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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contemplates the lives and writings of three seventeenth-century Spanish Colonial conventual authors – Catalina de Erauso, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Madre Jerónima Nava y Saavedra – from a feminist and socio-historical perspective. From the elite female environment of the cloistered convent Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava intruded upon the male-dominated worlds of the Conquest, literature, and ecclesiastical debates. They appropriated the patriarchal narrative genres of Lives of Saints, the comedia, essays, and soldier’s tales – all popular literary genres in early modern Spain and Colonial Spanish-America. Using these different literary genres Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava produced textual representations of themselves that stand in stark contrast to the prescriptive female behavioral norms of the period.

The analysis focuses on the manner in which, Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava appropriated, subverted, and exploited the dominant culture’s own literary mechanisms (comedias, legal defense, essays, and confessional letters) and its ideologies (female gender proscriptions) to legitimize their personal deviation from the dominant cultural norm. The innovations and particularities present in their works underscore these conventual authors’ individual interpretations of femininity, masculinity, and spirituality, which enabled them to gain a sense of agency for themselves.

What Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava said through their texts and with their lived experiences, specifically their unorthodox reformulations of gender roles, was transgressive for their times. Why then did the pillars of early modern Spain (the Church, the Crown, and Society) accept and even promote Erauso’s Vida i sucesos, Sor Juana’s La Respuesta, and Los empeños de una casa, and Nava’s Autobiografía de una monja venerable?
This dissertation's key proposition is that the Catholic Baroque worldview of the seventeenth-century Spanish Empire informed society’s acceptance of the non-normative content and structure of Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava’s manuscripts and their lives. Seventeenth-century Spanish society’s fascination with the Baroque phenomenon of monstrous hybrids and the dramatic character of the muger varonil was crucial in influencing widespread acceptance of these transgressive historical figures. Elucidating the Baroque Catholic milieu provides the opportunity to make visible these exceptional women long hidden under the obfuscation of culture and time.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter Claire and to my parents Dan Cornelius Mooney and María Teresa Del Carmen de Mooney.
EPIGRAPHS

The fruit of silence is prayer,
The fruit of prayer is faith,
The fruit of faith is love,
The fruit of love is service,
The fruit of service is peace.
   (Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

En la parte satírica no sea claro ni descubierto,
pues que sabe, que por ley se vedaron las
comedias por esta causa en Grecia y en Italia.
   El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo (Lope de Vega 341-344)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank the many people who have helped me with this research project. I am most indebted to Dr. Constance Janiga-Perkins, chairperson of my dissertation committee, for sharing her expertise, wisdom and fondness for conventual authors. I would also like to thank all of my committee members, Dr. Lawrence Clayton, Dr. Sarah Moody, Dr. Michael Picone and Dr. William Worden for their invaluable input, inspiring questions, and support of both the dissertation and my academic progress. I especially would like to thank Deborah Bruker whose invaluable editorial assistance brought this dissertation to fruition. This research would not have been possible without the support of my sister Rose Marie, my brothers Dan and Thomas, and my community of sister-friends who never stopped encouraging me to persist. A special thanks to the conventual authors who have inspired me.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

From behind the seemingly impenetrable walls of the convents in Spain and colonial Spanish America, recent scholarship has brought to the forefront the female conventual voice. This dissertation illuminates three of these voices: Catalina de Erauso (1585-1650),\(^1\) Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) and Jerónima Nava y Saavedra (1669-1727).\(^2\) Their manuscripts detail a myriad of experiences. Erauso narrates her quest for physical freedom amidst the brutality of the Indian wars in Peru; Sor Juana advocates for women’s intellectual freedom in the courts of the viceroyalty of New Spain;\(^3\) and Nava recounts her mystical experience within her convent in Nueva Granada. Nonetheless, there exists a common thread that binds the textual representations of these conventual authors from the seventeenth century: their refusal to accommodate prescriptive gender norms as they fought to express their aspirations.

Most investigations into early modern Spanish American nuns study them within the confines of convent walls. This study identifies and relates these conventual writers to the particular historical (Spanish Baroque society) and literary context (Vidas and comedias) of early modern Spain and Spanish America. It examines the literary and social dimensions encountered in the texts written by or about the conventual authors. Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava, among many other religious and secular female writers in early modern Spain and Colonial Spanish America\(^4\), add a constructive critical voice to the issues of their times, especially those pertaining to women. Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava participated actively, and to varying degrees, publicly in the wider Renaissance debate on the value of women, a debate widely known as querelles des femmes. This
debate against a long-established medieval misogynist discourse questioned women’s place in society, their moral and intellectual integrity, and gender relations. The medium available to Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava to make public their voices was the written word. In three distinct formats, these women promoted their belief in female agency using the autobiographic, the comedic and the hagiographic genres. This triad offered their contemporary reading public a wide range of religious and secular works that still resonate with today’s audience.

The dissertation investigates the manner in which Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava appropriated, exploited, and subverted the dominant culture’s own literary mechanisms (essays, hagiographies, and comedias) and its ideologies (female gender proscriptions) to legitimize their personal deviations from the norm and gain a sense of agency for themselves. The traditional bias of Spanish Baroque society was to view these deviations as "transgressions" and the women themselves as monstrous anomalies. Yet society accepted all three of these women. This study focuses on the motives, means and reasons for that acceptance.

Inspired by the mid-20th century feminist movement, scholars have engaged in a sustained effort to record the lives of women and their struggles and “make women a focus of inquiry, a subject of the story, an agent of the narrative” (Scott 17). Many feminists such as French scholar and writer Helene Cixious advocate as essential the recuperation of female texts for the sake of preserving and highlighting women’s history or, as it is often dubbed, “herstory.” The rubric “herstory” supports the integration of women in the traditionally male arenas of politics and history by bringing women from the margins to the center of historical focus. Historian Joan Scott identifies the first step in producing “herstory” as the gathering of information about the female subjects and writing about them to bring “value to an experience that had been ignored (hence devalued) and to insist on female agency in the making of history” (18). This dissertation
participates in the work that brings conventual inhabitants out of the submissive role ascribed to them. As Lynda Coon rightly observes: “this characterization of female religiosity has been challenged by the recognition that, although their role has been obscured by both a lack of sources and institutional biases, women have been at the forefront of Christian leadership” (Coon, Haldane and Sommer 1).

These and other scholars are questioning the epistemological perspective of history - the way in which it organizes knowledge about the world. History is not simply “an incomplete record of the past but … a participant in the production of knowledge that legitimized the exclusion or subordination of women” (Scott 26). Due to the “relatively limited impact women’s history was having on historical studies generally” (Scott 3), many scholars embarked on research to find legitimate feminist perspectives of history. Thus, historical accuracy requires that scholars include information produced by women. Doing so lessens the distortion of historical truth and broadens knowledge of women's greatly underestimated contributions. Scott suggests focusing on “female agency, on the causal role played by women in their history, and on the qualities of women’s experience that sharply distinguish it from men’s experience” (20). Constance Wilkins suggests that texts written by women “make it possible to approach an understanding of the feminine from its own point of view and thus provide the opportunity to make visible something that is invisible in male-authored works” (107). Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava try to break outside this “domestic and private” sphere as do the scholars who study them by changing the “politics that sets and enforces priorities” (Scott 9).

Early modern scholars have sparked much interest in conventual writing and understanding the importance of these texts. In recent decades, these scholars have transcribed and analyzed a myriad of works written by early modern Spanish and colonial Spanish conventual authors. This
interest in conventual narratives as an aspect of feminist scholarship began with a lone precursor: Josefina Muriel’s *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España* (1946). It was not until the work of Asunción Larvin in the 1970’s that the rediscovery of both the Spanish mystic Saint Teresa de Ávila as well as the Mexican polymath of Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz promoted a flood of critical inquiry by North American scholars into the writings and lives of Spanish American colonial nuns. Kathleen Myers, Naomi Lindstrom, Electa Arenal, Stacey Schlau, Kathryn Joy McKnight, Barbara Mujica, Ronald Morgan, Alison Weber, Anne J. Cruz, and Jean Franco - among many academics - have rediscovered, translated and published part of the corpus of female spiritual autobiographies called *Vidas*, making them available to a wider reading audience. In *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain*, Lisa Vollendorf offers an important addendum of female textual history – one not yet fully integrated into the canonically established histories of early modern Spain and Spanish America.

Conventual archives have become an important and vital source of female-authored texts. Through their *Vidas*, religious plays, music, or administrative documents, religious women left more traces than most secular women did in the early modern era. Luce Irigaray calls these texts the first “feminine writing” of early modern times (238-49). Lisa Vollendorf concurs that religious women account for most of the texts “produced by pre-twentieth-century women in the Catholic world” (xii). The texts known as *Vidas* - conventual narratives or female spiritual autobiographies - are more than a mere recounting of a nun’s life within a convent. Readers may assess *Vidas* as works monolithic in purpose and voice. Much of the research of the last two decades, however, reveals they are much more diverse. *Vidas* also underscore that women of early modern Spain and Spanish America, and in particular, conventual writers, resist typecasting under the homogeneous category of “Women” as understood in their respective eras.
The research on the subject of Spanish Colonial female monasticism yielded a foundational perspective that female monasticism presents a decidedly autonomous “face”; a perspective that promotes female agency, a sense of belonging to a female cultural community, but more importantly, as a locus of female empowerment and female subversion. Scholars, whose work emphasizes the importance of religious women on colonial society symbolically, socially, and economically, influence the research herein. Asunción Larvin is an indispensible starting point in the investigation of female monasticism. Her scholarly research on feminine monasticism in the late colonial period emphasizes the integration of convents into the social and economic life instead of presenting the usual picture of the convent as a picturesque or pious entity. Thus, construing convents as simple repositories for the daughters of the elite is a falsehood on many levels. Scholars now view convents and their inhabitants as active participants in the creation of Colonial society and the formation of marked feminine identity.

Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava are not representative of Women of early modern Spain, since most women, like most men, did not even write. Their Vidas document and promote different points of view regarding women’s role in society. These female authors not only chose a different literary genre (autobiographic, comedic, or hagiographic) in which to represent themselves, they each chose a unique battleground on which to wage their battles. Erauso took it directly to her body as a cross-dressing soldier battling Peruvian Indians in the New World. Sor Juana took her crusade for women’s intellectual freedom to the very halls of the corrales de comedia. Nava chose the soul as the locus of her contentions against women’s very restrictive role in the Church. Their texts, fascinating textual hybrids that contain varying degrees of autobiographical information, often wield several discourses within their pages. Their rich variety of discourse styles and content is in
no way a collective example of early modern conventual authors. Many centuries later, their texts remain a distinguished corpus depicting a rich range of women’s experience.

This study and its findings contribute to the existing scholarship on the history of conventual writers’ conflicts, struggles, and achievements. This dissertation foregrounds the ideology and motives of these writers, and asserts that the writings of these women dispel the traditional topoi of repressed and oppressed women. Through the written word, Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava establish themselves as authoritative witnesses and agents of change in the gender perceptions of early modern Spanish society. This perspective promotes a better understanding of the conventual author’s lives and the social forces that inspired and molded their works.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THESIS

From the exclusively female environment of the cloistered convent, Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava intruded upon the male-dominated world of the Conquest, literature, and ecclesiastical debates. These three conventual authors appropriated patriarchal narrative genres such as the Lives of Saints, the comedy, and soldier’s tales that were popular literary formulas in early modern Spain and Colonial Spanish-America. Using these three different literary genres, Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava produced textual representations of themselves that stand in stark contrast to the preponderance of male-authored texts of early modern Spain and colonial Spanish America. What Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava had to say in their texts and in their lived experiences, specifically their unorthodox formulations of gender, was considered extremely transgressive for their times. Why then did the pillars of early modern Spain (the Church, the Crown, and Society) accept and even promote, Erauso’s Vida i sucesos; Sor Juana’s La Respuesta and Los Empeños de una casa; and Nava’s Autobiografía de una monja venerable? One of the reasons was the cloak of acceptability that Saint Teresa de Ávila’s Vida (1558), or spiritual biography, afforded, since it was
considered the ecclesiastically approved paradigm for texts written by these female authors (Arenal and Schlau 26). As Stacey Schlau points out, Saint Teresa’s *Vida* served as a “blueprint for maintaining orthodoxy while expressing some aspect of the self” (4). Myers also concurs that in the early modern world, Saint Teresa’s *Vida* was the impetus for many women to take pen in hand: “…in the wake of the famous mystic author Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), hundreds of religious women were asked by their spiritual directors to write about their lives … so [b]y the early modern period hundreds of women wrote about their experience of the divine in Italy, France, Spain, and Spanish America” (Myers *Neither* vii).

This dissertation suggests other reasons for society’s acceptance of the non-normative content and structure of these textual representations of Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava. These reasons go beyond adhering to the Teresian paradigm of a *Vida*. The acceptance of the monstrous phenomenon and the dramatic character of the *muger varonil* by seventeenth-century Spanish society was crucial in influencing the reception of these historical figures whose actions and words overstepped the boundaries and limits imposed by Early Modern society on women. The analysis of these conventual texts vis-à-vis the following male-authored texts are paramount for understanding the conventual authors in their societal context. For Erauso, this study includes the historical documents *Certificaciones* and *Relaciones*, and the comedia *La monja alférez* written by Pérez de Montalbán. Nava’s analysis includes the text written by her confessor, Juan de Olmos, and Lope de Vega’s comedia, *Santa Teresa de Jesús*.

The analysis focuses on the manner in which, Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava appropriated, subverted, and exploited the dominant culture’s own literary mechanisms (legal defense, essays, or confessional letters) and its ideologies (female gender proscriptions) to legitimize their personal deviation from the dominant cultural norm. The innovations and particularities present in their
works underscore these conventual authors’ individual interpretations of femininity, masculinity, and spirituality – interpretations that enabled them to gain a sense of autonomy for themselves. Nonetheless, in their texts and in their lived experience, Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava present a contestatory voice: the author’s battle with conformance to and rebellion against societal norms.

1.2 CRITICAL EDITIONS

The primary text for Catalina de Erauso’s *Vida i sucesos* is Rima de Vallbona’s edited version of the manuscript, which is located in the Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, Spain. Sherry Velasco and Michele Stepto provide a tenuous trail to follow the alleged “autobiography” of the Lieutenant-Nun, since there is no extant copy of the original manuscript autographed by Catalina de Erauso. Stephanie Merriman suggests that Erauso, being Basque, probably had a ghostwriter record her life story in Spanish, since it was not her native tongue. Scholars believe that the publisher Bernardino de Guzmán received Erauso’s original manuscript in 1625. At a later date, the poet and author Cándido María Trigueros (1737-1801) obtained a copy of the manuscript. This copy (Trigueros’) was subsequently transcribed by the historian Juan Bautista Muñoz on 24 May 1784 under the extended title *Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez, o Alférez Catarina, De Catarina de Aruajo [sic] doncella, natural de S[an] Sebastián, Prov[inci]a de Guipúacoa. Escrita por ella misma en 18 de Sept[iembre] e 1646 [sic]*. This document, located in the Biblioteca de la Real Academia in Madrid, is the one that Vallbona used. Others then copied Muñoz’ transcription. One of these reproductions made its way into the hands of Felipe Bauza, who was living in exile in London. From Bauza, the Basque critic Joaquín María Ferrer obtained a copy that he edited and then published in 1829 under the title *Historia de la Monja Alférez, Doña Catalina de Erauso, escrita por Ella misma*. Ferrer’s edited version of Muñoz’ transcription was the one usually translated and reedited through the nineteenth- and twentieth-century. This study
uses Vallbona’s critical edition of Muñoz’ manuscript as it is the closest to the original. English translations are from the edition by Michele and Gabriel Stepto, who translated Ferrer’s 1829 manuscript.

The primary text for Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’ *Los empeños de una casa* is the bilingual edition prepared by Susana Hernández-Araico. This text of the cloak and dagger *comedia* had its first theatrical representation on October 4, 1683. This scholarly edition’s English translation is the source for text citation. Traditionally, scholars attributed only one complete secular play to Sor Juana, but a recent critical study by Guillermo Schmidhuber includes two additional secular plays attributed to Sor Juana: *The Second Celestina* and *Love is Indeed a Labyrinth*. This dissertation also uses the critical edition and translation of *La Respuesta* prepared by Electa Arenal and Amanda Powel.

Jerónima Nava y Saavedra is the least known of the three conventual writers and the scope of existing scholarship is very limited outside of specialized academic circles. One reason could be the lack of an English language edition of her primary text *Autobiografía de una monja venerable*. Scholars consider this manuscript, edited by Ángela Inés Robledo, as Nava’s spiritual autobiography. It is composed of seventy-three folios that date to the year 1727 and are archived in the National Library of Colombia. The work recounts Nava’s multiple mystical experiences, “la quenta de los sentimientos interiores de su espíritu,” during her time in the Convent of Santa Clara in Bogotá (Robledo 45).

In addition, this study includes consideration of judgments and interpretations regarding these *Vidas* and their respective authors - viewpoints readily gleaned from the male-authored historical and literary texts associated with each of these women. In the male-authored documents, the authors represent the conventual writers as scandalous presences either far beyond acceptable
societal standards or as monstrous phenomena designed to satisfy baroque society’s appetite for the spectacular. These male perspectives provide interesting contrast to the texts written by Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava, since “different writing practices and strategies are available to male and female authors, and that, in the narration of hagiography, these different authorial possibilities and proscriptions are especially marked” (Tudela 36). Male-authored literary texts or historical documents reveal textual judgment of conventual authors. Consequently, the male-authored supplemental texts provide a broader view not only of the conventual authors themselves but also of society’s reception of each nun and her texts: as Leon Edel points out, “biography inevitably becomes an inscription of the biographer’s subjectivity in the life and identity of the subject” (qtd. in Darcy 230).

The analysis of Erauso’s text and life is enhanced by the documents compiled by Rima de Vallbona in her critical edition of Vida i sucesos, which include “Certificaciones,” “Declaraciones,” and “Pedimento.” These documents are judicial in nature - they testify to the legal identity of the Lieutenant-Nun and state her claim to royal reward for services rendered to the Crown. They evaluate Erauso’s life not only by utilizing the aforementioned historical documentation but also by examining the contemporary comedia written by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, wherein Erauso is the play’s protagonist. This study uses the critical edition prepared by Luzmila Camacho Platero to elucidate Erauso’s literary representation as muger varonil.

Included within Ángela Inés Robledo’s Autobiografía de una monja venerable is the “Carta de Edificación,” written by Nava’s confessor, Don Juan de Olmos y Zapián. This is Olmos’ succinct hagiographic depiction of Nava, but it can also stand as a justification of his role as biographer of a subject not deemed as praiseworthy – a woman. Darcy Donahue points out that due
to the misogynist climate of the early modern Church, the hagiographic authors found themselves needing to justify their choice of a female subject.

As with Erauso, this study uses a comedia to analyze Nava’s literary representation as the muger santa: Famosa comedia de la bien aventurada madre Santa Teresa de Jesús, monja descalza de Nuestra Señora del Carmen. Lope de Vega wrote this comedia between 1590 and 1604 at the commencement of the deliberations for Teresa’s canonization of 1604.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The following observation by Anthony Cascardi influenced the overall tone of the analysis in this dissertation:

"[T]he task of historicizing the Golden Age [by using the term ‘early modern Spain’] involves an investigation of the ways in which literature is shaped by tensions that are focused at the level of social structure; it is also, however, to investigate the ways in which literature is itself a social force, actively proposing solutions to historical conflicts that seem irresolvable by any other means, or conversely, resisting solutions to those conflicts” (1).

This prosopographical study identifies and relates conventual writers to the particular historical (Spanish Baroque society) and literary context (Vidas and comedias) of early modern Spain and Spanish America via a two-pronged investigation. The work of gender historians influenced the first line of inquiry: how these conventual writers’ literary production offers a textual reconfiguration of the categories that define gender and the social function of women, both in the public and the private sphere. Historical considerations such as the behavior codes and the institutional forces set in place by colonial society, occupy center stage. The field of feminist literary criticism inspired the second line of inquiry: the depiction of female characters and gender relations in the manuscripts and comedias associated with the three conventual authors.
The methodological framework follows New Historicism, the critical method proposed by Stephen Greenblatt that brings to literary criticism the relevance of historical documents associated with literary texts. This study uses a parallel reading of literary, non-literary and historical documents of the same historical period associated with the conventual authors Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava. The disparate genres of literary and non-literary documents constantly inform and interrogate each other. This approach concurs with what New Historicism has posited, in that literary texts should not be considered just “the marginalia of History” (Marcus 132). The determination of some of the texts as exclusively non-literary in the modern usage of the term is sometimes problematic. A case in point is Eraus’s Vida i sucesos; is this a “true” autobiography in the modern sense, or is it similar to those texts referred to as soldiers’ tales? Conquistadores and soldiers wrote these manuscripts for the king in order to obtain recognition for their services. The audience of the time did not expect these works to be completely factual but rather read them as enhanced stories of soldiers’ lives.

The non-literary female-authored texts subsumed under the rubric Vidas (Vida i sucesos, La Respuesta, Autobiografía de una monja venerable) are analyzed alongside literary texts, comedias (La monja alférez, Los empeños de una casa, Vida y muerte de Santa Teresa). The comedias are not subordinate contextual backdrops to the Vidas. These “co-texts” amplify and enrich the analysis of the experience of these colonial conventual authors. Male-authored texts (literary and non-literary) are included to broaden the analysis of society’s perception of these authors.

The juxtaposition of documents (literary and non-literary) is crucial, since female-authored historical texts were scarce or nonexistent. Most historical and literary texts from the beginning of the colonial period were male authored: from Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), considered to be
the first chronicler, to Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1475-1566), Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700), to name just a few. Writing about the historical contributions of conventual women or women in general sometimes occupies only a few short lines within most of these male-authored colonial texts. Electa Arenal succinctly sums up the relevance of manuscripts written by conventual authors: “In their time, the Vidas were considered evidence of the nuns’ passage from daughters of Eve to transcendent symbols of purity. In ours, they document aspects of a culture usually hidden from history and indicate ways in which nuns were influential in economic, social, and educational spheres” (Arenal and Schlau 25). The first half of Arenal’s statement seems reductionist as the three conventual writers analyzed in this dissertation focused more on debating theological or societal issues, “in their time,” than transcribing mere recounts of their spiritual journeys toward “symbols of purity.” As mentioned, utilizing a broad range of genre to “read” the textual traces of the past is pivotal in a feminist approach to gender history. Providing information “usually hidden from history,” as Arenal points out, gives a better understanding and broader perspective of the colonial conventual author, specifically how her texts mirrors or reacts against the patriarchal social order that circumscribes her gender.

Since New Historicism also promotes the use of different genres to analyze the literature of a specific historical period, it ties in well with the feminist perspective that advocates the need of using alternative historical sources to determine women’s participation in history. Jane Marcus points out that in Virginia Woolf’s Three Guineas, “she claims that for truth, authenticity, and authority, one is forced to use biography, autobiography, and fiction as the true histories of women’s lives and interpreters of political events” (134). Therefore, feminist literary theory and criticism are the lenses through which this dissertation articulates the issues of female
representation and the reception of the non-normative representation of these conventual authors by early modern Spanish society. *Vida i sucesos* (Catalina de Erauso), *La empeños de una casa* and *La Respuesta* (Sor Juana), and *Autobiografía de una monja venerable* (Nava y Saavedra), in addition to the supplemental historical and theatrical texts, are assessed from a feminist perspective. This study uses two major lines of feminist literary criticism to analyze texts. The first is represented by Elaine Showalter’s gynocriticism, her adaptation of the French term *la gynocritique*, or “woman as writer” (*Feminist Poetics* 25), which pertains exclusively to the analysis of female-authored texts. Showalter established that women authors developed a “specialized discourse” of the “woman as writer -with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women” (*Feminist Poetics* 25). The second avenue of feminist inquiry used follows Showalter suggestion of, “woman as reader” of the male-authored texts associated with each conventual writer (*Feminist Poetics* 25). This “feminist critique” evaluates the male-authored images of the conventual women and their literary counterparts – *muger varonil, mujer esquiva, muger santa*. Showalter’s “feminist critique” takes into account “woman as the consumer of male-produced literature, and with the way in which the hypothesis of a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening us to the significance of its sexual codes” (*Feminist Poetics* 25). The study applies the perspective of a sexed reading subject and feminist reader-response theory to each of the conventual authors and the texts associated with them.

Feminist critics and their scholarship provide answers to key questions: does a “woman’s voice” exists within these texts, and is it distinct from that in male-authored texts? Is there a way to distinguish the conventual idiolect or particular voice fashioned by the author? Is there something essentially female about these writings in regards to structure, content, and discourse? Luce
Irigaray recognizes what these conventual authors somehow knew: they had no other means but to utilize the same words men used, albeit with a different meaning attached to them, to transmit their transgressive message. Irigaray therefore wonders, “If we keep on speaking the same language together, we’re going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again. Don’t you think so?” (83). Do these texts present a “double-voiced discourse” as Elaine Showalter argues of women’s self-expression, which cannot exist independently of a male-centered ideology: “[A]ll language is the language of the dominant order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it” (“Toward a Feminist Poetics” 262). This study shows that despite the strength of patriarchal concepts regarding women and their role in society, women have been able to provide alternative gender narratives that can undermine official ones.

Even though New Historicism does not engage in a symptomatic reading of the texts, much of what conventual authors repress or confine to the margins is essential for understanding early modern Spanish texts. Mary Gossy equates the repressed textual elements as the “untold story,” defining it as that “part of a text that makes its absence felt, and upon whose felt absence the form and process of the text depend”(2). She further goes on to elucidate: “[T]he missing element is not essentially absent; rather, it has been actively put aside in some conscious or unconscious process of selection”(Gossy 6). This dissertation aims to elucidate Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava’s “untold story.”

The schema of analysis follows Sandra Schneiders’ reading approach presented in her *The Revelatory Text*. For Schneiders, understanding the social location of the author as well as the reader is necessary to discern the relationship between the text and its subject matter. For the scholar, readers approach the text “with different perspectives and different objectives in view”(Schneiders 13). Schneiders presents the relationship in three broad categories: *World Behind*
the Text, World of the Text, and World in Front of the Text. Chapter 2 in this dissertation explores the World Behind the Text and refers to Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava’s social, literary, and ecclesiastical (theological and devotional traditions) context of seventeenth-century Spain. This chapter also covers the common elements under the headings of Baroque worldview and Catholic worldview. Chapter 3, The World of the Text, explores the literary context of the period's most popular genres – Vidas and Comedias. A detailed analysis of each conventual author’s manuscripts and associated male-authored manuscripts follows in Chapter 4 (Erauso), Chapter 5 (Sor Juana), and Chapter 6 (Nava). The dissertation's conclusion in Chapter 7 presents the World in Front of the Text, which offers the modern reader possible meanings for what “arises in the interaction between texts and readers” (Schneiders xxxi). As modern-day readers, we participate in the re-construction and re-presentation of the historical persons of Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava.
CHAPTER 2
WORLD BEHIND THE TEXT:
AUTHOR-CENTERED SOCIAL – HISTORICAL READING

The social-historical approach of reading the conventual texts brings to the forefront the world behind the text, that is, the social structures, historical events, and customs, as well as social issues related to roles, power, and class. It questions the events described or assumed in the text, the key places mentioned, (Viceroyal capitals of the Spanish Empire) and the political scene within the early modern Era. This approach follows Anthony Cascardi’s observation regarding the historization of the Golden Age, as quoted in the Methodology section.

Writings reflect an author's background, experience, and local culture as well as the author's interpreted understanding of the history, politics, culture, customs, religion and philosophy of the larger world. Attention to the social world behind the text explores such issues as how characters relate to one another in terms of power and class (for example, the confessor/nun relationship of Bishop of Peru/Erauso, Bishop de Puebla/Sor Juana, or Olmos/Nava). The meaning of this study’s three conventual manuscripts and their associated texts is predicated upon each author’s intention formulated in terms of her unique social, political and cultural matrix and understanding of the wider world.

2.1 BAROQUE WORLD VIEW

The first common thread that unites the three conventual authors is the discourse produced by the prevailing spirit of seventeenth century Spain and Spanish America, a spirit that served as
the internal animator of the manuscripts they wrote. This fascinating time in Spanish history, known as the Baroque period, grounded their unique way of confronting and understanding reality.

It is necessary to define Baroque since the term has passed through multiple historiographical interpretations. At first it was considered, as Irving Leonard recounts, “a nonsense word by which humanists of the Renaissance derided medieval scholasticism” equating it with “confused and unclear thinking” (28). Subsequently the term came to be a sign of the conflicts and contradictions that echoed the transition from imperial power to decline. Baroque became synonymous with the decadent and self-indulgent display of the elite vis-a-vis the decline of imperial Spain. The term Baroque also came to signify an exclusively artistic phenomenon. The following description summarizes the Eurocentric concept of the baroque, “a stylistic period of extravagant artificiality and ornamentation in post-Renaissance European art and literature and to characterize the doctrinal and iconographic strategies of the Counter-Reformation” (Salgado 316). Scholars sometimes express this emphasis on the religious content as Spanish Catholic Baroque. Mabel Moraña underscores this artistic component, “[e]l Barroco español es así considerado un arte que, para algunos, celebra el poderío de la España imperial; para otros, es el lenguaje grandilocuente y propagandístico a través del cual se expresa la crisis de un imperio” (225).

With the scholarly works of Irving Leonard, Baroque Times in Old Mexico (1959) and José Antonio Maravall, Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure (1975), this art-centered concept of Baroque began to broaden its meaning from more than an aesthetic field to encompass the socio-political. Hence, from the end of the twentieth-century, the Baroque has come to signify the totality of the European culture, (in this case, Spain’s culture) that was expressed during a specific time frame which was reflected in the economic, political social, religious and mentality of their society. Maravall succinctly delimits this time period: “In Spain,
the years of Philip III’s reign (1598-1621) encompass the period of transformation; those of Philip IV (1621-65) the period of its peak; and those of Charles II (1665-1700), at least in the first two decades, the final phase of decadence and degeneration, until a time of restoration toward a new epoch begins before the end of the century” (4). This expanded Baroque concept denotes a historic structure that articulates a specific mindset. Nicholas Spadaccini, in his introduction to *Hispanic Baroques: Reading Cultures in Context*, suggests one must also focus on the institutions and the ideas that constitute the Spanish Baroque culture, not only its cultural products, to correctly explain and interpret it.

The primary focus of this dissertation is the Baroque as a literary modality of the seventeenth century in Spain and Spanish America. This literary Baroque mode corresponds to a European phenomenon that had its roots in the Italian Renaissance but, according to Isabel Torres, “it was in Spain that the Baroque acquired its most exaggerated expression (Torres 2,3; Moraña 225).” This is the time of Spain’s Golden Age of artistic production: Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Góngora, El Greco and Velázquez. In terms of this study, the principal characteristic of the Spanish literary Baroque is the wealth of contradictions derived from a still lingering medieval mentality – a mentality that, when thrust upon the Renaissance stage, produced a conflict between the theological and the scientific modes of thinking. There was a rejection of the classical dichotomies of subject-object, real-unreal, and masculine-feminine. Baroque comedias exemplify this dichotomy through specific oxymoronic tropes: *muger varonil, muger esquiva, muger santa*.

Sofie Kluge describes the quintessential Baroque conflict as between “…nature and regulation, dynamic worldly sensuality and transcendental spirituality, between immanence and transcendence…” (312). Stephanie Merrim indicates that the dichotomies between, “law and lawlessness, overweening morality and base licentiousness, the spirit and the flesh, virtue and vice,
the deity and the delinquent all coexisted and were equally exalted. Paradox, antithesis, and incongruity informed both cultural realities and rhetorical figures”(177). Leonard adds to this list of contradictions, “the mystical exaltation of Santa Teresa de Ávila… and a sordid materialism… in the abundant picaresque literature … “[t]he excessive license in public morals was paralleled by the asceticism”(29). This antithetical culture is echoed in the complicated and embroidered format known as Baroque language that shifts emphasis from content to form, and from ideas to details, through the use of overstatement and excessive ornamentation (Leonard 28). This conflictive and oppositional character of the Baroque highlighted the displacement of the perceived harmony, equilibrium, and symmetry of earlier medieval times. All of these textual extremes are present in the conventual manuscripts under study.

Leonard asserts that the “opposing pressures of the Reformation and Counter Reformation had cracked the mortar of orthodoxy”(21). This crack in the harmonious façade allowed for “the integration of the ‘other’, whether in the form of the monstrously distorted…. or simply as an accommodation of neologisms, the new ‘American sensibility’…” (Torres 4). This “crack” set the stage for the acceptance and promotion of one of the unique features of this era: the fascination for the spectacle produced by the “monstrously distorted” that appears not only within each text but also within the authors themselves. This crack in the Spanish Baroque façade affects not only the language of the texts but also the construction of the author’s self-identity.17

A second characteristic of Baroque narrative is the author’s assurance of the reading audience’s capacity to understand the intertextual references woven into the fabric of the texts: for example, the many obscure symbolisms found in culteranismo and conceptismo. An insight by Isabel Torres proved very useful for this analysis and comprehension of the conventual authors’ texts , “…a distinguishing feature of Baroque writing/art in Spain was the implication of the
reader/viewer as a dynamic participant in the negotiation of meaning”(3). Further on she expands on this statement, “[m]eaning is always negotiable, but the process of interpretation… is dependent upon intertextual forms of understanding, and presupposes the active participation of the receiver”(4). Thus, this narrative style expected Golden Age readers to participate in the story by construing meaning from inference. When reading and interpreting the text, today’s reader must take into account the target audience’s shared cultural traditions, symbols, myths, fears, double entendres, and even slang.

One of the dominant intertextual references in conventual literature is the presence of a Baroque theology born from a Baroque culture closely related to its religious element, especially the “reactionary intransigence” of Spain’s anti-Reformation propaganda (Leonard 24). Therefore, included within this study’s analysis of each conventual manuscript is explication of the early modern era Catholic intertextual references, such as each conventual author’s particular traditional Catholic devotions and spiritual practices, the place of mysticism in society, and the political power of the institutional Church.

Since all three conventual authors lived in Colonial Spanish America, one must view their lives and works through the lens of Colonialism. Recent scholarship concerning the Baroque has focused on its manifestation in colonial Spanish America. This new perspective, known as New World Baroque theory or neobaroque theory, is attributable to the writings of José Lizama Lima, particularly his influential essay titled La curiosidad barroca. César Augusto Salgado argues that the focus of this new scholarship is the “hybrid reconfigurations that European Baroque paradigms have undergone when transplanted into the colonial arena”(Salgado 316). The Baroque culture transported to the colonies between the Conquest and independence manifested itself differently from its progenitor but was not subordinate to it. Salgado goes on to say that this transatlantic
transformation “from the European Baroque into the Latin American neobaroque is to move from a hegemonic, diffusionist, and acculturating conception of the term to an emancipating, autochthonous, and transculturating one” (316). Neobaroque theorists extricated a criollo identity derived from a sense of alienation, an alienation due to the Criollo’s markedly reduced political and social privileges compared to those of Spanish-born elites.

Previously, Spanish American Baroque was sometimes referred to as Barroco de Indias, a term employed by Mariano Picón Salas, Alfonso Reyes and Pedro Henríquez Ureña. Unlike neobaroque theorists, the aforementioned scholars did not acknowledge a meaningful hybrid content in the literature produced by criollos in the seventeenth century. These scholars believed that colonial Spanish American conventual writers were not hybrid originals but rather weaker derivatives of Golden Age Baroque writers such as Góngora, whom scholars frequently compare Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Mabel Moraña aligns herself with subordinate concept of the Barroco de Indias by stating, “[c]omo área periférica y dependiente, la cultura barroca virreinal está condicionada por la ideología hegemónica” (225-6) and not as a concept that underscores the hybridity. This term “hybrid”, as used by New World Baroque theorists, appertains to “a hidden inscription of difference within the fictional sameness of official culture, as rebellious graffiti camouflaged in the forest of Baroque symbols” (Salgado 317-8). In other words, Old World Baroque sometimes obfuscated but could not subordinate New World baroque. This fact informs this study's detailed focus on the colonial conventual milieu, a far less studied subtopic within the comprehensive Spanish Imperial model.

Even if the Baroque was a cultural style imported by the Spanish Crown as part of the ideological and cultural hegemony, Spanish-America was able to introduce narrative transgressions that produced a significantly altered discourse as can be noted in the analysis of the conventual
nun’s texts. These texts reflect a Baroque “culture in which doubt, disorder and anxieties of race, class and gender subvert an earlier attention to orthodoxy and order” (Torres 4). For example, Nava’s description of the Demon as a black man reflects commonly held anxieties about race. As with other colonial authors, these nuns participated in “…the manipulation of the dominant code of Baroque language… as a resistance to authority, the manner in which an emergent criollo consciousness is able to express itself despite the repression of the colonial state” (Ross 31). This altered discourse, as Salgado insightfully points out, is “an ironic reversal of the Spanish imperial project, one in which, through hybridizing strategies, the colonial subject took advantage of Baroque elements in the dominant discourse to create sites and terms for cultural resistance and survival” (317). Thus, the Spanish Baroque transforms the hegemonic discourse into an “expression of a heterodox counter-‘conquista’ philosophy” (Torres 4).

Interestingly, some scholars don’t question the paradoxical nature of this hybrid dissent occurring “at the time of greatest colonial conformity and quiescence, during the so-called long siesta of the 17th century” (Salgado 317). “Colonial conformity” was just superficial since the textual transgressions were definitely present. Newer scholarship has countered José Antonio Marvall assertion that the Barroco de Indias is nothing more than an extension of Spain’s imperialistic power with more positive descriptions of New World Baroque literature. This study favors Salgado’s, “not exclusively as a manifestation of white criollo discontent and estranged identity but as a mestizo expression only partially dependent on the European matrix” (319).

This dissertation associates the Spanish Baroque with the dominant culture of seventeenth-century Spain, and the New World Baroque with the more transgressive and hybrid aspects expressed by colonial Spanish American authors. It is interesting to note that present-day Spanish Baroque curriculums include Spanish American authors like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Juan
Ruiz de Alarcón do not strictly adhere to this division. This study focuses on two fundamental aspects of the Spanish American Baroque: the presentation of the Other (alterity) and the declaration of a criollo identity. These aspects produce a contestatory voice that is subversive on the one hand but ironically propagates the hegemonic discourse. These competing discourses are at the heart of the complexities of the colonial Spanish American Baroque. The analysis of these texts informed by the New World Baroque perspective contributed to a broader understanding of the problematic power relations between imperial and colonial interests as well as between genders that are present within the texts written by these female authors of seventeenth-century Spanish America. Analysis of Erauso's, Sor Juana’s and Nava’s texts and their inherent transgressions reflect the Baroque culture as it was played out in Spain and colonial Spanish America in the seventeenth century.

2.1.1 THE FASCINATION WITH MONSTERS

One of the most interesting aspects of Baroque Spanish society was its fascination with the monstrous phenomenon. The simplest definition for monster defines it as ontological category of irregularity. Society applied the term monstrous to those entities that embody opposite categories of being (man-animal or a male-female hermaphrodite) and to the plays known as comedias. In like manner, these three conventual writers present two opposite or antithetical terms within themselves: Erauso, the nun/soldier; Sor Juana, the nun/playwright; and Nava, the nun/mystic. Accordingly, society perceived these hybrid conventual writers as “manly women,” or muger varonil. This term refers to a popular figure of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish dramatic literature exemplified in such memorable figures such as Rosaura from La vida es sueño.
The *muger varonil* was a formalized representation of the “manly woman,” a hybrid of the female body with male intellectual or physical abilities. Therefore Erauso, the Lieutenant-Nun, conforms to the image of the cross-dressed female of the *comedias* by wearing men’s clothing; Sor Juana by donning the masculine cloak of intellectual acumen; and Nava by changing her disguise to what can be considered as a “mystical cross-dressing.” In other words, these female conventual authors had to change their appearance, externally or internally, to access knowledge that would not be available to them under the female guise. Only as a soldier, an intellectual or a mystical woman could Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava enter and function with agency in the male-dominated world of Spanish society. These aberrations, as Sherry Velasco points out, paradoxically produced repulsion and attraction within the viewer or reader (24).

The fascination with the monstrous phenomenon, or “prodigios” as they are also known, was an integral part of the psyche in the Spanish Baroque society. Janis Pallister in her introduction to Ambroise Paré’s, *Des Monstres et prodiges* (1573) notes that “…by the end of the sixteenth century, treatises on monsters had become a veritable genre (Pallister xxii).” *Autoridades* defines “prodigio,” “Por extensión se toma por cualquier cosa excesivamente grande, o extraordinaria en cualquier línea.” This teratological obsession found a receptive home in Baroque Spain where, “una variedad de engendros deformes y monstruosos habitan en muchos textos del siglo XVII español” (Río Parra 1). The rise in popularity of the concept of monstrosity or “prodigios” rises concurrently with the societal changes brought about by the decline of Spain’s imperial dominance at the end of the seventeenth century. What made the early modern Spanish era so receptive to the concept of monstrosity? Historiographical interpretations of the seventeenth century depicts the latter part of century as a world-turned-upside-down; a Medieval world’s orthodox religiosity upstaged by the Renaissance’s more scientific mindset. As Elena del Río Parra states, “la estética
The monstrous concept produced a disruption in the rigid structure of Baroque society’s mindset – a disruption that facilitated the acceptance of the unorthodox figures of these conventual authors.

The monstrous textual signification goes further than the nun's terribly scandalous public lives. As noted earlier, intertextual knowledge is necessary for understanding Baroque texts. The modern reader must understand the meaning of monstrosity as the contemporary readers or audiences did. Most scholars who study the monstrous concept quote Sebastián de Covarrubias’ *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (1611), which defines “monstruo” as “cualquier parto contra la regla y orden natural” como el ‘hombre [que nace] con dos cabecas, quarto bracos y quarto piernas” (qtd. in Miñana "Veréis" 391). Scholars also utilize the *Diccionario de autoridades* which defines monster as, “parto ú producción contra el orden regular de la naturaleza … Monstruo no es otra cosa sino un pecado de naturaleza, con que por defecto o sobra, no adquiere la perfección que el viviente había de tener”. Later editions of *Diccionario de autoridades* add a behavioral component to the definition: “taras en el comportamiento, definiéndose ‘monstruosidad’ como un ‘desorden grave en la proporción que deben tener las cosas, según lo natural, o regular’ […]en lo physico u en lo moral” (qtd. in del Río Parra Dissertation 14-15). “Perfection” was closely associated with the Male being as Rhodes points out: “those who perform the attributes pertinent to the cultural construct of Male, were understood to be superior in kind and degree …to what is Female”("Gender " 268). Erauso’s, Nava’s, and Sor Juana’s irregularities resides in that they do not follow the prescription for Woman as defined in early modern Spain. Erauso’s quest for physical freedom and other prerogatives of the elite male, Sor Juana’s fight for intellectual
freedom, and Nava’s direct mystical union with God did not fall under the submissive and obedient guidelines established for women.

Studying the monstrous phenomenon has become a new critical perspective in Baroque literary criticism. From these studies, a variety of characteristics for the monstrous phenomenon has emerged. The concept goes beyond the “meramente feo, repugnante y temible”(Miñana "Don Quijote" 137). A number of characteristics mark the conventual authors and their texts, including their comedias, as Golden Age monstrosities. First, Elizabeth Rhodes points out the feminine nature of “monstrous” as noted in both the Tesoro and Autoridades definitions previously quoted, “cualquier parto contra la regla y orden natural” and “parto ú producción contra el orden regular de la naturaleza” (“Gender” 267). This feminine aspect associates the nuns more closely with the monstrous. At the same time, as Río Parra specifies, the monster must not be portrayed simply as a passive embellishment, “debe ser objeto o sujeto de una acción… no ser el monstruo más que un suceso circunstancial dentro de una cadena de acontecimientos” (11). Paradoxically, the monstrous phenomenon must have both the feminine attribute of reproduction and the male attribute of action. This is why Nava, and not the Devil depicted in her visions, becomes the monstrous element in her text.

A second characteristic, and most certainly the more indicative, emphasizes the hybrid aspect. Early Modern Spain had a fascination with ambiguous or androgynous identities, that is to say, those “in between” genders that stood in stark contrast to the conventional and strict understanding of Man and Woman. These androgynous entities were difficult to represent since the categories of Male and Female were mutually exclusive. Erauso, the Woman - Soldier presents within the same textual characterization traits associated with Woman (such as instability, irrationality, and sexual excess) and the positive characteristics of Man (courage, ingenio, and
virility). Society’s fascination with Erauso began with the discovery of her female gender – a fascination that continues to this day. Erauso was no longer Catalina de Erauso, the elite virgin nun, nor the swashbuckling male Alférez but the popular icon of seventeen-century Spain, the “monstro” or “prodigio.”

Societal norms dictated that the female character of Erauso’s muger varonil revert to her normative position of silent and obedient woman confined to the domestic sphere, a change which did not materialize at the end of Vida i sucesos. Erauso fought to conserve her masculine identity because she realized that only as a man could she gain the royal pension she sought that would enable her to live independently in the New World. The Crown accepted and encouraged her male persona to capitalize on Erauso’s participation in the Conquista.

Sor Juana, the Woman-Intellectual, had the external physical characteristics of Woman but aligned her intellectual self with the category Man (rational, stable, and logical). The comedia termed this class of women as mujer esquiva, “the one who attempts to reject the dominant sexual economy and is usually raped or married for her efforts” (Rhodes "Gender " 270). It is curious to note that Sor Juana reverts in real life to the expected position of obedient wife, albeit bride of Christ, and desists her intellectual activities since, as Rhodes dismally affirms the “…pointless resistance to the dominance” of patriarchal institutionalized structure ("Gender and the Monstruous in El burlador de Sevilla” 270). As presented in Sor Juana’s chapter, the findings in this study do not wholly support Rhodes defeatist viewpoint.

Nava exemplifies those women who embraced the traditional ecclesiastically approved roles of submissive nun but at the same time appropriated the male priestly roles of intermediary between man and God. Nava, the Woman-Mystic, inhabits a liminal space, between the worldly and the divine, especially during her ecstatic visions that put her outside the realm of the
prescriptive female sphere. Nava represents the *muger santa* or ascetic women whose main calling is divine union with God. Even her esoteric visions displayed hybrid elements. Some of her visions challenge the modern reader with depictions of Jesus Christ with unequivocally feminine physical attributes intended to allegorize His nurturing aspect.

Miñana ties in the hybrid characteristic of the monstrous with the popularity of the *comedia*: “Ese conflicto con lo normal que surge de la multiplicidad propia del monstruo, de una metamorfosis a partir de la combinación de elementos distintos, conforma la base de la teoría teatral de Lope y del gusto del público por lo variado” (*Veréis* 391). Secular drama was flourishing during the seventeenth century, “the national stage was virtually exploding with aesthetic innovations, and contemporary writers and artists were delighted in the exploration of the monstrous” (Kluge 300). The creative freedom on the stage also fascinated the public. Not only is the author of the *comedia* and the *comedia* itself considered monstrous, the characters that inhabit these literary works share the same status: “La obra teatral misma es un monstruo que fascina al vulgo tanto como los seres prodigiosos llenos de arteficio y rareza (Miñana *Veréis* 389). Lope de Vega’s *comedias* exhibited a hybrid nature resulting from the mixture of two dramatic genres, tragedy and comedy, and was therefore considered monstrous. “In his *Tablas poéticas* (1617), Francisco de Cascales notoriously called the contemporary Spanish plays *hermafroditos* and *monstruos de la poesía*, indicating that they were neither tragedies nor comedies in the Aristotelian sense, but a mixture of both dramatic genres” (Kluge 297). The scholar goes on to say that Cascales probably had Lope de Vega in mind when he coined this metaphor “*monstruos de la poesía*” to refer to Spanish plays.

Therefore, the monstrous spectacle that was depicted on stage was reflected not only at the literary genre level but at the gender level: “comedia follows a poetics that offers but a restricted
space in which male and female character can suspend ‘natural order’ and temporarily impinge upon the cultural assignments of their generic other” (Rhodes "Gender" 270). The viewing public had a set of cues from which to understand this suspension of gender’s natural order: from the obvious change of costume (el gracioso wearing Leonor’s dress), switching codes of speech and gesture assigned to each gender (Erauso dueling with another man), or the inversion of social and material possession (Erauso bearing weapons). Another cue was the translocation of the character from spatial locations that were for each gender socially defined: women’s domain was the interior domestic space and men inhabited the exterior spaces. The comedia, true to its monstrous origins, “parto ú producción contra el orden regular de la naturaleza” produced offspring as monstrous as its progenitor: the muger varonil, esquiva and santa.

A third characteristic is a derivative of the aforementioned definition of Diccionario de autoridades, “Por extensión se toma por cualquier cosa excesivamente grande, o extraordinaria en cualquier línea.” Elena Río Parra notes that “[e]n su aplicación práctica, ‘monstruo’ sirve para calificar cualquier cosa que excede los límites de lo común, tanto por bondad como por maldad” (15). Erauso’s bravado, Sor Juana’s intellectual acumen, and Nava’s prophetic visions fall under things that exceed the common. Likewise, Society considered Lope de Vega, one of the most popular playwrights of the seventeenth century, as “monstruo” because of his popularity. Cervantes christened Lope as “monstruo de la naturaleza” in his prologue to Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos (1615) (qtd. in Kluge 300);(Miñana "Veréis" 391).

A fourth characteristic of monstrosity concerns that which is outside of natural or classical established boundaries or “contra natura.” Not only were Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava extraordinarily accomplished within their individual realms, they escaped the established societal boundaries set forth for women. Ubiquitous female behavioral manuals make plain that any
trespassing of behavioral gender boundaries was a serious transgression. Society ascribed a similar negative connotation to the *comedia*. “In the seventeenth century, the violation of the classicist rules of poetic composition was not seen as a harmless violation… but rather, conceived of as an unnatural, immoral perversion” (Kluge 298). Lope de Vega, instead of being censured by society for his “immoral perversion” gained tremendous public acceptance if not critical acclaim from his peers for going against classical rules: “Si para Horacio el monstruo representa los vicios de la mala literatura, para el dramaturgo español [Lope] lo monstruoso es precisamente la base de su nuevo teatro” (Miñana "Veréis" 389).

A final characteristic, exhibitionism is one of the more interesting ones. The root of the word monster is the Latin “mostrare’: that which should be shown and contemplated. This urgency to be shown, to be seen Miñana opines, is the most intrinsic characteristic of the monstrous ("Veréis" 371). For reasons specific to each, Society considered Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava monstrous spectacles. Did their extraordinary accomplishments and personas merit the lavish attention from a public fascinated with the strange and rare, or was their popularity a result of some underlying agenda of the Crown and Church?

This study partially bases its analysis of the acceptance of Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava’s atypical lives on Pallister’s useful insight regarding Paré’s *Des Monstres et prodiges* (1573). Pallister concludes that Paré’s detailed catalogue of monstrosities “brought the phenomenon from scandal to explanatory sign” (Pallister xxvii - xxviii). Society treated Erauso as an oddity when she returned to Spain to await the resolution of her case. Many people wanted to see her simply because the Church made her relinquish her male persona and return to wearing her nun’s attire. This attention did not occur when she returns to Spanish America as a male merchant since she had always been seen there as a man. This textual exhibitionism also occurs with Sor Juana with the
reception of her polemic text Respuesta and the public presentation of her play, Empeños de una casa. Because of her cloistered condition, Society could only "see" Nava textually. There is not enough documentation to determine if anyone other than her confessor actually saw her Vida. Nonetheless, the Church portrayed Nava as a potential candidate for sainthood. Lope de Vega had a purely economic reason for exhibiting his monstrous creation: to satisfy the curiosity of ‘vulgo y mujeres’ as he states in Arte Nuevo. As Miñana points out, “de lo artificial y raro, encarnado en la imagen del monstruo, resulta más eficaz a la hora de conquistar al público” (Miñana "Veréis" 389).

This fascination with the monstrous phenomenon, or “prodigios” as they are also known in Spanish, was an integral part of the psyche in the Spanish Baroque society. The representation of the unorthodox conventual writers Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava as monstrous figures serves as explanation, a gloss for their acceptability and popularity. Río Parra succinctly sums up this phenomenon, “El monstruo es, por tanto, un ejemplo para comprender el proceso de introducción de nuevas formas de pensamiento en España” (11). Their texts depict a society that internalized their Baroque monstrosity not as something to be feared but as something to be admired (admiratio) and shown to the world (mostrare). This wide-reaching acceptance was due, in large part, to the broad appeal of the comedia genre. The monstrosity in the writings of conventual writers was prevalent on the stage of Lope de Vega’s corral de comedias. The metamorphosis from a prescriptive female conventual identity to an extraordinary one, that of the hybrid nun-soldier, nun-playwright or nun-mystic is the result of the hybridization of male and female attributes in one being. The traditional precepts for these conventual inhabitants in combination with the elements strictly reserved for Males are a chimera that fascinates to this day.
2.2 CATHOLIC WORLD VIEW

The two great collective ideals that are most evident in the writings of the three conventual authors are honor, in the secular realm, and faith, in the religious. The importance of spiritual matters as central to Spanish society dates back to Medieval times and was maintained throughout the Golden Age: “[w]hether in art, music, literature, government, or personal life, the most obvious element was religion: the Catholic religion understood by all” (Morrison 8). Education, indoctrination and punishment created this popular religious culture. Thus, the historical context in which Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava wrote – early modern Spain and Colonial Spanish America – is only partially comprehensible when divorced from the all-encompassing presence of the Catholic Church. The term “sacred history” best describes this period and its dual point of view, the divine as well as the human. Morrison cites the following statistic to underscore the extent of religion’s role in Spanish society: “It has been estimated that by 1570 a quarter of the adult population of Spain was clerical… and there were, excluding the convents, 9,088 monasteries in the nation” (Morrison 7).

After the Conquest, the Church was an integral part of the Colonization of Spanish America. Christianization of the New World became one of the major concerns of the Spanish Crown, which established many religious orders during this period. The most influential order were the Jesuits, a militant priestly order, whose missionary fervor helped to establish Catholic missions and educational institutions throughout the Colony. It is interesting to note that New Spain had an almost complete absence of cloistered male religions compared to the over 9,000 monasteries in Europe (as seen in the quote at the beginning of this section). Jesuit priests figure prominently in the conventual authors’ lives and manuscripts as either their confessors or detractors. In the past, many scholars of the early modern era did not emphasize the important role
religious women carried out either in the spiritual conquest (Christianization) or the establishment of Spanish culture in the colonial world. Currently, historians who study women’s monasticism assert the significance of convents in the creation of colonial society. This study aligns with recent feminist scholarship that portrays convents and their inhabitants as agents in the economic, social, and political transformation of the Colonial world instead of the traditionally held belief of the essentially passive role of conventual inhabitants within the Church and society.

As Coon’s research establishes, “this characterization of female religiosity has been challenged by the recognition that, although their role has been obscured by both a lack of sources and institutional biases, women have been at the forefront of Christian leadership” (1). This institutional bias is present in Morrison’s quote that cites only male monasteries. This study follows in the tradition of secular historiography of female monasticism, which emphasizes not only the symbolic importance of religious women within the urban context but also their impact at all levels of society.

