna / me llevan a ver si alguna / fuera de mi patria tengo / Esto sabréis caminando, / pues tal espacio ha de haber" (508-9). From this falsified identity, Finea creates a doubly falsified one, delivering a much longer speech to Florela in which she becomes son to the King and suitor to Florela. In this speech, Finea emphasizes the verbal as opposed to the visual (which dominates as the primary discourse in most other sections of the play), telling Florela: "Yo en aquesta confianza / te he dicho lo que he callado / al Conde, y aun a mí mismo, / si a solas conmigo hablo" (522). By way of spoken agreement, Finea transforms from page to royal. The narrative word, as wielded by Finea, complements her visual spectacle, and the two meld to deliver her desired outcome. In the final scene of the play, Finea remains dressed as a page, but verbally rejects the maleness she has cultivated and tweaked throughout the work: "No puedo / ser hombre, que si lo fuera / no tratara el casamiento / contigo, que me has costado, / Conde, trabajos inmensos / desde el día que te vi / en Hungría" (547). Just as she initiated the play's conflict with story-telling, Finea also gives it its close through narration, allowing for the typical restoration of order that characterizes Golden Age *comedia*.

Finea's narrative-based dishonesty results in a full-on questioning of the visual. Though her primary target is the Count, her manipulative power affects multiple figures during the course of the play. After Finea appears before the king and her brother Alberto, covered and recounting her kidnapping story in person, Alberto questions her bodily presence, commenting, "Creo / que es ilusión lo que vi" (538). The Count, of

course, will doubt himself and his sensory perceptions more than any other character, continually wondering if he really did see Finea and if his eyes and ears are playing a trick on him. When he finally does acquiesce to Finea's version of events, this only creates more suspicion and doubt surrounding the line between truth and fiction. When he offers to marry Finea, unable to fight her story anymore, Alberto becomes convinced the Count must have murdered her and for this reason would be feigning a willingness to marry her. All levels of perception become unhinged, and the Count cannot remember his stance from one moment to the next. After confessing to kidnapping Finea, he explains that he will not be able to recognize her since he has never seen her, leading to the King's confused response: "Mucho he de hacer si resisto / en tanto enojo el poder. / No confesasteis aquí / que la trujisteis de Hungría?" (543), to which the Count replies, "Digo que verdad sería, / puesto que yo no la vi" (543). As the Count insists upon two incongruent facts, the play reaches its Baroque assertion of the illusion of appearance as it establishes the paradoxical realities that artifice has achieved by way of Finea's cross-dressing manipulations.²⁹ The play is a celebration of these realities, and the King praises

²⁹ Theatrical interpretation has used extratextual elements to further the sensorial elements at play in the absurdity created by Finea. A rendition of the play by the Compañía José Maya performed in 2009 in Madrid, directed by José Maya, focused almost solely on bodily movement as the guiding performative feature of their interpretation of the *comedia*. The set consisted of nothing more than the stage space, while the play made occasional use of a single musician who sporadically reacted to the play's events (scoffing, for example, when Finea first uses her male identity and attempts to pass to the other characters of the play). The main visual "currency" of the play, then, is the movement of the actors themselves, who constantly pace and counter one another, typically with Finea at the center, thus emphasizing how she forms the pivot upon which the action turns, and redirects. In this staging, when the Count confesses both to kidnapping and never having seen Finea, the King registers his utterly confounded state physically, screeching and flinging his arms about. The reaction gains laughs, of course. It also, however, creates another extension of the paradoxical play of sensorial perception that Finea has introduced into the work. With his physical reaction, the King employs and

Finea as the agent of their creation once she reveals her falsified narrative: “Yo no tengo por traiciones / las industrias del ingenio, / mayormente cuando amor ayuda al entendimiento” (547).

What the king lauds, in effect, is Finea’s almost synaesthetic ability to make word replace, and thereby practically serve as, vision. Her gender crossing carries out a distortion of the senses as narrative word and dramatic vision begin to cross, telling the characters, as well as the audience, different things that must at the same time go together. We see a similar crossing of communicative modes made by possible through cross-dressing in *La fuerza de la costumbre* and *El vergonzoso en palacio*. Serafina’s cross-dressed performance begets a transvestite portrait as well as another dual performance on the part of Antonio. In this sense, the crossed position she inhabits corresponds with a creative force that duplicates itself as it transverses the life/art dichotomy within the story of the play. The metonymic reproduction of the female cross-dresser in *La fuerza de la costumbre* further stretches visual and verbal facility as Hipólita and Félix’s narrative faculties at the end of the play defy their supposed normative transformation into proper woman and man, respectively. In this sense, the play’s discourse tells us something other than what the story has supposedly achieved.

engages the senses to represent the literal and figurative loss of sense that occurs when the Count presents these facts. Just as the level of confusion continually augments as the play continues, so too does this physical rendition of it evolve. Later in the play, the Count does an extended version of the cringing, shaking, and lamenting first introduced by the King. As this confusion reaches its zenith, the Count starts looking out into the audience for Finea, trying to pick her out of the members in attendance. This company takes the textual intensification of confusion and represents it through the trappings of performance, ultimately arriving at the creative addition of the breaking of the fourth wall. In this way, the performance pays a kind of homage to the creative model proposed by Finea’s manipulations, and stages its own moment of departure to make performance-based additions to the original playscript.

Behind or beyond a distortion of gender, the mode of articulation introduced by the female cross-dresser complicates articulation, challenging the separation of various mediums of representation that connect the audience to the play and shape their understanding of it.

If we consider the ways in which narrative and drama each lack certain defining characteristics of the other, the critic who approaches “drama as ‘defective narrative’” and “narrative as ‘defective drama’” ultimately arrives at the junction of visual and verbal manipulation. By stepping out of herself, however, and moving between genders, the female cross-dresser unites the two faculties, temporarily remedying drama’s narrative deficiency. Her version of simultaneous omniscience and unreliability betrays the dramatic format in order to forge one of its defining conventions, metatheater. For Derrida, this meddling at the margins ultimately sustains the center, of course, or as he explains in his “law of the law of genre”: “I would speak of a sort of participation without belonging—a taking part in without being part of, without having membership in a set” (59). The female cross-dresser takes up the gap between narrative and dramatic discourse, forging a dialectical ruse of visual and narrative-based deception that carries the power to temporarily re-organize social and personal identity, and more broadly, gender and genre. A focus on the “narrativity” of this figure, then, reveals the way in which she sustains an opening of “generic” possibilities, in both senses of the term. Ultimately, the visual and verbal sides of her plot rely upon each other to create their maximum deceptive effect, just as the female and male sides of her identity work in tandem to foster a variety of personal narratives at various levels of social standing. As these dynamics intensify, the cross-dressed protagonist inches closer to the audience and takes on a more central role in

sorting out the mess that she has created in the space between the metatheater on stage and the audience. It is this proximity that extends the generic limit of the art form.

