

Elizabeth Spragins

## CUERPOS, CUERNOS, AND ESPADAS CEÑIDAS: SEDIMENTING GENDER THROUGH VIOLENCE IN *LA MONJA ALFÉREZ*

Elizabeth Spragins  
College of the Holy Cross

*Vida y sucesos de la monja alférez* abounds with dead bodies. Catalina de Erauso (ca. 1592–after 1624) leaves these victims behind as collateral damage of Spanish imperial expansion through the regions that are now Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile.<sup>1</sup> Erauso is textually situated within the hypermasculine military society of the colonies by efficiently dispatching card sharks, army captains, indigenous combatants, and sheriffs alike. Indeed, Erauso so perfectly embodies the violent masculinity of the Spanish empire's frontiers that some critics have contended that her manliness is a caricature of masculine imperial Spanish culture.<sup>2</sup> I argue instead that Erauso's lethal gendered performance is an essential prerequisite to the recognition of them as a credible narrator. They carry out a habitual cycle of violence that, through its mundane repetition, forms a key constituting act of Erauso as a stable, gendered subject.<sup>3</sup> That repetitive violence accrues material proof in the physical form of the corpses of Erauso's victims, which in turn helps to generate a legibly masculine and credible narrating subject.<sup>4</sup> If gender is something that emerges through recursive iteration, the subject that materializes from that process can be seen as the stratified sum of these acts (Butler 522). By presenting physical evidence of Erauso's skills as a soldier, the bodies consolidate an identity that admits Erauso into a fraternity of other soldiers (Camacho-Platero; Castro Morales 228–229; Martín 138).<sup>5</sup> Their initiation into and association with this military brotherhood materializes their legibility as "varonil" while securing the support of potential compurgatory witnesses (Vallbona 132). These comrades attest to Erauso's presence and actions at key events "como el más fuerte baron" (132), as well as the credibility and validity of Erauso's textual response to the early modern colonial bureaucracy's demand for certain kinds of narratives based on embodied witnessing and experience-based authority (Folger 18).<sup>6</sup>

The stories about Erauso are nothing short of enigmatic. The young Basque noble flees life in a convent and lives as a man for nearly twenty years. They spend time as a page in several courts in Spain until eventually making their way to the Americas, unrecognized, as a cabin boy on an uncle's ship. Upon reaching the Caribbean, Erauso slips away in the middle of the night after stealing money from the ship's hold and finds work with a merchant en route to Panama. Eventually Erauso leaves that master, too, and makes their way to South America to fight as a soldier in various battles during the Spanish conquest of Chile. They are finally cornered in Guamanga and present themselves as a woman to the local bishop. On Erauso's own invitation, two matrons examine Erauso and affirm that the latter is "virgen intacta" (Vallbona 112). Erauso reassumes the veil in a convent in Lima, where they stay for two years. When word comes from Spain that they never actually took vows, they are allowed to leave the convent to return home as a celebrity. They attempt a pilgrimage to Rome, but on their way they are captured in the Piedmont and held prisoner as a spy of Philip IV. After they are freed, they are forced to return to Spain. Through a "*relación de méritos y servicios*," they seek compensation from the king in return for the losses incurred in their service to him on this occasion. This also occasions Erauso to present a case for compensation for their diligent service to the king in the New World, as

well as for permission to maintain their “*hábito de varón*” (Vallbona 131–144). On July 15, 1628, the Consejo de Índias reports to Philip IV that Erauso received “merced de quinientos pesos de a ocho reales de renta, en cada un año por su vida, [...] en consideración de lo que ha servido en ellas” (Vallbona 148). In other words, their petition was granted, at least in part.

Erauso’s behavior and their involvement with different sectors and regions of the early modern Iberian and Transatlantic worlds have led critics to characterize *Vida y sucesos* variously as a picaresque novel, autobiography, “*relación de sucesos*,” soldier’s narrative, “*memorial*,” nun’s “*vida*,” confession, or some hybrid of these common early modern genres. The multidimensional generic spectrum and historical veracity of *Vida y sucesos* notwithstanding, all of these modes of narrative share a preoccupation with establishing the narrative authority of the primary voice within the text. The patchwork of Erauso’s subjectivity can be pieced together from the collection of documents to which 21<sup>st</sup>-century critics still have access. This archive comprehends a diverse range of material, comprising both bureaucratic and literary sources. These include Erauso’s official application for royal recognition of their service and the *relación de méritos y servicios*, as well as the prose, poetry, and theatrical works that have enshrined the “*monja alférez*” as a literary and historical icon.<sup>7</sup> Somewhere between historical document and literary text lies the *Vida y sucesos*, whose complex material history I will discuss at greater length below. The subject that accumulates on the pages of the Erauso archive emerges as a product of the constraints of the colonial textual economy, both in terms of narrative authority and gender.

Due to the tortured path of transmission of the manuscript record of *Vida y sucesos*, all critics who work with *the text* must on some level acknowledge the insuperable distance between the text available to us in the twenty-first century and that created during Erauso’s lifetime (Pérez Villanueva, “Crossing Boundaries” 299). Since the first half of the nineteenth century, scholars have debated the relationship of the *Vida y sucesos* to a now-lost contemporaneous seventeenth-century text which Erauso might have had a direct hand in creating. To date, scholars have been unable to locate an autograph or printed original copy of a work charged to the printer Bernardino de Guzmán in 1625. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo and his student Manuel Serrano y Sanz famously dismissed *Vida y sucesos* as a fabrication by Cándido María Trigueros because of “*anacronismos y errores geográficos*” (369). The earliest known manuscript version of *Vida y sucesos* dates from 1784 and was transcribed and deposited in the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia by Juan Bautista Muñoz, who owned it. This manuscript was copied from another, no longer extant manuscript that belonged to Trigueros and was the source of Menéndez y Pelayo and Serrano y Sanz’s speculations about forgery.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, beginning with James Fitzmaurice-Kelly, scholars have agreed that these early theories went too far (xxxii–xliv). Extensive historical documents definitively establish the existence of a historical “*monja alférez*” and, furthermore, suggest that that Erauso had a significant hand in authoring their own life story (Merrim, *Coded Encounters* 179).<sup>9</sup> We now have access to a range of accounts of the relationship of Erauso to the text of *Vida y sucesos*. The most widely accepted is that Erauso commissioned or authorized a professional writer to tell their story as a kind of ghost writer.<sup>10</sup> Vallbona (3), Pérez Villanueva (“Crossing Boundaries” 299), Encarnación Juárez Almendros (130), and Adrienne Laskier Martín (138) agree that the Madrid manuscript, though it contains certain errors and possibly fictional interpolations, largely confirms the account of Erauso’s life that is available in the contemporaneous historical record, and that it therefore may be considered to be a somewhat reliable, if

subjective and generically hybrid, narrative.