2.2.1 THE CONVENT: A ROOM OF THEIR OWN

In the newly urbanized multi-racial centers such as Mexico City, convents necessarily would have been active participants. As Ibsen argues, “the establishment of convents paralleled the consolidation and expansion of colonial rule (3). The Casa de Contratación in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain, kept records of nuns who traveled to the New World. Convents were located in viceroyal cities such as New Spain (México City) (6 million inhabitants) or Lima, Perú, (1.5 million inhabitants). The first convent was established a mere 5 years after the viceroyalty of New Spain was formed – Nuestra Señora de la Concepción in Mexico City (1540) founded by Bishop Zumárraga. In the following decades, four new convents were founded – Regina Coeli (1573), Santa Clara (1570), Jesús María (1580), and San Jerónimo (1585) where Sor Juana Inés
resided. New Spain’s capital would boast 21 convents during the colonial period. The Colonial Church expected religious women to “serve as both subjects and agents of a regime undertaking massive imperialist endeavors. That is, nuns were to be subjects of the Spanish church and crown; to serve as agents of the church’s mission to Christianize heathens; to guard orthodoxy; and to ensure social obeisance” (Arenal and Powell 5-6). By the eighteenth century, the convent culture had expanded geographically and was thriving in many areas of Colonial Spanish America (Ibsen 3).

Convents were an elite-feminine urban phenomenon. The Council of Trent prohibited the foundation of feminine institutions outside city walls; only male monasteries could operate outside the safety of the urban centers. Female convents though separate from society were at the same time a reflection of their society. Within the convent’s walls, key economic, social, and cultural relationships vital to an urban-centered colonial society were created and sustained. In recent years, many studies have underscored the economic, artistic, and social contributions of religious women such as those produced by Lavrin, Franco, Myers, Ramos, Glanz, and Bravo. These scholars present convents as centers of female power but still within the patriarchal tradition. As Few underscores, “religion was also empowering to these women, because they could use it to reshape and modify the ‘traditional’ roles of women in a society structured by colonialism and patriarchy” (Few 635).

In Colonial Spanish America, most women authors wrote within the confines of the convent. The nuanced textual voices of these religious female authors reflect the distinctive racial and social composition of their colonial society. The principal characteristic of conventual life was its exclusivity. Many convents had constitutions prohibiting the entry of women who could not present proof of noble birth; thereby the conventual authors always include in their manuscripts
information regarding the status of their birth. This required proof of limpieza de sangre (purity of blood) testified that the postulant’s parents and grandparents were Spaniards and Old Christians. Moreover, rigid enclosure imposed by the Council of Trent necessitated that the religious woman’s family possess wealth to sustain nuns in perpetual seclusion. The required substantial dowry reinforced conventual exclusivity. The average dowry for profession as a black-veiled nun was 2,000 – 3,000 pesos, the equivalent of 14,000 – 21,000 2013 dollars. Contrast that with the average salary of a working-class Spanish immigrant who earned around 300 pesos – 2,100 in 2013 dollars a year (Ibsen 6). Therefore, most women of mid and lower social status, even if they were of Spanish descent, did not have the possibility to enter religious life without additional economic support. Ibsen notes that “18-22 convents in Mexico City were founded by secular women who either financed the costs themselves or encouraged other to make donations”(6). Even though convents were set up to house elite Spanish women, many different social classes were present. Racial hierarchies went from the noble professed nun or black veiled, to the slaves who served them.

Convents were also centers of great social prestige even though in theory they were cloistered spaces where the observation of the vow of poverty was expected. The aristocratic Dominican convent of the Real Descalzas in Madrid (an oxymoron in itself) housed young women belonging to influential families who lived as befitted their social status. The cloistered women continued with her same life-style replete with luxury goods, servants, and the intellectual or artistic activities that they enjoyed outside the walls of the convent. Spain exported to Colonial Spanish America the tradition that monasticism was the prerogative of upper-class women with the added requirement that convents in the New World be self-sustaining. The Laws of the Indies ordered that no convent should take in more nuns than it was able to comfortably support. Only
sufficiently wealthy towns could hope to have a convent’s foundation proposal accepted. Thus, the presence of convents symbolized the financial stability of a city. Due to their aristocratic makeup, convents also brought civic prestige to towns outside the main viceregal centers of Mexico City and Lima. Inhabitants believed that the presence of holy women and their prayers were necessary for the continued prosperity of their town. The families that sent their daughters to convents were well aware of the benefits derived from a family’s close association with the Church - one of the most powerful institutions in the Spanish Empire.

With this social and economic construct of conventual life in mind, it would be incorrect to assume that all nuns during this era possessed the spiritual inclinations or moral convictions to follow the religious life. In early modern Spain and Spanish America, parents had the responsibility to choose the future estado or “state” of their adolescent children. For the upper and middle-classes, the choices of which estado young girls could aspire to were very limited. Three options were available to these young girls: marriage, spinsterhood by staying in the parental home, or entering the convent. Each of these estados presented their own unique challenges. Remaining single under the severe restrictions imposed by the family to safeguard the family’s honor was very unappealing to many young girls. For others the idea of marriage was fraught with hazards of childbirth and subservience to a husband. Contrary to expectations, many theologians and moralists expounded a negative viewpoint on marriage that was widely circulated in moral treatises, confessor’s manuals and from the pulpit (Haliczer 171). Pedro Galindo, an influential theologian and author of Excelencias de la castidad y virginidad (1681), described in his book, “hair-raising descriptions of fearful wives and brutal and unfeeling husbands based on the experiences of his penitents and not entirely on traditional catholic attitudes that favored the celibate life” (Haliczer 170). Young women sometimes went to great lengths to avoid marriage.
Stephen Haliczer recounts the daring escape of Juana Vasquez from her home by dressing as a man thus “behaving just like heroine of a play by Lope de Vega or Calderon” to escape her father’s marriage plans. She was accepted in the convent even without a dowry to live a successful life within the walls as the abbess of this convent (172). An example of this real-life drama is replayed in the *comedia El caballero del Olmedo* (1620) written by Lope de Vega wherein the protagonist doña Inés pretends to have a religious vocation so she does not have to marry the galán, don Rodrigo.

Like Erauso, families sent many elite young girls to convents, which were the only educational option for women. Some remained there for life if their families could not find them a suitable mate. The principal impetus for families such as Erauso’s to remove their young daughters from society was primarily economic. A colonial family, even a fairly well off one, could strain their family’s finances by having to provide for more than one dowry especially during the seventeenth century which was fraught with highly adverse economic circumstances (Haliczer 82; Gascón 29). Thus, the daughter who could not secure a financially beneficial marriage proposal became a liability. For example, elite marriages cost the family between 12,000 – 20,000 pesos, 84,000 – 140,000 in 2013 dollars, as compared to the average marriage dowry for *Criollo* families that was between 4,000-5,000 pesos, 28,000 – 35,000 2013 dollars. Many *Criollo* families did not have enough money to pay the dowries for all their daughters to marry suitable men (understood as those with *limpieza de sangre*) and thus sent them to convents instead of risking their family bloodlines. It is important to note that a convent’s founding principles specify that a young girl’s decision to profess must be of her own volition, not coerced. The Council of Trent made a special admonition against those who force women to enter convents. In practice, neither the young girl's parents nor the convent considered a young girl’s will.
If not forced into the conventual life for economic reasons, as stated previously, a woman with limited religious vocation would choose the convent because it represented the only environment that could give her a degree of autonomy and “authority inadmissible in marriage” (Ibsen 6). Convents provided opportunities for women beyond the spiritual. These female communal spaces provided an educational environment not found outside the cloister walls. Sor Juana chose the least restrictive convent of San Jerónimo to further her intellectual pursuits. Myers succinctly sums up the predicament, “Paradoxically, the convent, while imposing the strictest observance of the image of the ideal woman, also gave women an opportunity for self-development and a degree of autonomy rare in seventeenth-century Hispanic society”(2).

Convents also were repositories for many women who were not seeking the religious life, particularly for respectable placement of female family members, be they excess daughters or widowed noble women (Gascón 40). Juan Ruiz de Alarcón describes such familial use in his comedia La Verdad Sospechosa (1621). Sor Marcela, the illegitimate daughter of Lope de Vega and the actress Micaela de Luján, “may have decided to don the habit partly in order to procure a more stable and honorable situation for herself”(Gascón 40). In addition, convents served as safe havens for women seeking refuge from abusive husbands and as genteel compounds housing women whose aberrant behavior might eventually lead to personal or family dishonor – the Church permitted a husband to put his wife in convent if he suspected her of committing adultery. Convents were also prison alternatives for upper class women convicted of criminal or aberrant behavior.

In contrast to Erauso and Sor Juana, Nava exemplifies the young woman that chooses freely to enter the convent for religious reasons, “su padre, deseoso de darles estado, les dijo a sus hijas que era la tiempo de que le eligiesen poniéndolo en sus voluntades y que condescendería con
el [que] fuese del gusto de ellas” (Robledo 36). This renouncement of parental authority and duty is highly unusual during the early modern period. It also could be read as a lack of marriage proposals for his daughters and that, as a travelling widowed businessman, he did not want to be encumbered by the process of choosing a suitable husband for his two daughters.

Within the walls of the convent, religious women designated a special space in which to exercise their power and influence, the *locutorio* or visitation parlor. Within the *locutorio*, the nuns conducted business behind a *reja* or grille, a permeable barrier between the “private” world of the convent and the “public” world of society. In the past, historiographical studies gave only marginally considered the transactions occurring within the *locutorio*. They considered this space to be a mere adornment to the colonial stage. Scholars like Burns58 for Perú and Larvin in colonial Mexico have moved it to center stage by highlighting the economic and cultural ramifications of this unique hybrid space. A myriad of economic transactions associated with a convent’s foundation and maintenance took place within the *locutorios*. Kathryn Burns’ term “spiritual economies” designates the intricate economic relationships between the convents, their supporters and the towns where they were located. Convents as an institution possessed a significant amount of money and assets as well as the individual nuns. For example, “half a nun’s dowry would immediately go to the convent and the remainder was administered by the nun until her death” (Ibsen 8). The financial windfall that convents obtained with each new postulant permitted the monastic institution to be an “integral and active part of the community: nuns managed water resources, provided education for girls and young women, administered loans, and contributed economic support for the rebuilding of neighborhoods after disasters” (Ibsen 8). The conventual authors contributed to the financial wellbeing of their convents. Sor Juana received recompense for
her literary and dramatic works commissioned by the city council. As Abbess, Nava engaged in financial transactions on behalf of the convent.

2.2.2 THE MYSTICAL PHENOMENON

For Spain and Colonial Spanish America, Baroque extremes of imperialism and decline dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In response to this chaotic period, Haliczer posits, “The need felt by Spain’s governing elite to establish direct contact with God in order to know [H]is will had never been greater than during this period of calamity, while those claiming to be able to provide divinely inspired advice and council had never been more numerous” (19). This same period was also known as Spain’s century of saints. Haliczer further argues, “sainthood and the imitation of sanctity took center stage to the point where they came to dominate the thinking of a large part of the ruling elite and played a key role in political decision making… unique for the influence that saintly individuals – specifically, women credited with great spiritual powers- came to exercise…”(6). With this political mindset, convents and their inhabitants were able to access and influence political institutions at levels not available for the general population of women. Chapter 6, the chapter analyzing Nava, covers the acceptance and promotion of this direct communication with God.

The only way a women could “exert considerable influence on a local, regional, or even national level and even to exercise a form of political activity in an age when the political arena was the exclusive province of a tiny male elite” was to be declared a mystic (Haliczer 7). Having the ability to gain authority and agency must have been a strong impetus for women to get themselves declared as holy by whatever means necessary. Philip II (1527 – 1598) offered support to mystics, especially Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order and Teresa de Ávila of the Discalced Carmelite order. On the other end of the political spectrum, Lucrecia de León,
“became the mouthpiece for a powerful opposition faction during the reign of Philip II” (Haliczer 7). King Phillip IV (1621-65) on his way to battle in Zaragoza, sought the advice of a noted cloistered abbess, Sor Maria de Agreda, (2 April 1602 – 24 May 1665), whose convent was along the route. He requested that she correspond with him so as to advise him on matters, “from his health to foreign policy” and not exclusively on spiritual matters as would be expected (Haliczer 7). The two became regular correspondents throughout the remainder of their lives, documented in over 600 confidential letters that spanned a period of over twenty-two years. Sor María de Agreda’s life exemplifies the essential paradox of women within the Church: “women were perceived as upholding and exemplifying the virtues of the church, they were excluded from active participation in institutional power” (Coon, Haldane and Sommer 1).

2.2.3 THE INQUISITION

In this climate of religious fervor, the Holy Office of the Inquisition, a rigid model of clerical authority, loomed large in the life of every citizen in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America. Established during the reign of Queen Isabella, the Inquisition, became “the chief normative institution functioning to guard society against all forms of religious belief or action that might threaten the faith” (Haliczer 103). In 1492, Spain issued the Edicts of Expulsion backsliders among Spain’s numerous Jewish converts and Moriscos⁶⁰. Later, the Inquisition expanded its jurisdiction to monitor the Old Christian majority through “the removal from popular culture of anything superstitious, immoral, or unorthodox.” (Haliczer 144). Many Church leaders believed that comedias were immoral: thus the disclaimers written by Lope de Vega, Montalbán and Sor Juana Inés in each of their comedias. Writers and playwrights had to have a special authorization from the Church, the Nihil obstat, before publishing or presenting their works.
The Inquisition played a defining role in the content of conventual texts. It enforced orthodoxy through its practice of publicly burning condemned transgressors at the stake in the spectacle known as *auto de fe*. Fear of such a fate was ever-present in the consciousness of most seventeenth-century citizens. Many passages in the conventual texts mention the writer's risk of condemnation for heretical statements.\(^6^1\)

During the period under consideration, conventual authors could not access many spiritual texts. The Inquisition published the *Index of Prohibited Books* (*Index librorum prohibitorum*) to combat the spread of the Protestant Reformation through the written word. These official promulgations greatly diminished Spanish intellectual life through their eventual ban of more than four thousand Spanish and foreign authors and works. The Index included religious as well as scientific books. Haliczer points out, “production of scientific works fell from 14 percent of books published in Madrid between 1566 and 1600, to fewer than 6 percent between 1601 and 1625. As a result, Spain did not participate fully in the scientific revolution. During the same period, the production of religious books rose from 32 to 42 percent of publications as part of the “plan to indoctrinate the Spanish reading public in the principles and values of the Counter-Reformation” (Haliczer 10-11). The Church encouraged the dissemination of the lives of saints (hagiographies) by the publication of the *Flos Sanctorum* (1599-1610)\(^6^2\) written by the Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527-1611) and a myriad of religious plays where these saints were the protagonists. Case in point is the *comedia* associated with Nava written by Lope de Vega at the time of Teresa de Ávila’s canonization proceedings. For religious female authors, the prohibition against the publication of a Spanish translation of the Bible in 1588, and other Latin spiritual treatises was a fundamental obstacle to their participation in ecclesiastical public life. Since the Church prohibited women from learning Latin, they could not participate in the language of the Church as readers, much less
writers who could cite the Bible as an authoritative source. Even within this seemingly oppressive intellectual environment, some conventual authors excelled, like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

2.2.4 PANTHEON OF FEMALE MYSTICS:

One of the main reasons Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava’s transgressive personas were accepted by a patriarchal Spanish Crown and Church was the existence of a pantheon of female mystics accepted at the highest level of the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy. What follows is a brief overview of mystical foremothers whose writings went beyond the strictly religious. Their mystical texts reflect a preoccupation with contemporary events. They were deeply moved by the social conditions that existed in their lifetime. From the traditionally obscure position that women occupied in medieval society, female mystics emerged into the public sphere to present their thoughts necessarily posited within an eschatological framework. In their manuscripts, they proposed that remedies for social ills come with a deeper understanding of religion and a higher standard of morality.

Even though outside the acceptable norm for women, these female mystics transcended religious boundaries and engaged in the intellectual, political, and social arenas. The Church legitimized them through the canonization process as acceptable and orthodox paradigms. The myriad of canonized women represents a “pantheon of female mystics” within the Church (Haliczer 4). The acceptability of the ubiquitous female mystic was an integral part of early modern Spain. One of the principle findings of this study is that widespread approval of female mystics was a large factor in the acceptance of Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava by State, Church and society, despite demonstrably transgressive pronouncements found in their lives and Vidas.

Since the Middle Ages, women have expressed their piety through different mystical experiences such as visions, revelations, voices, stigmata, and ecstasies. These medieval mystical
foremothers paved the way for early modern female mystics such as Teresa of Ávila and thereafter Nava. The Benedictine nuns St. Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) and St. Elizabeth of Shônau (1138-1165) are considered the first in an uninterrupted succession of women mystics that include visionaries, prophetesses, and even political reformers.

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) is probably the greatest example of a medieval mystic that encompass all the aforementioned elements in her life and writings. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican nun provided a new model of spirituality that engaged the mystical and the political realms. Her writings were directly concerned with introducing reforms within the Church and State. She “revealed great religious truths in spite of having no theological training” to a succession of Popes (Haliczer 42). This future Italian saint began to see visions and practice an austere ascetic life from an early age. She underwent the mystical experience known as a mystical marriage to become sponsa di Christi, or bride of Christ. In the summer of 1370, Catherine received a series of divine communications urging her to leave her cell and enter into public life. She did so dramatically by participating at high levels in the affairs not only of the Church but also of the State. Catherine of Siena was actively engaged in resolving Pope Gregory XI’s “Babylonish Captivity” during his exile in Avignon. The Church acknowledged Catherine’s epistolary influence during Pope Urban VI’s papal conflict -Great Schism. When a rival pope confronted Urban VI in Avignon, Catherine urged the Pope and opposing European leaders for restraint and compromise. Because of Catherine of Siena’s extant epistolary corpus, the Church proclaimed her a Doctor of the Church in 1970.

For Spanish early modern conventual writers, one of the most important medieval mystics was St. Gertrude the Great (1256 - 1302). St. Gertrude’s texts, though written in Latin, were “warmly received” in sixteenth century Spain, thus facilitating Teresa of Ávila use of the saint as a
model and guide in her life and writings (Casanova). Teresa includes many of St. Gertrude’s mystical images as well as the saint’s theological pronouncements to validate her writings. Following Teresa of Ávila’s example, Nava highlights St. Gertrude in her writings. The existence of this long and illustrious tradition of medieval female mystics encouraged a favorable climate to accept as theologically valid women’s divine communication with God.

Many women joined the “pantheon of female mystics” during the early modern period. The dramatic events of their time, i.e. the Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, influenced their participation in the mystical path and ecclesiastical acceptance of what they wrote. It is a period characterized by new sensibilities: explorations of new continents, new scientific laws and theological debates that had a deep impact on the practice of Christian mysticism. By the seventeenth century, Spain had become a country where mysticism played a dominant role in society to such a degree that “it was not limited to a comparatively small number of devout individuals but took on the character of almost a mass movement, at least among the urban middle and upper classes” (Haliczer 8). Haliczer goes on to suggest that the popularity of mysticism and its direct and personal connection to God was predicated on the disruption in society caused by waves of epidemic diseases in the late 1600s, military revolts and other natural disasters. The focus of blame for these tragic events then became directed either toward the self, the sinner who needs to repent, or directed toward “failure of the entire society that would require a kind of mass atonement” (Haliczer 17). Society needed a way to deal with these chaotic times. Therefore, as Haliczer points out, “the dominant intellectual concern in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe was the search for the way in which humans could directly receive the influence of heavenly forces” (9). European female mystics appropriated the only public role available to them - divine spokesperson. Female mystics were especially prominent in France with St. Jeanne Chantal.
(1572-1641) and the Ursuline nun Marie de Incarnation (1599-1672), and in Italy with St. Catherine dei Ricci (1522-1590). The New World also touted a famous mystic, St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617).

As “divine spokesperson, female mystics could advance into the arena of politics. Haliczer notes that “[a]s the culture of mysticism became a more and more decisive element in an urban middle-class society deprived of any legitimate means of political expression, prophecy was transformed into virtually the only way of indicting royal policies” (Haliczer 26). This follows in the footsteps of visionary women like Catherine of Siena in medieval Italy who participated directly in the political discourse of her country because of the authority derived from her mystical faculties. In Spain, Sor María de Jesús de Agreda (1602 – 1665) followed in Catherine of Siena’s lead by serving as spiritual advisor to King Philip IV. She was not only a mystical author but participated at the highest levels of power. More than 600 extant letters verify her relationship with the King. Sor María’s signature work, *Mystical City of God*, is a multi-volume work detailing the biography of the Virgin Mary (mother of Jesus). Even though her famous and controversial *Mystical City of God* was placed on the Roman Index in 1681, it was a highly popular text, “eighty-nine complete editions and sixty-eight anthologies and summaries, making it one of the most popular Spanish language devotional works ever written” (Haliczer 45). Sor María was widely believed to have the gift of bilocation. Reports tell of her appearing to the Jumano Indians of the American Southwest (Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona) as the “Lady in Blue” who preached the gospel and urged them to accept the Catholic missionaries.

The highest levels of Spanish government clearly accepted mysticism. King Philip IV even convened a gathering of mystics in Zaragoza to confer on matters of royal policy (Haliczer 26). The mystical experience was also validated by one of the most influential thinkers in Spanish
intellectual life, the Jesuit Juan Eusebio Nierember (1595 – 1658) in his influential treatise *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y lo eternal*. He “identified the contemporary need for solid spiritual direction, particularly in the form of dependable mystical treatises, to prevent deception by the devil” (Ahlgren 139).

Conventual authors such as Nava, found a safe haven within the Catholic Church behind the veil of a mystical life as demonstrated by the preponderance of female mystics. Nonetheless, they were considered transgressive as summarized by the chief complaint against Teresa of Ávila – she engaged in a mystical union with God unmediated by the institutional church (Ahlgren 130).

Mysticism had a “potentially subversive effect because it tended to support the individual’s own efforts to forge a relationship with God and call into question the value of the formal channels of grace mediated by the institutional church” (Haliczer 141-42).

The Inquisition’s persecution reflected institutional fear of this unmediated access to God. They questioned mystical theology and associated it with the heresy of *alumbradismo*, especially the practice of “*dexamiento*” (Ahlgren 123). Moreover, many women had prominent roles within the Illuminist movement. This further confounded the ecclesiastical hierarchy since these women were outside the sphere of the hierarchy's clerical supervision and control. The Inquisition accused more than half the female mystics brought before it of *alumbradismo* or Illuminism.

As countermeasure, prominent Churchmen such as Fray Luis de León and Antonio de Quevedo presented a learned defense of the mystical experience. They argued that “an orthodox treatment of mystical doctrine would be their strongest weapon against the *alumbrados*” (Ahlgren 143). Fray Luis de León defense of Teresa of Ávila’s mystical path included placing Teresa squarely within an accepted tradition of Christian mysticism which included Saint Gertrude and Saint Catherine of Siena.
2.2.5 TERESA OF ÁVILA

Any study on early modern conventual writers necessitates an introduction into the life and writings of Teresa of Ávila. Teresa of Ávila’s writings, especially her presentation of mental prayer, reflect such a profound theological insight that the Church declared her the first female Doctor of the Church. Many consider her a catalyst that changed male theologian attitudes in regards to female mysticism. The Pre-Teresian concept of female sanctity as summed up by Weber, “consists in being quiet, obeying, staying in a corner and forgetting about oneself” (Weber 164). Teresa of Ávila did the exact opposite. She dedicated her life to writing and founding new convents. She began to write in response to the dearth of mystical texts after the appearance of the Valdés Index. Alhlgren observes that “Teresa’s mystical works were the first new texts of this genre to be published” after the Valdés Index had successfully repressed the publication of any new mystical works (3-4). Her texts, written in the vernacular, stand in contrast to key medieval mystic texts, which were all written in Latin, the language of orthodoxy. Her manuscripts, essential resources for her reformed Carmelite order, encouraged her readers to pursue holiness and mystical union. In Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity, an in-depth study of the ecclesiastical milieu in which Teresa of Ávila lived, Ahlgren describes a time dominated by the Inquisition, “when all writings were closely scrutinized, when women lacked theological authority, and when canonization was a highly political process”(1). Many ecclesiastical leaders were concerned with the following issues. First, Teresa’s books were written in the vernacular so her ideas would be accessible to the “unlettered.” Second, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy questioned Teresa’s authority to teach others through her writings. Finally, they questioned the authority granted to her by her visions and mystical experiences since it challenged institutional authority. The wider Church was debating these same theological issues. Ahlgren explains, “The
general problem of authority which had emerged so forcefully in the Reformation era required theologians to give more thought to the role of personal revelation in the life of the institutional church, and particularly to the evaluation of visionary phenomena” (142). Even though Teresa of Ávila’s practice of instructing her nuns in the techniques of silent prayer struck critics as subversive to church authority, she nonetheless, adhered to the goals of the Catholic Reformation. The analysis of Nava’s visions in Chapter 6 echos the same concerns present in Teresa of Ávila’s manuscripts, including adherence to the orthodoxy of the Church.

Teresa was able to maneuver within this restrictive environment with the help of supporters. Father Antonio de Quevedo, an ecclesiastical leader of her time, staunchly defended her in the face of mounting opposition.78 Because of women like Teresa of Ávila, “women mystics had at last gained the kind of respectability that would allow them to play an ever more prominent role in seventeenth-century society” (Haliczer 44).

Female mystics, as has been noted, received either acceptance from the elite power structures (Sor María de Agreda) or persecution from the Inquisition (Teresa of Ávila) because of their writings. The repeated reprinting of Teresa’s and other female mystics’ writings encouraged other women to believe that their own spiritual lives were valuable enough to communicate to others. It also gave rise to numerous works in praise of women like Juan de Espinosa’s Diálogo en laude de las mujeres (1580) and Pérez de Moya’s Varias historia de santas y ilustres mujeres among others (Haliczer 63-64).

Therefore, conventual authors had different textual role models from which to choose to fashion and give authority to their writings. By far, Saint Teresa of Ávila’s four main manuscripts comprise the textual paradigm for most conventual authors. Lisa Vollendorf concurs on the importance of Teresa of Ávila in early modern Spanish society, “Saint Teresa’s dogged dedication
to writing paved the way for women’s legitimate participation in writing culture. As a result of this confluence of factors, Spain saw in the seventeenth century its first cohort of women who wrote plays, stories, and poetry for literary salons and the general public” (Recovering 6). Sor Juana exemplifies this new breed of female authors as noted in Chapter 5.

A brief introduction to Teresa of Ávila’s texts presents the salient points also found in Sor Juana’s and Nava’s texts. Libro de la vida (The Autobiography) (1562-66), though technically not a mystical work, still presents the episodes of temptation that is integral to the mystical way. It is most closely associated with the genre Vida and depicts the autobiographical information of her early years and her entrance into the convent. She also includes information on the foundation of her first reformed monastery of Saint Joseph in Ávila in 1562. In Libro de la vida, she includes an account of her spiritual progress, mystical experiences and her prayer practice. This text can be considered as an introspective autobiography which outlines the four stages of the soul’s ascent: mental prayer, prayer of quiet devotion, union (characterized by blissful peace), and finally, ecstasy or rapture where sense activity ceases.

At 47, Teresa thought she would spend the rest of her life at St. Joseph and write no more. She was wrong: for the next 20 years, she traveled throughout Spain establishing foundations both for nuns and for friars. As the monasteries got farther apart, Teresa began to write down spiritual directions for her nuns. She wrote Camino de perfección (Way of Perfection) (1564-67), to instruct her fellow sisters of the convent of St. Joseph in Ávila to avoid temptation and dwell in God’s presence in order to reach their spiritual goal. This manuscript gives the Carmelite nuns a detailed method for prayer and Christian meditation to progress in the spiritual contemplative life. Castillo interior/Las moradas (Interior Castle/The Mansions) (1577) is Teresa’s explanation of contemplative prayer. It is “a theological tour de force” that sets out a spiritual road map marking
the progression of the soul through seven stages until the ultimate union with God (Ahlgren 3).

*Moradas* was Teresa’s answer to the Inquisition who confiscated her manuscript *Libro de la vida*.

Teresa wrote *Las Fundaciones* (*Foundations*) (1573-1582) to provide her nuns with a way to remember the early history of their order. In addition to these four manuscripts, Teresa also wrote meditations, prayers, and hymns as additional spiritual instruction. Teresa also wrote thousands of letters to her fellow sisters, Carmelite friars, clerics and laity who were her benefactors. Of these, over 450 are extant.
CHAPTER 3
WORLD OF THE TEXT:
TEXT-CENTERED LITERARY READING

World-of-the-Text emphasizes the text as the place housing meaning (text-centered).

Chapter 3 covers the broad literary genres of \textit{vida} and \textit{comedia} used by the conventual authors in this study. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on the \textit{Vidas} and \textit{comedias} associated with the three conventual authors, with analysis on how the words in their texts under consideration (hagiography, \textit{comedia}, historical documents, and essay) conveys the author’s observations, experiences and implied views. Emphasis is on how the conventual authors describe themselves and their interactions with ecclesiastical power structures, and how they address and resolve their conflicts.

3.1 LITERARY WORLD VIEW: A PAUCITY OF FEMALE TEXTS

During the early modern era, women in the Spanish Empire did not have access to a public voice through the written word. Society placed undo restrictions on women’s ability to participate in the creation of culture. Publications by women amount to only about 1% of total publications in early modern Europe. This is due to the cultural admonitions advocating female silence, women’s lack of formal educational opportunities and economic factors (Wiesner-Hanks 190-91). Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava employed creative narrative strategies to produce a successful adaptation of male literary conventions in a female “voice” that challenged male directives and prerogatives. Erauso’s legal considerations, Sor Juana’s theological concerns, and Nava’s religious obligations were the impetus for these conventual women to write manuscripts that placed them in the public domain. Erauso adapted the soldier’s tale, Sor Juana disguised her theological essay under the
guise of an epistolary contestation, and Nava adapted the hagiographic genre to address mystical concerns.

Literary historians point out that women were limited in the number of literary genres they could access compared to their male contemporaries. The main female genres were poetry, autobiographies, memoirs, and advice manuals (midwives, cookbooks, housekeeping). This limitation was due in part to the lack of educational opportunities for females. Universities did not accept women and few alternatives existed for learning the Latin needed to read, quote and knowledgeably comment on male-authored texts. Women could not participate in any activity deemed threatening to male authority and power, such as publicly participating in political or ecclesiastical debates. Women ascertained that if they chose literary genres that were popular at the time - Vidas, comedias, poetry, or autobiographies - censure was less likely. Of these genres, the preferred mode of expression for the majority of women, religious or secular, was poetry. Due to its perceived emotional content, deemed suitable for women, poetry seemed to escape severe monitoring and restrictions. Of the three authors analyzed, only Sor Juana produced poetry.

3.2 VIDAS: LIVES OF SAINTS

As stated previously, the Church was an integral part of the political and social structure of early modern Spanish society. An important medium through which the Church communicated its ideals were the Lives of Saints or Vidas. Therefore, many religious orders began writing the spiritual autobiographies of their co-religionists: “[b]y the mid-sixteenth century religious orders and the ecclesiastical hierarchy itself had become extremely conscious of the need to document the lives of those whom they wished to put forward for canonization” (Haliczer 5). The surge in interest in the lives of saints resulted in an increase in hagiographic publications. Haliczer states that between 1480 and 1700, there were 443 individual Vidas published. The majority, 80.5
percent, were published in the seventeenth century which corresponds to the indoctrination and educational efforts of the Counter-Reform agenda (Haliczer 32).

Another impetus for the production of *Vidas* was Spain’s fascination with the cult of saints. Spain’s rulers sought to identify themselves with saints in order to garnish international prestige: “Of the fifty-five saints canonized between 1588 and 1767, seventeen were Spanish and only four were French” (Haliczer 35). Thus, Spain deems the seventeenth century the “century of saints.” Haliczer proposes that the Spanish kings had a vested interest in the support of potential Spanish candidates for sainthood because “canonization of worthy nuns and friars would gain the monarchy support from the powerful religious orders to whom those individual belonged” (35). Furthermore, since most Spanish saints came from the ranks of the nobility, the aristocracy’s sponsorship of a particular saint increased the family’s honor. This cult of saints is another aspect of Spain’s blurring of the lines between politics and religion.

One the most remarkable aspects of the cult of saints in early modern Spain was the interest in female saints. Powerful male-dominated institutions like the Inquisition and the Counter-Reformation Church were supportive of the canonization of spiritual women. Catholic theologians had already officially declared that certain extraordinary women such as St. Cecilia, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and St. Catherine of Siena were genuine recipients of divine favors. Theologians argued that God's granting of divine favors to women in the past necessitated His continued conference of such in the present. Their acceptance of contemporary mystical women stands in stark contrast to society’s misgivings about women in general, and women mystics in particular, since they were “preter naturam,” against nature.

Haliczer’s succinct recounting of society’s negative attitude towards women since the Middle Ages and its implications is worth quoting:
Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians saw men as perfect and complete and women as imperfect and deficient. The inferiority of women was at once physical, psychological, and intellectual. According to the great sixteenth-century poet and theologian Luis de León, women were ‘weak, brittle, and frail’ to an extraordinary degree. Psychologically, according to the late-fifteenth-century writer Martín de Córdoba, women were more attached to carnality than men, because emotion and not reason predominated in their psychological makeup. The weak-mindedness and generalized inconstancy and fickleness ingrained in the feminine psyche made them vulnerable to demonic suggestion. As a consequence, their spiritual lives were far more likely to be inspired by the devil than those of men, whose superior intellects allowed them to better resist demonic temptation. (48)

Even though this mentality was the prevailing wisdom, elite men of society highly regarded and even admired many mystical women. These men, who formed the upper levels of the political and religious hierarchy, placed their trust in women visionaries as noted in the section Pantheon of Women Mystics (Chapter 2.2.4). The increase in mystical women’s popularity drove a growing number of conventual spiritual biographies, autobiographies and other literary works, as well as female works of art and music.

Haliczer underscores an important consequence of this need to document the lives of potential female saints: “The high levels of documentation … detailed records kept by confessors, notarized accounts of miracles, and the spiritual writings of the women, meant that the facts about these women’s lives were not lost in the mists of hagiographical convention…” (5). “Elogio,” the manuscript of Father Juan de Olmos, Nava’s confessor, exemplifies this work. He sets forth in “Elogio” the reasons he chose Nava as the subject upon which to construct the “edification” of a proper role model for the Catholic Church of Nueva Granada as the extended title suggests.80 Female religiosity also found expression by means of comedía de santos such as Lope de Vega’s play, Santa Teresa de Jesús.
Another essential element for the upsurge in popularity of *Vidas* was the existence of a printing industry that produced works aimed at an expanding literate and cultivated audience. Medieval female mystics such as St. Gertrude had their works published in Spanish augmenting their readership outside the monastery walls. Four biographies were written about St. Catherine of Siena, in addition to the publication of her spiritual works (Haliczer 40). Women became an important segment of this reading population, especially educated (black –veiled) nuns and aristocratic women. Reading the *Lives of Saints* became an established part of convent life and domestic routines of aristocratic women and girls.

As vernacular translations of the lives of saints became available, many learned of the saints’ models of self-abnegation, physical mortification, and devotion. Consequently, imitating saints became an entrenched part of the Spanish culture and brought about changes in society. Heroic models from Teresa of Ávila or Sor María Agreda de Jesús definitely affected the politics and economies of households: “Greater involvement with the church and its new or expanded Counter-Reformation devotions (Rosary, Sacred Heart), as well as the spread of cults to saints to whom women were particularly devoted, such as Gertrude the Great, meant that many women “were spending more time warming the floors of churches than heating stoves to feed their families” (Haliczer 52). In other words, there appears to be a feminization of the Church with increasing numbers of women in attendance to the sacraments of Eucharist and Confession, attendance to devotional rituals, and holy days that grew steadily in numbers from medieval times. Therefore, as Haliczer underscores, “The impact of devotional literature on the behavior and cultural expression of early modern Spanish women cannot be underestimated” (45).

Some information regarding the lives of mystical woman was available outside of conventual archives or published *Vidas*. The annals of the Inquisition hold many accounts detailing
lives of female mystics who did not get official recognition from the Church. One of the most important factors that kept a female mystic’s manuscript in the archives of the convent and not in the Inquisition’s was her relationship with her confessor. This relationship determined her status as orthodox or heretical. The confessor validated the female mystic’s experiences before Inquisitorial censors when they evaluated her life or her manuscript male-dominated ecclesiastical institution. weighed heavily with the. His advocacy was instrumental in declaring the female mystic as a holy woman. As Haliczer notes, “The real litmus test for the acceptability of holy women to the male-dominated institutional structure was the way in which their biographies and autobiographies were dealt with by the censorship apparatus”(67). Their unique relationship developed through the constant interaction in the confessional.

As noted previously, one of the important functions of a female mystic’s hagiographic account is to determine her status as orthodox. Olmos wrote “Elogio de la autora”- also known as “Carta de Edificación” - with the explicit purpose of declaring and validating the exemplary life and holy death of Nava. What made Nava so special in the eyes of Olmos, if, as he states, there were other nuns of “mucha observancia” in the same convent? Some clerics had a vested interest in promoting the female mystics under their supervision, as successfully doing so furthered their personal agendas. For example, the Dominican Antonio de Lorea wanted to advance his idea that God’s miraculous presence is not limited to the Old Testament. Accordingly, he presents the biography of the ecstatic nun Hipolita de Jesús y Rocaberti (1549-1624), “in whose spiritual life God repeated the same favors he had awarded to St. Catherine of Siena two hundred years earlier”(Haliczer 13). Other clerics hoped that an association with someone who might become a second Saint Teresa would bring the confessor greater renown as a spiritual advisor furthering his ecclesiastical career. Confessors encouraged the nuns whom they advised to further their religious
education and indulge in spiritual writings. In this way, the confessor who authored any nun's well-received biography also achieved recognition. Additionally, Olmos desired to be associated with Nava who, as a “bride of Christ,” believed that God granted her special privileges. This is in keeping with Early Modern society’s belief that “[b]eing a conduit of divine messages and recipient of divine graces was the prerogative of women, and the best a man could hope for was a vicarious experience through close contact with a charismatic woman” (Blinkoff 80).

3.2.1 LITERARY GENRE: VIDA

The term Vida is not a monolithic genre. Its various acceptations are present in the manuscripts associated with Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava. McGinn defines Vidas as “the earliest and most important ways of communicating models for the pursuit of God” (Essential 49). Darcy notes, “the ostensible reason for commissioning these Vidas was to provide concrete example of the virtues which had been determined by the patriarchal religious establishment as characterizing the truly saintly existence” (231). Schlau, describes the genre as having connections with the autobiography, apologia pro vita sua, hagiography and liturgy (Schlau 5). Donahue, on the other hand, succinctly states, these accounts of the lives of conventual authors can be understood as a “literary hybrid” since “they do not conform to canonical notions of biography as it has been defined in modern terms, nor of hagiography, nor of autobiography, though they contain elements of all of these” (231). Adding to the generic obfuscation is the fact that there are two general categories subsumed under the genre Vida. The first category is the hagiography or a biography written of a known saint. The second type is a biography written in the hagiographic tradition about a religious person who is not a saint. This type has subdivisions. First, the spiritual autobiography or Vida espiritual written by the female author herself. Nava’s text “Autobiografía” would fall under this subcategory. Sor Juana’s La Respuesta can serve as her Vida since it
describes her intellectual “model for the pursuit of God.” Nava’s manuscript can also be called is also a theological autobiography since it details her journey from Daughter of Eve to bride of Christ. Erauso’s *Vida i sucesos* includes many of the essential elements of a *Vida* from her birth to an exemplary death.

These spiritual autobiographies do not attempt to tell the truth in a post-Enlightenment way. The spiritual autobiography, or *Vida*, begins with an “examination of conscience.” A nun is instructed by her confessor to write down every thought, action, and dream as part of their daily routine: “Y entre otras religiosas de mucha observansia, a quienes he assistido, fue una la Señora Madre Gerónima del Spíritu Santo, mi hija y mi señora religiosa del Monasterio de Santa Clara, a quien con especial assistensia y cuidado confesé” (Robledo 32). All that was expected of the nun was to record her thoughts without any subsequent analysis since a woman’s intellect was considered “feeble.” Nava simply states that she will recount her visions, “quiero dar quenta dellas como pudiere para que Vuestra Merced las examine. Y si ay algunos errores, así en el escrito que yo les doi como en el modo con que me pasan, me corrija y enmiende” (Robledo 55).

This type of *Vida* necessarily underscores the involuntary nature of the authorship. Erauso’s *Vida i sucesos* follows the intention of a *cuenta de conciencia* as she details her life.

The second subcategory of a *Vida* is a biographical text written by another author, usually a male cleric, depicting a female religious that he deems meritorious for emulation by the public or as a potential candidate for sainthood. Olmos’ “Eulogio de la autora” would fall under this category. A reversal of the stated objective of depicting a meritorious female religious is the Bishop of Puebla’s *Carta Atenagórica* imputing Sor Juana’s intellectual activities. The male-authored texts associated with Erauso, *Certificaciones* and *Relaciones* depict her transformation,
albeit not in the spiritual realm. For the purposes of this study, Sor Juana’s voice remains unmediated by a male author.

Olmos wrote his “pious memoirs” or “Elogio” because of his ecclesiastical assignment as Nava’s confessor. In this hagiographic biography, the clerical author makes use of extensive quotes from the nun’s “examination of conscious” to flesh out “an itinerary of conversion, withdrawal, ascetic purgation, and spiritual transformation” (McGinn Essential 49). Stephen Haliczer cites a study conducted by Isabelle Poutrin that compares the autobiographies of 113 Spanish women mystics to their biographies written by male authors. In this study, Poutrin concludes that biographies written by male authors contained information that was very close to the content supplied by the female mystic herself (6). This implies that male authors either appropriated all or parts of conventual biographies for their own works. Therein lays the source of authorial confusion on the provenance of many conventual manuscripts, as Robledo’s scholarly work on Nava’s manuscript revealed.

3.3 LITERARY GENRE: COMEDIA

Entre broma y broma, la verdad se asoma”

(Anonymous proverb)

To enhance the interpretation of their textual identity, this dissertation pairs each of the three subject conventual authors with a comedia. This analytical perspective follows Morrison’s viewpoint, “to understand the concerns and aspirations of a people, we must turn to those forms of their literature which are most genuinely national and popular” (22). Comedias were indisputably popular at all levels of the social strata during the Golden Age. Just one playwright, Lope de Vega, produced more than 400 comedias. Because of this popularity, Morrison acknowledges the validity of establishing comedias as “portrayer and interpreter of seventeenth-century Spanish life” (22). As the scholar further notes, “[i]t is widely agreed that the theater of Golden Age Spain
represented the popular taste, portrayed the society of the day, achieved audience identification, and met with popular acclaim”(21).

In order to yield a broader representation of the historical persona of Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava, this research examines the tensions produced between the conventual author’s narrative voice and her theatrical characterization in the comedias. Each chapter in the dissertation compares the discursively established conventual author with her constructed on-stage persona (muger varonil, muger esquiva and muger santa). The analysis explores how each embodiment of the conventual author (Vida or comedia) successfully confronts established hierarchical power structures. In addition, analysis of the dramatic author’s portrayal of the female protagonist - muger varonil, muger esquiva, and muger santa- clarifies the playwright's perspective. Do Montalbán, Sor Juana and Lope imbue the female protagonist with elements that expresses the reality of a culture in crisis? Alternatively, does the protagonist’s transformation from muger religiosa into muger varonil represent the dramatic author’s portrayal of an alternative way of being for women within the context of their era?

3.3.1 COMEDIA’S TRANSGRESSIVE FUNCTION

Friedman, Thacker, Morrison, and other Golden Age comedia scholars point to the comedia as the seventeenth-century’s locus to confront social standards. Thacker succinctly summarizes:

The antisocial play-acting which audiences paid to see in the corrales must have engaged them in a debate (perhaps unconscious) between what we may somewhat simplistically term the status quo and the avant-garde. Were the words and actions of a particular protagonist unacceptable to society? Or was society lagging behind that character’s behavior? The drama was not immediately threatening because it was the stage society that had to react to metatheatrical behavior, to stage the conflict and resolve it, not the audience. (Thacker 17)
Lope de Vega understood this transgressive function of the *comedia* as he clearly states in *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*: “En la parte satírica no sea claro ni descubierto, pues que sabe, que por ley se vedaron las comedias por esta causa en Grecia y en Italia” (Vega and García Santo-Tomás). The *comedias* under consideration echo these disclaimers.

The Golden Age metaphor of *theatrum mundi* employed by the prevalent dramatist of the time, Calderón, Vega, and Tirso de Molina reveals the era’s fascination with role-playing and its ability to criticize society: “[t]he society on stage remains traditional, patriarchal, but rebellion can be shown and society can be seen to change through metatheatrical strategies” (Thacker 16).

*Comedias* had significant influence on Golden Age society’s ability to accommodate an author's transgressive social, political, and religious ideas, as many productions in local *corrales de comedia* routinely presented non-normative behavior. The continual mimicking on stage of a transgressive social issues weakens that position’s ability to scandalize (Thacker 17). Therefore, society’s acceptance, approval, and affection for the transgressive figure of the *muger varonil*, *muger esquiva*, and *muger santa* presented in the *comedias* extended to incorporate the conventual writers themselves.

*Comedia’s* importance as “portrayer and interpreter of seventeenth-century Spanish life” made it subject to institutional scrutiny. Moralists such as Juan Vives and Fray Luis de León fought to abolish these popular dramatic productions because of the perceived detrimental effect on society. The royal decree of 1587 permitted women to act on stage for the first time. Prior to 1587, young men or boys performed all female roles. Moralists decried the cross-dressed roles as very scandalous since male attire displayed a woman’s bodily contours and thus “purportedly posed a grave temptation and danger for the male spectator” (Soufas "Feminist Approach" 138). The playwright had to present a serious motivation for a female character to access the Masculine by
cross-dressing and cross-behavior: in Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *La serrana de la Vera*, the female protagonist dresses as a man to murder her seducer; as does Doña Juana in Tirso de Molina’s *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* to avenge a lover’s betrayal; and Rosaura in Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *La vida es sueño* to restore her honor.

An unintended consequence of the royal decree of 1587 enabled women to access a specific space and time—*corrales de comedia* or playhouses—in which they could speak openly in the public sphere concerning the impossible prescriptive expectations imposed upon them. Nonetheless, the seemingly proto-feminist comedias where women’s roles suggest female empowerment and agency traditionally did not end on that note. Women’s roles revert to patriarchal expectations once they have lived out their drama on stage. Melveena McKendrick argues that the figure of the “*muger varonil*” represents the Spanish Baroque’s society “world turned upside down,” which returns to her normative representation once patriarchal order has been reestablished (322-23). Contrary to the expected resolution of the *muger varonil*’s fate, Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava undercut the organizing principle of dramatic social order and present a “world turned upside down” that resists reorganization. Whether as playwrights, authors or protagonists, these conventual authors present themselves as destabilizing elements. These *mugeres varoniles* do not participate in the reestablishment of the patriarchal order; on the contrary, they become agents of Spanish Colonial disorder.

3.3.2 MUGER VARONIL AS TRANSGRESSIVE AGENT

Since the 1950s, scholars have systematically studied women’s dramatic portrayal in both male- and female-authored plays of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century, Spain’s Golden Age of drama. The critical repertoire of female authored Golden Age plays is usually limited to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, María de Zayas and Ana Caro because of the overwhelming “barriers the female
dramatists themselves had to transgress in order to be heard in the male-dominated social and theatrical dimensions of Golden Age Spain” (Soufas "Feminist Approach" 139). This systematic study of women within comedias began with Carmen Bravo-Villasante’s 1955 study of the cross-dressed women. It was not until Melveena McKendrick’s 1974 study of the muger varonil that a comprehensive study came to fruition.94

Rhodes assigns the term Varonil to a female character who “perform the attributes pertinent to the cultural construct of Male, were understood to be superior in kind and degree not only to what is Female, but any questionable admixture of the two in which behavior prescribed for one gender was embraced by the other” ("Gender" 269). Ruth Lundelius says that the muger varonil “appeared in the repertory of virtually every dramatist, beginning with Lope de Vega, whose sensitivity to the dramatic appeal of the masculine woman was expressed in his dictum “… con acciones de hombres/ no agradan mal las mujeres….” to satisfy popular demand” (220).95 It is striking to see the predominance of women accessing the features of the muger varonil on stage but very few male characters accessing the Feminine. Of the three comedias, only Sor Juana’s male gracioso dresses up as a female. As Rhodes points out “…males accessing the Feminine belittled the construct of Man, making such a performance a degrading Trope of representation that served to pull the entire Masculine mimetic edifice downward. This is surely why Sor Juana and María de Zayas used it” ("Gender" 272).

Since Male was the dominant construct in seventeenth-century society, then Woman was necessarily “semantically opposed to Man as a figure of instability, deceit, and irrationality” (Rhodes "Gender" 268). Did a woman’s “instability” facilitate the transformation of each female protagonist into a muger varonil? If so, did their on-stage approval help promote the social acceptability of the conventual authors in their incarnation as mugeres varoniles?
3.3.3 PATTERN OF GENDER PERFORMATIVITY OF THE MUGER VARONIL

The application of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity illuminates the analysis of comedia’s on-stage depiction of gendered behaviors. Per Butler’s theory, gender performativity is a cultural construct. In addition, Joan Scott’s insight highlights other important issues underlying the analysis of gender performativity: “Its uses and meaning become contested politically and are the means by which relationships of power -of domination and subordination- are constructed” (2). The audiences of the seventeenth century were also aware of the artificiality of gender performance on the stage, as evidenced in Sor Juana’s gracioso’s soliloquy.

In this study, the character of the muger varonil thus reveals transgressions to the cultural construct of the female gender. Because of their entertainment value, gender issues are exaggerated on stage -thus facilitating its analysis as Rhodes suggests: “comedia follows a poetics that offers but a restricted space in which male and female character can suspend ‘natural order’ and temporarily impinge upon the cultural assignments of their generic other” ("Gender" 270). This suspension of natural order is highly dramatized in the oxymoronic trope of the muger varonil and its other incarnations, muger esquiva and muger santa.

In the analysis of the female protagonist’s gender performativity, a pattern emerges. During the opening scenes, the protagonist (Erauso, Doña Leonor and Teresa) abides by societal role prescriptions for appropriate feminine behavior. As the comedia advances, there is a widening split between the protagonist’s behavior and her expected social role. In addition to entertaining the audience, the behavioral transgressions illustrate the methods that society reproduces and reinforces those same societal norms (Thacker 18). For example, the ease with which Sor Juana’s gracioso, Castaño and Erauso appropriate a new role by simply donning items of clothing “challenges the status of the roles which do exist in society” (Thacker 18).
Golden Age theatrical convention provides the audience with many dramatic signals that a character’s gender affiliation has altered. The most notable is the change in costume: women dressed as men (Erauso) or men dressed as women (Sor Juana’s gracioso, Castaño). The outward change is complemented by a change in codes of speech and behavior (Erauso dueling or Sor Juana speaking in learned terms). With this new identity, the spatial location that the character occupies changes accordingly (women intrude on exterior spaces - Teresa founds monasteries in many cities; and men such as Sor Juana’s galán and gracioso move into domestic interiors). Hanna Scolnicov’s analysis of the theatrical space as seen through a feminist lens was useful in this study's analysis of each comedia:

(t)he structural division of space into the interior and the exterior of the house carries with it social and cultural implications. Gender roles are spatially defined in relation to the inside and the outside of the house. Traditionally it is the woman who makes the house into a home, her home, while the world of commerce, war, travel, the world outside, is a man’s world… Seeing the within and the without in terms of the outdoors and the indoors immediately transforms the theatrical space into a gender-charged environment, naturally fitted for acting out the drama of man and woman. The question of the theatrical space thus becomes the question of woman. (6-7)

In most comedias, the traditional comic resolution would then mold the protagonist back into her conventional clothing and role, and marry her off to the correct heterosexual partner. “Cross-dressing, like cross-behaving, was permissible at the beginning of the play, and could intensify even into the last moment. But by the final scene’s conclusion, the ‘right’ individual should be wearing the pants and the restitution of order sealed with a heterosexual marriage or two, to assuage any doubts about the proper order of things” (Rhodes Gender 270). If not, the muger varonil would receive an exemplary punishment – rape or forced marriage. The conservative playwright would always follow the pattern where restoration of order is paramount. Subversive playwrights such as Sor Juana and Juan Perez de Montalbán, instead of reaffirming the social
order, give their plays alternative endings that subtly state their dissident and progressive ideas in regards to the changing role of women in society. Thacker makes a very valid and interesting observation: “The social battle is resolved on stage, but the debate it sets up, the discord created, and the possibility for deceptive role-play within the ‘real’ society remains alive” (Thacker 17). The Church and State allowed Erauso to continue her “deceptive role-play” off the corrales de comedia stage.

3.3.4 *COMEDIA DIVINA*

In Lope, we find no urgency to leave the world behind in order to achieve greater spirituality; as in a great many of his works, here sacred and profane are inextricably intertwined, each one dependent on the other for the efficacy of its expression. (Gascón 19)

Chapters 4 and 5 present the secular comedias associated with Erauso and Sor Juana. Even though La monja alférez and Empeños de una casa are secular dramas, they incorporate many of the observations that follow. The third comedia, Santa Teresa de Jesús, an example of a religious drama,99 highlights Lope de Vega’s corpus of comedia religiosa, which has been largely neglected by scholars. This neglect should be considered in light that no other European national drama focused on religion as did the drama of Spain’s Golden Age where this type of comedia reached its highest expression and development. In the seventeenth-century, as religious plays were disappearing in Europe, Spain experienced a flourishing of the auto sacramental and the comedia divina alongside secular plays.100 Some of Lope’s religious plays were very popular in Golden Age corrales but remain relatively unknown today such as San Diego de Alcalá.101

Furthermore, as Morrison underscores, “[t]hat our own age tends to view secular works as almost automatically superior would baffle readers of earlier centuries” who enjoyed and demanded comedias a lo divino since they were familiar with religious matters in their daily lives (1). He further clarifies, “[t]o dwell only on those Golden Age plays with suspenseful plots and

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romantic intrigues is to violate a different age, by distorting it to resemble our own and setting aside much of the context of its artistic heritage (Morrison 1). Morrison explains yet another reason for the lack of appeal to modern audiences: “The characters are painted with broad strokes; the chief interest for most of the seventeenth-century audience resided less in the characters than in the situations and tableaux”(Morrison 25). This is why modern audiences who are interested in character development find this type of *comedia* generally not suited to their tastes.

Another obstacle for modern secular readership is the lack of familiarity with Baroque Catholicism, which limits full appreciation of the religious nuances in these seventeenth-century plays. Even though most in attendance in the *corrales de comedia* or open-air theaters were illiterate, scholars note that audiences possessed the theological knowledge required to appreciate the religious complexities and abstractions encountered in some of these plays. As Morrison notes, “Though largely without concentrated training in literature or theology, audiences enthusiastically chose to grapple with dramas full of didactic and intellectual elements” (28). Audiences also had cursory knowledge of ecclesiastical history and monastic life, which furthered their comprehension of the many religious details and allusions presented in *comedias*. For example, since the *corrales* audience was familiar with Teresa of Ávila’s endeavors as head of a new religious order, in Jornada I Vega highlights Teresa’s accomplishments through a sarcastic remark made by Don Alonso, her father.