La mujer por fuerza is a play that challenges boundaries through an intricate form of story-telling. Finea's deceptions breed comical bewilderment that manipulates its characters into nonsensical assertions. Her ability to alter embodied notions of sight on stage through story-telling points to a significant moment of control harnessed by the cross-dressed protagonist. In another play (definitely) by Tirso de Molina, we see this control enhanced to form an entire alternative theater within the theater, here fully independent of this protagonist. Doña Juana first intensifies the layering of the imitation of masculinity by emulating an already invented character, then wields the creation of a new dramatic arc by choreographing the imitations of, and inspired by, her imitation. A theater emerges that Juana, as Don Gil, creates, and then can crouch next to without further involvement. Here, the female cross-dresser's manipulation of appearance and word bind even closer, and the level of control similarly tightens. As I will discuss, even her servant as Don Gil seems innately aware that he enters another level of theatricality when he takes on the job.

In the past ten years, criticism related to Tirso's *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* has focused on contemporary performances of the play as well as the play's performative possibilities.³⁰ Ellen Frye notes that the play itself contains multiple degrees of meta-theatricality. In order to discuss these levels, Frye coins the term "meta-imitation" as a specific degree of metatheatrical gesture in which "a character attempts to mimic another character precisely, but that other character is him-or herself already an imitation" or

³⁰ See García Lorenzo, Sánchez-Sánchez, and Vidler for discussions of performances of *Don Gil* in Spain, operatic translation, and the United States, respectively.

“when one character adopts a new identity, and while in that role, takes on yet another identity” (129), both of which occur in Tirso’s play. Meta-imitation, in fact, is so pervasive that it is “the backbone of the entire structure of the play” (140). *Don Gil* manifests on stage as, and promotes, multiple levels of imitation that result in spectacle. While the imitation of imitation constitutes the play, how is this imitation constituted? The honor code, and the strategic role-play of the dishonored female character (via cross-dressing) provide the basis for the spectacle of imitation that follows. Doña Juana’s creation of Don Gil, and the corresponding intrigue that follows, derives from Juana’s vulnerable, dishonored state. The play, nevertheless, hones in on the comical, metatheatrical implications of her cross-dressing as opposed to the conventional, inevitable resolution of her marriage predicament.

We may see this emphasis early on in the play, before Juana has properly set much into motion as Don Gil. The first two scenes of the play present the audience with Juana’s two *criados*. First, we meet Quintana, Juana’s servant for when she operates as a woman/openly scheming cross-dresser. Quintana, privy to the details of Juana’s predicament, serves as her interlocutor as she explains her plans to become Don Gil. Within her identity as Don Gil, however, Juana has a second servant, Caramanchel. Caramanchel lacks Quintana’s knowledge, understanding only the male identity presented to him. Unlike Quintana, Juana’s servant from the start, Caramanchel has to audition for the part. One theatrically-based identity necessitates another, as Caramanchel seems innately aware of his responsibility to sing for his supper, proffering a lengthy exposition of his former masters and his subsequent adventures while serving them.

During this initial exposition, Caramanchel performs, and sets the stage for, the type of story-telling that will accompany Juana's performance of Don Gil. As Gil's servant, Caramanchel demonstrates the showmanship necessary for accompanying and serving the needs of such a theatrically-based identity, as well as the blend of artistic registers that transvestite theater entails. His explanation immediately makes explicit reference to the picaresque as he sets out to define his place in the play and its impending play-within-a-play. When Juana, as Gil, asks, "¿Qué tantos [amos] habéis tenido" (271), Caramanchel finds it most adequate to point him to Lazarillo as a useful referent for his past dealings as a *criado*: "Muchos, pero más inormes, / Que Lazarillo de Tormes" (272-73). In addition to openly likening himself to another type of character from another type of fiction, the *pícaro* defined by the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the story itself drags on indefinitely, co-opting the narrative progression of the larger story at hand, much like Julia's narrative intervention in *El laberinto de amor*. In effect, Caramanchel crafts a mini-picaresque within the play, sharing miniature, key anecdotes concerning his masters: the doctor, lawyer, clergyman, and nobleman. The stories invoke quotation, as well as the expected themes of social critique, thievery, and a realist attention to detail prompting descriptions such as "[...] que hay trazas / Dignas de un jubón de azotes. / Unos empina-bigotes / Hay a modo de tenazas, / Con que se engoma el letrado / La barba que en punta está" (419-24),

Certainly, such details about the maintenance of one's mustache will not come into play during Don Gil's weaving of deceptions. They clearly belong to another type of story, from another medium, which Caramanchel ultimately acknowledges himself as he wraps up his speech: "Si te hubiera de contar/ Los amos que en varias veces / Serví, y

andan como peces / Por los golfos de este mar, / Fuera un trabajo excusado, / Bástete el saber que estoy / Sin cómodo el día de hoy, / Por mal acondicionado” (479-86).

Caramanchel seems to realize he has moved into another sort of representation that cannot continue to exist efficiently in the *comedia*, where, pressed for time, things must move along. This same awareness, however, speaks to the way he positions himself as a servant not for Juana, but specifically tailored to Don Gil and his cross-dressed treachery. In his theatrical gesture to audition for the role of Don Gil’s servant, he introduces a narrative pause that mimics the fostering of generic crossing most efficaciously carried out by a character like Doña Juana later in the play. Caramanchel need not prove that he can understand anything about the impending intervention (and indeed, he does not, and spends most of the play utterly, and comically, confused about what exactly Don Gil is up to). The motive and personal specifics are not necessary; Caramanchel intrinsically understands instead the mode of representation, representation as deception, as crossing, that Don Gil brings to the play.³¹

In order to protect herself from the threat of her own lost honor, Doña Juana turns to cross-dressing. Her newfound mobility brings about the expected freedom of male

³¹ The 2003 production of this *comedia* by the Teatro Galileo in Spain used elements of costume to draw out Caramanchel’s increased theatricality, since he plays servant to the consummate performer of the work. In this rendition of the play, Caramanchel, played by Luis Miguel García, positions himself on the bridge formerly occupied by Doña Juana and her non-theatrical *criada* at the start of the play. Caramanchel assumes a liminal physical positioning, given that he stands on a connector of two definable places. As he delivers the speech discussed above, his “audition” for the role of Don Gil’s *criado*, he tries on Don Gil’s green scarf, providing another implicit nod (here, sartorial) to the invented nature of Gil’s persona and its reliance on clothing for innovation of the prior model (as I will discuss further in the analysis that follows in the body chapter). Within the text, Caramanchel has to prove himself in a theatrical manner before he can take part in Juana’s theatrical project as Don Gil. Such a tryout requires a prop that visually connects Caramanchel to these theatrics in order to label him a character-actor to Don Gil’s impending metadrama.

privilege, but also makes her dramaturge *par excellence*, such that she may re-create the psychological effects of her dishonoring on Doña Inés and Don Martín (the man responsible for dishonoring her and his new love interest), effectively re-staging aspects of her experience for the audience. In this sense, role-play and the honor code become intimately linked, with the dishonored female character manipulating the regulatory fantasies that threaten her fate. It is from this point that a full spectacle of theatricality may emerge, with three characters (Don Martín, Doña Clara and Don Juan) imitating Juana's male persona, Don Gil, in the street. The self-creation of the female cross-dresser guides the self-conscious acting out of creativity and performance itself on stage.

