

SEARCHING FOR THE WRITING SUBJECT IN
LA VIDA DE LA MONJA ALFÉREZ:
AUTOBIOGRAFÍA ATRIBUIDA A DOÑA CATALINA DE ERAUSO

by

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ABSTRACT

The writing subject in the *La Vida de la Monja Alférez: Autobiografía atribuida a Doña Catalina de Erauso* is a difficult subject to determine because of the apocryphal nature of the text, the impact of multiple authors on the subsequent copies of the work, and the gender changes of the protagonist. There have been many critical approaches implemented to study this text, among them sociological, historical, feminist and formalist. All of these have added invaluable information to the understanding of the text, but few have focused on all of the Erauso entities manifested in the *Vida*.

Further investigation is warranted into the writing subject phenomenon in Early Modern Spain to evaluate the messages that the collective writing subject is imparting. Applying Paul Smith's concept of the writing subject as a psychological collective entity that presents messages to the reader (xxx), the work can be evaluated for the various messages presented by the collective writing subject using the narrator and protagonist. Additionally, an evaluation of the historical Erauso and the history of the text will aid in understanding the various points of entry for other authors, editors, publicists and copyists.

Investigating the fields of Early Modern Autobiography, Soldier's Autobiography as well as the the various literary genres which are present in the text will clarify particular scenes that contribute to the development of the protagonist. All of these areas of investigation will allow the messages that the collective writing subject brings to the text to be analyzed. The writing subject of Erauso's life story can also be compared to the writing subjects of female soldier's life stories to establish similarities between the two. Conclusions can be drawn about the nature of the collective writing subject, the importance of gender identity and the messages that the writing subject delivers through a study of the text and an application of the criticism.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone who helped me and guided me through the trials and tribulations of creating this manuscript. In particular, my family and close friends who stood by me throughout the time taken to create this work.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE PROTAGONIST, THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO AND THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT.....	16
3. CONFIGURING THE NARRATING CHARACTER.....	62
4. CHARACTERIZING THE WRITING SUBJECT.....	103
5. RECONCILING THE WRITING SUBJECT.....	136
6. CONCLUSION.....	174
REFERENCES.....	198

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The *Vida I Sucesos de la Monja Alférez: Autobiografía atribuida a Doña Catalina de Erauso*,¹ which was written in c1646, continues to garner critical attention today among scholars, students, and others because it still has something important to say after the millennium.² Critics have long debated the effectiveness of myriad critical approaches to this work. While sociological, historical, feminist and formalist criticisms have provided an impressive amount and depth of information about this work, they have also created more questions than they have answered about this late baroque text. Because the *Vida* is a work of multiple authorship, a matter to which I will return shortly, I find that the use of a different critical approach serves to address some of the issues as yet unresolved among scholars.

As I read Erauso's³ purported autobiography in the early twenty-first century, I detect, among the palimpsest of elements, the prominent role of the writing subject in presenting the reader with the tools necessary to decipher the text. So it is that I would like to base my analysis of the *Vida* on Paul Smith's concept of the writing subject: the psychological collective entity that presents messages to the reader (xxx). The writing subject in Erauso's text manifests itself in

¹ For the rest of the dissertation, I will refer to Rima de Vallbona's critical edition as the *Vida*.

² In her monograph published in 2002, Sherry Velasco completed an exhaustive study of the iconic applications of the Monja Alférez character. She included appearances made by the character throughout the intervening centuries in broadsides, plays, and movies (1-11).

³ I plan to follow Mary Elizabeth Perry's example of avoiding gender-narrowing stereotypes. She uses the neutral term "Erauso." I will use both "Erauso" as well as the distinction I/Erauso and the specification narrator, writing subject or protagonist. As Perry mentions, the narrating character chose to develop an identity with a masculine gender, used a masculine name, and lived a masculine life, therefore describing this narrator with feminine possessive adjectives would overlook the narrator's own preference. Another option would be to refer to the narrator with feminine adjectives when the protagonist is living as a female and male adjectives when the protagonist is living as a female. I believe, as Perry suggests, that Erauso is a less-gendered compromise. ("Convent" 395)

the very first line of the body of the document: “Nací yo, D^a Catalina de Arujo”⁴ (33). Here, the writing subject creates the first-person protagonist/narrator, I/Erauso, who will both participate in and tell her story in the work. The mechanism of autobiography at work in the text means that the “I” (auto) will tell or write (graphy) those events (bio) the subject deems important in order to create this story/history. Conversely, a careful reading of the work should, in the analysis of the protagonist/narrator’s performance, reveal a configuration of the writing subjectivities responsible for the creation of the text. Furthermore, among the varying types of results this critical approach will provide, information about the writing subject as regards women, writing, and the writing subject of this time period are perhaps its greatest yield. This approach is particularly apropos for the *Vida* because of its murky history, multiple authorship, and the consequent difficulty of establishing an adequate critical framework for reading it.

1.1 HISTORY OF THE TEXT

While the *Vida* has many of the hallmarks of an autobiography, its mission is mitigated by the journey of the text itself. Since this document is apocryphal,⁵ it must be taken into account that none of the copies can be compared to the original to establish consistency because the original is lost (Pancrazio 457). The resulting numerous parallel versions of the principle document have, over time, developed their own histories. Additionally, the various adaptations have passed through many editorial hands, some of whom noted their changes and the reasons for them; but, probably, there were others who were not as transparent.

⁴ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s English version is included in Vallbona’s appendix. In order to maintain consistency with the reading of the *Vida*, I will use his translation as well. His translation reads, “I, Doña Catalina de Erauso was born...” (2).

⁵ Pancrazio considers the *Vida* to be “apocryphal” because “the text attributed to Erauso is characterized by discursive instability that undermines any notion of implied authorship and authority” (457).

The version of the *Vida* that I am using as the source for this project is emblematic of the complex process of authorship of the text: Rima de Vallbona's 1992 edition, titled, *Vida I Sucesos de La Monja Alférez: Autobiografía atribuida a Doña Catalina de Erauso*. The source for Vallbona's edition is a copy of the *Vida* that is part of the collection of Juan Bautista Muñoz. The date the copy was completed is given as May 24, 1784 (3)⁶. This copy is housed in the *Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid* under the number XXVIII A-70 (3). The title that Vallbona gives for that document is: *Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez, o Alférez. Catarina, D[^a] Catarina de Araujo [sic] doncella, natural de S[an] Sebastián, Prov[inci]a de Guipúzcoa. Escrita por ella misma en 18 de Sept[iembr]e 1646 [sic] “volviendo de las Indias a España en el Galeón S[an] Josef, Capitán Andrés Otón, en la flota de N[uev]a España, General D. Juan de Benavides, General de la Armada Tomás de la Raspuru, que llegó a Cádiz en 18 de noviembre de 1646 [sic]”* (3).

Historians like Vallbona have cited various discrepancies in the dates that appear in this particular parallel version. The discrepancy of the date in this title, 1646, is the first error, although the correct year, 1624 does appear at the end of the text (3). This, and other issues, will be more closely considered in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Another obvious matter is the date noted on the copy, 1784, as it is believed that the original document was completed in 1625. Taking into account the lack of an original manuscript and clear provenance, it becomes apparent that for nearly 160 years the whereabouts of the document were uncertain.

Catalina de Erauso's involvement with the supposed original is difficult to establish. The *Vida* is but one of myriad documents purported to have been written or dictated by Erauso in the

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, the page numbers refer to Vallbona's edition of the *Vida*.

early seventeenth-century.⁷ Often understood as a parallel to the 1626 legal petition by Erauso to King Felipe IV, the *Vida* was probably written in 1625. There is evidence that Erauso, or perhaps Erauso's intermediary, gave the manuscript of this autobiography to Bernardino de Guzmán. A well-known editor in Madrid, Guzmán forged his reputation by publishing fictional texts (2).

In the absence of a clear provenance and authenticated original, the question of the authorship of the *Vida* remains open. Many scholars assume either that the original author is Erauso, or that Erauso directly retold stories of her life to another author who penned the autobiography, a common practice at the time. This would be particularly believable given the fact that authors of fiction, particularly picaresque texts and travel literature, frequented the Editorial Guzmán in that era. Other critics have claimed that the document was created by Cándido María Trigueros, a poet and dramatist who is described as having some talent but little creativity (18).

Trigueros' name and reputation enter the discussion at this point because Juan Bautista Muñoz is believed to have made his 1784 copy of the *Vida* from one of Trigueros' (17). The critical concern for the legitimacy of the document is valid here as Trigueros was known for producing several anachronistic documents and claiming to have discovered them (17-18). However, Vallbona and other critics, while unable to absolutely disprove this idea, remain unconvinced that this is the case with the *Vida*. Such disinclination is merited, as even in his own day, the work of Trigueros was quickly discredited as aesthetically inferior (18).

Additionally, the critics find that Trigueros was probably not an accomplished enough author to produce a work of this caliber, and that the anachronistic elements of the *Vida* are relatively few

⁷ In her "Apendice N° 2" (129-50), Vallbona includes a petition attributed to *El Alférez Herausso/El Alférez Erausso* as well as numerous other testimonies written by fellow soldiers about their time of service with Erauso (145).

and insignificant. They also believe that Juan Bautista Muñoz himself had a great deal of experience with such material and would have been more than capable of recognizing a fraudulent manuscript (18-19). However, it must be stated clearly that even if Trigueros is not considered to be the author of the *Vida*, it would irresponsible to assume that he did not alter the document at all.

Another consideration in Vallbona's edition is a copy made in 1829 by Joaquín María Ferrer also from the copy of Juan Bautista Muñoz. At the time, Ferrer was a Spanish writer living in exile to escape the rule of Fernando VII. Ferrer reproduced this edition of the *Vida*, in which he admitted to correcting mutilations and errors of the copyist (3).⁸ In spite of his admission, Vallbona chose to include and comment on many of his notes even though she does not use his version of the *Vida*, in which she notes many variations from the Muñoz 1784 copy. Vallbona seems to vacillate on the erudition of Ferrer's version saying at one point that he did not note the changes and additions he made, nor did he explain his methods. She suggests that these tendencies of Ferrer's may have lead to the idea that even the original manuscript was a fraud. However, just a few lines later, she states that the only modern versions that should be taken seriously are those that follow Ferrer's model and include notes and appendices (4).

This confusing pronouncement of Vallbona's draws attention to one of the difficulties of reading this as an autobiography: editorial input. The coercion of the editor and publisher, who are redacting the text with an eye to publication, shape the work for particular audiences (S. Smith *Reading* 55). In Vallbona's case, at times she externalizes her thoughts in notes on Ferrer. The ongoing debate between Vallbona and Ferrer that takes place off-stage, in the footnotes, itself becomes a part of the experience of reading this version of the *Vida* and profoundly

⁸ Vallbona states that Ferrer admitted to changing names of towns, people and almost all of the dates in the text (3).

influences the reader's interpretation of the document. Ironically, as both editors touched the text and documented their changes, each revealed her or his own "Erauso." In no way do I wish to disparage the value of Vallbona's version of the *Vida*, rather I wish to underscore the potential impact on a work that the voice of the editor can have as it appears in the text. Since this rarely occurs without reason, the voice of the editor can, itself, insert messages into the reading of the text.

In the case of Vallbona, she does attempt to keep her message out of the actual text and in the notes. With Ferrer, this aim is not as certain. Therefore, the decision to include Ferrer's notes but not use his edition of the text seems sensible. In addition, it is reasonable to use the edition that is in the *Real Academia de Historia de Madrid*, as it has, at least, been out of circulation since 1784, and ostensibly, has incurred fewer changes since then than other copies. Another advantage of using the Muñoz edition is that it does seem to be the source for most subsequent versions.

Given the rich past of the copies of the *Vida*, I choose to use Rima de Vallbona's version in this study. The purposes of this investigation will be well served by both the notes that are included in Vallbona's edition (both Vallbona's and Ferrer's), and the levels of intervention that are apparent. However, it is important to consider why Vallbona felt the need to develop a new version of the *Vida*. Vallbona includes her answer to this question in her "Introduction," where it is apparent that her 1992 edition is something she pondered for quite some time. Vallbona states that there has not been a new edition of the *Vida* since the one done by Ferrer in 1829 (11). She indicates that there was a version that was announced by José Berruezo in 1959 with the stated goal of trying to find out whether or not this text is the autobiography of Erauso. Since this

version never appeared, and Vallbona considered it “una verdadera necesidad,”⁹ she took on the task herself (11).

As I mentioned earlier, she notes several variations between the Muñoz copy and the version of Ferrer, although she cannot with certainty clarify if these are copy errors or if they originate with Ferrer (12). In addition to the typographical dissimilarities, Vallbona notes lexical and morphosyntactical differences in the two texts. Although this is one of the shortest sections of the introduction, Vallbona does reveal some of her motives for adding a new edition to the body of work that surrounds this text. It seems increasingly clear that Vallbona is dissatisfied with Ferrer’s edition of the *Vida* and that she wants to respond to his obvious intrusions into the text.

It seems that Vallbona and I have a similar interest in the text at this point. I, too, am interested in using this document to reveal what it can about the writing subject. As I have already indicated, it is impossible to assume that the writing subject is the same as the historical Erauso, or even that the historical Erauso wrote the text. I believe, however, that we can presuppose some involvement on the part of the historical Erauso in the production of the life story that we read today as the *Vida*. The writing subject as the collectivity of psychological entities that produced the text and their messages, however, are the objects of my inquiry.

Apart from the manuscript, it has been confirmed that Erauso, as a historical figure, did exist. While there are myriad discrepancies as to the actual date, the *Vida* gives Erauso’s birth year as 1585 (33). Vallbona includes in the appendices such documents as: a baptismal record from 1592 that certifies the baptism of “Cat[alin]^a de Herauso” as well as references to ships logs, and the extensive testimonies that all support that such a person did live (152, 129-50).

⁹ An English equivalent of this would be “a true necessity.”

A considerable percentage, though not all, of the information available about Erauso in the historical record is born out in the *Vida*. However, it is important to note that the Catalina de Erauso developed in this life story is an intriguing literary character, with a varying and loose association with whomever may have been the actual historical Erauso. According to the text, the I/Erauso protagonist was born in 1585¹⁰ in San Sebastián, Guipúzcoa and brought up in a Dominican convent, Convento de San Sebastián el Antiguo, until early adolescence, when she escaped the religious life and decided to live as a male (33). As expressed in the *Vida*, the I/Erauso protagonist does not seem to have chosen this path for either religious or nationalistic motives, but rather seems drawn to the adventurous life of the soldier and explorer in the New World, and the less vulnerable life of a male.

In the *Vida*, the I/Erauso narrator describes with varying style and pace the transformation, exploits, loves, duels, battles, and ultimate decision to “reveal” the protagonist’s gender as female. The life story continues with the protagonist returning to Europe to gain recompense for outstanding military service. The last section of the *Vida* involves the protagonist’s trip to Italy for an audience with Pope Urban VIII, who grants the protagonist special dispensation to continue to wear men’s clothing.¹¹ Shortly after this audience with the Pope, the tale ends. It is known from records,¹² however, that the historical Erauso moves back

¹⁰ This is the year given in the text (33). According to the previously mentioned baptismal record referenced by Joaquín María Ferrer and included in Vallbona’s appendix, the date of Erauso’s baptism was February 10, 1592 (152). Additionally, a portrait of Erauso by Francisco Pachecho in 1630 lists Erauso’s year of birth as 1578 (13).

¹¹ A testimony in Vallbona’s appendix that confirms this meeting and the special consideration granted Erauso is included in the collection of Juan Bautista Muñoz copied by Cándido María Trigueros (127-8).

¹² Vallbona also includes in her appendix a *relación* printed in Mexico in 1653 (170-5). This document is a testimony that contains information about Erauso’s life and death in Mexico.

to the New World and lives in Nueva España (México) until 1648¹³, which is one of the years given for the historical Erauso's death (174).

1.2 RE-CATEGORIZATION OF THE TEXT

The writing subject crafts a text that looks like an autobiography through the use of a first-person narrator/protagonist, and, indeed, it may have been originally intended to be read as such. There are, however, questions about reading this text as an autobiography that must be considered before an investigation can begin. Given the unreliability of any of its versions, as well as the doubts about authorship, it would be unfair to expect that the version we read today could authentically represent the actual historical Erauso in a meaningful way. Furthermore, the information that remains about the historical Erauso is not adequate enough to truly understand this individual; therefore there is no basis for comparison. With the questions about authorship and the lack of information about this individual, an examination of the work from a purely autobiographical perspective would be insufficient analysis, and consequently may even overlook some of the key messages that are being communicated by the writing subject, whoever she, he or they may be.

One possible solution to the complex issue of categorizing this work as an autobiography would be to place it in the realm of "life narrative" as described by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (*Reading 3*). The authors define a life narrative as "a set of ever-shifting self-referential practices that engage the past in order to reflect on identity in the present" (*Reading 3*). This idea would allow for much more flexibility for the writing subject to not only report but also interpret the events in the manner that focuses the reader's attention on the characteristic that the writing subject wishes to emphasize. This definition also brings elasticity to the concept of

¹³ As with birth, there are multiple years for death: 1648 and 1650. The same *relación* referenced above in note 6 includes this alternate year for Erauso's death (174).

multiple authors since a single author is not specified as a requirement in this description as might be assumed in an autobiography.

The I/Erauso writing subject, assumed by many to be a singular identity must actually be supposed to represent a multiplicity of male and female possible authors, editors, and copyists, all of whom had particular reasons for becoming interlopers in the text. It would seem an impossible task to separate the authors from one another in order to elucidate the individual messages they are attempting to deliver through the text. Additionally, it would also present an insurmountable undertaking to attribute a singular message to a particular author. The result of such investigation would leave the text virtually meaningless as competing authors wrangle for a position from which to promote his or her message. However, if the theory advanced by Sidonie Smith were applied, then the conflicting and inconsistent messages can be taken together to present an amalgamated writing subject. Since this writing subject would be liberated from the necessity of consistency, it would then be free to present contradictory and even irreconcilable messages through a variety of media within the text. Inclusively, these various messages would become part of the modern-day reader's experience of the text.

One of these experiences would certainly be the effect of multiple authors on the message of the text. Sidonie Smith allows multiple authors to interact with the life stories by considering the role of "coaxers" within the text (*Reading* 53). This process accounts for the influence of those to whom the life story is told, including ghostwriters, and translators, as well as those who handle the text at a later point such as editors and publishers. Many of these coaxers are invisible in the final text, as even their questions disappear from the final version. Ironically, it is these same questions that have elicited the responses that form the basis for the direction of the life story. However, these invisible influences have unmistakable implications for the text. The

author indicates that "...collaborative life writing, as a multilingual, transcultural process, can be a situation of coercion and editorial control presented in the name of preserving the voice, the experience, and the culture of the life narrator" (*Reading* 55). Therefore, even in a text where the authorship is not in question, this influence cannot be discounted.

In the case of Erauso's *Vida*, collaborative life writing provides an avenue into the document that might have otherwise been inaccessible. It is quite interesting to note that Sidonie Smith allows for probable altruistic motives for writing subject, ghostwriters or editors who are trying to "preserve" their version of the original writing subject's "voice" (*Reading* 55).

Although this cannot be considered the only motive for these individuals, at least there was an editorial process in place that could have, theoretically, maintained consistency. In the case of the *Vida*, this process may have existed initially. However, with the loss of the original text, and the years of copying and the several new versions that appeared (and continue to appear), this philanthropic aim is almost totally lost. Those who have copied, handled, or altered this document have all left indelible if nearly imperceptible marks as they become part of the writing subject.

That this text has been altered by others is indisputable and all that one has to do is superficially peruse the document to notice it. The life story has been divided into chapters, each of which has a title that references the events in the chapter. It might seem a small intrusion, but it is, nonetheless, clear evidence of alteration. This in itself is not an irrefutable example of interference, but these titles refer to the protagonist in the third person. These inserted titles serve to divide the work into sections that were clearly not the work of the writing subject that referenced itself in the first person.

Language helps us understand who we are and the experiences we have by the manner in which we refer to ourselves (do we call ourselves patients, students, leaders, healers etc.) or by the manner to which we ourselves are referred (are we diseased, insufficient etc.) in a particular context:

Every day we know ourselves, or experience ourselves, through multiple domains of discourse, domains that serve as cultural registers for what counts as experience and who counts as an experiencing subject. But since discourses are historically specific, what counts as experience changes over time with broader cultural transformations of collective history. (*Reading 26*)

The messages in the text, whoever imparted them, are framed in their historical context.

Considering all of this, the question becomes what is the value of this document if it cannot be considered an autobiography? Seen as a whole, this text can still present valuable information about women as well as women writing subjects at the time. This may seem a challenging task, given that we cannot even be certain that the author or protagonist was a woman. Fortunately, the book is more than merely the autobiographical “I.” What I seek to find in this project is the message that the modern reader can take from such a work.

This text has fallen victim to its subsequent editors as well as to the expectations that the reader brings. Additionally, while modern criticism offers various composites such as woman warrior (Merrim), lesbian (Velasco) or a transvestite (Pancrazio) studies, I would like to accomplish something slightly different. In this study, I would like to note what type of protagonist and narrator are presented by the writing subject according to its own needs. The writing subject (a collective of all those who touched the text) would use the available tools of language or social convention to fashion a figure that is able to communicate important messages on behalf of the writing subject. Such a study would provide an open and ample arena in which

to accommodate the conflicting narratives and profiles of the various I/Erauso entities that cannot be easily classified and often disrupt an overarching category.

1.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THE WRITING SUBJECTIVITY AS COLLECTIVITY

As the writing subject is defined by its multiplicity, the work of Paul Smith is helpful. The portion of his work that is most important and applicable to the task of this dissertation is the fundamental understanding that a subject and this subject in particular, will not demonstrate the consistency that is often required of it by critics. There is no overarching category that can contain this entity. As Paul Smith asserts, the numerous forces acting on the subject as well as the range of internal positions will result in behaviors that are contradictory (158). The implications of this idea are many in the *Vida*: writing subject, narrator, and protagonist. Paul Smith's warnings about the narrowness of inexorable homogeneity are particularly apt in this case, as the different manifestations of the subject themselves demonstrate many disparate traits within their own entity (159).

Allowing for the multiplicity of the writing subject will enrich the text. Paul Smith's application of feminism allows him, at times, to combine the writing subject with the protagonist because as he states, 'the agent is never *only* an active force, but also an actor for the ideological script'" (156). While there are points at which this combination of the writing subject and the protagonist will be beneficial, I also plan to analyze them as separate entities within the various chapters of the dissertation. As each manifestation of the Erauso entity is described in the following chapters, the messages that they bring will emerge.

In the next chapter, the protagonist will be distinguished from the historical Erauso. The historical Erauso will be the subject who appears in the surviving historical documents that are reproduced by Vallbona in the appendices. Concerning the protagonist, it is prudent, however, to

note Sidonie Smith's assertion. She states that even the "I-then," or what I would call the protagonist, is not going to be the actual individual who participated in the event being described (*Reading 60*). This protagonist is the representation of the individual that is produced by the writing subject in order to recreate the meaning of the event as the writing subject interprets it (*Reading 61*). So, even the actions of the protagonist must be viewed through the lens of the more experienced writing subject. Additionally, as both Paul Smith and Sidonie Smith indicate, there are variations of the writing subject interacting with the text as well as alternate versions of the protagonist acting within the text.

In the third chapter, the narrator will be evaluated as a character used by the writing subject within the text to tell the story of the life of Erauso as well as direct the pace of the narration, and control what elements of the story are highlighted or minimized. As the various manifestations of the writing subject create their own incarnations of the narrator, these narrators will reflect the same disparity as the writing subject. The central task of the narrator is to construct the protagonist; through this process s/he reveals her/himself as well.

In the fourth chapter, I will identify the contours of the writing subject within the body of the text. Returning to the various theories mentioned above, this writing subject is a collective psychological entity that also represents a collection of different authors. All of these forces acting on the writing subject will result in similar discrepancies of presentation. The principal concern of the writing subject is achieving legitimacy in the genre of autobiography as s/he guides the life story of the protagonist through the narrator.

The fifth chapter will focus on reconciling what has been established about the writing subject with what is known of other writing subjects relating the life story of a female soldier.¹⁴ While this is a limited field, the comparisons demonstrate consistency between the writing subject, protagonist, and narrator in the *Vida* and their counterparts in autobiographies of female combatants. The accounts of heroic masculine acts, romantic episodes and a desire for acceptance in the male dominated world are all notable similarities in the texts. The *Vida*, however, conspicuously varies from the format because the protagonist is not ultimately forced into a female role. The writing subject's determination to present the story of the protagonist as a legitimate autobiographical account resonates throughout the text.

Returning one final time to the work of Paul Smith, his subject is one who demonstrates "non-unity...even of contradiction in internal constitution" (156). This same subject is also a "purely dominated entity" (P. Smith 154) who has been "formulated" as dominated and at the same time, as an "active and contestatory social agent" (P. Smith 152). However, even though the subject is both oppressed and "obeying the logic of its own oppression," the dominated position of the subject is not complete. This incongruity requires "various and different subject-positions" that produce "resistance to the logic of domination while still being in a sense a part of, or a by-product of, that logic" (P. Smith 152). The search for this dominated, but not compliant subject who, nonetheless brings with it a message that is of great importance about the writing subject, will begin in the second chapter as I establish the historical Erauso, the protagonist and evaluate the history of the text. This chapter will consider the protagonist as a single character that displays many discrepancies, as it is believed to be the work of various authors.

¹⁴ Julie Wheelwright's study deals with the life stories of many different female soldiers, among them Valerie Arkell-Smith aka. Colonel Victor Barker (11), and Dorothy Lawrence a.k.a. Private Denis Smith (81)

CHAPTER 2 THE PROTAGONIST, THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO AND THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT

Catalina de Erauso is a fascinating figure whose life story appeared in the form of an autobiography. Within the text, however, there are several versions of this Erauso entity that should be established and viewed as separate beings so that the messages in the text can be more clearly understood. We begin by looking at the principle manifestation of Erauso in the text, the protagonist. On the denotative level, the protagonist is one of the most recognizable versions of Erauso¹ that appears in the *Vida*; however, in order to fully achieve an understanding of the protagonist, it is vital to distinguish the protagonist from the historical Erauso. Finally, a look at the journey of the text will bolster the argument for multiple authorship.

In order to begin to understand this text, it is important to consider the context in which it was produced. The *Vida* is purportedly an autobiography, but its title suggests the uncertainty that surrounds this statement. The full title used by Vallbona reads: *Vida I Sucesos de la Monja Alférez*, while the subtitle adds: *Autobiografía atribuida a Doña Catalina de Erauso*. It is assumed that the subject of an autobiography wrote the text about him or herself, but in Vallbona's edition this autobiography is merely attributed to Doña Catalina de Erauso. Immediately, the question of authorship arises. If this change was made by Vallbona, it would be consistent with her stated purpose to modernize the text. The indication that the work is attributed to the historical Erauso is an appropriate manner of introducing the topic of multiple authorship.

¹ From this point forward, I will not include I/Erauso before the narrator, protagonist or writing subject unless it is necessary for clarification.

It is necessary to make this point here, because the text begins and ends with Erauso, and the historical Erauso has been assumed to be the source of the document.² There is also a tacit understanding that she had direct contact with the retelling of this story, although there is not much direct evidence that she was sufficiently exposed to literature to be the sole author. Vallbona's title itself seems to underline that uncertainty as she simply "attributes" the work to the historical Erauso rather than naming her as the author. In her introduction, Vallbona cites scholars such as Diego Barros Arana in 1872 and José Toribio Medina in his collection from 1888-1902, who have researched the text (6, 8). Each of the scholars indicates that the text was written by someone with a more literary background than that of the historical Erauso. There has been additional research into the identity of this author by scholars such as Stephanie Merrim, Mary Elizabeth Perry and James Pancrazio, but until an original version of the text is discovered, that may remain an unanswerable question.