The building up of Erauso's subjectivity through the various pages of this complex archive brings into starker relief the conventions—both narrative and gendered—that govern the texts within it. The acts that constitute Erauso as narrating subject are registered by multiple hands and thus retain some social and political contours that shape the writing of Erauso. The relationship between Erauso's body and the bodies of their victims reveals the textual construction of gender in *Vida y sucesos* to be iterative, gradual, and inextricably social. The fluidity of Erauso's gender is not incidental to their story; in fact, it is integral to their emergence as a credible narrating subject (Pérez Villanueva, "Crossing Boundaries" 303–306; Perry 396). If reading Erauso's narratives requires us to "excavate a subjectivity that bleeds through the page" (Goldmark 216), our first step in reading them must be to disinter and identify the vessels whose crimson ink saturates the text: the dead bodies that help constitute that subjectivity.

### **Witnessing, the Hábito de hombre, and Violence**

Like other early modern colonial narrators, the figure of Erauso emerges within the confines of the bureaucratic hierarchy of compensation and service. Erauso and their colonial contemporaries sought recognition of and compensation for their actions on behalf of the king and the empire, and narrated these actions *in order to* be rewarded for them, not just in the abstract with renown and acclaim, but also in very material terms.<sup>11</sup> These material concerns heighten the stakes for demonstrating the story's authenticity and convincing readers that these individual eyewitnesses can be considered worthy of the crown's *merced*.<sup>12</sup> Because of the distances between the seat of power and its colonial possessions, Portuguese and Spanish imperial expansion into new territories created an urgent need for witnesses that could report what was happening on the ground back to the capitol (Folger 20–21).<sup>13</sup> Into the epistemological void of expansion surged *cartas relatorias*, *crónicas*, *relaciones*, and *noticias* that documented events overseas and responded to bureaucratic demands for information. That vacuum mobilized the rapid consolidation of the state as a prime catalyst for literature, because "the bureaucracy invited and forced individuals in the colonies to write reports about their personal experiences and observations which could provide valuable information for government and justice" (18). The subjects who produced these texts established narrative credibility and sought "*merced*" by highlighting praiseworthy and reimbursable actions within the historical and geographical frames of the events they portrayed.<sup>14</sup> These narrating subjects also situated themselves with respect to other compurgatory witnesses that would verify their claims and situate them within a reputable community (Pupo-Walker, *La vocación literaria* 104, 108–11).<sup>15</sup> In colonial soldiers' narratives, compurgation arises from the fraternity of a military community: "the [...] rhetorical emphasis on the veracity of its referent is linked to the construction of a soldierly identity based on shared military experiences in the social spaces of war" (Martínez 95). The narrated material that such military voices undertake is limited explicitly to what they can attest to as a result of their physical presence at the time of the event (94). At least theoretically, such shared experiences streamline fact-checking, but they also impose implicit, or in the case of "*relaciones de méritos y servicios*," explicit generic limitations: certain recognizable features must be present in a soldier's narrative, or it will not be legible as such. As a military participant in the colonial space, Erauso becomes legible as an eyewitness who contributes to the colonial scriptural economy through the use of such recognizable forms—what Goldmark terms "*hábitos*," which

“[intertwine] vassalage, profession, and gender to designate a pre-established form for a soldier’s service and a petitioner’s claim” (218).

While earlier criticism of the Erauso corpus characterized the lieutenant nun as a rebellious, transgressive, or even deviant individual subject, recent work on Erauso’s *relación de méritos y servicios* instead highlights the construction of a standardized Erauso through this imperial bureaucratic network. Merrim suggests that *Vida y sucesos* “reflects [...] Erauso’s larger strategy vis-à-vis her own anomaly [, which] entailed her actively seeking to convert anomaly into notoriety, notoriety into celebrity” (“From Anomaly to Icon” 196). Merrim’s theory effectively positions *Vida y sucesos* within a deliberate marketing campaign to gain public recognition and compensation for Erauso’s services as a soldier in the Americas and earn a dispensation from Philip IV and the Pope to continue to dress as a man (176). While the success of Erauso’s *relación de méritos y servicios* does confirm their status as a deserving and famous subject on the authority of the colonial bureaucracy, the archive of documents regarding the *relación* is the product of the insuperable power disparity between the bureaucracy and the individual eyewitness (Folger 34). I thus depart slightly from Merrim’s characterization of Erauso’s marketing campaign as “strategy,” and instead adopt Folger’s differentiation, following Michel de Certeau, between *strategy* as the manipulation of power relationships by subjects “with will and power” and *tactic* as calculated action determined “by the absence of a proper locus” and executed “in isolated actions, blow by blow” (46–8).<sup>16</sup> Tactical reaction, rather than strategic action, characterizes Erauso’s picaresque-like narrative: the protagonist lives an itinerant, contingent, and unpredictable life on the frontiers of Spanish empire while moving from town to town and duel to duel. Differentiating between strategy and tactics in the case of Erauso allows us to appropriately position them as a subject: that is, as a cog in the imperial machine and an entity responding to and constrained by regulatory gender norms.

Erauso’s complex gender performance introduces a significant complication to the position from which they enunciate, though critics disagree about the extent to which their ostensible public “exposure” as “truly” female contributed to or detracted from the authority of their tale. Pérez Villanueva argues that “women outside of the convent were not considered to have the authority to write in the first-person singular” (*Life of Catalina de Erauso* 115). On this argument, Erauso’s capacity to narrate is predicated on their success in passing as a man—a success achieved not only through sartorial disguise but also through the material modification of their body, as well as through their successful narrative presentation of themselves as a powerful male (127).<sup>17</sup> Other female-coded models for credible autobiographical narrative were available to Erauso, especially among religious female confessional voices, such as Teresa de Jesús’s narrative framing of her own “*alumbradismo*.” As Georgina Dopico-Black argues, Teresa’s ability to establish her own hermeneutic and epistemological authority from an explicitly female position of subordination is central to her telling of her mystical experience of the divine: “Teresa relies on experience in order to negotiate a position of knowledge that is precariously balanced between subjectivity and subjection” (110). In other words, Teresa’s gender, framed as intellectually and otherwise submissive and inferior when she refers to herself as a “*mujercilla flaca*” (111), is deployed as part of her claim to experiential knowledge of the divine, in contrast with the theoretical knowledge of the “*letrados*” who will judge her tale. The assumption is that, as a woman, Teresa is fundamentally less credible than her male, educated counterparts and overseers. While Teresa relies upon her own privileged

knowledge of the signs of mystical experience within her own body, as well as her ability to interpret those signs, to claim unique authority to narrate, she nevertheless falls back on the male mediators to whom she tells her story to serve as witnesses in her defense (113–14). Such a female-coded model does not emerge in a consistent way in Erauso’s corpus. If Teresa subordinates herself and depends as supplicant upon male interlocutors for compurgation, Erauso instead violently inscribes herself as an equal to the male witnesses who will testify on their behalf (Castro Morales 232).