Doña Juana's invention of Don Gil is not entirely original. Her character copies that of Don Martín, such that meta-imitation provides the impetus for all the role-play that follows from Juana's version of the character. Her mimicking of Martín's creative impulse arises as a defense mechanism due to Martín's abandonment. Similarly, Don Martín's creation of Don Gil also functions as a defense maneuver. As Juana explains in the opening scene of the play, Don Martín adopts his alter ego at the advice of his father in order to avoid any legal run-ins as he pursues Doña Inés (173-80). Doña Juana's version of Don Gil, however, does not plainly mimic the character invented by Martín. She instead uses the name, and her disadvantaged position, to create a more attractive and interesting character than that of the source material. In her opening speech to Quintana, Juana emphasizes the Don Gil prototype's lack of origin: "Y en vez de su hijo, a un Don Gil / *De no sé quién*, de lo bueno / Que ilustra a Valladolid" (emphasis mine; 194-6). Doña Juana takes this "De no sé quién" and invents perhaps the most essential aspect of her version of the character, the green breeches. When Juana crafts "Don Gil de las

Calzas Verdes,” she outfits her Don Gil with a costume and a lineage in one fell swoop. Her economic choice not only introduces the green imagery and its corresponding discourse of hope, but also creatively expands upon the model offered by Don Martín. Juana’s creative gesture arises from the necessity of her jeopardized social role as an honor dispute creates a theater of invention.

Given that the Don Gil spectacle arises from an honor dispute, Juana initially positions the theater of her ruse accordingly, and focuses on re-staging the effects of her ordeal via Doña Inés. Here, imitation extends beyond the repetition of an individual character and becomes a matter of reproducing whole scenarios and moments of psychological experience. As scholars such as Catherine Larson and Robert Bayliss have pointed out, Juana’s manipulation of Inés as a result of this ploy compromises the feminist quality of her project, given her lack of regard for female solidarity within a patriarchal structure. In this sense, Juana’s repetition of her own ordeal does not initially share the creativity of her fashioning of Don Gil; she merely wishes to repeat rather than invent or subvert within this repetition. During Act 3, as Inés expresses her anger with Don Gil and feelings of betrayal, Juana makes this intention explicit in an aside to the audience: “[...] y heme holgado, / Porque experimente en sí / Congojas que me ha causado” (2498-500). In the same moment that Doña Juana achieves the desired effect as dramaturge, she confirms that nothing about the feminine experience of the honor code will be any different for Don Martín’s next love interest.

Although Doña Juana does not initially capitalize on the inventiveness of her creative position toward subversive ends, her ability to create convincing persona consistently protects her from the harm of honor and its corresponding social

performances. Later in Act 3, Doña Inés attempts to retaliate against Don Gil for his womanizing, exposing his actions “a voces” (2548): “Este es Don Gil, el que engaña / De tres en tres las mujeres. / Don Miguel, véngame dél; / Tu esposa soy” (2549-51). To counter this move, Doña Juana signals her own metatheatrical spectacle, convincing Doña Inés that she is in fact another invented character, this time, Doña Elvira (2556-7). When Doña Inés protests, Juana points to the green breeches as the cause of Inés’s disbelief: “Su vestido / Y semejanza hizo el daño” (2563-4). In this moment, Juana draws attention not only to an invented character, and to her original addition to that character, the green breeches. From this point of intrigue, Doña Juana is able to further entwine Doña Inés in complicated explanations of deception.

Once Doña Juana has replicated her own experience for Doña Inés and complicated the goals of Don Martín, her artistry may develop beyond the honor dispute into its own theater. At the end of Act 3, Doña Juana looks on as Don Juan, Don Martín and then Doña Clara all appear on stage, mimicking her character. Don Martín, desperate for Inés’ affection, even swears off his own Don Gil in favor of Juana’s version, telling Osorio: “yo he de andar / Como él, y me han de llamar / Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes” (2824-6). As each of the characters engages in the meta-imitation described by Frye, Juana observes a scene whose fictional reality she created, in which she herself has died, a death she orchestrated through the help of her servant. When Don Martín reflects upon the trouble and confusion his courting of Inés has caused, he invokes the dead Juana, causing Don Juan (posing as Don Gil) to consider yet another role for himself: “¿Qué es esto? ¿Yo Doña Juana? / ¿Yo difunto? ¿Yo alma en pena?” (2895-6). As a perplexed Don Juan contemplates the possibility of this dead Doña Juana personage, the real Doña

Juana laughs from the sidelines, commenting “¡Lindo rato, burla buena!” (2897). As audience member to her own play, Doña Juana enjoys the ridiculousness of the spectacle that has taken shape before her. Out of a dishonored position, Doña Juana crafts an entire alternate reality, originating with a creative sartorial addition in an act of meta-imitation.

Both Don Martín and Doña Juana attempt to orchestrate appearances that will meet the needs of a society composed of chaste, faithful women. It is only through cross-dressing, however, that this crafted appearance adopts a creative power that extends beyond the realm of this same fiction, creating multiple alternative realities that culminate in the comical suggestion of Don Juan as a dead Doña Juana. The female cross-dresser, in her position as playwright, makes possible a broader metatheatrical discourse within the play. Through the adoption of a male identity, Doña Juana may assume the creative power formerly wielded by Don Martín and his father. With this power, she may maneuver within the prescribed appearances of the honor code to intensify the break between appearance and reality to the point of absurdity for the audience.