Another important point that should be examined is the historical Erauso's motivation for producing this document in the first place. This text is part of a genre that is both historical and literary. The soldiers' memoirs were written for the purpose of proving the worthiness of their service to the king and queen. If this service could be proven, then the soldier would receive a pension. Often this was a lifelong stipend that was monetary or took the form of property, holdings or title rights granted in the Americas, called an *encomienda*, or any combination of these benefits. The documents presented by Vallbona fall into this category. They contain a request for a pension and are followed by testimonies from superiors and fellow soldiers that support the claim of military service. Vallbona includes the historical Erauso's petition and the granting of

² Scholars like Velasco base most of their work on this assumption.

the request. This short *petición* is the basis for this text, although the *Vida* is much more elaborate. The “*Vida* displays not only the content but several of the traits of the soldier’s autobiography” (Merrim “Anomaly” 8).

The autobiographical account of the historical Erauso’s life differs from the official *Petición* that was submitted to the King; however, in the *Vida*, there is far more than a factual recounting of the protagonist’s service to the crown. The request that was sent to the King was much more serious and did not include the references to “the brawls and men he had killed” that are reported in an almost blithe manner in the *Vida* (Perry “Convent” 408). The literary elements, the inclusion of the protagonist’s romantic escapades, and the emphasis on her cross dressing all suggest that the author and the well-known publisher, Berardino de Guzmán, were also envisioning the possibility of releasing the work to the reading public.

The author of the *Vida* was clearly familiar with the already established genre of the soldier’s tale and realized the popular and profitable potential for using this genre to present the life story of the historical Erauso. Therefore, the differences in the official *Petición* and the *Vida* could have reflected these separate goals. The serious tone of the *Petición* was due to the fact that it was a legal document written to establish respect for her service and gain a pension. This was done in the midst of the controversy surrounding the cross dressing that, ironically, was vital to securing the original opportunity to enter military service. In contrast, the more informal tone of the *Vida*, along with the inclusions of romantic trysts and the crimes suggest that the purpose of publishing such a work was indeed to receive the financial gains that marketing such a work could provide. It is possible to view the hope of financial gain as a motive for

engaging an author to write the *Vida*. It is ironic that the *Vida* was not published at that time, however. The copy that is the basis for Vallbona's edition is dated 1784, with the next version appearing in 1829. The 1784 edition is the one critics have consistently read as the story of *la Monja Alférez*.

Turning now to the text, it may seem easy to assume that the protagonist is representative of the historical Erauso. The reality is, however, that the protagonist is a reflection of the intent of the collective writing subject. However, the protagonist can still be used by the writing subject to present messages to the reader about the protagonist that is not connected in any real way to the historical Erauso. Additionally, the assumption of multiple authors leads to multiple aspects of the protagonist.

Understanding the attendant incongruity in the protagonist is the work of this chapter.

Many documents other than the *Vida* verify existence of the historical Erauso. I intend to use both Rima de Vallbona's edition of the *Vida*, the documents that she references, as well as the documents that Joaquín María Ferrer is believed to have found (these same sources are also cited by Vallbona) to develop an idea of Erauso in an historical context, and to study the opportunities available to the historical Erauso for education and career choice.

The documents provided by Vallbona develop a version of the historical Erauso that can be compared to the protagonist who inhabits the pages of the *Vida*. It is important to remember that the flat, historical Erauso that appears in the documents is not the same as the multi-dimensional person who lived. However, there is an interesting study by Julie Wheelwright, which will be evaluated in greater detail in Chapter Five that

provides some insight into the cases of later English women soldiers.³ The Spanish term, *mujer varonil*⁴ encompasses some of these same characteristics as well as provides the Spanish perspective about women who crossed the gender line in society.

Additionally, examination of the journey of the document will identify many if not all of the individuals with whom it had contact and who probably contributed in some way, whether openly or without identifying their alterations, to the text that we read today. These will be some of the individuals who within the framework of multiple authorship are using the text to send a message.

2.1 THE PROTAGONIST COMPARED WITH THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO

We start quantifying the protagonist in the text of the *Vida*, which begins with her birth. It is also here that the first of many discrepancies appear between the documents that record the life of the historical Erauso and what is reported about the protagonist. The writing subject introduces the reader to the protagonist and the narrator in the opening line, “Nací yo, D^a Catalina de Araujo, en la villa de San Sebastian provincia de Guipúzcoa, en el año 1585: hija del Capitán Miguel de Araujo i de María Pérez de Galarraga i Arze, naturales i vecinos de dicha villa”⁵ (33).

With the creation of the first-person narrator who is in charge of telling the story, the writing subject additionally makes the narrator responsible for any inconsistencies in the text. As the writing subject passes along this responsibility, it also fractures the

³ Wheelwright’s study focuses on female soldiers in England during the 18th Century. However, there are some apt comparisons that can be made as both nations were colonial powers with similarly rigid standards for gender roles.

⁴ This term is defined in English as “manly women” (Velasco *Lieutenant* 19). Around the time of Erauso, it was a popular device in theater used to describe a woman who dressed and behaved as a man often for a particular end. It can also be used to refer lesbian love without the penetration of a phallus, or a hybrid, often considered monstrous (*Lieutenant* 28).

⁵ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “I, Doña Catalina de Erauso, was born in the town of San Sebastián, in Guipúzcoa, in the year 1585, daughter of Captain Don Miguel de Erauso and Doña María Pérez de Gallarraga y Arce, natives and residents of the same town” (2).

identity. Although the topic of a fractured writing subject will be taken up in greater detail in Chapter 4, it is advantageous to consider briefly the impact such a division will have on the reader and the messages of the various Erauso entities. A writing subject is often considered to be whole and consistent but is rarely so (P. Smith 104). The divided writing subject occurs for a number of reasons, one of which is simply the difficulty of writing various adaptations of oneself in a text, i.e. writing subject, narrator, and protagonist. There are many other types of fractures that occur within the writing subjects as a result of the manipulation of gender, religion, language and nationality in a text. Such a divided writing subject can hardly be supposed to demonstrate consistency in behavior, speech or thought (P. Smith 103). Add to this the complication that the writing subject consists of the mindsets of various authors, and the inconsistencies begin to mount (P. Smith 103). In fact, it seems quite unrealistic to expect uniformity of this writing subject and, therefore, of the narrators who also emerge.

These discrepancies do provide entry points into the text by means of which the messages of the writing subject can be identified. Those points of divergence demonstrate tensions within the texts which often occur because the writing subject is divided (Kristeva 79). Kristeva uses linguistic psychology to describe a divided writing subject as one physically joined but psychologically divided. One of the reasons for such a divided writing subject to lose control over the writing is that the internal fractures (and external as in the case of this writing subject) cannot fully be expressed through language but nevertheless emerge as inconsistencies in the writing (Kristeva 79).

The birth narrative in the *Vida* provides a useful place to begin noting irregularity within the protagonist. The first appearance of the protagonist's surname in the *Vida* is

“Araujo.” The difference between “Araujo” and “Erauso” can be framed in the context of culture and language. “Araujo” is the surname given to the protagonist at her birth⁶ in the Basque region of Spain, where she spoke *euskera* from an early age. In the *Vida*, this is a significant component of the protagonist’s identity and linguistic ability.

According to Vallbona, the historical Erauso was monolingual until the age of fifteen, having been reared at home until age four, and then in a Basque convent (8). In the *Vida*, the three years following the protagonist’s escape from the convent were spent mostly in Basque territory. Subsequently she went to Perú where she worked exclusively among Basques for the first several years of her story. In the *Vida*, then, this background seems to have formed much of the protagonist’s early self-identity. The narrator emphasizes this connection by choosing to introduce the protagonist with the Basque name “Araujo.”

It is quite interesting that in the *Vida* the Spanish name, “Erauso,” only appears in the title, yet it is the name with which the character is associated today.⁷ The use of the Spanish “Erauso” appears to represent an editorial link between the heritage given in the narration and the legal name that was used by the historical Erauso after her military service to Castile, Antonio de Erauso (Merrim “Anomaly” 5). Moreover, a form of “Erauso” does appear on many of the legal testimonies concerning the historical Erauso’s military service. Some critics say the use of “Erauso” is evidence of a different author writing these memoirs (3). Vallbona argues that the Basque Erauso would not have made such a change. She indicates that an author who was Spanish would have been more

⁶ The name given on the Baptismal Record gives the historical Erauso’s birth name as “Cat[alin]ª de Herauso (152).

⁷ Vallbona attributes the usage of the name “Erauso” to Ferrer. One of his notes indicates that the family name “Erauso” belonged to one of the noble families in San Sebastián, while there is no mention of a noble family bearing the name “Araujo” (32).

likely to make this, and other changes that resulted in a more Spanish sounding word or name (3).

This line of reasoning does seem to hold up to the historical record, but it may be too simple. The name “Araujo” is not associated with the protagonist again in the text. If a reference for the female protagonist is needed, it is *la Monja Alférez*, or *Doña Catalina*. As the title indicates, the story is about *la Monja Alférez* and not *Catalina*. The divergence between the text and the title could suggest that the use of a different surname is the preference of an additional author or editor.

As an inconsistency in the text, this could be one of the first messages that the writing subject imparts to the reader. The initial identification of the protagonist’s dual nationalities introduces the idea of multiplicity in the first line of the *Vida*. This ambiguity over the nationality of the protagonist presents the reader with the first glimpse of the divided protagonist, narrator and writing subject that will emerge in the course of the narration. This opening does not merely present an unresolved conflict; it also reminds the reader of the choice that was made by the historical Erauso. This entity actually chose a nationality with which to identify as an adult. This reminder sets up the many decisions that are made by the protagonist to highlight her ability to make choices in life.

It is somewhat unexpected, although not unprecedented, that an individual with a strong regional identity would change his or her surname based on the preferences of another culture and language. One theory has the protagonist following the “psychosexual development of a male child” (Goetz 101). Such a break with a prescribed gender identity could indicate that a similar break could have occurred with

the protagonist's cultural identity as well. It seems that in the case of the protagonist, the writing subject wants to indicate to the reader that the protagonist may have identified more with the Spanish culture in which the protagonist spent his adult years rather than the Basque culture of her childhood.

The writing subject may be attempting a bridge between the variance in nationalities and the divergence in gender identity. If the female child protagonist was identified by the Basque heritage, then the male adult protagonist chose the Spanish nationality. This could be a continuation of the earlier message. More than merely a statement, this seems to be an early indication of the choices made by the protagonist. Over the course of the text, the writing subject writes the male protagonist as an individual who chooses his own path, not as one who is submits to the will of others.

The importance of this stance can hardly be underestimated. As will be mentioned in greater detail in later chapters, the decision of the protagonist to live as a male was not one that was forced because of the need to restore lost honor, protect the family or defend a maligned religion. The writing subject makes it perfectly clear in the text through a pattern of action that the protagonist prefers to live as a male. She consistently makes decisions that demonstrate her dedication to her male identity and the privileges it entails. Many times when her identity is threatened, she escapes. The first example is her escape from the convent in which she states that she left without knowing where she was going (35). The writing subject may have decided to begin with the subject of nationality in order to prepare the reader for the later gender choice.

Another evaluation of the gender changes reinforces the idea of multiple authorship. An argument offered by Pancrazio reads both the writing subject and the text

as “transvested” (455). He does not evaluate the authorship of the text; rather his focus is how to read the writing subject. He asserts that the autobiographical classification should not apply here because, “...we are trying to read Catalina as the autobiographical author of Antonio’s⁸ story. Even if Catalina penned the work with her own hand, she can only forge Antonio’s signature” (Pancrazio 464-65). This is an interesting point, but ultimately, this interpretation of the writing subject also forces her into the divided role described by Kristeva; she becomes “Catalina,” a Basque female and “Antonio,” a Spanish male. Pancrazio’s interpretation forces one to assign gender as fundamental and authentic.

Using Pancrazio’s terms, the evidence so far seems to indicate that “Catalina” may have been the historical Erauso’s born sex and childhood identity, but that “Antonio” was her preferred adult identity. In the *Vida*, the protagonist assumed “Catalina’s” identity when it was necessary to save her life, indicating that “Antonio” still had access to “Catalina,” but was able quickly and ultimately to discard this identity as soon as it became possible to do so (Pancrazio 456). Considering the previous issues with gender reference, it makes sense to follow Perry’s example and use Erauso to name this individual (“Convent” 395). Using Erauso can resolve the need to divide the protagonist, narrator and writing subject into two separate identities while it remains fluid enough to incorporate both genders within the same character.

Since it defines the protagonist as a transvestite and the text as transvested, it seems to me that Pancrazio’s argument limits the character of the writing subject. These restrictions do not allow the historical Erauso or the narrator and protagonist true freedom

⁸ “Antonio” is the name Pancrazio uses to refer to the male identity of the protagonist, while he uses “Catalina” to refer to her female identity (455). Antonio de Erauso is the name that the historical Erauso used upon her return to Mexico where she ended her days as a “merchant-muleteer” (Merrim 4).

of identity. The protagonist gains additional depth as she is presented as a character capable of creating and moving between two identities while preferring the one that seemed more advantageous, appropriate or powerful at a given moment. Additionally, what is known today of Erauso is the result of blending information gained from historical documents with the literary creation from the *Vida*. It is this amalgamation that gives this hybrid character⁹ form. Such a literary accomplishment would suggest again the involvement of a fairly competent writing subject that was able to integrate the historical Erauso's accomplishments and smoothly transition between the protagonist's different genders with great success in a fairly contentious public arena.

The *Vida* draws a flexible personality for the protagonist, while underscoring that she clearly preferred the Spanish male identity that Pancrazio calls "Antonio." In the narration, the narrator perceives no separation between the narrator and the protagonist. This can be noted in the pace that the narrator sets as the events are retold, emphasizing the narrator's investment in the action. For example, the protagonist has a dispute with another character, Reyes; at the theater in which Erauso left without a fight because she was not sufficiently armed. The next day, as a confrontation between the protagonist and Reyes nears in the text, the narrator rapidly relates how the protagonist prepares and pursues Reyes before she attacks him (46). Additionally, the testimonies in Vallbona's appendix clearly reflect the historical Erauso's preferred means of self-reference as "El Alferez Herausso," stressing her adult predilection for living as a man. A second argument for the historical Erauso's adult choice is demonstrated in her petition to the

⁹ Sherry Velasco devotes a chapter to "Hybrid Spectacles" in which she looks at the baroque aesthetic. She indicates that terms such as "shocking," "amazing," "prodigious," "monstrous," "excessive," "marvelous," and "outlandish" are frequently used to describe and celebrate an individual, like Erauso, who did not fit neatly into the defined gender categories (*Lieutenant* 24).

Pope.¹⁰ This petition to continue to wear men's clothing was a request to live as a man. As startling as this request may have been, the historical Erauso's confirmed virginity allowed such a choice to seem less threatening and ultimately acceptable to the Church (Merrim "Anomaly" 16-22).

While the historical Erauso chose to refer to herself by the Spanish surname, its appearance in the title of the *Vida* highlights the inconsistent references to the protagonist within the text. Another interesting discrepancy is noted in the text between "Erauso" and "Araujo." Both the father and the brother of the protagonist are identified with the name "Araujo" while the protagonist is not associated with either after the birth narrative (33, 55). It seems that the writing subject wishes to emphasize the Basque heritage of Erauso's brother, Miguel. The use of this surname for the protagonist at birth and Miguel in the Americas as a soldier reminds the reader of their shared Basque heritage and family ties. The separation of the protagonist from the Basque surname in the text is significant. There is no indication that Miguel had to hide his identity, and it is also clear that his military service brought honor to his family.

The first encounter between the siblings establishes the parameters for their relationship as soldiers in the Americas. After being in the Americas for a time, the protagonist finds herself out of work because she has been romancing an unmarried sister of her employer's wife (51). At this point, she enrolls as a soldier in a company bound for Chile (52). When the ship arrives, the governor's secretary, who is her brother Miguel de Erauso, brings the order to disembark (55). According to the *Vida*, as Miguel reviews the roster of new arrivals, he immediately recognizes the protagonist by name

¹⁰ Vallbona includes in her first appendix *testimonios* included with the Trigueros manuscript which confirm the historical Erauso's audience with Pope Urban VIII (126-28). She does not include a copy of the letter to the Pope.

and origin as a Basque native. He does not, however, realize that she is his sister or a female (56). It was unlikely that Miguel would have recognized his sister even if she were using the surname Araujo because he left when she was two years old (55-56). In addition to this, she was using the name Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán (56). In the *Vida*, Miguel inquired about his parents and sister, Catarina the nun (56). It is important to note that even as the protagonist crafts a male identity she chooses to present herself as a Basque in the text.

The writing subject contrasts Miguel's male Basque identity with the protagonist's assumed male one. This is an interesting and important difference highlighted between the siblings. The importance of Miguel's Basque identity is emphasized when he reacts emotionally upon learning of the protagonist's Basque origin. It is interesting to note that Miguel so imagines his sister to be a nun and a female that he cannot even see her right before his eyes. The protagonist had lived in a convent from a young age and Miguel's memory of her was as a female child. Another interesting detail is that Miguel uses the variant "Catarina" to refer to his sister instead of "Catalina."¹¹

Miguel's knowledge of the protagonist's escape from the convent appears sketchy. It seems likely that he did know about it, but he does not ask about the event directly. Since he asked about his younger sister, a plausible interpretation is that he was asking if she had been found. The narrator sidesteps Miguel's questions quickly and notes, "i fui a todo respondiendo como podía, sin descubrirme ni caer en ello"¹² (56).

With this response the protagonist demonstrates more concern for maintaining her

¹¹ "Catarina" also occurs in the title of the copy of the *Vida* that was placed in the library of the *Real Academia de la Historia de Madrid* by Juan Bautista Muñoz in 1784. In this copy, the historical Erauso's name in two places is given as "Catarina" (32).

¹² Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "I answered as best I could without revealing myself and without his suspecting anything" (32).

identity than with showing emotion about this reunion with her brother. Through this dialogue, the siblings' responses are contrasted, although the situation is somewhat unfair because Miguel does not realize what is actually occurring. The protagonist's motive to protect his identity is juxtaposed with Miguel's fondness for a fellow Basque. Miguel's affection prompts him to ask the governor that the protagonist remain in his company (56), a request that is initially refused. However, the governor immediately repents and the protagonist stays under the command of Miguel for three years.

During this period, the narrator states that the protagonist regularly shared meals with Miguel without his learning of the protagonist's identity. The two went different ways when the protagonist continued courting his mistress after Miguel had directly asked him to stop. Their fight caught the attention of the authorities; Erauso entered a church for sanctuary, but was eventually banished to Paicaví, Chile by the Governor for three years (57). These are interesting revelations about the personality of the protagonist, one who could live in direct contact with a sibling for years without accidentally revealing herself, and who could also betray him with his lover. These instances with Miguel do not suggest that the protagonist had strong ties to the idea of family.

It seems that the writing subject presents the protagonist as a self-interested individual who uses these connections when they are advantageous. However, they do not seem to be particularly important to the protagonist otherwise. Additionally, there is little indication of emotion when the protagonist is sent away from Miguel's company after they have an altercation over their lover. In Vallbona's appendix, there is a reference to a chapter on Erauso in Fray Diego de Rosales' *Historia general del reino de*

Chile, in which he describes the relationship between the two as “familiar amistad (181).”

This does not seem to describe an intimate closeness between the siblings, but rather a friendship between (unaware) family members. Perhaps Miguel sensed the protagonist’s deception, or perhaps the protagonist did not allow a closer relationship with Miguel for fear of discovery. The role Miguel plays in the protagonist’s life, however, is more complex. After Miguel’s death in Concepción, Chile, the protagonist clearly demonstrates grief at his loss. Additionally, one interpretation of Miguel’s death is that it presented the protagonist the opportunity to gain male status in society and in her family by replacing him.

If the Basque heritage for the protagonist was more of a useful disguise than a deeply felt affinity, then a closer look at certain components of the Basque culture of the time could provide some explanation of the protagonist’s decision to live as a man and a Spaniard. In the Basque society of the time, both men and women were considered equal heads of a household (Ott 53-54). The women were the heads of the domestic life of the family and the men were the heads of the life of the family outside of the home. This distinction could lead to the assumption of equality, although that might be overstating the circumstance. It is likely, however, that women in the Basque regions were more empowered than their counterparts in other regions of Spain. It could also suggest that Erauso understood the division from a very early age and chose to side with the powerful in society, rather than the female heads of household. It also bears mentioning that the protagonist escaped from the prescribed female life in the convent which would not have allowed her such freedoms. The Lacanian implications for the protagonist are that she

did not identify with the mother and accept the exclusion from a patriarchal society; rather, Erauso chose to identify with the father and the power structure (Goetz 101).

As an ambitious woman, Erauso would find few options in the larger country of Spain at that time. As a cultural icon, she combined the available models for women and heroes in western literature: nun-soldier-saint, *pícaro*, *pícaro*, *mujer varonil* and *caballero andante*.¹³ In society at that time almost all women were under the control of a man (Braccio 204). The strict code of honor as it was defined in literature required the males to protect the honor, or virginity, of all the females in the household (Mujica 163). If this honor was compromised, there were particular measures that could restore it (Mujica 163). As children, their fathers directed their lives. If they married, their husbands made their important decisions. If they did not marry, they either continued to live under the control of their fathers, or they entered a convent and were ultimately under the control of a male cleric, although they lived with and were supervised by women. The only women who were sometimes outside of male control were widows. This exception can be explained by keeping in mind what the men believed that they were protecting. Female virginity was of the utmost importance in Spain at that time as a concept of value in forming a marriage, and within marriage chastity was equally important.

The value of female virginity and chastity served to ascertain that any children produced from the union were unquestionably the biological descendants of the male (Perry “Convent” 407). Therefore, widows were the only women exempted from the

¹³ The nun-soldier-saint is a female who fought for religious reasons (Wheelwright 12). A *pícaro* or *pícaro* is a character who lived to live by his or her wits at a young age (Chandler 118-122). There were different manners of survival for the male and female rogues. The *mujer varonil*, or manly woman, was one who did not abide by the prescribed social gender roles (Juárez, “La mujer militar” 156). A *caballero andante* is a chivalric hero who embodied the male ideal (Chandler 123-29).

requirement of virginity (although not abstinence) and from the fear of looming dishonor that played such an important role in Spanish society at that time. Given the literary importance of this concept of honor, the confirmed virginity of the protagonist in the text played a significant role in the treatment that she received after “revealing” her sex as female (110). Additionally, the virginity of the protagonist made the work of the writing subject a legitimate endeavor. As Sidonie Smith explains, for a female to write in the autobiographical realm at this time in Early Modern Spain was unexpected and did not conform to social standards (*Poetics* 55). In order for a female author to be considered a serious entrant in the male-dominated genre, she had to establish that she had overcome the preconceived frailties and failings of her gender (*Poetics* 55). The verified virginity of the protagonist would greatly enhance the authority of the writing subject as they were assumed at the time to be the same. In the *Vida*, her virginity assisted the protagonist to reenter a society that would have ordinarily been biased against a female whose actions did not coincide with the social expectation. This was an interesting paradox, but one that worked in the protagonist’s favor after she returned to Spain.

We return now to the first line from the *Vida* to examine a second historical discrepancy. The year of birth given by the narrator within the text is 1585. There are, however, other documents that do not concur with this year. Baptismal records, found by Joaquín María Ferrer and referenced by Vallbona, indicate that the date of baptism was 1592 (152). While baptism and birth do not always occur in the same year, a separation of seven years is not typical. In addition, there is a portrait in the text of the historical Erauso painted by Francisco Pacheco in 1630 on which her birth year is recorded as 1578 (13). The reader would assume that she would have been asked her birth year by both the

author of the *Vida* and Pacheco; therefore, the discrepancy is confusing. Since I use the text of the *Vida* as presented by Vallbona, from this point on I will use the birth year given by the I/Erauso narrator, 1585.

Despite the inconsistencies in the birth year, it remains important to evaluate more closely the baptismal record, in which Ferrer's involvement should not here be overlooked. He has openly admitted to correcting mutilations of the *Vida* (3). Therefore, the historical documents he uses may also have been altered. The documentation of the baptismal record is extensive; unfortunately, we do not have the original for verification. The appendix in Vallbona's edition simply records Ferrer's note (152). Ferrer found the year of the historical Erauso's baptism recorded in a record from the Iglesia Parroquial de San Vicente Levita y Mártir in San Sebastián. Doctor D. Francisco Javier de Marín, the vicar, made the copy for Ferrer. Dr. Marín noted that the record was found in "folio veintiuno, partida cuarta, que es la trigesimaséptima de las del año de mil quinientos noventa y dos" (152). His careful notation of the sheet number and of the location of the record lends authenticity to the finding. The original baptismal record, according to Ferrer, reads:

Bautisóze Cat[alin]^a de Herauso en diez de hebrero deste d[ic]ho año.
Hija legítima de Miguel de Herauso, y M^a P[é]r[e]z de Galarraga.
Padrino P[ed]ro de Galarraga, y M^a Vélez de Aranzalde. Ministro,
el vicario Alvizu. (152)

There is much detail in the original legal document, such as the name of the child, the date of the baptism (February, 1592), the names of the parents and godparents, and the name of the cleric. In addition, Dr. Marín included his credentials in paragraphs that surround the copy of the baptismal record, and the date he made the copy, October 10, 1826. It is interesting to note yet another spelling of the surname, this time given as

“Herauso.”¹⁴ Both parents and child are listed with this surname. It is somewhat surprising not to find the Basque spelling of “Araujo” here. However, it must be considered that “Araujo” is the preference of the narrator, not the historical Erauso and the narrator may have had other reasons to insert this version of the name. It should be considered as well that “Herauso” could be an example of Ferrer’s corrections. Even so, the birth year date given in this document seems reliable. The ongoing significant discrepancies concerning the name, however, are persuasive indications that multiple writers have handled this text.

An additional inconsistency that Ferrer includes in his version of the *Vida*, and that Vallbona references in her edition, concerns the voyage of the protagonist to the Americas. According to the *Vida*, the protagonist left San Lúcar (Spain) on a ship captained by her mother’s brother, Esteban Ciguino in 1602 (41). Ferrer has questioned both the year and the name of the captain. He changes the name of the captain to Esteban Eguiño and changes the year to 1603. He believes that the year is more likely 1605 because that is the year that the armada lead by Luis Fajardo sailed (41). A captain of one the ships in the armada was this same uncle of the historical Erauso. Using the birth year given in the *Vida*, the protagonist would have been about twenty years old. The names of the captain and the leader of the armada are in the historical record. Additionally, there are references to the historical Erauso’s passage in other documents, although the name used by him is assumed. Sadly, no documents remain to corroborate the personal events recounted in the *Vida*, so we must depend on the narration’s version of things despite its inconsistencies.

¹⁴ The names “Erausso” and “Herausso” may have been interchangeable as they both appear in a petition attributed to the historical Erauso in support of a fellow soldier (145).

There are, however, numerous documents dating from 1625 that verify the battles, leaders and the historical Erauso's participation. This year, 1625, corresponds with the time in which the historical Erauso was petitioning the Spanish court for recompense for service in the conquest of the Americas. Many significant events occurred in this year for the historical Erauso: the *Vida* was submitted for publication; Juan Pérez de Montalbán presented his play, *la Monja Alférez*; the historical Erauso's fame spread through both Spain and the colonies in the Americas; the historical Erauso visited the Pope; and *Relaciones*¹⁵ are written in which she becomes a more scandalous character than in the *Vida*. Clearly this was the year in which public interest in *la Monja Alférez* reached the greatest level.