Furthermore, the majority of Spain’s noted seventeenth-century playwrights belonged to clerical orders such as Quevedo, Mateo de Alemán, Juan Pérez de Montalbán (Erauso’s *comedia*), and later in life, Lope de Vega. Before becoming an ordained priest in 1614, and subsequently a member of the Inquisition, Vega’s personal life resembled that of a Don Juan. Nonetheless, Lope was unquestionably an orthodox Roman Catholic and faithfully portrayed the Catholic faith in his
Not only were the audiences and playwrights Catholic, but also the supporters of the comedias themselves. The construction of many corrales de comedia were funded by cofradías or religious brotherhoods (Gascón 30). The Church also supported and promoted comedias religiosas as a means to confront the challenges presented by the Protestant Reformation. Comedias reaffirmed the orthodoxy of the Catholic faith by “inspire its audience to loyalty and devotion by dramatizing the triumphs of the heroines of the faith over worldly vices” (Gascón 18). The Church intervened directly in comedias by mandating that each play be examined for compliance with Catholic orthodoxy. The Church’s censor would then work with the playwright to correct perceived divergence from the faith before issuing the Nihil obstat authorizing the comedia’s publication or performance. Playwrights like Lope had to create entertainment that would please the popular audiences and satisfy the censors of the Inquisition. The encompassing religious mentality of early modern Spain established not only the production impetus of comedia religiosa but cemented its popularity.

Religious drama, or comedia religiosa, is the broad category under which autos sacramentales and comedia divina fall. During the Golden Age, comedia divina splintered into two classes: comedia de santos and comedias de asuntos de sagrada escritura. This was due to the great number of plays dealing with the adventures of saints that were demanded by the public (Morrison 27). The latter depicts only biblical figures. Differing from medieval hagiographic drama, the comedia de santos focuses on the saint’s acts of virtue as prescriptive models of Christian behavior to be imitated by the faithful instead of focusing on their martyrdom. Gascón provides a succinct definition of saint that is useful in the analysis of comedia de santos: “Devout Christians are nominated for canonization as saints for imitating the virtues of Jesus Christ in exemplary fashion. Whether through martyrdom, the performing of miracles, or the
spreading of Christianity, devotees are made saints because their lives commemorate the life of Christ” (31). Some of these plays were written for the beatification or canonization of holy men and women such as the case of the two comedias written in honor of Teresa of Ávila by Lope de Vega. Even though the comedia under analysis is considered as a comedia de santos, at the time it was written between 1590 and 1604, Teresa had not yet been declared officially as a saint.

Playwrights such as Lope understood their public well enough to know that simply presenting a saint’s virtuous conduct on stage would be terribly restrictive: “[g]enerally, the saint’s life was too uneventful as subject matter for a good drama”(Case 14). The Golden Age playwrights knew that if they “combined theological lessons, spectacular staging and lyrical language” they could keep the public’s interest (Morrison 1). Therefore, comedia divina became a Baroque hybrid where the sacred and profane interweave in such a way to provide simultaneously edification and entertainment. Comedia divina drama reached this goal by featuring a “doble trama” (double plot), whereby the author develops secular action of interest to the public alongside the hagiographical argument. In the play under consideration, Santa Teresa de Jesús, the cloak-and-sword elements (rivalry between galanes Don Diego and Don Ramiro for the hand of Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumado, honor dilemmas and swordfights) are intertwined with the foundation of the Reformed Carmelite Order. The playwrights may even take liberties in presenting the details of the basic plot of a saints’ life for dramatic effects. Therefore, a saint’s life is sometimes simply used as a backdrop to present the prevailing secular interest of the Golden Age audience.

This dual purpose (sacred – profane) of the comedia divina, where edification meets cloak-and-sword play was Spain’s answer to the Counter – Reformation efforts to educate its people as Gascon asserts: “[s]aint’s play were thus the perfect vehicle for the Catholic Church’s counteroffensive against Protestantism” (30). Comedia de santos, especially addressed Luther’s
claims that the worship of saints not only constituted idolatry but more importantly, there was no
need for an intermediary besides Jesus to communicate with God. Many comodias divinas were
not intentionally produced as vehicles for the depiction of metaphysical or theological problems or
principles that the playwright wished to demonstrate, as in *La vida es sueño* by Calderón or *El
burlador de Sevilla* by Tirso de Molina. Instead of appealing to the intellect, a comedia divina
captivates the Golden Age audience by presenting a saint’s miracles through “special stage effects,
such as elevating the saint into the air during moments of ecstasy and lowering of religious images
and crucifixes” (Case 14). *Comedia de santos* as experienced by the Golden Age audience, involves
both text and performance whereby “the saint’s identity, personality, and voice are refracted even
further through the lenses of the dramatists, directors, and actors who create and stage plays about
saints” (Gascón 17). Therefore, when evaluating a comedia de santos one must bear in mind that
these works were intended to be heard and seen, rather than works to be read, “its miracles and
stage effects are part of its very nature” (Morrison 33).

3.3.5 CLOSING SCENES

In Chapter 4, Erauso and her dramatic incarnation, Guzmán (comedia La monja alférez) exhibit a
hyper-masculine gender performance: “free to inhabit public spaces, to use language to express
desire, to badger and pursue women, to demonstrate his masculine and physical qualities whenever
and wherever possible” (Thacker 22). In Chapter 5, Sor Juana and doña Leonor’s (*Los empeños de
una casa*) model a male gender performance, at the intellectual level. Moreover, in Chapter 6,
Nava and Teresa (*Santa Teresa de Jesús*) closely identify themselves with the masculine clerical
roles. None of the conventual authors or their theatrical representations aligns closely with the
prescriptive female gender performance.
CHAPTER 4
WORLD OF THE TEXT:
CATALINA DE ERAUSO – THE LIEUTENANT-NUN

Whether we speak of poets and critics ‘reading’ texts or writers ‘reading (and thereby recording for us) the world, we are calling attention to interpretative strategies that are learned, historically determined, and thereby necessarily gender-inflected. (Kolodny 47)

Catalina de Erauso, also known as the Lieutenant-Nun (la Monja Alférez), was an elite Basque woman who rejected the expected female paradigm and embarked on a life of adventure in the New World as a man, a pícaro of the Spanish Golden Age. She stripped herself of the conventual cloth, cut her hair and adopted the vestments of a man. Her transformation before society was total when she assumed a man’s name as her own, an act that gave her a textual phallocentric voice and the privilege to live with absolute physical freedom, unheard of for a woman of her time. She took part in various military campaigns of the Conquista and multiple amorous adventures.

Who was this woman who circumnavigated the powerful sociopolitical and ecclesiastical forces constraining virtually all women and used them to her advantage? What personal price did she have to pay? To answer, this study explores four different genres of contemporary manuscripts that depict Erauso’s life: historical documents (Pedimento, Declaración) written in legalistic language; popular manuscripts (Relaciones I, II, III); a comedia (La monja Alférez); and an “autobiographic” manuscript (Vida i sucesos). These texts present Erauso disguised not only physically but also linguistically in her adventure from cloistered nun in Spain to the battlefields of the New World.
The narrowness of the study's manuscript selection reflects the manipulation and transformation of Erauso’s image via textual reinterpretation over the centuries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, interpreters transformed Erauso’s heroic and transgendered figure into a heterosexual or asexual one, or - as Sherry Velasco writes - “de-lesbianized.” In the twentieth century, interpretive scholarship has again transformed Erauso the protagonist. She is “re-lesbianized.” Sherry Velasco along with Michele and Gabriel Stepto provide an important recounting of the evolution of Erauso’s iconic figure as well as the changes in society’s attitudes towards lesbianism. Circumscribing Erauso’s image to Golden Age texts emphasizes the singularity of this historical figure without the undue influence of more modern perspectives.

4.1 THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO

Doña Catalina de Erauso’s real life story began at age four when her wealthy Basque family sent her to the Dominican convent of San Sebastián. After a brutal beating at the age of fifteen by one of the nuns, she escaped from the convent and began her life as the pícaro Francisco Loyola. The first step in Erauso’s transformation was the meaning-laden act of cutting her hair. She then dismantled her conventual habit and reassembled it into men’s clothing. After altering her physical appearance, she changed her name to conform to her new external identity. She subsequently changed her name often throughout her lifetime. After three years and a string of masters, the penniless Erauso joined the military and embarked on a journey that allowed her to participate as a man of privileged status throughout the Spanish Empire.

Erauso continued her masculine conversion by participating in the hyper-masculine enterprise of the colonization of the New World. Using the name of Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán, she became a soldier in the King’s army, a conqueror of indigenous people. To complement her military valor, she further validated her masculine identity with the stereotypical
masculine behavior of a rogue swashbuckler replete with adventures on the high seas, high stakes gambling, and romantic encounters with women. Erauso recounted the numerous episodes in her travels throughout the New World where she complied with the Golden Age duty to defend one’s honor and fight valiantly in duels – despite the Council of Trent's severe penalties for all involved in dueling.\textsuperscript{111}

Many of the legal battles described in \textit{Vida i sucessos} resulted from her dueling. The Council deemed that “the malice of the duel lies in the fact that the establishment of what is right depends upon the fate of arms and not the Church”\textsuperscript{(Catherein). Due to repercussions from dueling, Erauso enumerated the many political connections in high spheres of power, both civilly and ecclesiastically, who protected her from the law. When Erauso found that her influential allies could not defend her from capital punishment, she disclosed her female identity. From this point on, the wider world knew of Erauso’s sexual hybridity as well as her previous state as a nun. As a result, the Church initiated a canonical process to determine Erauso’s apostasy and sent her to a convent in Spain to live a traditional female role for two years. Apostasy \textit{a religone} occurs when a religious nun or monk leaves the religious life without permission. The Church has considered apostasy a grave fault since the time of the Council of Trent\textsuperscript{112} when the Council instructed bishops to punish religious who left their monasteries without permission from their superior. The apostate nun who left her convent would then incur excommunication, one of the principal and severest censures for a grievous fault. If a year passed without the nun making an effort to obtain absolution, the Church would suspect her of heresy. Heresy in the time of the Spanish Inquisition was a serious threat to Erauso’s life, one she could not easily outwit. Erauso’s life story per her manuscripts ends with her fighting for her life and her right to live as a man with all the privileges that entails – privileges that she felt due her for her service on the battlefield.
Historians know little about Erauso’s life after she received permission from the Pope and King to continue to dress as a man. From the “Relaciones” it is clear that Erauso abandoned her identity as a Basque female, renounced her portion of the family estate, and embraced the colonialist identity of Antonio de Erauso, mule-driver and merchant.

4.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

Early Modern Spanish society had strict gender constructs. As noted in the previous section, Erauso appropriated male vestments and privileges. Even though Erauso presents in both her behavior and physical appearance the expected male model, her womanhood – visible at times – was integral to her survival not only during her lifetime but also to her memory in posterity. This study provides evidence that Erauso’s historical/textual/dramatic character is far from a monolithic identity. The construction of her pluralistic identity is in constant formation and flux. As a young novice, Catalina changes her birth name - doña Catalina de Erauso - to the pseudonym of Francisco Loyola as she begins her life as a young pícaro; as a lieutenant in the King’s army in the Americas, she uses the nom de guerre Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán; and finally, Antonio de Erauso, the merchant. Erauso mirrors this state of flux in the myriad of names she gives herself in Vida i sucesos. The multiple name variations in this work are in dramatic contrast with the total absence of names in the Relaciones and the consistent name in Erauso’s legal documents. In her “autobiography,” the names correspond to the different stages of her life.

This dissertation uses feminine pronouns to denote Catalina de Erauso instead of the cumbersome her/him or he/she sometimes favored by writers and scholars. Mary Elizabeth Perry chooses to alternate between the feminine and masculine pronouns in each sentence “in order to avoid the suggestion that certain aspects of this person’s life were more masculine and others more feminine” (395). This study also uses the feminine to emphasize the inherent tensions that an Early
Modern woman faced if she occupied the privileged male-only public space. The fluidity of grammatical gender markers is anachronistic for Erauso’s time and conforms more to the modern historiographic principle of analogy. This principle denotes that a scholar understanding of her present reality serves, consciously or subconsciously, as an overarching guide to understanding the past and therefore subtly brings it in line with Western Civilization’s perception of reality.

What we read in Erauso’s memoir is a gender inversion of Simone de Beauvoir’s famous quote: “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.” Erauso self-constructed her masculine identity - Antonio de Erauso, a man from Basque Spain - through a long and complex process. The memoir reflects an Erauso that is in constant flux; therefore, it begs the question, what is the gender of the protagonist? Judith Butler reminds us in *Gender Trouble*:

> gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts… gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained (6).

With this quote in mind, focus centers on the construction of Golden Age masculinity and femininity - on the gender performativity of the two virtues that seventeenth-century Spain revered: a man’s honor, and a woman’s virginity and chastity. As noted in this analysis, the confluence of these two virtues in the persona of Erauso transforms her into a hybrid of the highest degree since she represents the best of both genders. She embodies the characteristics deemed most valuable by the patriarchal society and thereby she enjoys an unusual level of fame and acceptance.

As Erauso’s discursive identity changes, so does the genre she uses to communicate changes accordingly. Judith Butler’s explanation of performativity is essential to my analysis of Erauso’s life:
That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality. Further, if reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body. In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (173)

4.3 READING ERAUSO’S VIDA

The manuscript titled *Vida i sucesos* occupies an intermediate place between the legal documents (*Pedimento* and *Declaraciones*) that can be ascribed to Erauso’s representatives and the sensationalist texts *Relaciones* written by anonymous authors. The authenticity of Erauso’s authorship of *Vida i sucesos* is still disputed by many scholars. Critics of the memoir’s authorial authenticity cite the fantastic nature of some of Erauso’s feats as proof that the author of this apocryphal autobiography was familiar with the structure and content of traditional Spanish chronicles and the picaresque genre of the Golden Age. Stepto reminds us that Catalina de Erauso’s life coincides with the life of Cervantes and the popularity of the Spanish picaresque tradition and thus reflects elements of both: “Catalina’s memoir forcefully reminds us that that the picaresque is a creature of discovery and conquest, a new mode of storytelling brought to birth in a suddenly vast and changing world” (xxxv).

Even though the author presents Erauso’s memoir using an autobiographical first person narrator, there is no reliable way to determine if Erauso wrote the manuscript herself. Did Erauso just take pen and paper and write *Vida i sucesos* as if she were a cloistered nun following the orders of her confessor to write out her *Vida*? Did she begin to write this manuscript while biding her time in the convent of Santa Clara (Guamanga, Peru) as a prerequisite to her confession and absolution by the Bishop? Was it simply for Erauso an exercise in auto-determination when
confronted with her fragmented identity as she morphed from doña Catalina to the soldier Antonio de Erauso during the two and half years she resided at the convent of The Most Holy Trinity in Lima? Another possibility suggests that another person redacted it under her direction. An escribano, or clerk, transcribed the copious amount of information dictated by Erauso regarding places, dates and people. The work is a virtual who’s who of Imperial Spain ready to present to the King. This hypothesis is consistent with the uncertainty surrounding Erauso’s competency in Spanish because she was Basque. Vida i sucesos states the following: “I came to Madrid and presented myself before the king, and begged him to reward my many services, which I outlined in a memoir that I placed in the royal hand. The king referred me to the Council of the Indies” (74). This “memoir” could also just be the Pedimento and not the manuscript Vida i sucesos. Erauso presents her memoir to the King a second time after being mugged and left penniless by nine bandits on her way from Madrid to Barcelona: “He indicated with a gesture of his hand that I should approach and hand him my memoir” (26).

The Pedimento and Declaraciones were sufficient to obtain what she had requested: a military pension and the new male identity of Antonio de Erauso. Why would she have written a public autobiography? Vida i sucesos is not a signed document such as in the case of the Pedimento. All that remains is a copy of the original memoir at the Real Academy in Madrid. Various copyists of the original document are the cause of discrepancies between Vida i sucesos and the legal documents and not the escribano. ¹¹³

Did a third person take it upon themselves to pen the memoir without her consent simply for their own financial gain as in the case of the Relaciones? Erauso did not become famous until she was discovered to be a woman and subsequently sent to the Convent of Santa Clara in Guamanga: “News of this event had spread far and wide, and it was a source of amazement to the
people who had known me before, and to those who had only heard of my exploits in the Indies, and to those who were hearing of them now for the first time” (67). Her writings related to this event reveal that Erauso was not prepared for the amount of scrutiny she was about to receive as a Baroque “prodigio”: “It seems world had gotten out, drawing a large crowd of people to the palaces, and those of name and position had to be let in, no matter how much it displeased me –or the bishop, for the matter” (66).114

Producing a sensationalist manuscript is therefore not consistent with how Erauso wanted to lead her life. “I spent fifteen days [in Seville], lying low as much as possible and fleeing from the swarms of people that turned up everywhere, trying to catch a glimpse of me in men’s clothing (73). Writing an autobiography would have simply increased a fame she did not seem to be comfortable embracing, “Hízose el caso allí notorio, i fue notable el concurso de que me vide cercado de Personages, Príncipes, Obispos, Cardenales,… (123).115

The most probable explanation points toward a ghost writer who took it upon himself to redact Erauso’s life some time after she was cleared of apostasy and returned to the Americas to live her life out as man. The ghostwriter could have simply taken the legal documents and added information from the Relaciones before adding his own material. That material could have come from oral or imagined sources crafted to produce a manuscript that highlights the values of the Crown and Church.116 The process of fictionalizing some of Erauso’s life experiences within her memoir is consistent with a literary phenomenon that occurs in other colonial documents known as Autobiografías de soldados. These are nonetheless considered historical texts in spite of the fact that a soldier’s biographical information is paired with fantastical material (Vallbona 10).

Since legal woes are a constant theme in Erauso’s memoir, a more plausible reading could be to consider it as an extended narrative detailing the many legal battles that she engaged in.
during her lifetime. Therefore, the memoir can be read in conjunction with the previously mentioned legal documents as part of her legal defense against apostasy, dueling, and the prohibition to dress as a man. She also faced the threat of excommunication. With these legal issues put to rest it would be easier to obtain her military pension. Thus, her memoir reads with a sense of urgency and brevity as if trying to get all the information down in the most concise way. A legalistic reading sets forth that the positive outcome of Erauso’s legal battles mirrors society’s acceptance of her transgressive identity by seeing her as conforming to the ideal of the superior and privileged male who by her actions furthers the political agenda of imperialistic Spain.

Enrique Anderson Imbert posits a last alternative as he negates the authenticity of Erauso’s autobiography by dismissively calling it a “novelita” (Vallbona 10). Regardless if Vida i sucesos is accepted as a historical text or simply a work of literature, it is a very important manuscript in its documentation of the construction of masculinity and femininity in Colonial Latin-America and Spain. With this perspective in mind, one should read the text as an extended satire that critiques the same social conventions extolled by Sor Juana Inés and María de Zayas in their comedias. Just as Sor Juana, through the voice of the gracioso, comments on the absurdity of female external trappings, in her text Erauso critiques the absurdity of the male honor code and society’s denial of women’s physical ability to engage the world as well as men.

4.3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTUAL FIGURE

In the analysis of the textual figure of Catalina de Erauso, better known as the Lieutenant-Nun, this study goes beyond the issues of lesbian desire and transvestite presentation that have morphed the historical person of Catalina de Erauso into the larger-than-life character scholars are familiar with today. Many critics ascribe the Erauso's iconic figure and its endurance to her transgender transformation. In recent years, the life and adventures of Erauso have attracted a
wider readership than that of most conventual authors. This is mainly due to work of scholars of the last five to ten years – among them Velasco, Perry, Adams, Almendros, Aresti, Marín, Márquez de la Plata, Merriman, and Myers. They are interested in applying gender and queer theory to the transvestite Lieutenant-Nun, as noted by the explosion of books and articles dealing with these topics. There have also been modern adaptations of Erauso’s life in plays and movies that have elevated her public profile for the wider non-scholarly modern audience. While gender receives the lion’s share of the critical analysis of Erauso's figure, the issues of class, nation (Basque identity) and religion (Catholic) are equally as important. Without considering these factors as well, interpreters can give too much weight to Erauso’s sexual orientation and multiple personas.

The work and findings in this study are based on a close reading of the tensions that Erauso creates between the authority of the Church and the local authorities as they battle over who has jurisdiction over her. After taking into account all the contemporary documents related to Erauso that are presently available, one may conclude that Erauso's battle is more focused on her legal and financial well being than on making public declarations of her lesbian status. Erauso’s quest to have the Church and the Crown allow her continued wearing of men's clothing transcends the homoerotic benefits implied by her transvestite image. Consequently, the implied lesbian episodes emphasized in versions of the comedia and Relaciones may be the interpretive author's enticing literary tools to promote their work.

4.3.2 READING ERAUSO'S MALE-AUTHORED TEXTS

Historically and in the present, those who interpret and edit Erauso’s writings can mold her image and convert her story into any desired cause célèbre. Whose voice are we really hearing? In what follows, male interpreters tell Erauso’s life story through several male-authored texts:
Pedimento, Declaraciones and Relaciones. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this study includes only manuscripts that are contemporary to Erauso's life.

In these documents, the author of each manuscript configures Erauso’s image differently depending on the author's selection of which information to include within and, more important, the author's intent. These writers give special emphasis to the discursive elements that mark the predominant gender that the figure of Erauso assumes in each of these documents. These elements are indicators of the author’s agenda. Sherry Velasco suggests that the reader view grammar as situational, i.e. Erauso is codified using masculine pronouns and adjectives when the situation involves war, love conflicts or honor duels. In neutral situations, the author uses feminine gender markers. Some critics, such as the aforementioned scholar and Elizabeth Perry, posit that the principle textual battle, as evidenced in the situational grammar, is between Erauso’s trangender identity and a society that does not accept her. Research for this dissertation indicated that the discursive elements reflect primarily the agenda of the different authors to further the legal cause of Erauso or to spotlight and sometimes sensationalize certain aspects of her story for their own personal gain.

The Pedimento and Declaraciones present a direct epistolary relationship between Erauso and the Spanish Crown. The first set of documents correspond to Erauso’s Pedimento or legal Petitions to the Consejo de Indias. The author of these legal documents is petitioning the Crown (in Spain) to award Erauso three requests: a life-long pension for her years of military service, the necessary help to return to the Indies, and the permission to dress as a man since “el anadar en hábito de varón es cosa prohibida” (131). The Consejo de Indias replies that it will deal with the monetary requests but declares “será bien que bue lba al ábito de mujer” (132).
Consequently, Erauso must travel to Rome to get a special dispensation from Pope Urbano VIII (the particulars of this incident are later detailed in the Declaraciones) since she has no intentions of losing the privileges associated with being perceived as a man: “porq[ue] no se le conoce inclinación a mudar del que ahora trae, q[ue] es de varón”(131). Stepto succinctly expresses why Erauso is fighting both militarily and legally to be recognized as a man, “[Erauso's] male garb ceased to be a disguise and became a privilege” (xxxix). There is another reason that Erauso is seeking papal permission that is not usually discussed; the blessing of Pope Urban VIII will signify that Erauso is no longer a public sinner for dressing like a man and is free from the repercussions such sins would entail in the seventeenth century dominated by the threat of the Inquisition. The ideological dynamic that is played out between Erauso and the Church is further discussed in the section analyzing her “autobiography,” Vida i sucesos.

The first element to note in this document is her name, which depicts masculine and feminine gender markers as well as her social status: el Alférez doña Catalina de Erauso. The hybrid Erauso is further defined by the very masculine and key roles of military service to the Crown and defender of the Catholic faith: “los quince ha empleado en servicio de vuestra majestad en las guerras del Reyno de Chile y Yndias del Pirú ….” and “exercitar las armas en defensa de la fe católica y, emplearse en servicio de vuestra merced”(132). Fundamental to Erauso’s case is the author's stating of her nome de guerre, Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán. She revealed this so that she could legally have access to the requested military pension: “vino a merecer tener vandera de vuestra majestad, sirviendo, como sirvió, de Alférez de la compañía de infantería del Capitán Gonzalo Rodríguez, con nombre que se pusso de hombre”(132).

Even though these documents present the actions consistent with a male of the noble class, “fue con particular valor, resistiendo a las yncomodidades de la milicia, como el más fuerte varón,”
there is a strong presence of feminine linguistic markers. The document states that Erauso did everything she could not to be discovered, even by her own brother: “y esto hizo por no ser descubierta”. Her feminine identity is especially noted in the section recounting her capture in Piedmont, France when Erauso was travelling from Spain to Rome to ask for a special papal dispensation to dress as a man: “la prendieron a ella … la tuvieron por espía… la echaron en una cárcel … y si acaso la hubieran conocido que era mujer confirmaran ser espía, con lo cual, sin duda, la quitaron la vida” (133).

The author concludes the legal Petition stating that Erauso must be rewarded since she embodies the most important values of the dominant culture such as service to God and the King, noble heritage, and virginity: “Supplica a vuestra majestad se sirva de mandar premiar sus servicios y largas peregrinaciones… echos valerosos… hija de padres nobles hidalgos y personas principales en la Villa de San Sebastián… rara limpieza con que ha vivido y bibe” (133). Therefore, the use of feminine gender markers in Peticiones is consistent with presenting Erauso as a legal female entity, doña Catalina de Erauso, and is not for salacious effects, as noted in the Relaciones (broadsides) and in Motalbán’s comedia.

The second set of legal documents, Declaraciones hechas en Pamplona por Catalina de Erauso en relación con el asalto contra ella y otros viajeros en el Piamonte were presented to the Royal courts in Pamplona, Spain in July of 1625. The Declaraciones refers exclusively to Erauso’s capture in Piedmont, France and detail how Erauso was captured by a French captain suspecting her of being a spy for the King of Spain, “le prendió, diciendo que era espía” (138).

When captured, Erauso was in route to Rome where she was to present the legal documents requesting papal authorization to continue dressing as a man. Erauso spent fourteen days in jail subjected to torture and ridicule, “le dio palos y trató muy mal de palabras, diciéndole que era un judío, perro, marrano y luterano” (139). The author of the document intentionally adds that the
French jailers had insulted the King of Spain, “dixeron que su rey hera vn[sic] mal hombre y mal cristiano” so as to underscore her loyalty to the King and further Erauso’s cause (139). In these documents, the author portrays Erauso’s figure as highly masculine via grammatical markers, which contrast with the feminine markers of the previous Pedimento. Erauso’s completely masculine textual identity is noted from the first line: “pareció en persona el Alférez Antonio de Erauso” (139). It is important to emphasize that in this Declaración not once is Erauso’s feminine identity exposed. In all other documents related to her, there is mention that she is a female. This is probably due to the international nature and the seriousness of the legal charges of espionage, which would have been nearly impossible for a woman to litigate and free herself from capital punishment.

The set of manuscripts known as Relación I, II, and III occupy a special place in the construction of Erauso’s iconic figure. By the time of their publication, Erauso was so famous that there is no need to use her name or monikers. Relación I narrates “las grandes hazañas y valerosos hechos de una mujer” who was a soldier in Chile and Peru (160). Relación II continues the narration of Erauso’s military exploits with an emphasis on her quarrelsome nature and the many duels she instigated. This broadside concludes when Erauso has to return to Spain because of the revelation of her female identity. Relación III highlights the papal dispensation allowing Erauso to present herself “en traxe de hombre” (171). This last broadside highlights the tension in the Church when confronted with Erauso’s transgressive behavior. On one side the Pope is portrayed as accepting Erauso’s hybrid persona “dame otra Monja Alférez, y le concederé lo mismo” (171). On the other is a cardinal’s opposition, “no era justo hazle exemplar para que las mugeres que avian sido religiosas anduviesen en traje indecente” (171).
All three broadsides take the tension produced by the Baroque hybrid figure of Erauso to an extreme. As previously noted, in the *Pedimento* documents, feminine markers prevail because legally, Erauso is a woman, doña Catalina, who happens to serve the King in masculine garb. In the *Declaraciones*, the author presents Erauso as masculine to help her prevail against espionage charges. In contrast, the broadsides, *Relaciónes*, emphasize the feminine adjectives and pronouns to present the textual subject as a Baroque monstrosity: “muger, con apariencia de hombre”(160). This juxtaposition between Erauso’s identity as a woman and her masculine actions create a sensationalist discourse, “peleó la muger valentísimamente, y mató de su parte muchíssimos Indios”(163). These same military actions in a man would have produced admiration in the readers and not salacious interest as per the intentions of the anonymous authors of the *Relaciones*. This juxtaposition fits in well with the *raison d’être* of these proto-newspapers - financial gain for the authors and/or publishers. Since they are not legal documents, they are at liberty to elaborate on Erauso’s life and portray her experiences as “cosas admirable que causan espanto” and not factual evidence that could be verified in court and thereby contribute to her campaign to obtain a military pension and the right to dress as a man (165). Nonetheless, the anonymous authors want to denote a sense of veracity in the discourse by declaring: “Esto y lo que se dixo en la primera relación es la verdad de lo sucedido en el discurso de veynte y quatro años que anduvo peregrinando esta muger” (169). One such episode that would surely pique the readership’s interest is the homoerotic scene whereby Erauso declares her love to a beautiful young woman. Erauso is willing to reenter a convent just to be with her: “bolverse de nuevo a entrar en el Convento con ella” (172-173). This scene is not found in any of the other documents relating to Erauso so it must be taken simply as a sensationalist ploy by the authors of *Relación III*. 
The second function of the broadsides is the didactic-moralist perspective that promotes the idea that the hybrid and transgressive figure of Erauso can be saved by the grace of God and the Church since she remained a virgin, “la virtud permaneciesse en ella”. The last lines of the manuscripts encapsulates this perspective: even though Erauso is recognized as a public sinner, “a esta muger se le podía esperar el castigo”, she was redeemed and thus granted the public recognition of her salvation by means of an honorable death, “amada de todos los Presbíteros y Religiosos que se hallaron allí, le dieron con un supituoso entierro, sepulcro honorífico”(172).

By the end of this manuscript, the figure of Erauso conforms to the requirements of a traditional Vida with the exemplary death of the protagonist who remained a virgin her whole life.

4.3.3 READING ERAUSO’S VIDA I SUCESOS

Erauso begins the narration of her life following the hagiographic pattern of a Vida retelling when she was born, the name of her parents and the convent in which she resided. After a few paragraphs, the construction of her masculine identity commences with abruptness and uncertainty. Catalina, the novice, leaves the familiar surroundings of the convent, “salí a la calle, sin haverla visto, ni saber por dónde echar, ni adónde me ir” (35). It is symbolic that at the last moment she flings her scapular, almost as a way to publicize her escape, “i en la última que fue la de la calle, dexé mi escapulario” (35). The text does not explain how Catalina survives three days outside the safety of the convent - when she had never before been outside it - while preparing her transformation from novice to a young page. During those three days she discards the defining elements of her identity, “el hábito me lo dexé por allí por no ver qué hacer de él” (35). She also discards her hair, external symbol par excellence of her femininity, “Cortéme el cabello i echélo por allí” (35). Not only does she reject the external symbols of her conventual life but she also rejects the conventual discourse of the hagiographic model to narrate the details of her new life.
With her external alteration now complete, Catalina de Erauso experiences an internal permutation of her identity symbolized by the use of masculine grammatical markers to refer to herself and the adoption of a new name, “i llaméme allí Francisco de Loyola” (37). Erauso now adopts the picaresque genre to detail her first experiences as a male. This picaresque genre is well suited to describe the many episodes where Erauso/Loyola is experiencing hunger and all types of privations at the hands of multiple masters, “i sin haber comido más yerbas que topava por el camino” (36). After a beating by her first master, Erauso/Loyola finds work with the Secretary of the King, Juan de Ydiaquez. It is important for the author to present at this moment in her narrative a scene where Erauso/Loyola can confirm her total transformation. Her father has arrived at the Secretary’s house to inform him that his daughter has run away from the convent. Her escape has ramifications that affect the society at large. Catalina de Erauso’s loss of honor directly affects the honor of her father, the convent and the community associated with the convent: “D. Juan mostró sentirlo mucho por el digusto de mi padre, i porque a mí me quería mucho, i por la parte de aquel convento, de donde era él patrono por fundación de sus pasados, i por parte de aquel lugar de donde era él natural”. Erauso/Loyola passes the test: her father, Don Miguel de Erauso does not recognize his daughter in the guise of the Secretary’s page, “quedándome yo allí con mi padre sin hablarnos palabra, ni él conocerme” (37).

The next stage in Erauso’s transformation takes her from a young page to a man. Up to this point Erauso has simply adopted an external masculine guise. As per Butler’s performativity theory quoted previously, Erauso must now appropriate the masculine behaviors favored by the patriarchal powers in the seventeenth-century. She has to add to her disguise the instruments or symbols of a man of status, the sword and a pistol - weapons that will permit her to further declare her masculinity through behaviors, gestures and words that are the traits of a man. Therefore, the
reader should pay special attention to all the violent scenes as they reflect Erauso’s overcompensation in her effort to embody the masculine honor code. A string of violent scenes follows in quick succession. Either Erauso is trying to kill someone as revenge for insults to this masculine honor code or someone is trying to kill her for the same reasons. These actions correspond to the scenes normally found in cloak-and-dagger comedias, which Golden Age audiences much enjoyed.

In between each of these duels, Erauso is trying to evade the law by taking advantage of the power struggle between the Church and the local colonial governments as she seeks refuge in different churches. Just as Erauso did not completely discard her habit but merely transformed it, she did the same with her Catholicism. She used those parts that were necessary for her survival. That is why upon entering a new town Erauso marks the status of a city by naming the ecclesiastical buildings: “vide tres Conventos, de Franciscanos, Mercenrios, i Dominico; i uno de Monjas i un Hospital… Buena Yglesia con tres dignidades i dos Canónigos I un Santo Obispo Frail Augustino D. Dray Agustín de Carvajal, que fue mi remedio” (108).153 Chapter 15 recounts Erauso’s understanding and manipulation of the Catholic Church’s teachings in order to stay her execution for murder charges. While in La Paz, Erauso kills a man in the course of defending her “male” honor against an opponent who called her a liar and slapped her across the face with a cap. Authorities arrest her and she spends the next two days confessing in the jail. On the third day, her jailors hold Mass so she may receive Communion before they hang her. Cunningly, Erauso spits out the Host into her hand and shouts “Yglesia me llamo, Yglesia me llamo!” (93).154

Ecclesiastical rules necessitate that Erauso be taken out of the jail and into a church so that the Host may be placed in a sacred space, the Tabernacle. The priest and Erauso had done more than spiritual preparation during those two days. They were preparing her escape: “i esta
advertencia me la dio un Santo Religioso Franciscano, que en la cárcel havía dádome consejos, i últimamente confesándome” (95). Once inside the church, Erauso cannot be forced out by the local secular authorities because of the church asylum known as *immunitate ecclesiae*. The local governor keeps the church surrounded for over a month. Uribe-Urán describes the dire situation:

> Such criminals were confident that it would not be easy to remove them from the church for punishment. Indeed, groups of wrongdoers turned churchyards, churches, their cloisters, and their adjoining cemeteries into permanent residences. Authorities allowed alleged criminals to move freely in and out of church buildings under cover of night and encouraged them to bring friends, lovers, and liquor in for enjoyment. Their presence terrorized neighbors and passersby, and inconvenienced priests and parishioners alike. (446)

Therefore, it is understandable that the local Bishop orders one of the local priests to help Erauso escape in addition to providing her with money and transportation.

Chapter 20 recounts another direct battle between the Church and the local sheriff of Guamanga, don Baltasar de Quiñones. As the sheriff and four of his deputies are trying to arrest Erauso at yet another card game, the Bishop intercedes: “Salió el Obispo con quarto hachas i entróse por medio” and takes command of the situation and sends Erauso to his palace (110). The sheriff cannot be seen as publicly disrespecting the Bishop so he comes to discuss the issue privately with him: “Vino luego el Corregidor i huvo Su Ilustrísima larga coversación i altercación sobre esto con él, lo qual después por mayor entendí” (110). The Church prevails. The Bishop is now in charge of determining Erauso’s fate.

Locked up in the Bishop’s palace, Erauso realizes the inadequacy of the male privileges of a Basque hidalgo to protect her from her the law. Therefore, she astutely claims the prerogatives inherent in the female honor code that up to now has been useless to her. She knows that these advantages will only be available to her if she reveals herself as a female, a virginal female. Therefore Erauso confesses to the Bishop don Agustín de Carvajal that she is a woman:
que soi mujer; que nací en tal parte, hija de fulano i sutana; que me entraron de tal edad en tal Convento con fulana mi tía; que allí me crié; que tomé el hábito; que tuve noviciado; que estando para profesar, por tal ocasión me salí; que me fui a tal parte, me desnudé, me vestí, me corté el cabello; partí allí, i acullá, me embarqué, aporté, trahiné, maté, herí, malee, correteee, hasta venir a parar en lo presente i a los pies de Su Señoría Ilustrísima (110).\textsuperscript{159}

Erauso offers to have herself examined so the bishop can ascertain the validity of her claim in order to stay the probable death sentence at the hands of Sheriff Baltasar de Quiñones: “i si quiere salir de duda Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima por experiencia de Matronas, yo llana estoi”\textsuperscript{160} Now that she has declared her status as woman, she retakes the use of feminine grammatical markers. She will not be consistent in their use, as should be expected. Erauso’s gender fluidity will come through as inconsistencies in grammatical endings. The Bishop sends in two elderly matrons who certify that Erauso is a woman but more importantly, that she is still a virgin: “satisficieron i declararon después ante el Obispo con juramento, haverme visto i reconocido quanto fue menester para certificarse i haverme hallado virgen intacta, como el día que nací. Su Ilustrísima se enterneció”\textsuperscript{161}

As noted from the previous quote, the most important evidence in Erauso’s defense was her verified intact virginity. Her chastity was more significant than her status as a military hero. Virginity in the Early Modern era encompasses a wider social significance than commonly understood today. To comprehend the power of the concept of virginity in the seventeenth century, it is necessary to see it as a mechanism of patriarchal control. First, only a female publicly recognized as a virgin by the patriarchal economy had value in the matrimonial transaction. In Erauso’s case, she refuses to participate as an object in the matrimonial economy. The sexual system forces her into a third identity, the asexual being. Society applied the same construct of virginity to professed nuns.
Second, chastity after marriage was paramount in verification of the paternity of the children and their *pureza de sangre*, purity of blood. Purity of blood was an essential requirement to access power within the Spanish society. Many times Erauso declares her status as a Basque hidalgo, thus entitled to interact with people in elite circles. An example is the section in the memoir where Erauso enumerates a veritable who’s who list of Imperial Spain. Blood purity is also an important factor in the *comedia* associated with Erauso where the issue of Jewish converts is critical. And lastly, Asunción Lavrin notes, “the physical condition of virginity was used as an indicator of moral superiority” (10). Therefore, Erauso’s virginity trumps her criminal behavior and she is once again an admirable person.

Her transformation from criminal duelist - soldier back to a virginal conventual inhabitant begins when the Bishops orders Erauso to placed in a suitable place in his palace so as to prepare her spiritual confession: “be placed in decent quarters, and there in comfort I prepared my confession” (66). Only after she met the requisite ecclesiastical hurdles did the Church grant Erauso public recognition as a repentant sinner who returns to an ordered behavior by receiving Communion. The Bishop then gives a powerful pronouncement that carries the weight of his position: “Hija, ahora creo sin duda lo que me dixistes i creeré en adelante quanto me dixereis, i os venero como una de las personas notables de este mundo i os prometo asistiros en quanto pueda de vuestra conveniencia i del servicio de Dios” (110).162

The text reflects Erauso's reaction to her return to the confines of the conventual life. Erauso’s discourse emulates the mystical spiritual realm which is more familiar in an hagiographic text written by an author such as Nava: “procurándome socegar i reducir a quietarme, i arrodillarme a Dios, que yo me puse tamaño… pareciendo estar yo en la presencia de Dios” (110).163 Now that Erauso’s has revealed her hybridity, the hegemonic powers initiate a
rehabilitation process to re-establish her as a woman. First, she must enter into a female designated space, the convent of Santa Clara where she immediately has to change into the external signs of her new status by donning a veil. Thus transfigured, the Church ceremoniously reintroduces Erauso to the feminine realm: “I was carried in procession to the choir, where … I kissed the abbess’s hand, embraced and was embraced in turn by each of the nuns” (66). Erauso is now under the jurisdiction of the abbess. It is important to note that the abbess and the senior nuns of Santa Clara are the ones who now authorize Erauso’s movements. In this feminine space, hierarchical power is in the hands of the abbess and thus even the Bishop will need a written authorization so Erauso can visit with him. Because of her fame and elite status, Erauso is offered the choice of which convent in the vice regal city of Lima she would like to belong. Erauso will spend the next two and half years in the privileged convent of The Most Holy Trinity awaiting the results of the inquiry into apostasy. This period is marked in the text by a total absence of sword fights and violence that were ubiquitous during her criminal-adventure days. Erauso’s manuscript suggests that she was able to adjust to the conventual world and enjoyed the friendship of her fellow nuns. Nonetheless, the minute “word arrived from Spain that I wasn’t, nor had I ever been, a professed nun, and with that I was assured I might leave”, Erauso removes the veil and changes back into her masculine garb (69). Erauso is now ecclesiastically unhindered to leave the Indies and travels to Spain to petition her case to the Crown.

The last part of Erauso’s text returns to the cloak-and-dagger genre. Erauso first discards the hagiographic discourse as easily as she discarded her temporary veil by stating that “no tenía yo orden ni Religión” (115). Erauso, once more the Basque hidalgo, boards a ship back to Spain, “donde me recibió con mucho agrado, i me ragaló i sentó a su mesa” (116). Without delay, Erauso is engaged in another scuffle; she knifes a man over a game of cards while still on the ship,
and must transferred to another boat that had more Basque men: “I was forced to cut another man’s face with a little knife” (71). Her fame has preceded her from the Indies. Upon her arrival in Cádiz she enjoys the hospitality of the general of the armada, Señor don Fadrique de Toledo. She is accosted by a multitude of people who want to see the famous prodigio: “i estuve allí quince días, escondiéndome quanto pude, huyendo del concurso que acudía verme vestida en hábito de hombre”(118). Note that Erauso still refers to herself with feminine grammatical markers. She could have also been in hiding since she was still susceptible to arrest, “[a]llí me prendieron por mando del Vicario, no sé por qué”(118).

Authorities declare Erauso innocent of the charge of apostasy but she still does not have the papal permission to dress as a man and all the privileges it entails. Taking advantage that it is the “holy year of the great Jubilee,” Erauso quits her job in Pamplona and heads to Rome as a pilgrim seeking this authorization and a pardon for the public sin of cross-dressing. During a Jubilee year, pilgrims who visit Rome receive an indulgence, a full remission of all sins, di culpa e di pena, from culpability and from punishment. What follows is a brief narrative of her arrest in France charged with the crime of espionage. The aforementioned Declaraciones has a much more detailed account of this incident. Her arrest in France leaves Erauso penniless. Again, she is able to access someone in the elite circles of power, the Count of Agramonte, to help her get to Madrid to present her case to the King. Erauso details her military service to the king in “un memorial que puse en su mano” and is referred to the Council of Indies who awards her eight hundred crowns as noted in one of the Pedimentos (119). Soon after, someone assaults Erauso again, leaving her penniless to find her way to yet another personage of the royal court that can assist her. Erauso’s influential friends help her presents herself to the King a second time. The King instructs Erauso to tell him what had happened and “[m]ostró su Magestad con la mano querer el memorial’(121). The King
must have enjoyed her tales since “su magestad darme quarto raciones de Alférez reformado, i 30 ducados de ayuda de costa” (121). The memoir the manuscript refers to appears to correspond to the second Pedimento dated 19 Abril 1626.

With the funds awarded by the King, Erauso makes her way to Italy. True to her constructed identity, Erauso engages in one last swordfight to defend her “Spanish” masculine honor against an Italian. The preponderance of her memoir, Erauso identifies with the Basque nationality. Erauso as a Basque Hidalgo enjoyed the benefits provided by this nationalistic identity when other Basques helped her out of tight spots. After she made her fame on the battlefield, the narrator-protagonist underscores her Spanish pride that she is willing to defend with her life as in the episode of her incarceration in France and in this last swordfight. This change is nationalistic identity corresponds with her seeking monetary compensation from the Spanish Crown. Finally, Erauso is received by Pope Urban VIII and obtains permission to “proseguir mi vida en hábito de hombre” (123). The narrator-protagonist inserts a scene to mark that Erauso can now be officially recognized as a man and utilize masculine external symbols. In the scene, Italian elite fete her and throngs of admirers follow her. Erauso now refers to herself with masculine gender markers, “i fue notable el concurso de que me vide cercad”(123). Vallbona additionally points out that the father’s will label Erauso as one of his daughter because it predates the papal permission. The mother’s will, which comes after the papal permission, marks her as one of her sons (123).

Vida i sucesos abruptly ends with Erauso threatening two Napoli prostitutes for daring to refer to her as a woman, “Señora Catalina, [¿]dónde es el camino?”(124). This last sentence is a poignant reminder to Erauso that a woman could not go about masterless, “lonesome.” Erauso replies to the Napoli prostitutes with a seemingly violent reaction, “Señora puta, a darles a vuestras
Mercedes cien pescosadas”(124). Erauso’s reaction underscores her long-fought battle to be her own master and is not be read as an excessive rebuff to a prostitute’s offer.

4.4 READING ERAUSO’S COMEDIA: LA MONJA ALFÉREZ

The extraordinary story of Erauso naturally invites dramatization. Juan Pérez de Montalbán (1601-1638) appropriated the story of the historical Catalina de Erauso that circulated textually and orally by writing a contemporary theatrical adaptation, the *comedia* *La monja alférez*. He presented the play in 1625 while Erauso was still in Spain promoting her legal causes (military pension and the right to dress as a man). She did not return to the Americas till 1630. For that reason, Montalbán, constrained by historical proximity, does not deviate significantly from the historical facts of Erauso’s life and military exploits. He organized his *comedia* around fictitious events in Erauso’s personal life: a love interest and a duel with El Cid. Montalbán takes artistic license in his depiction of Erauso’s love interest, doña Ana, in order to use the comedic device of the *enredo* (confusion). The playwright staged the play using Julia Robles, an actress acclaimed for her roles as *muger varonil* (Camacho Platero 31). All these elements increased the entertainment value of the *comedia*. The author constructs the protagonist of *La monja alférez* as an aggregate of the most sensationalist aspects of Erauso’s life, which happen to be the values typically associated with the Golden Age hero: hyper-masculinity, and military valor. Therefore, the author does not need to adhere to a simple recounting of historical facts. The playwright uses these fictitious or exaggerated incidents as dramatic scaffolding on which to develop his message.

Critics such as Sherry Velasco, Sara Taddeo, Merry Elizabeth Perry and Stephanie Merrim have focused part of their scholarly attention on the vulnerability of Erauso’s gender construction, which permits her to confront the requisite feminine behavioral roles. The scholars have studied the differences that exist between Montalbán’s *La monja alférez (comedia)* and *Vida i sucesos*
(autobiography), of which there are many, in their analysis of what the Baroque culture defined as man, woman, and sexuality.

The primary intention of this *comedia* was not to represent on the Golden Age stage the remarkable feats of this singular personality but to explore the playwright’s personal and political agenda. The *corrales de comedia* (playhouses) were national platforms where actors frequently played out issues of class, gender and race out on the stage. Jonathan Thacker counters José Antonio Maravall’s argument that champions the view that Golden Age drama was an “expression of the monarchical -seigneurial status quo” (xiii). The scholar views drama as “part of a dialogue, a testing of new ideas, reflecting and generating shifts in perspectives on a number of matters of interest to Golden-Age audiences and individuals”(xiii). With this perspective in mind, it follows that one of the functions of Golden Age plays was to create dramatic tension based on moral dilemmas that affect the protagonist and oblige the public to reflect on these issues.

The perplexity caused by the phenomenon of a Lieutenant-Nun literally walking amongst the audience would definitely fall under the category of moral dilemma. Merrim designates the Spanish playhouses as a “safe place” to explore these emerging issues (20). Therefore, either consciously or unconsciously, Montalbán may have used *La monja alférez* to highlight the correspondence between two marginal groups – women and Jewish converts. Both were highly oppressed by the weight of the patriarchal and anti-Semitic society of seventeenth-century Spain. Since scholars have done much research from the gender perspective, the study approaches this play by focusing on the following subtext: the analogy of the transgressive figure of Erauso with another important transgressive figure of the seventeenth-century: the Jewish convert. This analogy is valid given the author’s *converso* heritage. Jack Parker indicates that there are many references to the Jewish origins of Montalbán father, Alonso Pérez and to problems the
dramaturge had with the Inquisition (16). Montalbán, through the drama on-stage, was providing the audience with a new way to think about the *converso* issue by forcing the audience to engage in a dialogue with the play - empathizing or disapproving of the characters - instead of passively accepting the authoritarian viewpoint.

4.4.1 SYNOPSIS OF THE COMEDIA *LA MONJA ALFERÉZ*

The three-part play opens with Erauso disguised as the character Alonso de Guzmán telling doña Ana, his love interest that he is has received orders to report to a new post at the port of Callao and must leave Lima, Peru. Guzmán, who lost everything due to cards, requests some funds from Doña Ana under the guise of procuring a horse for visiting her more frequently. Guzmán’s brother Don Miguel de Erauso, also commissioned to serve in America, is coming to Callao. Miguel arrives from Spain carrying a letter from his father asking him to look for his sister, Catalina, who has escaped from the convent. The siblings meet at a card game where Guzmán defends the brother Miguel against El Nuevo Cid (a famous military hero) and is duly impressed by his/her valor. Nonetheless, Miguel begins to suspect Guzmán is his sister so he sets up a false duel against El Nuevo Cid. In the midst of the duel, Miguel exposes Erauso’s true identity. Guzmán has no other option but to mortally wound his/her brother and escape to Lima thinking he/she has killed his/her brother. Meanwhile, Ana has set up a nighttime rendezvous in her home and has given Guzmán a sign to let him/her know that he/she can enter the darkened home to enjoy her favors. This sets up the requisite *comedia de confusión* similar to *Empeños de una casa*. Guzmán knows he cannot keep the planned amorous tryst and decides to leave a letter of explanation. Comedic fate has it that don Diego, who is enamored of doña Ana – though unrequited, shows up at the accorded time and enters the darkened home. Ana finds herself in a conundrum; she has realizes that the burly man in her arms is not the slender and effeminate Guzmán. If she confronts
don Diego and resists, she could lose her life: "Si me doy por entendida/del engaño ha de ser fuerza/ resistir, aunque aventure/la vida en la resistencia" (113).\textsuperscript{181} If doña Ana raises the alarm, her father would be duty-bound to kill her. She also worries that the intruder, don Miguel, might kill her elderly father as he defends his daughter’s honor. Therefore, doña Ana concludes that the lesser of two evils is to accept the rape under the guise of calling the intruder “her husband”: “y llamandole mi esposo/legitimé la licencia/de entregarle de mi honor/ la posesión que desea” (114).\textsuperscript{182}

Jornada II picks up three years later. Guzmán returns to see doña Ana who immediately recounts what had happened to her and shows him/her the gloves she has taken from the intruder as evidence of the rape. Guzmán recognizes the gloves as the ones he had given to don Diego as a parting gift. Guzmán confronts don Diego and tells him that he must marry doña Ana to restore her honor that he so blatantly usurped: “el remedio es ser marido/ de quien el honor debéis” (123).\textsuperscript{183} Don Diego gives as a pretext for not marrying doña Ana that she is still in love with Guzmán. To remove all doubt, Guzmán reveals his/her true identity with the caveat that it must be kept a secret: “Sabed, pues, don Diego amigo,/ que yo soy mujer”(125).\textsuperscript{184} One should view Guzmán’s chivalrous declaration in the light of his/her vehement rejection of the female identity to the extent of fighting his/her own brother to the death. Guzmán was willing to face the personal loss of his/her freedom that he/she enjoyed while cloaked by a masculine identity in exchange for the restoration of doña Ana’s honor upon marriage to don Diego. Guzmán then proceeds to settle accounts with Nuevo Cid from that card game three years ago and kills him in a duel, which precipitates the climatic action of the play. The authorities arrest Guzmán and condemn him to death. Don Diego, with the intention of helping his friend, reveals that Guzmán is a woman: “y aunque ella no lo confiesa,/ diré que es monja profesa,/ y pondrá a su potestad secular
impedimento” (136). The sheriff arrives and tries to force Guzmán to wear women’s clothing to the execution. Guzmán is appalled: "¿Qué ropa? Yo soy soldado, y en mi traje han de llevarme” (137). The viceroy suspends the death sentence upon learning of Guzmán’s female identity. Guzmán responds: “¿Mujer yo? Miente, mande su excelencia/ ejecutar la sentencia/ que don Diego se engañó por excusarme la muerte” (139).

The end of the comedia has the royal court wanting to see the spectacle of the Alférez and the Nun that Guzmán has become. Guzmán, the courageous lieutenant, feels humiliated by the thought of appearing in public dressed as a woman, “me dejaba dar la muerte/ en un infame teatro, / todo por no publicar/ que soy mujer, no es en vano/ querer que me vista ahora/ de lo que aborrezco tanto?” (152-53). Guzmán puts on a woman’s cape over her sword and goes to the Royal Court, where the curious will gaze at her. Montalbán ends his comedia when Guzmán, now called the Alférez Monja, Lieutenant-Nun, arrives in Rome. The ending corresponds to the real timeline of Erauso’s life. The author promises a second part if Erauso’s life continues producing material for a second comedia.

4.4.2 TRANSGRESSIONS IN THE LA MONJA ALFEREZ

Decorum in Golden Age theater refers to the requirement that each character is called to uphold the ideal social function that corresponds to their particular station in life. Montalbán depicts Guzmán (Catalina de Erauso) primarily as a masculine military hero and not simply a muger varonil that conforms to comedic expectations. The writer dedicates the bulk of Act II to Guzmán’s retelling of his/her life as an explanation of his/her “abnormal” behavior. Camacho-Platero suggests that the motif of disordered sexuality was used during this era as a metaphor for the social disorder and chaos caused in part by the wars of Conquest (22). In the midst of chaos, the comedia echo the Golden Age desire for a stability of elite society’s values.
Even though Erauso presents a transgressive image, her documented actions are in accord with the Spanish Crown: to conquer and place the New World under royal authority. Her military exploits were not necessary to recount in detail in the *comedia* since the audience would have known them. This determining factor enabled Erauso to receive her military pension and mitigate the criminal punishment for cross-dressing. The audience also recognized Erauso’s ability to overcome the limitations of her gender not only by dressing as a man but also by occupying the summit of perfection of the ideal man, the heroic soldier. Montalbán for that reason presents Guzmán as an honorable man and does not emphasize the violent side of Erauso’s character that engages in endless duels and killings. The audience in Madrid would not sympathize with a heroic protagonist if seen as having committed fratricide, thus the writer only portrays don Miguel as seriously wounded in the play.