Indeed, critics like Merrim, Kathleen Ann Myers, and Perry argue that it is precisely their generic complexity that allows Erauso to make a unique claim to narrative authority. Myers posits that “The Monja Alférez’s petition to the Crown, in fact, builds a case upon a dual argument: the merits of her deeds as a soldier *and* the singularity of her position as a woman fighting in the army” (182). According to Merrim’s reading of the “pedimento,” Erauso endeavors to capitalize on the Baroque fascination with the monstrous and the prodigious by putting their transgressive body on display to the “*narratario*”: “[...] in claiming reward for the ‘singularity and prodigiousness of her life/story,’ in spotlighting rather than stifling certain transgressive aspects of her life in the Petition, Erauso capitalizes on the prevailing aesthetic for her own gain” (“Anomaly to Icon” 195). I take seriously Merrim’s, Myers’s, and Perry’s suggestions that part of Erauso’s narrative achievement does indeed depend upon the delicate balance Erauso strikes between male-inflected violence and female sexual purity. Nevertheless, I am inclined to accept Pérez Villanueva’s contention that Erauso’s material gains—the royal stipend and papal dispensation to dress as a man—are contingent on their audience’s reception of their performance as sufficiently masculine (“Crossing Boundaries” 303–4). In particular, certain key aspects of the suite of narratives around their life valorize their masculine-coded imperial activity as an inextricable part of their narrative authority. Erauso’s petition to Philip IV, for example, highlights this preference for masculine-inflected action by emphasizing their deserving recompense for “servicios,” “peregrinaciones,” and “hechos valerosos” (126–134)—all actions that would only have been available to someone enacting a successful male performance in the imperial process. Goldmark rightly argues that Erauso’s *hábito de hombre* “becomes a necessary precondition for service [to king and empire] rather than a transgressive choice” (218).

Erauso’s performance of gender in *Vida y sucesos* is recursive, iterative, and tactical: Erauso’s tale and narrative authority is the product of an ongoing, socially dependent process, undertaken in circumstances of limited power and maneuverability (Butler 522). Even if the bureaucratic success of Erauso’s account of themselves is contingent upon a richer and more complex range of factors than gender alone, including rank and profession, Erauso would not be able to satisfy those prerequisites of rank and profession without first having attained legibility as masculine. Successful gender performance opens the door to Erauso’s career path of soldiering and enables them to earn the chorus of compurgations by fellow soldiers and officers that accompany the supporting documents of their *relación de méritos y servicios* (Vallbona 131). They become legible as a military man through narrative practices that were well established by the seventeenth century and thus render themselves deserving of rewards in recompense for their services as a soldier (Pérez Villanueva, *Life of Catalina de Erauso* 110).<sup>18</sup> According to Martínez, such military narratives were defined by their matter-of-fact attention to bodily violence and discourse, which in turn were directly related to their financial, social, and discursive survival (206).

The archive does not ultimately effectuate a transition of Erauso from female to male,

nor do we necessarily need to know if Erauso aspired to such a transition. Nevertheless, Erauso's performance of gender throughout the *Vida y sucesos* and in their *relación de méritos y servicios* consistently and actively seeks to situate itself vis-à-vis what is "varonil," styling Erauso somewhere within the confines of that contested zone.<sup>19</sup> A critical aspect of Erauso's "*hábito de hombre*" is the violence Erauso commits and references as evidence of their narratorial credibility. Indeed, as the *pedimento* of their *relación de méritos y servicios* makes clear, the lieutenant's affinity for violence is a constituent part of their success in assuming that "ábito de barón": "ha diez y nueve años pasó a las provincias del Perú en ábito de barón, por particular inclinación que tubo de ejercitar las armas" (Vallbona 131).<sup>20</sup> A process of gradual sedimentation, by which the disparate but recursive acts of gender accumulate and materialize as a stratified subject, confirms this tactical performance of gender. Through the habitual repetition of certain violent actions, Erauso consolidates a legible appearance of embodied, masculine substance.<sup>21</sup>

When read in conjunction with the contemporaneous bureaucratic documents that comprise the record of Erauso as a historical figure, *Vida y sucesos* details the complex process by which Erauso generates a material, gendered body through their "balor de hombre," and establishes an authoritative narrative voice on the basis of that body's discrete but habituated and lethal interactions with other bodies (Vallbona 131). During the early modern period, the human body in general—and the dead human body in particular—emerged as an individualized source of information that, with the necessary hermeneutical skills, could generate and serve as referent for an apparently stable kind of truth (Spragins). Widespread interest in the legibility of the human body is evident in what Jonathan Sawday has described as the anatomical Renaissance and its corresponding "culture of dissection." Sawday compellingly argues that early modern European scientists viewed anatomical discovery as analogous to the oceanic voyages of discovery that explorers like Columbus and Francis Drake undertook (23–4). Specifically, surgeons were concerned with the utility of the body's secrets—secrets that could only be unveiled through close examination and proximity to a physical corpse (25). Early modern narrators' interest in corpses, however, goes beyond their utility in establishing scientific truth and heralds a moment at which the fundamental epistemological assumptions undergirding knowledge production were being reordered and reconstructed (ix). As Miruna Achim has shown, one of the means by which colonial and Transatlantic authors sought to understand and impact imperial networks of influence was through the latent power of socially and politically significant dead bodies (83).<sup>22</sup> Throughout the early modern period and on both sides of the Atlantic, the body becomes particularly useful at a moment of crisis in belief, "when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit [...] belief," and "the sheer material factualness of the human body" becomes useful to narrators "to lend that cultural construct a 'realness' and 'certainty.'" Above all, the corporeality of the human body—its "sheer material factualness," present even when it is mediated through text—lends the appearance of epistemic certainty and provides a tangible presence whose universality a reader can recognize, but whose uniqueness speaks to the particularity of the event at hand (Scarry 14).<sup>23</sup>

If the dissection and revelation of the anatomized corpse establishes the surgeon as hierophant—as the knowledgeable and experienced reader of the corpse as text—the textual representation of corpses situates the narrator, too, as a privileged mediator between interiority and exteriority. Demonstrable knowledge of or even participation in the production of human corpses comes to be associated with hermeneutic aptitude and

epistemological authority. Martínez argues that, particularly in an early modern military context, “violence empowered soldiers and blood enabled writing. The authority of their narratives, like their professional, symbolic capital in the society of soldiers, relied largely on killing.”<sup>24</sup> As long as soldiers rely on violence to gain professional, symbolic capital, the bodies left in their wake function as textual precursors, the humic foundation to their storytelling. The unstable corpses that result from imperial violence become “the object of scientific, social, political, or divine truths in the seventeenth century” (206). In the face of epistemic uncertainty, early modern Iberian and transatlantic narrators resort to the apparently undeniable and irreducible certainty of the witnessed—and often violently created—dead body.

Two key episodes in *Vida y sucesos* demarcate the bounds of Erauso’s most extended and successful performance of masculine gender and stand out as points of gendered inflection: Erauso inaugurates their homicidal routine in their first honor duel in Peru, and then bookends what by that point has become their habitual masculinity when they accidentally murder their own elder brother in another duel. While other critics have emphasized aspects such as the narrator’s complex gendered identity, the collective composition of Erauso’s past through the archive of their *relación de méritos y servicios*, the conscious narrative construction of the text, and even the violence of Erauso’s actions, none have connected these elements with the central organizing motif of the text: the rapidly accumulating corpses of those who have the misfortune of meeting Erauso’s sword. Erauso accumulates corpses and presents these bodies to their audience as tangible evidence of a violently successful tactical performance of gendered identity, which in turn becomes a critical aspect of Erauso’s credible narratorial persona.<sup>25</sup> More concretely, Erauso establishes a predictable cycle of violence that is inscribed within an explicitly masculine mode of embodied activity, fostering a social fraternity of textual credibility and, through these acts, reinforcing their own credibility as a witness and narrator.