Returning to the events in the *Vida*, in the first chapter, the narrator states that she was taken by her parents to live in a convent "En el de 1589 me entraron en el Convento de San Sebastián el Antiguo de dicha villa, que es de Monjas dominicas, con mi tía, D^a Ursola de Sarauste, hermana de mi madre, Priora de aquel convento, donde me crié hasta tener quince años, i entonces se trató de profesión"¹⁶ (33-34). Vallbona includes the following words on Ferrer's verification of this information from the convent records, correcting the name of the prioress mentioned. She was D^a Ursula de Unza y Sarasti, professed in 1581, and she was not the prioress (34). It also bears mentioning that the

¹⁵ These three *Relaciones* are included in Vallbona's appendix and date from 1625 and 1653 (160-76). The second two were released around the time of the historical Erauso's petition and may have been intended to support her claim. She is presented as "patriotically valiant" or "pious" (Merrim "Anomaly" 25). The names associated with the testimonies are La Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, and the editorial house of Hipólito de Rivera.

¹⁶ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "In 1589 they placed me in the convent of San Sebastián el Antiguo in the said city, belonging to the Dominican nuns, under my aunt, Doña Ursula de Unza y Sarasti, first cousin of my mother, and prioress of that convent; there I was brought up till I was fifteen, and then the questions of my profession arose" (2).

first of the three¹⁷ *Relaciones* from Mexico concerning Erauso that Vallbona includes in her edition refutes the aunt's name in the *Vida*. In the *Relación* of 1653 the aunt was D^a María de la Cruz, who is listed as the abbess (160). This *Relación* is attributed to “la Viuda de Bernardo Calderón,” and is signed “en la calle de San Agustín (165).” It recounts events from the historical Erauso's life in Mexico based on the memories of a woman who had contact with her.

In both the *Vida* and the *Relación* of 1653, the aunt in the convent held different positions. Ferrer suggests that she could have been president of the convent who served in the case of illness or absence of the prioress (34). What matters for the purposes of this study is that the historical Erauso remembered the aunt in a position of authority. This is important because the reason given in the *Vida* for the departure of the protagonist from the convent was an altercation with another nun—one who had authority over her (34-35).

In the *Vida*, the nun who beat Erauso is a widow who entered the convent and professed as a nun. The protagonist describes her as “robusta” while she is a girl. This nun uses both her age and size against the protagonist, overpowering and beating her. The protagonist emphasizes this conflict, saying that the nun “me maltrató de manos i yo lo senti”¹⁸ (34). Another interesting note appears here from Ferrer. The *Vida* lists this nun as “D^a Catarina Alizi” while Ferrer corrects this name to “Aliri” from the convent records (34). Whether it was with Alizi or Aliri, this unfair power struggle seems to be the impetus for the protagonist to escape the convent life, and begin life as a male. It should be mentioned that this episode is similar to those found in both the picaresque

¹⁷ The other two *Relaciones* do not refer to this portion of the historical Erauso's life (165-76).

¹⁸ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “she laid violent hands on me and I resented it” (2).

novel and nun's confessional autobiographies, which also contain accounts of run-away nuns.

Before continuing, it is important to glimpse life in the convent during the historical Erauso's lifetime. As already mentioned, men dominated the lives of women in their family; however, the lives of nuns were an interesting case. The women in convents lived among other women and their direct superiors were women, although ultimately they were under the control of a male cleric. This life afforded women an escape from the domestic roles prescribed for them (Juárez "Señora" 188). As nuns, chastity was part of their vows, and they did not have the responsibility of child rearing which occupied the majority of time for married women. This time could be spent in meditation and devotion, but also in study. This study had the end of advancing the contemplative life of the nuns, but in order to study (i.e. read) the nuns had to have some type of educational system (Myers "Lieutenant" 143).

Since the protagonist arrived at the convent at age four, it is not likely that she had much formal education at home. At this time, the education of girls was primarily emphasized in the wealthier homes and only to the point that it would be useful in marriage. A typical assumption is that the education of the protagonist occurred in the convent. These convents housed libraries where the nuns could find books on such topics as: moral philosophy, *autos sacramentales*, *comedias*, poetry, books of mathematics, and grammar (Braccio 13). There are examples of literate Spanish nuns from this time period, the mystic Santa Teresa de Ávila, being an example. However, according to Socolow, the vast majority of nuns learned to read only enough to manage prayer missals, not to become students of Church doctrine (104).

The education of the protagonist is suggested more than once in the *Vida*. In one of the first picaresque-like encounters, the protagonist, as a young male,¹⁹ has found employment in the house of a relative of his mother in Vitoria. The master or “amo;” a *catedrático* (professor) notes the protagonist’s ability to read Latin and encourages him to continue studying. In an early indication of the protagonist’s preference for action over contemplation and study, the protagonist refuses (36). When the professor’s attempts to persuade the protagonist fail, he resorts to physical violence (36). Just as the protagonist refused to bend to the will of the nun in the convent, here again Erauso refuses to tolerate physical intimidation saying that after the attack he was determined to leave (36).

Another reference to education occurs after the protagonist goes to the Americas before signing on as a soldier. The protagonist is put in charge of running a shop and the narrator takes great pains to clarify that he is in charge of the books (45). The duties mentioned include recording purchase amounts, and keeping track of debts and inventory. Such a job would have required more than a basic convent education.

While it is clear in the *Vida* that the protagonist was literate, educated in Latin and able to keep accounts, no attempt is made in the text to explain how he gained that knowledge. Moreover, knowledge of Latin and accounting does not imply an ability to write the *Vida* alone. If the historical Erauso were no more educated than the protagonist, it does seem unlikely that this individual could produce a work like the *Vida*.

Thus far in our analysis of the *Vida*, the protagonist seems to be an opportunistic individual. This characteristic is seen for the first time when she takes control of her situation and escapes from the convent. Here, she chooses to leave behind the life her

¹⁹ This alteration will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, but the decision to live as a male seems to be intentional in the *Vida*. Additionally, the gender change follows a ritualistic pattern for transformation (Perry “Convent” 397).

parents choose for her and chart a new destiny. Making a decision to live by her wits, she believes the best way to do this is by constructing a male identity.

The second time the protagonist takes control of her situation is when she appears as a *pícaro* working for various masters while in Spain and recently after arriving in the Americas. One of these *amos* attempts to force her to pursue an academic life. After being beaten, she escapes. The *pícaro* literary theme was a very popular device at the time, and the choice of the writing subject to inject it into this narrative indicates that this character is to be seen as one who is willing to learn and develop the skills not only for survival, but those needed to make her life according to her own dictates (Chandler 118-22). The protagonist then elects to become a soldier after leaving Spain for the Americas. This series of choices affords her the opportunity to solidify a masculine identity by participating in exclusively male activities such as war, card-playing, gambling, and honor duels.

During this time, the protagonist's opportunistic nature reveals itself in one of the most telling events in the *Vida*. Miguel frequently brings the protagonist along when he visits his mistress, but a feud develops as she begins to visit Miguel's mistress without him. The protagonist has kept the secret of her identity from Miguel from the beginning and is aware of the division it creates. The episode in which the two fight over a lover, however, may have been the first inkling that Miguel had of the distance that existed between them as a result of this deception. This behavior of the protagonist is consistent with her mistreatment of other characters in subsequent love affairs mentioned in the *Vida* in which she shows a penchant for taking advantage of every situation. The affairs are maintained as long as possible so that she can take advantage of all the gifts, affection

and status that she is afforded while they continue. As soon as payment or responsibility is required, however, she escapes (47-48, 57, 69-71).

Another indication of the protagonist's opportunistic personality is exhibited in the *Vida* when she chooses to avoid execution for a murder by "revealing" herself as female, in effect undoing the masculine identity upon which she has built an entire life (110). Before this point in the narration, the protagonist has preserved the masculine identity at all costs, including family relationships and romantic interests. Finally, once she is identified as a female, she returns to Spain, secures a pension, and receives special permission from the Pope to continue to live and dress as a male. This seems to represent the protagonist's return to living as a member of the more powerful male gender.

Repeatedly in the *Vida*, she displays a selfish desire to turn situations into an advantage for herself at the expense of others. The protagonist's preference for the Spanish name and male identity again emphasize this ability to manipulate circumstances in her favor. It is quite clear from reading the text that she prefers to live as a man.

In comparison to the figure of Erauso developed in the *Vida*, her image in the legal documents gives the reader other information that may be helpful in identifying the historical Erauso.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO GLIMPSED THROUGH THE: DOCUMENTOS, TESTIMONIOS, RELACIONES, RECONOCIMIENTOS, PETICIONES, Y CERTIFICACIONES IN VALLBONA'S APPENDICES

While there is a great deal of information that can be gleaned through the *Vida* about the protagonist, there are many other documents that reference the historical Erauso as well. These documents consist primarily of testimonials from military leaders included for the purpose of confirming Erauso's service. Although the historical Erauso

who is described in these pages is not nearly as vibrant as the protagonist of the *Vida*, important information can still be garnered from these sources, not the least of which is validation of the existence of such an individual. In her edition, Vallbona lists many different testimonials, but I will focus on the ones that follow because these contribute in a meaningful way to the formation of the character of the historical Erauso.

One of the most important documents is from the *Archivo General de las Indias*-the petition written on behalf of the historical Erauso to the *Consejo de Indias*. It is included in Vallbona's second appendix as "Document N° 1: 7 de marzo de 1626" and it states that the historical Erauso served the Empire for nineteen years in the areas known at the time as Perú, Bolivia and Chile (131). That time frame would concur with 1605 as year of departure for the Americas.

The year of the document concurs with the events of the *Vida*. In order for the historical Erauso to spend nineteen years in military service, there are roughly two years for which no account has been made. Part of that time would have been the voyage from Spain to what is modern-day Peru, and the *Vida* includes an explanation that includes time spent after arrival serving various masters in such positions as shopkeeper, bookkeeper, etc.

Another important feature of this document is the manner in which it handles the sex of the historical Erauso. It is clear that the petitioners do not expect the request to live as a male to receive universal approval, and it seems to be imploring the Council to listen to the petition. First, the historical Erauso's name is given as "el Alférez doña Catalina de Erauso," and later mentions that she fought in "ábito de baron, por particular inclinación que tubo que ejercitar las armas" (131). It is significant that the historical

Erauso was listed as both the masculine “el Alférez” (although a corresponding feminine version did not exist), and the feminine “doña.” The second reference to the historical Erauso’s masculine attire would explain the presence of a female on the battlefield.

Emphasis was placed in this document on her “particular inclination” for bearing arms.

An essential component of this petition is a reference to the historical Erauso’s defense of the Catholic Faith and service to the monarchs. Although this component was a necessary part of the petition, and almost a formality, in this case it takes on a different meaning. The unconventional behavior of the historical Erauso can only become heroic if it is seen in the light of defense of God and King (Merrim “Anomaly” 11-22). It must be considered that she was training to be a nun, and this might have served somewhat as a counterbalance to her cross-dressing. This avowal of faith and country comes immediately before the second mention of her sex. The petition clearly states that the historical Erauso’s service occurred while she was perceived to be a male: “sin ser conocida,”²⁰ and before her sex was “discovered”: “por barrios sucesos descubrió serlo” (131). Male dress is mentioned several more times. Her brave deeds, “mostrando ella balor de hombre,” are emphasized more than once in the petition, although the historical Erauso (here called “she”) is described as being as valiant as a man.

The petitioner now turns to a rather unusual mode of defending the historical Erauso’s actions.

Y alguna ayuda de costa para poderse yr: y visto en el Consejo, ha parecido q[ue] aunq[ue] el andar en hábito de varón es cosa prohibida, ya que ha sucedido, y con él ha servido tantos años y con tanto valor en guerra tan porfiada y continua, y recibido heridas, será muy de la real mano de vuestra majestad hazella merced con que pueda sustentarse y recogerse... (131)

²⁰ Note here the intentional use of the female form of the descriptive adjective, *conocida* to describe the historical Erauso.

Up to this point, there has been no attempt to hide her sex from the Council, and now the petitioner seems to confront the scandal directly. Although the petitioner grants that dressing in men's clothes is prohibited, he requests that since the action has already occurred, and because the historical Erauso has fought bravely, with injuries, this case merits special consideration. The unusual part of this explanation is that the emphasis is placed on the fact that the events have already taken place, and that there is no way to undo them. Since her actions were brave and beneficial to the conquest, the petitioner appeals to the great mercy of the Council to consider allowing her a simple pension.

The petition ends with the suggestion of a possible compromise, “y en cuanto a si se le mandara que ande en hábito de muger, remitirlo a vuestra majestad para que mande lo q[ue] fuere más servido, porq[ue] no se le conoce inclinación a mudar del que aora trae, q[ue] es de varón” (131). Even after listing all the heroic accomplishments of the historical Erauso, the writer is concerned that the Council will not grant her request. Therefore, it is important to suggest that even if the Council determines that the historical Erauso should return to female dress, she still has the valor of a man.

The indication is that somehow women's attire might diminish her bravery on the battlefield. Still, this is a daring pronouncement in a time when the historical Erauso was initially seen by the society as a “monstrous hybrid spectacle” (Velasco *Lieutenant* 24), and it is a masterful idea. At once, it underscores the uncomfortable position in which the Council finds itself while asserting the worth of her petition. This suggestion asks the Council to normalize the service of this individual with that of a male while acknowledging this same individual's female sex. The return to female dress would allow the historical Erauso to return to a more conventional appearance, while the

acceptance of the petition would essentially split the historical Erauso in two: the male soldier who would receive a pension for his brave service, but who would not be physically present, and the female-dressed, almost nun who would be allowed to accept the money.

Julia Kristeva's divided writing subject can be illustrated by this portrait of the historical Erauso. The petitioner's compromise, ironically, is the physical manifestation of what has been occurring within the historical Erauso for years. The appeal worked, however, as the historical Erauso's request for a pension was granted (Document 5 p. 147). Not surprisingly, there were conditions (131-32). In the last line of the approval, the Council dictates that, "En quanto al mudar hábito, como parece, y sera bien q[ue] vuelba al ábito de mujer" (132). The Council prefers that the historical Erauso "return" to wearing women's attire.

Another important component revealed in this petition is the name that the historical Erauso crafted for use during military service, Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán. This name will connect the historical Erauso with the testimonies written to verify her service. An important omission is one that has been noted by several scholars, Merrim and Perry among them. Merrim succinctly states, "Erauso's crimes, so prominently featured in the *Vida*, do not make their way into the Petition to mar its self-promotional contrivances. Omissions such as this prompt us, as perhaps did Erauso herself, to view the Petition as 'official' and the *Vida* as the unofficial versions of her story" (11). This perspective may help to reconcile the differences between the two versions of Erauso's life, and the discrepancies that occur with great regularity in the *Vida*.

Vallbona includes thirty additional *testimonios, certificaciones, peticiones, documentos, and reconocimientos* from a number of different individuals who had served in the military with the historical Erauso. Several refer to the historical Erauso as *el Alférez Catalina de Erauso*, and Document N° 4, the testimony of Sebastián de Ilumbe makes no reference to her sex (133-34).

Documento N° 4.1, however, contains several interesting points (134). The historical Erauso's name is given as Catalina de Herausso, and is the testimony of Don Luis de Céspedes Xeria, who had served with the historical Erauso in Chile. He indicates that he has known Erauso for eighteen years and continues, “a esta parte que a que entró por soldado en hábito de hombre, sin que nadie entendiese que hera muger” (134). It seems that Xeria felt the need to clarify that the historical Erauso was introduced to him dressed as a man and further, that there was no one else who knew that she was female. Xeria's letter mentions Erauso's sex again when it states that the historical Erauso was as brave as a man would have been. The difference between this document and the previous one is that Xeria includes references to her sex while the previous one did not. The indication is that all who had contact with her were equally fooled, or perhaps equally impressed, by her male soldier façade.

As we draw the picture of the historical Erauso, we note that Document N° 4, Sebastián de Ilumbe leaves out her sex as unimportant. Another possible explanation is that this document seems to be a form letter in which the name of the soldier, the area in which the soldier served, and the officials under whom the soldier served are simply inserted. It is an impersonal confirmation of service. In contrast, Xeria seems to have had a more personal relationship with the historical Erauso and so feels compelled to

explain how he did not realize he had a soldier whose sex was female. The mention of her sex so early in the testimony seems to indicate a desire to confront the issue immediately and directly while, somewhat inappropriately, sharing the blame with everyone else who was deceived by her male persona. These contrasting documents show the differences in perspective between an impersonal governmental system that allowed the historical Erauso to join the military conquest as a soldier and the discomfort felt by a man who later had to explain just how she deceived him.

In Documento N° 4.2, Francisco Pérez de Navarrete seems to demonstrate confusion about the historical Erauso. There is no early reference to her sex, rather he certifies that he knew Catalina de Herausso in Chile but qualifies that with, “que así es su nombre agora” (135). He seems uncertain about the differing presentations of the historical Erauso and so ascertains that Catalina de Herausso is the name that is presently being used. He further claims that the individual he knew was dressed as a soldier. As he describes how he and the historical Erauso were both defending a castle, he says that the historical Erauso was always a good soldier without mentioning her sex. He continues by listing several reasons for which she was considered a male, “...siempre le vide servir como buen soldado, acudiendo a lo que le hera ordenado, con gran puntualidad y fue tendio por hombre, por mostrar siempre valor y se halló en muchas ocassiones y recuentros que se tuvieron con el enemigo y salió herido en la batalla...” (135).

According to Pérez de Navarrete, these characteristics were not attributes associated with females, but, considered together, would convince other soldiers that she was male. Additionally, he lists the traits of a good soldier to describe the historical

Erauso's service, such as doing what one is told with great punctuality, demonstrating valor, bravely confronting the enemy and being wounded in battle (135). In this testimony Pérez de Navarrete demonstrates that he is now a conflicted companion. On one hand, he seems to want to aid his fellow soldier in her attempt to receive a governmental pension. On the other hand, he reveals a sense of confusion and at times a sense of frustration or betrayal. The impression is that he did not truly know the historical Erauso as he believed that he did. Early in his testimony, he refers to her by clarifying that Catalina de Herausso is that name that Erauso is now using. By choosing to word his statement in this manner, he is expressing angst that reflects his uncertain relationship with her. The suggestion is that Pérez de Navarrete is referring to someone who would change names and identities, and this seems to suggest that he feels deceived by her or unsure of his own experience.

Documento N° 4.3, the *Certificación de don Juan Cortés de Monrroy* includes additional information (135-36). In it, there are the expected references to the historical Erauso dressed in male attire, and serving bravely in battle. Here, however, the “revelation” of her gender coincides with events in the *Vida*. Cortés de Monrroy indicates that the historical Erauso chose to “reveal” her gender (110). This is a significant moment in the *Vida*, and it is quite important that this was her choice. Cortés de Monrroy states, “...ella misma descubrió ser muger, y al presente se halla en esta corte en el mismo áuito de hombre...” (136). He was so impressed with her decision to “reveal” her female sex and then to continue to dress in male clothing that he included it in his testimony. It seems that for Cortés de Monrroy, such a fantastic “revelation”

would not have been made lightly. The conclusion that he draws from this “revelation” is that her entire story must be true.

He continues by declaring that she deserves any mercy that the Council would bestow upon her. It is important to look closely at this assertion. As I have mentioned, it is significant historically because it coincides with the events recounted in the *Vida*, and because it allows the historical Erauso the choice of being female or male. This choice is one she has made before and will be allowed to make again. Her choice is consistent: when she is under the control of a male-dominated society, she hides behind womanhood when it is to her advantage.

In the episode in the *Vida* when the protagonist chooses to “reveal” her gender to the Bishop, it is because she wants to avoid the death penalty for murder. Her time waiting in the convent in the Americas was spent as a female because the historical Erauso’s male persona would otherwise have been executed for murder (114). In the *Vida*, the protagonist waits as a female for confirmation that she had never taken the vows to become a nun (114). Once this has been established, the protagonist remains in female dress until she is returned safely to Spain. Once in Spain, the protagonist begins to refashion a male life and even goes so far as to petition the Pope for the privilege of continuing to wear male clothing. This post-war choice to remain a male is significant, and here we have documentation of the historical Erauso making choices about her gender.²¹ These choices are paralleled by those of the protagonist in the *Vida*.

Another document of interest is N° 4.18, a *petición* composed by the historical Erauso in support of a *certificación* written by D. Juan Recio de León on her behalf

²¹ Gender here is a reference to the I/Erauso entities’ choice of social presentation: masculine or feminine. Sex is seen as more a biological definition than a cultural one, although admittedly this is a difficult distinction.

(145). The interesting part of this document is the manner in which Erauso refers to her historical figure. The *petición* begins with the legal formula “El Alférez Herausso, natural de la Villa de San Sebastián...digo.” This self-reference, “El Alférez Herausso,” seems to support the use of *Erauso* as an appropriate manner in which to refer to the main character in this study. The spelling is somewhat different, but indicates with the use of *digo*,²² that the historical Erauso is here testifying about herself in first person.

Caution must be exercised in this case, because there was also a scribe involved in the production of this document, and the varying names were probably interchangeable. “Herausso” coincides closely with the name on the baptismal record found by Ferrer. It is interesting to note that in the self-reference the historical Erauso did not use “doña Catalina” at all. The choice of the surname “Heruasso” combined with the masculine military title, “El Alférez,” seems an appropriate choice for proving her heroic side. Still, it is somewhat unusual in these testimonies to find an officer who is named only with title and surname. In the case of the historical Erauso it is plausible that she was so well known that she did not need to follow the prescribed formula in which the officer’s first and middle names would appear after their title. One final version of the name appears at the end of the document in addition to the name of the scribe and the witness. This time the testimony is attributed to “El Alférez Erausso.”

Following the historical Erauso’s petition for Recio de León, Vallbona has included his *certificación* as well, N° 4.19, a petition that includes some interesting material. One of its more unusual characteristics is that Recio de León uses the name “el Alférez Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán” or a shorter version of it to describe all of the historical Erauso’s deeds during military service. He also avoids adjectives of gender as

²² *Digo* is the first-person singular conjugation of the verb *decir*, which means to speak or to say.

much as possible, but when they are unavoidable he uses masculine references to the historical Erauso. There is a mention that the historical Erauso was as brave and strong as the male soldiers. After he mentions the “revealing” of the historical Erauso’s sex to the bishop, he refers to her as “Doña Catalina de Herausso” and uses feminine adjectives to refer to Erauso. It is interesting to note that Recio de León chose to include the following statement about Erauso.

...descubrió ser muger al Obispo de la dicha ciudad de Guamanga, y que se llamaba Doña Catalina de Herausso, cossa que hasta entonces jamás a mi notticia hauía venido, de que en mí, y en todo el Reyno caussó extraña admiración, particularmente por hauerle visto acudir con esfuerço baronil a todas las cossas que se le encargaban en la milicia, sufriendo las neçessidades della, y hauerle conocido con mucha virtuda y limpieça, sin hauer entendido cossa en contrario;...(146)

The statement that before this point, he never knew that the historical Erauso’s sex was female seems like another example of the discomfort felt by those who had spent time with her and had believed her to be male. Even though Recio de León expresses discomfort, he also admits to an uncertain, and not necessarily approving “strange admiration” for her. He mentions her “male strength,” and willingness to suffer the discomforts of military life while at the same time maintaining “masculine” virtues and cleanliness. Recio de León is giving the historical Erauso high praise in his statement that illustrates the idea of the *mujer varonil*, or manly woman. The idea was that women, it was hoped, would aspire to become more perfect, i.e. male. Thus, the *mujer varonil* was a more perfect woman as she was almost a man.

There is one final note to mention from the last documents that Vallbona includes in this appendix. These refer to the historical Erauso’s stipend, and the approval given to her to live and continue to receive this pension in “Nueva España” (Documents 6-12, 148-

49). The years on these documents are 1628-1630. The historical Erauso is referred to in all of them (even by herself) as “El Alférez doña Catalina de Erauso.” This is an interesting development in the historical Erauso’s identity. According to the *Vida*, Pope Urban VIII granted her the right to officially change her name to Antonio de Erauso and to wear men’s clothing in 1626 (122-23). In the protagonist’s interview with the Pope, he had verified her life story, travels, sex and virginity. In the narrator’s version in the *Vida*, the special dispensation was given along with encouragement to: “encargándomela prosecución honesta en adelante, i la abstencia en offender al próximo, temiendo la ulción de Dios sobre su mandamiento, Non occides, i bolvíme”²³ (123). It seems likely that both the Pope’s sanction and the resulting notoriety of the historical Erauso’s situation made it possible for both the historical Erauso and the Spanish government to use the title “El Alférez doña Catalina de Erauso” (Merrim “Anomaly” 10-17). This title permanently established a divided identity for the Erauso entities, and is the one by which both the historical and the Erauso characters have been remembered. It is little wonder that the historical Erauso chose to spend the rest of her life living quietly as a mule driver in Mexico simply, using the name “Antonio de Erauso.” It also underlines the historical Erauso’s preference to live and be recognized as a male and not as a female.

In summary, according to the documents in Vallbona’s appendix, the historical Erauso’s lifestyle caused much discomfort for her peers. The testimonies, particularly those given by other soldiers, present their uncertainty about her. Only after the Pope established clearly that the historical Erauso was a female who could live and dress as a man, does there seem to be an uneasy compromise achieved, and *la Monja Alférez*

²³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “urging me to live uprightly in the future, to avoid injuring my neighbor, and to fear God’s vengeance respecting His commandment-*Non occides*. And then I withdrew” (140).

emerges. The baroque aesthetic that “prized singularity, marvel and the unveiling of a reality that is not what it seems” played a part in the acceptance of such a figure in literature (Myers “Lieutenant” 148). In that time, however, the historical Erauso’s choices would still have caused concern in a society that depended on clearly defined gender roles to maintain stability. If the historical Erauso were simply a literary or dramatic creation, the lingering uncertainty would have been resolved in the climax of the work. Dramas of the era used cross-dressing for a reason: to right a dishonor, or to achieve a political, national or religious gain (Velasco *Lieutenant* 35-43). Once the purpose had been achieved, then the cross-dressing female returned to female dress. There was no easily categorized reason for the historical Erauso’s lifestyle and there was no clear resolution and return to a socially acceptable role. The confusion over *la Monja Alférez* continues as through the years the iconic representations have presented as many questions as they have answers.

Although the questions remain about who *la Monja Alférez* was as a historical figure, the documents at the end of the *Vida* do seem to indicate that she did exist. This contribution of Vallbona’s to the compendium of information about the historical Erauso does seem to present the best evidence available. Vallbona herself asserts certainty in her introduction that, “No hay la menor duda de que Catalina de Erauso existió y realizó la mayoría de las hazañas que la narradora protagonista de *Vida i sucescos* relata en forma de autobiografía (3).” While Vallbona is certain that Erauso did live and accomplish the majority of the actions in the *Vida*, not all critics agree with her claim.²⁴

²⁴ Critics such as James Pancrazio, Diego Barras Arana, and Mary Elizabeth Perry all express doubts about the reliability of the text.

The veracity of the events in the *Vida* may well be another question associated with this text that has no definitive answer. It is possible, however, to track the actual journey of the manuscript through the centuries. The history of this apocryphal document will confirm the many opportunities that other authors have had to enter the text.