In *Vida i sucesos*, Erauso uncovers her feminine identity to self-interestedly save her life from criminal arrest. In the *comedia*, Erauso-Guzmán reveals her feminine identity because of the platonic love for doña Ana. Montalbán simply presents the same-sex flirtation between doña Ana and Guzmán as an effective and non-threatening way to maintain the masculine disguise: “ya que naturaleza/ tan gran milagro haya echo, ¿cómo se pudo encubir/ tanto tiempo, o qué ocasión/ en el traje de varón/ os ha obligado a servir en la Guerra/ Y si adoráis/ a doña Ana, ¿he de creer/ que amáis siendo mujer/ otra mujer? No queráis acreditar imposibles” (126).^189^ Montalbán does not punish the *muger varonil* at the end of the play by forcing her to get married, to enter a convent, or having her executed as required by dramatic conventions. Golden Age comedic authors used these prescriptive endings to signal the restoration of both society's order and the transgressive figure’s rightful place in it. The *muger varonil* becomes anew the protagonist that conforms to society’s expectations. In the face of such convention, Montalbán
rewards Erauso-Guzmán by permitting her to be the only *muger varonil* in Golden Age comedias that maintains her identity as a male: “His Holiness seemed amazed to hear such things, and graciously gave me leave to pursue my life in men’s clothing” (78). The playwright signals with this unorthodox ending that he has a very important message to deliver.

The divergent reading of this play is undergirded by the social anxiety caused by the issue of “purity of blood” that was still intense during the Spanish Golden Age. Even renowned people like Teresa of Ávila suffered under its shadow. Her seven brothers may have moved to the Americas so as to “escape from the constricting social conventions of a country where ancestry and purity of blood counted for so much” (Elliott *Old World* 76-77). Through metonymic extension, Montalbán exchanges the anxiety that Guzman experiences when identified publicly as a woman with the anxiety of a Jewish convert. “¿Para qué quiero vivir/ si saben que soy mujer?” is for Erauso/Guzmán a cry of anguish at being recognized as pertaining to a subjugated minority (139). Guzmán’s public rejection of his/her female identity - the scene where his/her belligerence gets her expelled from the convent- echoes the “new Christian’s” vehement denial of any association with Judaism. In contrast, in *Vida i sucesos*, the writer retells this scene – Erauso’s time in the convents of Santa Clara and The Most Holy Trinity- with fondness.

4.5 BEYOND THE CLOISTER WALLS

All the documents associated with Erauso - *Pedimentos, Declaración, Relaciones,* “autobiography”- and the *comedia* portray a slightly different stylized image of the historical person. Not one of these documents reflects a holistic image of Catalina de Erauso; they simply contain the necessary elements to promote the socio-political preoccupations of the author or reader of the documents. This raises a foundational question: how could Erauso’s transgressive figure and the manuscripts associated with her achieve acceptance by the highly restrictive society
of Early Modern Spain? During her lifetime, the public regarded Erauso positively based on her manufactured identity that conformed to the narrative of the Church and Crown. The material interest of the Crown was one of the most important factors in the acceptance of Erauso’s legal documents. She was the heroic soldier who fought for Spain in the wars of the Conquista (Crown). The Church accepted Erauso’s transgressive behavior by finally authorizing her to wear male clothing even though she so blatantly disregarded the symbols of the Church — she throws away her scapular when she escapes from the convent; participates in duels; is accused of being a heretic by abusing the sacredness of the Host; and dressing like man. Erauso nonetheless, maintains herself within the behavioral framework of the Church by invoking ecclesiastical asylum, confessing, and making a pilgrimage to Rome to seek papal dispensation. Her ability to prove that she was still a virgin gave the Church grounds to declare her a morally superior member of society even in the face of her anti-social behaviors. Erauso’s documents record some of the most important secular, military and ecclesiastical figures in Imperial Spain including King Philip IV, the general of the Armada, Fadrique de Toledo, and Pope Urban VIII. Even though there were many conflicts between the Church and Crown as observed in the many instances that Erauso takes advantage of their jurisdictional disputes, the Church and Crown maintained nonetheless a close association. The ultimate power of the ecclesiastical authority of the Church supports the favorable resolution of Erauso’s petition to dress as a man. Uribe-Urán writes, “the institution’s comparatively long duration speaks about the lasting dominance of the Catholic Church in all realms of Spanish life into late colonial times (education, health care, taxation, economic production, record-keeping, and so on)” (450).

What these documents also highlight is the Baroque mentality that elevates to a special place a “prodigio” (a prodigy), the woman-soldier. ¿Qué ha de verme? ¿Soy acaso / algún
monstruo nunca visto, o la fiera que inventaron, que con letras, y con armas, se vio en el reino polaco? ¿No ha visto un hombre sin barbas?” (151).  

Erauso has become an international object for public consumption, as has Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Nevertheless, Erauso resists the culture’s objectification of her person. Erauso was not comfortable with her fame: “there were more people waiting than we knew what to do with, all come out of curiosity, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Lieutenant-Nun. As for me, I was anxious to get inside the archbishop’s palace…” (67). The public's amazement at Erauso’s cross-dressing was dependent on the identity emphasized. In Spain, where society only knew Erauso as a female, her dressing as a man caused wonder. Correspondingly, in the Americas where people only knew Erauso as a man (Guzmán), seeing her dressed as a woman in a conventual habit was surprising. Erauso cherished her male identity because it served her well since it conformed to the prevalent double myth: the political imperialistic agenda of the Spanish Crown, and the superiority and privilege of the Spanish male nobility in a patriarchal society (Perry 411). Erauso’s masculinity had permitted her freedom unknown to women during the Early Modern era and a social recognition that enabled her to associate with men of the upper echelons of power: “as an honor to me, a great honor, the general [Fadrique de Toledo] took one of them [Erauso’s brothers] into his personal service and gave the other a promotion” (72). Erauso’s lasting success was assuming her identity as a woman. It was in proving that she was a woman, a virginal woman, that she had the power to save her life.  

Within the Baroque fascination with hybridity, Erauso’s figure becomes the platform to discuss pressing issues of her day: construction of masculinity, female gender proscriptions, the importance of the patriarchal concept of virginity, and the transgressive elements in Spanish society. With this in mind, Montalbán’s play becomes more than a neutral piece of entertainment, a simple exercise in entertaining the masses with a theatrical adaptation of the latest social scandal.
A surface reading of the *comedia* might reflect Montalbán as a conservative playwright in that he reaffirms the hegemonic cultural order but his stylized rendition of Erauso reveals society’s preoccupation with pressing socio-political issues of his time: women and the *converso*. Consequently, one can view Montalbán as a radical playwright in that his *comedia* holds up for public review the rapidly changing social order of the Golden Age Spain of Phillip IV. This change enabled a woman to appropriate the role of an elite man. Additionally, Erauso underscores the power of performativity as exemplified by her disguise at the physical level (her clothing) and at the linguistic level. Erauso used self-referential feminine gender markers at certain points in her life when she needed to be “seen” as a woman. When she recounts her manly exploits, Erauso uses masculine gender markers. A nuanced reading of this textual gender fluctuation can follow the same process as a bilingual person: it is easier to remember and relate the experience in the language or in this case, the gender in which it occurred. In other words, the instability in Erauso’s grammatical gender markers are more subconscious in *Vida i sucesos* compared to the more intentionally manipulated texts of *Pedimentos*, *Declaraciones*, *Relaciones*, and Montalbán’s *comedia* - not once does the playwright use the feminine name of Catalina.

The Baroque monstrosity of Erauso's hybrid figure has perpetuated a lasting interest in this figure of the Spanish Golden Age. The image of Erauso as a lesbian - transvestite has played an important role in her success at the popular level, as seen in the many adaptations of her “autobiography” both past and present. Her success as a historical figure should be measured using different parameters. She is more than a tantalizing object for popular consumption. She was a sign of her times. The long-term success of Erauso’s story should encompass more than the gender hybridity evidenced in the few homoerotic scenes in her “autobiography” and in the literary pieces of the *comedia* and *Relaciones* that have received so much critical emphasis as decisive elements.
of her identity. By leaving the traditional feminine paradigm, Catalina de Erauso created an ontological vacuum in the Spanish Golden Age.

As she was not an easy fit into normative categories, Society relegated Erauso to the Baroque entity of “prodigio.” Her textual representations serve as a bridge spanning the immense gap between what Early Modern society demanded of women and the way Erauso wanted to live her life. Her notoriety was not the ultimate goal of her transvestite image. She simply wanted to live a life that permitted her to enjoy the privileges of an elite male within the dominant ideology of Church and Crown. It is others who have used this historical person and her works to promote personal agendas.
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the second of the conventual writers analyzed in this dissertation, represents the Intellect within the Body – Mind – Spirit triad. She is a prolific writer of courtly and religious poetry (Eucharistic allegories), plays, mythological masques, and personal essays. Many of her works are considered “paratheatrical texts because they were intended for visual as well as musical (and possibly choreographic) effects” (Hernández Araico 317). She was also interested in science, music and art. Her highly acclaimed diverse body of work has garnered for Sor Juana the appellative of the Tenth Muse. As a way of continuing her intellectual pursuits, she became a nun of the Order of Saint Jerome and resided in the convent of Santa Paula in Mexico City. Her writings will be used to exemplify the Early Modern intellectual battle known as Querelle de femmes, which is best represented in her Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz (The Poet’s Answer to the Most Illustrious Sister Filotea de la Cruz). This manuscript, composed in 1691, lays out her lifetime dedication to learning and examines through the lens of gender, a woman’s right to use her intellect for personal and spiritual growth. It is one of Sor Juana’s most widely read works and is considered a “fundamental work in Western Feminism” (Arenal and Powell vii). For this reason, in 1974 Mexico declared Sor Juana the “First Feminist of America.” Nonetheless, as Teresa Soufas reminds us, feminism is an anachronistic term when referring to Sor Juana. When applied to Renaissance thought, scholars often use the term “pro-woman argument” to characterize any discourse on womanhood that
challenged the misogynistic ideology that constrains women’s participation in society and limited their public agency.

The comedia associated with Sor Juana, Los empeños de una casa or Pawns of a House is considered a comedia de enredos (comedy of intrigue) a variant of the comedias de capa y espada (cloak-and-sword comedies). Hernandez Araico considers Pawns of a House a humorous love intrigue surpassing “plot complication in Calderón cloak-and-sword comedias, acclaimed throughout Europe for their extremely inventive intrigue” (319). This comedia is the core piece of a theatrical fête. The complete composition (Loa/Prologue – Letra I - Act I – Letra II – Interlude I- Act II – Letra III – Interlude II – Act III – Dance) is one of the “very few extant seventeenth-century theatrical fêtes in Spanish, and the only one known by a female playwright, explicitly commissioned for performance at a royal celebration” (Hernández Araico 316). Vicereine Marfa Luisa Manrique de Lara later published it in Seville, in 1692. House of Pawns best highlights Sor Juana’s wit and her command of satire and the double-voiced discourse while conveying transgressive social issues to her audience. Sor Juana knew the dangers of using satire to question official gender ideology publicly through the medium of comedia as underscored by Lope de Vega in El arte Nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo.

Of the three conventual writers under consideration, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is the most widely known due to her works having attained induction into the patriarchal literary cannon. Electa Arenal considers her the “last great author of Spain’s Golden Age (1). Ryan Prendergast states that Sor Juana has become “the most famous and celebrated female writer and intellectual of the Hispanic Baroque” (29). In her time, Sor Juana was widely popular. Spanish publishers printed nine editions of her texts between 1689 and 1725. Even though Sor Juana writings do not compare in quantity to the comedias written by Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca or Tirso de Molina,
many scholars deem her works of equal quality. Sor Juana, along with María de Zayas and Ana Caro Mallén de Soto, is one of the few Spanish Early Modern female dramaturges. Just as important, her voice is one of few from the seventeenth-century dramatic genre in the Americas. These female dramaturges took full advantage of the narrative techniques available to Golden Age dramaturges to convey their own rebellion against the status quo. These female writers presented to their audiences the subtle gender subversions that they articulated through the presentation in their comedias of non-normative definitions of the female gender. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz skillfully adopts the genre of the comedia as a much more widespread platform than would have been permitted by a traditional Vida, or in her case through her essay, Respuesta, to expound on some of the issues of paramount importance to her. This expanded readership was possible since comedias were the most popular mass cultural art form in Spanish Renaissance. Sor Juana’s theater is still relatively unknown in the United States especially amongst monolingual scholars even though there are translations made by A. Trueblood and Hernández Araico.

5.1 THE HISTORICAL SOR JUANA

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’ writings bear the influences of a Baroque court life, her illegitimate birth, and colonial status. She was born in San Miguel de Nepantla in 1649/51 under the birth name Juana de Asbaje y Ramírez de Santillana. Scant biographical documentation exists about her life; what is known comes from Father Calleja’s biography written in 1700. Sor Juana was the illegitimate child of a Basque military officer, Captain Pedro Manuel de Asbaje y Machuca, and an illiterate criolla, Isabel Ramírez de Santillana. She grew up on her maternal grandfather’s hacienda run by her mother since her father was absent early in her life. The young Juana had access to her grandfather’s library to further her education beyond the sphere of domestic interests. As a young girl, she had begged her mother to let her dress up as a boy and send
her to the university in Mexico City: “These early years as an avid reader in her grandfather’s study mark the birth of one of the greatest scholars in Mexican history” (Gonzalez 29). In 1664, her family presented the 14-year-old Juana to the viceroyal court of the Marquise de Mancera. She became the lady-in-waiting to the Vicereine Leonor Carreto. The viceroyal couple was so impressed with Juana’s knowledge that they organized an oral examination to test Sor Juana’s knowledge. Forty male scholars came to the viceroyal palace to engage in an intellectual debate with the young Juana. Calleja reports that Juana outwitted the men.

In lieu of marriage, Sor Juana entered the strictly ruled and aristocratic convent of the Discalced Carmelites in 1666. Her *comedia* and her essay *La Respuesta* state her reasons for choosing the religious life over marriage: the convent was the only place in her society where she could live virtually masterless and devote herself to learning. Even though she was illegitimate, she was able to enter the convent because of her viceroyal patronage. Three months later she became ill and had to leave to convalesce at home. In 1669, Sor Juana returned to the religious life and took the veil at the Hieronymite (San Jerónimo) convent of Santa Paula. This convent had more relaxed rules, which permitted her to study in a well-appointed cell attended by servants. Even though she was cloistered, the convent’s *locutorio* resembled a literary salon. Sor Juana received aristocrats, scholars, ecclesiastical authorities and representatives of the *cabildo* (city council). Many came with writing commissions. The convent permitted her to write secular material for economic recompense since Sor Juana had to support her “household” (servants, *mulatta* slave, and personal expenses such as her extensive library). The Marquis de Mancerra and his wife were frequent visitors, “[a]fter attending vespers, they would repair with Sor Juana to the locutory, together with acquaintances from court circles and persons of literary inclinations. Sor Juana thus became the center of a *tertulia*, a conversational gathering; a contemporary participant recalls her
adroitness in intricate scholastic disputation, her comments on sermons, her skill at improvisation verse” (Trueblood 6).

In 1680, the next appointed viceregal couple, Marquis de la Laguna and his wife arrived in Mexico City. They are the people most closely associated with Sor Juana’s career as an author. The politically powerful vicereine María Luisa Manrique de Lara y Gonzaga took Sor Juana under her royal patronage. Both vicereines, Doña Leonor and Doña Maria Luisa were educated and enjoyed the arts; in particular, Doña Maria Luisa was a “lover of theater” (Hernández Araico 318). She encouraged and protected Sor Juana’s artistic and intellectual pursuits. Upon her return to Madrid from New Spain, Doña Maria Luisa published Sor Juana’s first book *Castalian Inundation* (1689) which made her a literary figure in the Spanish-speaking world.

Doña Maria Luisa’s return to Madrid’s royal court in 1687 escalated Sor Juana’s troubles. Unprotected by royal patronage, ecclesiastical criticism is unleashed against her person and her secular endeavors (love poems, *comedia*, and theological discussions). This criticism parallels the rising crisis of the Spanish Empire. Padre Antonio Núñez de Miranda, the powerful confessor to the viceroy and other nobility, comes to the forefront as one of Sor Juana’s principal opponents. He believed Sor Juana constituted a public scandal for engaging in secular artistic endeavors such as writing secular literary pieces and designing the architectural-theatrical triumphal arches for the arrival of new viceregal couple. Sor Juana retaliated by exercising her right to change confessors in a letter dated 1681/82. Sor Juana’s immediate ecclesiastical superior, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla, demanded conformity. In 1690, he publicly tried to humiliate Sor Juana into submission with the publication of *La carta atenagórica* (*The Letter*). This cover letter amounts to a public admonition and an implicit threat of persecution by
the Inquisition. In 1691, Sor Juana issues a public rebuttal titled *La Respuesta*. In it, Sor Juana defends women’s rights to intellectual pursuits.207

There is mostly silence surrounding Sor Juana’s departure from the public eye after her epistolary confrontation with the Bishop of Puebla. In 1692, she sold her library of four thousand books, and her musical and scientific instruments. In 1693, Sor Juana recalled Padre Núñez as her confessor. After making a general confession, she turned to an aesthetic life. One year later, Sor Juana renewed her vows and made a declaration of faith repenting and renouncing secular studies. She signed this declaration in blood. One should not take Sor Juana’s silence as her final word. Even in silence she speaks. Her poem “First Dream” suggests that Sor Juana did not cease all intellectual activity. Sor Juana studied God’s creation and escaped the world through her dreams.

The ecclesiastical enforcement of Sor Juana’s silence is broken at the very point where her historians inscribe it. Her “silent” voice demands to be heard and keeps us invested in her life. Sor Juana dies on April 17, 1695 after taking care of her fellow sisters during an epidemic in the convent.

5.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: QUERELLE DE FEMMES

*Querelle de Femmes* or “the question of women” is the historical context that encompasses the *Vidas* of all three conventual authors. Their manuscripts reflect the ongoing debate in early modern Europe “about the proper roles of men and women and the proper balance of power between them” (Wiesner-Hanks 178). Petrarch and Boccaccio initiated this debate in the fifteenth-century. Both championed “classical” models of human behavior grounded in the misogynist platonic tradition. The philosophical paradigm of perfection was the Male construct. Thus, the dominant Golden Age discourse was one that attributed “incompleteness” to Women. The Church was deeply involved with this endeavor of defining gender norms for women. As Rhodes points
out, “The relative disorder associated with Woman… is directly apparent in documents such as seventeenth-century prescriptive literature and pragmáticas…” written by ecclesiastical authorities ("Gender” 268). The Church’s gender dispute played out against a background of the social and political instability surrounding the controversy of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. For the Church, “gender determined duty as well as destiny” (Arenal and Powell 5). The stated goal of a woman’s life was the altar. Young women who were not marriageable faced another fate. As Arenal observes, “In a world where females were associated with the Devil and the flesh, intelligent and beautiful women especially were blamed for all manner of ill; to lessen the threat to men’s uncontrollable passions, they should be sent to a nunnery to embrace holy plainness and ignorance” (Arenal and Powell 5). Nava and Sor Juana approach the same altar but become a Sponsa Christi, Bride of Christ. In contrast, Erauso’s journey takes her away from the altar and onto the battlefield, a dramatic counterpoint to the normal gender expectations of the era.

The querelle thus became women’s rebuttal of the “humanist” ideals that disparaged the role and nature of women. They were arguing against the Early Modern mindset that the use of reason was an exclusively masculine privilege. At first, this Humanistic questioning of gender was concerned with woman’s role in literary production. In France, women claimed intellectual and literary independence in the face of formidable opposition from powerful figures such as Moliere. As Merrim notes, “Educated women of the seventeenth century, while still subjected, would become increasingly active subjects and publish in ever-greater numbers. They would demand and achieve roles that far exceeded those that Fray Luis and other moralists had envisioned for them”(xxxvii). The questioning then extended into all areas where women's exclusion from positions of power in politics, economics, art, literature and religion relegated them to inferior positions (Tierney 1177).
Sor Juana participates in the *Querelle de femmes* with *La Respuesta* (*Reply to Sor Philotea*) and *Los empeños de una casa* (*Pawns of a House*). In these manuscripts, she underscores the role of women authors in early modern Western society as they posit the nature of female reason and its implications for sexual equality. Despite ecclesiastical opposition, Sor Juana declares herself a Humanist “ente de razón”, a “rational being”, instead of the accepted “irrational being” that was normative for women (Arenal and Powell 38-39). Her works stand in contrast to traditional female literary output. Literary historians point out that women's participation in the main literary genres was limited compared to that of their male contemporaries. Women wrote poetry, autobiographies, memoirs, and advice manuals (midwives, cookbooks, housekeeping). The lack of educational opportunities for women was one root cause of this limitation.

During the Baroque period universities barred women. Few females had the means and/or opportunity to learn Latin – a prerequisite for reading learned works. Additionally, most of these works resided in places that barred access to women: university and church libraries. Sor Juana circumvented these restrictions by amassing a private library in her cell. Thus, conventual writers traditionally could not access a learned discourse that they could later express in their text. Sor Juana on the contrary displays a traditional learning in her writings and thus her works were intended for educated readers who were familiar with Bible, classical mythology, and classical rhetorical methods. Traditionally, women could not participate in any intellectual activity where their inclusion could threaten male authority and power, such as public, political or ecclesiastical debates. Sor Juana’s learned discourse did permit her to participate, though unwittingly, in the ecclesiastical debate known as *La Respuesta* where, “[h]er work reflects how actively the masculine culture assigned women secondary, invisible, silently, reflective roles in society” (Arenal and Powell 15).
Nonetheless, women took advantage of the literary genres that they were permitted to engage in at the time such as Vidas, poetry, or autobiographies. Of these genres, the preferred mode of expression for the majority of women, religious or secular, was poetry. Due to its perceived emotional content, deemed suitable for women, poetry seemed to escape severe monitoring and restrictions. Of the three authors analyzed, only Sor Juana produced poetry. Nava wrote because of religious obligations, and Erauso’s legal considerations impelled her to take up the pen. Another interesting difference between male and female authors was the outcome of their writing. Female authors, especially conventual authors, could not expect economic gain from their works.

The dramatic genre, comedias, was a bastion of male playwrights during the Golden Age. As previously noted, Sor Juana represents the only female playwright of the New World with Los empeños de una casa (1683). Her contemporaries in Spain are Ana Carol Mallén de Soto (1600? – 1652?) with Valor, agravio y mujer and María de Zayas (1590-1647?) with La traición en la amistad. Mallén de Soto’s comedia presents the heroine Leonor who having been jilted by her lover disguises herself as a man to avenge her lost honor. Thus, she is able to chase him across the sea to Brussels. In Zayas’ comedia, the female characters have the will and the power to court and marry the men of their choosing – a departure from the typical comedia plot. Zayas also wrote a collection of stories Desengaños amorosos, which criticizes the literary and dramatic representations of female characters. Even though today many of the female playwrights are unknown, Zayas was considered by Juan Pérez de Montalbán –who wrote the comedia associated with Erauso- as the Tenth Muse in his time (Soufas "La traición" 149).
5.3 READING SOR JUANA’S VIDA: LA RESPUESTA

Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz (The Poet’s Answer to the Most Illustrious Sister Filotea de la Cruz) has its genesis in a controversy surrounding a personal document written by Sor Juana at the request of Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, Bishop of Puebla. Sor Juana set down in writing what she had probably discussed in the many gatherings in the locutorio of the convent, a kind of intellectual salon, regarding a famous sermon given by the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio de Viera about 40 years prior.\textsuperscript{212} Viera’s sermon purported that he could give better arguments regarding Jesus’ highest example of His love for humanity than those already given by the doctors of the Church (St. Augustine, St. Thomas and St. John Chrysostom). The Bishop purposely delivers Sor Juana’s transcription of her oral refutation to the local press with a cover letter signed by “Sor Filotea.”\textsuperscript{213} Bishop Santa Cruz gives Sor Juana's only incursion into theological dialectic the pretentious title of \textit{Carta Atenagórica} or \textit{Letter Worthy of Athena} (1691).\textsuperscript{214}

On the surface, the Bishop’s cover letter seems to convey spiritual guidance urging her to give up secular learning and perfect herself in the religious life but, in reality, it was an ecclesiastical admonition, which included the threat of eternal damnation and carried the weight of persecution by the Inquisition. Sor Juana writes: “concederme benévola licencia para hablar y proponer en vuestra venerable presencia, digo que recibo en mi alma vuestra santísima amonestación de aplicar el estudio a Libros Sagrados, que aunque viene en traje de consejo, tendrá para mí sustancia de precepto” (42-44).\textsuperscript{215} Sor Juana subtly tells her readers that it was not a nun (Sor Filotea) “quien hizo imprimir la Carta tan sin noticia mía, quien la intituló, quien la costeó” but someone with “pastoral insinuación” (42-44).\textsuperscript{216}
Bishop Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, her clerical superior Archbishop Francisco Aguiar y Seijas, and her ex-confessor Antonio Núñez de Miranda believed and demanded that “all but divine knowledge should be eschewed, especially by a woman” (Arenal and Powell 27). Núñez “considered Juana’s position in the limelight at court dangerous … her continued study and writing after entering the convent, especially on worldly subjects, he judged nothing short of scandalous” (Arenal and Powell 5). The Bishop probably felt that now he could openly criticize Sor Juana because her royal patron Vicereine Maria Luisa had returned to Spain in 1687. After the publication of the Bishop’s cover letter to Sor Juana’s, *Carta atenagórica*, Vicereine Maria Luisa tried to defend Sor Juana from Spain. The Vicereine attached additional defenses and laudatory poems written by others to Sor Juana’s *Carta Atenagórica*.217

The Bishop’s letter was just one of many ecclesiastical denunciations that learned Early Modern women had to contend with in their lives. Sor Juana, a woman of letters who considered herself a Christian humanist,218 recognized that the ecclesiastical leaders of her time did not accept her nonconformity to the proscribed conventual roles of Holy Ignorance and Holy Silence advocated by moralists such as Fray Luis de Leon and Juan Luis Vives in such texts as *Formación de la mujer cristiana*. In the face of ecclesiastical censure, Sor Juana declares: “es que desde que me rayó la primera luz de razón, fue tan vehemente y poderosa la inclinación de las letras, que ni ajenas represiones – que he tenido muchas, ni propias reflejas – que he hecho no pocas, han bastado a que deje de seguir este natural impulso que Dios puso en mí” (46).219 Sor Juana acknowledges that the Bishop’s reprimand found in his cover letter has more to do with her literary incursions in the secular world than with the content of her *Letter Worthy of Athena*: “Bien conozco que no cae sobre ella [Carta] vuestra cuerdísima advertencia, sino sobre lo mucho que habréis visto de asuntos humanos que he escrito” (44).220

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Sor Juana alludes to the Inquisition at least four times in *Respuesta*. Faced with this very real threat, she prepared a carefully crafted document, a “rhetorically structured letter of self defense,” that answered each one of the accusations made by the Bishop/Sor Filotea (Arenal and Powell 18). Sor Juana used the legal format in her written defense, “If my crime lies in the ‘Letter Worthy of Athena …’” (91). As part of her defense, she argues for the intellectual equality of women: “Is my mind, such as it is, less free than his [Vieira], though it derives from the same source?” (91). Sor Juana advocates for a woman’s right to study: “All that I have desired has been to study, so as to become be less ignorant” (91). It took Sor Juana three months to formulate this forty-six paragraph reply, an exemplar of Scholastic disputation, “astounding display of baroque erudition” (Little n.p.). Sor Juana states: “No mi voluntad, mi poca salud y mi justo temor han suspendido tantos días mi respuesta”. This reply is known as *Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz* or *The Poet’s Answer to the Most Illustrious Sister Filotea de la Cruz*.

Sadly, it would be one of her last writings, her final attempt at setting the record straight in regard to gender relations and woman’s role in society in the face of the Archbishop’s censure. *Respuesta* displays Sor Juana's traditional learning and thus her expectation of a readership steeped in the culture of the Church and the Imperial Court. These readers would be familiar with references explicitly presented or implied in regards to the Bible, classical philosophers, classical mythology and classical rhetorical methods. Sor Juana’s contemporary readers would also be comfortable with the Baroque literary style and its distinctive interplay among words that make the text so rich in polyvocal and polysemous word-games. As Arenal and Powel rightly point out, Sor Juana deftly “combines the languages of court and convent, Scholasticism and literature, medieval dogma and modern rationalism …sacred and profane, dramatic and comical” (16). Thus modern
day readers must be fluent in the conventions of religious language such as the rhetoric of weakness, humility and obedience as well as Biblical and classical allusions that convey the spiritual, cultural, social and gender context of Sor Juana’s life.

5.3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTUAL FIGURE

The critical analysis of Sor Juana’s manuscripts underscore a unique advantage for the modern reader: her manuscripts circumvent male intermediaries. Erauso’s *Vida i sucesos* may have been written by a male ghostwriter. Nava’s folios necessarily went through clerical editing. This does not imply that there is no male presence within her texts. Sor Juana was aware of institutional restrictions that molded her expression and content in *La respuesta* and *Los empeños de una casa*. Nonetheless, Sor Juana’s texts demonstrate how she found ways to accommodate what was permitted to religious women in order to cultivate her talents. Both of her manuscripts suggest that women’s literary and political agency do exist. To understand Sor Juana’s life fully, the reader must take into account her “untold story,” her textual silence during her last years. Her silence, which has intrigued scholars for many years, is as important to the critical analysis of Sor Juana’s identity as her manuscripts.

5.3.2 SYNOPSIS OF RESPUESTA

In the guise of a religious epistolary address, Sor Juana begins the *introito* section of her “rhetorically structured letter of self defense” (Arenal and Powell 18) with the standard modes of address used for religious hierarchy and colonial society: “Muy ilustre Señora, mi señora” (38). 224 Even though Sor Juana directs *Respuesta* toward Santa Cruz, (Sor Filotea) the Bishop of Puebla, it is logical to assume that it was also directed to the two other ecclesiastical authorities mentioned above who were demanding that she submit her will and conform her role as conventual member of the Colonial Spanish Church. More importantly, Sor Juana uses *Respuesta* to reveal to her circle
of influential and powerful friends in Mexico City and Spain that she is in danger from an Inquisitorial investigation (Arenal and Powell 30).

Paragraphs 5 and 6 comprise the exordium section of the text that lays out the purpose of her essay: “yo no quiero ruido con el Santo Oficio, que soy ignorante y tiemblo de decir alguna proposición malsoneante o torcer la genuina inteligneia de algún lugar. Yo no estudio para escribir, ni menos para enseñar… sino sólo por ver si con estudiar ignoro menos. Así lo respondo y así lo siento” (46). Chapters 7 – 29 constitute the narratio section of this classical rhetorical text, which lays out the facts that girth the argument.

Sor Juana begins with a narration of her childhood in paragraph 7 that parallels the recounting of precocious religiosity in most Vidas:

“Prosiguiendo en la narración de mi inclinación, de que os quiero dar entera noticia, digo que no había cumplido los tres años de mi edad cuando enviando mi madre a una hermana mía, mayor que yo, a que enseñase a leer en una de las que llaman Amigas … Teniendo yo después como seis o siete años, y sabiendo ya leer y escribir…” (48).

What follows are details of the trials and triumphs of her intellectual life, Sor Juana’s intellectual autobiography. These trials comprise the central part of her argument which is succinctly stated by Arenal and Powel: “a dearly held intellectual position, which is her concept of how theology can best be done: by studying the arts and sciences and by including women both as subjects of study and teachers of other women” (18). In the words of Sor Juana: “Con esto prosegui … los pasos de mi estudio a la cumbre de la Sagrada Teología; pareciéndome preciso, para llegar a ella, subir por los escalones de las ciencias y artes humanas; porque ¿Cómo entenderá el estilo de la Reina de las Ciencias quien aun no sabe el de las ancila?” (52). These handmaidens are Logic, Rhetoric, Natural Sciences, Arithmetic, Geometry, Architecture, History, Law, Music, Astronomy, Mechanical Arts: “y después de saberlas todas (que ya se ve que no es
fácil, ni aun posible) pide [a Sagrada Escritura] otra circunstancia más que todo lo dicho, que es una continua oración y pureza de vida” (54). Paragraphs 30-43 comprise the disputatio section in which Sor Juana proves her thesis with syllogism (deductive reasoning). The concluding two paragraphs, the peroratio, enclose her remaining remarks.

5.3.3 TRANSGRESSIONS IN LA RESPUESTA

Most of Sor Juana’s transgressions are found in the disputation section of her manuscript. Two of the principal rhetorical devices Sor Juana uses in Respuesta to give authority to the defense are exemplum and comparatio. Within this section she sets forth examples of people accepted and honored by the Church, to answer her question, “[t]hen where is my transgression…?” (91). She first cites the Biblical or historical figure and then subtly compares herself to that person or their plight. She begins to bolsters her case by emphasizing the founder of her order (Hieronymite Order) St. Jerome (347-420 A.C.), and one of his principal followers, Paula of Rome (347 – 414). Sor Juana states that her studies were a direct result of being the spiritual daughter of Saint Jerome: “y más siendo hija de un San Jerónimo y de una Santa Paula, que era degenerar de tan doctos padres ser idiota la hija” (52). Jerome was a man of prolific literary activity. His best-known works are his exegetical studies that resulted in the revisions and translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin. He is ranked first among ancient exegetes; his Letters have been regarded with St. Augustine’s Confessions as one of the works most appreciated by the humanists of the Renaissance.

Sor Juana points out that St. Jerome gave instruction on the Holy Scriptures to a group of patrician women, notably Paula who belonged to one of the principle families of Rome. Sor Juana implies that Jerome supported the education of women in Biblical studies and furthermore he instructed Paula to teach her daughter, Eustochium. Many of his famous letters are ones written to
Paula of Rome and her daughters (Blesilla and Eustochium) in reference to their education. Both women were devoted students and mastered Hebrew, which was instrumental in helping Jerome later on with his work of translating the Hebrew Old Testament. Paula went to Jerusalem to found three women’s convents and one convent for men under the auspices of Jerome. Paula continued her close spiritual and intellectual relationship with Jerome and shared in his exegetical labor.

In this way, Sor Juana advocates for a better education for woman than could be obtained at the schools called Amigas, which she attended as a young child. Sor Juana also criticizes the random program of self-instruction -the only other means of education available to her: “estudiaba continuamente diversas cosas, sin tener para alguna particular inclinación… y como no tenía … límite de tiempo que me estrechases … por la necesidad de los grados… he estudiado muchas cosas y nada sé, porque las unas han embarazado a las otras” (56). Sor Juana laments “el sumo trabajo no sólo en carecer de maestro, sino de condiscípulos con quienes conferir y ejercitar lo estudiado” (58). The Dominican nun and prolific author from Barcelona, Hipolita de Jesús y Rocaberti (1551 -1624) also echoed this sentiment. She “insisted that parents teach their daughter how to read and saw nothing wrong with girls learning Latin” (Haliczer 51).

Sor Juana denounces another educational option for women, male tutors: “¡Oh cuántos daños se excusaran en nuestra república si las ancianas fueran doctas como Leta, y que supieran enseñar como manda San Pablo y mi Padre San Jerónimo! (84). Sor Juana denounces the scandalous behavior that could occur between the male tutor and the young female student through the inherent close association, “Por lo cual, muchos quieren más dejar bárbaras e incultas a sus hijas que no exponerlas a tan notorio peligro como la familiaridad con los hombres, lo cual se excusara si hubiera ancianas doctas, como quiere San Pablo” (84).
With this precedent set, Sor Juana disputes the traditionally held belief that Holy Ignorance is essential for women’s spiritual well-being: “sabe que le he pedido que apague la luz de mi entendimiento dejando sólo lo que baste para guardar su Ley, pues lo demás sobra, según algunos, en una mujer; y aun hay quien diga que daña” (46).\(^ {238}\) She takes the conventional thought expressed above and applies it to men saying that learning can also be harmful in men. Vis-a-vis the catalogue of famous women mentioned previously, Sor Juana ironically places learned men who have done great harm to the Church: Pelagius, Arius, Luther and Cazallas. These men used their learning to espouse heretical claims, “A ésto vuelvo a decir, hace daño el estudiar, porque es poner espada en manos del furioso; que siendo instrument nobilíssimo para la defense, en sus manos es muerte suya y de muchos” (81-82).\(^ {239}\)

In Sor Juana’s direct and ironic tone, she chastises those men who wish to keep her silent, those “meros gramáticos, o cuando mucho con cuatro terminus de Súmulas, quieren interpreter las Escrituras y se aferran del Mulieres in Ecclesiis tacaeant, sin saber cómo se ha de entender” (88).\(^ {240}\) Sor Juana succinctly explains away St. Paul’s indictment, “Let women keep silence in the churches” in paragraph 32 by presenting the work of Dr. Arce who resolved, “women are not allowed to lecture publicly … but that studying, writing, and teaching privately is not only permitted but most beneficial and useful to them” (81).\(^ {241}\) Sor Juana contends that St. Paul’s statement “was meant not only for women, but for all those who are not very competent” including men (83). She also explains that the command to silence had to do with Eusebius’s complaint that the murmur created by women teaching other women in the temple caused confusion while the apostles were preaching (87). Sor Juana confidently and directly questions her ecclesiastical superiors, exhorting them to give a better explanation than the one she just gave: “I would like these interpreters and expounders of St. Paul to explain to me how they understand the
passage”(89). She retorts that the Holy Mother Church has allowed women, and not only acknowledged female saints, to write: “¿cómo vemos que la Iglesia ha permitido que escriba una Gertrudis, una Teresa, una Brígida, la monja de Agreda y otras muchas? (90). She also underscores her reply by naming Biblical women who in the Apostle Paul’s time were permitted to speak on holy matters. It must be noted that Sor Juana at times takes the liberty to truncate Biblical verses or patch them together as she sees fit to prove her case.

Sor Juana also makes use of the *exempla* of Saint Paula to bolster her argument that “active and creative intelligence in women was not the exception but the rule” (Arenal and Powell 31). Sor Juana presents an impressive “catalogue of illustrious women” popular since traditional times: the Old Testament (Deborah, Queen of Sheba, Abigail, Esther, Hannah); mythological (Sibyls, Minerva\(^243\)); classical-historical (Pola Argentaria, Zenobia), and contemporary women (Christina Alexandra, Duchess of Aveyro).\(^244\) Among the intelligentsia of the Golden Age, not all would be familiar with the nuances suggested by presenting these women as examples. An important twist that Sor Juana employs to further her argument is placing Biblical, classical and historical women such as the Virgin Mary, St. Catherine, St. Teresa of Ávila\(^245\) and Isis in strategic places within the hierarchal patriarchal ladder as she “situates women next to, above, or in place of men” (Arenal and Powell 32). In traditional biblical exegesis, most male authors give a patriarchal recounting. Sor Juana appropriates this mode of narrating and inverts the paradigm by giving a matrilineal perspective as those found in the catalogues of illustrious women.

Sor Juana acknowledges God as the source of her intellectual gifts and her love for learning: “Bendito sea Dios que quiso fuese hacia las letras” (60) lends authority to her endeavor.\(^246\) Now Sor Juana can present herself as a martyr persecuted by the ecclesiastical
authorities who demand that she cease all secular scholarly and artistic endeavors.\textsuperscript{247} She poses the following question:

\begin{quote}
¿Quién no creerá viendo tan generales aplausos, que he navegado viento en popa y mar en leche, sobre las palmas de las aclamaciones comunes? Pues Dios sabe que no ha sido muy así, porque entre las flores de esas mismas aclamaciones se han levantado y despertado tales áspides de emulaciones y persecuciones… (61-62)\textsuperscript{248}
\end{quote}

In reply, Sor Juana presents Baltasar Gracián, a famous philosopher and essayist of the Golden Age reprimanded for publishing secular material against the wishes of his Jesuit superiors. Sor Juana mentions Gracián to parallel her own struggle against her religious superiors. She then compares her persecutors to the politicians in Athens who expelled “que se señalaba en prendas y virtudes porque no tiranizase con ellas la libertad pública” (62).\textsuperscript{249} And to the followers of the Machiavellian maxim: “aborrecer al que se señalaba porque desluce a otros” (62).\textsuperscript{250} Sor Juana courageously compares her detractors to the Pharisees against Christ who condemned Him simply for working miraculous signs” (64). She concludes: “Cualquier eminencia, ya sea de dignidad, ya de nobleza, ya de riqueza, ya de hermosura, ya de ciencia, padece esta pensión; pero la que con más rigor la experimenta es la del entendimiento” (66).\textsuperscript{251}

Sor Juana’s \textit{Respuesta}, her final public document, is a forewarning of her upcoming “silence” evidenced in the following statement: “he intentado sepultar con mi nombre mi entendimiento, y sacrificárselo sólo a quien me le dio” (46).\textsuperscript{252} As can be noted, it is with an active voice not passive that she determines to silence herself, as an act of sacrificial love not ecclesiastical bullying.

5.4 \textbf{READING SOR JUANA’S COMEDIA: EMPENOS DE UNA CASA}

Upon first approaching \textit{Los empeños de una casa}, it reads like a straightforward comedy, circumscribed by the generic requirements (stock characters, dramatic situations) of the Golden
Age Spanish theatrical code. However, Sor Juana uses this popular mode of entertainment as a satiric vehicle against the social conventions predominant in the Hispanic world of the seventeenth-century. The *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines satire as a “kind of protest, a sublimation and a refinement of anger and indignation” which closely describes Sor Juana’s principal motive behind this play (780). Sor Juana, from her unique perspective as an artistic and intellectual female colonial subject, utilizes the *comedia* format in *Los empeños de una casa* as a public platform through which she can give expression not only to her artistic license in the form of transgressions to the dramatic code of the *comedia* as set forth by Lope de Vega, but as a shrewd questioning of the social status quo effectively accomplished in *La respuesta*. Thus *comedias* written by women become one of the few alternative gender narratives in the secular seventeenth-century dramatic literature. Their perspective was not prevalent due to the scarce number of *comedias* written by women, mainly María de Zayas, Ana Caro Mallén de Soto and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Thus, Sor Juana's use of levity goes far beyond entertainment value and becomes a weapon to disarm her opposition. Sor Juana imbues her seemingly conventional play with multiple transgressions that concomitantly disguise and exemplify the dissident ideas the author wants to transmit. Some transgressions are recognizable to the many people in the audience. For example, Castaño (the *gracioso*) disguises himself as the protagonist, doña Leonor to satirize female prescriptive behavior. Other transgressions to the dramatic code and to society are not so obvious. These can be elucidated in both the dialogue and the behavior of the characters on stage, found especially in the voices of the stock characters of *muger esquiva* and the *gracioso*. Even though critics such as Georgina Black, Julie Greer Johnson and Christopher Brian Weimer suggest that the most transgressive element in *Los empeños* is the figure of the *gracioso*, Sor Juana imbues *Los empeños* with a myriad of subtle ironies to accomplish her task of
critical censure of the institutional structures in Colonial Mexico. The use of irony, therefore, is one of the most effective weapons of this conventual author in her life-long battle for intellectual freedom for women as displayed in La respuesta.

These ironic transgressions are expressed explicitly by the dramatis personae of Leonor, the muger esquiva, and Castaño, the gracioso. Implicitly they can be noted in the title; the description of the galán, don Carlos; the transatlantic identity of the gracioso; the final resolution of the play; and even in the generic modifications of the comedia including the suggestion that Leonor’s monologue can be considered as the textual representation of the conventual author that would usually be found in the autobiographical account if she had penned a Vida.

5.4.1 SYNOPSIS OF THE COMEDIA

Act I begins with doña Ana and her servant Celia telling about the kidnapping of the protagonist, doña Leonor by don Pedro, doña Ana’s brother. He does this to prevent doña Leonor from running away with don Carlos to avoid an arranged marriage. The elopement thwarted, the authorities leave doña Leonor at doña Ana’s house. Don Carlos seeks refuge in one of the rooms in doña Ana house, as she is in love with him. The comedia de enredos intensifies when Don Juan, another of doña Ana’s lovers enters a darkened room mistaking Leonor for his beloved. When don Pedro arrives, they all hide in different rooms.

Act II takes place early the next morning. Don Carlos, still hiding in one of the rooms, speaks with his servant, Castaño, about a plan to get doña Leonor out of the house. Celia asks him to go out to the garden so don Pedro will not see him as he leaves. Doña Ana in a plan to make don Carlos jealous has her brother sing doña Leonor a love song so don Carlos can hear from his hiding place in the garden. Celia tries to make don Carlos believe that doña Leonor has accepted don Pedro’s love. Don Rodgrigo, doña Leonor’s father enters the scene and accepts don Pedro as his
son-in-law. Castaño suggests to don Carlos that he should take the wealthy doña Ana, but the nobleman insets on removing doña Leonor from that house.

Act III has don Carlos still hiding in one of the rooms. He asks Castaño to take a letter to doña Leonor; meanwhile don Juan is in the garden with a key to doña Ana’s room that Celia gave him. Castaño dresses as a woman in order to avoid detection and he runs into don Pedro, who mistakes him for doña Leonor. The disguised Castaño accepts don Pedro’s marriage proposal, but a fight between don Juana and don Carlos interrupt the amorous scene. When doña Ana arrives to break up the fight, Castaño blows out the candle to avoid detection. In the darkness, don Carlos mistakes doña Leonor for doña Ana and leaves the house with her to protect her from her brother’s wrath for giving him refuge. Doña Ana mistakes don Juan for don Carlos and leads him to her room. Meanwhile, don Pedro locks Castaño in another room, still mistaking him for his beloved doña Leonor. Another fight ensues when don Rodrigo, arrives on the scene to convince don Pedro to accept the relationship between doña Ana and don Carlos. Doña Ana enters to break up the fight and declares her love for don Juan. Castaño’s identity is discovered. Three marriages restore the order: doña Ana and don Juan, doña Leonor and don Carlos, and Celia and Castaño. Don Pedro, the galán, is left alone.

5.4.2 TRANSGRESSIONS IN EMPENOS DE UNA CASA

The importance of the stock character of the *muger varonil* and its variant for this *comedia*, the *muger esquiva*, cannot be understated. In her fundamental study of the *muger varonil* in Golden Age Theater, Melveena McKendrick proposes that the stock character of *muger esquiva* is the most popular and important manifestation of the *muger varonil* (142). According to McKendrick, the aversion that the *muger esquiva* feels toward love and marriage “is not prompted by a desire to reject the essential nature of her sexual being” but by the rejection of the passive and submissive
role that women are forced to adopt (143). McKendrick also analyzes the different motivations that underscore the behavior of the *muger esquiva* on stage, which subsequently reveals the degree to which the playwright approves or disapproves of a women’s right to be free from repressive societal constraints. Male playwrights usually represent the motivations of the *muger esquiva* as “reprehensible character traits” such as excessive vanity and arrogant pride. As McKendrick points out, “Their continual recurrence reveals the dramatist’s inability to conceive of any assertion of female independence other than that based on some reprehensible character trait” (145).

This misogynistic mindset was not only the purview of male theologians, but also in “[m]ost of the leading playwrights of the seventeenth century satirized women who had received what to their minds was an excessive level of education” (Haliczer 51). It is interesting to note that Cervantes is the only male playwright who sympathizes with his *muger esquiva*, Marcela (McKendrick 145). Sor Juana appropriates the stereotype of the *muger esquiva* and, instead of using this stock character to discredit intelligent women, uses it to confer the source of this discredit upon society. As previously noted, Sor Juana uses in *La Respuesta* this same tactic of reversal with acumen and wit. Here in the comedy, Doña Leonor rejects her forced conscription into the legions of passive women devoid of intellectual curiosity that the patriarchal hegemony demands: “Inclíneme a los estudios/desde mis primeros años/ con tan ardientes desvelos,/ con tan ansiosos cuidados,/ que reduje a tiempo breve / fatigas de mucho espacio (Jor I, 307-12). More significantly, through Doña Leonor, Sor Juana protests society’s inability to accept that a woman can achieve intellectual pre-eminence through her own efforts - a labor that society deems should be reserved exclusively for men. The following verses describe the experiences Sor Juana had in the viceroyal court of Marquise de Mancerra in Mexico City where her scholarly endeavors brought her both admiration and censure, “Conmuté el tiempo, industriosa,/ a lo intenso del
trabajo, de modo que en breve tiempo/ era admirable blanco/ de todas las atenciones,/ de tal modo, que llegaron / a venerar como infuso / lo que fue adquirido lauro” (Jor I 313-20).  

Since Early Modern Society did not readily accept that women could have intellectual parity with men, Sor Juana ironically depicts Doña Leonor as an object for public admiration because of her beauty and bearing and not her intelligence: “Era de mi patria toda/el objeto venerado …y como lo que decía,/ fuese bueno o fuese malo,/ ni el rostro lo deslucía,/ ni lo desairaba el garbo,/ llegó la superstición/popular a empeño tanto,/ que ya adoraban deidad/ el “ídolo que formaron”(Jor I, 322-32).  

This is why doña Leonor must rescind of her female gender and transform herself into an “idol,” a Baroque monstrosity, part human female and part idol. Sor Juana includes another Baroque monstrosity, the hybrid character of Don Carlos de Olmedo, el galán. Sor Juana’s description of Don Carlos is androgynous: “Era su rostro un enigma/ compuesto de dos contrarios/que eran valor y hermosura,/tan felizmente hermanados,/que faltándole a lo hermoso/la parte de afeminado,/hallaba lo más perfecto/en lo que estaba más falto” (Jor I 407 - 14).  

Of the men who court Doña Leonor, Don Carlos is the one she decides to marry. Their elopement initiates the action in this comedia: “dispusimos esta noche/ la fuga, y atropellando/ el cariño de mi padre,/ y de mi honor el recato,/ salía a la calle…” (Jor I, 487- 91). Doña Leonor’s elopement contradicts the usual depiction of a female character’s lack of agency, which confines a woman to the interior spaces –on stage or off. Sor Juana also presents the other female character, Doña Ana, with the same uncharacteristic freedom for a female of her world. She has been living seemingly unsupervised in Madrid before she goes to Toledo to help her brother in his endeavor to win Doña Leonor’s heart. She lacks the traditional spatial confinement within the protected interior of a household under the guardianship of a male. Sor Juana uses these situations to underscore the
tradition of a man’s honor and that of his whole family by extension that depended on the preservation and socially recognized protection of the daughter’s virginity. Again, Sor Juana’s reversal tactic, perfected in *La Respuesta*, is used with refined skill.

Sor Juana also employs the *gracioso* to set forth her most ingenious transgressions. The metatheatrical device of role-playing within a role—a *woman* disguised as a man—was ubiquitous in Golden Age comedy. Sor Juana takes this theatrical device and gives it a transgressive bent by imbuing it with a highly charged modification: a *man* dressed as a woman. As Black points out: “Cross dressing was a favorite dramatic device…But if the woman in man’s clothing was a relatively frequent occurrence on the early modern Spanish stage, the counter-instance of a cross-dressed man was a much rarer and potentially much more transgressive gesture” (183). Hernández Araico identifies two comedias where the *gracioso* dons female disguise: Lope’s *La discreta enamorada* or Calderón’s *El Escondido y la tapada*. The scholar further clarifies, “The process itself of donning the disguise is irrelevant; the *gracioso* simply appears on stage already in drag and either talks only to his master so that others think he is with another woman (in Lope’s play) or simply remains silent when another character momentarily mistakes him in the dark for a female (in Calderon’s)” (327). Sor Juana changes the traditional irrelevancy of the *gracioso* “donning the disguise” as Hernández Araico points out, by bringing to the forefront of the stage the step-by-step transformation of Castaño into Doña Leonor. Castaño’s monologue is a running commentary on the artificiality of female gender construction and is Sor Juana’s best comedic use of irony. It is interesting to note that Castaño, disguised as Doña Leonor, is the “only member of the cast to challenge openly the patriarchal system of standards and values that are in question throughout the entire play” ("Comic Hero" 95).
In Act III, Castaño begins his transformation into Doña Leonor by removing the external signs of his masculinity: “(Quítase capa, espada y sombrero)” (Jor III 2409). He then continues with a soliloquy (Jor III 2410-2485) which details how a woman should present herself to society that includes instruction on coiffure, fashion, makeup, jewelry. Castaño’s soliloquy echoes St. Jerome’s denunciation against the artifices of worldly women in the fifth century: “Lo primero, aprisionar/ me conviene la melena/ porque quitará mil vidas/ si le doy tantica suelta” (Jor III 2410 - 13).

For Sor Juana, the transgression represented by the gracioso dressed as doña Leonor goes further than eliciting a comedic response due to the confusion typical of comedias de enredo: “¡Viva Dios! que por Leonor/ me tiene; yo la he hecho buena/ si me quiere descubrir” (Jor III 2502-04). Through the gracioso’s monologue, Sor Juana presents a thinly veiled criticism of Early Modern society’s value system that regards woman’s physical appearance as most important.

“Ya estoy armado, y ¿quién duda/ que en el punto que me vean/ me sigan cuatro mil lindos/ de aquestos que galantean/ a salga lo que saliere/ y que a bulto se amartelan,/ no de la belleza que es,/ sino de la que ellos piensan?” (Jor III 2478-85).

The patriarchal injunction against female agency necessarily produces a female character denied public speech. Sor Juana gets around this restriction by having Castaño /Chestnut speak the words instead of Doña Leonor. Castaño/Leonor is the only character in the play that speaks directly to the audience and thus “to actually cross the imaginary boundary between the world of the stage and the everyday world of the viewing public…. brings the matter of women’s issues to the fore to confront the audience directly with the fundamental question of where a woman’s space or place really is” (Greer Johnson "Engendered" 6).

Sor Juana intentionally has Castaño/Leonor address the female audience to underscore the implications of the verses that go beyond the theatrical comedic effects. “¡Gran cosa es el ser
rogadas!/ Ya no me admiro que sean/ tan soberbias las mujeres,/ porque no hay que ensorberbezca/ cosa, como el ser rogadas” (Jor III 2540 - 44). Greer Johnson also notes that having the character of the *gracioso* dressed as doña Leonor gives “Sor Juana the opportunity to be more closely associated with his protestations” ("Comic Hero" 106). In this way, the transvestite identity of Castaño reproduces a polyvalent discourse that Sor Juana utilizes with singular sagacity to lay out an important point in her *comedia*: the behavior required of women by society’s patriarchal ideology is as superficial and frivolous as the clothing that Castaño dons to disguise himself as doña Leonor. Christopher Brian Weimar underscores that Castaño expresses a “double-voiced feminist discourse” that is free to question the social conventions of Early Modern women in regards to her identity and behavior since he does not have to abide by the requirements of the honor code as if he were truly a woman (97). To further emphasize Castaño’s polyvalent discourse, Sor Juana has the *gracioso* use feminine linguistic gender markers to refer to himself/herself: “porque como soy *morena* me está del cielo lo azul” (Jor III 2420-21). I differ from Greer Johnson’s reading in that “Castaño’s preparation for a feminine role is so meticulously executed that he himself begins to believe he is a woman…” as the use of linguistic gender markers would suggest ("Comic Hero" 101). Castaño’s last minute transformation into Doña Leonor does not equate to Catalina de Erauso’s life-long transvestitism.