While a specifically male privilege affords Juana the ability to travel in order to pursue Inés and Martín, and also to woo Inés and Doña Clara, it is not a male identity or its corresponding privilege that ultimately facilitates the creation of these multiple fictions. The break between appearance and reality that Juana plays with derives from this same rupture as experienced by the audience, or rather, the cross-dressing act. As Sedinger emphasizes, the cross-dressed stage actor offers an experience of dramatic irony for audiences who see one gender proposed by the play but know the actor to be of another. This does not create androgyny, but rather a break between the visible and the

knowable. In the case of *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, the play both makes the audience privy to multiple occurrences of this break and consistently signals the heterogeneous nature of Juana's character. While we watch Doña Juana and Don Gil pass as woman and then man to orchestrate further imitations, the servant characters consistently remind us that Doña Juana is a manly woman and Don Gil is a womanly man. As Jelena Sanchez signals in her discussion of Tirso's play, if Juana offers a version of masculinity for audiences, it is a highly effeminized version that "represents the ubiquity of a feminized mass culture in Spain" (140). In addition to the sexual connotations of the green breeches, Caramanchel's consistent commentary lets no one forget the feminine aspects of Don Gil's appearance. This constant reminder of Don Gil's effeminacy does not just resonate with a feminized society, but also offers a blended figure that the audience can identify as neither man nor woman throughout the play. These reminders signal the way in which only a blurring of these identities can sustain the break between appearance and reality that follows (and multiplies to the point of farcicality).

Through cross-dressing, the meta-*dramaturga* creates a spectacle that demonstrates the link between identity and invention by breaking the ties between appearance and knowledge. In this sense, she does not just excite male audience members through her dress, but also manipulates the theatricality of everyday life to confuse normative notions of subjectivity from the stage. In *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, this is done to extremes, creating multiple layers of imitation and confusion. The most fundamental confusion, that of Juana/Gil's identity, coupled with the audience's awareness of the subsequent intrigue, creates a theater within a theater that many (in the play and in the audience) wanted to watch.

All of the examples discussed thus far have been largely comical plays. Although Lope makes clear, and rightfully so, that all *comedia* blends tragic and comic registers, one may still note a clear difference between the severity of outcome in Calderón's *El médico de su honra* as opposed to the playful *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes* imagined by Tirso. As mentioned, though dishonor motivates all of the cross-dressing heroines discussed, this motive becomes less and less relevant as the plays focus on the creative, aesthetic power wielded by the figure, as well as the limits of this power's limit-breaking capabilities in its distortion of the experience of the drama as well as the boundaries of "drama" itself. In essence, these plays foster a specific exploration and contemplation of the creator's position, which arises from an environment of pressure and competition in the seventeenth-century context of individuals breaking from and surpassing literary predecessors. The comic environment of plays like *El lacayo fingido* and *La mujer por fuerza* creates a space for the wonderment and humorous frustration behind the mode of categorical destabilization introduced by the female cross-dresser.

Other more serious, even tragic, plays from the time period still focus on the singular figure of the cross-dressing woman, but the severity of the consequences of dishonor do not fade into the background as quietly as in the plays discussed in this chapter. This is not to say, however, that we cannot trace the employment and strengthening of the same kinds of visual and verbal deceptive techniques so clearly depicted in the aforementioned plays. Even in plays seemingly more fixated on evoking the tragic consequences of dishonoring, multifaceted story-telling that blends truth and fiction, as well as visual transformation and "passing," both prove crucial to the heroine's

theatrical presence within the work. These techniques, in effect, show us how playwrights consistently imagined novelty.

Ana Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer*, for example, has often been cited as a feminist reworking of the typical honor plot guiding *comedias de capa y espada*. The protagonist, Leonor, offers a rendition of masculinity as Leonardo that critiques, and prompts evolution in, the culturally-prescribed brand that leads to a cavalier, dishonest figure such as Don Juan. Even as secondary characters such as Fernando and Ludovico mock the precepts of honor late in the third act as Leonardo squares off with Don Juan, Leonor/Leonardo her/himself does not actively pursue or dwell on other tricks or deceptive offshoots of her disguise. Leonardo does not needlessly woo or humiliate other female characters; the point is merely to avenge Don Juan's wrongdoing. She repeats her desire for murder consistently throughout the work, suffering a number of interruptions that show hope of coming to an end in the final scene of the play.

In this showdown, it seems that Leonardo has finally achieved what he desires, but he finds his battle interrupted yet again when Ribete spies him and Don Juan on the brink of combat and alerts Leonor's brother, Fernando. When Fernando and Ludovico invade the impending swordfight, then, Leonardo's battle becomes an interim, postponing what he views as the desired solution to his problem. In the middle space of the play's development, where Leonardo stages his interjection, another "in between" space appears, in which he must improvise and put off the suspicions of his brother. Although Leonor/Leonardo seemed to be set against this inefficient posturing up until this point in the play, it has become unavoidable, and left without an alternative, he takes up the kind of creative position he had formerly eschewed. He has to tell a story that will

explain why he is fighting with Don Juan, and he begins this story with a reference to the truth of what transpired between Leonor and Don Juan.

This reference to the truth, however, becomes the jumping off point for a fiction akin to that of Julia's falsified account of herself. Like Julia, Leonardo describes meeting Leonor, effectively intertwining his cross-dressed persona with a fictionalized version of herself: "mas dejóla, ingrato, a tiempo / que yo la amaba, Fernando, / con tan notables efectos, / que el alma dudó tal vez respiraciones y alientos en el pecho" (2628-633). The way in which Leonardo makes his cross-dressed and female self coincide is notable, as is his manner of controlling the temporality of the account. In his fictional version of an honor dispute that includes the superior, transvestite Leonardo, his appearance coincides with Don Juan's disappearance. Naturally, this aspect of the tale speaks to Leonor's fantasy in which something appears to rectify the devastating reality of Don Juan's abandonment, but it also points to an important aspect of her newfound creative power as a transvestite character within the work. Speaking from the vantage point of Leonardo, she combines new sequences and temporalities into a story that, in its content, inserts fictions amongst a collection of truths.

Within this tale, Leonor, speaking as "Leonardo," also creates an exalted version of herself. She is able to re-write the vision Don Juan projects of her by dishonoring her, writing into the play an alternative from the purview of Leonardo, a competing suitor. As Leonardo, she poeticizes herself, specifically in contradistinction to Don Juan: "[...] y animaba / la vida en el dulce incendio / de la beldad de Leonor / corrida en los escarmientos / de la traición de don Juan" (2633-37). Leonardo not only praises Leonor's beauty, but further her capacity as story-teller, indirectly complimenting

his own narrative capabilities in the process (since Leonardo/Leonor tells both stories): “me declaró su historia / el lastimoso suceso / con más perlas que palabras;” (2641-643). Despite the fact that Leonor/Leonardo does not carry out the kind of aesthetic project that figures like Lope’s Sancho or Tirso’s Finea undertake while cross-dressed, *Valor, agravio y mujer* still probes the limits of narrative layering, and celebrates the ability to test these limits from within that same probing.