2.3 HISTORY OF THE TEXT

The history of the *Vida* is fascinating, broaches many questions, and underscores its potential for multiple authorship. In other words, assessment of what has been reported as the journey of the actual document may determine possible entry points at which the text could have been altered. In general, textual alterations were very common in Early Modern Spain. There are many reasons for textual changes. Some could be attributed to copyist's errors. In addition there were instances of intentional changes. Both types of change were so well known at that time that one of the comical commentaries in the *Quijote* is based on just such textual inaccuracies and discrepancies. Additionally, during the Early Modern period, art in general was considered a collaborative work and rarely were the names of architects, authors or composers associated with cathedrals, literature or music (Mujica 24). In the time of the *Vida*, writing still meant copying and imitating models. This perspective, the apocryphal nature of the text, and the various versions that have appeared all underline the many authors visible or not that have had access to the document.

There has been much research dedicated to the journey of the document. As is the case with innumerable works from this time, the original copy of the *Vida* is missing. According to Vallbona, the original document was given to the editor Bernardino de Guzmán in Madrid in 1625 (2). Despite great effort on the part of critics and historians

alike, this document has not been found. There is a precedent for unpopular or unfavorable documents from this time period to have been “disappeared” intentionally (Pancrazio 457-58). This document could have been considered such, as the idea of cross-dressing and receiving special permission from the Pope to continue cross-dressing would have been contrary to the established social order. The supporting evidence in the form of government or Church documents could also have been kept out of the public eye. This, then, indicates that the intentional “disappearing” of this document is something to be considered. Until the original manuscript can be found, unfortunately, the *Vida* will continue to be apocryphal, causing additional difficulty with determining the original content, form and style. As a result this study has chosen a later version of the *Vida* in order to conduct the evaluation.

The version that I have chosen, Vallbona’s edition from 1992, is based on the next document that appears in the chain. A copy of *Vida* appears among the collection of Juan Bautista Muñoz, deposited in the Biblioteca de la Real Academica de la Historia de Madrid. Vallbona gives the number of the collection as XXVIII, A-70, dated on the last page as May 24, 1784 (3). The title of the *Vida* is listed as: *Vida I sucesos de la Monja Alférez, o Alférez Catarina, D[^a] Catarina de Araujo donella, natural de S[an] Sebastián, Prov[incia] de Guipúzcoa. Escrita por ella misma en 18 de Sept[iembr]e 1646 (3). At the end of the title, additional information is included: “volviendo de las Indias a España en el Galeón S[an] Josef, Capitán Andrés Otón, en la flota de N[ueva] España, General D. Juan de Benavides, General de la Armada Tomás de la Raspuru, que llegó a Cádiz en 18 de noviembre de 1646 (3).”*

The title and the text of this edition of the *Vida* contain several notable inconsistencies. One interesting difference is that this title varies from the one used by Vallbona, in which the line from the Bautista copy, “escrita por ella misma,” (*written by her*) is changed to “atribuida a” (*attributed to*). This change does not occur in Ferrer’s title (5). Vallbona herself states that one of her reasons for producing a new version is that there has not been one since Ferrer’s second appeared in 1838.²⁵ It seems possible that Vallbona was the one who changed the title from “escrita por ella misma” to “atribuida a.” It is not noted, however, in her introduction and it therefore remains unclear at what point the title changed. While the change may seem somewhat minor, it demonstrates the very different assumptions under which the various authors and editors were working.

A second inconsistency that appears in the title is the year, 1646, in which the historical Erauso returned to Cádiz. As Vallbona mentioned, her return to Spain more likely occurred in 1624 (3). As I mentioned in the previous section, the historical Erauso was already petitioning the Spanish crown for a pension by 1626 according to the *Petición* and the supporting *testimonios* from 1625 (130-149). Therefore, it seems unlikely that the author of the *Vida* would wait an additional twenty years to issue the accompanying autobiography. The idea of publishing a story while it is relevant and at the height of public interest would make much more sense. The erroneous year also seems an improbable mistake for an author that participated in the actual events. The historical Erauso is believed to have lived out her final years as an anonymous mule

²⁵ The first version of Ferrer’s appeared in 1829. The title of Ferrer’s second edition was *Historia de la Monja Alférez. D.ª Catalina de Erauso, escrita por ella misma, e ilustrada con notas y documentos, P.D.J.M.D.F.* (Vallbona 3-5).

driver in México. This lifestyle does not lend itself to first-hand recollections of events from twenty years previous.

A final inconsistency to note in the title is the indication that the narrative will end after the protagonist returns to Cádiz. This, however, is not the case as the story of the I/Erauso protagonist continues through her interview with the Pope and ends with a dramatic confrontation between the protagonist and two women (addressed as prostitutes) in which the protagonist responds to their insults with a threat to attack them and anyone who dared defend them (124).

Another previously mentioned inconsistency is the use of the surname “Araujo.” In the 1625 *Petición*, the historical Erauso used the surname “Herausso” or “Erausso.” A return to the use of the Basque surname, “Araujo” would be inconsistent with her earlier preference. Therefore, it is here that an additional intrusion occurred. An author or editor of this version, for reasons of publication or possibly to establish a particular identity for Erauso, made these changes in the document.

As this document is purportedly a copy made by Juan Bautista Muñoz, it is important to consider his role in the path of the *Vida*. Bautista was considered a scholar and an expert in the field of archaic documents (18). It is believed that Bautista copied his document from one belonging to Cándido María Trigueros (18). Both Bautista and Trigueros provide two additional points of entry as editors or copyists into the text.

It is interesting to note that Trigueros’ name is associated with this text for two key reasons. As Vallbona asserts, Trigueros is linked to literary fabrications. In effect, Trigueros has been described as a writer with some talent but little creativity who had previously produced “documents” from an “unknown” writer that turned out to be

Trigueros' own attempts to mimic poetry from an earlier era (18). In Pancrazio's words, this author was known "for writing apocryphal²⁶ Golden-Age poetry (458)." Clearly, this is a figure that requires further investigation.

All of the above mentioned copyists represent possible authors or editors who had the opportunity to alter the manuscript. There is another consideration, a lengthy time gap between the years 1625, in which the historical Erauso was supposed to have handed the manuscript to the editor Gúzman in Madrid, and 1784, in which Bautista submitted his documents to the Real Academica de la Historia. In the intervening century and a half, there is no credible evidence of the whereabouts of the original document or any of its copies, official or otherwise. Consequently, it has been suggested that Trigueros actually created this document in another attempt to publish his own material. The connection between Trigueros and Bautista then becomes even more important. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, however, suggests that Bautista would have been able to spot the characteristics of Trigueros' work in the document if it had been Trigueros' creation (18).

Trigueros' involvement with the text could be a stumbling block for inclusion in the historical cannon, although it merely adds texture to a literary investigation. Many scholars believe that the text is consistent with other soldier's tales from the period of publication of the original *Vida*. There also seems to be a general agreement that it would take a writer of great talent to be able to place the historical Erauso's story in an appropriate literary context from a vantage point that was over 150 years in the future.

According to Vallbona, there are many indications that Trigueros did not create the version that Bautista copied (17-19). The surviving works of Trigueros do not

²⁶ In Pancrazio's article, he includes the following explanation of "apocryphal" as "writings or statements of questionable authorship or authenticity. From Late Latin *Apocrypha*, from Greek *secret*, *hidden* from view" (455).

suggest that he had such creative talent. Even Bautista, a contemporary, expresses little concern about copying this document from Trigueros. It would be unwise to discount Trigueros' involvement completely, however, because he did seem to have the literary background and ability to alter existing documents or mimic older ones. Trigueros could have easily embellished the original text with what he believed to be appropriate dialogue, descriptions, or explanations. As will be evaluated in Chapter Four in greater detail, the text does have various points at which alterations or additions were probably made. The document passing through Trigueros' hands represents another opportunity for alteration.

The scholar Bautista, however, must not be overlooked as a possible agent in the modification to the text. As Fitzmaurice-Kelly points out, Bautista was a scholar in this area, and could have identified falsifications. It stands to reason that he would also have been capable of making changes to the document, and that these changes would have been linguistically and contextually appropriate. Bautista is not known to have had the literary background of Trigueros, but it is possible to attribute to him changes in chronology, travel monologues, or even historical descriptions. Someone with experience in the writing styles of the Golden Age, and someone with knowledge of the historical and political landscape of the time could have added information to the copy. The dialogue between the protagonist and her brother as Miguel is dying after she stabs him in a duel is strongly reminiscent of dramatized action (64-65).

Additionally, it is possible that Bautista made notes in the margin of the document as he worked, and these notes were later incorporated into the main document itself. There are instances in which this is believed to have occurred in other documents from

around this time period. Although these would not have been intentional changes, they would have become alterations from the original copy. It is also important to take into account that the scholars at that time were not averse to modifying documents. For example, Ferrer will next be considered as a point for alteration because he openly admitted to correcting what he believed were errors that he found in the text (3). These points of entry, therefore, do not suggest that either Trigueros or Bautista (particularly Bautista) intended to alter the course of the document for personal gain; rather, any additions that were made were probably intended to add their knowledge or expertise to the line of possible authors that had already touched the *Vida*. Ironically, if Trigueros did seek to gain renown for writing this work, then this could be considered his greatest failure as he is unilaterally dismissed as a likely candidate today (17-19).

The next point of entry into the text occurs as it passes through the hands of Ferrer. Vallbona included a statement from his 1829 edition of the *Vida* in which Ferrer admits to correcting errors (3). Some examples of these corrections include changing “muchos nombres de pueblos y personas, casi todas las fechas de la relación que hace de sus propios hechos esta mujer interesante” (3). Ferrer’s admission of extensive textual alteration would make the entire document questionable by modern standards, and the fact that he did not gloss his changes makes the work of authenticating the document much more difficult. It is interesting to note that Velasco refers to these alterations as simple “editorial changes” (*Lieutenant* 3). This attitude reflects the general acceptance of change as a part of these documents.

While the minor changes that were made by Ferrer do not necessarily decrease the value of the document, they are still changes from the original copy. Ferrer’s position is

additionally suspicious because he was a writer. Fortunately for Ferrer, there is no evidence to suggest that he, unlike Trigueros, was a Golden Age enthusiast who wrote apocryphal poetry. Ferrer was, however, a political exile in Paris from about 1820-1830. Therefore, even though he is not mentioned as the creator of this document, his perspective as a political exile must be considered. Velasco believes that Ferrer chose to publish his version of the *Vida* as a warning about the lost or misguided potential of Spanish women (*Lieutenant* 88). Velasco indicates that Ferrer uses the life story of the protagonist presented in the *Vida* as a model of what can happen to intelligent, ambitious women who do not receive proper education. This cautionary view of the protagonist's life serves to underline Ferrer's criticism of Spanish society. It also, ironically, links to the iconic view of the historical Erauso as monstrous (*Lieutenant* 24). Ferrer believes that the lack of education was disastrous in the case of the protagonist, and according to Velasco, Ferrer interprets her life as wasted potential (*Lieutenant* 89). The underlying political agenda can then inform the changes that Ferrer chose to make and clarify some of his points.

Ferrer's notes are retained in Vallbona's edition while the version that he edited does not actually serve as the basis. Therefore, we have the benefit of seeing what Ferrer felt compelled to note and change without having the handicap of reading these changes as part of the original copy. Vallbona describes her edition as a contemporary transcription that is based on the Bautista copy (11). She indicates that she was motivated to produce a new version because of the many discrepancies among the various versions. While she does not state it directly, she suggests that another edition is needed to attempt to address the inconsistencies of the other versions (11-12).

The final point of entry that must be considered is Vallbona herself. In the Introduction to the *Vida*, Vallbona carefully documents the changes that she made in her translation of the document into a more current format (22-27). These changes are primarily focused on the modernization of the language in spelling, punctuation and organization. Vallbona insists that these changes are external and made to help the modern reader access this older text. It must be remembered, however, that Vallbona had her own reasons for working with this text as well. She states that there had not been an updated version of the *Vida* since Ferrer published his in 1829 and that a newer version was appropriate. Vallbona is a respected historian in the field, and felt that more recent investigation into the topic could enhance the reader's understanding of such a text. Vallbona does not seem to bring a gender agenda to this edition, although in her novelistic works she is known for using the theme of liberation of women. This perspective could explain why this topic was interesting and important to her. Throughout this edition, she does attempt to keep an objective distance, and many scholars have found this edition to be valid. Still, especially in the notes, Vallbona's voice is heard, and although she may not have changed the actual text, the association of her remarks with the text will have at least a subtle impact on the reading.

Information from this chapter defining the protagonist, the historical Erauso and the history of the text, can now be used to analyze the narrator in the *Vida*.

CHAPTER 3 CONFIGURING THE NARRATING CHARACTER

In the case of the *Vida*, there seems to be a faint and often flexible line between the historical individual who lived and the “I” narrator who lives within the text. It is important, however, to analyze them separately, since the narrator is one of the most important tools the writing subject uses to convey the meanings in the *Vida*. In the previous chapter, many nuances of the historical Erauso were explored through an evaluation of the *Vida*. Historical documents were also shown to provide additional information about her life, revealing insight into her background, and how this was reflected in the protagonist. The function of the narrator, however, is to retell the events of the past.

The narrator in the *Vida* therefore is a “distinct character with a name and a history” that maintains a separate identity and function in the work (Barry 233). Additionally, the narrator is “homodiegetic,” one who is both the narrator of the story as well as the protagonist who participates in the events retold (Genette 245). The narrator in the *Vida* maintains an “external’ focalization” by reporting the actions of the protagonist rather than revealing her thoughts and feelings (Barry 232). The result of this position is that the reader and the protagonist are both witnesses to the events being described in the text (Barry 233). This approach is somewhat unusual in an autobiography. Normally, the narrator would have access to the emotions of the protagonist, and the reader would therefore expect that the narrator would take advantage of this contact to divulge the emotional reactions of the protagonist.

The interplay between the narrator and the protagonist in the text serves as a reminder of another important point in the analysis of the text, that the *Vida* should be

considered literature. Even though this text probably has its origins in the *Petición* made to the Spanish royals, the embellishments in the *Vida* move it beyond the realm of historical document. Therefore, a literary analysis of the text will aid in understanding the development of the narrator. The narrator cannot be considered merely an extension of the historical Erauso outside the text or the writing subject within the text; her particular role in the text is to guide the narration. It must be noted, however, that the narrator is still a tool used by the writing subject in order to tell this life story.

In order to configure the narrator, I will focus on components of the narrative that develop the protagonist as well as the narration. The events that the narrator chooses to include or exclude help to develop the overall picture of the protagonist that the narrator wants to present. I will also examine the reliability of the narrator because it will affect the reader's perception of the veracity of the narrative. Additionally, the narrator's self-perception will be analyzed. I will then discuss how the writing subject uses the narrator to create other characters within the text. Before proceeding, however, I wish to place the *Vida* in its historical context vis a vis autobiography in early XVII Century Spain.

3.1 THE PROBLEM OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

One of the central problems concerning Early Modern autobiography is that it is an “androcentric genre” (S. Smith *Poetics* 52). A woman choosing to tell her life story in this masculine domain must employ a “double-voicedness” which reflects the conflict between the reader's expectations and the narrator's desires (*Poetics* 50). In Western tradition, for a variety of reasons over the centuries,¹ the work of women writers was not valued. There were exceptions to this, however, and they fall into two categories:

¹ For a more complete treatment of the development of the social roles of women writers, see in S. Smith's *Poetics* the topic “The Figure of Woman” pgs. 27-31.

women writing of their daily life through journals, and women writing of their exceptional lives (*Poetics* 55). The women in the first category were seen as primarily adding to the cultural knowledge of the period while providing no information deemed useful by the male authorities. The women in the second category were seen as exceptional precisely because they were capable of having an impact in the world of men (*Poetics* 55).

Usually, women with influence in the masculine power structure, such as queens or the female religious were somewhat removed from traditional gender expectations (*Poetics* 55), although they often demonstrated discomfort with their position. An example is Teresa of Ávila who wrote her religious autobiography at the request of a male superior. She felt compelled, however, to bemoan her lack of theological training and general ineptitude for writing (Mujica 86). These admissions of false humility were actually in line with the prescribed gender roles and allowed her to write in the masculine genre while still maintaining a feminine posture. Such a marginalized position left women in a perpetual state of otherness “unrepresented and unrepresentable” in the autobiographical genre (S. Smith *Poetics* 48-49).

Part of the reason that women were considered “the other” in autobiography stems from the idea of a narrator “as telling unified stories of their lives, as creating or discovering coherent selves” (S. Smith *Reading* 47). The narrator, however is “always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of our pasts, addressing multiple and disparate audiences” (*Reading* 47). The narrator is navigating an autobiography about the life of *la Monja Alférez*, an extraordinary although

marginalized protagonist. This conflicted position is reflected in the double-voice that is employed in the narration on several levels.

One of the divisions in the narration is the temporal separation between the narrator and the protagonist.

Every telling of an experience in autobiography or ethnology requires a double consciousness of what took place. In narrating past experiences, the autobiographer is both participant and observer in that the younger protagonist was part of the experience while the older narrator, temporarily removed from the past is the detached witness to the experience through memory. (Deck 248)

This textual split between the older narrator and the younger protagonist is “autobiographical double consciousness (myself in the past compared to myself at the present moment of narration)” (Deck 248). For the narrator, both the homodiegetic perspective and the detached manner of narrating denote this sense of “autobiographical double consciousness.”

In the case of the narrator, this division is complicated by multiple authors. Even in an autobiography that is not apocryphal, the split is more than the binary “I-now” and “I-then” (S. Smith *Reading* 59). Using Smith’s divisions and assuming consistent “I-now” and “I-then” identities is not possible for an autobiography whose author is clear; it becomes significantly more difficult to establish for the *Vida* (58). While the narrator grapples with the sense of multiple roles in the temporal divide of the narration, the protagonist does not. This awareness of various positions combines with the narrator’s sense of chronological distance from the action and leads to moments in which the scurrilous behavior of the protagonist is portrayed with indulgence and even pride. One such example of this in the *Vida* occurs in the encounter between the protagonist and Reyes (46-47). After their encounter at the theater when the protagonist interprets Reyes’

refusal to remove his hat as an affront to her honor, the next day she slashes Reyes' face. This attack was not provoked by anything more than a rude exchange at the theater yet the narrator presents it as a justified demonstration of valor.

Such a biased presentation of the protagonist casts aspersions upon the narrator's reliability. Rather than focusing on the veracity of the text, it can be considered in "...its psychological dimensions rather than in its factual or moral ones" (Deck 244). The intent of the narrator becomes the focus, and this allows the reader to cross "the perceived gap between the reality and human expressions of it" (Deck 244). Such a focus on intent highlights the importance of the messages presented by the protagonist, narrator and writing subject.

In such a tantalizing story, the reader must trust that the narrator will candidly tell the story of the life of the protagonist. A narrator who assumes an authoritative stance "invites or compels the reader's belief in the story and the veracity of the narrator; it persuades the reader of the narrator's authenticity; it validates certain claims as truthful; and it justifies writing and publicizing the life story" (S. Smith *Reading* 27). Therefore, the narrator's tone from the beginning of the *Vida* is reassuringly detached yet credible, and the reader does not sense that the narrator is deceitful or attempting to justify the behavior of a cross-dressing female soldier. The narrator establishes this safe distance early in the narration as s/he reports the information about the protagonist's childhood and escape from the convent in a removed and unemotional manner in the text (33-36).

3.1a GENDER

Although the narrator avoids the label of gender, the historical Erauso could not. Her choice was to ally herself with the male world, lifestyle and even the masculine

autobiography. The narrator underlines that connection by developing the protagonist through masculine literary genres such as the *pícaro*, hero in the *capa y espada* plays and the soldier's tale. These literary comparisons will be more fully developed later in this chapter. All of these correlations indicate that the narrator would not allow this story to be marginalized as a female autobiography.

Such careful configuration of the protagonist on the part of the narrator reveals a comprehensive understanding of the social implications of this life story. The narrator realizes the dangers inherent to presenting the protagonist's story as a woman's autobiography, and deliberately chooses not to clearly address the question of her sex. The gender fluctuation minimizes the impact of an autobiography with a female protagonist, although she was also a virgin and a nun, both of which grant the autobiography legitimacy. All of these components aid the protagonist to cross the gender lines and succeed in the almost exclusively male sphere of autobiography. The *Vida*, while not published until much later, was probably written for public consumption, and the gender changes would have simultaneously caused a scandal while attracting readers to the *Vida*.

The impact of multiple authors as well as a protagonist with a somewhat ambiguous gender identity result in a narrative that is difficult to classify solely as female autobiography because the narrator successfully crosses the "gender wall," and is able to think of the protagonist in masculine terms (Finney 164-65). Additionally, in the text there is little evidence that the protagonist ever relinquished her masculine persona even when she returned to wearing a nun's habit after "revealing" her sex to the Bishop (110).

On the contrary, there is evidence that she planned to return to life as a male as soon as it was proven that she had never taken vows as a nun.

3.1b INCORPORATING THE CONQUEROR

As the writing subject grapples with the difficulty of telling the life story of a female in the genre of autobiography, there are some useful parallels that can be drawn between the *Vida* and autobiographies written by other marginalized individuals such as indigenous writers. While the life stories of indigenous writers are often considered “authentic forms of self-representation” they also demonstrate “a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or conqueror. These are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding” (Pratt “Transculturation” 28). Both the writing subject of the *Vida* and the indigenous writers were attempting to appropriate a new identity by using the medium of their oppressors. In a similar manner, the protagonist’s incorporation of the male Spanish vernacular and assimilation of his values allows the narrator to present her story as legitimate.

This idea can be combined with the assertion that one² who writes a life story is a “boundary-crosser [whose] role can be characterized as that of a dual identity” (Reed-Danahay 3). Although the narrator can legitimize the protagonist through gender, she was still marginalized by her sex. The narrator reflects this dual identity, both subjugated and powerful, as the gender signifiers vacillate between feminine and masculine in an

² Reed-Danahay is speaking of the role of the autoethnographer (3). Although this field is modern, it has applications in the study of autobiography. Reed-Danahay believes there is a literary relevance for autoethnography as it considers “forms of writing that address both the writer’s own group and a wider, more dominant one. Texts or works of art that are autoethnographic assert alternative forms of meaning and power from those associated with the dominant, metropolitan culture...” (8). She also states that “realist conventions and object observer positions of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question” (2).

effort to “appropriate the idioms of the...conqueror” (Reed-Danahay 3). The protagonist in the text is identified by female gender signifiers when she dresses and acts like a female, i.e. in the convent both before and after her life as a soldier (33-36, 111-115). During her life as a male, however, she is described with masculine gender signifiers (36-110).

Through this effort both sides of the protagonist emerge: the female protagonist who is controlled by her society, as well as the male protagonist who moves among the powerful. This split goes even deeper as the male protagonist not only has power over the females in his society; he also participates in the conquering of the indigenous people. Such a division further aligns the female protagonist with the powerless and marginalized of her time. It is interesting to note that the narrator avoids indicating a gender by the continued use of the first-person singular *yo*, which in Spanish reflects the gender of the individual using the term, having none of its own.

The tension that results in the text as the narrator attempts to incorporate the conqueror through the marginalized protagonist is exposed through direct dialogue. In these scenes the narrator “reveals the degree of self-consciousness about her position as a woman writing in an andocentric genre” (S. Smith *Poetics* 50). These passages are notable because the protagonist rarely speaks. Here, the narrator is speaking “directly to her reader about the process of constructing her life story... she is absorbed in a dialogue with her readers, that “other” through whom she is working to identify herself and to justify her decision to write about herself in a genre that is a man’s” (*Poetics* 50). This dramatized dialogue extrapolates the emotion that the narrator is experiencing.

This type of dialogue often occurs in the fight scenes in the *Vida*. In the initial encounter with Reyes, the narrator condenses the exchange without using dialogue (46). When the protagonist confronts Reyes about his earlier insult, the short dialogue is included: “-A[h], Señor Reyes.- Bolvió él, i dixo: -[¡]Qué quiere!-Dixe yo: -Esta es la cara que se corta-”³(46). This dialogue adds little to the narrative; however, its inclusion heightens the drama in the scene. Another good example occurs at the end of the duel in which Miguel is killed, although it seems forced and highly stylized. While the protagonist is dueling with her opponent, she hears, “¡Ha, traidor! ¡qué me has muerto!”⁴ (65). The addition of this dialogue underlines the emotion the narrator experiences as she retells the death of Miguel.

3.1c AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS TRANSGRESSION

The silence of the protagonist reflects another problematic area of autobiography, the prevalent view that autobiographical writing was a transgression, particularly for religious writers (Fernández 25). There is an overriding sense that “[g]uilt, [or] at least discomfort, is often associated with self-writing” (Molloy 4). The narrator presents sections of the *Vida* in a confessional style that was typical of autobiographies written by nuns (Myers “Saints” 149). In these religious autobiographies, when the silence between the individual and the divine is broken through written expression, the “I” writing subject becomes internally, rather than externally, focused (Fernández 21), and the autobiographer demonstrates a sense of confusion about the act of writing which does not seem sinful to him or her. Therefore the “I” writing subject begins to represent himself or herself as a misfit, “people who are born into the wrong environment, or the wrong

³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as ““Ah, Señor Reyes!” He turned round and said, “What do you want with me?” I replied, “I’ll show you whose face is going to be slashed!” (19).

⁴ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “Ah, traitor! Thou hast killed me!” (41).

historical moment” (Fernández 26). The only way out for the autobiographer is apostrophe:

Even though autobiography is very frequently a form of apology, or a self-defense submitted to the court of public opinion, autobiographers often feign indifference to the verdict of that tribunal; they may even call into question that court’s jurisdiction through their use of apostrophe. Ultimately, apostrophe pretends to highlight the inability of the autobiographer’s contemporaries to adequately see, judge, or appreciate his or her true self; the trope endeavors to point out a primary incommensurability between one’s true identity and others’ (mis)perceptions, between the self and others, or even between (private) identity and (public) speech. In other words, true to its’ etymological sense of “turning away from,” apostrophe represents a suspension of apology or of normal communication between present, contemporary interlocutors, and the invocation of an absent, but higher authority. (Fernández 21-22)

The overriding sense of being misunderstood informs the writing of the *Vida* and is reflected in the defiant stance of the narrator. This attitude is most evident in the final scene of the *Vida* when the protagonist is addressed by two women who she believes are insulting her (124). She angrily rebuffs them and threatens to beat them and anyone who comes to their defense. This scene clearly indicates the protagonist’s sense of identity and willingness to defend it. Also, throughout the *Vida*, the protagonist refuses to follow tradition simply because she should. Beginning with her escape from the convent and continuing through several different masters in Spain and in the Americas, she defends her right to determine her own future. Additionally, her sense of defiance stems from her collective nature. Such a narrator will not show the consistency that would be expected of a single narrating character who is “in principle, reliable” (Pavel 20). Even with these contradictions, critics have continued to read the narrator as a whole that presents her/his own messages about gender identity.

3.2 THE NARRATOR AND CONFIGURATION OF THE PROTAGONIST

Apostrophe provides a good place to begin evaluating the narrator. In the *Vida*, the romantic scenes between the protagonist and the female characters indicate that the narrator understands the social standards that mandate gender behavior. This concept can be used to explain the narrator's lack of remorse when the protagonist does not follow these conventions. This is an ongoing theme throughout the *Vida*, beginning with the escape from the convent, to the various duels, murders, romantic escapades and deceptions that occur in which remorse is not demonstrated by the narrator or the protagonist. Since apostrophe assumes that the autobiographer is speaking to a "higher authority" such as the Pope who has already approved the life of *la Monja Alférez*, remorse would not be necessary.