Sor Juana chose the theatrical device of role-playing within a role knowing the consequences of a male cross-dresser as Weimar notes: “various *comedias* make it clear that behavior defined as “masculine” was valued more highly than behavior defined as “feminine.” Women who assume masculine personas most often grow in dramatic stature as a result, while men who assume feminine personas make themselves objects of ridicule” (92). One of the main reasons for this ridicule is the implied same-sex desire. Castaño concludes his aforementioned
monologue saying that he “plays” the part of a woman better than any other in Toledo and therefore it might be possible that some man may even fall in love with him/her: “Temor llevo de que alguno / me enamore” (Jor III 2497). Georgina Dopico Black suggests: “it is almost impossible to overlook the same-sex desire that colors the exchange between Pedro and Castaño” (196). The aforementioned scholar following Judith Butler’s concept regarding the fluidity of gender and sexual construct, proposes “if with Sor Juana we imagine not only gender but also sex as a superficial inscription that does not go beyond its performance or remit to an unconstructed natural given, then we should not read Castaño’s cross-dressed body as that of a man in feminine drag but, rather, as something else: if not exactly a woman, then nevertheless a perfectly legitimate wife” (197).

In addition to the transgressive nature of the implied same-sex desire, Sor Juana further disrupts social norms by violating the rigid boundaries of the social classes. Even though Don Pedro does not recognize Castaño/Leonor, the audience realizes that a person of the high class (Don Pedro) is proposing matrimony to a person of the lower classes (the servant Castaño): “¿Es posible que no os mueve/ mi afecto ni mi nobleza,/ mi hacienda ni mi persona/ a verme menos severa” (Jor III 2528 - 31). Castaño/Leonor responds: ¿Pues soy yo farandulera?/ Palabra os doy de casarme, / si ya no es que por vos queda” (Jor III 2639- 41). Don Carlos exclaims that he is so happy to hear her acceptance that he will die of happiness: “Pues no, señor, no os muráis, / por amor de Dios, siquiera / hasta dejarme un muchacho/ para que herede la hacienda” (Jor III 2628-31).

If men do not gain anything except degradation by performing the Feminine, what did the gracioso gain? What was Sor Juana’s motive behind the seeming humiliation and degradation of the literary figure of the gracioso? A sexualized reading as Black previously suggested, would not
answer this question since it is not consequent with Sor Juana’s life-long battle for women’s intellectual freedom as stated in La respuesta. Sor Juana’s transvestite figure can be read from an intellectual rather than physical point of view, however it can also be construed as an oblique critique of playwrights such as Lope de Vega who used salacious humor in their comedias. Gail Bradbury notes that some of Lope de Vega’s comedias present episodes of transvestism, “in which men have occasion to dress up as women would have been played as pure comedy, without serious undertones” such as El paraíso de Laura y florestas de amor (1625) but in the following works, La francésilla (1599?), La serrana de Tormes (1590-95) and El caballero-dama, [where] the humor by the female disguise has a salacious element” (571). It can also be taken as yet another example of Baroque fascination with the monstrous phenomenon as evidenced by Don Pedro’s question: “¿Pues quién eres tú, portento,/ que por Leonor te he tenido? (Jor III 3305 - 06) 280. For Sor Juana, it was better for Castaño to be considered a “portento” since, “… homosexuals could be burnt alive while hermaphrodites took pride of place in the catalogue of Nature’s prodigies” (Bradbury 579). Therefore, Sor Juana judiciously added the following caveat to protect her from any repercussions: “Pues atención, mis señoras,/ que es paso de comedia;/ no piensen que son embustes/ fraguados acá en mi idea,/ que yo no quiero engañarlas,/ ni menos a Vuexcelencia” (Jor III 2572-477). 281

As previously outlined, Sor Juana used the main characters of the muger esquiva and the gracioso to present her transgressive ideas. Nevertheless, other important transgressions can be inferred from the comedias as a whole. First, Sor Juana distinguishes herself from the majority of Golden Age dramaturges by her colonial birth. She places this fact at the climactic moment when Castaño/Leonor finds himself about to be discovered as a man: “¡Quién fuera aquí Garatuza,/ de quien en las Indias cuentas que hacía muchos prodigios!/ Que yo, como nací en ellas,/ le he sido siempre devoto/ como a santo de mi tierra … inspírame alguna traza/ que de Calderón parezca/ con
que salir de este empeño!” (Jor III 2384-96). Sor Juana’s audience would have understood the references to the Church (Garatuza) and to Peninsular Theater (Calderón) embedded within the previous verse. The historical character Garatuza was the alias used by Martín de Villavicencio y Salazar, a New World pícaro or rogue who disguised himself as a priest until arrested by the Inquisition. In this verse, as a counterpoint to her colonial status, Sor Juana mentions Calderón de la Barca from whose play, *Empeños de un ocaso*, she derives a feminized title of her play, *Empeños de una casa*. This intertextual game underscores the fact that she places her *comedia* vis-a-vis Calderón’s play which “had developed … a reputation as a palace spectacle” just as Sor Juana’s *comedia* enjoyed under the patronage of the viceroyal couple of la Laguna (Hernández Araico 332).

It also signals that a female writer has appropriated this very male-dominated dramatic form. Sor Juana’s mastery over the dominant theatrical discourse formulated by Lope de Vega who had huge commercial success, and then elevated to a literary art form by Calderón de la Barca is manifested by her break with established dramatic decorum. This break with decorum is mirrored in the gender transformation of Castaño to Doña Leonor. As Hernandez Araico points out: “in the theatrical transformation of the comic genre – género, coincidentally, being the same word as ‘gender’ in Spanish … The gracioso’s adroit transmutation, which humorously disturbs the social structure, is the analogous to Sor Juana’s deconstruction of the comic genre, cross-dressing it in poetic, lyrical form, or vice versa” (327-28). The scholar also points out that Sor Juana writes this *comedia de capa y espada* at a time when *comedia* writing was on the wane. After the 1680s, most court presentations were pastoral-mythological *zarzuelas*. Therefore, just as Castaño within the play, Sor Juana’s *comedia* is disguised with the outer trappings of a courtly zarzuela and presented to the audience disguised in plain sight. Most of these outer trappings can be found in the ancillary
texts. One of these outer trappings occurs in a scene mid-comedia similar to the lyrical form most commonly associated with court spectacles, a musical caesura. This dramatic form is not typical in the corrales de comedia (public-playhouses) (Hernández Araico 322). To manipulate further the traditional construction of the comedia, Sor Juana mixes in this one play the genres of a comedia de capa y espada (cloak-and-dagger play) and a comedia de enredo (comedy of manners). In one last twist, this comedia dons the textual trappings of a Vida. Doña Leonor’s soliloquy is usually accepted as a transparent autobiographical account, a requisite part of a Vida. It can also be read in the following manner: Sor Juana’s La Respuesta can be seen as mirroring this comedia whereby, despite the Machiavellian manipulations of her confessor (in lieu of Doña Ana), Sor Juana marries her chosen Beloved and becomes Sponsa Christi. Hernandez Araico concludes: “Thus poking fun at the genre itself by disguising it and undoing it, Sor Juana flaunts her mastery over established forms with delightful stylogical and ideological features of the play that distinguish her, the playwright, as a colonial female subject” (xxiii).

Julie Greer Johnson notes Sor Juana’s manipulation of gender-genre in her analysis of the theatrical space as seen through a feminist lens. The action in this comedia is limited to the interior of single house (Don Pedro’s and Doña Ana’s) and only two scenes occurring elsewhere. The many disguised characters fumbling around in the dark compound this confinement to the interior female space. One of the most obvious veerings from the normative male-public space vs. female-private space paradigm is Sor Juana’s placement of Chestnut (Castaño) and Don Carlos forcibly enclosed by Doña Ana. Hernández Araico also notes that within the female domestic space of the interior of the home, Sor Juana additionally inverts “the roles of the suitor (Don Carlos) and his lady-love by ensconcing him and his servant behind a grated window” giving the audience the perspective that the two men are “cloister nuns” (322-23).
Dramatic conventions dictate that by the end of a *comedia*, especially those that feature the character of the *muger esquiva*, a valid marriage must take place as a symbol of the restoration of social harmony interrupted by the actions of said *muger esquiva*. During the final resolution of the play the father declares: “Como se case Leonor/y quede mi honor sin riesgo./Lo demás importa nada;/y así, don Carlos, me alegro/de haber ganado tal hijo (Jor III 3340-44). As Elizabeth Rhodes points out: “Cross-dressing, like cross-behaving, was permissible at the beginning of the play, and could intensify even into the last moment. But by the final scene’s conclusion, the ‘right’ individual should be wearing the pants and the restitution of order sealed with a heterosexual marriage or two, to assuage any doubts about the proper order of things” (Rhodes "Gender" 270). McKendrick concurs, “the unanimity of opinion amongst the dramatist can be judged from the fact that not one of these women finally remains voluntarily single” (143). The *comedia* previously analyzed, *La monja alférez* written by Montalbán where Erauso remains single, is an exception to this rule. Erauso not only does not marry at the end of the *comedia*, she does not return to wearing women’s clothing as does, for example, Rosaura en *La vida es sueño* written by Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

The final resolution of the play begs for another reading: Doña Leonor, who is closely associated with Sor Juana, obtains the goal of marrying the man of her choice, Don Carlos. On the traditional Golden Age stage, the female protagonist would now assume the invisible roles of wife and mother. This marital resolution thus becomes a foreshadowing of Sor Juana’s comments to her future silence written in *Respuesta*. Even though both Doña Leonor and Sor Juana obtain what they seemingly want -Don Carlos and the space to pursue intellectual endeavors- they both end in silence. Thus, order is restored. Doña Leonor becomes a wife and Sor Juana returns to the invisible and silent cloistered nun that her first (and final) confessor, Padre Antonio Núñez de Miranda,
demanded. Another change in the final resolution of the traditional Golden Age play constitutes the
dramatic punishment meted out by the author on Don Pedro, the play’s principal galán. Sor Juana
condemns him to bachelorhood because his misogynist myopia did not permit him to see further
than the external trappings of the women he loved and therefore consequently mistook Castaño in
disguise for Doña Leonor. Furthermore, as Greer Johnson notes: “The severest penalty she can
subject him to then, and the one to which men have automatically condemned women, is to deny
him any choice in determining his own destiny” (“Engendered” 4).

5.5 BEYOND THE CLOISTER WALLS

Sor Juana understood the power of language and used it effectively. Her writings indicate
an understanding of the modern concept that language denotes gender issues and ideology. She
artfully disguises her intellectual debate advocating for women’s right to intellectual pursuits and
artistic freedom. Sor Juana masterfully accomplishes this goal as she manipulates gender and genre
in House of Pawns: “Sor Juana flaunts her mastery over established forms with delightful stylistic
malleability” as Hernández Ariaco notes (xxiii). The gracioso, Castaño, concisely embodies her
writing style: he dons female clothes unbeknownst to all the other characters in the play but in full
view of audience. In a display of comedic genius, Sor Juana has the gracioso enter into a dialogue
with the audience on the artificiality of female proscriptive clothing and behavior. La Respuesta
accomplishes this same dialogue with her reading audience. Sor Juana dons the artificiality of the
rhetoric of humility to cover her learned disquisition. Sor Juana transforms the comedic genre of
House of Pawns from a cloak and dagger comedy (capa & espada) to a comedy of intrigue
(enredos) as easily as she transforms the gender of Castaño from the male servant to the
impersonation of doña Leonor. In a like manner, she transforms the exclusive male gender of
Colonial Golden Age playwrights by becoming the first female playwright of Colonial Spanish America.
In 1694, Jerónima Nava y Saavedra and her sister Juana left San Miguel, their family's farm in the small town of Tocaima (Reino of Nueva Granada), to enter the convent of Santa Clara in Bogotá. After many years of living the traditional life of a black-veiled nun, Nava began experiencing ecstatic visions. Father Juan de Olmos y Zapiaín, her confessor, commanded her to set down the visions to determine their orthodoxy. She documented them for over twenty years in a series of folios. These folios form part of her life narrative known as Autobiografía de una monja venerable, which details the transformation of the young Criolla girl, Jerónima into the mystic Madre Gerónima del Spíritu Santo.

Autobiografía de una monja venerable consists of two distinct manuscripts: “Elogio de la autora,” written by Olmos and Nava’s folios of visions collected under the title “Autobiografía.” The latter reads like an unending litany of visions in which Nava melds corporeal and spiritual discourses in an attempt to describe her ineffable transformation from daughter of Eve to bride of Christ. Through rich symbolic language reflecting the Baroque environment and her state as a Catholic nun, Nava emphasizes the mystical experience by giving her visions preeminence over her life story. This emphasis is a deviation from the traditional structure of other Vidas, such as Teresa of Ávila’s Camino de Perfección or Nava’s contemporary and fellow Colombian Josepha de Castillo’s Su Vida. Much of this study's analysis centers on the images and interior locutions presented in Nava’s visions.
Ángela Inés Robledo brought Nava’s life, thoughts, and words out of obscurity by publishing Nava’s manuscript and her confessor Olmo’s accompanying text (Robledo 9). Until Robledo’s 1994 publication, Nava’s manuscript was primarily inspirational reading material within the cloistered walls of the Santa Clara convent. More importantly, Robledo’s scholarly work dispelled the previously held belief that the account of Nava’s life and visions was the sole work of her confessor. This authorial confusion was due to another manuscript housed in the Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia that contains a title page with the following heading, “Vida de la Madre Jerónima del Espíritu Santo (En el siglo, Jerónima Nava y Saavedra) Religiosa clarisa de Santafé/ Escrita por don Juan de Olmos/1727.” José María Vergara y Vergara reinforced this confusion by naming Olmos as the author in his Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada: Desde la conquista hasta la Independencia (1538 -1820).

Authorial error is understandable since it was common for clerical authors of that period to pen Vidas of their confessants using extensive quotes from a nun-writer’s “cuentas de conciencia” or examination of conscience without acknowledgment of the nun-writer as co-author. Lesser-known nun-writers, such as Nava, regularly had their published manuscripts subsumed under a male clerical’s text. It is truly exceptional to read Nava’s own words, especially since she was not a famous nun like Madre Castillo (Colombian Francisca Josefa del Castillo y Guevara) or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

The title Autobiografía de una monja venerable suggests that the reader will encounter an autobiography in the modern sense of the word. Ibsen clarifies this point, “While not conforming to modern notions of autobiography, these narratives may nonetheless be framed in a wider sense of the process of an “autobiographical impulse” where the truth is secondary to the ideal self that the writing subject wished to represent” (Ibsen 11). Nava’s ideal self is that of the bride of Christ.
Olmos takes this ideal self a step further in his representation of Nava as a potential candidate for sainthood.

Research for this study explored Nava’s textual identity within both “Elogio de la autora” and “Autobiografía.” In addition, the dramatic figure of the *muger santa* from Lope de Vega’s *comedia, Santa Teresa de Jesús*, was used to flesh out Nava’s textual identity. The examination of the tensions produced between the male hagiographer’s narrative voice (Olmos’ “Elogio”); the female mystics’ manuscript (“Autobiografía”); and the legends and myths propagated by the popular imagination depicted in the comedia, (Lope de Vega’s) yields a broader representation of the constructed nature of the persona Jerónima Nava y Saavedra.

Analysis using all three texts revealed that Nava’s Vida is much more than a mere recounting of her visions: the documenting of her mystical life provides further evidence that it was possible for conventual authors to circumvent the institutional constrictions imposed by the Church. These texts shed light on the tensions between the male clerical hierarchy who desired to control the female mystic’s religious experience and the women who entrusted their spiritual life to their care. Therefore, Nava takes her battle of understanding herself and her world to the liminal arena of Mysticism.

6.1 THE HISTORICAL NAVA

Instead of the traditional hagiographic *Vida*, Nava’s “Autobiografía” is a litany of visions that corresponds to her examination of conscience or “cuenta de conciencia.” Nava’s historical portrayal comes from the information supplied by her confessor Olmos in his “Elogio” or “Carta de edificación.” As the clerical author of Nava’s *Vida*, Olmos takes special care to include the essential moments of a potential saint’s life story within his hagiographic depiction of Nava: predestination at birth, childhood, trials during adolescence, adulthood as a member of a convent.
and as a bride of Christ, death, and miracles attributed after death. In her folios, Nava includes few of these life moments essential in *Vidas*. Olmos must necessarily fill in the gaps in his introductory text, “Elogio,” in order to portray his subject as a “suitable” candidate for sainthood.

Nava’s “suitability” as a potential saint includes more than strictly religious qualifications. “In a church that had fully accepted the importance of rank and family, the number of saints from noble or ‘good family’ backgrounds exceeded any other social group by a ratio of roughly three to one throughout the medieval and early modern periods” (Haliczer 81). Olmos establishes Nava’s blood purity or *pureza de sangre* by stating that Nava was “hija legítima de Juan de Nava y de Doña Juana de Saavedra” (Robledo 35). To establish her credentials as a *Criolla*, a member of the Spanish colonial elite, Olmos is careful to include that her parents were land owners, “tuvieron una hazienda de trapiche en jurisdicción de la ciudad de Tocaima” (Robledo 35). It is on the family farm, San Miguel Hacienda that Jerónima was born on April 25, 1679.

A second qualification entails the element of predestination evident from birth. “More than 43 percent of the ‘true’ mystics experienced the death of one or both of their parents during childhood, sometimes after a long and painful illness” (Haliczer 155). Olmos precisely recounts the tragic situation that led to Jerónima’s Baptism: the death of her mother a half an hour after she was born. This data can be interpreted as Jerónima’s predestination as a saint since the death of a mother is a typical element in hagiographies. She is baptized expediently by her paternal uncle, “el Reverendo Licenciado Fray Salbador de Nava” on May 6, 1669 (Robledo 35). Olmos provides this information to certify that Nava comes from a “good” family with close relationships with the Catholic Church.

Thirdly, the potential saintly subject chooses her life path from a very early age. Haliczer gives a pragmatic explanation for early piety. The post-Tridentine Spanish environment, as he
suggests, “created the psychological conditions that could turn a child toward a life of mystic contemplation” (Haliczer 148-52). Such conditions include the pious behavior of parents that a child mirrors in play activities, an adoption of monastic lifestyle in the home including choosing a confessor for a child as early as age four or five, and the prevalence of devotional works and *Lives of Saints* in many *Criollo* homes. More than a few of these works were translated into Spanish (Haliczer 148-52). For example, Madre María de San José’s (1656-1719) father read devotional material, used “silisios” and spent most of the night kneeling in prayer (Myers 88). This ascetic family environment therefore also predisposed the adults to view any childish behavior as precocious spirituality thus encouraging the child to continue on the religious path.

The period of adolescence, before a young girl enters the convent, is depicted in many *Vidas* as fraught with temptations. Neither Olmos nor Nava present the requisite adolescent misbehavior as portrayed in other conventual accounts such as María de San José. In this *Vida*, a ten- year-old playmate is seen as the catalyst for her fall and subsequent conversion experience: “Comensé en esta junta de muchachas a perder i malograr todas las buenas inclinaciones que tenía, porque aprendí a maldesir i a jurar i a desir algunas palabras que no eran mui onestas” (Myers 91). Olmos is also careful to point out that Nava and her sister were raised within the Christian parameters set for young ladies by their three paternal aunts, especially Aunt Gerónima de Jesús, “fueron transportadas de la dicha assienda de su padre a esta ciudad, en donde fue continuado el esmero de sus tías en la criansa y buena educasión de las niñas, pero con expesialidad la de Gerónima [de Jesús], para Gerónima [Nava y Saavedra]” (Robledo 36).

This heightened vigilance of the adolescent girl or *doncella* reflects the fear of a potential sexual liaison that would put a family’s honor at risk. Nava’s life story also deviates from the traditional life of most young ladies of marriageable age within the elite *Criollo* society. Young
women could not chose their path in life; either a husband is chosen for them or they are sent unwillingly to the convent. Nava’s father wants his daughters, Juana and Jerónima, to be honorably placed outside the family home either married or in a convent, since he needed to leave the city for work for an extended period of time, “Y presisado de hacer un viaje fuera de esta ciudad” (Robledo 36). Juan de Nava allows his two daughters, Juana and Jerónima, to choose, “su padre, deseoso de darles estado, les dijo a sus hijas que era la tiemp de que le eligiesen poniéndolo en sus voluntades y que condescendería con el [que] fuese del gusto de ellas” (Robledo 36). Both sisters chose on their own accord to enter monastic life. “Vista esta resolución de las hijas por su padre dispuso todo lo necesario y se efectuó” (Robledo 36). The sisters, Juana (15 years old) and Jerónima (14 years old) enter the Convent of Santa Clara on June 6, 1683. It is important to note that the Convent of Santa Clara was associated with one of the main centers of political and ecclesiastical power in the Colonial world: the Cathedral and the Audiencia de Santa Fé de Bogotá, the seat of government of the Virreintato de Nueva Granada.

One of the most important life markers in a Vida is the recounting of a nun’s death. A “good” death is a mark of saintliness and holds a preeminent place in his narrative. Olmos provides a detailed description of Nava’s suffering and death at the beginning and end of “Elogio,” and underscores her death’s peacefulness, “Y fue el tránsito de Gerónima con la apasivilidad de un dulce sueño” (Robledo 33). His real focus is more on his grief at the loss of Nava, “[e]l dolor de su falta atravesó mi corasón” (Robledo 33). He does not want to say the funeral Mass because doing so would increase his pain, “acrisiessen mi grande pena,” but he is ordered by the Abbess, “que hisiese el entierro de Gerónima cantándole también vigilia y Misa de de [sic] cuerpo presente; aquí no pude excusarme” (Robledo 33).
Most priest-authors’ voices reflect “distance and authority, supporting the existing system of religious dogma and practices” (Darcy 231) but Olmos’ voice, as noted, is more loving. Olmos finalizes his account describing her last moments when he heard her Confession and gave her the Eucharist before her death, “Estuve en su celda el día que murió” (Robledo 49-50). After signing his manuscript “Elogio,” he adds as postscript containing one of the essential elements in any case promoting a candidate for sainthood, details of a miracle. Olmos establishes what he believes to be the first posthumous miracle attributed to Nava in declaring that Nava’s intercession before God expedited his receipt of the ecclesiastical position of Canon of the Cathedral. Since he is the recipient of the miracle, there is no need for other paperwork to substantiate this claim. Nonetheless he remarks, “Y lo así escrito, en caso necesario lo firmaré con juramento en forma” (Robledo 51).

6.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: CONVENTUAL MYSTICISM

When approaching the mystical text “Autobiografía,” the modern secular reader should consider two basic assumptions so that the text does not read like an unending litany of visions without rhyme or reason. First, the place of enunciation is the Baroque environment of a colonial convent in Nueva Granada. Nava’s Baroque Catholicism becomes the prism through which she views and understands her life. Chapter 2 of this dissertation elaborates on this unique Baroque mentality that considered visions and other paranormal experiences part of everyday life. Haliczer states that “visions and revelations were extremely common, so common as to constitute perhaps the most important manifestation of the divine favor shown to a particular individual” (128). The intellectual and social elite accepted the supernatural and the miraculous as part of everyday life. During the Counter-Reformation, the Church presented visions and revelations as confirmation of Catholic truths in the face of Protestantism, thus lending “Autobiografía” an apologetics undertone.
As Haliczer notes: “From the standpoint of the Counter-Reformation church, the mystical transports of women were to be encouraged as long as those women trod the path of orthodoxy” (144). “Autobiografía’s” discourse reflects this outlook and interprets all earthly matters through the lens of eschatological or eternal values.

Due to its ineffable nature, mysticism is difficult to define, as evidenced by the myriad of volumes written throughout the centuries by many in the Church. In these texts, mystics describe their experiential relationship with God. Bernard McGinn notes that mysticism is “that part, or element, of Christian belief and practice that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the effect of what the mystics themselves have described as a direct and transformative presence of God” (Essential xiv). Another way of understanding mysticism is given by Robert Morrison in his analysis of *comedia a lo divino*. He succinctly summarizes the concept of a Golden Age mystic: “At the end of the sixteenth century, the word *místico* meant ‘hidden’ and referred to the quiet, secret way the soul sank itself into contemplation of God. This state was not considered a matter of trances or dreams, but the result of extreme piety, subjugation of the appetites and affections, profound knowledge of oneself, and a certain state of election” (17). Nava illustrates this “hidden” way when she recounts how she feels impelled to leave what she is doing and withdraw to a place of solitude to encounter God: “En otra occasion, sentía un ynpulso ynterior que <me> llamaba a la soledad y retiro ynterior y fue tan vehemente que ube de omitir lo que me divertía. Y fui donde me llamavan, deseando hazer la voluntad de quien así me ynpelí; y, aviéndome recojido, vi al Señor en un campo, frente a frente conmigo” (Robledo 65).

Nava's detailing of her profusion of visions reveals her deepening spiritual relationship with God. This interpretation concurs with the Catholic understanding of spirituality as the discipline that focuses “precisely upon the relational and personal (inclusive of the social and political)
dimensions of the human’s person’s relationship to the divine” (Downey viii). Even though Nava was duty bound to explain this relationship to her confessor, “Autobiografía” is her attempt to explain to herself her unique relationship to God. This is a key finding of this study and led to the realization that Nava’s visions are the roadmaps permitting her and other conventual mystics to find their “way of perfection.”

Nava’s Catholic mystic spirituality serves as the interpretative framework for analysis of her visions, rhetorical strategies and cultural transgressions as presented in “Autobiografía.” Nava seems to inhabit two worlds - the earthly realm and the spiritual realm - and moves seamlessly from one to the other. Her mystical way of pursuing knowledge and relating to God may seem alien to the secular reader because of its liminality.322

6.2.1 NAVA’S SPIRITUAL PATH

Nava lived at a time when Christians had access to abundant literature on the interior life of prayer written in the vernacular, which made it accessible to a wider reading public. Spain saw a flowering of mysticism with St. Teresa of Ávila, St. John of the Cross and Fray Luis de León. These publications emphasized a more subjective individual experience. Teresian spirituality informed Nava’s spiritual path. Teresa’s main ascetic belief focused on the mystical ideal of ecstatic union with God. To obtain this union, the soul had to reach a state of perfection through the rejection of the material world and acts of self-abnegation.323 The Church referred to this renunciation of all earthly things by tirelessly subjugating one’s own desires as contemptus mundi. In her works, Teresa also avidly promoted her belief in prayer as instrumental for obtaining the mystical ideal of an ecstatic union with God.

These same spiritual concepts underscore much of Teresa’s poetry324 as evidenced in the last lines of her poem “Nada te turbe.”325 Teresa simply states, “Quien a Dios tiene, / Nada le falta.
The poem concisely renders Teresa’s understanding of mystical theology, and “constitute(s) one of the most moving depictions of inner spirituality of the sixteenth century” (Mujica 60). Nava’s litany of visions describes her spiritual path toward becoming a bride of Christ. Her visions follow St. John of the Cross’ three stages or mystical ways. The vías místicas describe the spiritual process by which the mystic prepares her soul for an encounter with God: vía purgativa, vía iluminativa, and vía unitiva. In her text, Nava expresses mostly the illuminative way and not the more physically demanding aspects of the purgative-stage that are scrupulously detailed by many female mystics such as Teresa of Ávila.

The vía purgativa or purgative way, is the first step where “the soul purges itself of the world, lust, and sin” (Gascón 45). This state involves the purification of imperfections through the practices of penance and mortification and prayer. The purgation of the exterior and interior person is an “essential condition for anyone who seeks God in this life (McGinn Essential 48). During this stage, the mystic merely desires union with God but does not feel worthy enough because of their terrible life or “mi mala vida” (60). Nava laments that her life is not exemplary because of the many grave sins or “gravísimas culpas” which she does not expound upon in any detail (61). Feeling unworthy of God’s love and attention was a common trope in many female Vidas. Compared to other conventual nuns, Nava uses this type of rhetoric of humility very judiciously.

The second, vía iluminativa or illuminative way, describes the phase at which “the soul communes with and imitates Christ through meditation and prayer” (Gascón 45). As Freze explains, “In the illuminative way, one finds discursive reasoning, meditation, and vocal prayer difficult to follow; instead, God calls the soul to a complete contemplative experience” (Freze 82). During this preparatory stage, the mystics also receives divine knowledge, or “luses claras” as Nava refers to them: “Suele la Divina Majestad dar unas luses tan claras a mi entendimiento que se
queda absorto y como suspenso” (Robledo 55-56).

Having the ability to comprehend “luses claras” is one of the many gifts or graces the mystic receives in addition to “voices, visions, apparitions, prophetic utterances, private revelations, ecstasy, rapture, bilocation, the stigmata, luminous effluvia, fragrant effluvia, levitation, the gift of healing, the gift of miracles” (Freze 82).

Mystical theology calls this inspired understanding interior locutions since no supernatural entity is present. Nava’s “luses claras,” or divinely inspired knowledge, covers a range of subject matter, some of it transgressive for her times, such as criticizing the actions of priests and expounding on issues of Catholic orthodoxy. God’s sorrow over humanity’s lack of love and knowledge of Him is one of the main themes of Nava’s “luses claras.” God instructs Nava to ask the people why they do not love Him, “Pregúntales por qué no me quieren o en qué les e faltado yo” (Robledo 80).

Nava is careful to cite when the information she receives from the interior locutions comes directly from God versus the occasions when it comes from other sources such as Mary or St. Francis Xavier. Nava also receives “luses claras” from divine beings such as angels and archangels. St. Michael, the Archangel, “me dio a entender que Dios me quería para que fuese estrella y lus entre aquellas densas nubes” (Robledo 93).

Wisely, she adds her confessor as another source: “Que pudiéndome aver negado la luz, me la diste tan clara en tus ministros para que me fuesen, con los suaves colirios de la verdad, abriendo los ojos” (Robledo 80).

The last stage, Via unitiva or unitive way, occurs when “the soul achieves spiritual union with the divine” in an ecstatic mystical experience (Gascón 45). One can interpret ecstasy as “that experience whereby a soul is momentarily caught in the loving presence of God. This state, which is initiated by God, causes the physical senses to be temporarily suspended” (Freze 84). Rapture is an ecstatic moment that lasts for more than several minutes or is extreme. Nava depicts these transcendental moments with as much clarity and detail as possible not only for the benefit of her
confessor but as a way of making sense of the very profound sensations of the ecstatic mystical experience, “causando en mi alma unos deleites y gosos que parece que ya se quería salir ella de mi cuerpo” (Robledo 78). She prudently points out that the mystical union she experiences has been requested by God while she is in prayer: “Muchas an sido las ocasiones en que a solisitado la unión con mi alma en la oración” (Robledo 75).

In the mystical narratives of Teresa of Ávila or John of the Cross, the authors frequently represent divine union or ecstatic rapture as a marriage ceremony replete with worldly descriptions of the wedding ritual, including the customary guest list - Mary, the saints and angels. This type of vision depicts the love of God for man using the metaphor of a groom and his bride during a mystical espousal in which Jesus Christ tells the mystic that He takes him/her for His bride. Nava’s first account of her mystical marriage with Jesus takes place in a beautiful garden, “un jardín ameno y hermoso” (Robledo 75). Nava’s description of her encounters with Jesus in the garden could be considered to have erotic or sensual undertones, but would not have been understood that way in her times: “Estaba yo muy adornada y Su Magestad me tenía de la mano… me recojía todo el cabello; y redusiéndolo como a una trensa…” (Robledo 75). Nava describes her second mystical marriage in greater detail: the handsome young Jesus, “un hermosísimo mancebo”, asks her to be His bride in “nuebos desposorios” (Robledo 82). Nava includes such domestic details as the beautiful silver tunic the Blessed Mother has prepared for her to wear and the ring Jesus gives to her: “Traía una cadena en la mano y me la echó al cuello; y Su Magestad también metía su cabeza entre la cadena. Y después me puso un anillo y me dio a entender que quería celebrar nuebos desposorios conmigo” (Robledo 82).

Nava experiences many other instances of ecstatic union with Jesus which are portrayed with much physicality, “echándome los brazos, juntó Su Santísimo Rostro con el mío; esto lo sentí
sensiblemente y quedé por más de dos horas sin poderme mover, esperando morir a manos de aquella dulzura” (Robledo 78). Nava believes Jesus feels the same way about her and thus transcribes His words to her: “Desíame: ‘tan gustoso es, para mí, el estar contigo como son de deleitosos estos amados jardines y plantas” (Robledo 75).

6.3 READING NAVA’S VIDA: “AUTOBIOGRAFIA”

Nava’s “Autobiografía” is not the equivalent of a modern day autobiography. She presents her life as a series of visions instead of using a narrative account. She expresses her religious life using Catholic Baroque elements and the lens of mystical Catholicism. Elucidating these elements bring the content of her visions into sharp focus. Her Baroque worldview sets the stage for her visions: “una experiencia barroca como una forma de concebir la cristiandad. Esto es, una teatralidad que se refleja en la espiritualidad, en los gestos, en las representaciones de la vida, la muerte, la fiesta, el cuerpo y hasta en una experiencia gastronómica” (Borja 102). Nava's visions mimic Baroque theatrical pieces complete with dialogues, characters and scenery that were popular in the religious theater of her time. As Haliczer observes, mystical visions are “filled with the images conjured up by reading vernacular devotional works and hagiographies, reinforced by sermons, paintings, and religious theater” (151). Nava’s visions also include the many Baroque religious statues found in the niches of her convent.

Nava's manuscript reflects the basic principle underlying a Catholic Baroque cultural production, as succinctly stated by Jaime Borja: “ensenar, deleitar y mover los sentimientos” while concomitantly “persuadir al lector hacia los sabores y las ventajas de la vida penitente, la vida ejemplar del buen cristiano … mostrando vicios y virtudes” (103). For Baroque Spanish culture, the exaltation of the senses, “mover los sentimientos” is present not only in the written word (religious literature) but also in the treatment of visual images such as the famous sculpture of The
Ecstasy of St. Teresa by Bernini or in religious theater. Exaltation of the senses is a principal way that mystics express the indescribable mystical experience.

Nava's Vida is neither an objective nor a historically accurate portrayal of seventeenth century colonial Spanish-America. Vidas manuscripts are textual persuasions to live a saintly Christian life. Nava’s “autobiographic” document relates to spiritual realities not necessarily lived realities. Nonetheless, it provides much historical, social and cultural information. Nava gives us a glimpse into the theological debates of her time, the customs in Colonial Spanish-America and the convictions of the audience-reader. For example, Nava speaks out against clerics who demean the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession. She also weighs in on the heresy of Arianism, predestination, the Trinity, and Marian theology. In Capítulo IV Nava describes a mundane scene that highlights some of the customs of her times. She is upset at the nun’s lax behavior while in the Choir: “Para proseguir, haré aquí un paréntesis (e deseado mucho que el Santísimo Sacramento sea venerado y reverenciado y no pudiendo sufrir el que en su presencia se hagan algunas cosas como beber chocolate, estar parlando y tomar tabaco en polvo” (Robledo 163).

If these goals are kept in mind as we read Nava’s litany of visions, it becomes apparent that she is truly “teaching, entertaining and moving the emotions” just as she is persuading the reader of the joys and advantages of a penitent life. Thus, Nava draws upon a rich Baroque tradition to recreate the textual environment used in “Autobiografía.”

6.3.1 NAVA’S THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In her folios, Nava mentions a diverse group of writers who represent the theological context of Nueva Granada. Their works informed her writings and served as textual backdrop (Robledo 11) St. Teresa gave female mystics an accepted textual voice in El camino de la perfección. St. Ignatius of Loyola provided the philosophical and religious substratum traceable in

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Nava’s confessors, many of whom belonged to the Jesuit order. Many of Nava’s visions are initiated from the Ignatian meditative practice: “Ignacio aconsejaba poner en marcha la imaginación como apoyo de la meditación y las visiones eran parte de esta práctica que bien conocían las autoras, porque sus directores y confesores, además de sus lecturas, pertenecían a la Compañía” (Borja 113). Nava recounts such use of the imagination during one of her meditations, “tome para meditar el punto de los asotes. Y estando en esta consideración se me represento el señor atado a la columna” (Robledo 149).

Nava’s manuscript also reflects the influence of Francis de Sales, an important author during the Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Sales worked tirelessly to bring the French Calvinists back to the Catholic Church publishing many tracts and treatises. Nava writes that she is “afisionadísima a los santos” especially Francis de Sales and his doctrine, found in his *Práctica del amor de Dios*. The Salesian spiritual approach focuses primarily on Man’s love for God as evidenced in Nava’s plentiful use of the *Rhetoric of Love*. Nava does not specify if she is referring directly to Sales’ book that she has read translated into Spanish or just recalls from memory what her confessor tells her about Sales’ doctrine when she comments: “y refiriendo yo algunas de sus doctrinas que son una miel…”? (Robledo 97-98). Even though not directly cited by Nava in her manuscript, another important work by Sales, *An Introduction to the Devout Life* permeates her manuscript.

The theologians who instructed Nava - Juan de Olmos, Matheo Mimbela, Don Juan Bautista de Toro and Presbítero Juan de Herrera - were either Jesuit or Dominican: “las doctrinas esquisitas que le partisiparon teólogos que la asistían” (Robledo 40). Her confessor instructed her in the Faith: “En otra ocasión también vi al Señor que estava con mi confesor, como rogándole que me ynstruyese” (Robledo 80). Jesus tells her that her spiritual advisor will always
be able to teach her well: “Que si teme el que por falta de luz puede herrar yo se la daré para que te dirija y encamine” (Robledo 74).

These Catholic theologians and spiritual advisors influenced Nava’s worldview. Robledo, in the prologue to “Autobiografía,” does not underscore their importance. Nor does Robledo consistently present the traditional Catholic underpinnings that explain many of the images or statements that may seem so foreign to the modern secular reader. For example, Robledo states that “Nava y Saavedra reemplaza su ‘yo’ enamorado por ‘corazón’” without going into detail about the theological implications of the term “heart” or any Biblical metaphor that could have informed her analysis and her reader’s (Robledo 20). Robledo interprets the following vision as masochistic violence: “me paresió que veía al Señor con la cruz en los ombros, mui fatigado y cansado y pretendía entrar con ella en mi corazón” (Robledo 63). Robledo’s commentary reflects more her own point of view than Nava’s theological understanding as evidenced in the following quote, “En la relación sadomasoquista y mística… puede conducir a situaciones de cruda lascivia y/o de violencia. En una ocasión Nava y Saavedra no sólo imagina que Cristo entra en su corazón, sino que éste penetra en él con una inmensa cruz capaz de destrozarlo” (Robledo 21).

Nava’s Catholic Baroque environment should impress upon the reader her support and alignment with the teachings of the Church. Nonetheless, within Nava’s text, the modern reader can glimpse instances where her personal thoughts appear transgressive within the constrictions of the conventual milieu. Nava framed these transgressive pronouncements within the mystical discourse, thus giving them a facade of orthodoxy. These transgressive pronouncements highlight the prevalence of a contestatory voice that is subversive on the one hand but ironically propagates the hegemonic discourse. Section 6.3.4 analyzes Nava’s transgressions in more detail.
6.3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTUAL FIGURE

Whereas the analysis of Sor Juana’s textual identity takes into account only a woman’s voice, Nava’s comes from both masculine and feminine sources. The source of Erauso’s female voice is questionable, could have been a male ghostwriter, as presented in Chapter 4. The critical presentation of Nava’s textual figure underscores the differences between the way male hagiographers present their female subjects (“Elogio”) and the way women speak of themselves (“Autobiografía”). Golden Age male hagiographic authors see women first and foremost as brides of Christ who are “mysterious, unfathomable” (Gascón 16). In contrast, female conventual writers “describe their roles in more active terms” and do not limit their authority by associating themselves exclusively from the pantheon of female saints but take it upon themselves to “imitate male models” (Gascón 16). They see themselves as not only “brides of Christ” but as “God’s prophets (Gascón 16). Section 6.3.5, the transgressions section of this chapter, contains an analysis of Nava’s self-perception.

Olmos deviates from the norm by describing Nava using active masculine terms such as “instruidora e illuminadora” (Robledo 40). In his role as hagiographer, Olmos laments his inability to render a faithful textual rendition of Nava as a holy woman, “mi pluma tosca … no alcanza, que es porque no puede, que es el objeto muy alto” (Robledo 34).\(^{355}\) Even though the Church and early modern Spanish society considered female religious laudable, Olmos must still justify his role as biographer of a subject not deemed praiseworthy: women. Darcy Donahue points out that the hagiographic author, in the majority men, had to justify a female subject as the focus of their hagiography due to the misogynist climate of the colonial Church. “It is as though these women possess the souls of men which have been dealt the unfortunate fate of being trapped in a female body. The use of masculine qualifiers to describe women subjects reveals the deep-rooted
misogyny of the male authors at the same time it converts these women into icons of the male value system” (Darcy 232). Even though men held select women in high regard, male authors could not bring themselves to link their female subjects to male models of saintliness even as they described them as *mugeres varoniles*, manly women.

By describing Nava as a *muger varonil*, Olmos is “asserting her superiority over the rest of her sex” (Darcy 232). As a *muger varonil*, Nava does not possess any of the vices adjudicated to women such as frailty and lack of intellect. Therefore, Olmos describes Nava in flowing terms, “Fue mui pundonorosa, mui prudente, amantíssima de la justicia. Tan magnánima y fuerte que, puedo aseverar, pudo competir con la más grande fortalesa varonil” (Robledo 38).

In addition, the male author circumscribes their subject’s description within the accepted female realm by emphasizing the “corporeal rather than the spiritual” (Gascón 16). Olmos contrasts Nava’s *varonil* characteristics with female attributes or “prendas naturales” such as “cuerpo alto mui proporsionado; su rostro fue mui hermoso, sus ojos fueron mui bellos y vivos” (Robledo 37).

Olmos also lists Nava’s virtues that emphasize female submissive qualities: “temor de Dios … obediensia, amor a la pobresa … observansia de su regla … gran asistensia al coro… resar el Oficio Divino” (Robledo 39). Another method for “the justification of their role as biographer” is to compare the female subject (Nava) to previously vetted religious women models like Catherine of Siena, Hildegard of Bingen, or Gertrude the Great. It is curious that Olmos also chooses to compare Nava to a pagan goddess, “Iris” (Robledo 43).

In a more subtle way, Olmos reinforces Nava’s female passive status. Upon a first cursory reading of “Elogio,” the reader assumes that Nava occupies a place of preeminence since she is the subject of the hagiographic biography. With a closer reading, details surface that indicate that the principal character of “Elogio” is the author himself, Olmos. He presents himself as a multi-faceted
persona: hagiographer, co-protagonist, confessor, friend, witness, and interpreter of Nava’s mystical experience. Olmos participates directly in Nava’s life and her *Vida*. He has the authority to include material that Nava does not incorporate in her own “Autobiografía”, “me presisa referir en éste algunas cosas que le pasaron en su interior y me comunicó” (Robledo 35).\(^{358}\) As interpreter of her mystical phenomenon, he declares that Nava’s sickness is not natural but sent by God for her purification,\(^ {359}\) Since Olmos intends his manuscript as part of a potential canonization process, “Elogio” takes on a aspect of a legal documenting eyewitness accounts: “Y me aseveró un sujeto…” (Robledo 41); “Supe que un sujeto que comunicaba algo a Gerónima…” (Robledo 41).\(^ {360}\) Olmos, though a priest, takes on the role of a medical doctor by rendering a medical diagnosis on the cause of her death, “de donde me persuadí, como del color y efectos de la orina, que lo que le quitó la vida fue piedra en el riñón” (Robledo 49).\(^ {361}\) At the end of Nava’s life, Olmos presents himself as Nava’s beloved displaying an emotional attachment uncommon in most hagiographies of established saints.\(^ {362}\) Olmos is clearly distraught by Nava’s death and does not want to perform the funeral rituals, “me atormentado la pesadumbre de su fallesimiento” but does so on the behest of the Abbess of the convent (Robledo 33).\(^ {363}\) Olmos’ language underscores the suffering caused by the loss of his “soul mate” of more than twenty years.

Olmos’ continuous presence throughout “Elogio,” therefore, points toward the importance of his textual presence. Olmos’ first statement in “Elogio” declares his high position within the Church of Nueva Granada, “El Doctor Don Juan de Olmos y Zapiaín, Canónigo de la Santa Iglesia Metropolitana <de la ciudad de Santa Fe> del Nuevo Reino de Granada, en Indias” (Robledo 31). The manuscript finalizes with Nava’s first posthumous miracle-eight days after her death-, “Después de fallecida Gerónima, el día 31 de julio de 27, se me confirió canónica institución de dicha Canongía” (Robledo 51). Olmos recognizes that there were other men better prepared for the
title of Canon and thus only a miracle would have granted him this position. Olmos thus becomes the recipient of the canonically prerequisite miracle to commence the canonization process.

6.3.3 SYNOPSIS OF “AUTOBIOGRAFIA”

Nava gives an account of her relationship with God in her folios, which she divides into five chapters. In Capítulo I, Nava explains that during each mystical experience God gives her divine knowledge or “luses tan claras” (Robledo 55). This divine knowledge centers on God’s attributes, “su providensia, bondad y mansedumbre” (Robledo 56). She details the different physical manifestations, “cosas extraordinarias que me pasan”, that signal that she will undergo a mystical experience, (Robledo 55). She then prepares to quiet herself and be available to God, “sentí una suave fuerza que me ynpedia y llamava. Y recojiéndome a lo interior…” (Robledo 64). The mystical experience affects her mind, willpower, body, and her senses: “mi entendimiento se queda absorto y como suspenso” (56); “mi voluntad… se derrite en tiernos y suavísimos afectos” (56); “mi cuerpo, digo que me parese que le an metido en un horno de fuego.” and “Y aunque no pierdo los sentidos quando me pasa esto, aunque agan el ruido que hizieran, ni sabré dar razón de lo que a pasado” (56).

At other times Nava reports that the mystical experience is so intense that “milagrosamento no muero según siento el corazón” (56). The physical sensations are so pleasing, “me lleno de tanto goso, que a mi parecer me veo como anegada en un mar de delisias” (57) that she must reiterate that God wants her to feel like this to protect herself from heresy. Even though she states that God initiates these mystical encounters, she still fears being deceived by the devil: “miedo que tengo de ser engañada” (Robledo 57). This is a righteous fear as the Church accused many mystics of following the Alumbrados sect. Nava finalizes this introductory section with a description of what happens to her body after the mystical experience has run its course: “Y en
desapareciendo estas luses quedo con un adormesimiento, que es menester rato de espera para poder caminar o salir” (Robledo 56).

In Capítulo II, Nava sets the stage for her first mystical experience. She is going through a terrible spiritual crisis and laments that her life is headed in the wrong direction. Because of her “mala vida” she has had many sleepless nights, “entre otras muchas que me quitó el sueño el peligroso estado de mi consiensia” (Robledo 60).

At her lowest point, she calls on San Francisco Xavier who tells her that a future sickness will save her soul. From this point on, visions follow upon visions. Nava transcribes 105 visions in Capítulo II; Capítulo III has 68; Capítulo IV has 26, Capítulo V includes 14 visions and 3 poems; Capítulo VI has 7 visions; and lastly, Capítulo VII includes only 3 visions, the last of which depicts Nava contemplating a statue of Ecce Homo and asking Christ what caused humanity to put Him in such a calamitous state. Nava’s manuscript ends with Christ’s incomplete answer since Robledo deemed her handwriting illegible (Robledo 187).

6.3.4 CLASSIFICATION OF VISIONS

Nava transcribed over 240 visions without any fixed internal order -thematic or chronological. Her manuscript reads like an unending rosary of mystical experiences. Following Borja’s suggestion, conventual visions may be grouped by what they aim to accomplish. Many follow the format of allegory where God manifests Himself to the mystic to indicate the correct way to follow the spiritual path. Often, the visions take on the form of an exempla, a Baroque narrative style that transmits a biblical teaching. Some simply describe the space where the conventual writer encounters the sacred, a mystical tableau replete with the images available to them from their convent’s iconography. Nava’s visions are also thematic. They describe her relationship to her confessor, her relationship with the outside world and, more importantly, her
relationship to Jesus. She also presents visions that decry the sins of humanity against God and some that give expression to her own sinful nature, “mala vida.”

6.3.4.1 CLASSIFICATION OF VISIONS:
BY PHYSICAL SENSES AND CHRONOLOGY

Nava’s visions are often classifiable by the physical sense involved: visual, audio, tactile, and olfactory. Her Jesuit confessors followed Ignatian spirituality which suggests using the imagination during contemplative prayers to fully “see” a Biblical scene: “Estando yo un día pensando qué júbilos sentiría la Santísima Virgen quando tenía al Niño en su vientre, me paresió que le vi…” (Robledo 110). A preponderance of her visions, one hundred and thirty six (56%), are predominantly visual and begin with phrases such as “Me paresió que veía” (Robledo 63); “En mi recogimiento vi” (Robledo 68); “que así lo vi” (Robledo 72) and so forth. Forty nine visions are interior locutions whereby Nava “hears” Jesus or other celestial beings speak to her; “enpesé a oyr aquel repetido verso Sanctus” as it was sung by all the choirs of angels (Robledo 109). They commence with the phrases such as “Oy una voz en mi ynterior que me desía” (Robledo 60) or simply “me desía” (Robledo 95). The majority of interior locutions are dialogues between Nava and Jesus. Forty-seven visions (19%) describe the physical sensation of touch echoing the erotic discourse from the Song of Songs as noted in the section on the Rhetoric of Love. There is one instance where a vision includes an olfactory component, “me paresió que venía a mí una fragancia que me sacaba casi de mis sentidos” (Robledo 97).

Chronological grouping of Nava’s visions is sometimes possible. Nava did not keep a daily journal that recorded her mystical experiences as they took place. The descriptions in her manuscript reflect a distancing from the events she is narrating. It is difficult to ascertain the exact time frame in which Nava experienced her visions or when she subsequently redacted them at Olmos’ request. Robledo indicates that Nava wrote these folios over a period of twenty years and
believes that she wrote up to the time of her death on 29 May 1727. Therefore, Nava would have been thirty-four to thirty-eight years old when she commenced writing. If she entered the convent at fourteen, as indicated by Olmos, twenty-four years pass before she picks up her pen.\textsuperscript{385} Could these twenty-four years correspond to the time Nava refers to as her “mala vida?”

Most visions have very vague dates: “En otra ocasión estando, a mi parecer, en el Choro” (Robledo 136).\textsuperscript{386} Forty-five percent of her visions begin with this imprecise date. The only other indications of a time frame are her references to the Catholic liturgical calendar. While these dates specify a specific religious feast, the year of occurrence is absent. For example, the first concrete date is the “Octava de Corpus” which falls on the eighth day after the Feast of Corpus Christi sometime in May (Robledo 77).\textsuperscript{387} The next date, “Asunción de Nuestra Señora”, is celebrated on August 15 (Robledo 86).\textsuperscript{388} Nava then mentions visions occurring in “Cuaresma” or Lent followed by “Miécoles Santo” or Wednesday of Holy Week. This would place the aforementioned visions in a subsequent year (to the Octava de Corpus) sometime in late February or March (Robledo 84). The following date mentioned is “Día de Ramos” or Palm Sunday, which chronologically would have fallen before the previous entry (Holy Week) so it must be considered as occurring in a later year (Robledo 96). Therefore, the reader cannot deduce from the varied feast days correct intervals for the passage of time.\textsuperscript{389}

Nava also includes references to a daily time frame during which her visions take place. Conventual life centers on a routine that meticulously regulates each hour of the day to balance prayer, work, silence, and different spiritual practices. The recitation of the Divine Offices\textsuperscript{390} by the Choir\textsuperscript{391} or “Choro” governs each day. This area is considered the most important and reverent. The nuns begin their conventual life in this space when they profess as Novices. Within the Choir, cloistered nuns receive Communion during Mass, pray the Divine Offices or contemplate quietly...
the life of Jesus and the saints by focusing their attention on the many statues that adorn its walls. Nava considers the Choir a safe haven to commune directly with God. Thirty eight of her visions (15%) occur here during the moments immediately after Communion. Twenty-seven visions happen during the prayer of the Divine Offices; half take place during Matins, prayers at midnight. Another set of visions take place during specific spiritual practices: reciting the very long litany of the Holy Name of Jesus (Robledo 132); Novena to St. Francis Xavier (Robledo 144); praying the Salve Regina (Robledo 182) or during the many times she engaged in contemplative prayer.

The majority of Nava’s visions transpire within the context of religious practice and not during mundane moments of work or recreation. Nonetheless, there are three consecutive visions brought about by Nava’s concern regarding the selection process of a new abbess for the convent. A vision confirms that Nava will be the next abbess. It depicts Jesus giving her His purple robe even though there is opposition from the Choir nuns, “lo vi que se quitó la ropa de púrpura; y me la puso… Y las religiosas, luego que me la vieron puesta, clamaban porque me la quitaran; porque era indigna de tenerla” (Robledo 112).

6.3.4.2 CLASSIFICATION OF VISIONS: BY RHETORICAL STYLE

Nava’s visions are also classifiable by rhetorical style: Rhetoric of Humility, Rhetoric of Love and Rhetoric of the Body. Rhetoric of Humility refers to the self-denigrating rhetorical style employed by conventual writers since medieval times. Teresa of Ávila successfully used it, as noted by Alison Weber in her book Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity. Nava repeatedly refers to herself as ‘Pobre ygnorante siega’” (Robledo 67) and uses other colorful self-descriptors: “un candil del Ynfierno” (Robledo 71) / víbora (69) / “la más vil de todas tus criaturas” (96). Nava uses another form of humility trope when she explains a spiritual concept
by substituting domestic examples for learned metaphors. Nava’s description of the colonial custom of giving compliments serves as an explanation about God’s generosity. \(403\)

Imitating Teresa of Ávila formulaic humility, Nava qualifies some of her visions with a form of the disclaimer “a mi parecer”, such as “me parese” or “me paresió” (Robledo 76-77). \(404\) Scholars interpret Nava’s use of this disclaimer as insurance against reprisal from the Inquisition in case it perceived a statement or vision as potentially heretical. It is important to note that of the more than 240 visions in “Autobiografía,” Nava makes use of this strategy only twenty-four percent of the time. Nava describes the overwhelming majority of her visions stating authoritatively what she saw, heard or felt: “Estando en este estado, vi…” (Robledo 66-67); “Oí como una voz que hablaba …” (Robledo 60) or “lo sentí sensiblemente …” (Robledo 78). \(405\) Nava’s assertive rhetorical stance contrasts with the expected humility trope.

The Rhetoric of Humility also reflects ecclesiastical prohibitions against a woman’s theological education. Teresa of Ávila, as other conventual authors, “did not incorporate scholastic reasoning nor lengthy citations of Scripture or Church authorities in her arguments” (Ahlgren 143). Scholastic reasoning is best exemplified in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. \(406\) In this massive undertaking, Aquinas divides the whole of Christian theology into major topics. He subdivides the major topics into subtopics presented as questions. The discussion of each question follows an invariable form. First, Aquinas presents a specific query and provides an answer that begins with the word *videtur* or “it seems that” or “me parece.” This answer turns out to be the wrong answer to the query. In the second part labeled *responsio*, Aquinas presents the argument he considers to be the correct theological answer. In the third and final part, each query ends with a refutation of the arguments presented in the first *videtur* / “me parece” section. There is another possible reading of the antecedent “a mi parecer” that proposes a carnavalization of the scholastic
reasoning style unavailable to conventual authors. Whereas Aquinas presents the incorrect theological view following the phrase “a mi parecer”, the conventual authors present what they truly believe to be divinely inspired, or “luses claras.”