### **Cyclical Violence and Performed Masculinity**

The cyclical or episodic pattern of Erauso’s narrative is established from the very first time they kill someone. Critics have rightly pointed out that Erauso’s diligent defense of their male-coded honor and participation in “rituals of insult, quick retort, and armed response” inscribes them within a recognizably masculine framework that is reinforced on a granular level by the masculine adjectives used to describe them throughout this section.<sup>26</sup> Erauso’s masculine style is assumed, constructed through, and built upon the bodies of the formulaic murders that they commit over the course of the text.<sup>27</sup> The cyclical, methodic way in which Erauso slays their adversaries is one of the means by which the narrator does work to establish Erauso’s masculinity. This gender identity is a key component of Erauso’s ability to function epistemically in their social world and highlights that they are a legible member of a masculine in-group. In particular, the first episode in which Erauso girds a sword lays the first critical layer in the sedimentation of their recognizable masculinity. Their accompanying capacity and willingness to commit violence with that weapon becomes essential to their legibility as a credible, male narrator. The narrator imposes further productive constraints on this gender performance by opposing Erauso’s legible masculinity against a domain of untrustworthy feminine voices that emerge as useful straw[wo]men for unifying textual fraternity.

In this scene, Erauso is working in the shop of their new master, Juan de Urquiza, who has to travel on extended business from Saña, Peru, to a nearby city, Trujillo. Urquiza

has told Erauso that while he is away they may entrust certain people with store credit, including his mistress, a woman named doña Beatriz de Cárdenas. Erauso's time in Saña is clearly demarcated by the phrase "al punto" (Vallbona 45, 47), and by the final use of a feminine adjective, "llegada," which is immediately followed by a moment in which their master, Urquiza, provides them with two suits of clothing. In this moment, he literally corroborates the legibility of Erauso's masculinity by clothing them as a male upon their arrival, welcoming them into his own group with these crucial early modern markers of identity.<sup>28</sup> Just as Urquiza ratifies and externalizes Erauso's masculinity, he also endorses their trustworthiness by charging them with the care of his well-stocked store in Saña and its one hundred and thirty thousand pesos. Urquiza, through his gift of masculine costume and his trust in Erauso's reliability, acts as a compurgatory witness for Erauso and establishes their position in this material and textual economy.

Erauso justifies Urquiza's trust in them and, despite Urquiza's written endorsement of doña Beatriz's trustworthiness, highlights their own skepticism of the reliability of females: "Comenzó mi Sra. Beatriz de Cárdenas a sacar ropa. Prosiguió y fue sacando tan largamente, que yo llegué a dudar, i sin dárselo a ella a entender, se lo escribí todo por extenso al amo a Truxillo" (46). In this way, Erauso both proves themselves honorable in their diligent care for their master's estate and establishes themselves as a conscientious, male-allied narrator to whose written story Urquiza lends credence with no hesitation. Erauso's actions not only illustrate their success in performing their own masculinity, but also contrast their dedication to their master with the behavior of his mistress, who, the narrator implies, takes advantage of Urquiza's generosity. The narrator establishes Beatriz as untrustworthy for abusing her position, thereby creating a foil for Erauso, who is instead portrayed as eminently reliable and mindful of their master's estate in his absence.

The narrator further diminishes Beatriz's credibility and trustworthiness by highlighting her sexual promiscuity outside the confines of marital wedlock. This is one example in which the narrator "underscore[s] the superiority and privilege of being male in this patriarchal society when she [chooses] to live as a man, even though she defie[s] social constrictions on her as a woman in order to make this choice" (Perry 411). In this episode, which establishes the ritualistic pattern of Erauso's future masculine performance, the narrator highlights their authority not just as a reliable witness, but also as a demonstrably more reliable witness than their female foil. It is here that the narrator establishes one of the major contours of the relation of powers and normative constraints that make up Erauso's world. While the boundaries between male and female performance are, of course, contested, unstable, and arbitrary, in this local instance the narrator defines Beatriz as markedly female and untrustworthy and diametrically defines Erauso against her negative example. Ultimately, despite Urquiza's eventual response that doña Beatriz may do as she wishes, Erauso further demonstrates their commitment to specifically textual authenticity by creating an archive of this situation when they safeguard the letter with their master's instructions about doña Beatriz: "guardando yo esta carta, proseguí" (46). In roughly the same timeframe during which Erauso gains conditional affirmation of their legible masculinity, the narrator clearly shows the reader the epistemic advantages that this affirmation holds in terms of the expectations Erauso may have for their own status as a transmitter of knowledge.

Later in Erauso's master's absence, Erauso goes unarmed to the theater, where a man named Reyes, doña Beatriz's nephew, insults Erauso and threatens to slash their face when they ask him to sit elsewhere so that they can see the stage. The narrator represents Erauso



in specifically masculine terms at this moment of impotence and makes it clear to the reader that they would have responded to Reyes's verbal aggression with violence had they been appropriately armed: "Yo me hallé sin armas, más que una daga, salíme de allí con sentimiento. *Entendido* por unos amigos, me siguieron y sosegaron" (46). This moment is particularly critical to their final transitional step into a recognizably male identity. Although their master had equipped them with two good suits of clothes that would allow others to read them as male, their masculinity was lacking one final but crucial feature: the tools with which to commit violence and kill. Reyes, by publicly insulting Erauso and threatening their bodily integrity in the theater, highlights this gap in their performance and manages to escape unscathed. Erauso's masculine performance has been critiqued as insufficiently masculine to defend himself.

The next day, Reyes walks by the shop twice, and Erauso clearly sees this as a further provocation and a call to action. As soon as their adversary passes by the second time, Erauso arms himself to the teeth: "cerré mi tienda, tomé un cuchillo, fuime a un Barbero i hícelo amolar i picar el filo como cierra; púseme mi espada, *que fue la primera que ceñí*" (46, my emphasis). This last phrase, in which Erauso describes how they first armed themselves, sets up the expectation that though this is the first time they have belted on a sword, it certainly will not be the last. Erauso then goes looking for Reyes, whom they find near the church with another man: a witness to the duel who will step in if the principal combatants are eliminated. Reyes and Erauso exchange a few words, and Erauso slashes a glancing blow at Reyes's face, declaring: "'Esta es la cara que se corte', y dile con el cuchillo un refilón, de que le dieron diez puntos" (46). Erauso's violence is nothing if not efficient—after quickly taking out Reyes with a cut to his face deep enough to require ten stitches, they turn to take on Reyes's second. When Reyes's friend attacks, Erauso draws their sword and kills him with a stab wound to his left side: "Su amigo sacó la espada y vínose a mí, yo a él con la mía: *tiramos* los dos, i yo *le entré una punta* por el lado izquierdo que lo *pasó* i *cayó*" (46, my emphasis). These four steps—*tirar*, *entrar una punta*, *pasar*, and *caer* – are a constant in almost every sword-fight engages in. Both the words themselves and their order are repeated in a ritual of violence and death whose repetition recursively reinforces Erauso's performance as a legible male military participant in the Spanish-American empire. The efficiency with which they commit violence speaks to their professionalization within a world governed by violent manifestations of the day-to-day business of colonialism and warfare (Martínez 10). No time is wasted on euphemisms or transcendental speculation about the nature of death—the unnamed man's death is brutal; mechanical; quick; and, as the reader soon discovers, readily reproducible.