Therefore, the narrator is telling the story of one who has already been approved by this "higher authority" and is now attempting to present this tale in greater detail to a more judgmental, but ultimately less important, public. This stance could explain the perspective from which the narrator presents the protagonist's actions, without prejudice and in a direct manner. In order to begin the evaluation, we can understand the narrator to perceive her/himself to be misunderstood by society, but ultimately accepted by the "higher authority."

Another point to consider is the difficulty of writing an autobiography while still living (Fernández 30). This quandary is illustrated by a humorous example in the *Quijote* in which the character Ginés de Pasamonte is in the process of writing his autobiography (Cervantes 164-65). Don Quijote questions him about his work, and Ginés admits that he cannot finish the work because the story has not ended. The narrator, however, can focus

on the story of the protagonist as *la Monja Alférez* as her story has a beginning and an end. This confident narrator begins the narration with the birth of the protagonist when s/he also announces her presence with the first line, “Nací yo, D^a Catalina de Araujo” (33).

3.2a INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Such an involved narrator might be expected to express emotion about the actions of the protagonist; however, the narrator prefers a detached mode of narration. Emotion, although not directly articulated, is demonstrated in other ways in the text. The narrative denotes the narrator’s preference for a more aloof style of relating the action, which is evident from the first paragraph of the text:

Nací yo, D^a Catalina de Araujo, en la villa de San Sebastián, provincial de Guipúzcoa, en el año 1585: hija del Capitán Miguel de Araujo i de María Pérez de Galarraga i Arze, naturals i vecinos de dicha villa. Criáronme mis Padres en su casa con otros mis hermanos hasta tener 4 años.⁵ (33)

In this introduction to the text, the narrator is reporting where, when and to whom the child is born. This manner of narration is only personalized by the use of the first-person singular verb form, *nací*, and the subject pronoun, *yo*; as well as the object pronoun *me* attached to *criaron* and the possessive adjective, *mis*. This introduction does not engender any warm images of family for the reader; rather it entices the reader into the tale that follows. As this was a formulaic way of beginning a nun or saint’s autobiography, the narrator therefore chooses to report events, focusing more on actions than on contemplation.

⁵ This text is translated by Fitzmaurice-Kelly as: “I, Doña Catalina de Erauso, was born in the town of San Sebastián, in Guipúzcoa, in the year 1585, daughter of Captain Don Miguel de Erauso and Doña María Pérez de Gallarraga y Arce, natives and residents of the same town. My parents brought me up at home with my brothers and sisters till I was four years old” (2).

Considering that the narrator prefers to use the first-person singular form of the verb in the narration, the presence of another hand can be detected in the section headings and chapter titles which use the third-person singular to refer to the narrator. The first chapter of the text is titled “Su patria, padres, nacimiento, educación, fuga”⁶ (33). Other than the chapter titles and the introduction, the organization presented by this additional source does not affect the narration, but it does support the idea of multiple authors.

The argument for multiple authorship is bolstered as the inconsistencies with the historical record are evaluated in the narrator’s version of the birth narrative. One of these is the introduction of the protagonist as “Doña Catalina de Araujo.” This reference⁷ does not coincide with the preference of the historical Erauso or the historical records (131, 145). “Araujo” is, however, is used by the narrator in the *Vida* to refer to the protagonist and her family members. Additionally, there is no evidence that demonstrates the historical Erauso’s preference for “Doña” although it is used by many of the witnesses in the testimonies.⁸

These female signifiers recur in the text as the I/Erauso narrator continues, “En el de 1589 me entraron en el Convento de San Sebastián el Antiguo de dicha villa, que es de Monjas dominicas...”⁹(33-34). The lack of sentiment is a surprising omission, as it seems likely that this would be an emotional event for the parents and the young child being sent away from her family. Instead the narration skips this parting and even the

⁶ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as: “Her native place, parents, birth, education, escape and wanderings in different parts of Spain” (1).

⁷ Ferrer’s research revealed that there was an important “Erauso” family in San Sebastian, while there was no record of an “Araujo” family. Vallbona concurs, mentioning that the surname “Erauso” is listed in the *Nobiliario Español* as a family being of noble origin in the Basque region (32).

⁸ In the documents that are attributed to the historical Erauso included in Vallbona’s index, she uses the masculine title “Alférez” with her last name. She does not use Catalina / Catarina or doña. (145).

⁹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as: “In 1589 they placed me in the convent of San Sebastián el Antiguo in the said city, belonging to the Dominican nuns...” (2).

intervening years to continue with “donde me crié hasta tener quince años i entonces se trató de mi profesión”¹⁰ (34). Seen in the context of a nun’s autobiography, however, such omissions were common and were actually part of the formula of writing the life of a saint that established a “Christian” upbringing and allowed the writer to move on the more significant parts of her life.

In the same sentence the narrator makes a transition from the four-year-old protagonist left at the convent to a fifteen-year-old girl who was on the verge of taking her vows as a nun. This omission emphasizes that the *Vida* is not to be read as a typical autobiography, but rather as the life story of the male protagonist that begins shortly after her escape from the convent. This section seems to function principally as an affirmation of the protagonist’s childhood as a girl. It also suggests her motivations for preferring to live as a male as an adult.

In keeping with the formula, the narrator reveals very little about these years. There is no indication of the relationship that the protagonist had with her family, although later encounters with them in the *Vida* denote affection in the relationship. It is particularly telling that the narrator chose to include the reactions of the family members to the protagonist even when they did not realize with whom they were interacting. This inclusion suggests compassion on the part of the narrator for the protagonist who was not recognized by her own parents. These encounters later provide impetus for her to leave Spain and begin a new life in the Americas.

After beginning life as a male, the protagonist demonstrates a certain level of education. There is unmistakable evidence that she could read and write Latin and had

¹⁰ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translation reads: “...there [the convent] I was brought up till I was fifteen, and then the questions of my profession arose” (2).

ability with numbers, but an account for this education is never provided in the *Vida*.¹¹ Additionally, it is interesting to note that although the protagonist spent her formative years in a convent, neither the narrator nor the protagonist make religious references in the *Vida*. The only literary allusions are to characters from popular literature. The only time that religion is mentioned is in the context of the social institution of the Catholic Church.

The inconsistencies of the protagonist in this regard are remarkable: a novice nun who escapes to live as a male, a rogue seeking sanctuary after committing murders, a virgin soldier who confesses her sex to the Bishop to avoid execution, and finally a pilgrim who journeys to Rome to petition the Pope to wear men's clothes. The narrator presents a portrait of the protagonist as an individualistic character who does not desire to change the way her world works. She is, however, determined to participate in it. The narrator presents a protagonist who is more concerned with observing the Church's standards of social behavior than believing the religious doctrines. The narrator shares this practical application of values, and refrains from moralizing about the actions of the protagonist in the *Vida*.

A notable inclusion in the introduction is that the protagonist was female. This is accomplished by using terms in the text such as *Doña* and *Catalina* as well as *hija*, and *doncella*¹² (32). Obviously, this is an important aspect of the protagonist that the narrator wanted to emphasize, and its repetition draws attention. The gender change of the protagonist is an enticing plot point, but the narrator provides few direct answers about

¹¹ While the *Vida* is not specific about the education of the protagonist, many scholars, among them Myers, Braccio, Juárez, and Merrim, indicate that it is likely that the historical Erauso received a better-than-average education for a girl in the convent setting.

¹² *Doña* is a title of courtesy preceding a female's first name that implies virgin, *hija* means daughter, and *doncella* translates as damsel or maiden (Merriam-Webster).

her formative life that lead to this choice. Much later in the text, the protagonist states that her impending religious vows were the motivation for her escape from the convent, although in the initial scene this is minimized (110, 34).

Her drastic decision to run away from the convent and her subsequent gender change create tension in the narrative. The narrator strives to present a beating by an older nun as the motivation for her spontaneous flight, while also including details that insinuate that her escape was calculated.

3.2b TENSION IN THE NARRATIVE

Since the *Vida* is apocryphal, it must be assumed that the narrator is a collective entity; however, moments of tension in the text indicate contradictions within the narrating character. Life stories are “drawn from multiple, disparate, and discontinuous experiences” and as a result the narrators are “multiple identities constructed from and constituting those experiences” (S. Smith *Reading* 35). These tensions are demonstrated in the “gaps, inconsistencies, and boundaries breached within autobiographical narratives” (*Reading* 35). In the case of the narrator, the discrepancies in the work do not seem to be a conscious attempt to disrupt the narrative. One notable instance of variation concerns the transformation of the gender identity of the protagonist in which tension develops in the presentation of her motives.

One of these variances in style concerns the placement of events in the text. In the scene that precedes her flight from the convent, the protagonist is overpowered by an older nun in an altercation (34). This conflict, based on placement, serves as the motivation for the departure of the protagonist. The narrator describes the event with striking amount of detail.

One night at midnight, the protagonist went to the chapel for Matins. When she arrived, her aunt gave her the key to her chamber and asked the protagonist to bring her breviary (34-35). When the young protagonist did this, she saw the keys to the convent hanging in her aunt's room and left the door open, returned the book and the key to her aunt, and excused herself from the Mass by saying that she was not feeling well. Her aunt consents saying "Anda, acuéstate"¹³ and the protagonist left the church (35). She returned to her aunt's cell and took the keys from the wall, some other items and money. Next she opened doors until she found the exit. After reaching the street, she left behind an *escapulario*.¹⁴ The narrator uses this token to signify the break that the protagonist is making with the religious life.

In addition to the remarkable description in this passage,¹⁵ inconsistencies that reflect tension in the narrator can be noted. As the narration continues, the narrator indicates that the protagonist left the convent suddenly. However, there is little doubt that she had plotted to take advantage of any opportunity. It is likely that the protagonist

¹³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "Go and lie down!" (3).

¹⁴ This is a piece of material that contained a religious image and represented the protagonist's devotion to the religious life.

¹⁵ The passage reads: "Salí del coro, tomé una luz, fui a la celda de mi tía, tomé allí unas tixeras i hilo, i una aguja; tomé unos reales de a ocho que allí estaban, tomé las llaves del convento i salí; i fui abriendo puertas i emparexádos[las], i en la última que fue la de la calle, dexé mi escapulario, i salí a la calle, sin haverla visto, ni saber por dónde echar, ni adónde me ir. Tiré no sé por dónde, i fui a dar en un castañar que está fuera i cerca, a las espaldas del Convento, i acogíme allí; estuve tres días, trazando i acomodándome i cortando de vestir: corté i híceme de una basquiña de paño azul conque me hallava, unos calzones de un faldellín verde de perpetuan, que traía debaxo, una ropilla i polainas: el hábito me lo dexé por allí por no ver qué hacer de él. Cortéme el caballo i echélo por allí, i partí la tercera noche, i eché no sé por dónde, i fui colando caminos i pasando lugares por me alexar..." (35). Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads: "I left the choir, lit a lamp, went to my aunt's cell, and took from it scissors, some thread, and a needle; I took some *reales de á ocho* which were there. I took the convent keys, came out, and set to work opening and shutting the doors, and at the last one—which was the street-door—I left my scapular, and sallied forth into the street, without ever having seen it before, and not knowing which way to turn nor where to go. I cannot say which road I took, but I came upon a grove of chestnuts outside the town, close behind the convent, and took shelter there, and spent three days planning, fitting, and cutting out clothes. I cut and made myself a pair of breeches out of a blue cloth skirt that I had on, and out of a green linsey petticoat that I was wearing I made a doublet and gaiters. As I could not see my way to making anything out of my habit I left it there. I cut off my hair and threw it away, and the third night I started off I knew not where, scurrying over roads and skirting villages so as to get far away..." (3-4).

knew where the keys were, having grown up in the convent, and that she was waiting for an opportunity to leave the convent during a time in which she would not be missed for a few hours. In addition, from her aunt's room she takes scissors, thread and a needle as well as the money and the keys to the convent (35). If the protagonist had truly escaped on the spur of the moment, then it seems that the money and keys would be the most important things to take. The inclusion of the scissors, thread and needle imply that she had a clear plan of living as a male after leaving the convent by making herself male clothes and cutting her hair.

Another consideration that supports the idea of a planned escape is the age of the protagonist at that time, “Estando en el año de noviciado, ya cerca del fin” (34).¹⁶ This line provides further motivation for the protagonist's escape, and is repeated years later in a conversation with the Bishop after she has “revealed” her female sex. This time the protagonist is more explicit about the reason for her flight, she was, “estando para profesar”¹⁷ (110). She knew that she had very little time left before taking her vows and chose to implement her drastic plan. The date the protagonist escapes from the convent is given in the *Vida* as March 18, 1600, which is probably shortly after her fifteenth birthday.¹⁸ The protagonist has clearly linked the beginning of her adventurous life with the escape from the convent which was precipitated by the impending taking of vows rather than the altercation with the older nun.

¹⁶Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as: “When I was almost at the end of my year's novitiate...” (2).

¹⁷ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as she “was about to be professed” (114).

¹⁸ The *Vida* gives Erauso's birth year as 1585 (33), and according to Ferrer, the date of Erauso's baptism was February 10, although the year Ferrer listed was 1592 (152).

3.2c RELIABILITY OF THE NARRATOR

In this passage the reader senses that the narrator is keeping “something back” (Barry 225). As the narrator obscures the reason for the protagonist’s flight from the convent, concerns about the narrator’s reliability arise. This is an interesting omission on the narrator’s part, and one that is not wholly achieved. As a result, the narrator leaves enough information in the narration for it to be fairly obvious that pieces are missing. This ruse both reflects the narrator’s tension and creates additional tension in the narrative.

As a result of the stress in the narration, the narrator cannot speak as a unified entity. The narrator responds to the tension by supplementing the narrative with direct dialogue for the first time in the *Vida*. This dialogue seems to serve no function in the narrative itself, as the protagonist’s aunt merely consents to her leaving the Mass, saying “Anda, acuéstate”¹⁹ (35). The dramatized dialogue is another example of theatrical elements in the *Vida*, although here it is also included to lend authenticity to the narrative in a situation where the narrator is uncertain of how to proceed.

The narrator’s confusion over the protagonist’s motives for leaving the convent leads to conflicting justifications for her action. The narrator augments the idea that the protagonist left the convent on a whim by describing her lack of familiarity with the town beyond the convent’s walls, “i salí a la calle, sin haverla visto, ni saber por dónde echar, ni adónde me ir”²⁰ (35). This statement seems to support the idea that the protagonist had not planned this escape. This is the first of many escapes in the *Vida* and this pattern is one that is repeated in subsequent spontaneous flights. Each time, the protagonist lives

¹⁹ See note 13.

²⁰ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads: “and sallied forth into the street, without ever having seen it before, and not knowing which way to turn nor where to go” (3).

by her wits and acquires another post until she is forced to leave again. After this first flight, even though the protagonist has no idea of where to go, she clearly has a plan for what to do once she arrives. After leaving the convent, she manages to reach a small grove outside of the town where she undergoes her transformation into a male (35).

The narrator portrays the physical transformation of the protagonist in the same detached manner as the birth narrative, but with more description. The gender alteration of the protagonist follows an accepted literary pattern that describes such changes and attributes a great degree of importance to them (Perry “Convent” 397). The shedding of her *escapulario* and habit underline the physical and emotional significance of leaving behind the life of the convent. The narrator is using a symbolic presentation of the protagonist’s gender change to emphasize the transformative nature of the act.

According to Perry, “She thus marked and clothed her own body, rebelling at the contours that cultural expectations imposed on her body and self as female, and scorning the long hair and developing breasts that so often symbolized the developing sexuality and availability of unmarried girls in this period” (“Convent” 397). The protagonist voluntarily undergoes these changes in order to successfully achieve the physical representation of the male gender.

In the *Vida*, these alterations are reported in a methodical manner. The narrator sets the stage for the change in an orchard near the convent. Here, the protagonist first remakes the clothes from those of a novice nun to those of a young man, fashioning pants, a shirt and a coat (35). Just as she sheds her habit and the *escapulario* because they cannot be remade into usable garments in her new life, she also discards the religious and social dictates that they represent.

After modifying her clothes, the protagonist cuts her hair, an important ritual as she remakes her life (Perry “Convent” 397). This last act, where she physically changes her body, confers a sense of finality to the change. While the changes in her appearance could be reversed, i.e. she could allow her hair to grow longer, or she could change her clothes, there were other changes made by the historical Erauso that were not as superficial.²¹ These purposeful, physical changes underline the seriousness of the protagonist’s decision. The tension in the narrative now abates as the reader has learned some of the answers to the questions about the escape.

3.2d LITERARY TYPES

After describing the physical transformation of the protagonist, the narrator marks her development as a male by applying a series of male literary archetypes. Her life story is presented in the frame of a “quest or adventure narrative” in which “a hero/heroine alienated from family or home or birthright sets forth on a mission to achieve elsewhere an integration of self that is impossible within constraints (political, sexual, emotional, economic) imposed in a repressive world and to return triumphant” (S. Smith *Reading* 70). This quest narrative is the overarching structure in which the narrator develops the male identity of the protagonist through the following models: the *pícaro*, the hero in the *capa y espada* plays and the *Don Juan* character.

Immediately after beginning her life as a male, the protagonist traveled around Spain in a manner analogous to a *pícaro*,²² a familiar prototype for the readers of the

²¹ A *testimonio* from Pedro de la Valle in the *Vida* records that the historical Erauso told him she used a poultice from a very young age to keep her breasts from growing. He reported that this poultice, while having the desired effect, caused her great pain. He also noted that she did not have breasts, although he thought that she looked more like a eunuch than a woman (128).

²² This popular character and genre featured an orphaned child who survived by his or her wits while serving a variety of cruel or indifferent masters, but were “likeable despite their defects” (Chandler 118-20).

Vida. The wit typical of the genre granted access to the protagonist, “[h]umor abounds, but it is only a step removed from tears, and what appears to be funny is tragic in a different light” (Chandler 119). A feeling of loss is notable in the early escapades in the *Vida* as the protagonist wanders, hungry and searching through the country, even as she accepts and leaves various positions. It continues until the protagonist encounters her mother and chooses a life of adventure in the text (38).

In the picaresque scenes in these early chapters, the protagonist reveals her cleverness while making choices that are often motivated by hunger. Another similarity that the protagonist shared with the *pícaro* protagonist is that each lived with a series of masters who taught the child crucial survival skills through their abusive or negligent behavior. The protagonist shows resourcefulness and learned to survive in spite of the treatment she received. Although the protagonist is older than the typical *pícaro*, she was equally inexperienced, especially as a male.

The protagonist’s first master in the text is a university professor who notes her ability to read Latin, and encourages her to continue studying (36). She rejects this advice, is beaten, and leaves. Her second master is a secretary of the King whose service she leaves after her father visits (36). In this encounter the narrator does not portray any overt emotion on the part of the protagonist, although there are moments of urgency and confusion after she leaves the secretary’s employment. Along with the faster pace of the narration, this sense of confusion is used by the narrator to signify the emotion of the protagonist, who gathers some money and leaves with no plan saying, “partimos a la

mañana, sin saberme yo qué hacer, ni adónde ir; sino dexarme llevar del viento como una pluma”²³ (37).

This series of masters represents the education of the *pícaro* in literature, but the use of this character in an autobiography also signifies the evolution of a protagonist²⁴ who is struggling with “antagonistic visions of life: submission to others versus autonomy; self-renunciation versus self-promotion; an *ancien régime* notion that bases personal worth and authority on birth and lineage versus a more modern vision that values experience and enterprise” (Fernández 32). This idea applied to the protagonist of the *Vida* heightens the importance of the *pícaro* comparison, and gives greater depth to the protagonist’s struggles. Throughout the *Vida, la Monja Alférez* resists submission, and uses the lineage that would have been hers if she were a male to fabricate the life that she wants through her endeavors.

After leaving the secretary and before she sets out to realize her future, she wanders around the Basque country. This picaresque journey in the text is a time of reflection for the protagonist. She settles for a short time, but then decides to return to her hometown of San Sebastian where she goes to hear a Mass in the same convent from which she escaped (38). In the chapel, the protagonist sees her mother across the room. Her mother does not recognize her, so she stays for the service. She is asked by several nuns join them in the choir, but she refuses and slips away (39).

In this series of actions the protagonist severs herself from her life in Spain. As a result of that break, she is able to embrace the next stage of her life. These short, but

²³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as: “We started at daybreak, I not knowing what to do nor where to go, but letting myself be carried along like a feather by the wind” (6-7).

²⁴ Fernández is describing the autobiographical “I” in the work of Diego de Torres Villarroel entitled *Visiones y visitas de Torres con d. Francisco de Quevedo por la corte* (32).

compelling scenes in the *Vida* exemplify the transformation of the protagonist from child to adult. The narrator vividly illustrates this transition using emotion and simple descriptions. Comparing the escape from the convent with clear preparation to her flight after she sees her father where she takes her things and leaves with no plan at all, the reaction of the protagonist in the second case seems to be an emotional one (37). In contrast to her spontaneous reaction after seeing her father, in the encounter with her mother she reacts stoically and slips away (38). Almost immediately, she boards a ship to the Americas (39). These are important scenes for the narrator to include because they provide the protagonist an opportunity to make peace with her previous life. In a sense, this can be considered the birth of *la Monja Alférez* since her next choice brings her to the Americas. The narrator's choice to present the young protagonist as a *pícaro* character allows the reader to relate to a young person who is trying to survive using any resources available and must, at times, make socially unacceptable choices.

As the protagonist gains confidence in her male identity the *pícaro* comparison gives way to the addition of elements from the *capa y espada*²⁵ dramas. These fast-paced scenes focus attention on the action. The common theme of honor in the *capa y espada* dramas appears in the *Vida* in an altercation between the protagonist and another character, Reyes, concerning a perceived insult (46). While at the theater in Paita the protagonist asks Reyes to move because she could not see around him. Reyes refuses and the protagonist takes offense and a feud ensues. After they duel, the protagonist leaves both Reyes and his companion lying on the street, and she is taken to jail.

²⁵ These cape and sword dramas were introduced in the 16th century in Spain, and were still popular in the time of the historical Erauso. They often focused on the theme of honor (lost, sought, restored etc.), and later added more complex themes as well (Chandler 44, 54-55).

Another example of the honor theme presented in the *capa y espada* style occurs near the end of the text. In Cuzco, while the protagonist is gambling *el nuevo Cid*²⁶ sits down next to her and takes some of her winnings²⁷ (101). The third time he tries, she sticks his hand to the table with her dagger. A fight ensues in which the bravery of the protagonist is demonstrated as she pursues *el Cid* and kills him even after she has been seriously injured (102-103). Her wounds lead to the first instance in which she “reveals” her sex believing that she was about to die (102).

The honor theme provides the context of the *capa y espada* play, in which the protagonist is the hero who values honor. This is a clever way to ascribe heroic, masculine characteristics to the protagonist that cast her as a good model of a Spanish male. While honor duels are typical of *capa y espada* dramas, it should be mentioned that they also often included lovers’ intrigues. The romantic scenes in the *Vida*, however, can be applied to the protagonist in a different manner.

Romantic episodes are used as a literary device in the *Vida* to emphasize the protagonist’s success at achieving the male standard of behavior. In these, the protagonist is compared to an iconic model for male behavior, *Don Juan*.²⁸ This might, at first, seem a risky comparison since *Don Juan* was at the time often considered a hedonist whose actions bring about his demise. In the *Vida*, the narrator focuses the

²⁶ *El Cid Campeador* is a national hero in Spain who embodies the male spirit of Castile: vigorous, brave, tender, faithful, just and of a consistent religious belief (Chandler 30-31). The “nuevo Cid” in the *Vida* is described in Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation as “a dark, hairy man, of great height and truculent appearance” (100). His deeds are not reminiscent of the hero’s behavior.

²⁷ In Note 1 from Chapter XVIII that follows Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation, he states that the events of this chapter seem to be apocryphal. He believes they were suggested from Pérez de Montalbán’s play, *La Monja Alférez* (303).

²⁸ At this time, *Don Juan* is the iconic, 17th Century figure of a man who is condemned for his life of seduction and deception. The first play dealing with the theme, *El Burlador de Sevilla*, was published in 1630 by Tirso de Molina (5 years after the first reported version of the *Vida*), but the character existed in folklore before he was written (Chandler 52).

outcome of the romantic scenes on the protagonist's well-honed ability to keep her identity secret.

A comic tone underpins these escapades as the protagonist deceives the women she seduces because the reader knows the protagonist's secret. In the case of the *Vida*, many of the affairs occur because another character wanted to take advantage of the protagonist. The pace of the narration is faster in these sequences as it reflects the thrill of the seduction based on deception rather than demonstrating affection felt by the protagonist for the women. These are direct links to the *Don Juan* character, a *burlador*, who often has sex with the women he seduces under false pretenses (Mujica 131).

A scene in the *Vida* that illustrates the *Don Juan* comparison finds the protagonist in the care of a woman who hopes that Erauso will manage her household and marry her daughter. The narrator says that the woman's daughter was unattractive and indicates a preference for "buenas caras"²⁹ (70), signaling that the protagonist has assimilated a male attitude towards women. It is difficult for a reader to consider this without thinking of her sex, however. The deception, in which the reader is implicit, is always at the foreground of these scenes as the protagonist attempts to escape before her sex is discovered.

It is the deception that the protagonist employs in the pursuit of these women that reminds the readers most strongly of *Don Juan*. One of the key differences between *Don Juan* and the protagonist is that she never consummates the relationships sexually. To do so would irrevocably reveal her gender identity, something the protagonist is unwilling to risk. Only when she is in imminent danger of being executed is she willing to admit the ruse. Even this admission is not final in the text, as she eventually brings her case to live

²⁹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as "pretty faces" (47).

as a man all the way to the Pope (122-23). The narrator's careful construction of the comparison between the two protagonists, *Don Juan* and Erauso, who spend much of their lives in disguise, is a valuable asset to the *Vida*. The comparison to a legendary figure allows the reader to understand and sympathize with the protagonist. As a male, the protagonist indulges in a rash, passionate, pleasure-seeking life of adventure in a manner similar to *Don Juan*. The strong male identity of the protagonist allows for this comparison to work.

One final literary archetype appears in the pages of the *Vida*, the valiant soldier. After the narrator aligns the male protagonist with the *pícaro*, the hero in the *capa y espada* plays and *Don Juan*, she now presents her as a soldier whose exploits in the service of the monarch are exemplary during the intense battles at Paicaví in Chile.³⁰ According to the narrator, the Spanish had prevailed in earlier conflicts with the indigenous people, however; they were not faring as well in the final confrontation, suffering the loss of many soldiers as well as captains (58-59). Additionally, an indigenous warrior had taken their flag. The protagonist and two others rode after it, but only the protagonist made it through the battle. She suffered grave wounds to both her legs as well as piercings from three arrows and a gash in her shoulder. Even though she was seriously injured, she killed the indigenous soldier carrying the flag, recaptured it and returned to her commander, "...apreté con mi caballo, atropellando, matando i hiriendo a infinidad"³¹ (58). This valiant act of self-sacrifice committed in order to safeguard the symbol of her nation gains her the title of *Alférez* (59).

³⁰ This battle probably occurred between 1604-1611. Her age was given as 19 years in Apendice N° 2, Documento N° 2: 7 de marzo de 1626 (31).

³¹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads: "and set spurs to my horse, trampling, killing, and wounding to no end..." (35).

The previous male archetypes, *pícaro*, hero in the *capa y espada* dramas, and *Don Juan* have all been phases in the development of the narrator that lead up to, and end with the ideal soldier, the *Alférez* who has rightfully earned her title. The narrator's sense of legitimacy is supported by the laudable actions of the protagonist in this scene. The reader sees the protagonist as an exciting character whose life story is retold through the fast-paced, dramatic and detailed account of the events. As the narrator develops a credible protagonist, the reader becomes more invested in the story.