Nava’s second rhetorical strategy falls under the heading of Rhetoric of Love. In her prologue, Robledo advances that Nava founded “Autobiografía” on the discourse of love. She asserts that the modern reader should analyze and enjoy Nava’s text simply as a “texto amoroso” (Robledo 18). Per Robledo, such a reading facilitates the deciphering of the text because the love discourse is readily available to the modern reader instead of the difficult-to-comprehend mystical and hagiographic discourse (Robledo 18). Even though “Autobiografía” is a text about love, Robledo suggests reading Nava’s text with modern sensibilities regarding love without incorporating the Biblical understanding of the love relationship between Man and God. This Biblical understanding of Nava’s Rhetoric of Love would better serve modern readers as they approach her mystical text.

The rhetorical strategy of using human love to describe divine love has a long history in the Judeo-Christian tradition. While it seems paradoxical to use profane imagery to describe the mystical experience, many sacred works have used non-sacred words and images to express spiritual ideals such as those found in The Song of Songs. Origen and St. Bernard’s medieval commentaries on the Song of Songs transformed the human love story into the orthodox interpretation that sublimes the human passion into a soul’s love for God. Similarly, El libro de buen amor, and the mystical poetry of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Ávila “appeals to the soul to seek and find God … using language and imagery from Song of Songs” (Smith 139). Nava appropriates the interactions between the lover and the beloved in their garden of delights found in The Song of Songs to represent her relationship with Jesus. Nava describes herself as
falling madly in love with Jesus when he appears as a handsome Capitán General, “Yo quedé, a mi pareser, más enamorada” (Robledo 77). The two exchange loving pleasantries: “Gerónima es mi corazón y io soi el corazón de Gerónima” to which Nava responds, “Con estas finzas y amores me parece que me yba enamorando más y más de su amante corazón” (Robledo 87). In her visions, Nava underscores the intimacy that lovers share which include physical caresses within the lush and beautiful garden, “sentándome junto a mí me tenía de la mano, me recojía todo el cabello” (Robledo 74). The erotic allegory finds realization in the mystical marriage. Nava’s first description of a mystical espousal is very sensual:

Estaba yo mui adornada y Su Magestad me tenía de la mano. Desíame: ‘tan gustoso es, para mí, el estar contigo como son de deleitosos estos amenos jardines y plantas’. Y haziéndose como desententendido de mis faltas me recojía todo el cabello; y redusiéndolo como a uno o a una sola trensa, me dejó el pelo en esta disposición y recogimiento (Robledo 75).

As previously noted, Nava uses the Rhetoric of Humility to portray herself in an unflattering and passive way - pobre, sola, despreciada, simple, esclava, vil, and ignorante. On the other hand, Nava uses the Rhetoric of Love to present herself as an active participant in the mystical relationship as does the Shulamite woman in The Song of Songs who is “revealed as a passionate young woman, as spirited and assertive” (Bloch and Bloch 5). Ariel Bloch points out that women in the Old Testament are usually presented as “passive and acted upon” but in The Song of Songs, the Shulamite woman appears sometimes as more than the equal of her lover.

As the beloved Shulamite, Nava feels God will respond favorably to her petitions. In the following vision, Nava confidently asks God to remain in her soul after Communion to enjoy the ecstatic state for a longer period:

Aviendo comulgado un día le rogué no se fuese de mi corazón por todo aquel día. Y le sentía en él como recostado descansando, causando en mi alma unos deleites y gosos que parece que ya se
quería salir ella [alma] de mi cuerpo… y quedé por más de dos horas sin poderme mover, esperando morir a manos de aquella dulsura. (Robledo 78)  

Another contrast between the use of the narrative strategy of *Rhetoric of Humility* and *Rhetoric of Love* is the position Nava occupies within the mystical relationship. When Nava employs the *Rhetoric of Humility*, she portrays herself as a sinner, the “most vile of all the creatures” that can only be saved by the grace of God. When Nava utilizes the *Rhetoric of Love*, she becomes her Beloved’s comforter and refuge, producing an inversion of the traditional dynamic of God-sinner. Various passages depict a fatigued Jesus looking for rest within Nava’s heart: “paresióme que se llegava a mí fatigado y sediento… Y dándome a entender que se quería alojar en mi corazón, se recostó blandamente en él” (Robledo 116). In another vision, the inversion God-sinner is striking, “vi a mi Señor que se llegó a mí con un amor y mansedumbre que me asombró. Traía las manos atadas y se echó en mi presencia. Arrojándose al suelo me desía, ‘¿qué quiere que aga por ti? Aquí me tienes; aprisionado me han tus amores’” (Robledo 135).

In the third rhetorical strategy, *Baroque Rhetoric of the Body*, the human body takes preeminence as a signifying medium. "En este sentido, el cuerpo se convierte en un discurso que autoriza y reglamenta las prácticas culturales” (Borja 101). During the Baroque period, people perceived the body as a mirror image of the soul in which the physical ailments were confounded with spiritual malaise. Therefore, the physical body was considered a battlefield where the enemy, Lucifer, tempted, seduced and tried to influence the mystic in a myriad of ways so as to remove her from her path toward sanctification: “An sido y son gravísimas las tentaciones con que el demonio me combate” (Robledo 91). As Morrison points out, “The heroism of the cloister was as much admired as that of the battlefield, and the same sort of determination characterized both military exploits and religious victories” (6).
Under the rubric of *Rhetoric of the Body* are those manifestations of Nava’s material reality that fit the Baroque path to sanctity: divinely marked at infancy, sickness, and ascetic practices.\(^{420}\) Hagiographic authors such as Olmos carefully noted these elements in their manuscripts. In addition, Nava's visions depict Biblical-historical manifestation of the body. This focus on corporeality is based on Borja’s perspective that a mystic’s communication with God occurred by means of an aesthetic practice played out on a corporeal stage (Borja 107).\(^{421}\)

Most hagiographic narratives commence with the call to sainthood in infancy. This narrative model reinforces the idea that God calls the body, from its inception, to a spiritual path. Olmos specifically mentions the premature death of Nava's mother as a sign of Nava's future sainthood. “Y a media hora de aver nasido (assidente de este parto) murió Doña Juana Saabedra, su madre” (Robledo 35).\(^{422}\)

External markings can also be a sign of spiritual predestination. Nava sets forth in her manuscript that she is divinely marked. Jesus “sculpted” her cheeks “con una S y un clavo bajo al corazón” (Robledo 154).\(^{423}\) In another vision, the Blessed Mother marks some people as her disciples. Nava follows suit. Olmos tells us that Nava (in real life) had an iron made to brand others in the convent, including a priest.\(^{424}\) This branding is time-and-culture-bound and does not have the same meaning today. Jesus also imprints Nava’s body with the signs of His Passion or stigmata, with the difference that the lance wound is on the left side of her body in deference to Jesus.\(^{425}\) Nava prudently explains that the stigmata, “en mi entender, fue solo un amago; que yo no mersco estar tan bien marcada, aunque lo e deseado y lo deseo” (Robledo 154).\(^{426}\)

Another important marker on the cartography of the body is a divinely imposed ailment. Borja posits sickness as allegory: a nun’s sickness should be considered as a common rhetorical trope within conventual literature just as the humility trope (108). Sickness is a typical marker of
divine favor in the conventual world just as the premature death of the mother (Haliczer 15). More importantly, sickness can be construed as a valid path toward sanctification (Borja 109). In Nava’s first vision, St. Francis Xavier tells her that the chronic illness she faces is the only way for her to “retire” from the world and withdraw from all temptations. Within a month, Nava is stricken with a terrible disease: “me poseyó un accidente tan terrible que no ubo médico, de los muchos que llamaron, que conosiese el origen de la enfermedad (la qual conosí avía vendió enviada de Dios)” (Robledo 61). Nava acquires this sickness at an age with Biblical implications, “treinta y tres años seis meses y quince días” (Robledo 38). Olmos provides many of the details of Nava’s unspecified illness but concludes that Nava dies from a kidney stone (Robledo 49). Nava does not dwell on the trying physical aspects of her chronic illness and will provide the details only if pressed by her confessor. Most conventual Vidas depict nuns heroically battling illness.

Another set of sanctifying physical elements concern ascetic practices such as fasts, self-castigations, and sleep deprivation, which can be disconcerting to modern secular readers. How does Nava’s physical suffering harmonize with her spiritual path? McGinn points out that extremely tortuous forms of ascetic practices should be read as “examples of hagiographical exaggeration that were not meant to be taken literally” (Essential 48). To contextualize these ascetic practices within the context of Nava’s mystical journey it is necessary to be summarily familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Nava’s Jesuit confessor would have instructed her within this tradition. An important aspect of Jesuit spirituality centers on the exploration of one’s sinful nature and subsequent penitential acts. St. Ignatius exhorts the importance of castigating the body as an integral part of an ascetic practice. In the Spiritual Exercises, San Ignacio explains three precise ways to punish oneself for past sins and to fortify
oneself from committing new sins: the way one eats, sleeps and treats one’s body by inflicting pain. Therefore, within the framework of corporeal sanctification, to possess dominion over one’s body through these ascetical practices is paramount.

The first element of the ascetic practice concerns the body’s nourishment: “This first way pertains to eating. That is, when we abstain from what is superfluous we are practicing, not penance, but temperance. We practice penance when we abstain from what is ordinarily suitable. And the more we subtract the better is the penance, provided that we do not weaken our constitution or bring on noteworthy illness” (Ignatius and Ganss 50). Eating and fasting carry an important signifying element within conventual environments. Caroline Walker Bynum, in her book *Holy Fast and Holy Feast*, investigates the basic motifs of religious life, principally chastity, poverty, and especially fasting (2). For Bynum, fasting was of upmost importance: “To repress eating and hunger was to control the body in a discipline far more basic than any achieved by shedding the less frequent and essential gratifications of sex or money” (2). Nava includes only one description of the spiritual practice of fasting even though, as Bynum points out, food in the monastic environment is “a more important motif in women’s piety than in men’s” (4). Nava simply writes: “En otra ocasion, me senté a comer mi pobre razón” (Robledo 127).

Bynum further explains: “food was, in medieval Europe, a fundamental economic –and religious– concern. Medieval people often saw gluttony as the major form of lust, fasting as the most painful renunciation, and eating as the most basic and literal way of encountering God.” For Nava, who came from a privileged background, issues surrounding food may have been difficult to overcome. Therefore, Nava wants to set down that Jesus recognizes her sacrifice, “‘hija, te agradesco el que por mi respecto comas y el que te ayas sujetada por mi amor a comer esta pobre vianda; que quisá en la casa de tus padres tubieras más regalo” (Robledo 127).
Another of the ascetic practices encouraged by Ignatius that Nava does not delve into regards sleep. “The second way pertains to our manner of sleeping … and the more we deprive ourselves, the better is the penance, provided we do not harm ourselves or weaken our constitution” (Ignatius and Ganss 50). Nava does not present any heroic endeavors in regards to this facet of her spiritual practice.

The third element of Ignatian ascetic practice is the most controversial for modern readers: “to chastise the body, that is, to inflict pain on it, by wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains; by scourging or wounding oneself; and by similar austerities” (Ignatius and Ganss 50). Ignatian methodologies used self-flagellation as a form of penitential discipline. Within the confines of monastic life, it is also a practice of imitatio Christi, a way of reliving in the flagellant's body the sacred pain of Christ’s Passion (imitation passionis). Causing pain in the body thus becomes an act of adoration: “[e]l cuerpo de las monjas se transformaba en un espacio sagrado, cuando, al lacerarse, se constituían de manera simultánea en altar, victima y sacerdote…” (Borja 110).

Nava did not focus on the physical aspects of her ascetic practices but emphasized contemplative prayer in contrast to other conventual writers who detailed their often brutal disciplines. Nava follows Loyola’s admonition against mortification that would cause sickness in the penitent: “me lleno de tan grandes ansias de castigarme y de no darme gusto en cosa ninguna que, si no reselara ofensa de Dios, de otra manera me parece que me tratara” (Robledo 121).

The lack of extreme fasting and disciplines as evidenced in other mystics is due to Nava’s “afición a San Fco. de Sales” who sets out in his influential text “Práctica al amor de Dios” that the most important religious experience is union with God and not mortification. Nava may have read the book in the vernacular or been familiar with the main points of Salesian doctrine through the spiritual
instruction provided by her confessors. Her manuscript reflects a Salesian tone of an ongoing love conversation between the Beloved, God and the sinner, Nava.

The importance of *imitatio Christi* within the religious environment is visible in the statuary displayed within the niches of the convent’s walls. The Nazarene Christ statue, depicting a bloody Christ carrying the Cross, is preeminent in Nava’s physical and mystical environments. Another important suffering image, *Ecce Homo*, depicts Jesus after the scourging by Pontius Pilate: “Estando mirando atentamente una ymagen del Ecce Homo…” (Robledo 172). The statue’s name comes from Pontius Pilate’s words, “Behold the Man.” Nava’s convent had other less tragic iconographic models than the Nazarene Christ to enhance the prayer life of the nuns.

The image of Child Jesus was a popular and important visual element of the Counter-Reformation art. Nava recounts, “[e]stando yo haziendo yntensísimos actos de contrisión y derramando copiosas lágrimas, me llegué a vesarle a un Niño Jesús que está en el Coro los pies” (Robledo 141). In this vision, the Infant Jesus lovingly, “y con su camisita (con una manguita) me enjugó las lagrimas y me consoló” (Robledo 141). Nava also prayed in front of a statue of St. Francis, The statue of “debota ymagen de Nuestra Señora del pie de la cruz” is another of the many statues present in the communal areas of the convent and may have been in Nava’s private cell (Robledo 115). In the end, the image of the suffering Christ dominates her visions.

In contrast to other conventual authors, Nava did not expend much effort explaining her physical penance. However, she does detail her difficulty with sensual temptations. The Jesuit scholar, George Ganss, S.J., sets forth the historical and religious perspective of the term “sensualidad” as understood by Nava as “the sense appetites, or inclinations of one’s human nature” (161). He further elucidates: “Though the term is sometimes applied to excess in food, drink, or sex, it does not of itself imply excess. It easily comes to mean the likes and dislikes of our
human nature, which are often emotional” (161). The reader should interpret “tentasiones sensuales” in the full context of the word and not by the narrow modern understanding of sensuality.

Nava laments in Capítulo V, the terrible sufferings caused by her sensual temptations, “las tentasiones sensuales que padesía” that at one time were “tan frequentes” and “tan horrible” (Robledo 169). Nava continues in Capítulo VI, with a specific temptation - an encounter with an unnamed man. The reader should interpret this encounter within the framework of the mystical journey and not simply as a paphian experience. The spiritual work of the mystic is fraught with difficulties as Gascón makes clear, “though the ascetic continues to progress in her devotion to God, she is subject to worldly desire at every stage of her development, and the temptations become increasingly more subtle and dangerous as the devotee advances” (65). Nava does not supply any details except that this temptation has divine roots just as her illness. God has permitted the Devil to tempt Nava through an unnamed man, “el sujeto.” Nava does not inform the reason she finds herself outside the convent walls on an errand that would facilitate the opportunity for her to succumb to temptation. Only senior cloistered nuns, such as an abbess, could leave the convent on errands pertaining to the business of the convent: “Se ofresió salir a una casa perteneciente a mi ocupación. Y de esto tomó motivo el Demonio para ynsistir a un sujeto a que me procurarse divertir o pervertir … Y confieso que el sujeto no se avía explicado conmigo, tuve el atrebimeinto de darle un día la mano” (Robledo 172).

Nava goes on to say that this happened on more than one occasion: “y aviendo reynsidido en ésto” (Robledo 172). Nava recognizes that the “divine” illness she acquired permitted her to stay away from “el sujeto” and save both of their souls, “hiriendome con la enfermedad, me separó de este peligro” (Robledo 138). Nava asks God to give this man, “el qual fue quien más me
pervirtió” many trials and tribulations while on Earth to save him from Hell, “rogándole le enbiase algunos trabajos en esta vida, a fin de que pagase acá y fuese esto el medio de que cayese en la quenta de sus errores” (Robledo 138).457 Twelve lines deleted by either Nava or her confessor follow this explanation. It would be interesting to know the reason for this censure. Nava revisits this incident with the unnamed “sujeto” in the concluding chapters of her manuscript. She acknowledges that God has helped her curb her sensual temptations or worldly desires. 458

Another facet of the Rhetoric of the Body groups those elements that are exclusively feminine metaphors. This follows Helene Cixous’ l’écriture feminine, which posits that the language of the text inscribes the female body. As previously mentioned, conventual writers did not have access to authoritative material to substantiate their writings and thus had to rely on direct experience. For example, Nava uses the personal experience of temptations of the flesh to make a theological pronouncement. This reflects the basic difference between male and female religiosity, “religious women derived their basic symbols from such ordinary biological and social experiences as giving birth, lactating, suffering, and preparing and distributing food” (Bynum 6). Nava uses the familiar images of Mary’s motherhood including pregnancy and childcare to narrate her visions and explain theological concepts.459

The most prevalent female metaphor is lactation, which symbolizes Mary's nurturing love for Jesus and humanity: “vi a una señora hermosísima y mui adornada. Tenía como llenos los pechos de suavísima leche que ofresía a muchas personas que la rodeavan y sercaban”(Robledo 93).460 Nava also portrays herself as the Child Jesus’ nursemaid461, “luego vi al Niño Jesús que, llegándose a mí y poniéndome las manitas en el hombro me desía: ‘críame’” (Robledo 97).462 Paradoxically, Christ takes on the female attribute of lactation,“Observé que me aplicaba a su pecho y me regalaba en él mucho mejor que lo hacen las amantes madres con sus queridos hijos
Nava’s use of maternal metaphors to depict God concurs with Salesian thought. For Francis de Sales, “[t]he interior life is one of journey and development toward the incomprehensible mystery that is God, a God we speak of in many names and images. … He likens God to a mother nursing her child, embodying the deepest form of unconditioned, active and most ardent love” (King 79). This cross-gendered aspect of Christ has a long tradition in the Church “the maternal metaphors, commonplace in late medieval devotional literature, which present Christ as a nurturing figure suckling needy souls at his breasts or feeding them with his own body and blood spiritual ‘sustenance’ purveyed by ‘Mother’ church in the form of the Eucharist (Smith 139). This nurturing interpretation of Christ’s female aspect is presented by Smith vis-à-vis the contrary “widely-held medieval view that the weaknesses of the bodily condition which Christ took on were to be identified principally with the physicality of women” (139).

In another type of maternal metaphor, Nava describes Jesus as a child in a crib who misses his mother. Nava presents herself not only as caregiver but also in the position of a dependent child. She see herself as a six-year old child, “me vi un poquito más grande como de edad de seis años.” Nava uses this vision to explain the Biblical injunction to approach Jesus with the innocence of a child.

The last component of *Rhetoric of the Body* speaks to the biblical underpinnings of certain elements of the body emphasized by Nava such as the eyes, blood and the heart. These corporal elements also serve as Petrarchan love poetry in which sonnets utilize synecdoche to characterize the beloved. This follows Robert Elliot Bayliss’ proposed reading of Fray Luis de Leon’s and St. John of the Cross’ religious and mystical poetry: “a conservative approach to love poetry that reconciles it to Christian ideology by replacing divinized lady with God Himself” (51). These
metaphysical poets give voice to their religious impulses using a highly charged language and imagery. Jesus asks Nava to become such a poet by composing a poem to His eyes.468

The reader should view the metaphorical use of blood within the historical consideration of the age even though it is manifestly strange to our modern sensibilities. From the time of the ancient Israelites, blood symbolized life.469 One such image depicts Nava drinking blood from Jesus’ side, “Lleguéme a saludarle la amorosa llaga de su costado y me dijo: ‘vebe, ovejita mía, que éste es el bebedero de mis escojidos” (Robledo 165).470 Bynum cautions the modern reader when confronted with such images: “However absurd or vulgar some medieval practices and language may seem to casual modern observers …. we do well not to take offense” (5).

In over twenty visions, Nava uses the metaphor of the heart to refer to either Jesus or to her. The figurative understanding of “corazón” is still in use today as a primordial symbol for the totality of one’s being. Nava’s understanding of the term heart underscores the popular devotion471 to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.472 This spiritual practice began to flourish in the Middle Ages through a renewed attentiveness to Jesus humanity and his Passion. The height of the practice was the seventeenth century, when Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal, and the “French School” offered a much more tender and compassionate spirituality. Nava was familiar with the writings of Francis de Sales as has been previously noted. There is a distinct Salesian influence in Nava’s use of images depicting sweet and tender moments between her and Jesus. In these, Nava is either a mother figure or the beloved.473

6.3.5 TRANSGRESSIONS IN "AUTOBIOGRAFIA"

The previous sections covered the images and words contained within Nava’s visions. They tell the story of a young woman’s spiritual growth in which she acknowledges that an unknown sickness has purified her soul from “sensual” temptations. By the end of
“Autobiografía,” Nava recognizes that she has finally overcome a daunting spiritual test. For today’s reader, Nava’s Vida is much more than a mere recounting of her visions. It represents the textualization of a conventual author’s self-identity as she confronts the patriarchal constrictions of early modern Spanish America. Whereas Erauso took her fight to the battle fields of the Conquista, and Sor Juana to the sphere of the intellect, Nava engaged society in the mystical realm.

How then did Nava support the status quo (align herself ideologically and politically with the interests of Colonial Spanish America’s power elite) and at the same time express her subjectivity? How does the text mirror and concomitantly react against the patriarchal social order that imposed severe restrictions on women: limiting their access to the Latin biblical texts that would to give authority to their writings, denying them a formal religious education, or restricting them from activities deemed clerical? As Nava confronted her vow of obedience with the need to define herself and her mystical experiences, tensions arose that became part of her manuscript. These textual tensions reveal Nava’s transgressive pronouncements and behaviors.

6.3.5.1 TRANSGRESSION: AUTHORIZEDATIVE VOICE

In medieval times, the word "auctor" had a different meaning than its modern one - as writer of original material. A medieval “auctor” used traditional sources to give authority to his ideas. Knowledge of Latin was the gateway to the vast compendium of theological material that lent orthodoxy to the writings of learned men. Most women in the early modern period lacked this classical education. Women were considered “unlettered” even when they did know how to read and write in the vernacular.

Haliczer suggests that the “lack of theological training and an inability to read Latin or understand scripture were liabilities imposed by the male dominated society” (66). For most conventual writers, their proficiency in Latin consisted in the ability to read the prayers recited in
the Latin Rite of the Mass and other prayers taught by their spiritual directors. There are a few instances in which Nava writes in Latin, though not always correctly, to transcribe a prayer or Biblical passage: “Llegóse, pues, a mí; y blandamente me escribió en el corazón estas palabras: *Ego sum via veritas et vita*” (Robledo 122). In contrast to Nava’s limited knowledge of Latin, Hipolita de Jesús y Rocaberti (1549 – 1624), a Dominican nun from Barcelona, was proficient in Latin as well as Spanish and Catalan. She was a prolific author with at least twenty-six books in Latin (Haliczer 87). Nonetheless, Olmos states that Nava was very learned, “personas de letras y juicio que le trataron, experimentando tan alta capacidad, decían y con razón, que no era entendimiento mujeril; pues discorría remontándose en cosas altísimas y escudriñaba las profundísimas” (Robledo 37).

Without access to Latin, conventual authors appropriate the personal mystical experience as the only alternative to give authority to their voices in which “union with God gave the soul access to a kind of knowledge that it ordinarily would not have” (Ahlgren 130). This mystical knowledge, a “visionary epistemology that makes God more accessible to the unlettered” is what Nava refers to as *luses claras* (Ahlgren 142). Her personal experience substantiates her *luses claras*, not the prominent Latin mystical texts written by Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, Francisco de Osuna and others. Since Nava is denied access to these formal theological authorities, she claims God as her instructor: “me parecía que me decía el Señor … que quería instruirme” and then transcribes God’s explanation of the vow of poverty (Robledo 154). God asks her to see His wounds and “read them”: “mire y lee esos capítulos de tan soverana doctrina” (Robledo 155). For Nava, not all theological instruction comes from the written word in Latin. Nava can now write, “Y tengo por mui sierto,” reflecting the sentiments of a self-assured author (Robledo 71). She was, however, careful to preface her mystical narrative with the
qualification that her confessor should correct and rectify her words if needed, “me corrija y enmiende” (55).

Some readers may assume from Nava’s statement, “sintiendo yo una dulzura y suavidad tan grande que no puede mi cortedad explicar” that she cannot explain the mystical phenomenon because of her lack of theological knowledge (Robledo 89). Ironically, this 'flaw' had positive spiritual value: a priest could validate a female mystic’s vision on the basis that her visionary revelation had to be divinely inspired since she lacked Scriptural instruction. This justification closely resembles the belief espoused by the Alumbrados: “unlearned but divinely inspired, and consequently endowed with a greater capacity of understanding the Scriptures than trained theologians” (Hamilton 105). Therefore, some conventual writers who substantiated their writings with similar claims encountered problems with the Inquisition. This reasoning may seem convoluted to the modern reader but was the norm for the hierarchy of the Church during Nava’s time. How else, reasoned many a learned man, could a “weak” woman with no formal theological training reveal such knowledge, such “luses claras”?

Even though Society considered Nava “unlettered,” many of her visions touch upon the varied theological debates of her time, including Marianism, Trinitarian doctrine and Arianism. Her God-given authority enables her to criticize the learned men of her society. Nava forcefully denounces not only the attitude of the religious but of the lay learned men of Nueva Granada (Robledo 122). Nava takes a very controversial stance against two unnamed clerics accusing them of the heresy of Arianism. The priests had received Communion without having confessed previously because of their lack of belief in the divine nature of Jesus. She also criticizes three bishops -“tres sujetos que tenían mitras”- for various ecclesiastical lapses (Robledo 84). Nava is concerned with the “ministros de Nuestro Señor” who do not have reverence for the Eucharist, a
very important issue during the time of the Counter-Reformation (Robledo 151-52). Nava describes in Capítulo IV, an unusual vision in which she eats God’s heart. Nava uses this cannibalistic vision to censor priests who distribute the Eucharist sacrilegiously, “me parecía que llegava un sujeto … tomava el corazón del Señor en sus mano y le yba despedasando. Tiraba los pedasos, sin saber a quién … Observé que algunos de los que comían estos pedasos del corazón del Señor asían como ascos y les daban bascas” (Robledo 51-52).

6.3.5.2 TRANSGRESSION: RESTRICTIONS ON FEMALE CLERICAL ROLES

Nava’s transgressions go further than criticizing the local Church authorities. She undertook various clerical roles specifically prohibited for women: instructing others in theological matters, Biblical interpretations, hearing confession, giving benedictions and mediating between man and God. Women who engaged in these clerical duties overstepped the religious gender barrier so carefully set up and maintained by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Haliczer points out that “[f]aced with the combined influence of the monarchy, the church, and the Holy Office, the ‘holy woman’ who wished to survive with her reputation intact would have to support not only the faith but also the entire structure of power as it then existed” (Haliczer 91). Nava’s clerical activities are thus analyzed against the backdrop of “a doctrine of gender orthopraxy” (Ahlgren 142). Church history and Nava’s manuscript reflect this ambivalence toward women’s clerical roles.

Traditional belief is that all Biblical texts prohibit women’s participation in the Church. Ben Sirach, the aristocratic scholar from Jerusalem, expressed his aversion to women in the many maxims collected in the Book of Sirach or Book of Ecclesiasticus. In the first centuries of the Catholic Church, Tertullian and Augustine reflected this same mindset. Even though the Church and Spanish society deem Nava’s actions unorthodox, two scholars have shed light on the orthodoxy of Nava’s position. Kenneth Bailey presents a convincing argument in Jesus Through
Middle Eastern Eyes, regarding equality between men and women during the time of Jesus (189). Bailey posits that Jesus positive attitudes toward women were influenced by his mother, Mary and thus was comfortable including them as disciples and as travelling companions (192-94). The scholar, A.N. Wilson, in his historical portrayal of the Apostle Paul, sets out to disavow the preconceived view of Paul as “a bigoted Jew who, as a result of his conversion on the road to Damascus, became a bigoted Christian. He is widely regarded as a misogynist, the father of that strand in Christianity which sees the female sex as inferior to the male” (Wilson 14). Many base their criticism of Paul on his notorious letter in I Corinthians 14:34, in which he instructs women to be silent in church. Wilson affirms that Paul could not have written this passage since many women formed part of his inner circle, including Lydia and Priscilla who established the first house-churches and were among his many female converts.

Nava would have been familiar with these biblical passages and thus transcribes a vision that contradicts the indictment to silence: “Y dijome el Señor, ‘quien cuida de este huerto a de arrancar estas hierbas (y aun a mi parese no eran del todo malas pero no eran útiles), pero no a de dejar por este motivo de cultivar la tierra ni se a de exasperar’” (Robledo 147). The words placed in italics correspond to Nava interjection of her thoughts in the middle of Jesus’ statement, one of many telling examples in her manuscript of the tension between the traditional proscription to silence and her need to express herself.

The letter ascribed to the Apostle Paul, I Timothy 2: 11-12 is used to fundament the prohibition against women teaching: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. / But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” This Biblical injunction caused many of Teresa of Ávila’s critics to resort to naming her works (especially her Vida) as heretical since “acceptance of Teresa’s doctrine implied acceptance of a
woman’s role as theologian and teacher” (Ahlgren 118). In contrast, there is no evidence that Nava experienced any clerical censure. Olmos, speaks of Nava using positive qualifiers: “Era en el monasterio distribuidora de ignoransias (bien se sabe la jente que ai fuera de las señoras religiosas), instruidora e illuminadora, dirijiendo a quantas alcanzaba a Dios…” (Robledo 40).

Nava appropriates the clerical role of teaching by divine directive: “Y tube clara noticia de que gustava Dios que ynstruyese a la jente ignorante; pues eran muchas las almas que se perdían por falta de luz y así procure y lo hize yr instruyendo algunas.” (Robledo 71). But at the same time recognizes that this role is not permitted to women: “Y la ansia de instruir y amor que tengo a las almas es tanta que me ynpasienta mi sexo porque me impide el que yo haga algo por quien tanto hizo por mí” (Robledo 71).

To provide theological instruction to others was in itself problematic for conventual authors but even more so was advancing biblical interpretation. McGinn underscores that “[w]omen by definition could not be professional exegetes, because academic theological training was closed to them. Nevertheless, many female mystics knew the Bible well, citied it often, and, without composing formal commentaries, included much commentarial material in their writings” (Essential 42). He also points out that the Song of Songs, “a central text of the mystical tradition”, where frequent female exegesis could be found (Essential 41). Teresa of Ávila’s interpretation of the Song of Songs survives only in part because her confessor deemed it unorthodox and had it destroyed. Madame Guyon embarked on the ambitious project to write an exposition, or verse by verse commentary, of the whole Bible. Nava was not as ambitious as Madame Guyon or Teresa of Ávila. She limited her commentary on the Song of Songs to the imagery of the garden of delights and the relationship with the Beloved in the Rhetoric of Love.
Nava's insightful biblical exegesis can be noted in the vision where God gives her a tablet with the Ten Commandments, “los dies preseptos del Decálogo”, in which the first Commandment is written in gold and the rest in ink (Robledo 81). She explains: “Conosí que este presepto es el que da lustre a todos los demás” and that if mankind would follow these rules, “adquirieran una tranquilidad y paz unos entre otros” (Robledo 81). Nava’s last chapter presents a vision in which St. Joseph and Mary present a theological dilemma -which is superior, the married state or the virginal state: “¿no fuera medio más proporsionado el que la Santísima Virgen, pues avía de permanecer virgen, se retrajese en una clausura?’ Si pues, ¿Cómo dispuso Dios que tomase el estado del matrimonio, paresiendo este medio tan encontrado?’” (Robledo 182). Nava is reticent to commit these questions to paper as evidenced by her placing her exclamation in parenthesis: “(¡O, Dios, Dios!)” (Robledo 182). Nevertheless, Nava feels secure in her biblical interpretations because she rests on divine acknowledgement that she is a purveyor of God’s wisdom. Jesus tells Nava, “‘en tu corazón boy depositando muchas parte de mi caudal y este tesoro llegará tiempo en que dé sus ganancias, porque sabrán mis piedades que uso contigo y se moberán muchas almas a amarme” (Robledo 117).

Nava also appropriates the clerical role of confessor: “Y tengo por mui sierto que muchas almas se ubieran perdido si no ubieran llegado a comunicar conmigo sus errores”(Robledo 71). She also sees herself as a Jesuit missionary transported mystically to the Indies. Nava also longs to participate actively in the missionary work of the Church: “Y tube lus de que éste que venía con el santo, como sirviéndole, era el Rey de Bungo, el qual, por medio de la ynstrucción de San Xavier, se salvó” (Robledo 114). “Rey de Bungo” refers to the daimyo or provincial governor of an ancient feudal Japanese province who converted to Catholicism under the guidance of the Jesuit Francisco Xavier.
Nava's best known role is as an intercessor. Both the “Autobiografía” and Olmos’ hagiographic portrayal “Elogio” depict her as such. There are at least twenty visions that depict Nava’s intercessory efforts. Her confessor, Olmos, avails himself repeatedly of Nava’s mystical ability to communicate directly to God: “aviéndome mandado mi confesor que pidiese por él” (Robledo 69). Nava also details her intercession for a certain man, “un sujeto de mi cariño” that was having an illicit epistolary affair, “una propensión terrible a una señora que comunicaba” (Robledo 71). Nava advises the man to cease all communications with the woman. During the next several months, Nava repeatedly asks God to have mercy on this man and assist him in removing him from the sinful relationship. God commands Nava to bring the man before Him. Nava’s vision, as she transcribes it, recreates a judicial setting where Nava brings the man before God who will act as judge, St. Joseph as the defense lawyer for the man, and St. Ignatius defending the woman (Robledo 71). Even with Nava’s admonitions, the man persists in his relationship. This vignette ends when the man repents his erroneous ways, thereby establishing Nava ability to intercede for others (Robledo 72).

The vow of obedience that Nava took upon entering the convent necessarily frames her clerical transgressions. Nava’s writings were a direct consequence of this vow and not an overt act of self-expression: “Vuestra Merced me hordenó” (Robledo 105). Nava compiles those visions that she has been able to recall before submitting them for judgment. Their tone reflects a lack of self-analysis characteristic of a paradigm of dominance and submission prevalent in the nun-confessor relationship (Darcy 235). The vow of obedience enabled Nava to protect herself from the threat of heresy and the accusation of fingida santidad. Modern scholars agree that underlying conventual texts rests a form of male clerical control “to regulate female religiosiy through confession and such obligatory written exercises as autobiography and the biographies of
sisters in the convent” (Darcy 231). Clerics feared that women could challenge them if they had knowledge of Scripture and Church’s rituals. Darcy further explains, “Nun’s biographies, however, may also have been requested because of the desire of the Church power elite to record, oversee, and ultimately appropriate the activities of women” (231).

“Autobiografía” should also be framed as a retrospective life story “to determine whether these revelations were an act of God or the work of the devil” (Ibsen 10). Olmos’ principal task as Nava’s spiritual advisor was to determine that Nava’s visions were in accordance with Church orthodoxy. Nava understands the delicate balance that she must maintain between orthodox or heretical:

Lo que Vuestra Merced verá por este escrito, es lo que tengo ynpresionado; sin dejar cuidadosamente cosa ninguna, ni aver ponderado ni exagerado lo que llebo dicho; y con la grasia de Dios no saliera un punto de las reglas de la verdad, ni me parese que equibocadamente dijera ninguna cosa. Y porque soi una pobre ignorante y mi sexo es tan ruin, digo casi en todo que me paresía. (Robledo 99)

This well-written caveat occurs towards the end of Capítulo II, after Nava's detailing of more than one hundred visions.

The fear of being the potential author of heretical statements, or associated with one, was very real while the Inquisition reigned. Conventual authors and their readers were all operating under the cultural assumption that women were susceptible to spiritual misguidance. Haliczer writes: “Fear of demonic influence on women with spiritual pretensions was a widely held belief disseminated by theologians such as Antonio González de Rosende, one of Spain’s leading seventeenth-century theologians” (54). Morrison concurs: “Demonology was … a prominent factor in the religious beliefs of the seventeenth century” (9). Even if Demonology held center stage in early modern Spain, Haliczer points out that an underlying reason for this battle against female
visionaries was not necessarily a battle against the Devil but that “the female mystic, however orthodox her beliefs, could pose a threat to a male-dominated church unless she kept her ambitions very much within bounds and accepted the status quo” (144). Nava begins her first folio stating that her visions are not inspired by the Devil but by God. Nonetheless, she still questions herself: “Yo procuré como pude desechar esto [la visión] porque me parecía que era materia sospechosa” (Robledo 97). Nava transcribes this last comment to fulfill the requirements of a visionary’s battle with the Devil – a form present in most hagiographies.

Nava acquires more self-confidence as her visions progress. The following three visions portray a Nava in very active masculine roles. Nava initiates the contact with God during the mystical encounter, “Estando yo deseando amarle con un amor de su gusto sentí que se llegó a mí y me desía…” (Robledo 76). She inverts the patriarchal order of God as protector of humanity, an inversion of the paradigm master-slave. And thirdly, Nava becomes the refuge for God so He can avoid those who wish to harm him: “… vi que acceleradamente tiraba una carrosa y se yba a esconder a mi corazón de unas perzonas que intentaban herirle” (Robledo 76).

6.4 READING NAVA’S COMEDIA: SANTA TERESA DE JESÚS

The following section references the analysis of the *comedia Santa Teresa de Jesús* written by Lope Félix de Vega Carpio (1562-1643) vis-à-vis the *Vida* of Jerónima Nava y Saavedra. Lope de Vega produced two religious plays with Teresa of Ávila as protagonist. The play under consideration, *Santa Teresa de Jesús*, was written between 1590 and 1604 during the initial deliberations of her beatification process in 1604 (Morrison 111). The second play, *Vida y muerte de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, was written approximately between 1620 and 1630, on the occasion of Teresa’s canonization in 1622 (Gascón 64). The choice over which of the two comedias to choose conforms to the study’s criterion: all the conventual authors and comedias
consistently exhibit the characteristic of Baroque monstrosity. The first play’s hybrid nature of interweaving the sacred and profane—where mystical visions follow duels over a maiden’s honor—conforms to this criterion. In addition, the intermingling of the sacred and profane allows the audience/reader to see a broader dimensionality of the woman mystic.

Teresa of Ávila, the protagonist of Lope’s *comedia de santos*, serves as the basis for comparison between the hagiographic depiction of a potential saint or *mujer santa* (as analyzed in the previous sections of this chapter) and those characteristics which Vega chose to highlight for his Golden Age public. How does the playwright Lope de Vega formulate the figure of the female ascetic and mystic for a secular audience compared to Olmos’ portrayal of Nava for a predominantly ecclesiastical readership? The current analysis does not address the historical persona of Teresa of Ávila but the way in which Vega, the Golden Age dramatist, conceptualized the female saint within his *comedia de santos*.

6.4.1 SYNOPSIS OF NAVA’S COMEDIA

Most *comedia a lo divino* adhere to the following schematic structure: Act I deals with the events surrounding the life of the young saint from birth through adolescence. Act II usually highlights the pivotal event of entering a religious order and the protagonist’s separation from society’s structures. Act III, the final act, demonstrates how the saint abides in God’s favor by depicting associated miracles and other mystical experiences. The *comedia a lo divino* especially emphasizes how the saint becomes a mediator between the sacred and secular aspects of society that are in constant conflict thus becoming a living model of Christian behavior. After her separation from society in Act I, the saint reintegrates into society but now under a different status. Teresa Cepeda y Ahumado, the young maiden whom men duel over reappears as Teresa de Jesús, foundress of a new order, the Discalced Carmelites. The play usually ends with the saint’s holy
death signifying true Christian triumph over this world and its evils. Lope’s *Santa Teresa de Jesús* follows this schematic structure despite beginning *in medias res*. There is no mention of infant predestination except in passing: “dos hijas mozás sin madre,/ yo, que soy noble y soy padre” (Vega I.355-59).

Act I of *Vida y Muerte de Santa Teresa* opens with a festive scene depicting the “fiestas de corte” in Ávila where the *galanes*, Don Diego and Don Ramiro are trying to secretly give Teresa love notes (Vega I.4). This sets up the love triangle and the impetus for the sword duels so popular in *comedias*. The next scene finds Don Alonso, Teresa’s father, hosting an elegant dinner or “sarao” which serves as the backdrop for the *de rigueur* confrontation between father and daughter over a woman’s honor. The father, Don Alonso, then declares his intention of marrying off her daughter to one of the suitors. Teresa replies that she does not want to be married but desires to enter a religious order: “no tengo de ser casada.../ Sólo digo/ que ser monja es mi deseo” (Vega I.548-49).

Unbeknownst to Teresa or her father, Don Diego bribes Don Alonso’s servant, Lebrija, to let him into Teresa’s quarters: “Ya llega el punto dichoso,/ que gozar mi gloria espero” (Vega I.638-39). The audience of the time understood the sexual connotation of the term “gozar mi gloria.” Don Ramiro has the same intention. This scene - where the two *galanes* bribe their way into the lady’s room - also occurs in Sor Juana’s play, *Empeños de una casa*, with a similar intended comedic effect. The result is a duel between the two *galanes* interrupted by the arrival of the father. As in *comedias* of the Golden Age, the mere presence of a man in a woman’s quarters is tantamount to the woman being guilty of dishonor and possibly subject to severe punishment. Teresa knows the consequences, “Cuando culpada me hallares, / corta el hilo de mis días” (Vega I.684-85).
Teresa leaves the “sarao” with her brother, Don Juan. She no longer desires to participate in her sexual objectification by her father and the two galanes. In her struggle for self-determination, Teresa must run away.\textsuperscript{534} Teresa tells her brother to inform their father Don Alonso that he is to meet her at the convent of La Encarnación where she will reveal her choice of spouse. Jornada I closes with another version of the comedia de confusiones, but this time the action is between Teresa and the sacristán whom she thinks is the voice of God telling her who she must marry. Teresa is unsure of her religious vocation: “Dios, ¿con cuál marido iré” (Act I, 817). “Caso que yo sea casada, vos, primo, seréis mi esposo” (Act I, 765-6).\textsuperscript{535} Teresa states that she prefers her cousin don Diego over don Ramiro, her father’s choice. Teresa hears a voice and confuses it with God’s voice. Teresa had heard the voice of the Sacristan arguing off stage with Leonido, Don Alonso’s servant: “Esta voz misterio esconde, / pues cuando lo digo yo / que es el cielo quien me habló” (Act I, 823 – 825).\textsuperscript{536} Teresa, upon hearing the “divine” advice, chooses to become the bride of Christ instead of don Diego’s: “Sólo digo / que ser monja es mi deseo” (Act I, 568 - 569).\textsuperscript{537}

Act II moves from the streets of Ávila de the mystical realm and thus is replete with visions. In Teresa’s first vision, an angel declares that Teresa will suffer a divine illness, which after three days will bring her to her deathbed.\textsuperscript{538} Lope insert humor even on Teresa’s deathbed: “Tres doctores la visitan, / y no hay remedio que cuadre” to which Petrona, the graciosa, answers, “Antes me parece, padre, / que su muerte solicitan” (Vega II.73-75).\textsuperscript{539} As in Nava’s manuscript, the divine battle for the nun’s soul encompasses the holy woman’s illness and concomitant mystical experience. On stage, Vega reproduces Teresa’s second vision with Justice carrying a scale, St. Michael, Teresa’s Guardian Angel, and the Devil. As St. Michael, declares: “Es el pleito, Señor, que se litiga / entre el Ángel de Guarda y el Demonio,/ sobre un alma que sale ya del
cuerpo/ de una doña Teresa de Ahumada,/ monja profesa en la ciudad de Ávila” (Vega II.162-66).\textsuperscript{540} A theological debate ensues between the Angel and the Devil on the merits of letting Teresa live or die. The Angel asks the Devil: “Supuesto que si muere ha de salvarse,/ ¿de qué te sirve, a ti que agora muera?”\textsuperscript{541} The Devil responds, “Temo/ … Que si agora vive,/ ha de sacar de mis ardientes uñas/ más almas que la Libia tiene arenas/ y que el fúlgido sol menudos átomos” (Vega II.188-91).\textsuperscript{542} The divine battle for Teresa’s soul ends when Justice pronounces that she shall live.\textsuperscript{543}

Teresa informs Fray Mariano, her confessor, that the celestial vision announced her recovery from the brink of death. Fray Mariano requests that Teresa recount her vision so the Church can ascertain its orthodoxy and providence.\textsuperscript{544} Olmos also requested from Nava the same accounting. Teresa will only tell of her vision under the protection of the confessional.\textsuperscript{545} Teresa substantiates her vision by declaring that she has had three subsequent visions of Jesus to confirm it.\textsuperscript{546} Regardless of Teresa’s insistence, Fray Mariano believes the visions are not divinely inspired, “El demonio fue, sin duda,/ pues tantas formas tomó” (Vega II.354-60). Teresa refuses to disavow the mystical experience. Invoking ecclesiastical powers, Mariano orders Teresa to repudiate the visions. He justifies this action with the logic that if the Devil can deceive even learned men, he inevitably can deceive a woman.\textsuperscript{547}

When Jesus reappears to Teresa in the form of the Blessed Child, she faces a major dilemma for many mystical female authors: to obey their confessor and ignore to their visions or to heed the divine visions.\textsuperscript{548} Teresa tries to run away from the vision of Jesus but St. Paul and St. Peter impede her escape. What ensues is Lope’s humorous debate on the vow of obedience: “Por obedecer, Señor; / perdonadme si os ofendo; / y si peco obedeciendo, / culpad a mi confesor” (Vega II.436-39).\textsuperscript{549}
In recognition of Teresa’s obedience, the Child Jesus grants her a mystical espousal to become His beloved “Esposa” (Vega II.440). Teresa reciprocates in kind, “mi Esposo” (Vega II.480). The Child Jesus, as the Beloved, gives Teresa a gift, a diamond cross to affix on her Rosary. The second favor the Child Jesus grants Teresa is the foundation of her convent even if insurmountable odds may arise. Fray Mariano declares that Teresa’s miraculous recovery from her illness was the divine seal of approval to found her convent. Teresa’s transformation is now complete: from the beloved of two galanes (Teresa de Ahumado) to the beloved of Jesus (Teresa de Jesús). Lope makes it clear that Teresa can now leave the cloister at will to found her first reformed convent.

Next Teresa’s sister, Doña Juana, and the Abbess come to inform her of grave problems: the ecclesiastical authorities (the local Bishop) and the governmental authorities (the Consistorio) oppose the new Order. Doña Juana believes that Teresa’s jilted lovers – the galanes Don Diego and Don Ramiro – are blocking approval of the license for the new mendicant order. Unable to marry Teresa, the frustrated men now pursue her sister Doña Juana. She in turn is in love with another, Juan del Valle. In reality, the primary opposition comes from the mendicant nature of Teresa’s new religious order. Society dictates that no unaccompanied woman may walk its streets, especially one from the upper classes that include the professed nuns of Teresa’s order.

In a divine deus ex machina, the Child Jesus, as promised, resolves many obstacles to the foundation of the mendicant order: first, even though don Diego still loves Doña Juana, a change of heart results in his dropping opposition as regidor (Vega II.680-709); Juan del Valle receives a windfall of money and donates “quinientos reales” to repair the house intended for the convent's home (Vega II.709); and the celestial workers renovating the house refuse payment. Jornada II ends with one more miracle: the direct intervention of Teresa to prevent the death of Juan del Valle.
in a duel with Don Diego over the former’s intention of marrying Doña Juana. Don Diego cannot move his sword arm to kill Juan del Valle because of Teresa’s divine intervention.

Act III leaps forward in time. Lope de Vega has Teresa expediently detail the seventeen convents she has founded in the different cities of Spain. Following this monologue, the scene is set for Teresa’s spectacular miracle in the city of Alba: her revival of her presumed dead nephew, don Gonzalo. Juan del Valle, now married to Teresa’s sister Doña Juana, escorts Teresa to his home in Alba to intercede for the health of his son. This topic lends itself to many heart-wrenching scenes that add to the sensationalist aspects of the play. Again, Lope de Vega intermingles humor in the midst of a serious scene, this time using the voice of the graciosa Petrona to make light of the ascetic lifestyle of Teresa, “con siete misas y una disciplina/ suele desayunarse la conciencia” (Act III, 107-8). Before presenting Teresa’s impressive miracle, Vega introduces a suspenseful scene that stresses the importance of relics as causal agents of miracles: Teresa cuts her finger and Juan del Valle uses his “pañuelo,” or handkerchief, to deal with her small wound. Unbeknownst to Juan, don Diego lies in wait to ambush and shoot him. High dramatic tension persists as all realize that Juan del Valle is not dead: the handkerchief, stained with Teresa’s blood, has miraculously stopped the bullet. Don Diego realizes that divine intervention has saved Juan del Valle’s life. Deeply affected by the miracle, Don Diego tells Teresa that he wants to become the first male monk of her order.

By the time Juan del Valle and Teresa make it to Alba, Juan's son don Gonzalo has died and his body taken away. Teresa confidently tells the parents that God will save the child and asks that the child be brought to her. Teresa, assuming her role as beloved of Christ just as Nava does in her visions, asks Jesus to grant her the favor of her nephew’s life. In the midst of the family’s
joy over the child's recovery, the restored Gonzálo reproves his aunt Teresa for bringing him back to life.568

Before the end of the comedia, Vega presents the essential last moments of a woman's consideration as a potential saint: a holy death and the requisite posthumous miracles. The closing act begins with Teresa leaving her sister’s house to return to her convent. Again, Teresa falls deathly ill. Before she begins a litany describing her divine sickness, Vega uses Petrona to provide more comic relief: the graciosa tells the audience of her importance in the labor and founding all the convents.569 Due to all the walking involved, with self-deprecating humor she refers to herself as the Dromedary nun.570

To further delay Teresa’s death, Vega inserts a monologue where Teresa speaks directly to the audience. She carries a cross as a symbol that the suffering caused by her illness unites her with the suffering Christ on the Cross. Immediately after the monologue, Vega presents the sixth vision of the comedia in an exchange between Teresa and her Beloved Spouse: Jesus asks Teresa to hand over her “cross” since her work is done (Vega III.642). Teresa dies two days later.571

Vega presents a series of three posthumous miracles to underscore Teresa’s saintliness (at the time of this play's presentation, the real Teresa's canonization had not yet taken place). Only Fray Mariano and Juan del Valle are privy to the miracle of seeing Teresa’s soul leave her body in the form of a dove.572 Not one to be left out, don Diego exclaims that now he smells a heavenly odor emanating from Teresa’s deceased body, as does doña Juana.573 The Church believes that at the death of a truly holy woman an effusive smell, sometimes of roses, confirms that she has gone directly to Heaven. The only one at Teresa’s deathbed who cannot smell this heavenly perfume is the graciosa, Petrona. Teresa performs one last miracle for her faithful companion, allowing her to smell the heavenly perfume.574 In the last scene, shouts occur offstage. These shouts represent the
townspeople who want to see “la santa madre” (Act III 842). This is an obvious reinforcement of Vega’s depiction of Teresa as a saint.

6.4.2 TRANSGRESSIONS AND COMPARISONS

Lope de Vega’s comedia, *Santa Teresa de Jesús*, does not present the *mujer santa* protagonist as a complex dramatic figure but “an uncomplicated portrait of the female saint: a person dedicated but obedient, humble but miracle-working, practical but mystical- and always ascetic” (Morrison 109). Lope did not create a dramatic character in the vein of a *La Celstina* or a *don Juan*. He had two objectives: entertainment and propaganda. Lope entertains his audience with many elements of the subgenre of cape-and-sword, and comedy of confusions. Lope does not explore profound theological questions (as in *El Mágico Prodigioso* written by Calderón) but merely presents some elements useful to Teresa de Ávila’s canonization process. Therefore, within the religious and social context of the Golden Age, the figure of the *muger santa* or holy woman should be viewed as a model to be emulated. The qualities of a potential saint - submissiveness, obedience, humility, faith, and hard work - are foremost in an author’s mind.

This section compares the figure of the *mujer santa*, as presented by Lope de Vega, with the textual representation of Gerónima Nava y Saavedra in “Autobiografía.” This comparative analysis is based on the three roles a *muger santa* occupies within a *comedia*: desired object, desiring subject, or symbolic authority that can mediate the desires of others before God. Interestingly, these three roles loosely correspond to each of the three acts in the *comedias* under consideration: Act I- desired object/marriageable girl; Act II- desiring subject/chooses religious life; Act III – symbolic authority/miracle purveyor. The authors present Teresa and Nava as fluid figures occupying all three roles.
The *muger santa*, as do many of the female characters in *comedias*, begins her journey as a desired object. Teresa and Nava, both marriageable young women of the upper classes, must confront the authority of their fathers who determines their station in life (marriage or convent). The head of family fiercely guards his daughter’s virtue, a symbol of his family’s honor: “Quien tiene hijas que casar, / de vidrio tiene el honor.” (Act I, 338-339). Gascón underscores that “[i]n Golden Age literature, what a daughter decides to do with her body may impact a family’s honor or socioeconomic status while a son’s actions may not” (17). The characters of Teresa and Nava temporarily remain desirable objects even after each enters the convent. Their subsequent "forbidden" status is a catalyst for male desire rather than an ardor-dampening obstacle. Vega portrays the *galán*, Don Diego, continuously pursuing Teresa throughout the *comedia*. Eventually he relents and becomes a monk whereby he sublimates his love for Teresa in love for God. Nava’s *galán de monjas* is the unnamed individual who caused her so much spiritual turmoil.

Teresa and Nava’s mutual role as desiring subjects is in opposition to the societal prescriptive of woman as desired object. Both resist sexual objectification by choosing the conventual life. This choice is their first act as desiring subjects. Lope seems to question the patriarchal right of a father to choose a spouse for their daughter in the following scene where Teresa’s challenges her father’s authority: “Si ellos me quieren amar, / ¿puedo hacer que no me amen?/ No tengo yo poderío / contra su amoroso abismo:/ que los hombres, aun Dios mismo/ les deja el libre albedrío” (Vega I.709-14). Her father responds by giving her the right to choose, but only between the two *galanes*. Teresa responds: “y por no dejar celoso / a ninguno de los dos, / nombro por esposo a Dios, / que es el verdadero esposo” (Vega I.914-21). Nava’s father, for expediency, gives Nava and her sister the freedom to choose the conventual life. Men do not confront familial opposition when they turn to asceticism. Don Alonso reminds the audience of this
duality when he sarcastically states: “Mira que no estás en ti; / de tu provecho te olvidas: / que si llegamos a cuentas, / pocas monjas hay contentas, / y muchas arrepentidas” (Vega I.607-11).  

The representation of *muger santa* as a bride of Christ is commonly used by hagiographers to represent female saints in contrast to male saints who are portrayed as “founders, prophets, and apostles representing God on earth…” (Gascón 70). Even though Teresa founds a new religious order and Nava usurps ecclesiastical powers reserved for men, the defining image of these women is their mystical relationship with God as *sponsa di Christi*. For example, *The Extasis de Santa Teresa* focuses on the paradigmatic image of a female mystic in the moment of ecstatic union instead of depicting the foundress of the Reformed Carmelite order. The patristic notion adopted by Lope and Olmos represents these two mystics using the language and imagery of marriage, often with sensual undertones.  