After having injured and killed (respectively) their first two victims, Erauso flees to a nearby church to seek sanctuary. They are caught on their way in by a local official and dragged to prison: "Yo al punto me entré en la Yglesia que estava allí. Al punto entró el Corregidor D. Mendo de Quiñones del hábito de Alcántara, i me sacó arrastrando, i me llevó a la cárcel (*la primera que tuve*) i me echó en grillos i metió en un cepo" (46–7, my emphasis). The parenthetical aside that this is the first time Erauso has been incarcerated creates another precedent for later episodes in which the steps of insult, sword-fight, injury (often to the left side of the body), and homicide are almost inevitably followed by Erauso's near-arrest or arrest and incarceration. The episode concludes when Urquiza returns from Trujillo to bail Erauso out of jail. He endeavors to convince Erauso that one way of quelling everyone's tempers would be to marry his mistress, doña Beatriz—which reconfirms Urquiza's reading of Erauso as credibly masculine.<sup>29</sup> Erauso refuses, despite doña Beatriz's

best efforts to seduce them while they take sanctuary in the woman's house, and Urquiza agrees to relocate them to his store in Trujillo so that they can avoid being killed as revenge for having slashed Reyes's face and killed his friend. Even after Erauso's refusal of his proposal, Urquiza continues to work with the authorities on Erauso's behalf and finally manages to obtain their release, which at a grammatical level again confirms Erauso's male-coded identity: "fui *restituido* a la Yglesia de donde fui *sacado*" (47, my emphasis). Erauso leaves Saña on different terms—and markedly more masculine ones—than those on which they arrived: they have been confirmed as a reliable narrator and source of textual information by another man, they own two good suits of male clothing, they are consistently described using masculine modifiers, they are the object of sexual desire for women, they are a recognized and validated member of a male social network, and they have succeeded in defending their own male-coded honor from the male-specific insults of other men by use of their own weapons. In Perry's words, "from the androcentric perspective of seventeenth-century males, she has transcended her lowly condition as a woman and acceded to the superior realm of masculinity." Erauso's capacity to produce wounded and dead bodies certainly validates the legibility of their body as masculine in a way that is opposed to and easily distinguished from the untrustworthiness of a woman.

Having established the basic pattern by which they will participate in and narrate their contributions to the colonial project, Erauso goes on to repeat this formula throughout different cities in South America. In one example, Erauso kills two men with whom they play cards over the course of back-to-back chapters. In both episodes, Erauso goes to a gambling house and begins to win. When Erauso asks their opponent how much money he will bid, the opponent grows angry and calls them a cuckold. In the first episode, they exchange more words before the fight breaks out: "Bolville a decir: ¿Qué embida? Dio un golpe con un doblón diciendo: Embido un cuerno." (84). In the second episode, Erauso's opponent, Fernando de Acosta, moves almost immediately to insults: "Alargó las manos hasta cerca de mis barbas i dixo: He perdido los cuernos de mi padre" (86). The insult is telling: Erauso's masculinity is now sufficiently legible that Acosta's very taunts confirm it. Acosta insults them by attacking Erauso's visible masculinity, down to the hairs on their chin, affirming their belonging in the male in-group. Erauso, predictably, responds by drawing a weapon to defend their honor. Friends temporarily talk the incensed lieutenant down, but Erauso gets the opportunity for revenge in the street when the same adversaries attack later on.

The stock nature of Fernando's insult—calling another man a cuckold—incorporates Erauso within the masculine order through its allusion to the soldiers' shared concern for sexual honor. The very predictability of Erauso's response—to pull out their dagger or draw their sword, ready to defend their honor to the death—reiterates Erauso's successful and convincing performance of masculinity. The evidence of previous kills has accumulated to incorporate Erauso's body as bearded, but, like their male comrades, vulnerable to being cuckolded. These routine and ritualized performances of gender are not, of course, exclusive to Erauso. The same normative constraints around masculinity that dictate and facilitate Erauso's legibility also predict and validate the behavior of their companions. By participating in these rituals of challenge and the protection of public honor, Erauso becomes integral to the routine practices within the fraternity to which they pledge.

### **Fraternity and Fratricide**

The expectation that Erauso will inevitably get themselves in trouble while gambling and

have to beat a hasty retreat towards their next adventure is one of the major forces behind the momentum of the story line, which drives straight over the still-warm, prostrate bodies of Erauso's victims. The violence Erauso commits is inextricably linked to their maintenance of their male performance, which is integral to the narrative authority of the text. Nevertheless, one of the most striking features of Erauso's rote violence is the relative *lack* of lingering over their victims. Even as Erauso loses companions left and right or summarily dispatches a converted "capitán de Indios" to the detriment of their own career advancement, they display no remorse or sadness (beyond, in the particular case of the capitán, the inconvenience of being passed over for promotion): "lo hice al punto colgar de un árbol, cosa que después sintió el gobernador, que deseava haverlo vivo, y diz que por eso no me dio la Compañía" (60). For most of the text, the bodies Erauso produces serve what seems to be a purely utilitarian purpose—they signify no more than proof of narrative credibility. One exception to this nonchalance about the collateral damage of their hypermasculine violence, however, occurs when Erauso accidentally murders their own elder brother. Even as this episode highlights the emotional toll the death of Erauso's brother takes on Erauso, the heightened emotional pitch at which the fratricide is narrated actually reinforces the persuasive "*pathos*" generated by the presence of corpses—the very same pathos through which Erauso constructs their legible masculine persona.

At the beginning of the chapters, Erauso has been living quietly in Concepción under the command of Francisco Navarrete. They decide go to a gambling house with a fellow lieutenant, and the beginning of the episode follows the normal playbill for a night on the town with Erauso: insults, swordplay, injury, death, attempts at incarceration, and escape. Their companion calls them a liar and a cuckold—"me dixo que mentía como cornudo"—and they respond by running him through—"yo saqué la espada i entréela por el pecho" (62). A judicial official tries to detain them immediately and begins to interrogate them on the spot: "Entró el Auditor General, Francisco de Parraga, i acióme también fuertemente, i zamarreávame haciéndome no sé qué preguntas" (63). Luckily, their brother comes to the rescue and helps them escape. The escape is facilitated by the siblings' shared and exclusive language of Basque: "Entró en esto mi hermano, i díxome en vazquense que procurase salvar la vida" (63). Erauso kills Parraga in the process, a fact that they only find once they have reached the safety of church sanctuary: "entréme en San Francisco que es allí cerca, i supe allí que quedavan muertos el Alférez i el Auditor" (63). They seek sanctuary in the church for more than six months, and the governor surrounds the building with guards and puts out a warrant and a bounty for Erauso's arrest.