3.3 THE NARRATOR'S CONFIGURATION OF OTHER CHARACTERS AND THE "REVELATION" OF ERAUSO'S SEX

The narrator takes great care to delineate the protagonist in the *Vida*. Other characters, however, are much more simply drawn because they are present only to aid the development of the protagonist. As such, only the protagonist shows growth, and these ancillary characters are primarily drawn as foils, some based on popular stereotypes. This was accomplished by applying a communal idea in which "[t]he premodern subject distinctly experiences the overpowering presence of normative values, which it describes in a language fully shared with the community" (Pavel 24). Some of these shared perceptions would have included literary types, folkloric ideals, and social constraints. The narrator was delving into this collective idea for the secondary characters and they therefore do not require much elaboration.

3.3a HONOR AND RESOLVE

In the first chapter of this dissertation several of these characters were considered. Rather than repeat that work here, I will consider how the narrator configured them to have maximum impact on the protagonist. The first character to be identified in the plot is Doña Catarina Alizi, the nun who beat the protagonist. The altercation with this

character sets two important precedents for the development of the protagonist: she refuses to accept an insult, and she makes an intentional choice as she leaves the convent. Her resentment toward the nun foreshadows the temperamental personality that she displays as a male, which often leads her into honor disputes. Additionally, the decision to escape the convent is one of her first. Until then, the protagonist has had little control over her life; as a child she was left at the convent with an aunt, and as a novice, she was expected to take her vows.

Often in the narration, Erauso's harsh response to insults and her hasty decision-making occur together. In the scene with the *catedrático*, Dr. Francisco de Zeralta, is one example (36). The protagonist is in the employ of the university professor where she stays for three months. He shows an interest in her after learning of her ability to read Latin and encourages her to continue her studies. When she refuses, he beats her and she decides to leave. The narrator indicates that the protagonist sees this as an affront to her honor, and refuses to accept it. This refusal also emphasizes the idea that she prefers adventure to study. She had recently escaped from the life in the convent, and the narrator highlights her unwillingness to return to a conscripted life.

Once the protagonist dedicates herself to the life of a male she has an outlet in which to dispute attacks of her honor. The ongoing conflict with Reyes presents the narrator with an ideal means to demonstrate this point. The narrator presents Reyes as conceited and antagonistic while the protagonist is courageous and forceful. In their first encounter in the *Vida*, Reyes taunts the protagonist who leaves angrily because she only has a dagger (46). The narrator emphasizes that she is not leaving the scene because of cowardice; rather that she plans to be better prepared for their next encounter.

The next day, she notices Reyes pass her shop. She closes the store, takes her knife to the barber to be sharpened, puts on her sword and pursues Reyes. The narrator dramatizes the exchange between the two with direct dialogue. The protagonist confronts Reyes with “Esta es la cara que se corta”³² and slashes his face (46). She then engages his companion until she injures him as well. The protagonist is compelled to confront Reyes in order to recoup her honor. Unfortunately, the protagonist’s troubles with Reyes do not end after this incident.

Erauso’s employer proposes an unusual solution to the problem. He asks the protagonist to marry his lover, D^a Beatriz because Reyes was married to D^a Beatriz’s niece. Erauso refuses, is reassigned to a different store in Truxillo, and shortly thereafter has a final confrontation with Reyes who follows her with two friends. The only option for the protagonist is to escape to Lima.

The protagonist’s sense of honor and insult often gets her into trouble with authorities in the *Vida*. This was the case while she was a soldier stationed in Concepción where she went to a gambling hall with a fellow soldier (62-63). In the midst of their game, her companion accused her of lying so she ran him through with her sword. A melee ensued, and she was caught and questioned. At this point, Miguel enters and tells her in Basque to run for her life. She attacks the *Auditor General*, Francisco de Parraga who was holding her. Both the other ensign and the *Auditor General* die and the Governor, Alonso Gracia Romón has soldiers surround the church where she claims sanctuary (63). She is confined to the church for six months until the furor dies down (64).

³² Fitzmaurice-Kelly translation reads “I’ll show you whose face is going to be slashed!” (19).

Her quick response to insults is repeated in many situations in the *Vida*, and often end in murder. Although she is often caught and sentenced to die, there always seems to be a remarkable circumstance that grants her freedom. These encounters are reminiscent of popular dramas in which unreasonable adversaries pursue the hero. In order to restore her honor, the protagonist must defeat them. The narrator uses these episodes to establish the honorable nature of the male protagonist.

3.3b LOVE INTERESTS

The “respectable” protagonist maintains her honor even during the romantic episodes with other women. There is clear lesbian attraction in some of the scenes, but the element of deception and the lack of sexual contact minimize the scandalous nature of these episodes, which the narrator uses to underline the success of the protagonist’s male persona.

The first romantic episode involves D^a Beatriz de Cárdenas, who appears in the shop where the protagonist is working in Villa de Sana (on the coast of modern day Peru). Apparently, D^a Beatriz is allowed special privileges to charge purchases and when the protagonist questions her employer, Juan de Urquiza, he tells her that D^a Beatriz should be allowed to have anything she wants (46-47). D^a Beatriz next appears in the narrative after the protagonist’s initial encounter with Reyes. Here the narrator explains that D^a Beatriz is related to Reyes. Urquiza has suggested a marriage between his employee, the protagonist, and D^a Beatriz, whom we learn is his mistress. Such a union would have been convenient for the Urquiza who would have secured them both “...él mirava a tenernos seguros, a mí, para servicio, i a ella para gusto...”³³ (47). While the

³³Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “his aim was to keep both of us-me for business and her for pleasure” (20-21).

protagonist initially seems to consider this plan, as soon as D^a Beatriz makes sexual advances, she refuses to continue the ruse.

The narrator includes this scene for several reasons, the primary one of which is to demonstrate the dedication that the protagonist felt to her masculine lifestyle. While romance was not necessarily risky, in a marriage it would have been more difficult to maintain her secret.³⁴ Her refusal to continue with the marriage indicates that she was not willing to compromise her masculine identity. The narrator also uses this opportunity to reiterate that the protagonist does not submit to authoritative coercion. Urquisa's demand was not like the physical abuse she suffered at the hands of others, but it was exploitation. Finally, an arranged marriage would have amounted to reconciliation with Reyes and would have deprived her of the opportunity to restore her honor.

The character of D^a Beatriz is simply drawn, although there are enough details to make her interesting and multifaceted. She is first introduced as one who charges extravagant amounts of merchandise at Urquisa's shop. Later, when she is involved with the protagonist she becomes aggressive and demands that the protagonist have sex with her. Through this episode the narrator presents the protagonist as a person of integrity as she refuses to have sex with or marry D^a Beatriz. To further develop the protagonist, the narrator mixes honor elements from the *capa y espada* plays with the deception and the quick escape that is evocative of the Don Juan legend. The ironic interplay of this scene ultimately has a comic effect.

The narrator draws on collective ideas about villains and heroes to portray Reyes and the protagonist. Both D^a Beatriz and Urquisa act without regard to honor, and the

³⁴ There are documented cases in which female soldiers were able to successfully keep the secret of their sex within a marriage. Wheelwright mentions the case of Valerie Arkell-Smith who lived as Col. Victor Barker (11).

protagonist must protect her own honor at all costs. The narrator is craftily reminding the readers that while the protagonist has made an unconventional choice, this male persona is dedicated to upholding the ideals of honor.

The only physical contact between the protagonist and a woman occurs soon after the honor of the protagonist has been established and builds on her *Don Juan* image. After the last encounter with Reyes, the protagonist is again released and leaves for Lima (51). A few months later, however, the protagonist is discharged after being caught with the unmarried sister of her new employer's wife (51).

The narrator could have simply left a vague description in the text that would have conveyed her attraction to the young woman, but chooses to describe the exact circumstances in which the protagonist was found, “un día, estando en el estrando peinándome acostado en sus faldas i andándole en las piernas”³⁵ (51). The narrator is clearly drawing an erotic picture that involves physical contact, but the deception in the scene makes it humorous as well.

The *burla*³⁶ occurs in this scene as the *doncella hermana* does not know the sex of the protagonist to whom she is suggesting marriage. After being confronted by her employer, the protagonist is forced to leave. Although the tantalizing elements of this scene are distracting, what the narrator highlights is the protagonist's dedication to her male identity. This scene is an example of imitation of extreme male behavior, but even in this case, she chooses to protect her male identity, rather than pursue a romantic tryst.

³⁵ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “And one day, when I was in the parlour, combing my hair, lolling my head in her lap, and tickling her ankles...” (29). Velasco's more modern translation differs somewhat “And one day, when she and I were in the front parlor, and I had my head in the folds of her skirt and she was combing my hair while I ran my hand up and down between her legs...” (*Lieutenant* 57).

³⁶ *Burla* means trick (merriam-webster.com). The literary application in the *Don Juan* tales is a deception used to realize a sexual act (Mujica 131).

Although this is the only case of physical contact, there are other encounters with a woman included in the *Vida*, in which the protagonist is portrayed as a *burlador*. As a *burlador*, the protagonist is not trying to gain sexual favors; rather she is looking for economic or social gain. There are two instances that are placed next to each other in the text by the narrator, in which the protagonist attempts to take advantage of families that are trying to arrange her marriage.

In the first case in the text, an indigenous woman has taken an exhausted Erauso into her house after she was found lost in the wilderness (70). The protagonist feigns interest in running this woman's household and marrying her daughter, but the narrator makes it clear that this was never the protagonist's intention. The narrator speaks directly from the narrative to explain that the young woman was not her type, which was "muy contraria a mi gusto que fue siempre de buenas caras"³⁷ (70). It is somewhat surprising to discover that the narrator, who has been silent on this point previously, openly admits a preference for a particular type of woman. Even though the presentation of this scene differs somewhat from the others, the reactions of the protagonist remain the same. She escapes to safeguard her masculine identity.

The next episode in the text is actually occurring while the protagonist deceives the indigenous woman, and only heightens her comparison to a *burlador*. In this case, the protagonist accepts an engagement with the niece of the Cannon of the cathedral (70). The narrator makes particular mention of the gifts that she receives from her betrothed. The narrator portrays the protagonist as someone who enjoys the attention; but also as someone who willingly leaves both women when her secret is threatened. The inclusion

³⁷ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "the very opposite of my taste which has always been for pretty faces" (47).

of these encounters by the narrator suggests that their provocative presence draws the reader into the story. At the same time they reinforce the protagonist's masculine persona and titillate the reader with the deception and gender confusion that is going on without the knowledge of the women.

3.3c FAMILY

The characters of Erauso's family members assist in the development of the protagonist as well as prompt her to maintain her masculine identity. Some of these encounters have been explored previously; therefore this section will focus on the narrator's presentation of these characters and their impact on the protagonist.

The first family members that the protagonist as a male meets are her mother and her father. These encounters provide her with the impetus to make a final break with her life in Spain and begin a new life in the Americas. In the case of her father, the narrator presents a situation in which the protagonist had direct contact with him although she does not speak to him in the text (37). Her father speaks to another page as he waits to see her employer about his missing daughter, and ironically, does not notice her specifically even though they are alone together for a few moments. The meeting motivates the protagonist to leave this comfortable employment and sneak away without preparation (37). The protagonist clearly feels confusion that his father does not recognize him and this leads to a period of aimless wandering and the protagonist's first incarceration for throwing a rock at a boy and injuring him (38). The narrator does not express emotion, but the hurried and spontaneous flight indicates that the protagonist was unsettled.

The scene in the *Vida* in which the protagonist sees her mother results in a similar sense of anxiety. Although there is no direct interaction with her mother, the protagonist also leaves this situation quickly after the Mass is over (38). She is even willing to resort to deceit in order to slip away from the curious nuns. The narrator insinuates that the protagonist is unable to depend upon her own wiles to escape and instead she pretends that she cannot understand their requests.

The placement of both of these scenes in such close proximity to each other in the text by the narrator reinforces their importance. Additionally, their placement shortly before the protagonist leaves Spain allows them to function as a farewell to both Spain and her life as a female. It is appropriate that the protagonist has an opportunity for closure before she departs for a new existence.

The narrator reveals more of the protagonist's emotion during her encounters with her brother, Miguel. She is in the Americas for some time before she finds Miguel; therefore, when she encounters him she is more fearful of exposure than pleased to see a family member. The narrator devotes a good deal of space in the narrative to the relationship that grows between the protagonist and her brother, although there is always tension present. The deception in these scenes does not seem comical as it does in the scenes of seduction.

The narrator includes the protagonist's betrayal of Miguel to imply that this relationship could not continue. When Miguel is mortally wounded in a duel in which both he and the protagonist were seconds, the action reported by the narrator leaves little room for emotion. The narrator describes the protagonist as "quedé antónito",³⁸ however,

³⁸ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "I stood there thunderstruck" (41).

when she hears that the fallen man is Miguel (65). This shock is followed by an unusual expression of emotion on the part of the narrator.

After Miguel's death, the protagonist watches his burial from the choir of the church. The narrator expresses the emotions of the protagonist as she watched her brother's burial with what is described as "sabe Dios con qué dolor"³⁹ (65). In an uncharacteristic state of repose, the protagonist spends eight months waiting while Miguel's death is resolved before leaving. The death of Miguel leaves the protagonist in a state of confusion, similar to her reaction to her father.

During this period of mourning, the narrator expresses more emotion than in any other single situation. Characteristically, the protagonist shows very little reaction, however the narrator's homodiegetic perspective provides emotional and temporal distance between the event and its retelling. As the narrator recounts the loss of Miguel, s/he is able to express in words emotion that the protagonist cannot. The protagonist primarily demonstrates emotion through actions that reflect a confused or introspective perception.

3.3d THE PROTAGONIST "REVEALS" HER SEX

The development of the protagonist's male persona that occurs through her encounters with her family comes to an abrupt end when, in two instances, she chooses to "reveal" her sex. Toward the end of the *Vida*, situations arise that threaten both the protagonist's identity and life. The protagonist fears the injuries she suffers from her encounter with *el nuevo Cid* are fatal and decides to "reveal" her sex to Fray Luis Ferrer of Valencia during her confession (101-103). However, she recovers after a four-month

³⁹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as "God knows with what grief!" (42).

period of convalescence, and leaves Cuzco in order to avoid another confrontation with the friends of *el Nuevo Cid*.

In this case there were no repercussions for either killing *el Cid* or for living as a man. The narrator even states that the protagonist received provisions and money from priests and government officials who appointed fellow Basques as her traveling companions to accompany her to Guamanga (103). The narrator indicates that those who protected, nursed and aided the protagonist were not concerned about her confession.

The next time the protagonist “reveals” her sex as female there is a different outcome. After a commotion in front of the Bishop’s home in which the authorities try to arrest her, the Bishop steps outside, convinces her to relinquish her weapons and accept his protection (109-10). Inside his house she is fed, and kept in a locked bedroom (110). The next morning when she speaks with the Bishop, he advises her to reject the dangerous lifestyle that left her in danger of damnation (110). His kindness and his admonitions affect Erauso and she makes a full confession, including “revealing” that she is a woman (110).

In this unusual scene, the narrator reproduces the protagonist’s statement to the Bishop. It is not an emotional plea but a recounting of past actions, “trahiné, maté, herí, malee, corretee, hasta venir a parar en lo presente i a los pies de Su Señoría Iustrísima”⁴⁰ (110). It is significant that this is the longest speech attributed to the mostly silent protagonist in the *Vida*. After the Bishop listened to the protagonist for nearly three

⁴⁰ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “took to roving, slew, wounded, embezzled, and roamed about till the present moment, when I placed myself at the feet of your most illustrious Lordship” (114-15).

hours, according to the narrator he was left “sin hablar i llorando [a] lágrima viva”⁴¹ (111).

Erauso remains in the house for another day until the Bishop admits to doubting her story. At this point, the protagonist volunteers to be inspected by two female servants to prove the story. The two women avow that she is both female and a virgin. Their inspection convinces the Bishop of the veracity of the protagonist’s story (112).

The narrator marks the protagonist’s change in gender behavior with a change in narration. While the protagonist is escaping, dueling, killing and deceiving the narrative is brisk and action oriented. After the protagonist “reveals” her female sex, the narrative becomes much slower and takes on a confessional tone. At the core of this scene, however, the narrator focuses on the reason the protagonist chose to reveal her secret. She was in mortal danger at that moment in the narration because if the officials had arrested her, she could have been executed for the murder of *el Nuevo Cid*.

Since the Bishop shows her kindness and consideration, the protagonist decides to make a full confession to him. This compassion, in turn, grants the protagonist the opportunity to choose to divulge her sex to him which has the practical benefit of saving her from execution. The narrator presents the confession in a direct, tranquil manner. The narrator reports that after talking to the Bishop, the protagonist “procurándome socegar i reducir a quietarme, i arrodillarme a Dios, que yo me puse tamañito, i descúbrome viéndolo tan santo varón i pareciendo estar yo en la presencia de Dios”⁴² (110).

⁴¹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “he still sat speechless, shedding scalding tears” (115).

⁴² Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “And this discourse made me feel very small; and seeing that he was such a saintly man, and feeling as though I was in the presence of God, I revealed myself” (114).

The moment of “revelation” that the narrator crafts here is a meek confession made because the protagonist felt remorse for her actions. This is in stark contrast to the situation in the *Vida* in which she is in mortal danger. In the narration, the *Corregidor* gives the order to kill her shortly before the Bishop intervenes. After the Bishop has taken the protagonist into his house to protect her, the *Corregidor* continues to argue with the Bishop over his decision. Although the *Vida* presents the protagonist’s confession as voluntary, there is little doubt that her primary motive for “revealing” her sex was to avoid execution. The obvious necessity of the confession, however, is minimized so that the narrator can emphasize that the protagonist chose to confess because the Bishop is benevolent.

Although the narrator emphasizes an interpretation of the scene that differs from the circumstances, there is no tension in the narrative. In this case, the writing subject uses the narrator to rework the situation in order to align it with the primary characteristic of the protagonist that is developed in the narrative, her capacity to control her life. It is no accident that the protagonist is in charge of both her transformation into a male and her “revelation.” The narrator presents her as a strong, capable character who chooses the path of her life. She is not one who merely reacts to circumstances as they arise; she manipulates the situation in order to assure the outcome she desires.

3.4 MESSAGES

The writing subject uses the narrator to direct the life story of the protagonist, and in fulfilling this role, the narrator presents a series of messages about the protagonist as well as about her/himself. The narrator presents the protagonist as an individual who took action and was the only one responsible for her life and choices. From an early age,

the protagonist is described as self-assured and assertive. Even in the moments in which the protagonist struggles with uncertainty, she is still in motion, wandering or searching. This portrayal of the protagonist reflects what the narrator believes to be important about the protagonist, as well as what the narrator believes that the reading public wants to know about the protagonist.

In the retelling, however, the protagonist reveals information about herself as well. She exposes her doubts and conflicts through moments of tension in the text that reflect the collective narrator as well as the multiple authors who had a hand in the creation of the multiple narrators. The narrator is usually efficient, moving the action along at a fast pace. S/he slows the narration in moments that require a more contemplative mood, or in order to focus attention on a scene. Although the narrator presents the protagonist as unified, it is clear that the conflict within the narrator reflects a conflicted protagonist. The silence that pervades much of the portrayal of the protagonist is broken in several key scenes which give voice to the conflict within both characters.

CHAPTER 4 CHARACTERIZING THE WRITING SUBJECT

The writing subject is an enigmatic entity in an autobiography, one that exists without being directly heard. While this identity bears much of the responsibility for the choices made in the narration, it is never palpably manifested in the text. Outside of the text, the author is a definite individual; yet even this clear identity is a separate being from the writing subject who constructs the text. The author, outside of the text, is creating a self-portrait, which in itself is a challenging and incomplete act; the writing subject in the text is the essence of this external author plus the essences of all editors and copyists identified and unidentified, who altered the text.

This process is “alternately reductive and expansive; it imparts to a single picture the force of universal implications” (Howarth 364). Creating a protagonist to reenact the life story of an individual reduces an entire life to the confines of a book while the literary creation of such a character expands the limits of the time and space, in addition to expounding her or his personality traits. The work of this chapter is to identify the writing subject in the *Vida*, even though in the text it is “always just around the corner, never quite done justice. It will not stand still” (Fernández 91).

4.1 CONSTRUCTING THE WRITING SUBJECT

In order to begin evaluating the writing subject, it is important to establish a context for the term. The writing subject is “the sum of sensations, or the ‘consciousness,’ by which and against which the external world can be posited” (P. Smith xxvii). The writing subject is in part a counterpart to the historical Erauso and the protagonist because both experience and interact with the world. The writing subject provides the consciousness through which the narration of the narrator and the actions of

the protagonist are created. This “complex but nonetheless unified” writing subject “is the bearer of consciousness that will interact with whatever the world is taken to consist in” (P. Smith xxvii). Although multiple authorship must be taken into account in the evaluation of the fractured writing subject, in the text this writing subject is still considered a unified and singular entity.

The external world with which the protagonist interacts in the text is the setting that the narrator creates. This setting is historically similar to the one in which the historical Erauso existed, but it is important to bear in mind that this world is manipulated by the writing subject in a way that was never possible for the historical Erauso. The passage of time can be speeded up or slowed down depending on the tempo of the narration, likewise distances can be covered in a short time or over an extended period, even the setting can be altered from the actual landscape in order to suit the aims of the writing subject. These objectives can be overt or they can be unconscious, which allows for a multiplicity of unintended changes considering the multiple authorship of the text.

The scenes in the text reveal various characteristics of the writing subject. The pace at which the events are related can emphasize the importance of the action to the narrator or it can highlight a point about the character of the protagonist that the writing subject wants to emphasize. Moments of tension and conflict in the text are reflective of splits in the narrator as well as in the writing subject of the *Vida*.

4.1a MULTIPLICITY OF SUBJECT POSITIONS

The moments of tension in the *Vida* suggest the multiplicity of the writing subject. Multiplicity, however, is a characteristic of any writing subject. Barthes’ image of a

photograph¹ illustrates this point well (276-77). A photographic image of an individual compared with the living subject of the photograph presents very different impressions (P. Smith 107). It is difficult to reconcile the shifting, movable individual with the static photograph that displays only a single, unchanging image; the comparison “very well illustrates the tensions between the ideological demand that we be one cerned ‘subject’ and the actual experience of a subjective history which consists in a mobility, an unfixed repertoire of many subject-positions” (P. Smith 107).

A changing, mobile “I” writing subject cannot fully encapsulate a life that was not static at the moment of the writing of an autobiography (Levisi 230). It is like the attempt to reconcile a living person with a stationary photograph, or the attempt to recreate the life of that same person that occurred many years in the past. The writing subject is taking on a task that cannot be truthfully recreated.

The subject “operates by means of a multiplicity of demands for differing and various subject-positions. These subject-positions cannot neatly overlap and produce the cerned ‘subject’ that would be the ideal citizen, but leave gaps and contradictions which help constitute the subject/individual’s history and which are indefeasibly part of it” (P. Smith 108). By allowing for the mobility of the writing subject in the *Vida*, we permit the disparities that are left in the text to tell us information we otherwise cannot know.

In other words, conflicts are to be expected within a writing subject. As both ambiguity and inconsistency are such core parts of the human experience, it is reasonable to expect the same vacillation in an autobiography. Through gender oscillation, the writing subject exposes one of the most important inconsistencies in the protagonist. In the case of *la Monja Alférez*, the reader is already familiar with the historical person, if

¹ This passage is translated by Paul Smith (107).

only because of the notoriety surrounding the case. This familiarity places particular demands on the writing subject to present the protagonist in a manner that either dispels these ideas or embraces them.

In the *Vida*, the writing subject embraces the choices of the protagonist. This is a very significant difference between the writing subject in this autobiography and the writing subjects in other autobiographies that are attributed to women. In the *Vida*, the writing subject does not express the need to apologize either for writing this story or for the choices that were made. Rather, the writing subject justifies the need to write this story and celebrate the life story of the protagonist.

4.1b INTERACTION WITH THE EXTERNAL WORLD

As the writing subject develops the protagonist through the narrator s/he “enters a dialectic with the world as either its product or its source, or both” (P. Smith xxvii). An interpretation of the term “dialectic,” read as an exchange of ideas, is valid because the writing subject interacts with the external components of the setting in a text (Merriam-Webster). The readers understand the events as they unfold in the narrative, through the eyes of the narrator and the reactions of the protagonist both of whom are guided by the writing subject.

Another reading, however, of “dialectic” includes the Hegelian process of change in which a “concept or its realization passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite” and includes the three-fold process: “thesis, antithesis, synthesis” (Merriam-Webster). This application of the term has interesting implications for the writing subject who embodies contradictory identities.

The idea of “becoming” applies to the realization of the writing subject through the creation of the protagonist and the narrator. While the act of writing divides the writing subject (Fernández 91), it also is her/his fulfillment (P. Smith xxvii). The writing subject as the “source” simultaneously creates the textual writing subject entity and divides her/his literary self from her/his physical self at which point s/he becomes a “product” of her/his created world (P. Smith xxvii). The influence and intent of the writing subject can be seen through the evolution of the protagonist and the narrator.

In autobiography, the recreation of oneself as other characters normally comes from an individual who has “seen him/herself as the whole and coherent human being who underwrites, subscribes to the possibility of a knowledge about the self” (P. Smith 104). Such a writing subject uses language as “little more than a vehicle capable of carrying a reflective knowledge” (P. Smith 104). The reader of an autobiography expects a unified writing subject “which is guaranteed by the writing signature, by the name which is attached to the text” (P. Smith 104). Such an expectation requires that the reader submit to the “fiction” that the writing subject is unified. This concept then becomes “legalized” or legitimate as it is expressed through writing (P. Smith 104).

In the *Vida*, if the reader accepts that the life story has been written by the same individual who lived the events, difficulties arise. As the writing subject ostensibly begins to write about her/himself, other identities emerge in the pages of the work to become the narrator and the protagonist. The work of the writing subject becomes to manipulate these different entities in order to tell a unified story. In the case of the *Vida*, other authors and editors contribute to the writing subject and consequently alter the protagonist and writing subject.

4.1c PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE

As the writing subject begins to tell the adventures of *la Monja Alférez*, s/he trades in the flawed vehicle of language. Fluctuations in language, such as gender signifiers, keep the reader off balance as well as emphasize the divisions in the writing subject. Language, while “theoretically infinite,” also requires boundaries. Those restrictions can be circumvented by changing the language used to refer to the subject (P. Smith 110).

As the writing subject writes, s/he accesses “not only to the symbolic-the system of signs used to keep us in place-but also to the imaginary where we seek the reflection of our plenitude,” indicating that language is both the medium used to control the writer and the means that can be used by the writing subject to control the narrator and protagonist (P. Smith 110). This contradiction reflects the dilemma of all writing subjects, one that is compounded in the *Vida*. Language confines the writing subject’s ability to describe the protagonist and the narrator in the text because of its’ predetermined nature, in addition to the social expectations and connotations that it represents as it is touched by “[t]he law of the father” (P. Smith 113).

4.1d DIVIDED WRITING SUBJECT

While the writing subject in the *Vida* is read as a single entity, it is still a split consciousness that presents messages to the reader (P. Smith xxx). It is also the driving force behind the narration, organization and focus of the text (Fernández 91). The text must be examined because it is here that the writing subject simultaneously divulges itself and obscures itself. A poststructuralist view of the writing subject accepts that “[w]e are accustomed to keeping the medium (language) separate from the object of

representation (life)” (Fernández 91). The task of the autobiographer is “to express one medium, “being,” in another medium, language” (Fernández 91).