In contrast to Ana Caro’s *Valor*, a decidedly feminist rendition of the honor plot prompting the typical female cross-dressing narrative, Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* presents a female protagonist with much less agency or clarity within her project. Rosaura arrives to Poland with a basic plan for vengeance, equipped with male attire and sword, but relies heavily upon outside assistance. First, she presents the case to Clotaldo, who arranges for her to return to her feminine identity and aid Estrella. Clearly, this initial reversal signals the manner in which Rosaura does not wield the same creative authority over her transvestite mission as some of the prior versions of her character as designed by Lope and Tirso. Furthermore, Clotaldo’s plan for Rosaura hardly protects her; while in her feminine dress, Segismundo tries to rape her and she finds herself dealing with Astolfo’s uncomfortable advances. By the end of the play, with no helpful suggestions from Clotaldo (other than to enter a nunnery), Rosaura sees no other option than to present her case to Segismundo, looking to her former sexual assailant for a possible alternative resolution to her predicament.

Unlike others that came before her, Rosaura does not exactly craft the alternative from her own wit as facilitated by the cross-dressing act. She does, however, carve out a pocket of creative space with her final speech in Act 3 when she petitions

Segismundo to assert some narrative/artistic agency over her own story, as well as her personage within the play. While the act of asking Segismundo for help suggests little feminine agency, even with the trappings of the transvestite plot, the content of the speech, like Leonardo's, creates a kind of respite from the mechanics of the progressing events. She has the opportunity to wax poetic, and to tell a story to the teller's liking. Appearing in a hybrid generic appearance of feminine dress and male arms, for the time that Rosaura speaks to Segismundo, she is able to set the terms of her identity, while also defining her dramatic experience as has transpired on stage up until this point. Though the audience has freely watched these events, for the time of the speech, Rosaura plays with this perception, giving it its own "telling" from her cross-dressed position on stage. The speech signals an ephemeral moment of transvestite intervention in which Rosaura may exercise creative license. For the time of its narration, Rosaura can narrate as the trickster that she perhaps never managed to become as she finds narrative recourse to the personage that she lacks.

In the speech, Rosaura can narrate her own loss of agency, pointing out to Segismundo: "Tres veces son las que ya / me admiras, tres las que ignoras / quién soy, pues las tres me has visto / en diverso traje y forma" (2712-2715). When Rosaura references her three interactions with Segismundo, she refers not to the event or circumstance of the event precisely, but rather to her identity within each of these encounters. From this vantage point, she uses the elaboration of the meetings to enumerate the different aspects of her personality: first she was a woman, then a man, and now, a hybrid of the two: "La tercera es hoy, que siendo / monstruo de una especie y otra, / entre galas de mujer, / armas de varón me adornan" (2724-27). Though Rosaura

has not necessarily acted out upon the cross-dressing mode that initiates her presence in the play, here she verbally invokes it, allowing it to exist in the poetic terms of her presentation to Segismundo. The transvestite persona, the neither he nor she, becomes a figure of speech, correspondent to Rosaura's appearance on stage if not her exact persona in the play as whole.

The bulk of Rosaura's speech includes the typical origin narrative that comes to typify the cross-dresser's use of story-telling. She differs in this regard from Leonor insofar as she does not invent fictions upon fictions, or self upon self, so much as relate the facts in a way that has not garnered dramatic importance up until now in the play's overall progression. The story, nevertheless, extends to re-narrate all of Rosaura's attempts at restoring her honor throughout the play. She relates her initial meeting with Segismundo in the play's opening scene, as well as Clotaldo's proposed solution of turning her into "Astrea," all leading to her current, distressed state. The recounting of events, from a practical standpoint, is entirely superfluous. The audience has already watched all of this transpire, and Segismundo has been privy to most of it (though his recognition of Rosaura as Astrea in Act 2 remains a matter of eerie suspicion).³² Certainly, Rosaura's reiteration of the events serves to impress upon Segismundo as much as possible the dire nature of her situation so that he will take action and she can avoid the convent. I would add, however, that the lengthy discourse additionally underscores Rosaura's momentary ability to control the focus and direction of the scene.

³² From the perspective of performance, the repetition of prior events did help audience members follow the action, given that each act of a *comedia* would be separated by other forms of performance such as the *entremeses*. This logistical element probably also contributed to the impetus to have Rosaura repeat her entire plotline in Act 3. Despite this practical motivation, Calderón expounds far beyond a mere recap into the territory of poetic contemplation.

The content that she communicates both immediately to Segismundo and indirectly to the audience recreates verbally what has already taken place dramatically. In the speech, Rosaura privileges word over image while calling attention to her ability to create a hierarchy of the sensorial reception of the representation taking place on stage.

The speech does not, however, simply meditate on repetition and reiterations in a way that ignores or belittles the visual. Having explained what has already happened, Rosaura closes her petition to Segismundo with a self-description that reflects upon her appearance. In conjunction with her “crossed” appearance (dressed as a woman but bearing arms), Rosaura spends verses 2902-2921 expounding the meaning of her intermediary position. In addition to repeating a heterogeneity already evident in her sartorial presentation, the verses repeat in terms of syntax and cultural convention. Rosaura articulates herself and her purpose to Segismundo first as a woman, then as a man. For example, she initiates this closing section with the following: “Mujer, vengo a persuadirte / al remedio de mi honra; / y varón, vengo a alentarte / a que cobres tu corona” (2902-2905). She then continues to explain her actions within the “Mujer/ y varón” semantic framework, providing culturally sanctioned ideas about what one does as a woman and as a man. Here, Rosaura demonstrates that she understands the cultural script guiding sexual identity: as a woman, she acknowledges her dependency on Segismundo within the trappings of the honor code, and as a man, she promises him militaristic and political solidarity befitting the public sphere of patriarchy. As she continues, Rosaura switches between these two codes, defining her position through both, but committing exclusively to neither. This culminates in her final assertion: “porque he de ser, / en su conquista amorosa, / mujer para darte quejas / varón para ganar horas”

(2918-21).

I am interested here in the way in which Rosaura uses the semantic alternation between normative discourses of femininity and masculinity to ultimately remain outside each. Rosaura fully asserts her identity as woman, and then as man, leaving us at an impasse insofar as we may attempt to identify her as solely one or the other. She makes no effort to rectify this situation, to present herself as a third sex, but instead focuses on the distance she achieves by making this position a *story*. Through the repetition of this alternation, she uses her temporarily totalizing hold over the play's discourse to call attention to this in-between, and the narrative manipulation that engendered it. It is not just that Rosaura finds distance and perspective from binding social codes, but in the process, makes her distance a narrative position and the cross-dressed convention a literary construct. As implied by her dress, Rosaura is neither one nor the other, a "monstruo," and she creates that same mode with words, holding it up and pointing out to both Segismundo and the audience that power of invention. Although Segismundo ultimately presents Rosaura with the resolution to her honor plot, here, during the length of her speech, she is able to propose her own solution, no longer content to capitulate to Clotaldo and not yet insured by the protection of Segismundo.