The *muger santa* can assume the role of a symbolic authority that can mediate the desire of others as intercessor before God. This intercessory role is Teresa and Nava’s most important manifestation. To portray this role, Teresa and Nava must embody the characteristics of the *muger varonil*. The hermit Mariano declares that Teresa, “donde ha de tener por nombre/ mujer varonil y fuerte” as an explanation for her success (Act II, 55-56). Olmos repeats the same words in regards to Nava. Teresa’s transformation is now complete… Teresa is no longer the marriageable young woman Teresa de Ahumado but the *mujer varonil* Teresa of Ávila who travels around Spain establishing convents without having to cross-dress like Erauso.

### 6.5 BEYOND THE CLOISTER WALLS

Both Nava and the protagonist Teresa are depicted as a self-assured mystics and writers. They are confident enough to place themselves outside the female norm by appropriating male clerical roles and portraying themselves as active participants in their interactions with their
convivial world and God. Through her images and rhetorical style, the reader sees Nava as a desiring subject contemplating and defining her own desires. Lope de Vega also portrays Teresa in that same light. They both took recognized symbols of authority and subtly incorporated them into their convivial identity. Nava’s manuscript and life as well as Teresa's portrayal are full of paradoxical tensions common to the Baroque milieu. Nava constructs herself as an entity that accepts submission as an important element of her identity. Nava pairs and contrasts this act of self-negation with elements that affirm her subjectivity and agency. These tensions are necessary to produce the mystical, autobiographical and confessional text “Autobiografía.” As Robledo contends, mystical texts like Nava’s are palimpsest under whose surfaces lay hidden meanings that can be uncovered through a close and careful reading (Robledo 16).

Careful reading of the comedia divina alongside "Autobiografía" uncovers for the modern reader a woman who defied societal constraint. In so doing, Nava found her voices in spite of all the societal and ecclesiastical restrictions set in place. She was able to transgress the seemingly insurmountable boundaries set up around her –including the cloister walls.
CHAPTER 7
WORLD IN FRONT OF THE TEXT:
READER-CENTERED READING

For Sandra Schneiders, understanding the social context of the author (Chapters 2 and 3) as well as the reader’s is necessary to discern the relationship between the conventual manuscripts (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and their subjects (Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava). Reader-response theory sometimes favors the reader whereby meaning is dialogic – the text has no fixed and final meaning. Schneiders’ Three-World approach parallels a communication matrix whereby the sender is the conventual author (Chapter 2 and 3), the message is the manuscript (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and the receiver is the reader (Chapter 7). The scholar describes this interaction as analogous to reading the musical score of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony and hearing it performed in a concert hall. A text’s interpretation will be impaired when any of these Worlds are given interpretive predominance.

7.1 WORLD IN FRONT OF THE TEXT IMPACTS:
PERSONAL CONTEXT AS INTERPRETIVE LENS

Modern day readers read from their own context -gender, experience and culture-that interacts with the conventual manuscripts to produce meaning; they use their personal context as interpretive lens. The meaning they arrive at may be valuable for the modern reader but it may not be the one intended by the conventual author. This dissertation aimed to bridge this gap. The intention of the critical inquiry into Erauso’s, Sor Juana’s and Nava’s texts was to assess, describe and evaluate its content. This inquiry is akin to an act of translation. The modern day reader needs to be bilingual, fluent in the Baroque discourse of the seventeenth-century, especially the distinct
manifestations of Baroque Catholic spirituality. The critical “translation” can never equal the original since many of the linguistic and cultural nuances cannot be fully transmitted in modern terms. This fluency is acquired through the process of reconstructing the multiple linguistic, cultural, and historical forces that went into the creation of the text. The reader should keep in mind and take responsibility for any additions or exclusions involved in the reading project. This is a reflexive and self-critical approach to the reading of the conventual texts. With each additional reading, the modern day reader bring new experiences, thus it is never a finished process. With each interpretation, the reader becomes the “new author” of these conventual texts. Fluency provides the opportunity to make visible what is hidden under the obfuscation of religion, cultural, and time. And what is hidden are the exceptional woman they were with all their accomplishments and flaws not just stylized Baroque caricatures.

7.2 WORLD BEHIND THE TEXT REPRISE

Catalina de Erauso, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Madre Gerónima Nava y Saavedra were extraordinary women: Erauso engaged the King of Spain, Sor Juana was named the 10th Muse by the Vicereine, and Nava was considered a proto-saint. They were not typical representations of early modern women or those that inhabited the convents of Colonial Spanish America. Their manuscripts tell us first and foremost their self-perception. They self-identified as empowered female protagonists in their Vidas and comedias capable of directing their lives to reach their goals.

As Teresa Soufas emphasizes, conventual authors were not “linguistically disempowered woman” ("Feminist Approach" 132). Their narratives call attention to their actions over submissiveness even at a time when women were denied access to institutional power. They “speak” as though their audiences found acceptable women who engaged others in the public sphere, had intellectual freedom, or spoke directly to God without priestly intermediary. The
convetual writer though seemingly controlled by outside forces has taken control of her own voice. Vollendorf’s historical research substantiates that early modern Spanish women’s story relates more than oppression and submission. In the port of Seville, woman ran their husband’s businesses when they left for the Americas, they had more legal protection than many of their European contemporaries, and aristocratic woman exercised control over political affairs (Lives 4-5).

Erauso, Nava and Sor Juana not only tested and transgressed the conventual spatial boundaries they were able to transform this obstacle into something unique, a polyvocal and polysemous conventual manuscript. Their distinct voices were derived from their lived realities (female bodies) and their own way of pursuing knowledge. Sor Juana was self-educated in lieu of an institutional education prohibited to women. Nava on the other hand received her knowledge not through intellectual endeavors but infused by divine source or luses divinas. Erauso acquired experiential knowledge on the battlefield.

Highlighting Erauso, Sor Juana, and Nava’s agency reflects a feminist perspective on history: the role women play in the formation and recording of their own history. Their texts participate in the task of elucidating the history of gender and gender relations; albeit a narrow construct since only elite women of the early modern era were considered. Previous scholarship explored women’s roles primarily based on male-dominated institutions and male-authored texts. This work led to a skewed perception of early modern woman’s agency. Giving primacy to female-authored text such as those under consideration, they contribute to a more holistic understanding of the construction of gender in their era. Their manuscripts provide a unique commentary on how women could circumvent the strictly defined gender roles. Therefore, their manuscripts serve as a bridge between the life women were expected to live (as set out in manuales de mugeres) and the
life they wanted to live. Their life choices challenged the social, cultural and religious attitudes and codes of conduct that constrained women physically, mentally and spiritually within the walls of the convent.

The conventual authors document their battle between their claim to masculine privileges (participate in the public sphere as a soldier, playwright, or a mystic) and society’s prescriptive behavioral norms which emphasized a woman’s enclosure in the home or cloister. Through their Vidas, they created an alternative gender narrative for their contemporary audiences even if that was not their conscious intention. Their text portray woman who were able to circumnavigate social and ecclesiastical obstacles. Erauso obtained permission to legally live out her life as a man with all the privileges it entailed. Sor Juana skillfully rebutted the Bishop of Puebla while concomitantly advocating women’s right to learn. Sor Juana wanted more education for woman than the limited exposure that Fray Luis de León or Juan Luis Vives endorsed: only the necessary to ensure that women were “La perfecta casada.” Nava’s vision-filled manuscript underscored a woman’s right to commune directly with God without clerical intermediaries and making God more accessible to the unlettered. Thus they challenged gender norms formulated by the male intellectual structures and institutions like the Church and Crown - the most important frameworks for gender norms in early modern society. Either as playwrights, authors or protagonists, they present themselves as destabilizing elements. Nonetheless, their contestatory voice paradoxically propagated the hegemonic discourse.

Their empowering message was in direct conflict with the Inquisition’s goal of controlling religious practice and expression. The Inquisition also monitored the expressions of femininity and masculinity evidenced in the underlying tensions present in manuscripts and comedias in regards to cross-dressing. The conventual authors challenged
the status quo by donning the external or internal characteristics of a man. Both Sor Juana and Erauso wished to dress as men as it meant freedom. For Sor Juana, it meant the freedom to further her studies; for Erauso it meant to travel unencumbered in male public spaces. Castaño, the graciosos in Sor Juana’s comedia, takes advantage of cross-dressing to move unencumbered in the feminine spaces of the house to escape death. Their cross-dressing went further than outward appearance. The mystic also cross-dresses in the sense that her “divine” identity permits her to access male public spaces such as the protagonist Teresa travelling unaccompanied (with the graciosa) throughout Spain to found her monasteries, and Nava running errands that permits her to encounter the “sujeto” that causes her such spiritual turmoil. Nava’s varonil soul permits her to engage in clerical roles. Sor Juana intelecto varonil permits her to be an exegete (La Respuesta) and a playwright (Los empeños de una casa).

7.2.1 ACCEPTANCE DESPITE TRANSGRESSION

Either as conventual authors, playwrights, or protagonists in comedias, Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava present themselves as destabilizing elements in Colonial society. These mugeres varoniles do not conform to patriarchal normative practices. Both Nava and Sor Juana are depicted as learned women who could discuss theological issues with the intellectual elite in Mexico City and Bogotá. Erauso demands from the Crown the privileges and recompense she knows she has earned as a lieutenant in the King’s army. Chapter 2 and 3 were foundational to explain why they were accepted or at least not subjected to Inquisitorial censure. Even though their actions could be perceived as religious transgressions, they nonetheless furthered the Church’s ideals. They represented the Church’s understanding of mystical encounter with Christ in uniquely feminine ways. The Church held women in a special place evidenced by the pantheon of mystical
foremothers. Erauso saved her own life by identifying as a member the elite and privileged group of conventual inhabitants. Even though Erauso presented an image of transgression, nonetheless she aligned her actions in accordance to the Crown by participating in the Conquest of the New World.

Baroque concept of a monstrosity or “prodigio” serves as an archetype to understand the process by which new forms of understanding were introduced into Early Modern Spanish society. In order to accommodate Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava’s transgressive female modality within their midst, society was compelled to perceive them as “prodigios” —warrior, muse, goddess— or Baroque monstrosities. Their Vidas acted as a prism refracting their hybrid nature. This process of acceptance was furthered on the stages of the corrales de comedia. Society’s acceptance, approval, and affection for the hybrid (monstrous) figure of the muger varonil, muger esquiva, and muger santa presented routinely in the comedias are thus transferred to the conventual writers.

7.3 WORLD OF THE TEXT REPRISE: GENDER DETERMINES GENRE

Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava’s gender and the specific area of female gender prescriptive behavior they chose to battle against, determined the genre they employed. Erauso appropriated the male genre of a soldier’s tale; Sor Juana, the comedia and essay; and Nava the hagiographic autobiography. As a group, their texts loosely conform to the Vida storyline: a text that presents the author’s self-awareness of their transformation from daughters of Eve into a religious woman worthy of emulation. As Vidas, they necessarily take on the characteristic of an extended examination of conscious. Note the many sins that Erauso details such as her dueling.

This study revealed that the structure of their Vidas parallels the structure of religious comedia. In the Spanish Golden Age theo-centric world view, society seamlessly comingled the religious and the mundane. Each narrative, Vida or comedia, begins with an exposition detailing
Erauso, Sor Juana’s and Nava’s affiliation to the elite class. Next follows a series of complications.

Erauso rejects her conscription into the legion of submissive women. Sor Juana questions why she can’t receive a classical education and still be obedient and faithful the Church. The sensual temptations caused by the unnamed “sujeto” represent Nava’s spiritual crisis.” As in most comedias, order must be restored to the on-stage society at the time of the denouement. Erauso submits to live two years as a nun until she is recognized legally as a man by the King and Pope. Olmos verifies that Nava is a bride of Christ and has ecclesiastical approval of her mystical communication with God. Sor Juana’s silence may initially seem to suggest that clerical control has prevailed through the Bishops’ strong armed intimidation. Many would assume that Sor Juana did not live out the life she wanted as an intellectual and artist, but there is no way to confirm that her withdrawal from the world was not part of the contemptus mundi stage of her mystical path. Scholars may still find a manuscript explaining her silence. She sublimated her love for knowledge into love for God. Nonetheless, as an artist, Sor Juana was successful. Not many early modern female playwrights had their works published. I would like to believe that Sor Juana’s independent voice was still heard in her time even though it may have sounded like silence.

The associated manuscripts (male-authored texts and comedias) give us a glimpse into the assumptions of the people who admired these women. As a screen on which the era is projected, we glean from these texts information regarding what the conventual author’s contemporaries found valuable or awe-inspiring in their embodiment as soldier-nun, intellectual-nun and mystic-nun. Their positive assessment is confirmed by the mention of their exemplary deaths, “attended by the most important people of the town, for she had been loved by all of the nuns and priests in the regions, and they gave her a sumptuous requiem and an honors sepulcher” (Stepto and Stepto
Society’s admiration for exceptional women was more prevalent than our modern understanding would lead us to believe as evidenced by the pantheon of female mystics.

In addition, analysis of the dramatic author’s portrayal of the female protagonist, especially the transformation of their *muger religosa* into a *muger varonil, muger esquiva, and muger santa* revealed the playwrights’ own concerns. Montalbán, Sor Juana and Lope imbued their female protagonist with elements that expressed their personal crisis. Montalbán’s play disguises Spanish society’s anti-Semitic sentiment with the female protagonist troubles. Sor Juana’s cross-dressed *gracioso* argued against the artificiality of female adornments as defining elements for women. Lope de Vega promoted that entertainment and orthodoxy can go hand in hand.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The dissertation’s goal was to provide more insight into the world of Erauso, Sor Juana and Nava to assist the modern secular reader in making a more informed interpretation of their conventual manuscript. Therefore, the importance of these women and their textual voices are not lost in the obfuscation of Baroque discourse. By adding little known voices such as Nava’s, this study aims to reduce the distortion in the feminine voice caused by the absence of manuscripts that did not make into the canon. In the end, nobody is saved by the facts of their lives as laid out in a critical inquiry. It is their story that keeps them alive for us today. The swashbuckling Erauso, Nava’s courageous epistolary stance, and Nava’s mystical love story will hopefully motivate scholars and non-scholars alike to share their *Vidas* and lives.
remarkable absence or subordination of women in the narratives of the “rise of civilization,” their particularity in
enforces priorities, repressed some subjects in the name of the greater importance of others…” (Scott 9).

The discrepancy on the date of Erauso’s birth is analyzed by Rima de Vallbona on pages 13-14 of Vida i sucesos.

Mabel Moraña has pointed out that the term has been applied to various cultural products produced during different historical time periods. This observation is contrary to strict historiographical use of the term that I use in this study, the culture of seventeenth century Spain and Spanish America (Mabel 222).

The feminist criticism perspective of gynocritics echoes New Historicism, in that it blurs the lines of academic frontiers. My translation: “the Spanish Baroque is considered an art that for some celebrates the power of Imperial Spain; for others, it is the
“grandiloquent and propagandist language through which the crisis of the empire is expressed” (Showalter "Feminist Poetics" 28)

1 The discrepancy on the date of Erauso’s birth is analyzed by Rima de Vallbona on pages 13-14 of Vida i sucesos.

2 For expediency, I refer to the conventual writers from now on using abbreviated names: Nava, Erauso and Sor Juana

3 Seventeenth-century New Spain includes what today is Mexico, Central America, Florida, and southwestern United States. Mexico City was the imperial center of the Spanish colonial world.

4 Lisa Vollendorf’s The Lives of Women. A New History of Inquisitional Spain provides a broad range of female writers, both religious and secular, in early modern Spain.

5 Androniki Dialeti points out that defenders of women and their rights have existed since medieval times. Giovanni Boccaccio wrote the first collection of exclusively female biographies that bring women to the historical foreground in De mulieribus claris in1362 (2).

6 Lisa Vollendorf’s The Lives of Women offers many insights into how Spanish society reacted and was affected by the publication of the first fiction and non-fiction works written by women about women.

7 Scott questions and criticizes the dominant male perspective of history: “The form that knowledge has taken - the remarkable absence or subordination of women in the narratives of the “rise of civilization,” their particularity in relation to Universal Man, their confinement to studies of the domestic and private - indicates a politics that sets and enforces priorities, repressed some subjects in the name of the greater importance of others…” (Scott 9).

8 From now on the shortened title Santa Teresa de Jesús will be used.

9 The term “New Historicism” was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt. His book Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare (1980) is considered the origin of this literary critical practice. As Stephen Greenblatt himself points out in the introduction to The New Historicism, a series of essays that discusses his approach, New Historicism is “a practice rather than a doctrine, since as far as I can tell (and I should be the one to know) it’s no doctrine at all” (Greenblatt 1).

10 Even though Greenblatt now favors the term “Poetics of Culture” to New Historicism to represent the type of critical inquiry he does, I use the more recognized term of New Historicism. Hayden White gives a working definition that explicates the “poetic” aspect of this critical method, which will figure prominently in my approach to the conventual texts: “in the sense of ‘creative’ … in that they appear to escape, transcend, contravene, undermine, or contest the rule, laws, and principles of the modes of social organization, structures of political superordination and subordination, and cultural codes predominating at the time of their appearance. In this respect, they can be said to resemble poetic speech which, even though it may contravene the rules of both grammar and logic, not only has meaning, but also always implicitly challenges the canonical rules of linguistic expression prevailing at the time of its utterance.” (301)

11 Aram Veeser calls attention to another aspect of New Historicism that is crucial to this study, in that it “brackets together literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and other disciplines and sciences,” which will supplement and expand the analysis of the conventual texts. (xi) Thus, this dissertation will include analysis that goes beyond traditional literary criticism. New Historians like Jane Marcus, Louis Montrose, and Hayden White participate in this debate that seeks to blur the academic frontiers between literature and historical endeavors. This blurring can be observed in Jane Marcus’ interrogative: “If all history (or at least historiography) is fiction, as contemporary theorists tell us, an interesting question for literary critics is whether all fiction is history. It is easy for the literary critics to accept the new narrativity of historians and, since Michel Foucault, the study of history as a discourse. Can historians, accustomed to raiding the literature of an age for examples, accept an equal revelatory force in fiction as in events as evidence of lived reality” (133).

12 The feminist criticism perspective of gynocritics echoes New Historicism, in that it blurs the lines of academic frontiers. “Gynocritics is related to feminist research in history, anthropology, psychology and sociology, all of which have developed hypotheses of a female subculture including not only the ascribed status, and the internalized constructs of feminity, but also the occupations, interaction and consciousness of women.” (Showalter "Feminist Poetics" 28)

13 “It was in 1639-40 that the interaction of events in the Old World and the New reached a climax which effectively destroyed the Spanish Monarchy as a great international power” (Elliot 100).

14 My translation: “the Spanish Baroque is considered an art that for some celebrates the power of Imperial Spain; for others, it is the grandiloquent and propagandist language through which the crisis of the empire is expressed”
Gerard Genette and Michel Foucault turned their attention to the European Baroque, especially France.

16 The concept of monstrosity and its relationship with the conventual authors is analyzed in the next section.
17 Picón Salas’s classic study is De la Conquista a la Independencia (1944).
18 My translation. “as a peripheral area, the Baroque vice-regal culture is conditioned by the hegemonic ideology”
19 New World Baroque theory is “a poetic appeal for restitution” that does not place colonial Spanish America’s cultural production in a subordinate position in regards to the Spain’s Baroque ((Salgado)
20 Life Is a Dream was written by Pedro Calderón de laBarca in 1635. The play includes the protagonist, Segismundo, Prince of Poland and the muger varonil, Rosaura.
21 In Ambroise Paré’s Preface he explains the difference between monsters and marvels: “Monsters are things that appear outside the course of Nature (and are usually signs of some forth-coming misfortune), such as a child who is born with one arm, another who will have two heads, and additional members over and above the ordinary. Marvels are things which happen that are completely against Nature as when a woman will give birth to a serpent, or to a dog, or some other thing that is totally against Natures…” (3).
22 Ambroise then goes on to explain at least 13 causes for monsters.
23 My translation: “By extension, it can refer to anything that is excessively grand or extraordinary in any sense”
24 My translation: “a variety of deformed and monstrous aberrations that inhabit many of the Spanish seventeenth century texts.”
25 My translation: “in the Spanish Baroque esthetic, the monstrous is constituted by an imaginative force that contradicts the classical and harmonious norms.”
26 Treasure of the Castilian Language
27 My translation: “any birth against natural rule and order” such as “a man that is born with two heads, four arms and four legs”.
28 My translation “birth or production against the regular order of Nature… a Monster is none other than Nature’s sin, that by defect o excess, does not acquire the perfection that a living being should have.”
29 My translation: “behavioral defects, defining monstrosity as a grave disorder in proportion to that which things should have, according to what is natural or regular … in the physical realm as in the moral.”
30 My translation: “the merely ugly, repugnant and fearsome)
31 “any birth against natural rule and order”
32 “birth or production against the regular order of Nature
33 “it must be the object or subject of the action.. it will not be the monster if it is not more than a circumstantial occurrence within a chain of events”
34 The following quote informs the understanding of many early modern Spanish texts, “Inordinate sexual desire was understood to be a fundamental feature of Woman since the time of Aristotle and before…” from (Rhodes “Gender and the Monstrous in El burlador de Sevilla”)
35 “Therefore, the multiplicity is for Covarrubias one of the distinctive characteristics of the monster, it is the origin of its exceptionality. We must not forget that the monstrous can be formed from beings that posses multiple or disproportionate attributes, or from the combination of multiple beings in one… this conflict with the normal that surges from the multiplicity proper of the monster, from a metamorphosis that begins from the combination of distinct elements, conforms the basis of the theatrical theory of Lope and the audience’s appetite for variety”
36 “The theatrical piece itself is a monster that fascinates the popular audience just as much as rare and marvelous beings”
37 See (Kluge 298). The mixture of genres began much earlier with Fernando de Roja’s Celestina: Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea (1499).
38 “birth or production against the regular order of Nature
39 My translation: “By extension, it can refer to anything that is excessively grand or extraordinary in any sense.”
40 “in its practical application, ‘monster’ serves to qualify anything that exceeds the limits of what is common, be it good or bad”
41 “if for Horace the monstrous represents the vices of bad literature, for the Spanish dramaturge [Lope], the monstrous is precisely the basis of his new theater”

42 “el carácter más intrínseco del monstruo” la urgencia de ser mostrado, de ser visto” (“Veréis” 371).
43 My translation, “the artificial and the rare, embodied in the image of a monster, is more efficacious to conquer an audience.”
44 “the monstrous is then an prototype to understand the process by which new forms of understanding were introduced in Spain”
45 For historical overview see Elliott – Spain and Its World/ Kamen, Empire and Inquisition and Society in Spain / Ruiz, Spanish Society
46 In English the use of the term convent is customary for female foundations which were usually urban, and the term monastery for male and considered agrarian foundations. I shall follow the same usage.
47 Sor María de Ágreda was said to have miraculously appeared to Native Indians on the northern frontier influencing them to Christianity and Spanish rule.
48 From the inception of the New World, the Catholic Church, in the figure of Queen Isabelle, La Católica, was an active participant. The centrality of the Catholic worldview in the Conquest of the New World is exemplified by Herán Cortés’ plan to establish a
new social order of Spaniards and Indian based on a vision held by the Franciscan monks who arrived in 1523, with a “burning desire to establish, in a Mexico still uncorrupted by European vices, a replica of the church of the apostles” (Elliott Spain 38).

The subtitle of this section, A Room of Their Own, is an adaptation of Virginia Woolf’s, A Room of One’s Own (1929). In this book, Woolf calls for the creation of a history of women, “I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history… but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety?” (68).

See See Úrsula Suarez’ (Suárez 196-97) and Nava’s Vidas (Robledo 39)Nava for a description of servants and slaves within the convents.

“The harsh economic climate of early modern Spain made convent life an increasingly attractive option for the daughters of many aristocratic families” (Haliczer 82). “Many nuns in Renaissance Europe did not willingly enter the convent; rather, it was common practice for noble father to consign their daughter to monasteries in order to preserve the family fortune instead of forfeiting dowries to other noble families”(Gascón 29).

Francis Turner determined the approximate value of a peso in the seventeenth century of $70.00.

And it shall not be lawful for any one, of whatso ever birth, or condition, sex, or age, to enter within the enclosure of a nunnery, whether the permission of the bishop, or of the Superior, obtained in writing, under the pain of excommunication to be ipso facto incurred. But the bishop or the Superior ought to grant this permission in necessary cases only; nor shall any other person be able by any means to grant it, even by virtue of any faculty, or indult, already granted, or that may hereafter be granted.” (Capuchines, Clarissan Urbanists).

Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America

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The Inquisition would not arrive to Colonial Spanish America till 1571. During the period under investigation, the Inquisition was under the leadership of Diego de Arce y Reynoso, Inquisitor General from 1643-1655.

The principal religious conventual orders were Augustinians, Conceptionists, Discalced Carmelites, Dominicans, and Franciscans (Capuchines, Clarissan Urbanists).

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51

The religious order founded by St. Angela de Merici in Italy in the sixteenth century for the specific purpose of educating young girls and thus became the first teaching order of women established in the Church.

Marie de Incarnation was a pioneer of education in the New World.

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The Congregation of the Inquisition list of forbidden readings for the year 1681. The commission which proscribed Sor María de Agreda’s manuscript “included thirty-two sessions … during which 132 doctors spoke” (Campbell 229).

Dexamiento is the Spanish term for a state of mystical abandonment or “state of quiet”. For a more detailed explanation see the chapter “Dejamiento and its Practitioners” by Alastair Hamilton in the recently published A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism (Hamilton 103-24). Dexamiento should not be confused with the mystical recogimiento or gathering of the senses practiced by the Franciscans in the fifteenth century (Hamilton 106).

Fray Luis de León (1527-1591) is best known for his treatise The Names of Christ and a popular work in prose titled The Perfect Wife.

Though Teresa of Ávila had many critics and detractors, she also had powerful allies. Antonio de Quevedo “felt called upon to justify mysticism as part of the doctrine that the Catholic Church had always followed” (Ahlgren 127).

As Ahlgren notes, “Teresa’s integration of visionary experience into the mystical journey differentiates her doctrine from other [male] desictions of mystical union, underscoring a visionary epistemology that makes God more accessible to the unlettered. Teresa’s empowering message was in direct conflict with the Inquisition’s goal of monitoring and controlling religious practice” (142).

St. Teresa, Teresa of Ávila and Teresa de Jesús all refer to Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Dávila y Ahumada, born in Ávila, Spain, on March 28, 1515, and died at Alba de Tormes on 4 October 4, 1582. Teresa entered the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Ávila which had a relatively relaxed enforcement of conventual rules. After much opposition, Teresa founded the convent of Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph (a reformed order) in Ávila on August 24, 1562.

Teresa of Ávila wrote several spiritual works - Camino de perfeccion (The Way of Perfection); Libro de lasfundaciones (Foundations); Moradasdel castillo interior (The Interior Castle) as well as her autobiography Vida, which was appropriated by the Inquisition.

The Valèz Index of 1559 reflected the “anti-mystical trend” in Spain of the sixteenth-century. It listed 701 proscribed titles by the Inquisition which included the Lazarillo de Tormes (Pérez 182). Joseph Peréz study, The Spanish Inquisition: A History is an in-depth study on the Inquisition’s impact on Spanish society covering three centuries.

The accepted Latin mystical texts circulating in Spain were written by authors such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Richard of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Jean Gerson.

Ahlgren points out the incredible position Antonio de Quevedo assumes in regards to the validity of Teresa of Ávila’s writings: “He thus situated Teresa in a long line of theologians who taught the possibility of union with God in this life, and claimed that she had earned herself a place among them because ‘in her way of speaking and teaching she proceeds with as much assurance as if she had studied a thousand years, and chosen and read all the books that treat this material’. Indeed, Quevedo argued, if her works had been written in Latin, ‘with the same wisdom and style that they have in the vernacular, they would be without doubt the most widely read and esteemed that the Church has, outside of the divine and Sacred Scriptures and those of the saints’” (Ahlgren 138).

“The seventeenth-century has been called Spain’s century of saints” (qtd Figueroa y Miranda 47) (Morrison 10).

The complete title of the manuscript known as “Elogio”: “Carta de Edificación de la Señora madre Gerónima Del Espíritu Santo. Religiosa Clarisa De Velo Negro y Abadesa que fue de su monasterio de Santa Fé” (Robledo 29).

Lynda Coon in the Introduction to That Gentle Strength : Historical Perspective of Women in Christianity, explores “the historic roles in women of the Christian church and examines how their spirituality both reflected and shaped not only the female experience but the universal Christian experience” (1).

Apologia pro vita sua is Latin for a defense of one's life.

Catholic saints are compiled in the manuscript known as the Flos Sanctorum. The text was written by the Jesuit priest Pedro Ribadenyra and published in 1599. It consists of three volumes that offer the Lives of the Saints or the hagiographic account of men and women who have been deemed saints by the Catholic Church. The original purpose of Ribadenyra’s work was to enrich the readings of the Breviary (text containing the prayers and readings for the Divine Offices) with hagiographic accounts for each month of the year. It is a valuable document that reflects the spirituality of the Golden Age in Spain.

Historians utilize the word presentism to denote the fallacy to judge the past by the standards of the present of the post-Enlightenment world.

My translation, “Among other very observant religious women whom I assisted, it was Lady Mother Gerónima of the Holy Spirit, my daughter and religious Lady, whom I confessed with special attendance and care.”

My translation, “I would like to give an accounting of them as best as I can so that Your Excellency may examine them. And if there are any errors, in the writings I give to you as in the way in which it happens to me, correct me and rectify.”

Olmos was commissioned by Juan Bautista de Toro to assume the duties of confessor in the various monasteries of Santa Fé de Bogotá. “me persuadió a que ministrase el Santo Sacramento de la penitencia en los monasterios de
religiosas de dicha ciudad” (Robledo 32). My translation, “He persuaded me to administer the Holy Sacrament of Confession in the monasteries of female religious in said city.”

Many a true world is spoken in jest.

Comedia is the Spanish equivalent of a play regardless if there is a happy resolution.

Philip IV, who took the throne in 1621… enjoyed comedias twice a week at whichever palace he was in” (Morrison 21).

That the satiric part be not clear or open, since it is known, for this very reason comedies were forbidden in Greece and Italy” (Vega, Brewster and Matthews).

I circumscribe the transgressions to the issues of gender. Other social or political transgressions are beyond the scope of this study.

Dramatic gender bending was socially acceptable only when women dressed as men. “Spanish obsession with sodomy explains why Spanish theatrical practice settled for women on stage rather than boys dressing as ladies” (Rhodes “Gender” 272).


My own translation. “with manly actions/ women are not displeasing”.

See Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. In her text, she questions the belief that certain gendered behaviors are natural. That what we associate with learned gendered behavior, what we commonly call femininity and masculinity, is a performance.

See (Rhodes “Gender” 271)

As Rhodes bluntly observes: “the one who attempts to reject the dominant sexual economy and is usually raped or married for her efforts…pointless resistance to the dominance of the same” ("Gender” 270).

This genre has its roots in medieval sacred drama, also known as medieval hagiographic drama, which depict the life of a saint, especially in the retelling of the events in their lives for which he or she is best recognized: their martyrdom.

See Morrison page 19 and Canning page 1. The following scholars have provided much needed context for analyzing the current play Santa Teresa de Jesús: Christopher Gascón, The Woman Saint in Spanish Golden Age Drama; Elma Dassbach who studies male and female saints in the plays by Lope, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca and classifies each saint by virtuous action: mendicants, converts, martyrs, or miracle workers in La Comedia Hagiográfica del Siglo de Oro Español; and Elaine M. Canning who in Lope de Vega’s Comedias de tema religioso: Re-creations and Re-presentations gives an analysis of key features of Lope de Vega’s religious drama.


For a well documented introduction to Lope de Vega’s life, see Thomas Case’s introduction to San Diego de Alcalá (Case).

European religious theater was pioneered by the Jesuits as “an important reason for the success of the Catholic effort to solidify popular support” (Haliczer 32).

Nihil obstat literally means in Latin, nothing hinders. This stamp indicates that the work has been examined and approved by a censor who finds it free of doctrinal or moral error. The censor is often a scholarly priest whose task is to work back-and-forth with the author of the work to correct any inaccuracies or problems.

The auto sacramental or mystery play has the sacred purpose of instructing the Catholic population (mainly illiterate) by dramatizing the principal mysteries of the Catholic Faith, especially the Sacrament of the Eucharist. These autos were performed in the streets during the annual Feast of Corpus Christi. Lope de Vega is reported to have written about four hundred autos.

A person listed in the register of saints drawn up by the Benedictine monks of St. Augustine’s Abbey in Rasmgate, Great Britain and thus officially registered by the Catholic Church. For more information see Morrison, Chapter 3, “Saints and Sainthood” (35-47).

There are many titles that fall under the category of comedia divina. El mágico prodigioso” written by Calderón is considered to be the best-known saint’s play of the seventeenth-century (Gascón 30).

A pícaro is a character from sixteenth century Spanish literature that embodies the scoundrel who lives by his wits. The pícaro usually presents his story from the first person narrative as he explains the many episodes that the hero lives on either side of the law depending on the occasion. See Moll Flander as an example of a female pícaro in the English language during the 18th century.

I qualify the term autobiographic in the case of Vida i sucesos since it cannot be completely verified that it was penned by her.

Technically, Catalina de Erasno is not a cloistered nun but a novice since she escaped the convent before attaining the final vows.

Those who fight duels, those who challenge or accept challenge thereunto, all accomplices, all who help or countenance such combats, all who designedly assist thereat, finally all who permit dueling or who do not prevent it in so far as lies in their power, no matter what their rank or dignity, be it royal or imperial… The excommunication is incurred, first, by the duelist himselfs, not only when they actually fight, but as soon as they have proposed or accepted a challenge; next, by the official witnesses or seconds, also by physicians expressly brought upon the scene.

115 Emphasis added.

116 Another element that supports this hypothesis is that there is no other manuscript signed by Erauso like the Pedimento. All that exists is a supposed copy of the original at the Royal Academy in Madrid. “Regardless of the identity of the interpolator, the important thing is that the manuscript that has been preserved was written between 1626 and May 24, 1784, the date Juan Bautista Munoz deposited it in the Royal Academy of History in Madrid”(Tierney 1357).

117 The famous Mexican actress, María Félix portrayed Erauso in a 1945 film that was adapted in 1987 by the Spanish director Javier Aguirre.


119 These documents appear in the appendix of the critical edition by Rima de Valbona. Pedimento refers to the documents dated 7 March 1626 (No. 1) and 19 April 1626 (No.3) and Declaración dated 8 July 1625 (No. 4.8) and 1 July 1625 (No. 4.10)

120 Counsel of the Indies was the most important administrative organization of the Spanish Empire.

121 All the translations of Erauso’s legal documents are my own. “dressing in a man’s habit is something prohibited”

122 “returning to the habit of a woman would be good”

123 “because it is not known that she has an inclination to change garments that she is presently wearing, which is a man’s”

124 Emphasis added. Lieutenant Madame Catalina de Erauso

125 “the fifteen years that [she] was employed in the wars of the Kingdom of Chile and Indies of Perú … in exercise of the use of arms in the defense of the catholic faith and employ oneself in the service of your majesty”

126 “[she] came to be worthy of your majesty’s flag, serving, as she served, as Lieutenant in the infantry company of Captain Gonzalo Rodríguez, with a man’s name that she named herself”

127 “it was with particular valor, resisting all the inconveniences of military life, like the strongest man”

128 “and this is what she did so as not to be discovered”

129 Emphasis added. “they captured her… they had her for a spy… they threw her in a prison … and if by chance they would have known that she was a woman it would have confirmed that she was a spy, which, without a doubt, they would have taken her life”

130 “Appealing to your Majesty to be served by ordering [she] be rewarded for her [military] services and long pilgrimages… courageous acts… daughter of illustrious noble parents and principal citizens of Villa de San Sebastián… a rare purity in the way she has lived and lives”.

131 Declarations made in Pamplona by Catalina de Erauso in Relation to the Assault Committed Against Her and Other Travelers in Piedmont.

132 “he captured him, saying that [he/she] was a spy”. No gender is specified in this sentence.

133 “he caned him and treated him badly with words, saying he was a jew, dog, pig and lutheran”.

134 “they said that his king was a bad man and a bad christian”.

135 “appeared in person the lieutenant Anthony of Erausso”(page 139).

136 “the great feats and courageous acts by a woman”

137 “in masculine clothes”

138 “give me another Lieutenant-Nun, and I will concede the same”.

139 “it is not just to make her an example so that women who had been religious would go about with indecent dress”

140 “woman, with appearance of a man”

141 “the woman fought courageously, and on her part killed many Indians”
“admirable things that cause fright”

“This and what was said in the first broadside is the truth of what happened in the discourse of twenty four years as that women travelled extensively”.

“virtue remained in her”

“this woman could only hope for punishment” … “beloved of all the Presbyters and Religious that were present, they gave her a sumptuous funeral, an honorific burial”.

“I went out into a street I had never seen, without any idea which way to turn, or where I might be going” (4)

“my nun habit was useless and I threw it away” (4).

“I cut my hair and threw it away” (4).

“There I went by the name of Francisco Loyola” (5).

“having eaten nothing more than the herbs I had found growing by the roadside” (4).

“Don Juan showed his deep concern on account of the grief it caused my father, and his own fondness for me as well- and there were other things too, the matter of the convent, which his ancestors had founded and of which he was now a patron, and the town itself, of which he was also a native” (6).

“The two of us didn’t speak a word to each other, nor did he recognize me” (5).

“I counted three monasteries (of Franciscans, Dominicans, and Mercedarians), a nunnery, and a hospital… The cathedral is a grand one, with three prebendaries, two canons, and a good bishop, the Augustine friar don Agustín de Carvajal, who was of great service to me…” (61).

“Stepto’s translate this passage as ‘I call on the church! I call on the church’ (49). I believe a more accurate rendition would be the literal translation “Church, I am called! Church, I am called”, to underscore that now she, Erauso, has become the edifice of the Church since she has the Eucharist in her hand as would be the case of a tabernacle within a Church.

“This was a scheme I had come up with thanks to a pious Franciscan, who gave me some words of wisdom when I was in jail, and took my last confession” (50).

Victor Uribe-Uran’s important article, “Iglesia me llamo”: Church Asylum and the Law” provides historical information regarding church asylum in Spain and Colonial America since “most of the available historiography deals with England” (446). Following is the scholar’s concise explanation of ecclesiastical asylum as specified in the Siete Partidas. (Siete Partidas is a thirteen-century legal code for the Spanish kingdom and is considered one of the most important law codes of the Middle Ages. It was used well into the nineteenth century in Latin America and influenced legislation in Southeastern United States): “The Siete Partidas established that debtors and other “wrongdoers” could not be expelled from churches where they had sought refuge, nor could they be killed or subjected to any bodily chastisement (dalle pena en el cuerpo ninguna). Whoever wished to extract them from their shelter should provide a caución, or security bond, supported by a bondsman or, if unable to do so, swear an oath under God that, once extracted, the culprits would not suffer any bodily harm (mal ninguno en el cuerpo). This also applied to serfs who ran away from their masters and entered churches. The Siete Partidas also excluded from the benefit of asylum traitors, rapists of virgins, forgers, and royal-tax evaders. Such exceptions suggest the particular gravity attributed to these offenses at the time. (451).

“At this point, the bishop stepped out of his palace with four torchbearers at his side, and walked right into the middle of the whole thing” (63).

“Soon afterward the sheriff arrived, and His Holiness had a long discussion with the man, and they argued bitterly over the whole matter” (64).

“The truth is this: that I am a woman, that I was born in such and such a place, the daughter of this man and this woman, that at a certain age I was placed in a certain convent and with a certain aunt, that I was raised there and took the veil and became a novice, and that when I was about to profess my final vows, I left the convent for such and such a reason, went to such and such a place, undressed myself and dressed myself up again, cut my hair, traveled here and there, embarked, disembarked, hustled, killed, maimed, wreaked havoc, and roamed about, until coming to a stop in this very instant, at the feet of Your Eminence” (64).

Emphasis added. “if it will remove your doubts, let other women examine me” (64).

“after they had examined me and found me to be a woman, and were ready to swear to it under oath, if necessary- and that what’s more they had found me to be an intact virgin, as on the day I came into the world. This piece of news touched His Eminence.” (66).

“Daughter… my doubt is gone. I believe you now, and I shall believe from this day on whatever you may choose to tell me—I esteem you as one of the more remarkable people in this world, and promise to help you in whatever you do, and to aid you in your new life in service of God” (67).
I felt a calm sweeping over me, I felt as if I were humbled before God, that things were simpler than they had seemed before, and that I was very small and insignificant... feeling as if I might already be in the presence of God"(64).

"I had no order, and no religion” (Chapter 21, page 69).

"well received by the general, regaled, invited to dine at his table”(71).

Emphasis added. “I spent fifteen days, lying low as much as possible [in Seville] and fleeing from the swarms of people that turned up everywhere, trying to catch a glimpse of me in men’s clothing” (Chapter 23, page 73).

"I was arrested on orders from the vicar – I have no idea why” (74).

"a memoir that I placed in the royal hand” (74). See Document No.1, Pedimento dated 7 March 1626, in the appendix of Vida i sucesos.

"and hand him my memoir” (76).

"the king had granted me four times the allowance of a part-time lieutenant” (76).

"to pursue my life in men’s clothing” (78).

"My fame had spread abroad, and it was remarkable to see the throng that followed me”(79).

See Vallbona’s footnote No. 72 (123).

"Señora Catalina, where are you going, all by your lonesome?” (80)

"one hundred strokes to your pretty little necks” (80).

Jack Parker recognizes that the comedia, La monja alférez, presents an authorial dispute within the literary canon attributed to Juan Pérez de Montalbán. This comedia was published within a group of “unbound” works and not within the three volumes of published comedias. Other critics such as Victor Dixon consider Luis Belmonte Bermúdez to be the author of La monja alférez (64).

Judith Butler promulgates "[t]hat gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative character”(141)

On April 29, 1492, the Edict of Expulsion of the Jews was issued. The charter declared that no Jews were permitted to remain in the Spanish Kingdom; they either had to convert or leave. One of the responsibilities of the Inquisition included ensuring the orthodoxy of those who had converted from Judaism. For example, “Others, like St. Teresa’s seven brothers, may perhaps have been moved by the desire to escape from the constricting social conventions of a country where ancestry and purity of blood counted for so much”. (Elliott Old World 76-77).

Jack Parker mentions an interesting fact concerning Montalbán’s father: “The father, who had been a bookseller in Alcalá… while continuing certain interests in other places, including Valladolid, where he had contacts with Cervantes. In fact, from certain enmity arising between the two, Francisco Maldonado de Guevara has credited Alonso Pérez [the father] with the authorship of the false Quixote” (15).

At this time I have chosen to utilize the cumbersome s/he and his/her to emphasize the hybrid nature of the protagonist Guzmán, the nom de guerre of Catalina de Erauso.

All translations of the quotes in this comedia are my own. “If I make known/ the deception, I will be forced/ to resist, even though I’ll hazard/ my life in the resistance”

“and calling him my husband/ I legitimized the license/ to deliver my honor/ in possession of what he desires”

“the remedy is to become a husband/ of the one whose honor you are obliged”

“Be it known, therefore, my friend don Diego,/ that I am a woman”

“even though she did not confess it./ I will say that she is a professed nun/, thereby place an impediment on the secular jurisdiction”. Montalbán as a canonical lawyer would have noted this.

“What clothes? I am a soldier/ and in my suit I will have to be taken”

“A woman, me? He lies, command your Excellency that the sentence be executed/ that don Diego deceived to excuse me from death”

“I would permit death/ in an infamous theater/ all so as not to publicize/ that I am a woman, it is not in vain/ to want that I now wear/ what I greatly abhor”

“since nature/ such grand miracle has made, how was it possible to hide/ for so much time, or for what reason/ in the guise of man/ has obliged you to serve the crown/ And if you adore/ doña Ana, should I believe/ that you love another woman while being a woman? Are you certifying impossibles”

“Why do I want to live/ if they know I am a woman?”

“What is there to see in me? I am perchance/ some monster never seen,/ or a beast that was invented/ with letters, and with arms/ as seen in the kingdom of Poland? Has a man with beard not been seen?”

This idea is suggested by Jonathan Thacker (16)

The apppellative of the Tenth Muse appears in the title of Sor Juana’s works published by the Vicereine María Luisa in Spain.
All quotes are from The Answer/La Respuesta, Electa Arenal’s and Amanda Powell’s critical edition with side-by-side Spanish and English translation by the authors. For brevity I will refer to this essay as La Respuesta.

Dorothy Schons first coined this term in 1925. Sor Juana has become an iconic figure in Mexico where her image graces coins, bills, films, and plays.

All quotes are from Susana Hernández Araico’s critical edition of this play with a side-by-side translation into English by Michael McGaha. The entire theatrical fete (which includes the comedia, an introductory loa, songs, sainete and the final sarao) has been published in its entirety once in Mexico in 1976, and once in Spain in 1989.

Shakespeare’s The Comedy of Errors is an example of a comedia de enredos where the manipulation of the action by one of the characters to meet their own needs is more important than the characters themselves.

In the two Letras, Sor Juana uses the tunes of well-known songs and substitutes her own lyrics.

Susan Hernández Araico’s edition of House of Pawns includes all the ancillary texts.

Julie Greer Johnson has done much research concerning the use of satire in the works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Antonio Sebastián de Toledo Molina y Salazar, Marqués de Mancerra

Sor Juana dedicates poems to Doña Leonor Carreto using the pseudonym of Laura.

She also held monastic office as mistress of novices and kept the financial records of convent.

Literary salons were an important place for the exchange of ideas (educate) and enjoy literature (amuse).

Sor Juana saw the Marquise every day at Vespers.

The original title: Inundación Castálida de la única poeta, Musa Décima, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, religiosa profesa en el Monasterio de San Jerónimo de la Imperial Ciudad de México, que en varios metros, idiomas y estilos, fertiliza varios asuntos, con elegantes, con sutiles, claros, ingeniosos, útiles versos; para enseñanza, recreo y admiración, dedicales a la Excma. Señora Doña María Luisa Gonzaga Manrique de Lara, Condesa de Paredes, Marquesa de la Laguna, y los saca a la luz Don Juan Camacho Gayna Caballero del Orden de Santiago, Mayordomo y Caballero que fue de su Excelencia, Gobernador actual de la Ciudad del puerto de Santa María.

A detailed analysis of this work follows in the next section.

Valor, Outrage and Woman

Friendship Betrayed

Love’s Disillusions

See Lisa Vollendof’s The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitorial Spain for a listing of other female playwrights (Lives xi).

Antonio de Viera (1608-1697) was a famous Portuguese and Brazilian Jesuit theologian. Historians consider him one of Portugal greatest figures of the seventeenth century. He was an advocate for the Amazonia Indians and he denounced the severity of the slave owners. The Portuguese Inquisition imprisoned him for some of his writings and leniency to the converted Jews (Catholic Encyclopedia).

St. Frances of Sales used the same pen name when writing to nuns.

The Letter Worthy of Athena, also known as Missive Worthy of Athena. Athena is the Greek goddess of industry, the arts, wisdom, and women’s crafts such as spinning and weaving.

I grant me kind license to speak and to plead my case in your venerable presence, I declare that I receive in my very soul your admonition to apply my study to Holy Scripture; for although it arrives in the guise of counsel, it shall have for me the weight of law” (45)

“for one who had the letter printed, unbeknownst to me, who titled it and underwrote its cost” … “pastoral insinuation” (43-45)

For a more detailed description of these issues, see the critical edition of The Answer written by Arenal and Powel.

Humanism is “name given to the intellectual, literary, and scientific movement of the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries … which aimed at basing every branch of learning on the literature and culture of classical antiquity”.

“for ever since the light of reason first dawned in me, my inclination to letters was marked by such a passion and vehemence that neither reprimand of others (for I have received many) nor reflections of my own … have sufficed to make me abandon my pursuit of this native impulse that God Himself bestowed on me” (page 47).

“I recognize full well that your most prudent warning touches not on the letter, but on the many writings of mine on humane matters that you have seen” (45).

The structure of Respuesta follows a classical rhetoric for a legal defense, a dispositio as formulated by Marcus Fabious Quintilian (35 -96). He wrote Institudio oratoria, a set of 12 books on education and rhetoric. He specialized in forensic oratory (used in legal proceedings). Sor Juana mentions him in the first paragraph of the Respuesta.

I follow the divisions of Respuesta as those suggested by William Little in his annotated translation (Cruz). The Scholastic era flourished from 1100 – 1500. It refers to a method of critical thought that seeks to articulate and
defend orthodoxy through the use of dialectical reasoning and thereby reconcile Christian theology with classical philosophy, especially Aristotelian philosophy.

Emphasis added. “It has not been y will, but my scant health and a rightful fear that have delayed my reply for so many days” (39).

“Most illustrious Lady, my Lady” (page 39)

“I want no trouble with the Holy Office, for I am but ignorant and tremble lest I utter some ill-sounding proposition or twist the true meaning of some passage. I do not study in order to write, nor far less in order to teach … but simply to see whether by studying I may become less ignorant. this is my answer, and these are my feeling” (47).

“To go with the narration of this inclination of mine, of which I wish to give full account: I declare I was not yet three years old when my mother sent off one of my sisters, older that I, to learn to read in one of those girls’ schools that they call Amiga … later when I was six or seven years old and already knew how to read and write” (49).

“I have said enough… to comprehend my nature with clarity and full understanding, together with the beginnings, the methods, and the present state of my studies” (77).

“I went on this way, always directing each step of my studies … toward the summit of Holy Theology; but it seemed to me necessary to ascend by the ladder of the humane arts and sciences in order to reach it; for who could fathom the style of the Queen of Sciences without knowing that of her handmaidens?” (page 53)

“And once each science is mastered (which we see is not easy, or even possible), She demands still another condition beyond all I have yet said, which is continual prayer and purity of life”(57).

Paula of Rome lent her name to Sor Juana’s convent, Santa Paula. She was canonized St. Paula of Rome and is considered the patron saint of widows (Feast Day is Jan 26).

“the more so as the daughter of such as St. Jerome and St. Paula: for it would be a degeneracy for an idiot daughter to proceed from such learned parents” (page 53).


Wealthy women organized these informal schools to provide young girls from the upper class a rudimentary education.

“I studied constantly in a variety of subjects, having no inclination toward any one of them in particular… I held no particular interest to spur me, nor had I any limit to my time … as is required in taking a degree… Hence, I have studied many things but know nothing, for one subject has interfered with another.” (57)

“the great trial I have undergone in lacking not only a teacher, but schoolfellows with whom to review and practice what had been studied”(59).

“Oh, how many abuses would be avoided in our land if the older women were as well instructed as Leta and knew how to teach as is commanded by St. Paul and my father St. Jerome!” (85). This leads to considerable harm, which occurs every day in … these unsuitable associations. For this reason, many parents prefer to let their daughters remain uncivilized and untutored, rather than risk exposing them to such notorious peril as this familiarity with men. Yet all this could be avoided if there were old women of sound education, as St. Paul desires” (85).

“I have prayed that He snuff out the light of my intellect, leaving only enough to keep His Law. For more than that is too much, some would say, in a woman; and there are even those who say that it is harmful” (page 47).

“To such men, I repeat, study does harm, because it is like putting a sword in the hands of a madman… it becomes his own death and that of many others”(81-83).

“certain men, who as mere grammarians or, at most, armed with four terms from the principles of logic, wish to interpret the Scriptures and cling to the ‘Let women keep silence in the churches,’ without knowing how to understand it rightly”(89).

The quote is in English since the Sor Juana’s original quote is in Latin.

“how is it that we see the Church has allowed a Gertrude, a Teresa, a Brigid, the nun of Agreda, and many other women to write?”(91).

“Minerva, the mistress of all the wisdom in Athens, is worshiped as the goddess of the science”. The Bishop used this allusion in the title of Carta Atenagórica.

William Little gives details of the 25 mythological and secular women exemplary women that “bear striking resemblance to Sor Juana herself” (page 20).

St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), Spanish mystic and founder of the women's Discalced Carmelite order (1562). For more detailed information see Chapter 4 on Nava.
“May God be praised that He inclined me to letters” (61).

During Sor Juana’s whole life people have forbade her to study as seen in the following quotes: “[A] very saintly and simple mother superior who believed that study was an affair of the Inquisition and ordered that I should not read” (73). “On one occasion, because of a severe stomach ailment, the doctors forbade me to study” (page 75).

Who would not think, upon hearing such widespread applause, that I had sailed before the wind with a sea smooth as glass, upon the cheers of universal acclaim? Yet God Himself knows it has not quite been so, because among the blossoms of the very acclaim there have roused themselves and reared up the asps of rivalry and persecution (63).

“anyone possessing significant qualities and virtues was expelled from the republic to prevent his using them for the subjugation of public liberty” (63).

“abhor the person who becomes significant because that one tarnishes the fame of other” (63).

“These are the wages suffered by eminence, whether of dignity, or nobility, or wealth, or beauty, or learning; but it is high intelligence that experiences all this with greatest force” (67).

“I have attempted to entomb my intellect together with my name and to sacrifice it to the One who gave it to me” (47).

Wilkins analyzes the importance of the comedia as a vehicle for feminine subversion in the comedias of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and María de Zaya.

I am indebted to Susan Hernández Araico for many of the suggestions about transgressions.

The term muger esquiva refers to a variant of the muger varonil or virile woman.

The term gracioso refers to a complex character in Spanish comedy. He is not simply the comic relief of the comedia. He is typically a loyal servant even though he pokes fun at his master, the galán. He is concerned with his baser needs. However, the gracioso is the venue for the dramaturge to provide the audience with social commentary.

“Irony has many functions. It is often the witting or unwitting instrument of truth. It chides, purifies, refines, deflates, scorches and ‘sends up’. It is not surprising, therefore, that irony is the most precious and efficient weapon of the satirist” (Cuddon 431).

The most comprehensive studies on the muger varonil are: Melveena McKendrick’s Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age, a Study of the Mujer Varonil; Carmen Bravo-Villasante, La mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro espanol: siglos SXVI-SXVII; and Ruth Lundelius’s The mujer varonil in the Theater of the Siglo de Oro.

Marcela is the shepherdess in Don Quijote in the episode about Grisóstomo and Marcela.

Historians sometimes equate the term muger esquiva with “blue stocking.” The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory quotes the following: “The Blue Stockings were a group of intelligent, well-educated and gifted women who, from early in the 1750s, held receptions or soirees, in the French salon tradition, at their homes in London, and continued to do so through most of the second half of the 18th c.” (91).

“From my earliest years I was inclined to study with such ardent enthusiasm and with such anxious effort that I managed to cover much territory in a short time. Industriously, I made up for the shortage of time by the intensity of my work…” (51).

“Industriously, I made up for the shortage of time by the intensity of my work, so that before long I became the center of attention and attracted great admiration. People venerated as inborn talent what in truth was but the just reward for hard work” (51-52).

“In my homeland I was the venerated object of adoration and common applause. Whatever I might say—whether it was really good or bad—was so confirmed by the beauty of my face and the elegance of my bearing—that I soon became the pawn of public superstition. They came to adore as a goddess the idol they had formed” (53).