After the furor finally dissipates and the guards are removed from outside of the church, friends come to visit Erauso in the safety of the sanctuary. Among these friends is another lieutenant named Juan de Silva, who tells Erauso that he has had a confrontation with a knight of the order of Santiago and needs a second. As he pleads with Erauso for support, Silva asserts their shared membership within this military caste.<sup>30</sup> Erauso reluctantly agrees, fearing a trap. Erauso's own sense of misgiving is transmitted to the reader when the narrator foreshadows Silva's death by referring to the fact that, at this moment in the text, he is alive: "vino un día D. Juan de Silva, mi amigo Alférez *vivo*" (64, my emphasis). Vallbona reads this ambiguous passage as a clear indication that Silva, at the time of writing, is dead (64n42). The sense of foreboding is accentuated by the reader's own acclimation to the ritualized routine of how Erauso's duels usually end.

Silva and Erauso eventually leave for the place where the duel will take place. The reader's expectations of misrecognition are again primed when the narrative voice tells us

that it was so dark that Erauso and Silva could hardly see their hands, and that they had to take precautions so as to be able to recognize one another in the fight: “Era la obscuridad tan suma que no nos víamos las manos; i advirtiéndolo yo, hice con mi amigo que para no desconocernos en lo que se pudiese ofrecer, nos pusiésemos cada uno en el brazo atado su lenzuelo” (64). This scene, in which Erauso ties their handkerchief around their arm in order to render themselves distinguishable from the other men involved in the fight, undoubtedly highlights the extent to which Erauso has been integrated as a member of this violent fraternity. By now Erauso has accumulated such legible masculinity that they are indistinguishable from and interchangeable with any of their compatriots in the dark. The anticipation of misidentification underlines for the reader the widespread acceptance of Erauso as verifiably masculine, and as a thoroughly assimilated member of this male, military, and violent society.

The duel begins and, shortly, Francisco de Roxas injures Juan de Silva. Erauso, fulfilling their role as the second, begins to fight, and both Silva and his opponent soon fall. Disregarding the dead bodies of their companions, Erauso and Roxas’s second fight on until Erauso runs their adversary through below his left nipple: “Proseguimos yo i mi contrario batallando: entréle yo una punta por baxo, según después pareció, de la tetilla izquierda, pasándole, según sentí, colete de dos antes, i cayó” (65). Vallbona’s footnote on the word “colete” draws our attention to the sheer physicality of this moment of battle: “la frase ‘...pasándole, según sentí, colete de dos antes,’ connota la fuerza de la estocada mortal que pudo atravesar dos pieles de animal y llegarle al corazón de la víctima” (65n45). In this moment, Erauso is profoundly aware of the body of their adversary, and they will maintain this awareness long after he draws his last breath. The anatomical specificity with which the narrator describes the mortal wound—“la tetilla izquierda”—also betrays a lingering over the corpse that is different from the usual efficiency with which Erauso dispatches other opponents. For instance, when describing the death of the Portuguese card player who insults Erauso, the narrator merely remarks in passing: “entréle una punta i cayó muerto” (87). In this particular episode, Erauso’s prolonged lingering over the agonizing body of their brother is also accentuated when the narrator highlights a temporal delay between the moment of killing and the moment when they discover what part of their opponent’s body they have stuck their lance into: “según después pareció” (65). Erauso develops this awareness of the opponent’s body only because they stay when the opponent cries out, “¡Ha, traidor! ¡que me has muerto!” (65). In one sense, Erauso’s keen awareness of this particular opponent’s body and their ability to deploy specific details about Miguel de Erauso’s dying figure once again underlines their reliability as narrator. Even during moments of heightened emotion and action, Erauso is able to recall and report key details about an event. These details can also be read as the sedimentation of the accumulated evidence of prior duels that have brought Erauso to this moment. While Miguel de Erauso is a new victim, his undeniably material wounds and the ritualized duel leading up to them conform to the pattern of violence Erauso has established: insult, swordfight, injury, death, confinement.

Despite Erauso’s fear, prior to the duel, of being mistaken for someone else in the dark, their opponent has managed to identify them as someone who owes him loyalty—as the person whom Miguel de Erauso previously helped escape from justice: Lieutenant Díaz. However, Erauso’s own anagnorisis is still suspended even after Miguel speaks, and they have to ask whom they have killed: “Yo quise reconocer la habla de quien yo no conocía. ¡Preguntéle quién era!” (65). The exclamation points themselves heighten the drama of the

moment and amplify this unusual lingering over the body of a dying man.<sup>31</sup> The interjection also draws attention to Erauso's own awareness of himself—in the sentences that bookend the disclosure of their brother's identity, Erauso names the narrative “yo” on three separate occasions in which the verb alone would have been sufficient to identify the subject of the verbs without ambiguity: “yo quise,” “yo no conocía,” and “yo quedé” (65). Erauso's proximity to their brother's expiring body brings the identification of the witness into crisp focus and empowers their narrative voice to testify precisely to the facts of the matter and identify the critical actors. At this climactic point in the plot, the power of Erauso's narrative voice as “yo” is brought into stark relief. The disbelief the narrative voice directs towards itself also discloses an extended rumination over the agonal moment of their brother's death, particularly when we compare this relative contemplativeness with the glibness with which Erauso previously has treated previous victims. The drawn-out suspense of anagnorisis is brought to a close when the identity of the dying man is finally revealed in his own voice: “Dixo: ‘El Capitán Miguel de Araujo’” (65).

As in other moments in the text when they have killed someone in a swordfight, Erauso goes running to the church. This time, though, they go there not primarily to seek sanctuary, but rather to bring two priests to the dying men to hear their final confession. Silva and Roxas die soon afterwards. Erauso's brother is taken to the house of the governor to be treated by a doctor and a surgeon, according to the narrator, because of his more exalted social position in the viceregal hierarchy: “A mi hermano lo llevaron a casa del Gobernador, de quien era Secretario de guerra” (65). There, a doctor and a surgeon do what little they can for the captain, a statement is taken about the deaths of Roxas and Silva, and Miguel de Erauso is denied a final mouthful of wine by the doctor. He dies soon enough, after berating the doctor for being even more unsympathetic than Erauso himself: “Más cruel anda vuestra merced conmigo, que el Alférez Díaz” (65). With his last words, Miguel de Erauso unwittingly confirms the successful passing of his younger sibling into masculine testimonial credibility—he recognizes Erauso not as a blood relative, but rather as a member of his military tribe. Erauso's words about his death are confirmed and validated by their own participation in having brought it about. The governor again surrounds the convent and attempts to force his way in with a guard, but the friars resist, and the governor withdraws, leaving the guards behind.