The writing subject in the *Vida* is split by the need to express her/his experience in writing. This divided subject, split by language, can have an infinite number of divisions but remain unified biologically in a single body² (Huang). The language used by the writing subject is illuminating, even when s/he does not have full control over it. As the writing subject loses control of the fractured semiotic codes, there is a rupture with “a symbolic code which can no longer ‘hold’ its (speaking) subjects” (Kristeva 79).

At the moments at which these fractures occur, the writing subject is breaking through the artificial constructs of language and is able to emerge in a more fully realized form. As the written expression can no longer contain the writing subject, s/he again finds her/himself in the realm of “marginality, dissidence, and subversion” (Abraham). These moments when the marginalized writing subject ruptures the text can be contextualized in the premodern idea of autobiography.

4.2 WRITING SUBJECTS IN PREMODERN AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Placing the *Vida* in the context of premodern autobiography³ allows for an expanded definition of reliability and candor. The standard for truthfulness that is expected from a modern autobiographical writing subject cannot be applied to a premodern autobiographical writing subject as “the boundaries between the literary and the extraliterary are deliberately blurred by creative writers posing as historiographers, thus producing shifting but fertile ground for narratologists” (Hoesterey 8). As a genre,

² Huang reads Kristeva’s work to indicate that this unified biological entity is “itself based on division.”

³ Premodern autobiographies are those produced before 1850 (Molloy 1).

premodern autobiography, and its writing subject, will abide by a different set of principles than modern autobiography.

One of these precepts is the communal nature of the writing subject in premodern autobiographies. The premodern writing subject was willing “to espouse the common moral values even when its own behavior contradicted them. For a long time, self-delusion was not assumed to be a pervasive feature of all discourse...” (Pavel 22). Intentional duplicity, however, on the part of the writing subject or narrator was believed to be something that could not be concealed indefinitely and would eventually be discovered (Pavel 22). When “duplicity, irony and self-deception” were employed it was always in an obvious and even humorous manner (Pavel 22).

Since there was typically no buffoon character⁴ in the autobiographies to represent observable deceit, there was a general assumption of reliability in the presentation. Both the reader and the writing subject of a premodern autobiography accepted as true what a writing subject believed to be authentic. Thus, the writing subject’s intent becomes the measure of veracity in the text (Deck 244). This practice allows inaccuracies to become part of the reading of a pre-modern autobiography because the writing subject’s intentions were honest. Additionally, it allows for the divided writing subject to manifest itself in the text without jeopardizing the legitimacy of the account. Although the *Vida* is studied from a modern viewpoint today and viewed as literature, it is essential to remember that it does take the form of an autobiography that was read with different expectations at different times over the centuries.

⁴ The *gracioso* was a common figure in 16th and 17th-century Spanish dramas. This comic character was often a servant who usually parodied “his master on a lower level” (Chandler 49).

4.2a THE USE OF YO IN THE NARRATIVE

Another cultural expectation of an autobiography is the use of the first-person singular subject pronoun, *yo*. In Spain and Latin America this approach to writing is called *yoísmo*,⁵ and it has a particular connotation there. This concept is so strong, in fact, that many autobiographers shy away from the self-serving “I” (Molloy 5). In the premodern autobiographies the writing subjects prefer to make their “I”s representative “of a country, of a social group, of a sex” that separates them from the individualistic and self-absorbed “I” that would otherwise inhabit the narration (Molloy 3).

The writing subject in the *Vida* could apply this representative tendency to the presentation of the male soldier persona of the protagonist. If the writing subject was not merely writing the story of Erauso’s soldier persona, but universally the story of soldiers, then the behavior of the protagonist as a soldier can be considered representative of that group. It is demonstrated in the accounts in the *Vida* that the protagonist was an exemplary soldier; one is much more in line with the standard for male behavior than female behavior.

Additionally, the use of *yo* in narrative does not seem egocentric. The writing subject uses the narrator to embrace the *yo* in the text as a means of authenticating an existence that began as a fabrication, but became a life story. Another benefit of using *yo* in the text is that it does not require the problematic gender reference. Using the *yo*, the writing subject is free to be a fully realized entity that is not limited to the male/female dichotomy.

⁵ Molloy calls this concept “I-ism” (5).

4.2b FEMALES IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The writing subject in the *Vida* is never fully liberated from the male/female split and employs Sidonie Smith's many-layered position of "double-voicedness" in order to connect with the readers as well as maintain her/his own sense of the story that s/he is telling (*Poetics* 50). In a life story, the autobiographer is attempting to explain, justify or even demonstrate the worth of the telling (Molloy 4). The situation of the writing subject in the *Vida* is complex because the autobiographical genre is almost exclusively reserved for males and a writing subject telling the life story of a female in a soldier's autobiography would go against social expectations. Additionally, the genre carried a stigma for Spanish writers that associated it with extreme self-interest (Molloy 4).

In the case of the writing subject in the *Vida*, this is not an autobiography about an exemplary female life; rather, this is the story of a transvestite nun soldier. The multiple voices of the writing subject rapidly gain additional dimensions as all the various entities for whom the writing subject speaks come to light. This marginality increases the female portion of the collective writing subject's "sets of stories, all nonetheless written about her rather than by her" (S. Smith *Reading* 51). The choice to vary from feminine to masculine adjectives is one attempt made by the writing subject to encompass and convey to the readers the complex identity of the protagonist.

The writing subject uses the narrator and the protagonist with their varying personas to direct the reader's attention, to relate to the reader and to express emotions that attempt to bring the reader closer to the protagonist, who develops her identity in the pages of this text. Sidonie Smith's ideas about a woman writing in the genre of autobiography affect the female portion of the collective writing subject as she asserts

that a woman writing in the autobiographical genre follows the path of her father (*Poetics* 55). In doing so she severs her connection with her mother. The result of the separation of the writing subject from the path of the mother is an artificial or “man-made” stance of the writing subject that is in line with the male-dominated society. Additionally, this position “perpetuates the political, social, and textual disempowerment of mothers and daughters” (*Poetics* 53). From this perspective, the autobiographical genre is ideal for the female portion of the collective writing subject of the *Vida* because it requires that the female authors follow the standards for a male. The use of this genre generates doubt about the gender of the author, therefore it seems a reasonable place from which to narrate the tale of *la Monja Alférez*.

The process of writing such a multifaceted character as the protagonist requires a complicated text. Some of this complexity is played out during the dramatized scenes in the *Vida*. These scenes stand out because it is doubtful that the writing subject can recall dialogues that occurred years earlier, and there is the further sense that these exchanges are contrived. An illustration of this point is the dialogue used in the *Vida* between the protagonist and Don Juan de Silva. Silva arrives at St. Francis’ Church in Concepción, Chile where the protagonist had taken sanctuary after she killed a fellow soldier who called her a liar while they were at a gambling hall (63-64). Silva asks the protagonist to be his second in a duel. At first the protagonist refuses and Silva states “Si os no parece, no sea. Yo me iré solo, que a otro no he yo de fiar mi lado”⁶ (64). These artificial inclusions are an attempt to minimize the female portion of the writing subject’s feelings of uncertainty about writing such dramatic and revealing episodes in a genre that may

⁶ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “If you don’t care to risk it, never mind; I shall go alone, for I’ll trust my defence to no one else” (40).

seem to the writing subject to be unresponsive to her needs as a female (*Poetics* 50). At particularly intense times in the narrative, times when this androcentric genre fails the writing subject's need, s/he resorts to dramatization in order to fill the resulting void.

4.2c LACK OF APOLOGY

If autobiography was insufficient to respond to the female portion of the collective writing subject's needs, then the advantages available to her/him in the genre must be considered. There were female writers who attempted to espouse their femaleness by emphasizing those characteristics that were believed to be inherently female such as "self-effacement and passivity" in order to remain secure in their subordinate position to males (*Poetics* 54). This type of female would not choose to write an autobiography because it would be inconsistent with her idea of herself.

The *Vida*, however, takes the form of soldier's autobiography, and shares certain characteristics with that genre. While soldiers writing their life stories felt a strong need to justify their stories by including a moral, they also express an awareness of their fundamental right to write (Levisi 237). The autobiographies of women, on the other hand, always contain an apology for trespassing on a genre which was seen as unseemly, even for men, but nonetheless, almost exclusively male domain (Levisi 237). One of the principal reasons the *Vida* does not include this apologetic stance, is that the writing subject does not perceive a need for contrition. For the writing subject, the autobiography is written as part of the full realization of this individual. That is reason and moral enough.

Conversely, there is a group of female autobiographers who are granted authority in the male realm, such as queens or the female religious. Ironically, they received their

power from the male establishment. The result is that “[m]ale voices, reaffirming the ideology of female subordination to male authority, haunt her text” (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). Additionally, there is a distinct position of apology both for writing an autobiography (which was also required of the male writers) as well as sense for female writers that they should not be writing in the autobiographical genre reserved almost exclusively for males (*Poetics* 55).

The male lifestyle of the historical Erauso, however, had already been sanctioned by males by the time the *Vida* was published. The Spanish crown approved her petition for a pension, the Pope invited her for an audience and fellow soldiers wrote *testimonios* about her military service. This offered to the writing subject the advantage of prior approval from the male power structure and could additionally account for the lack of apologetic references that often permeate autobiographies written by women. It could also speak to the writing subject’s identification with the male self that would not have had to struggle with the justification for writing. The prose is simple, but confident. The narrator portrays an uncertain and passive female protagonist; but when the protagonist is a male, he is decisive and active.

According to Sidonie Smith, even females who are exempt from the social standards and approved to write in the autobiographical genre often demonstrate a need to divide themselves further from the female ideal by assuring the readers “that she has successfully escaped the drag of the body, the contaminations of female sexuality. To the extent that she establishes her chastity within the text, to the extent that she reaffirms through the text, as well as in the text, her subordination to all fathers, she is allowed the voice of authority” (*Poetics* 55).

4.3 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR A FEMALE WRITING SUBJECT

Although, the writing subject in the *Vida* may be partly male as a result of the influence of editors, copyist and others, the writing subject is also considered partly female because of the autobiographical frame of the life story. Therefore, the writing subject of the *Vida* must confront social norms to be considered a legitimate autobiographer as s/he separates her/himself from her/his perceived femaleness. The female stereotypes stem from long-held cultural positions that “if women begin to speak and act from the same ground of cerned subjectivity and identity as men have traditionally enjoyed, a resistance is automatically effected in a sense” (P. Smith 137). As women have been marginalized as the other, they have been denied the opportunity to become fully realized subjects (P. Smith 137). Their identity stems from this state of otherness that validates that idea of self. This can be read as a complicity of both males and females that supports the system.

At the time in which the historical Erauso lived there were well-defined gender mores for behavior, lifestyle and responsibilities. In a society with clear gender roles it was particularly important for the writing subject to minimize the femaleness of *la Monja Alférez* by emphasizing her separation from female sexuality in order for the autobiography to be read as a serious text (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). Not only did the *Vida* have the potential to threaten commonly held beliefs about male and female behavior, as well as acceptable literary genres in which particular sexes could find expression; its impact could be considered a danger to males’ and females’ understandings of themselves. That the story was notorious and well known made it enticing, but in order

for this society not to label the protagonist as “monstrous,”⁷ the autobiography had to package her presentation carefully so as not to upset a delicate social and religious order that depended on certain mores (Merrim “Anomaly” 4).

4.3a IMPORTANCE OF VIRGINITY TO ESTABLISH LEGITIMACY

This has significant implications for understanding the emphasis placed on the protagonist’s virginity. In the text, the day after “revealing” the protagonist’s sex to the Bishop, the protagonist is eager to prove this story and consequently offers to subject herself to an inspection to ascertain that she is a female and a virgin (111). The writing subject is under some pressure to prove that the autobiography is an appropriate genre to tell the story of *la Monja Alférez* and establish authority, and the virginity of the protagonist is central to this claim.

Retelling this encounter provides the writing subject an opportunity to distance her/himself from what was considered inappropriate female sexual desire. The actions of the protagonist are assumed to be reflective of the writing subject because of the autobiographical nature of the account. In early modern times women were considered weak and unable to control their sexual appetites, often being blamed for seducing men (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). In the *Vida*, the writing subject needed to separate her/himself from this popular idea. The emphasis on the protagonist’s virginity helped achieve this separation. The unique position of the protagonist, as well as other virginal women “came not from the power to pollute and disorder, but from the power to renounce sexuality. Erauso knew that to get approval for the life he had made for himself, he should emphasize his virginity” (Perry “Convent” 406).

⁷ Sherry Velasco discusses this vision of “female homosexuality,” “monsters” and “masculine women” in Early Modern Spain (*Lieutenant* 13-43).

This ability to control the protagonist's desires distanced the writing subject from the "weakness" of her gender while remaining subordinate to the male authorities and the codes that mandated gender behavior. Both of these in combination allowed the writing subject to present this story from a position of authority. Even the protagonist's romances, included in some detail in the *Vida*, reflect the idea that the writing subject had control of his/her sexual appetites. In every case, no matter how much flirtation or physical contact occurs, the protagonist leaves before being forced to "reveal" her sex. This shows greater control and greater determination on the writing subject's part than was considered possible for a female. The fact that the protagonist can control sexual drives removes the writing subject further from the female stereotypes.

4.3b MALE/FEMALE SPLIT IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is interesting to note that this male/female split was not as clear and rigid as social conventions may suggest. Studies document 119 verifiable cases of female soldiers from different countries (Juárez "Mujer militar" 150). It is quite illuminating to realize that *la Monja Alférez*, while still an anomaly, was certainly not unique in this behavior. This was not a brief, localized phenomenon; rather the records evaluated in this study indicate that reports of female soldiers came from many different European and North American countries and occurred throughout the XVI and XVII centuries ("Mujer militar" 151). Fortunately, this occurrence gives *la Monja Alférez* a group of peers, some of whom also wrote autobiographies. This group provides a useful comparison in the following chapter.

4.4 GENDER OF THE PROTAGONIST: LANGUAGE

Through the autobiographical genre and the Spanish language, the writing subject chooses to tell this story through masculine and power paradigms. Unfortunately, the social structure did not allow for gender change outside of literary contexts. The genre of premodern autobiography, however, offers the writing subject some of the same flexibility as literature with the added benefit of an authoritative testimony. Even in the less rigid autobiography, however, there is still a psychological disconnect that occurs when the writing subject places her/his life story in this context.

The varying gender designations of the protagonist reflect this dilemma. With a creative application of language, the writing subject uses the static gender signifiers of Spanish to cast doubt about the reader's understanding of gender itself as it raises the question: is gender prescribed or described? This creative application of language allows the reader, the protagonist, and the narrator more room to accept the fully realized writing subject entity that is emerging through the writing of the text.

Specific episodes in the *Vida* demonstrate the writing subject's support of the protagonist as well as highlight the development of the writing subject. An example is the birth narrative that is often used to set a tone with readers as it "blends the individual and collective memory the most successfully" (Molloy 15). This memory, which belongs more to others than to the writing subject, is highly personal and is only available for public consumption "when the autobiographer introduces the necessary markings that will permit such a recognition" (Molloy 15). As the writing subject opens the *Vida* with this short passage, s/he reveals something about her/himself. It is also in this narrative that the narrator establishes the protagonist's gender as female. This defining of the

protagonist at birth as a female lays the groundwork for the later gender fluctuation in the text.

As soon as the protagonist leaves the convent, however, the narrator identifies him using masculine gender designations. In the text, when the protagonist arrives at the home of D. Juan de Ydíquez to work as a page, he is described using masculine adjectives and as being in the company of other males (37-38). This masculine description continues throughout the protagonist's life in the Americas until the protagonist "reveals" a female sex to the Bishop toward the end of the *Vida* (110). In the text, the protagonist's changing gender corresponds to his/her identity at different points in the narration and allows the protagonist to incorporate elements of both genders in one character.

4.4a FRACTURES AS GENDER VARIANCE

Almost every moment in the *Vida* involves a situation in which the narrator or protagonist is managing more than one gender. The stress on the already divided writing subject to present a unified identity for a protagonist that is rarely whole leads to vacillating gender signifiers. As a result, the writing subject demonstrates these fractures in the narrative. A writing subject attempts to "'rescue' the subject of the enunciation from its distance from the enounced" (P. Smith 105). Applying Smith's idea to the *Vida* would equate the narrator with the "enounced" and the protagonist with the "subject of the enunciation" (104). There is, however, one final subject, the writing subject, who is creating the image of the Erauso entity in the text. This writing subject in the *Vida* is working to free the narrator and the protagonist from the confines of expectation and writing in order to allow them to surpass these imposed limitations and more fully realize

the complicated Erauso character. An expectation from which the writing subject releases the narrator and protagonist is the prescribed gender behavior mandated by social roles at that time. Additionally, a limitation of writing is that the narrator and protagonist are expected to demonstrate more consistency than the historical Erauso.

After the protagonist and narrator are liberated from these limitations in part by the gender fluctuation of the protagonist, the writing subject is seen as “the “I” that would be prefigured or desired by the moral and ideological operation of trying to maintain the coherence (wholeness) and the propriety (the wholesomeness) of the ideological subject” (P. Smith 105). The third manifestation of the “I” is the “cerned”⁸ individual who is the ideological subject (P. Smith 105). Both of Smith’s definitions for “cerned” apply to the writing subject in the *Vida* who accepts the inheritance of gender roles at that time as well as understands the significance of writing the life story of a female in the male genre of autobiography. Additionally, the *Vida* provides the writing subject an arena in which s/he can immerse the life story of the protagonist in a genre that legitimizes the choices of the protagonist. In the discourse, the writing subject is not bound by the narration as are the protagonist and the narrator (P. Smith 105). Therefore, in the *Vida* the writing subject is a more fully realized entity who brings completeness to the work; rather than attempting to reconcile the narrator and the protagonist. The cerned writing subject has synthesized the other two.

4.4b REVELATIONS ABOUT THE PROTAGONIST: ACTION SEQUENCES

Although the writing subject is seen as a unified while marginal individual, there was still a great deal of popular interest in the gender-mixing, cross-dressing female idea

⁸ Paul Smith is referring to two seldom used English verbs “to cern” which he defines as “to accept a inheritance or patrimony” and “to cerne” which is “to encircle or to enclose” (xxx).

that was reflected in a number of dramas that include this theme (Juárez “Mujer militar” 150). Autobiographies also reflected dramatic themes, although the emphasis on action in autobiographies served to develop the protagonists (“Mujer militar” 152). This clearly relates to the protagonist who has little time to reflect in the *Vida* and is often embroiled in some action sequence. The writing subject must use the action scenes to reveal the protagonist’s characteristics to the reader.

An exemplary action scene in the *Vida* that sets up a revelation about the protagonist occurs after a trek through the rugged landscape in which she outlives her two Basque traveling companions who died of exhaustion and froze (67-71). Not merely the retelling of a harrowing event in the protagonist’s life, it is a test of her masculinity. Without proofs of this type, the female soldier would not believe herself to be masculine enough. This type of survival experience often appeared in the writings of female soldiers to prove that they had overcome what society perceived as the weaknesses of their sex (Juárez “Mujer militar” 155).

The writing subject had to justify the choice to write in the masculine genre of autobiography, and s/he had to validate her/his protagonist as a worthy soldier by proving her masculinity. The authentication of the protagonist would by extension sanction the writing subject. Many of the tasks that the writing subject must undertake are designed to present this autobiography as a legitimate text. A focus on action accomplishes two goals: it highlights the masculinity of the protagonist as well as bolsters the writing subject’s attempt to establish legitimacy.

The insightful means through which the writing subject describes the protagonist’s encounters with females is another example of revealing characteristics

through action passages. Although these scenes clearly have a lesbian component to them, such experiences with females can also be explained by social mores (“Mujer militar” 156). Since the society dictated that sexual relationships were solely between males and females, the writing subject tends to submerge these feeling of attraction in the masculine persona (“Mujer militar” 156). If the feelings become too overwhelming, and the protagonist’s masculine identity is threatened both by exposure and by desire, then escape in the form of *burla*, or deception, is the only option. This is a central characteristic of *Don Juan*, the *burlador* who seduces and leaves his female conquests.

One of the scenes in the *Vida* in which this seductive behavior is prominent is the one in which the protagonist attempts to seduce two women at the same time (69-70). She has been rescued by servants of a wealthy *mestiza* woman who runs a farm and wants the protagonist to marry her daughter as well as manage her property (70). While the protagonist is engaged to the farm woman’s daughter, a Cannon also wishes her to marry his niece. The protagonist gladly accepts the proposal from the Cannon and all the gifts from his niece (70). This scene serves more than one purpose because, in addition to the connection to *Don Juan*, it demonstrates the writing subject’s attempts to navigate the *mujer varonil* or the masculine woman identity (“Mujer militar” 156). The writing subject is attempting to present an entirely male façade for the protagonist by emphasizing what are perceived to be male values. The deception illustrated by this scene demonstrates that the protagonist is unable to cultivate honest relationships with either men or women. Without these normal relationships, the protagonist tends towards deception and extremes in these romantic relationships that cannot be consummated.

The writing subject is attempting to explain the protagonist's desire for sexual conquest in a socially understandable context by making the behavior masculine. Unfortunately for the protagonist and writing subject, the quest for perfect masculinity often leads to isolation ("Mujer militar" 156). The difficulty of navigating this double identity is reflected in the narration by moments of tension as the writing subject attempts to make examples of lesbian desire into games or socially acceptable behavior. The scene in the *Vida* in which the protagonist seduces the farmer's daughter and the niece of the Cannon is presented by the narrator as a game in which the rules of social interaction are used for the benefit of the protagonist (70). The narrator even ends the scene with the glib remark "Y hasta aquí llegava esto quando monté el cabo i me desaparecí; i no he sabido cómo se huvieron después la Negra i la Provisora"⁹ (71).

The next significant action event that reveals the writing subject is the scene in which Miguel is killed ("Mujer militar" 157). By returning to this event years later, the writing subject is expressing remorse and emotion about the death of Miguel. However, even though the protagonist does not know who she is killing, Juárez suggests that there is a subconscious desire in the writing subject to take Miguel's place in the family and in society ("Mujer militar" 157). It would signify that the protagonist has achieved the male status that lends legitimacy to her actions as a soldier. In order to gain male status in her family and therefore in society the protagonist must forcibly take it from Miguel. The protagonist is not seeking to gain familial status rather she is interested in the social position granted to males. In the text, the writing subject almost admits that the protagonist recognizes Miguel. After stabbing the other man (at this point unknown to

⁹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly's translation reads "The affair had got to this point when I doubled the Cape and vanished: and I have never heard what became of the [mistress of the farm] and the Vicarress-General" (49).

the protagonist), the protagonist asks his name because the voice sounds familiar (65). The protagonist is shocked to hear confirmation that the dying man is Miguel and the protagonist and the narrator express a degree of regret that is not often noted in the *Vida*, in which the narrator states “Yo quedé antónito”¹⁰ (65).

As the revelations about the death of Miguel indicate, the expression of emotion does not preclude a lack of ambition and desire. Women at this time were not considered to have a voice (Juárez “Mujer militar” 158). They were in a position in which they were “unrepresented and unrepresentable” (S. Smith *Poetics* 49). If the voice of a female was “unrepresentable” then in order to tell the story of a female protagonist, it was necessary to legitimize her life story in some way. Soldier’s autobiography offered an opportunity to frame the adventures of *la Monja Alférez*. In addition, the female soldier’s tale shares certain characteristics with other conquest literature. The *Vida* can be read as an analogous discourse that can be compared to that of the conquest (Juárez “Mujer militar” 158).

Like the conquest, the autobiographical genre in which the writing subject tells the life story of the protagonist is identified with masculine power. This document contains the writing subject’s desire for expression and it was written on the muted, female body of the nun Catalina by the masculine soldier identity (“Mujer militar” 158). Juárez indicates that the writing subject was willing to sacrifice Catalina’s identity entirely to present the story of *la Monja Alférez*. It is difficult to know if such an extreme separation between the male and female identities within Erauso occurred, but the gender vacillation as well as the vigorous manner in which the protagonist protected the male identity is suggestive of internal conflict.

¹⁰ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “I stood there thunderstruck” (41).

The writing subject in the *Vida* is appropriating the male conquerors' standards in order to fashion a platform from which to speak. It seems that the writing subject wants to convey to the reader that the female identity with which the protagonist lived belonged exclusively to childhood. This is emphasized in the text precisely because it is excluded. However, Erauso's female sex was something that the narrator and the writing subject could not physically alter; therefore the adult protagonist is often shown as veiling her female identity and placing a high priority on maintaining her virginity.

The protagonist was so devoted to this identity that extreme measures were often necessary in order to protect it. However, as the writing subject writes the *Vida*, it seems even more difficult to present the protagonist as a female. The writing subject therefore accepts the necessity of using the body of Catalina to present the tale of *la Monja Alférez*.

The writing subject in the *Vida* struggles to present her/himself as a wholly cohesive identity, because s/he must "painstakingly justify...that her[/his] individual anecdote and her[/his] private recollections are historically significant; that in some way s[/]he is useful, and her[/his] story worthy of the telling" (S. Smith *Reading* 17). This overwhelming "need to signify its own importance, on whatever level, and the need to appeal to, even to conquer, many different readers, is ever present in Spanish American autobiography" (*Reading* 17). Therefore, the writing subject had to prove that the autobiography was worth writing and reading because it was the story of a woman, which in itself was often considered indelicate or unimportant. Additionally the writing subject had to produce a work, narrated in what was considered to be the self-serving "I," that was both historically significant and worthy of being told. This task seemed to be too much for the writing subject to achieve. The next result was the sublimation of the

female protagonist in order that the male protagonist's story could be told, thereby giving the text a place in a historical canon filled with the writings of males.

4.4c IMPORTANCE OF ACTION FOR MASCULINE PROTAGONIST

A preference for action provides another motive for the masculine gender signifiers used to describe the protagonist in the sections of the *Vida* in which the protagonist lives as a man. The actions of the protagonist were considered stereotypically masculine behavior; therefore, in order for these acts to be understandable and acceptable, the protagonist must have been male.

The characterization of the protagonist as both male and female presented the writing subject with the dilemma of constructing a sanctioned life story in a manner that clearly explains that *la Monja Alférez* has “escaped the drag of the body, the contaminations of female sexuality” (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). While the protagonist did not “reveal” her female sex until the end of her time as a soldier, the writing subject was faced with explaining her gender anomaly from the beginning of the *Vida*.

While the historical Erauso was living as a male, her deeds would have been indisputably attributed to a male. The writing subject in the *Vida*, however, should be considered both male and female because of the influence of editors, copyists and others. The portion of the writing subject that ensued from the writings of the historical Erauso was not male since she “revealed” her female sex before the *Vida* was even written. The writing subject was therefore associated with a female sex from the beginning pages and had to expunge the negative connotations of being a female in order for the autobiography to be taken seriously. Consequently, one of the principle tasks for the

writing subject was to present the protagonist as a definitive male soldier in order to justify the writing subject's desire to write the story.

One way the writing subject developed the protagonist's character was through the action scenes. The focus on action by the writing subject, however, was not solely to move the plot along, or to justify writing the text. These scenes in soldier's tales allowed them to express pride in their identities through the act of writing about the adversities that they had overcome and the bravery of their actions (Levisi 241). The aversion to emotion outside of a highly ritualized context again follows the pattern of the soldier's memoir in which the expression of emotion offers the reader little information about the protagonist. Additionally, the writing subject was attempting to distance *la Monja Alférez* from the stereotypes of women. In the popular dramas of the XVII Century, the men were responsible for their families honor, or social reputation which consisted of the "purity" of their bloodline, and the chastity of the women in their families (Mujica 120). This precept gives insight into the women characters who appear in the *Vida*. Their presence quietly reinforces the stereotypes of women in order to differentiate the protagonist from them. Since these women were mostly sketches that appear in the *Vida* with sufficient description to evoke the readers' collective idea of the character,¹¹ an additional reason for including them in the narrative is to encourage the reader to question the true gender orientation of the protagonist, the narrator and the writing subject.