Valor, agravio y mujer and *La vida es sueño* both focus far more on the tragic social implications of the honor code as it affected women during the seventeenth century than their comedic counterparts, like *Don Gil*. These examples valorize the question of women's honor and social agency without an excessive aesthetic demonstration of trickery on the part of the transvestite protagonists. Within each cross-dressed project, however, these moments of narrative meddling do occur in momentary pockets of

creative story-telling for the characters. In both cases, these moments are highly necessary: they allow Leonor, as Leonardo, to explain himself and his attack on Don Juan to Don Fernando, while for Rosaura, the lengthy petition to Segismundo serves as her last option for personal and social resolution. During such pragmatic moments of self-explanation, though, some very creative things happen. For Leonor, this means exploring the artfulness of adding in word the multiple selves she has created visually while blending and making inseparable elements of truth and fiction. In Rosaura's case, less invention takes place, but rather a reiteration that, in its repetition, calls attention to her newfound narrative control of, and subsequent distance from, the verbal coalescing of social and sartorial codes surrounding gender, as united by language. These two figures, though not consistently or explicitly focused on showing the manipulative excesses of a political project, in their political endeavors, reveal the embeddedness of these creative powers in that same project.

My purpose in this chapter has been to signal that the female cross-dresser is a creative figure. The plays analyzed, *El laberinto de amor*, *El lacayo fingido*, *La mujer por fuerza*, and *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*, all give an up-close perspective on this creativity: how it functions, and what it yields. If we approach the female cross-dresser focused on her plot points, we lose this facet of her evolution during the seventeenth century. The events of plot by and large do not change too much: dishonor, avowal for reorganization, confusion, reversal (marriage). Popular dramatists followed the formula, leading to the same normative marriage that strongly suggests a lack of true innovation in terms of the *comedia's* depiction of gender. Perhaps the point, however, is not the politics. In other words, though the overall direction or relative feminist quality of the

project does not evolve in any major structural way, the representation has a color or shade, an aesthetic value, that does.

As evidenced in these plays, the female cross-dresser tells us about theatrical art in the context of the *comedia*. The model offered to us is one of wonderment and confusion as created through narrative and visual complexity. This model coalesces by and through the machinations of the female cross-dressed character, who serves as a vessel for the exploration of social and stylistic limits. In these plays we find the image of a directorial creator who is excessively powerful and capable of new types of innovation that take up pre-existing models to surpass them. As playwrights hone in on a singular, manipulative figure, this figure becomes more powerful and metatheatrical. In *El laberinto de amor*, the figure exists as two distinct protagonists, who explore the two sides of the manipulative project separately. Such a division gives us a heightened perspective on the nature of each deceptive faculty, from Porcia's multiple costume changes to Julia's various narrative tricks, and even selves. When the visual and verbal come together in the character of Sancho in *El lacayo fingido*, the efficiency and swiftness of his tricks earns him marked praise from the other characters, even as they find themselves humiliated and utterly played. The jolliness of the folly becomes utter beguilement in *La mujer por fuerza*, as Finea stretches the boundaries of what is seen and known to their absolute limit, with their crossing bordering on synaesthesia. Finally, Doña Juana's novel version of Don Gil intensifies even the initial moment of imitation, and her ruse transforms individual trickery into a unified, functional theater.

Any artwork preserves a version of its maker for posterity. In the case of the plays discussed, the female cross-dresser elevates that legacy as she articulates a notable

distortive and manipulative capability on the part of the metadramatist that makes the creative practice highly efficient and more wide-ranging in its scope, even borrowing from narrative. The playwright's artistic enterprise faced the looming anxiety of being "new" and the pressing sense that time and money could, and would, run out. Characters like Julia, Porcia, Sancho, Finea, and Don Gil have their own urgent social concerns when they arrive on the scene. Though they may have lost control of their personal circumstance, their command within the drama ultimately takes over both action and reaction, marveling and reordering the senses of those involved. They propagate a brand of story telling unique to their liminal station that grants the art form a greater variety of tools with which to signify. Within the *comedia*, these characters defy the limitations of time, sight, and sound that necessitate the creation and conclusion of drama written for the seventeenth-century commercial stage. Their dramatic narrativity asks to be heard, if we are willing to see it.

CONCLUSION

In the dissertation, I have discussed the significance of female cross-dressing in early modern Spanish theater as highly symptomatic of the self-awareness that makes its way onto the stage during a period of great social change and artistic upheaval. I have argued that the female cross-dresser offers us a script for understanding how the *comedia* responded to the pressures that conditioned its creation as a “new art form.” This analysis aims to afford the figure a position of much greater aesthetic significance than she has been granted heretofore, due to the manner in which her appearance in men’s clothing fed the sexual interest of audience members. While the sartorial detail certainly contributes to the commercial impetus to include the character in plays, it explains the motivation for—but not the entirety of—the effect. Furthermore, the expansion of the character from its original Italian source material over the course of the seventeenth century merits our attention, as this growth offers a glimpse into what direction Spanish playwrights took the *comedia* as they made it a unique form of expression.

The dawn of the Renaissance brought with it a paradoxical revolution. The artistic struggle to be new ultimately involved a fair amount of recycling. Early modern Spanish drama and poetry both inherit Italian forms as they delineate a strong break from the status quo. Even that which must be left behind plays a fundamental role in the weaving of the new artwork. Cervantes states directly in the prologue to the first part of *Don Quijote* that he plans to launch “una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías, de quien nunca se acordó Aristóteles, ni dijo nada San Basilio, ni alcanzó Cicerón” (11). In order for such an invective to be carried out, the conventions of the chivalric genre, or more

broadly the idealist mode of expression in general, must pattern each of the title character's actions, making novels of chivalry an inextricable, implicit, and explicit component of the fashioning and theorization of the modern novel. The tradition of self-reference in early modern Spanish art involves an integrative defiance that seeks upheaval through inheritance.