“His face was an enigma composed of two contraries—strength and beauty—so happily paired that, though his beauty was in no way effeminate, it found perfection through the very thing it lacked.” (Jor I 407 - 14)

“However, fearing that perchance my father—who, determined to marry me off, was then calculating the merits of my suitors and considering other advantages—might stand in our way, tonight we decided to elope. Thus, trampling my father’s love and modesty’s honor underfoot, I went out to the street” (Jor I, 487-91).

In this play, Doña Leonor seems to be constrained by her father’s parental right to choose a husband for her and then by Don Pedro’s kidnapping.
Richard Hornby in *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* lists five categories of metadrama: ceremony within a play, role-playing within a role, real life reference, self-reference of the drama, and play within a play. For further information see Anita Stoll’s “Teaching Golden Age Drama: Metatheater as Organizing Principle”. (Hornby) (Stoll)

Julie Greer Johnson succinctly describes the characteristics of the gracioso and his importance as a figure of social subversion within the comedic cast ("Comic Hero" 94).

Sor Juana mentions St. Jerome many times in *La Respuesta*. It is interesting to note the following quote from St. Jerome that echoes Castaño/Leonor’s soliloquy: "paint their cheeks with rouge and their eyelids with antimony, whose plastered faces, too white for human beings, look like idols; and if in a moment of forgetfulness they shed a tear it makes a furrow where it rolls down the painted cheek; women to whom years do not bring the gravity of age, who load their heads with other people’s hair, enamel a lost youth upon the wrinkles of age, and affect a maidenly timidity in the midst of a troop of grand children." (Jerome and Wright)

"First I’d better hide these lovely locks, for if I leave them hanging out, they’ll slay every man in sight” (199).

"Good God! He thinks I’m Leonor. Now I’ve done it! I’ll be in a fix if he tries to lift this veil” (203)

"Well now I am fully armed. No doubt four thousand dandies will pursue me as soon as they see me –you know, those guys who are ready to court anything that moves, and who fall in love en masse, not with real beauty but with what is in their own heads” (201-03).

"What fun it is to be begged! Now I can see why women are so proud. Nothing goes to a person’s head faster than being begged” (205).

Emphasis added. “for this sky-blue is just the thing to show off my dark skin” (199).

"I’m really scared some would-be lover will ensnare me” (203)

"Is it possible that neither my affection nor my nobility, my wealth nor my own person can move you to look upon me less severely” (205).

"Do I look like a two-bit actress? I give you my word to marry you, unless you try to pull out” (211).

"Oh, no, sir, don’t you die; at least, not till you’ve given me a kid to inherit your property” (211)

My emphasis. “Then who are you, monster, for I thought you were Leonor?” (page 249).

"Well, I must point out, my ladies, that this is all part of the plot of this play; you shouldn’t imagine for a moment that I’ve thought all this up, for I wouldn’t want to cheat you much less Your Excellency” (201)

"I wish I could be like that con man Garatuza, who is said to have gotten away with so many miraculous crimes in the Indies! Since I was born here, I’ve always been devoted to him as my homeland’s patron saint … inspire me with some clever trick worthy of Calderón to get me out of this pickle, for now I have become fate’s merest pawn” (198-99).

See Introduction to this section for a list of these ancillary texts.

*Sponsa Christi* is Latin for Spouse of Christ.

See (Greer Johnson "Engendered")

"As long is Leonor gets married, and my honor is out of danger, the rest is of no importance. So, Don Carlos, I am happy to have gained a son like you” (251).

Catalina de Erauso, better known as Lieutenant-Nun, was a transvestite of 17th century who passed for a male soldier in the conquest of Peru. See Sherry Velasco’s analysis of Erauso: *The Lieutenant-Nun, Transgenderism, Lesbian Desire, & Catalina de Erauso*.


The conventual author is presented under various names representing her different states in life. Jerónima Nava y Saavedra corresponds to the childhood years and adolescence before entering the convent. She chooses the name of Gerónima del Espíritu Santo upon receiving her vows. La Madre Gerónima del Espíritu Santo reflects her title as Abbess of the convent of Santa Clara. As can be noted, there is a change in spelling between Jerónima and Gerónima. “J” is linguistically Hispano-American and thus she is textualized within the colonial American environment of the upper Criolla society. “G” is linguistically associated with Spain and its predominance within the conventual milieu. Which spelling or title is chosen by critics and scholars depends on the locus of enunciation, Spain or Colonial Spanish America.


An interior locution is a mystical concept in which a person receives a set of ideas, thoughts, or visions from an external spiritual source. This type of revelation is distinct from an apparition or a vision since no supernatural entity
such as Jesus or an archangel is present during the interior locution. These ideas or “luses claras” as Nava refers to them, are controversial since it is difficult to determine if the locution was actually from another source or the person’s own mind.


293 My translation, History of the literature of New Granada. From the Conquest to Independence (1538-182)

294 See Kathryn Joy McKnight’s scholarly study on Madre Castillo in The Mystic of Tunja.

295 Because of this authorial confusion, Robledo makes a call to other colonial Latin-American scholars to seek out and recuperate the manuscripts from other colonial nuns and re-edit them under the name of the conventual authors themselves and not to continue being represented by their clerical intermediaries (Robledo 10).

296 The biblical quotation associated with the concept of Bride of Christ is as follows: “One of the seven angels...came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb’. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. (Rev 21: 9-10)

297 Haliczer proposes that families held traditions of seeking sainthood for its members, a “tendency toward the aristocratization of those who gained a reputation for sanctity was accentuated by the revival and expansion of the aristocracy itself during the seventeenth century” (81).

298 “legitimate daughter of Juan de Nava y doña Juana de Saavedra”

299 “They had a sugar cane farm in the jurisdiction of the city of Tocaima”

300 Haliczer proposes a psychological explanation for the mystical path: “During the early modern period, there was a complex relationship between childhood experiences and the development of the dissociative behavior that translated into trances, visions, and prophecy and gained the individual the reputation of being a mystic. Devotional works, and sermons, combined with exposure to visual media like estampas and religious painting and sculpture, stimulated the imagination of children and provided the imagery that filled their visions. Confessors and spiritual advisors whose own commitment to a life of mystical contemplation was strong could also have a profound influence of the child. In addition, Spanish parents at that time can generally be described as dethatched, hostile, and restrictive toward their children... When social stressors like war, economic dislocation, and plague are added to the outright abuse that many of them experienced, it is only natural that such imaginative and sensitive children should seek to separate themselves from a painful reality and take refuge in a world of helping, loving divine figures. In this way the child passed from lesser to greater states of dissociation and evolved into an adult for whom the world of religious imagery was more real and meaningful than the social and material world itself” (159-60).

301 Refers to switches or small whips used in the aesthetic practice of self-flagellation. In the Catholic context, self-flagellation is part of Imitatio Christi, specifically the Flagellation of Christ before the Crucifixion.

302 For more information of María de San José religious family environment see Kathleen Myers, Word from New Spain. The Spiritual Autobiography of Madre María de San José (1656-1719). Myers describes the twenty-one years María prepared herself for a religious vocation while still living at home (Myers 40).

303 The paradigmatic narrative of conversion of a sinful youth is St. Augustine’s Confessions (398 A.C.).

304 My translation, “With this group of young girls I began to lose and spoil the good intention that I had because I learned to curse and swear and say some words that were not very honest”

305 “They were transported from their father’s hacienda to this city, where the upbringing and good education was carried out with care by their aunts, especially Aunt Gerónima [of Jesus] for Gerónima [Nava y Saavedra].”

306 My translation, “It was urgent that he travel away from the city.”

307 My translation, “their father, wanting to provide them their station in life, said to his daughters that it was time that they should chose which station they wanted and would consent to whatever they desired.”

308 My translation. “Having seen their daughter’s resolution, he prepared all that was necessary and it was carried out.”

309 “Y aviando pasado Gerónima su aprobación y novisiado, hiso su profesión solemnle el día dies y siete de febrero año de mill seisientos y ochenta y tres, teniendo de edad diez y seis años, nuebe messes y veinte y tres días” (Robledo 37). There must be some mistake in the dating of the year of Jerónima’s profession since it seems to be backdated from the date of her entrance into the convent of Santa Clara. I believe her profession as a black-veiled nun occurred on February 17, 1685 and not the year 1683 as stated above so as to account for the two years between her entering the convent at fourteen years old and professing as a sixteen year old young lady.

310 The analysis of the spiritual dimensions of Nava’s protracted illness will be further discussed in Baroque Rhetoric of the Body on page __________

311 My translation, “And Gerónima’s transition with the gentleness of a dream.”

312 My translation, “the pain of her loss pierced my heart.”
“increase my enormous pain” ... “that I would do Gerónima’s burial and also sing the Vigil and Funeral Mass; I could not excuse myself”

“I was in her cell the day she died.”

“And what is written, in case it is necessary, I’ll sign it with a formal oath.”

Fr. Luis de Granada (1505-1588) influential text, *Sermón contra los escandalos en las caídas públicas* or “Sermon against the scandal caused by a public fall from grace”, seems initially to contradict the orthodoxy of visions since he gives examples of people who while possessing holy reputations have fallen from grace. However, Fr. Granada maintains that the existence of fallen people in no manner negates the existence of many other mystics whose sanctified lives rendered them as loyal servants of God (Haliczer 133). St. Teresa of Ávila, St. Francis de Sales and the Jesuits held Fr. Luis de Granada texts in high regard.

The earliest Christian mystics include Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-216), Origen (ca. 185-254), and Gregory of Nyssa (ca. fourth century). In the Middle Ages, Julian of Norwich (1342 – 1416) and Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) exemplify the medieval mystic. In the early modern era, Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) and John of the Cross (1542 – 1591) detailed their contemplative life, “an uncompromising commitment to prayer, meditation, mindfulness, and holiness” (McColman 51).

The Divine Majesty usually gives me clear “luses” or lights that my mind becomes astonished and amazed.”

These specific issues will be further analyzed in the section on Nava’s transgressions.

“Ask them why they do love Me or if I have not given them all they need.”

“He insinuated that God wanted me to be His star and light amongst those dark clouds.”

“Even if God could have denied me the light of understanding, He gave it to me so clearly through his ministers, who with the soft eyepatches of truth, my eyes could be opened.”

“causing in my soul such delights and pleasure that it would seem that my soul wanted to leave my body.”

“Many have been the times in which God has solicited the union with my soul when I have been in prayer.”

“I was much adorned with jewelry and His Majesty held me by the hand… He took all my hair in His hands; and braided into one plait.”

“He had brought a chain in his hand and he placed it around my neck; and His Majesty also places His head within. And after He placed a ring on my finger and insinuated that he wanted to celebrate another marriage to me.”

“He placed His arms around me and placed His Holy Face next to mine; I felt this physically, and for more than two hours I could not move, waiting to die from that sweetness.”
“He said: ‘It is as enjoyable for Me to be with you as these garden and plants are pleasing to Me’.”

Christianity is conceived as a Baroque experience. That is, theatricality in spirituality, gestures, representations of life and death, celebrations, body, and even in the gastronomic experience to teach, to delight and move the emotions; “persuade the reader toward the flavors and advantages of the penitent live, the exemplary live fo the good Christian… demonstrating vices and virtues”

To continue, I will need to make a parenthesis (desiring that the Holy Sacrament should be venerated and reverenced, and not being able to suffer anymore that certain things are done in His presence such as drinking hot chocolate, talking and snuffing powdered tobacco).”

My translation, “Ignatius advised the use of the imagination as a support to meditation, and visions were part of that practice well known to the [female] authors, because their directors and confessors, in addition to their readings, belonged to the Society.”

My translation, “For meditation, I used the Flagellation as a meditation focus. While I was meditating, our Lord presented Himself tied to the column.”

Práctica del amor de Dios, translated as Treatise on the Love of God, is the spiritual masterpiece of Francis de Sales.

My translation, “Nava y Saavedra replaces her enamored “I” for heart”

It seemed to me that I saw the Lord with the Cross on His shoulders, very fatigued and tired and He intended to enter into my heart with it [Cross].”

In the sadomasochist and mystical relationship… can lead to situations of crude lasciviousness and or violence. On one occasion, Nava y Saavedra not only imagines Christ entering her heart, but that He enters it with an immense Cross capable of destroying it.

Olmos follows tradition by initially, “profess ignorance or inability to portray the goodness of their subjects in an adequate manner” (Darcy 232).

“She was very honorable, very prudent, devotee of justice. So magnanimous and strong that, I can asseverate, she could compete with the greatest masculine fortitude.”

My translation, “her natural adornments” … “a tall and well proportioned figure; her face was lovely, her eyes were beautiful and alive.”

My translation, “I need to refer herein some things that happened in her interior and that she communicated to me.”

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344 See page _______ of this dissertation.
345 The Catholic Encyclopedia gives a succinct summary of this text that is clearly reflected in Nava’s manuscript: "An Introduction to the Devout Life", a work intended to lead "Philothea", the soul living in the world, into the paths of devotion, that is to say, of true and solid piety. Everyone should strive to become pious, and "it is an error, it is even a heresy", to hold that piety is incompatible with any state of life. In the first part the author helps the soul to free itself from all inclination to, or affection for, sin; in the second, he teaches it how to be united to God by prayer and the sacraments; in the third, he exercises it in the practice of virtue; in the fourth, he strengthens it against temptation; in the fifth, he teaches it how to form its resolutions and to persevere. The "Introduction", which is a masterpiece of psychology, practical morality, and common sense, was translated into nearly every language even in the lifetime of the author, and it has since gone through innumerable editions” (Pernin).
346 Nava addresses the manuscript to one of these men, “Vuestra Merced”, which is taken to be Fray Juan de Olmos (Robledo 55).
347 Matheo Mimbela, Nava’s confessor prior to Juan de Olmos, was also confessor to Francisca Josefa de Castillo y Guevara, the most recognized Colombian conventual author.
348 Robledo characterizes Juan de Herrera as a “personaje conocido en los círculos académicos y religiosos de la Santa Fe de la época” (Robledo 11). He is also considered the most prolific composer of music during the Colonial era in Colombia.
349 “The exquisite doctrines imparted by the theologians that assisted her.” These men belonged to the Universidad Javeriana, a Jesuit university and Universidad Tomística, a university run by the Dominicans. These were the only two institutions of higher learning in Santa Fé de Bogotá. Nava, being a woman, would have been prohibited from gaining a formal education at these universities.
350 “One day in the confessional with my confessor who was instructing me about God’s love.” In another of her entries, Nava reiterates the importance of her confessor in instructing her in the Faith: “En otra ocasión también vi al Señor que estava con mi confesor, como rogándole que me ynstruyese” (Robledo 80).
351 “If he [the spiritual advisor] due to lack of enlightenment could err, I will give him [enlightenment] so that he can direct and lead you.”
352 My translation, “Nava y Saavedra replaces her enamored “I” for heart”
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tales padeseres, sin acabar al paciente, no cabían en indisposición o alteración de humores naturales, sino que el Señor daba permiso al Demonio para que la atormentase (Robledo 44). Translation: “such ailments, without killing the patient, did not fit within the indisposition or alteration of natural humors, but our Lord gave the Devil permission to torment her”

My translations, “A individual verified to me…” / “I knew of an individual that communicated something to Gerónima”

My translation, “what persuaded me, the color and effects of her urine, is that a kidney stone took her life.”

For a detailed study on the relationship between confessor and the conventual author see Jodi Bilinkoff, Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1450 – 1750, especially Chapter 4.

My translation, “the sorrow caused by her passing tormented me.”

“He said to me”

I felt a gentle force that impeded me and called me. And withdrawing into my interior…”

“my mind is absorbed with fascination and suspense”; “my willpower… melts into soft and tender affection”; “my body, I say that it seems to me, has been introduced into a fire-burning oven. And, even if I do not lose my senses when this happens to me, even if they make as much noise as the like, I would not be able to explain what has happened to me”

“my the way my heart feels, it is a miracle I do not die”

“I am filled with so much joy, that it seems to me that I am drowning in a sea of delights”

“Y en los amorosos afectos a que mueve a mi voluntad, los cuales son purísimos y castos, conozco que es el Señor y que quiere que yo le sienta así” (Robledo 56). My translation: “And those loving affections that move my willpower, which are pure and chaste, I know that it is my Lord and that He wants me to feel them in that way.” Nava follows this explanation with another similar one, “que este gosto es purísimo y que tiene su origen de los divinos objetos que, a mi entendimiento, da Dios a conoser” (Robledo 57). My translation: “that this delight is pure and has its origen in divine objects, to my understanding, which God permits us to know”

“I’m fearful of being deceived”

After these lights have disappeared, I’m drowsy, that I need to wait a moment before I am able to walk or go out”

Nava is resisting God, “Avía sido mi resistencia a los auxilios y llamamientos de Dios casi inexplicable” (Robledo 59). “It is inexplicable my resistance to God’s help and calls”

“la terrible quenta que me esperava y el claro conocimiento de que mis pasos no se dirijían al Cielo, sino al Infierno” (Robledo 60). My translation, “the terrible judgment awaiting me and the clear knowledge that my path was not leading me to Heaven but to Hell”

“among other many things that rob me of my sleep, the dangerous state of my conscience”

“Oí como una voz que hablava a mi interior y me desía que una enfermedad havitual sería el único medio para que me retirarse de todo … abstraerme de toda ocasión peligrosa” (Robledo 60-61). My translation:”I heard as if a voice spoke to my interior and was saying to me that a chronic sickness would be the only means that I would be able to retire from everything… withdraw from every dangerous [sinful] occasion”

“One day meditating on the joys that the Blessed Mother would feel when she had the Child in her womb, it seemed to me that I saw …”

“It seemed that I saw”; “In my spiritual withdrawal”; “and that is show I saw it”

I began to hear the repeated verse of Sanctus.” The verse in Latin: Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus /Dominus Deus Sabaoth./Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. /Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis. (Holy, holy, holy Lord,/God of power and might./heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest./Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest).”

“I heard a voice in my interior that said to me…”

“He said to me”

“En otra ocasión, estando en el Choro, sentí la divina presensia de mi Señor que en forma de pastor se llegaba a mí. Llebaba un cayado en la mano y me desía” (Robledo 72). “On another occasion, while in the Choir, I felt the Lord’s divine presence in the form of a shepherd that approached me. He carried a staff in his hand and said to me…”

“me dio un abrazo tan estrecho, juntando su corazón con el mío, que casi sensiblemente sentí que se estrechaba conmigo (del cual favor quedé como fuera de mí y sin poder por mucho rato recobrar las fuerzas que con tango gusto avía perdido)” (Robledo 75). My translation:“He gave me such a tight embrace, touching His heart to mine, that I almost felt it physically that He was embracing me (I lost consciousness from favor which I was glad to lose, and I was not able to recover myself for a long time” “[o]tras veces siento, dentro de mi corazón, como alguna cosa que tubiese cuerpo y le persivo sensiblemente” (56).383
celebrated on September 29 (Robledo 158); Laura García presented in IX Festival Iberoamericano de Teatro de Bogotá.

50 days after Easter Sunday forward to Pentecost Sunday. From there add one week for Trinity Sunday. The following be precise. For example, to find out the date for the observance of the Octave of Corpus Christi one must start counting that I take it off since I was not worthy to have it on” (Robledo 111); “Por tiempo de una elección … y yo haziendo varias peticiones por que nos diese una Prelada de su agrado… me dijo el Señor…” (Robledo 111); “At the time of an election… and I was petitioning God various times that he give us a Prelate to our liking… he told me…” “Aviendo yo comulgado un día y estando pidiendo a mi Señor se sirviese de el Señor…” (Robledo 63) “After receiving Comunion”

Since many Catholic religious feasts depend on which date Easter Sunday falls on, it makes it even more difficult to be precise. For example, to find out the date for the observance of the Octave of Corpus Christi one must start counting 50 days after Easter Sunday forward to Pentecost Sunday. From there add one week for Trinity Sunday. The following Thursday is then established as the Feast of Corpus Christi. The “Octava de Corpus” would then fall on the next Thursday which would correspond to sometime in late May or early June.

“Choro” is used to refer to the conventual space and to the group of nuns who pray in the Choir.

The different iconography that Nava mentions in her texts, Ecce Homo, Nazarene Christ, Mary, or the Child Jesus are discussed in the section titled Rhetoric of the Body in this Chapter.

“Después de aver comulgado” (Robledo 63) “After receiving Comunion”

In one such vision, Nava sees God as the father of all the nuns in the Choir, “Una noche, estando en Maytine … vi, al tiempo de desir el Choro… a su Soverana Magestad en una forma hermosísima. Representava que era aquella santa comunidad familia suya y que Su Magestad era Padre de ella” (Robledo 118).

See Appendix for the complete novena.

The novena to Saint Francis Xavier is prayed for nine consecutive days from March 4 to March 12 his feast day. See Appendix for the complete novena.

Salve Regina is the Latin prayer known as Hail Holy Queen which is usually prayed at the end of the Rosary. See Appendix for complete prayer in Latin and English translation.

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I saw that He took off his purple cloak; and placed it on me… And the nuns, after they saw that i had it on, clamored that I take it off since I was not worthy to have it on”

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sentido en esta pasada ocasión” (Robledo 83).

cultivo de la mística en una modalidad novedosa: la mística del cuerpo en el mundo, es decir, la mística como

Here you have Me; imprisoned by your love.”

He tenderly reclined in my heart.”

He laid down in my presence. As He lowered Himself to the ground He said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you? ... I stayed like this for more than two hours without being able to move, waiting to die at the hands of such

power women wield in the love relationship (Bloch and Bloch).

Having received Communion on day, I pleaded with Him not to leave my heart the rest of that day. I felt Him

reclined and resting in my heart, causing in my heart delights and pleasures that if felt as if my soul wanted to leave my

body… I stayed like this for more than two hours without being able to move, waiting to die at the hands of such sweetness."Further on Nava says, “tuve el atrevimiento de pedir a Nuestro Señor me diese a sentir lo mismo que avía

ascética, cuyo escenario era el cuerpo. Este era un camino barroco, la búsqueda de la santidad a través del cuerpo, como

mixes simile and metaphors liberally as stated by Ariel Bloch, “It is often hard to tell what is real and what imagined;

for that reason, many readers have found the poem to be dreamlike, with a freedom of movement, a dizzying fluidity,

that conveys the intoxication of the senses" (15).

Gerónima is my heart and I am the heart of Gerónima” … With these compliments and loving courtesies, it seems

that I was falling in love more and more with His loving heart.”

“sitting next to me as He was holding my hand, He gathered all my hair.” Nava depicts another scene

physicality takes center stage:”Otro día estando yo reziviendo de aquellas manos liberales y de aquel amoroso corazón tiernas carisias” (Robledo 96). “Another day I was receiving tender caresses from those generous hands and loving heart.”

I was much adorned and His Majesty held my hand. He said to me: ‘it is as delightful for me to be here with you as are these enchanting gardens and plants’. He was acting as if He was ignoring my faults, He took all of my hair in His hands; reducing it to one plait, He left my hair thusly disposed.” Nava is careful to balance her words with the

following statement: “Y así como me acordó que me avía despuesto con Su Magestad me acordé yo de mis infidelidades” (Robledo 75). My translation: Just as I recalled my espousals to His Majesty, I recalled my infidelities”

Nava presents a second vision where God asks to marry her. In this vision God drapes a golden chain around both of them and gives her a golden ring. The Virgin Mary appears as the bride’s maid placing a silver garment on Nava, “y me dio de entender que quería celebrar nuevos desposorios conmigo … Mi Señora la Virgen Santísima estaba como sirviendo de madrina …me ponía una túnica que parecía toda de plata” (Robledo 82).

Ariel Bloch underscores the power women wield in the love relationship (Bloch and Bloch).

In this sense, the body transforms itself into a discourse that authorizes and regulates cultural practices.”

Robledo underscores another important physical aspect in Nava’s manuscript, “una retórica corporal que

acompañaba la oración. Retórica asociada a un ejercicio físico, reglamentado por la escritura, es decir, una persuasión

en donde se delineaban posturas claves, un espacio de gestualidad que por sí mismo expresaba un proceso de

espiritualización corporal propiciatorio. Ponerse en pie, de rodillas, postrarse en el suelo, arribar, los ojos al cielo, abrir los brazos en cruz, caminar con los pies y los brazos atados, pasear… “(Robledo 107).

Borja’s understanding of a corporeal rhetoric, “la comunicación con Dios se lograba solo mediante una práctica ascética, cuyo escenario era el cuerpo. Este era un camino barroco, la búsqueda de la santidad a través del cuerpo, como cultivo de la mística en una modalidad novedosa: la mística del cuerpo en el mundo, es decir, la mística como experiencia sensorial y secular” (Borja 107). See previous note for similarities.

A half hour after birth (an accident during labor) died Doña Juana Saabedra, her mother.”

with an ‘S’ and a nail under the heart”

“hizo fabricar tres letras de fierro … que significases ser esclabos de María. Y puestos los herresillos al fuego

imprimió las tres letras en la palma de su braso siniestro e hiso la misma demostración con muchas personas en el

monasterio” (Robledo 47). My translation: “she ordered that three iron letter be made… to signify that they were

Mary’s slaves. After placing the small irons in the fire she branded the three letters on the palm of her left arm, and she

made the same demonstration with many other people in the monastery”

me cojió las manos como queriendo unpreziar en ellas us santísimas llagas. La misma acción hizo en los pies y en el

costado, pero no al lado que tiene Su Magestad abierto, sino al siniestro” (Robledo 154). My translation: “He took
me by the hands as if wanting to impress upon them the Holy Wounds. This same action He took with my feet and my side, but not the same side as His Majesty has open, but the left side”

426 In my understanding; it was only a feint; I do not deserve to be so well marked, even if I have desired it and desire it now."

427 Borja posits that “la enfermedad siempre ligada a un espacio de sacralización” (108). My translation, “sickness is always linked to a consecrating space.”

428 Francis Xavier, a Spanish Roman Catholic missionary was co-founder of Society of Jesus or Jesuits with Saint Ignatius of Loyola. His missionary work was primarily in Asia, India and Japan and that is why Nava refers to him as the “Apóstol de las Indias” (Robledo 60).

429 “oi como una voz que hablaba a mi interior y me desía que una enfermedad habitual sería el único medio para que me retirarse de todo” (Robledo 60). My translation: “I heard a voice within and it said that a chronic sickness would be the only way to withdraw from everything”

430 “A suffered a terrible accident whereupon no doctors, of the many that were called, knew the cause of the sickness (I knew that it had been sent by God).” Nava reiterates that her unexplained ailment is a gift from God, “Dándole yo gracias porque me avía llamado y por los trabajos que me avía enviado en la enfermedad que e padesido, en los cuales me hizo el beneficio de darme fortaleza y conocimiento claro…” (Robledo 79). Nava again recognizes this divine aspect of her illness, “acidente que padesía; y que lo padesía por horden de la Justicia Divina” (Robledo 79). Not only is the illness divinely sent, but it’s length is negotiated by St. Francis Xavier, “oi una voz en mi ynterior que me desía: “no morirás por ahora, durará tu padecer por diez años, aunque no en todos será ygual el tormento” (Robledo 61). My translation: “I heard an interior voice that said to me: “you will not die for now, your sickness will las for ten years, even if the suffering will not be the same.”

431 “thirty three years six months and fifteen days”

432 The symptoms Olmos includes: “dolores de cabeza”, “dolores de todo el cuerpo” and “ardores” (Robledo 43)

433 “No ay explicación bastante para desir lo que en el tiempo de mi enfermedad pasé de trabajos interiores y exteriores; y si Vuestra Merced gustare alguna ves de saberlo, diré quando me lo mande algo” (Robledo 61) My translation: “There are not enough explanations that would suffice to say the interior and exterior sufferings I have endured throughout my sickness; and if Your Excellency would like to know them, I will say something when you command me to do so”

434 Asceticism comes from the Greek word askesis, which describes the intense physical training of athletes. The early Christians appropriated the word to express the severe physical practices of self-denial as preparation for a more intense religious life.

435 “Interior penance is grieving for one’s sins with a firm intention not to commit those or any other sins again. Exterior penance, a fruit of the former, is self-punishment for the sins one has committed” (Ignatius and Ganss 49).

436 Ignatius of Loyola explains in one of his directives, “Exterior penances are performed chiefly for three purposes: First, to satisfy for one’s past sins. Second, to overcome ourselves; that is, to keep our bodily nature obedient to reason and all our bodily faculties subject to the higher. Third, to seek and obtain some grace or gift which one wishes and desieres, such as interior contrition for one’s sins, or abundant tears because of them or of the pains and sufferings which Christ our Lord underwent in his Passion’ or to obtain a solution to some doubt in which one finds oneself” (51).

437 At the writing of this dissertation I could not find any other study dealing with religious women and food for the period under study. Even though Bynum does not continue her investigation into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, she states that in rural Catholic Europe (of which Spain and Spanish America would fall under) the practice of fasting persisted into the early modern period.

438 “On another occasion, I sat down to eat my meager ration”

439 The religious connotations associated with food go far beyond the ascetic practice of self-disciple, “renunciation of ordinary food prepared the way for consuming (i.e., becoming) Christ, in Eucharist and in mystical union” (Bynum 2).

440 For another point on view on fasting, Bynum suggest that the attitudes toward food and fasting of the ascetic are more “diverse than those implied by the modern concepts of anorexia nervosa and hysteria” (5)

441 “My daughter, I appreciate that in My honor you eat and that have subjected yourself for My love to eat this por ration that in the house of your parents you would have probably feasted.”

442 The ascetic practices centered upon the imitation of Christ’s passion (imitatio passionis) began to take form in the latter part of the Middle Ages. “In this period women emerged as the primary exponents of extreme forms of self-discipline in the following of the Crucified Lord” (McGinn The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism 61). Christ’s Passion entails all the events that led up to Christ’s crucifixion and were traditionally exhibited in visual imagery as well as the popular Passion plays that were a “constant presence in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New Spain” (Kilroy 107).
and know all the details of the errand. 

Chapter I of this Dissertation covers the economic functions a convent performed within an early modern society that necessitated the direct contact with the outside world. 

My occupation permitted me to go to a house. The Devil used this errand as a motive to persuade a man to try and entertain or pervert me... And I confess that the subject [man] had not explained himself to me, and I had the audacity to give him my hand one day. 

"and having reoffended with this..."

"afflicting me with this sickness, He separated me from this danger."

"who was the one who caused me to be corrupted" ... "begging God that He send him some afflictions in this life, so that he can pay here his sins and become aware of his errors."

"dándole gracias a Nuestro Señor por la merced que me a echo de que las tentaciones sensuales que padesía, aya permitido que no sean ni tan frecuentes ni tan horribles ..." (Robledo 169-70) - "thanking My Lord for the mercy He has given me by making my sensual temptation less frequent and horrible"

"Estando yo un día pensando qué júbilo sentiría la Santísima virgen cuando tenía al Niño en su vientre" (Robledo 110). Nava uses the following female metaphor of birth pangs to describe God’s rage: “unas voses terrible como la muger que está escrana al parito” (Robledo 110). 

I saw a beautiful and adored woman. Her breasts were full of sweet milk that she offered to the many people that gathered around her.”Nava presents many example of lactation metaphors: “Estando considerando la felicidad de mi Señora y Ama, La Santísima Virgen María, de aver me resido alimentar con la virginal leche de sus purísísimos pechos al hijo del Eterno Padre y tenerle en su regaso y averle dado el ser natural de puro hombre” (Robledo 176).In another vision Nava asks the Child Jesus what He was eating. “ ‘hasta ahora conserve en mi boca la dulse leche que me dio mi..."
A Burning Heart Can Save Your Soul: Images of the Sacred Heart in New Spain

Grace Kilroy,
special devotion to the Sacred Heart. For a detailed account of this devotion within the context of New Spain see Lauren Augenblick’s text. "I came to greet the wound at His side and He said to me: ‘drink, My little sheep, this is the trough of my chosen.’" Nava is drawn repeatedly to Christ’s side, “me llevó a que besara aquella amorosa llaga de su costado. Y empecé a ver que de ella y de los pies y manos salía tanta sangre, que yundava todo el mundo” (Robledo 84).

In one of her visions, Nava sees herself as the Child Jesus’ nursemaid, “me vi en forma de ama” (Robledo 97).

“and then I saw the Child Jesus come up to me and place His little hands on my shoulder and say” ‘nurse Me.’” The Blessed Mother has asked Nava care for the Child Jesus using a specific spiritual regimen, “y mi Señora me lo entrego para que le crease y cuidase mucho. Dióme una doctrina aserca de la dieta espiritual que avía de guardar y el Niño un día me dio a entender que quería que hiziese con él el oficio de ama. Yo no hallaba qué darle y aplicándole a mi corazón me pareció que se lo avía vevido” (Robledo 97).

In another vision, Nava soothes Jesus who she describes as an angry child, “querrando yo tener el atrebimiento de tomarle en mis brazos, se retiraba el Niño de mí … Yo le procuraba, con mis toscas razones, desenojar y no quería sino huír de mí. Finalmente, yo le tomé en mis brasos, quiso o no quiso (Robledo 111). Nava utilizes again this very sweet and domestic image of a mother and child in the following vision, “vi al Niño Jesús que, llegándose a mí y poniéndome las manitas en el hombre me desía: ‘erés mi madre, susténtame con tu corazón’” (Robledo 135). In another vision, Nava soothes Jesus who she describes as an angry child, “querrando yo tener el atrebimiento de tomarle en mis brazos, se retiraba el Niño de mí … Yo le procuraba, con mis toscas razones, desenojar y no quería sino huír de mí. Finalmente, yo le tomé en mis brasos, quiso o no quiso (Robledo 111).

Nava emphasizes in a number of visions Jesus’ eyes as the most salient feature, “entre las facciones de su divino rostro, y pendiente de él, me ponía su santísima boca sobre el mismo corazón y me desía: ‘eres mi madre, susténtame con tu corazón’” (Robledo 135).

In another vision, Jesus who is represented as child desperately needs Nava, “Y sentí que me echo los brasos al cuello, y no quería sino abrazarme. Por último, le tomé en mis brasos, quiso o no quiso (Robledo 111). Nava utilizes again this very sweet and domestic image of a mother and child in the following vision, “vi al Niño Jesús que, llegándose a mí y poniéndome las manitas en el hombre me desía: ‘erés mi madre, susténtame con tu corazón’” (Robledo 135).

The poetic format whereby the lovers praise each other signaling out various parts of the body to dwell upon belongs more contemporarily to the Petrarchan sonnets and historically to the Arab genre, wasf. “The images are not literally descriptive; what they convey is the delight of the lover in contemplating the beloved, finding in the body a reflected image of the world in its freshness and splendor” (Bloch and Bloch 15).

"And thinking that it would be better to leave Him in His little crib, I went to hear Mass; after a short time in the Choir, it seemed to me that I saw the Child in the back, or I felt Him sobbing and crying because I had left Him.” In another vision, Jesus who is represented as child desperately needs Nava, “Y sentí que me echo los brasos al cuello, y no quería sino abrazarme. Por último, le tomé en mis brasos, quiso o no quiso (Robledo 111).

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weekly, as is the norm today. Nava was especially devoted: “afisionada al Santísimo Sacramento” (Robledo 73). This phenomenon is necessarily an ineffable experience of a trans-rational nature and thus difficult to put into words. “I do not have words with which I can explain it to myself.” Far from lacking theological knowledge, the mystical

things, contained in the amazement of his writings, especially the one titled “Treatise on the Love of God.”

A.D. nor is it accepted by Protestants. Only the Catholic Church recognizes it as canonical. Sirach’s misogyny is

half a century later, holy women were not allowed such public venues to spread their message (142).

Nava also writes Jesus Nazarene King of the Jews incorrectly in Latin (Robledo 132).

She also correctly transcribes, ‘sic Deus dilexit mundum ut illium suum unigentium daret’ which refers to John 3:16; “For so God loved the world He gave His only begotten Son.”

People of letters and discernment that met her, seeing such acumen, would say and with much reason, that she did not have a feminine intellect; because she reasoned surmounting great heights and scrutinizing the depths”

And I know it as true”

feeling a great sweetness and gentleness that my shortsightedness cannot explain.” Further on, Nava seems to be at a loss for words to describe what she is feeling, “yo no tengo términos con qué explicarme” (Robledo 119).

“I do not have words with which I can explain it to myself.” Far from lacking theological knowledge, the mystical

phenomenon is necessarily an ineffable experience of a trans-rational nature and thus difficult to put into words.

Christianity holds that there is one God, but three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity has been a topic of great dispute since the Early Church. In the fourth century, Arius claimed that Christ was created by God the Father and thus not co-eternal thus denying the Divinity of Jesus Christ as understood in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Council of Nicene was convened to declare Arius’ claims heretical and to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity. Nonetheless, Arian challenges continued even up to the time of Nava who refers to it in her manuscript.

“The Book of Sirach written in the second century B.C. does not appear in the Hebrew Bible after the first century A.D. nor is it accepted by Protestants. Only the Catholic Church recognizes it as canonical. Sirach’s misogyny is evident: “A man’s spite is preferable to a woman’s kindness; women give rise to shame and reproach” (Sir 42:14).
Kenneth Bailey dedicates part 5 of his book, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* to the task of promoting the understanding that “Jesus selected images and created parables with a deliberate concern to communicate his message to his women listeners on as deep a level as to his male followers” (Bailey 194). Women comprised an important element in Jesus’ lifetime assuming the roles of disciples, fellow travelers, and especially as financial contributors to His fledging movement. Bailey thus underscores Jesus’ role in promoting the destruction of the gender barrier so prevalent in the Middle East.

The passage reads: “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” Scholars such as Wilson argue that I Corinthians was not penned directly by the Apostle but to a later period called “school of Paul” and thus not be adjudicated to him (142).

Wilson suggests that the women were more inclined to accept the new Christian religion than men since they were exempt from the obligation of circumcision.

And the Lord said to me, ‘the person who cares for this garden has to uproot these weeds (and even these seem to me not to be all that bad but they were not useful), but should not cease to cultivate the land because of this motive [weeds] nor become exasperated.” Emphasis added.

The syntax of these biblical passages has been the subject of serious scholarly debates in the recent years. For an alternative and historical reading of this biblical passage refer to Linda Belleville’s book *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*.

Teresa of Ávila, a well-known religious figure in Spain, had many detractors, as expected, especially since she was considered to be “disrupting the natural order by teaching men” (Ahlgren 120).

In the monastery she was scattered ignorance (it is well known the many people besides the religious women, instructor and one who enlightens, directing as many as God made possible.”

I had a clear directive that God was pleased that I instructed ignorant people; because there were many souls that were lost from the lack of light and therefore I tried to do as told.”

The desire to teach and the love I have for soul is so great, causing me to be impatient with my sex because it impedes that I do something for the One who did so much for me.”

Jeanne Bouvier de la Motte Guyon, 1648-171). Madame Guyon is also considered by McGinn to be the first woman to write a full exposition of *Song of Songs*(*The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* 41).

I came to know that this precept is the one that gives luster to all the others” and if mankind would follow these rules, “they would acquire tranquility and peace among each other”

In another similar vision, Nava recounts: llegó Su Magestad a mí y me colocó en el corazón una primorosa tabla en que venían escritos los diez preceptos; y observé que me la yntrodujo y fijó mui intensamente. Y en esta tabla avían quedado, a mi parecer, algunos campos alrededor de ella y me dijo el Señor: ‘éstos los llenas con algunas obras de supererogación.’” (Robledo 127) Supererogation, as defined by the *Webster Dictionary*, is a technical term used within the Catholic Church to refer to those good works which can be used to exempt repentant sinners. Supererogation gave way to the abuses of indulgences and the consequent criticism by the Protestant Reformation.

Would it not have been better if the Blessed Virgin, since she were to remain virgin, should have withdrawn to a cloister? If so, how did God decree that she should take the state of marriage, seemingly such a contradiction?”

The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph restate the dilemma: “ ‘¿a un hombre pone Dios por guarda de la pureza siendo el medio de violarla?’” (Robledo 182). Such questioning is reminiscent of Sor Juana’s poem “Hombre necios que acusáis”The following are the first two stanzas of the poem by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: “Hombres necios que acusáis a la mujer sin razón, /sin ver que sois la ocasión/de lo mismo que culpáis/;si con ansia sin igual/solicítáis su desdén,/¿por qué queréis que obren bien/si las incitáis al mal?” and its translation into English, “Silly, men-so very adopt/at wrongly faulting womankind/not seeing you're alone to blame/for faults you plant in woman's mind./After you've won by urgent plea/the right to tarnish her good name,/you still expect her to behave—/you, that coaxed her into shame.

In your heart I am depositing the bulk of my treasure which at the right time will produce profit, because people will know the fidelity I have for you, and it will move many souls to love Me.”

And I am very sure that many souls would have been lost if they had communicated their eros to me”

“me vi en una parte muy distante y remota … la Asia … y después me sacó a otro sitio más despejado … las Yndias” (Robledo 83-84).

“And I had a light that the person who arrived with the saint and serving him, was the King of Bungo, who was saved by the instruction of Saint Xavier”
“my confessor requested that I intercede for him.” Juan de Olmos, repeatedly asks Nava to intercede for him:

“Dijome un día mi confesor que qué le pedía a Dios para su merzed. Yo ya le avía pedido que le librase de todo peligro de ofenderle y le diese fortaleza y luz para asistirme…” (Robledo 103). Another request: “avía mandado que pidiese a Su Magestad le ayudase” (Robledo 136).

“a dear individual” … “a terrible propensity with a woman with whom he was communicating.”

“le hube de desir claramente mi sentir y que a mí me paresía que le desagradava Dios de que persistiera en la dicha comunicación.” (Robledo 71).

“Aviendo, pues, yo comulgado, quise obligar a Nuestro Señor, pues le tenía dentro de mí, a que me hiziese esta merzed” (Robledo 71).

“Después de algunos días, en que me parese que esta va el sujeto casi sin ánimo de dejar esto, pidiendo yo por él, me dijo el Señor: “traémele aquí” (Robledo 72) - "having caused me great pain, I summoned the individual again, and it was God’s will that he desisted”

The Catholic Encyclopedia interprets the vow of obedience as follows: “The voluntary binding of oneself under oath to obey superiors in a religious institute, or a confessor, or spiritual guide” (Hardon)

"His Excellency ordered me”

As Darcy adds, “In the case of Vidas written by priests, the confessor-penitent relationship is primordial, and the life histories of women religious by their listeners-manipulators are, in fact, testimony of the Church’s efforts to control its female activist” (Darcy 231).

“What your Excellency will see in this manuscript, is that which has been impressed upon my mind; being careful not to leave anything out, nor have weighed or exaggerated what I have said up to now; and with God’s grace I will not have strayed from the precepts of truth, nor does it seem that I have said anything incorrectly. Since I am just a poor ignoramus and my sex is so contemptible, I say- it seems to me- about almost everything I have written.

Robert Morrison also states that “[t]he devil was so constantly feared by seventeenth-century Spaniards that he served as the explanation for all morbid mysteries(9-10).

Me dan gran cuidado algunas cosas extraordinarias que me pasan, así por yntimas, como porque conosco que son sobrenaturales y de éstas no tengo duda ninguna, porque ellas mismas me necesitan al asenso y las tengo por de Dios y también por yntelectuales” (Robledo 55).

"I tried to cast aside [the vision] because it seemed to me to be suspicious.” Paradoxically, “the devil routinely inspired visions that appeared to be of divine origin but really were designed to serve his own sinister purposes” (Haliczer 128), and persecution by the devil can be construed as an infallible sign of sanctity (Haliczer 76).

Haliczer point out that “[t]he growing self-confidence of women in the value of their spiritual lives and experiences is also evident from the number of devotional works by women that were being produced and published in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century” (62).

Nava takes the active role of guardian dog instead of passive sheep: “me dio a entender que quería que le resguardase su perzona … [r]epara que los perros, como pueden, defienden a sus amos” (Robledo 72).

"I saw that He rapidly pulled a carriage, and He went to hide in my heart from the people who intended to hurt Him”

The full title of the comedia is Famosa comedia de la bienaventurada madre Santa Teresa de Jesús, monja descalza de Nuestra Señora del Carmen. From now on I will refer to the play simply as Santa Teresa de Jesús.

Morrison has proposed that the play under investigation, though considered by Morley and Brueton to be of questionable authorship by Lope de Vega, was indeed penned by the playwright since “part of Act 2 … is evidently the oldest manuscript … in Lope’s handwriting” (111).

Vida y muerte de Santa Teresa de Jesús was edited by Elisa Argone Terni.

Other names associated with this genre are baroque hagiographic drama or Golden Age saint’s play. I have used the Cervantes Virtual digital edition that presents the text with versification. The Linkgua 2007 edition does not.

My translation for all quotes, “two young daughters without mother,/ I, who am noble and a father.”

"Yo pienso que se encontraron,/porque los dos enviaron /cada uno su papel/ a mi señora” (Vega I.145-48).

"pues hoy, falsa, mi honor menguas,/ que la mujer que anda en lenguas,/ no es bien que en papeles ande” (Vega I.517-19).

"digo que quiero casarte,/ para no cansarme yo;/ y a la mano tengo dada;/ don Ramiro es tu marido” (Vega I.562-65).

"I do not want to marriage…/I say/ that to be a nun is my only desire”

"The joyful moment has arrived/ my glory I hope to enjoy"
“Whence upon you find me culpable/ cut the thread of my life”

“Con extraña presunción / me llevó a la Encarnación / y se quedó en el convento” (Vega I.792-99).

“God, which husband will I choose… In case I am to be married, cousin, I choose you as husband.”

“That voice hides a mystery. I say that is was Heaven that spoke to me.”

“I only say that to be a nun is my only desire.”

“él es mal de corazón, / ni habla ni siente’ (Vega II.39-40).

“Three doctors visit her/ and they can’t find a remedy” to which Petrona, the graciosa, answers, “I do think father, that they [doctor] solicit her death”

“My Lord, it is the battle litigated between the Guardian Angel and the Devil over doña Teresa de Ahumada – professed nun of the town of Ávila’s- soul which is about to leave her body.” Note the use of the familial name. She has not become at this point in the play a candidate for canonization since she has not performed any miracles, prerequisite for being considered a saint.

“If she dies, she will go to Heaven. What use is it to you that she dies now?

“I fear that if she lives, she will tear from my burning claws more souls than Lybia has sand or atoms in the shining sun”

“¿Qué es lo que visteis, señora? / Decídmelo” (Vega II.236-37).

“In confesión, / el caso, padre, sabréis,/ porque importa que guardéis/ secreto en esta ocasión” (Vega II.336-39).

“tres veces su fe me ha dado,/ de Niño Jesús la una,/ la otra puesto en la columna,/ y la otra crucificado” (Vega II.345-47). The debate between Fray Mariano and Teresa on the validity and orthodoxy of the vision that depicts the divine battle over her soul can be found in verses II.336-99.

“como confessor, os mando/ que lo que os he dicho hagáis,” and instructs Teresa to run away if the visions recur, “higas y cruces le dad” (Vega II.368-98). “as you confessor, I order you to do as I say and if the visions were to recur to run away and make the sign of the Cross”

“Dulce voz, el pecho ablanda; / pero el confesor me manda/ que no espere. ¿Qué he de hacer?/ Dios me aclare mi sentido./ ¿Llegará? ¿Que estoy dudosa?” (Vega II.400-05).

“If by obeying, I offend Thee, I’m sorry; and if I sin by obeying, it’s my confessor’s fault”

“como amante obligado / te quiero dar un favor … Una cruz te quiero dar / por las muchas que me distes” (Vega II.502-06).

“Salga de su convento, con una compañera, todas las veces que fuere necesario” (Vega II.299). Lope de Vega adds the comment that the Church has given “tan amplia licencia / en religión tan estrecha” since permitting a conventual inhabitant to leave the convent when necessary was expressly prohibited by the Council of Trent (Vega II.302-3).

“porque me ama don Ramiro,/ el mismo que desprecia sté,/ y don Diego/ …/ Los amantes heredé/ cuando en religión entraste;/ los dos, que son regidores,/ levantan este rumor,/ envidiosos del favor/ que doy… [a] Juan del Valle, que al fin / este ha de ser mi marido,/ que como tal le he escogido” (Vega II.583-85).

“Rogadle por mi niño don Gonzalo” (Vega III.94).

“con el medio ataré la abierta herida/ y el medio por reliquia he de guardarle” (Vega III.137-8).
“Sólo de la ropilla me ha pasado,/ porque a la sangre de este medio paño/perdigones y bala han respetado” (Vega III.154-6).

“que yo no quiero enemigo/ por quien Dios milagros hace” (Vega III.174-5).

“Con el rector fray Mariano/ don Digo, os habéis de ver./ En Maqueda, primo, está/ que es el convento primero de mis Descalzos” (Vega III.239-44).

“Sin duda Gonzalo es muerto./ mas Dios lo ha de remediar” (Vega III.373-4)... “Algún desmayo será;/ trae el niño con cuidado” (Vega III.411-12).

“Viva este niño, mi Dios,…Cumplid, aunque es fuerte cosa;/ esta palabra que he dado;/ que el esposo está obligado/ a cumplir la de la esposa” (Vega III.431-8).

“Porque vuestro celo/ me quitó el subir al cielo;/ donde gozara de Dios” (Vega III.448-50). Could Vega have been commenting, a brief passing exegesis, on the biblical story of Lazarus whose reaction to being resuscitated is not recorded in the Bible?

“Yo fui posta y postillona/ de todas las fundaciones” (Vega III.529-30). Postillion is the person who rides the near horse of the leaders in order to guide a team of horses drawing a coach. Post refers to a stage coach.

“lo que anduve, no te asombre;/ que en Sevilla;/ por mal nombre;/ soy la hermana Dromedaria” (Vega III.544-6). There follows another comic incident this time between Petrona and Lebrija, Teresa’s father’s servant (Vega III.576-98).

“Esposa, dentro en dos días;/ que en mis altas jerarquías;/ te las volveré a poner” (Vega III.717-20).

“Murió nuestra madre amada;/ la virgen santa expiró;/ una paloma salió/ con la primer boqueada” (Vega III.807-10).

“Sólo Dios ha permitido/ que el milagro sucedido/ lo viésemos vos y yo” (Vega III.818-20).

“Este olor al cielo sabe” (Act III, 824).

“Ella me abrió este sentido” (Act III, 837).

See Gascon’s The Women Saint in Spanish Golden Age Drama.

“Who has daughters to marry, their honor is made of glass.” Don Alfonso tells Teresa that by marrying her off she will not have occasion to dishonor him: “hija, tengas culpa o no,;/ la ocasión quiero quitarte;/ digo que quiero casarte,;/ para no cansarme yo;/ ya la mano tengo dada;/ don Ramiro es tu marido” (Vega I.560-65).

“If they want to love me,/ can I make them not love me;/ Do I not have power/against the abyss of their love;/ that all men, even God Himself/ has been given free will”

So as not to leave one of the two men jealous, I choose God as spouse, the true Spouse”

“Pay attention, that this [choice to be a nun] is not in you; you forget about what is beneficial to you: if you do the math, there are very few happy nuns, and many that are regretful.”

This statue was sculpted by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. It is located in the Cornaro Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

Teresa tells God, “No me dejéis tan quejosa,/ que entre el esposo y la esposa/ no ha de haber cosa compartida” (Act III, 662-4). “Absorta me quedó en calma;/ Vuelve el alma enamorada;/ La pasada gloria cesa;/ y sin vos, Niño, he quedado;/ como quien rey se ha soñado;/ y si despierta, le pesa” (Vega II.528-43).

“oí decir que había Universidad y Escuelas en que se estudiaban las ciencias, en Méjico”... “mudándome el traje, me enviase a Méjico” (48). My translation: “I Heard tht at the University and Schools in which sciences were studied... I asked that I be dressed as a man and sent to Mexico.”


Cruz, Sor Juana Inés de la. Respuesta 1691. <dept.sfcollege.edu/HFL/hum2461/pdfs/sjicAnswer.pdf>.


Pérez de Montalván, Juan. La Monja Alférez Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic monographs, no. 34. Ed. Camacho Platero, Luzmila. Newark, Del.: Juan de la Cuesta, 2007.


APPENDIX A
LITANY OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Jesus, hear us.

Jesus, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Splendor of the Father, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Brightness of eternal Light, have mercy on us.

Jesus, King of Glory, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Sun of Justice, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most amiable, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most admirable, have mercy on us.

Jesus, the mighty God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, Father of the world to come, have mercy on us.

Jesus, angel of great counsel, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most powerful, have mercy on us.

Jesus, most patient, have mercy on us.
Jesus, most obedient, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Lover of Chastity, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, our Lover, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, God of Peace, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Author of Life, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Model of Virtues, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, zealous for souls, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, our God, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, our Refuge, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Father of the Poor, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Treasure of the Faithful, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, good Shepherd, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, true Light, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, eternal Wisdom, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, infinite Goodness, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, our Way and our Life, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, joy of the Angels, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, King of the Patriarchs, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Master of the Apostles, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Teacher of the Evangelists, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Strength of Martyrs, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Light of Confessors, *have mercy on us.*
Jesus, Purity of Virgins, *have mercy on us*.

Jesus, Crown of all Saints, *have mercy on us*.

Be merciful, spare us, O Jesus!

Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Jesus!

From all evil, deliver us, O Jesus.

From all sin, deliver us, O Jesus.

From your wrath, deliver us, O Jesus.

From the snares of the devil, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

From the spirit of fornication, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

From everlasting death, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

From the neglect of your inspirations, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through the mystery of your holy Incarnation, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Nativity, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Infancy, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your most divine Life, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Labors, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Agony and Passion, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Cross and Dereliction, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Sufferings, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Death and Burial, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Resurrection, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Ascension, *deliver us, O Jesus*.

Through your Institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, *deliver us, O Jesus*. 
Through your Joys, *deliver us, O Jesus.*

Through your Glory, *deliver us, O Jesus.*

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

spare us, O Jesus!

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

graciously hear us, O Jesus!

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us, O Jesus!

Jesus, hear us.

Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, you have said, "Ask and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you"; mercifully attend to our supplications, and grant us the grace of your most divine love, that we may love you with all our hearts, and in all our words and actions, and never cease to praise you. Make us, O Lord, to have a perpetual fear and love of your holy name, for you never fail to govern those whom you solidly establish in your love. You, who live and reign forever and ever. R. Amen.
Lord, Most amiable and most loving

St. Francis Xavier,

in union with thee

I reverently adore the Divine Majesty.

The remembrance of the favors

with which God blessed thee during life,

and of thy glory after death,

fills me with joy.

I implore thee to obtain for me,

through thy powerful intercession,

the inestimable blessing of living

and dying in the state of grace.

I also beseech thee to obtain the special favor

I ask of this Novena.

(Make your request here...)

But, if what I ask is not for the glory of God,

and the good of my soul,

I pray and desire that

which is the most conductive to both..

Amen.
Pray for us, St. Francis Xavier.

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let Us Pray.

O God, Who didst vouchsafe,

by the preaching and miracles of Saint Francis Xavier,

to join unto Thy Church the nations of the Indies,

grant, we beseech Thee,

that we who reverence his glorious merits

may also imitate his example,

through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Pray the Our Father... and the Hail Mary..., three times, in memory of St. Francis Xavier's devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, and Glory Be To The Father... ten times in thanksgiving for the graces received during his ten years of apostleship.
Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
ad te clamamus exules filii Hevae,
ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.
Ora pro nobis sancta Dei Genetrix.
Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;
to thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us;
and after this our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us O holy Mother of God,
R. that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.