With the immediate threat of Erauso's arrest averted, their brother's body is interred in the same church: “Muerto el dicho Capitán Miguel de Araujo, lo enterraron en el dicho Convento de San Francisco, viéndolo yo desde el Coro: sabe Dios con qué dolor” (65). The first part of this sentence reads as an epitaph or official statement about the man's demise—Miguel de Erauso has died and was buried in the convent of San Francisco in Concepción, Chile. This information is attested to by a named witness—Erauso himself. This confirmation irrevocably substantiates their position as eyewitness to yet another corpse, as well as their efforts to establish their own narrative *ethos* and to evince sympathetic *pathos* in their reader. In the moment of their brother's death, they continue to establish themselves as a reliable, textually oriented witness who can be depended upon by the colonial administration to submit accurate written reports of colonial events. Even as their “*ethos*” as colonial eyewitness is upheld by their presence at Miguel de Erauso's burial, the second part of the sentence betrays Erauso's own feelings about Miguel de Erauso's demise and seeks to persuade the reader through *pathos* by awakening feelings of empathy and identification with the narrator. Erauso remains transfixed by the sight of their brother's corpse, unable to tear their eyes away, and witnesses the inhumation from the choir of the

church. The pain they feel at this moment, as well as the juridical process, paralyzes their movement and delays for months what at other points in the book would be a rapid resolution of the episode. The narrator tells us: “Estúbeme allí ocho meses, siguiéndose entretanto la causa en rebeldía, no dándome lugar el negocio para presentarme” (66). Though this protracted stay in Concepción following Miguel de Erauso’s burial is supposedly due to the governor’s trial of Catalina de Erauso for insubordination, such legal formalities have hardly managed to keep them locked away elsewhere in the text. Rather, Erauso’s contemplation of their brother’s dead body and grave of their brother, which lasts for the better part of a year, seems to stem from their own self-flagellation for failing to recognize him. That self-flagellation, however, does not undermine Erauso’s own credibility as narrator in any way. On the contrary, Erauso’s murder of their own brother is the moment in the text at which Erauso learns to mobilize other rhetorical strategies to further compel their audience to believe the story as they tell it.

This episode of mistaken identities in many ways repeats the murderous episode that immediately precedes it, even down to the similar injuries Erauso inflicts on the two men’s chests. Miguel de Erauso’s death follows the same formula as those of their previous victims—in killing their brother, Erauso generates more compelling evidence of the violent masculinity upon which their narrative authority relies. Indeed, they even affirm their position as an eyewitness to the burial of Miguel de Erauso, noting the position from which they observed this event. Thus, their witnessing of his body becomes linked to their status as witness—a status they have previously used for and will subsequently endeavor to use for their own eventual financial benefit. Miguel de Erauso’s death, though it leaves them materially and spiritually emaciated, affirms in Erauso the narrative power they have accumulated through the acquisition of male accoutrements and the performance of masculine swagger. The repetitiveness of the murder episodes, which could allow us to dismiss them as simply serving a generic, plot-driving function, actually serve to sediment Erauso’s performance within the lines of a normative, gendered schema.

### **Conclusions of Model Readership**

The Bishop Fray Agustín de Carvajal models for Erauso’s reader how to receive Erauso’s story when the consequences of masculine violence finally catch up with them. After yet another violent run-in in Guamanga with gambling partners threatens to get Erauso in trouble with the law, a bishop intervenes on their behalf. Just as the servants of the Corregidor grab Erauso to drag them off to prison, the Bishop bodily intervenes and takes Erauso into his home. After being locked up in the episcopal palace, Erauso persists for a brief time in their masculine performance. Finally, however—whether precipitated by the saintly presence of the Bishop, or perhaps by recognition that their luck has run out and that they need to change tactics to escape punishment—Erauso modulates their performance for this new audience: “La verdad es ésta: que soi muger; que nací en tal parte, hija de fulano i sutana” (110). This new performance temporarily removes Erauso from a position of agency and independence, and instead almost immediately situates them relationally, as the daughter of a certain family (Pérez Villanueva “Crossing Boundaries” 304–5). As a narrator, however, Erauso retains authority and utterly captivates their audience, the Bishop, who is so caught up in the story that he does not even blink, let alone interrupt the flow of storytelling. When Erauso has finished, the bishop first rejoins with an overwhelmingly emotional response: silent tears. Erauso’s appeal on the basis of *pathos* has succeeded admirably.

After Erauso submits to an examination of their own material body, the Bishop concludes that the corporeal evidence presented accords with their story as they have told it and validates them as a narrator: “Su Ilustrísima se enterneció i despidió a las Comadres, i me hizo comparecer i delante del Capellán que vino conmigo, me abrazó enternecido, i en pie, i me dixo: ‘Hija, ahora creo sin duda lo que me dixisteis i creeré en adelante quanto me dixereis’” (112).<sup>32</sup> The Bishop emerges as yet another high-status witness whose belief in and acceptance of Erauso’s story encourages future readers to accept their performance as legible. Erauso’s convenience, in the particular matter of their service to king and country, is served by widespread belief in their narrative. The endorsement of a figure such as the Bishop is critical to building Erauso’s fame and notoriety throughout the colonies: “Corrió la noticia de este suceso por todas las Yndias, i los que antes me vieron, i los que antes i después supieron mis cosas, se maravillaron en todas las Yndias” (113). In promising his services to Erauso, the Bishop effectively offers to act as a credible male compurgatory witness to their narrative authority. The Bishop’s compurgation applies not only to the particular story that Erauso has told him, but to their future narratives as well: “Creeré en adelante quanto me dixereis.” It is this last piece of Erauso’s interaction with the Bishop that best serves their purposes as narrator: a figure with widely accepted authority endorses Erauso as a credible witness to their own story in perpetuity.

The scene with the Bishop, then, serves not only as the spectacular finale of Erauso’s gendered performance, but also as an endorsement of Erauso as narrator on the level of *ethos* and *pathos*. Erauso has posited the identity of a credible narrator as violent and undeniably masculine. The validity of that identity is attested to by other men both indirectly through gifts of clothing, weapons, and women and directly through compurgatory evidence regarding Erauso’s character. Most critically, Erauso has earned the respect and belief of this fraternity by accumulating evidence of their lethal skill in the form of their victims’ corpses. Indeed, Erauso has so successfully written themself into this violent textual economy by the time they meet the Bishop that they are now at risk of being caught and punished for it. Erauso’s recursive violence thus forms an inextricable part of the compelling subject that has endured in the text of the *Vida*.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For some of the most commonly cited sources on Erauso's gender, see Stepto (xl) and Merrim ("Catalina de Erauso" 38–41). For a particularly insightful analysis of Erauso's complex gender construction within the *pedimento*, see Goldmark (215–235).
- <sup>2</sup> Thinking carefully about how to refer to Erauso is a critical first step in approaching this text. Perry uses the surname "Erauso" rather than their given name "Catalina" and employs "he" and "she" in alternating sentences to "avoid the suggestion that certain aspects of this person's life were more masculine and others more feminine" (395). Goldmark exclusively refers to Erauso by the surname to avoid making "determinations for another's gender identity and [...] the violence such projections often entail" (231). I have adopted a modified version of these strategies—I refer to Erauso by the surname and use the pronouns "they," "them," and "themselves" where a pronoun is called for syntactically, and I repeat the name where the pronoun's antecedent is unclear. While the MLA does not currently admit a singular "they" in their guidelines, other style manuals, including Chicago and the Associated Press, have begun to admit its use into formal writing in recognition of the need for a gender-neutral pronoun for people that do not identify as "he" or "she."
- <sup>3</sup> Butler discusses an "abiding gendered self" that is instituted through "a *stylized repetition of acts*" comprised of "bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds" that constitute the "appearance of substance" (519–20). The monotony and repetitiveness of Erauso's violence has generally led critics to dismiss it as generic and conventional; I suggest instead that it is this very repetitiveness that heightens the significance of the violence.
- <sup>4</sup> See Seagraves for a comparative reading of masculine violence in theater and *Vida y sucesos*.
- <sup>5</sup> I use the term "consolidate" deliberately here, bearing in mind Butler's understanding of gender as the product of a process of constrained and ritualized repetition. Butler and other scholars of gender emphasize the gendered subject's lack of power and argue that "discourse, language itself, first en-genders the subject as an effect of language's positing power" (Gerdes 149).
- <sup>6</sup> Consider, too, Adorno's extensive work on Bernal Díaz del Castillo ("Discourses on Colonialism"; "The Authority of Eyewitness Testimony"; and "History, law, and the eyewitness protocols of authority") and Pagden (147–8).
- <sup>7</sup> Rima de Vallbona has edited all of these documents into a single volume, *Vida i [sic] sucesos*. The edition is comprised of an edition of the manuscript in the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid that was copied by Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1784, as well as a rich collection of the documents that made up Erauso's "pedimento" deposited in the BRAH and the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, baptismal records, posthumous relaciones, an excerpt of Juan Pérez de Montalbán's drama *La Monja Alférez*, and James Fitzmaurice-Kelly's English translation *The Nun Ensign*.
- <sup>8</sup> In the mid-1990s, Pedro Rubio Merino discovered in Seville and edited two other copies of *Vida y sucesos* whose content to a greater or lesser extent agrees with the Madrid manuscript. The content of the more complete of the two manuscripts (Seville Manuscript A) largely agrees with that of the Madrid manuscript, though its structure and order varies, a fact that leads Rubio Merino to contend that the Madrid manuscript and Seville Manuscript A derived from a common source (17–27).