Female cross-dressing allows the *comedia* to vie both with its predecessors and its own constitutive tenants toward continual newness. Early modern art strived to break with tradition, but still strategically inherited pre-existing models and forms. The female cross-dressed character embodies this pattern, as she tactically inherits masculinity, as well as the advantages of its privileged social and cultural status, toward an innovative version of imitation. In the process, we find that she does indeed gain a level of dramatic knowledge and control unlike that of the other characters on stage during the course of the play. The creative self-consciousness employed by the female cross-dresser allows for references to creator, creation, and reception. The touting of art from within does not stop at mere self-reflexive gesture. These elements, as fostered by the dramatic imagination of female transvestism, find themselves challenged by the same figure who engages them. The *comedia* aims to break from classical precepts in order to focus on a brand of entertainment more attuned to the needs and wants of its audience. As we follow the female cross-dresser's flourishing in the plays discussed in the preceding chapters, we find other forms of challenge and competition taking shape.

In the plays analyzed in Chapter 2, the removal of the transvestite persona agonizes the spectator, prompting an extended focus on the viewer-character's desperation and struggle to recover this persona. We find the spectator's place in the

triangular construction of drama singled out and questioned. From *La Baltasara* to *Afectos de odio y amor*, this character grows and adapts his own creative strategies. Whereas characters such as Álvaro, Iusefa, and Miguel of *La Baltasara* merely continue their gaze upon Francisca's corpse at the close of the work, utterly spellbound by its sight as they have been throughout the play, Calderón's character Casimiro makes strides in evolving this spectator position. Although he begins the play a crying mess over his separation from Cristerna, he demonstrates heightened metatheatrical understanding when he disguises himself as a soldier to regain access to her. He learns from the thing he views, as he also takes up role-play as a strategy to get closer to the transvestite figure. He inches closer to the manipulative mode that has captured the focus of the play. The imagination of female cross-dressing does not just highlight the role of the spectator, but it further requires a consideration and regeneration of this role.

The "play" of the *comedia* similarly undergoes both a reference and a renovation. We start with the idea that creative role-play can infuse a play with added dramatic energy and hence radically change the focus of events within a given play. Pedro and Costanza have this idea in *La fuerza de la costumbre*, as they metonymically suggest the elements of tranvestism so that the play can hopefully be about the gender reversal of Félix and Hipólita. In *Las manos blancas no ofenden*, the protagonists take up the project so dually pushed and eschewed in *La fuerza de la costumbre*, and demonstrate the way in which the play can be shifted from its initial premise, making the alteration the sustained focus of the *comedia*. *El Aquiles* features the same veering from one dramatic premise to another as the subject of myth, leaving us in anticipation of Deidamia's intervention in the never-completed second part. Tirso infuses a rare reversion to the dramatization of a

mythological plot with the addition of creative role-play. Achilles's prolonged games and courtship with Deidamia pause the forward movement of his development as a military hero, while Deidamia's cross-dressed presence in the final moments of the play promises another impending diversion. Plot progression finds itself challenged, manipulated, and ultimately redirected by female cross-dressing projects, as illustrated most clearly by these *comedias* that make this labyrinth their primary focal point.

While plays like *Las manos blancas no ofenden* and *El Aquiles* offer an unusual glimpse of male transvestism and its alternative creative model, it is the female cross-dresser who gains dramatic agency as a result of her rise in social status upon acquiring a male identity. This acquisition translates to heightened control that allows the figure her final dramatic reference within plays: to that of the creator him/herself. She becomes more and more of a story-teller, borrowing staple narrative techniques crucial to non-dramatic media while multiplying and layering visual selves. The trickery becomes increasingly adept until she creates a theater entirely separate from herself in *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*. Again, the referent expands its signifying power while preventing any stagnant image of the dramatist.

As the *comedia* refers to itself, it also interrogates its referenced precepts, sustaining the consistent audacious suggestion that each element become what it is not: that the viewer be more like the thing he watches, that the play forsake its normative jumping-off point to instead unravel reversals, that the dramatist tell stories like an author while spinning representation out of sensorial control. The version of dramatic self-reflexivity wrought by creative self-consciousness works like a tragicomedy, a breakdown that ultimately rebuilds an artwork founded upon twists, turns, and

bifurcations that cannot last but that recycle, innovating upon their prior models. In this way, the *comedia* continues to respond to both the threat of the past and challenge of the future in its execution on stage.

The *comedia* was hard on itself, and in the process of questioning each element of its composition, strived to remain dynamic and fresh. Seventeenth-century artistic self-reference in early modern Spain across genres of expression involves in some way an acknowledgement of the different aspects of the creative process from within, as fueled by a general environment of competition and anxiety surrounding the fleeting nature of the increasingly individual artistic enterprise. These references appear to have allowed a method of mapping out the individualization and uniqueness of each art form, as is the case with the *comedia nueva*. In my analysis of the female cross-dresser's elucidation of creative self-consciousness as related to drama, I have highlighted her engagement with each aspect of the process. This exploration has required a vaster vision of what I consider to be early modern Spanish theater's creative engagement with transvestism. In order to understand the full function of the character, we must be aware that her creation arises from a more expansive curiosity with gender-bending that relocates how we understand the source of the figure. Rather than regard her as pure show for the pleasure of the male gaze, we also may see the character as originating from another creative inquiry that starts with the hermaphrodite, who offered a more totalizing breakdown of gender.

My critical move has been to relate this imagination to the building of the dramatic aesthetic that has made early modern drama the object of continued critical, artistic, and cultural interest, particularly given the founding of the National Classical

Theater Company in 1986, Spain and the continued staging of Golden Age plays. From a political and ethical standpoint, of course, it is important not to glorify the meaning behind the artistic appropriation of individual gendered practices, particularly given the negative ramifications that this could have for the subject in question. For example, it would be a mistake to interpret the tale of Eleno/a de Céspedes as a fanciful illustration of gender's fluidity that directly inspired artists to make interesting art. Eleno/a's trial, though often ridiculous in its probings about Eleno's alleged penis, is not a laughing matter, as it ultimately forced Eleno/a out of his chosen life and profession and back into a female gendered identity. More importantly, these individuals are far removed from their *stories*, the discursive element that ends up defining them and preserving them for posterity. My discussion of Francisca Baltasara, Catalina de Erauso, and Queen Christina of Sweden has not been precisely about them but about their *representation*, their discursive presence in the written and painted impressions of others. The question, in this sense, has been that of their cultural consumption, and the theatrical translation of this consumption to the stage of the public theater. Even with the existence of a memoir, it is clear that what Catalina de Erauso thought of her fame, or how she cared to define her identity, cannot be discerned from the materials that we have left of her story. In his portrait of Magdalena Ventura, Ribera clearly deliberately distorts the subject's physical appearance to accentuate a physicality that would read as "unnatural" and shocking to those expecting a normative female or male appearance. With his inscription, he makes this portrayal about himself and his ability as an artist, rather than about accurately representing the subject at hand.

The movement from real-life to stage, then, might more accurately be described as the evolution from one mode of cultural representation to another. These forms of representation are of critical importance for literary scholars. Since the expansion of what constitutes “text” or object of study in the realm of literary criticism, we have come more easily to recognize the presence of representation outside traditionally-defined genres of texts. In the cases of “La Baltasara,” “La monja alférez,” and “Cristina de Suecia,” the cultural building of persona translated directly to theater as each dramatist aimed to profit from their social and cultural significance by promoting further access to the three figures. We can read other types of “source-texts” that influenced the theater, as well as how dramatists chose to inherit them. Certainly, the images of each persona as crafted for the stage do not match the details that we have about their cultural presence during the seventeenth century. The shaping and re-working of the three stories offers us a glimpse at the strategic legacy of seventeenth-century drama.

What dramatists highlight in their versions of real-life cross-dressers on the stage is the curiosity and insatiable fascination with the figures on the part of the public. They replicate the representational impulse on the part of early modern Spanish culture, the desire to bring the individuals closer, to have access to the shock and potential wonder of gender play. The fluidity of supposedly fixed categories of identity as it existed in real life found itself the repeated object of both creative interpretation and the subsequent gaze of public spectatorship. A principal fascination with gender play and the knowledge of gender’s slippage as a signifier supports the continued flourishing of self-aware dramatics.

In short, my consideration of the role of real-life gender-bending in shaping the form and function of female cross-dressing in *comedia* sheds light on the importance of gender troubling in the formation of the dramatic aesthetic of the seventeenth-century commercial theater. The notion that gendered identity (a purportedly fixed thing) could be creatively translated to the development of a drama that would also break from precepts while signaling its novelty from within. My approach here offers a paradigm shift insofar as the question flips from what gender play in the *comedia* can reveal with regard to how early modern Spain understood and imagined identity to how this understanding of gendered identity informs the making and receiving of art. Art speaks to gender, but does gender speak to art? In the past thirty years, feminist interventions into studies of the *comedia*, as well as early modern Spanish art in general, have focused on broadening the scope of what *comedias* say, and who writes them. The rediscovery of female dramatists such as Ana Caro, María de Zayas, and Ángela de Azevedo expanded our idea of the feminist potential of the *comedia*'s frequently employed honor plot. In addition to the extension of the canon itself, feminist readings of male-authored *comedias* offered more nuanced perspectives on the importance of characters such as Rosaura, whose subplot had previously been condemned as detrimental to the entire quality of Calderón's masterpiece. The *comedia* could address issues other than mythological reference, questions of religious determinism, and the very nature of the relationship between representation and reality, to name a few examples. The *comedia* represented an array of desires that fall outside the strict hetero/homosexual dichotomy, explored feminine subjectivity through strong female characters, and engaged the notion that gender and other forms of identity consisted of role-play.

Having explored what *comedia* communicates about gender, I have endeavored here to inquire how the *comedia* appropriates gender as a motivational and evolutionary tenant. I have argued that it forms an artistic inspiration that embodies certain principles and aspirations of the seventeenth-century artistic project while also communicating this same evolution from within. This methodological flip side of the coin is important because too often our view of artistic genius and what counts as unique art maintains a privileged neutral status: textual elements such as crafty metaphors, the psychological complexity of characters, or the adept consideration of a specific theme over the course of three acts cause literary greatness.

For instance, scholars such as Alexander A. Parker, Bruce W. Wardropper, and Donald D. Larson have developed paradigms for navigating the art form beyond those already provided by Lope. Parker in particular strives to steer critics away from a mishandling of genre that might occur by way of the adoption of paradigms of other national literatures that work for Shakespeare or Marlowe and render the *comedia* inferior and misunderstood. In order to avoid this pitfall, Parker develops an alternative approach that de-emphasizes psychological character development and champions the primacy of theme and poetic justice as the binding thread of the play, which pushes forth an action in which not much time remains for extensive character development. Wardropper explains that characters of the Spanish *comedia* face essentially the same illusory reality that colors their everyday lives, but do different things with it according to the type of play in which they appear. Comedic characters will find a personal truth in struggling with illusion, a process that makes them suitable for marriage, whereas serious play actors must “seek the eternal essence underlying the illusion” (3). There are comic plays and

serious plays, and characters will act accordingly. Larson, in a reading of *La dama boba*, sees all *comedia* as essentially comic, given the lack of finality that would imply tragedy, which is more easily found in lyric (43). Whereas in a comedy, characters can face the “enemy” of life and find some way to work around it, or with it, in tragedy, there are no such options. The tragic hero’s fate must be marked by hopeless descent: “His life is defined chiefly by its decline, of course: having reached the limit of his potentiality, the hero plunges toward a final conflict, passion, and ultimate defeat” (42). Such finality does not occur in the *comedia*, as there is always room for play, making the genre “indisputably comic.” Despite the relative amount of freedom implied by this separation, characters themselves do not necessarily determine their fate. They find their autonomy instead by adapting to the pre-determined matches of Fortune.

None of these lines of critical exploration should be discounted, but they remain divided from the more politically motivated examination of the *comedia* as related to its expression and exploration of identity in its racial, religious, gendered, and class-based forms. The implied message of this division seems to be that the *comedia* can deconstruct the different elements that comprise gendered identity from the stage, and be a great literary form worthy of critical examination, but one is a feminist project and one is not. By examining the translation of real-life cross-dressers to the stage in conjunction with the flourishing of purely fictional female transvestite characters, I have tried to show how a dramatic creativity emerges from the cross-dresser’s maneuvering of categories and that this creativity helps to found and propagate a model of strategic imitation and individual ingenuity from the stage. The marvel of being able to radically transform identity and circumstance at the personal level takes on a theatrical effect in the discursive search for

the cross-dressed figure of real life and in the evolution of the stage version of the *corrales*.

As theater moved into a secular format with a clearly delineated stage space, it had to be new enough to defy literary tradition, mutable enough to be freshly repeated, and exciting enough to invoke awe. As playwrights crafted a framework that would meet these demands, early modern subjectivity underwent great change as a result of the organization of an early form of mass culture and the social changes inspired by the New World encounter. Female cross-dressing enjoyed a new spotlight as it offered both a workable filter to represent the creativity and possibility of social mobility suggested by gender-bending as well as a mode of category troubling amenable to the task of accelerating and evolving drama. While we often marvel at the monstrously prolific production of dramatic art during this moment in Spanish history, we might also consider what the art form asks us to marvel at inside its verses: a character capable of the renewal, defiance, and wonder that bears down upon the entirety of the undertaking. The discovery and staging of the inherent instability of gendered identity sets a key foundation for a self-proclaimed “new” dramatic aesthetic. As “she” poses as “he,” the female cross-dressing phenomenon of seventeenth-century Spain speaks volumes and works wonders from the temporary and fundamental position of the “in-between.”

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