- <sup>9</sup> Vallbona, in particular, was instrumental in conducting a rigorous examination of the text and the seventeenth-century historical documents in its periphery in order to assert that Erauso was the author of a substantial portion of the text (3). One account of the relationship between Erauso and the text endeavors to explain the anachronisms and geographic errors identified by Menéndez y Pelayo and Serrano y Sanz with the activities of a later author/editor. This last theory suggests that there was an anonymous author who appropriated and extensively elaborated on Erauso's own autobiographical interpolating episodes.
- <sup>10</sup> Merrim accepts this particular account "in view of the many mentions in the *Historia* of Catalina telling her tale" ("Anomaly to Icon" 196).
- <sup>11</sup> Erauso's story succeeded in this project, as can be seen through the reward of "merced de quinientos pesos de a ocho reales de renta, en cada un año por su vida, en pensiones sobre encomiendas de indios en las provincias del Perú, en consideración de lo que ha servido en ellas, y en la de Chile, de diez y nueve años a esta parte" (Vallbona 148).
- <sup>12</sup> For a more complete study of the evolving relationship between colonial writing and the economy of "Mercedes" see Folger (19–35).
- <sup>13</sup> Walter D. Mignolo highlights the importance of "cartas relatorias" in bridging the distance between writers on the ground, representatives of the Crown, and the Crown itself, and cites one such regulation that dictated the terms of that mediated exchange of information: "Pues en todas las tierras de las Indias sometidas a la Magestad Imperial hay orden y mandato de hacer esto y de dar información fidedigno de lo que se lleva a cabo en las Indias" (59). See also Folger (20–21).
- <sup>14</sup> Consider, for example, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's "quest for recognition and preferment" that Roland Greene argues motivated, at least in part, his writing of the *Comentarios reales* (196–7).
- <sup>15</sup> Vallbona explicitly links Erauso's narrative voice with Pupo-Walker's analysis of the Garcilasan narrator, noting that "este efectivo recurso da unidad al relato" (15). Folger, too, treats the colonial subject in terms of their communal validation (28–34). On the epistemic status of compurgatory witnessing, see Frisch (40–45, especially 43).
- <sup>16</sup> Folger follows Certeau's distinction between these two acts in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (35–7).
- <sup>17</sup> Here I refer to the allusions in the "pedimento" to Erauso's poulticed and shrunken bosom.
- <sup>18</sup> See also Levisi (97–117) and Martínez (192).
- <sup>19</sup> A document from the "relación de méritos" recounts Erauso's imprisonment as a spy in the Piedmont on their way to Rome, and remarks on how fortuitous it was that their hábito de varón was so convincing for "sin duda la mataran si entendieran que hera muger" (Vallbona 131).
- <sup>20</sup> For a detailed account of the process of a relación de méritos y servicios, see Folger (28–34).
- <sup>21</sup> Here I follow Butler's understanding of gender as corporeal style (521–22).
- <sup>22</sup> Achim offers a reading of the autopsy of Friar García Guerra's body in Mateo Alemán's *Oración fúnebre* in the context of social and political foundering of New Spain following García Guerra's appointment as viceroy in 1611.
- <sup>23</sup> The scholarship of Vincent Brown, Robert Pogue Harrison, and Katherine Verdery has been deeply influential on my thinking on the social, political, and cultural importance of the dead body for the living.

- <sup>24</sup>In his study of Alonso de Contreras's autobiography, Martínez demonstrates that it is Contreras's "choice to present himself not only as a dutiful, courageous, and competent soldier but also as an insubordinate braggart, a fearsome killer, and a determined survivor" (205–6).
- <sup>25</sup>I follow Folger's understanding of tactical in the Certeaudian sense, as a performative "'feigning' of the self" that "opens up spaces which allow for the assertion of a form of subjectivity which strives to undercut the normalizing thrust of bureaucracy" (10). I in no way wish to imply that a person that in the twenty-first century might be read as *not-cis-gendered* is in any way faking their identity, but rather wish to suggest that the assertion of subjectivity in the face of any normalizing thrust is by necessity forced to construct a kind of public face, with all accompanying performative fronting.
- <sup>26</sup>Perry remarks that "Apparently concentrating on the tasks of establishing 'manhood' and making the body perform those acts that would inscribe it on a male identity, Erauso engaged in many brawls. In these rituals of insult, quick retort, and armed response, Erauso acted out the warrior ethos that had become somewhat anachronistic in post-Reconquest Spain, but appeared very appropriate in the frontier settlements of the New World" (401).
- <sup>27</sup>On gender as style, see Butler (519-22). For a related consideration of the intertwining of ascriptive identity categories, see Goldmark on "hábitos."
- <sup>28</sup>Consider, for example, Barbara Fuchs's work on costume and clothing in cases of successful gender and cultural passing in Cervantes's oeuvre (4–8, 23–30, 68–74).
- <sup>29</sup>Some critics have read this episode as being a point of generic departure from the picaresque. Unlike Lazarillo, who agrees to marry his master's mistress to give a veneer of respectability to her sexual dalliances, Erauso refuses, or cannot risk, such an attachment, and moves on, without consequences, to another location (Merrim "Coded Encounters" 181).
- <sup>30</sup>For a discussion of the duel as an aristocratic civilizing process in early modern Europe, see Quint (233–4).
- <sup>31</sup>Vallbona comments: "Obsérvese que en este pasaje tan dramático, la carga emotiva se concentra en los puntos de admiración, los cuales abundan. Esto no es corriente en otros momentos del discurso narrativo del presente texto" (65, n. 46).
- <sup>32</sup>The corporeal examination of Erauso's body warrants an entire article unto itself, but here I limit myself to noting the prestigious voice of the Bishop vouching for the lieutenant's reliability as narrator.

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Received January 15, 2019

Accepted April 9, 2019