¹¹ Pavel indicates that "The premodern subject distinctly experiences the overpowering presence of normative values, which it describes in a language fully shared with the community...In accordance with the Aristotelian dictum, fiction speaks about the universal; inner life, subject to universal rules, can effortlessly be made public" (24).

4.5 NARRATIVE STYLES IN SOLDIER'S TALES

As the writing subject struggles for legitimacy in the narrative, the application of different literary styles both help her/him in the quest as well as reinforce the masculinity of the protagonist. The narrative style of the *Vida* is similar to that commonly used in the soldier's tales (Levisi 236). Often these soldiers had little formal education, still they successfully presented their life stories, which were often not meant for public consumption, in a manner that was imminently readable and offered a great deal of insight into their authors (Levisi 236).

It is argued that the published soldier's tales were often written by another author, although those that were written as personal accounts may have been written by the soldier himself (Merrim "Anomaly" 19). These accounts often employed the third-person narrating voice and the events were usually related in chronological order (Levisi 236). This characteristic does denote a significant difference between the *Vida* and soldier's tales.

The narrator in the *Vida* differs from the narrators of soldier's tales as s/he relates the tale from a homodiegetic perspective using the narrative "I." This choice allows for flexibility to vary the gender of the protagonist. Grammatically, it would be possible to achieve this effect using a third-person narrator, but the impact would be much less significant. The probable outcome of a vacillating third-person narrative would be confusion because the narrator could be referring to characters other than the protagonist, while the use of a first-person narrator would imply intent and make it clear that the protagonist, whose gender might vary, was the undisputed "I" of the text. The writing subject is linking her/himself to the protagonist by retelling the events of her/his life

using “I” rather than “he” or “she.” In the text, for example when the narrator recounts “Yo con esto determine dexarlo, i hícelo así”¹² the reader has a sense of definitive actions and decisions on the part of the narrator and protagonist, regardless of gender (36).

An important similarity between the two styles is the focus on action, however, the straightforward narrating style of the writing subject moves the action forward and s/he rarely focuses on the emotional state of the protagonist. The focus on the events of the protagonist’s time as a soldier also follows the chronological path that is common in this genre.

Another narrative divergence that appears early in the text is the protagonist’s choice to escape from the convent and begin living as a male. This decision, obviously, would not have had a place in other soldier’s tales, although they also contained a similarly brief summary of childhood (Levisi 236). When the narrator chooses to focus on the escape sequence and even on the several years following, the intentional modification of the standard format calls the readers’ attention to the irregularity. It is apparent that the “implicit listener” was always present for the writing subject (Levisi 237). The writing subject realized that the protagonist’s gender change must be addressed if the text were to be taken seriously by the reader and preferred to do so early in the *Vida* in order to frame this decision as a deliberate choice.

The writing subject presents the protagonist’s life in a manner that supports the decision to live as a male and fight as a soldier, and shows this life to be useful, instructional, and probably most importantly, acceptable. There were probably other reasons for writing the *Vida* as well. Often the motivation for a soldier’s autobiography was for financial gain or to satisfy social aspirations (Levisi 239). Many of these soldiers

¹² Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “On this I made up my mind to leave him, and did so” (5).

had little experience with writing and expressed themselves in a similar to manner to how they spoke, in a plain and straightforward manner without literary pretense (Levisi 239).

A typical soldier's memoir from the Golden Age can be compared to the *Vida* (Levisi 239). Often a soldier's autobiography was considered semi-private and addressed to a superior. This does not apply to the *Vida*, although it does accurately describe the historical Erauso's original petition for recognition of service. A defining characteristic of the soldier's autobiographies is a preoccupation with action for the purpose of convincing their superiors of the value of their service (Levisi 239). This emphasis on action is one that the *Vida* clearly shares.

Another important characteristic of the soldier's tale is an awareness of the reader, whose interest was less on the process of self-reflection than on valuable insight into the protagonist. The writing subject's need to delineate the protagonist explains the lack of emotional response in the *Vida* as well as the continual reference to the action in the protagonist's life and frequent feats of bravery. When writers of soldier's tales attempt to describe an emotional event or even emotion itself, they are inclined to contextualize it within a religious belief system or a social or military code of conduct (Levisi 240). For the soldiers, their sense of self-identity came from their actions.

4.5a LITERARY MODELS

Just as the frame story of a soldier's autobiography added certain credibility to the *Vida*, so the addition of picaresque elements gave the work the possibility of social redemption where a moral was often provided to offset the antisocial tendencies of the protagonist. A formula applied by Cervantes in various works of fiction adds an element of universality to the works (Levisi 228). A case in point is his *Coloquio de los perros*,

one of the *Novelas Ejemplares*,¹³ in which the dog tells his story in the picaresque genre. The work lessens its focus on the life of an individual and actually becomes a universal account through which a moral lesson can be conveyed (Levisi 228).

In the social environment in which the *Vida* was written, the writing subject needs to present this story in a manner that would not offend the censor or the reader. Curiosity and interest would be enough to entice readers to pick up the text, but it would not satisfy the moral obligations of the work. If, however, the writing subject could frame the socially unacceptable story in a literary genre that implied that there would be a moral lesson in this tale such as the picaresque, that could allay initial fears enough for the censor and the reader to allow the autobiography to be read without ever having to condone the behavior. However, it is somewhat difficult to discern a moral in this text. Not only is the protagonist permitted to continue wearing male's clothing, she is compensated for the military service provided. Although she is often alone, her life in the *Vida* is full of adventure, intrigue and even romantic escapades. As the writing subject chooses to tell the events of Erauso's life through a fictional genre, the work takes on a universal appeal.

Ginés de Pasamonte in *Don Quijote*,¹⁴ another Cervantes' character, provides a different model (Levisi 230). Ginés comments on the limitations of writing his life story while still alive, which exemplifies the actual struggles of the autobiographer (Levisi 230). The fictional nature of the picaresque genre intimates a more integrated sense of self for the protagonist than actual writers of autobiographies were able to achieve for their protagonists. In the *Vida*, the writing subject demonstrates the strain of integrating

¹³ The *Novelas Ejemplares* are a collection of short stories written by Cervantes. In the introduction, Cervantes indicates that each story will impart a moral lesson (Chandler 123-29).

¹⁴ The tale involving Ginés de Pasamonte (Cervantes 164-65).

the various personas; despite this s/he still understands the value of presenting the story of *la Monja Alférez* in this genre. The stress on the writing subject can be seen in the vacillating gender adjectives and periods of distress in the narrative.

4.5b MUJER VARONIL

A final literary device used by the writing subject to reinforce the masculine identity of the protagonist as well as enhance her legitimacy was the idea of the *mujer varonil*, or masculine woman. These women did not fit the social expectations of their times and were explained by a popularly accepted theory that went back to fetal development. It was believed that some fetuses that were male became female because the “temperature of the bodily ‘humors’ changed during gestation and caused the genitals to ‘transmute’” (Velasco *Lieutenant* 28). These male fetuses that became female would demonstrate masculine behavior (*Lieutenant* 29).

Baroque society looked at individuals whose behavior did not match their sex as monstrous (*Lieutenant* 28). This understanding of the historical Erauso and the protagonist explains how so many of the soldiers accepted the male persona of the protagonist as possibly a eunuch but predominantly male. Although there are vacillations between the gender signifiers of the protagonist, even those conform to the expected sexual roles and do not threaten the socially accepted gender roles. Once the writing subject establishes the protagonist as a masculine woman, she has advanced the social understanding of both. The *mujer varonil* aspect of the protagonist emerges clearly in the battle scene when she recovers the Spanish flag (58-59). This incident and others are referenced in Documento N° 4.1, Luis de Céspedes Xeria’s *certificación* along with the statement that she fought as bravely as a man (134). Although the term is not used

specifically by Xeria, the literary idea of the *mujer varonil* clearly colors his understanding of the historical Erauso. The writing subject uses this accepted device to explain the protagonist to the reader.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE WRITING SUBJECT

The writing subject of the *Vida* was a product of its time, utilizing both popular fiction and autobiographical styles to present the story of *la Monja Alférez*. In Early Modern times, imitation of already accepted genres was considered the only way to write. The frame of the autobiography is evidently a soldier's memoir, but the literary elements that have been included allow the writing subject more room for expression than the straightforward narrative would have. However, since the choice of genre, autobiography, was perceived as a male-dominated one, the writing subject encountered several dilemmas.

The first dilemma was justifying the choice of the genre. Pre-autobiography was deemed appropriate because the *Vida* is principally the story of a soldier. In order to establish the protagonist as a soldier, the protagonist must also be established as a male identity. The use of masculine gender signifiers was a first step. Additionally, focusing on the action in the narration and avoiding the sentimental furthered the association with the soldier's tale by demonstrating that the protagonist's characteristics were typical of masculine behavior. The application of literary figures and genres such as the *pícaro*, theater of *capa y espada* and the *burlador* also added to the overall masculine presentation of the protagonist.

The second dilemma that the writing subject encountered was her/his own gender presentation. This was somewhat facilitated by Erauso or another author writing the

autobiography after *la Monja Alférez* already had an audience with the Pope who allowed her to live wearing men's attire. To begin, the autobiography could have been written by a writing subject who already knew about this approval by the Church. This position would allow her/him a degree of acceptance that would otherwise be almost unattainable. However, the writing subject must also convince the reader of the value of the autobiography. The promise of a moral, or a justification for writing, could dispel these concerns.

The next dilemma, significant to this investigation, is the quandary that the writing subject faced in dealing with the gender of the protagonist. This was not resolved easily, but in the solution certain contours of the writing subject become apparent. There is no clear answer given in the *Vida* to the gender of the protagonist, which in itself gives insight into the writing subject. It is uncertain exactly what makes up the gender preference of this individual.

In an effort to configure the protagonist in the text, the writing subject comes to more fully develop her/himself in various manners. The vacillating gender descriptors reflect the social expectations and the writing subject's attempts to encompass an entity that is larger than the story in which it is being written as well as the multiple authors who impact the work. The mere attempt to write a living person into a text produces a split that results in a fractured writing subject incapable of fully representing itself in writing. At the same time through writing, the writing subject is able to restore some unity to an identity that was not allowed be fully cohesive in the rigid society of that day. As always, the multiple authors continue to contribute to the lack of cohesion in the

writing subject, which is perceived as singular but represents the influence of multiple authors.

These contradictions in the writing subject appear in moments of tension in the text such as the death of the protagonist's brother Miguel or the moment in the narration when the protagonist completes the rituals to transform her gender from young woman to man. As the change from child to adult is difficult and uncertain, so is the young protagonist's alteration from female to male. The writing subject sets the protagonist's gender transformation at the time of physical maturation. In much the same way the childhood identity is incorporated into the adult identity, the writing subject integrates the protagonist's gender identities into a fuller picture of her/himself.

CHAPTER 5 RECONCILING THE WRITING SUBJECT

In the *Vida*, the writing subject is a collective entity that results from the influence of multiple authors. Editors, scribes, and copyists all handled the text at some point after its original production and had ample opportunities to alter it, intentionally or accidentally. The historical Erauso also touched the text, although it is impossible to determine the extent of involvement that she had with the original *Vida*. She was, however, the inspiration for the work as well as the ever-present figure that the literary versions attempt to capture, or even create. The collective writing subject, while neither male nor female is still linked to the iconic historical Erauso as are the protagonist and the narrator of the *Vida*. As such, it is important to evaluate the writing subject in terms of the similarities that are shared between her/him and the historical Erauso.

While the historical Erauso has left little incontrovertible evidence of who she was, the field of female soldiers provides some apt comparisons. The writing subject can be compared to the historical Erauso's peers, women subjects who lived as male soldiers, to note the similarities and differences between the two. After this has been accomplished, the criticisms that have separated the historical Erauso from the writing subject can be examined. These include the educational background of the historical Erauso, and the varying gender signifiers in the text. Finally, insight into the development of the writing subject in particular scenes in the *Vida* can be evaluated for the links they provide to female soldiers. These comparisons will provide important information with which to evaluate the ideas that each entity presents in the text.

5.1 THE FEMALE SOLDIER WRITING SUBJECT

In order to ascertain if the writing subject displays characteristics that are consistent with female soldier writing subjects, it is important to consider her/him in the company of peers. This comparison with females who wrote about their choice to live the life of a military male, regardless of motive, provides invaluable insight into the phenomenon¹. Although the study is focused on life stories of women warriors in Great Britain in XIX century, there are similarities that relate to the life story of *la Monja Alférez* in Spain. Both nations had had colonial empires, although Spain had not yet lost its colonial holdings during the historical Erauso's lifetime as England mostly had by the XIX century. Either shortly after (if one accepts 1585 given in the *Vida*) or shortly before (if one accepts Ferrer's revised 1592) the birth of the historical Erauso, Spain had already suffered the defeat of the *Armada Invincible* at the hands of the English in 1588 which lead to considerable reorganization of the naval forces in Spain. An additional point to consider is that both nations had strict social conventions about the role of women in their societies, although, both nations held female monarchs to a different standard.² These females who chose to live as soldiers in male guise share many common, distinguishing characteristics that will be illuminating in the comparison with the writing subject.

A central concern in the evaluation of the *Vida* is the difficulty comprehending these females from a modern viewpoint (Wheelwright 9-10). Frequently the historical Erauso is confused with the protagonist and the resulting iconic entity is appropriated to

¹ The case of female soldiers in the colonial conquest is studied in great detail by Julie Wheelwright.

² The differences are between women in general in the society and women who took on roles that were perceived to be masculine, such as a female monarch or a female religious figure who chose to write an autobiography (S. Smith *Poetics* 55).

demonstrate particular values for subsequent generations (Velasco *Lieutenant* 5). The result is that the iconic Erauso is considered a feminist who was championing the cause of liberation for all females. In actuality, the female soldiers were not advancing the cause of women in general at all.

During the course of their entry into the masculine world many became so immersed in their male identity that women became ‘the other’ in their eyes...In the military women experienced an individual liberation that dissolved any sense of sisterly solidarity as they became ‘one of the boys.’ Often the only way for women to cope with the contradiction of being both female and a soldier was to actively deny their connection to the feminine world. Disguised as men they engaged in acts of imitation of love-making, flirted, teased, abused and insulted other women to secure their own position. To expect these female warriors to challenge an institution in which they held such a precarious position is unrealistic. (Wheelwright 10)

This assertion turns on its head the proclivity to “recast these women merely as unconventional heroines” who could be used or who were attempting to use their position to highlight the “unrealized, potential power of women” (Wheelwright 10). These females who lived as male soldiers actually demonstrated the same responses to females that the males displayed. Additionally, the females in the larger society were a threat to the female soldier because their prescribed female behavior was a constant reminder to the female soldier of what she must not appear to be (Wheelwright 12). Her liberation was individual in nature, and caused the female soldier to think of herself as apart from other females, and in some cases, superior to them (Wheelwright 12). They preferred to exchange roles completely rather than attempt to integrate certain behaviors that were identified with a particular gender (Wheelwright 12).

Ironically, this separation also functioned to minimize the social impact of her behavior as she was considered more of an anomaly than a revolutionary (Wheelwright 11). If she were inclined to bring other females into a similar position in the exclusively

male military or even into a position of power in the male-dominated society, she would first be forced to reveal herself and would thereby destroy the very opportunity she had worked so hard to obtain. Many females who entered the military had a specific reason for doing so and left when that goal had been accomplished; however, many had a great deal of difficulty readjusting to life as female (Wheelwright 19).

In many cases, these females preferred to continue living as males (Wheelwright 148). This certainly is true for the historical Erauso who lived anonymously as a male after all the attention waned. Many of these female warriors entered the male lifestyle with the express intention of attaining the rights and privileges reserved for males and could not tolerate a return to powerlessness. Their lives as males were actually the only way they could “conceive of themselves as active and powerful” (Wheelwright 19). In order to successfully navigate the social contradictions inherent in their lifestyle, the females living among males developed a “strong male identification” (Wheelwright 12). These social identities were not merely conventions; they were strongly held beliefs that went to the very core of what it meant at the time to be male or female. For a female to go against such convictions that dictated not only what a female was to wear but also how she must think and what actions were acceptable required a great sacrifice. This leads directly to what has already been expressed about the protagonist and writing subject in the *Vida*.

5.1a DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PROTAGONIST AND FEMALES

The *Vida* clearly demonstrates this break with other females in the characters of the protagonist and the narrator. The romantic escapades from the *Vida* are modeled on the *Don Juan* character from literature that is portrayed as deceiving the female

characters in the dramas. This mode of behavior does not demonstrate respect for the female characters, although they are often willing participants in the sexual relationships, even if they believed their partner to be a different individual.

A portion of the writing subject presents the protagonist as a type of *Don Juan* character who deceives the women with whom he comes in contact. Female soldiers frequently included in their autobiographies clichéd dramatized situations in which a female falls in love with the female soldier³ (Wheelwright 12). That would fit with some of the inclusions in the *Vida*, especially the scenes where the protagonist is forced to flee.

The irony in these episodes is that while the *Don Juan* character is often forced to flee because he has deceived a woman and had intercourse with her under false pretenses, the protagonist flees because she is unwilling to have a sexual relationship with a woman and thereby reveal her deception. This apt use and twist of a common theme is an example of the wit of the writing subject. It is interesting to note that the length of the protagonist's deception is focused on the level of commitment that the protagonist feels for the relationship.

The protagonist in the *Vida* does not intend to consummate the relationship sexually or contract marriage with any of the woman because she only has access to the male world on a temporary basis (12). Therefore, the protagonist is unwilling to shed the male identity for a love relationship. At the same time, the protagonist seems to demonstrate more than simply a desire to emulate the males' flirtatious behavior; the protagonist seems to seek out the company of women for love relationships. This incongruity adds to the appeal of this text as the writing subject suggests lesbian attraction on the part of the protagonist. Even given these probable tendencies, the

³ Wheelwright considers these scenes to be unreliable accounts because of their formulaic nature (12).

protagonist still displays a fundamental lack of respect for other females which is more in line with the behavior of the female soldier.

The writing subject also demonstrates complete dedication to the male identity in the *Vida*. There is a connection to the historical Erauso here who had petitioned Pope Urban VIII to continue in male dress. The petition to continue wearing male garments emphasizes that the historical Erauso understood the importance of male presentation and the power that was implicit in that appearance. That the Pope granted the historical Erauso's petition demonstrates the point that the female soldier was not perceived as a threat to the established order; rather she was an anomaly as long as she remained sexually inactive (Wheelwright 12). Allying with the male attitude, the writing subject becomes a more legitimate autobiographer in the male-dominated literary genre. The camaraderie that the protagonist and writing subject express is with male soldiers, not with females.

Even the final encounter in the *Vida* reinforces the divide between the protagonist and other females. As she comes upon two women, they exchange words in which the protagonist feels insulted and in turn uses pejorative terms to retort (124). She threatens to punish them and anyone who attempts to defend them. The disdain with which the protagonist addresses these women makes it clear she certainly does not feel any kinship with them. Only once in the *Vida* does the protagonist demonstrate anything close to deference for a female, her mother. However, even that encounter is indirect as she does not actually talk to her mother (38-39). The protagonist remains at the Mass after she realizes that her mother does not recognize her. When it is over, she makes excuses to

the nuns who ask her to join the choir and leaves. After leaving Spain, women in the *Vida* are objects, to be manipulated, used or abused by males.

5.1b IMPORTANCE OF “REVELATION” OF SEX

This view of femininity is reinforced again in the section of the *Vida* in which the protagonist chooses to “reveal” her sex. It is overwhelmingly significant that the writing subject, narrator and protagonist all saw the virginity of the protagonist as a vital component to her identity. It is crucial that the protagonist be a virgin. This one characteristic is so significant that it trumps all the unacceptable male behavior of the protagonist that would be punishable by death for a man. It serves as indemnity for the protagonist to invoke when circumstances become dire.

When the protagonist in the *Vida* was found to be a virgin, the narrative makes it clear that all doubts are resolved about the validity of the story that Erauso has told the Bishop (112). As Wheelwright states, “The female warrior’s acceptance was often based on denial of her sexuality and great emphasis was placed on her virginity or sexlessness in popular representations” (12). When her virginity was verified, the protagonist’s entry into the male world was permissible because the protagonist had been a good soldier. Additionally, her virginity confirmed that she followed the social requirement for an unmarried female.

At that time in Spain, female sexual activity was defined as sexual penetration by a phallus (Velasco *Lieutenant* 21). This also applied to homosexual male relationships, and was part of the basis for the reaction of the society at the time.⁴ Therefore, it was of utmost importance to maintain the virginity of the protagonist. Since the protagonist, presenting a male persona, did not have a male who was responsible for her honor, she

⁴ For more information on this social policy, see Powers’ article.

must vigilantly protect this valuable asset. If the protagonist had participated in a sexual relationship with a man, then the male persona would have failed, socially, personally and as a male.

The female persona of the protagonist would have failed as well. This can again explain the protagonist's preference for women. At the time, love between women was not considered a threat as long as there was no phallic penetration (*Lieutenant 21*). This standard was one that was vital to the success of the protagonist and writing subject.

5.2 THE WRITING SUBJECT AND THE HISTORICAL ERAUSO

It has been established that the writing subject does share certain characteristics with female soldiers writing autobiographies. There are several studies that should be examined as they unequivocally attempt to reunite the historical Erauso with the writing subject. Apart from the apocryphal nature of the text, there are several concerns about the historical Erauso which prevent her from consideration as the sole entity involved in the writing subject. One of the primary reasons is an insufficient educational background.

This argument may have a sexist motivation because it is not equally applied to the male soldiers who wrote autobiographies (Juárez "Autobiografías" 161). The assumption is that the historical Erauso did not have a level of knowledge that was sufficiently sophisticated to be able to produce this text. Unfortunately, the only other surviving documents attributed to the historical Erauso are not sufficient to establish her educational level as they also appear to have been influenced by a copyist or a scribe ("Autobiografías" 161). They are, however, written clearly and appropriately in Spanish.

The argument that the historical Erauso spent many years in the convent is often included to demonstrate educational access. It has been indicated that the education that females in the convent received was typical of an upper class Basque female (Myers “Lieutenant” 147). Repeatedly, the writing subject emphasizes not only the cleverness of the protagonist but also the abilities that she exhibited that could have only been the result of instruction.

In the text, the protagonist’s knowledge of Latin was emphasized as the university professor tried to force her to pursue further study (36). Additionally, she was put in charge of the accounts for the stores in which she worked (46). In another scene, the woman in whose home she recovered after the ordeal in the wilderness wanted for the protagonist to manage the household and property as well as marry her daughter (70). If the writing subject managed to convince the reader that the protagonist was educated and capable of handling various tasks that required educational training, then the reader would likely connect those abilities with the writing subject as well. The importance of the educational level of the protagonist could have reasonably served to legitimize the efforts of the writing subject rather than connect the historical Erauso to the text.

The ability of the writing subject to produce a text with so many of the characteristics of other published works can be viewed through the lens of popular literary tradition at the time to gain additional insight. It was a common practice for writers to include literary elements or oral traditions in their works (Myers “Lieutenant” 147). At the time, there was a common idea that literature was the result of a collective process and that the “I” was a “deliberation chamber” (Pavel 25). It would be surprising

if the text of the *Vida* did not demonstrate some characteristics of well-known literature, and this tendency can explain the various similarities to different literary genres.

5.2a PROBLEM OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Another possible application of sexist motives that separate the historical Erauso from the writing subject concerns the genre of autobiography (Juárez “Autobiografías” 161). Many autobiographies written by males are well structured and styled (“Autobiografías” 161). It is important to note that these soldiers were not well educated, therefore, their works were written without literary pretensions or concern for rhetoric (Levisi 239). It seems that to Juárez the motive in attributing their work to the male soldiers but denying the historical Erauso authorship is sexist.

Such a separation of female writers from authorship of their autobiographies deprives them of their literary right of expression, advocacy and their “protagonismo literario” (Juárez “Autobiografías” 161). According to this criticism, *la Monja Alférez* is marginalized by modern literary critics for the same reason that she had to fight for legitimacy in her own time; she chose to write in the autobiographical genre. The writing subject is already managing the physical division of author and writing subject, the gender division of the protagonist in the text, the time differences for the protagonist and the narrator as well as the inconsistencies typical of the writing subject, narrator and protagonist. It seems that the expected cohesion of the writing subject would be further complicated by dividing it from the historical Erauso.

Any female writing an autobiography in this time had to struggle to overcome the social preconceptions of merely choosing the genre (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). Despite all these concerns, the writing subject decided to write an autobiography, apparently,

determining that this genre provided an appropriate forum in which to discuss the protagonist's life as a soldier. In order to be accepted in the field, the writing subject had to prove the masculinity of the protagonist and prove its own worth as a writing subject while confronting the negative social stereotypes concerning the protagonist's choice to live as a male.

The "double-voicedness" (*Poetics* 50) and the divided writing subject that resulted from the attempt to reconcile social constraints with the writing subject's own inner conflicts are read in a different manner if the writing subject is believed to be someone other than the historical Erauso. The writing subject must develop situations in which the qualities of the protagonist emerge through created scenes in order to remind the reader of the historical Erauso.

Some critics believe that the education received by the historical Erauso in the convent provides sufficient background for the historical Erauso to have written the *Vida* (Juárez "Autobiografías" 161). In addition, the historical Erauso could have sharpened this ability through the frequent retelling of the story of *la Monja Alférez* (Juárez "Señora" 192). Even within the *Vida*, the writing subject mentions numerous times in which the protagonist recounted the tale to other characters: to Fray Luis Ferrer of Valencia, to the bishop, to Pope Urban VIII as well as to all the nobles Erauso visited in Italy (102, 110, 123). This valuable oral version of the story would have provided the historical Erauso with many opportunities to polish the account. While this argument does indicate a likely appropriate educational level for the historical Erauso to have written the *Vida* account, the apocryphal nature of the text makes it unreliable.

5.2b RE-EXAMINING THE GENDER DIVIDE

The gender split of the writing subject provides interesting insight into the historical context of gender identification and helps us understand the tension in the text that results from maintaining both male and female identities (Irigaray 14-15). Initially, Early Modern society looked to science to distinguish male from female. However, a reliable definition is impossible because portions of both male and female anatomy are present in both (Irigaray 14). As far as science can discern “You are then man and woman. Man, or woman? Yet-you may be assured, reassured-one character always prevails over the other” (Irigaray 14). There must be an “unknown” determining characteristic while allowing for “considerable fluctuation” of the proportion of the combination of male and female (Irigaray 14-15).

The question arises of how “a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition?” (Irigaray 22). For centuries, a female was defined either by what she was not, or by what she did not have, referring either to anatomy or to characteristics assigned to her gender (Irigaray 22). This position left the woman “off-stage, off-side, beyond representation, beyond selfhood. A power in reserve for the dialectical operations to come” (Irigaray 22). At this point, the ideas of Freud enter the argument, specifically the idea that little girls are little boys. While this idea may seem to promote equality of the sexes as children, one conclusion of this argument suggests that “there never was (or will be) a little girl” (Irigaray 48).

This idea leaves the female in isolation. As the little boy moves through the various stages of development in becoming a man, so Freud believes moves the little girl. It is at the moment in which the little girl discovers what anatomically she “lacks” that

the development of a “woman” begins (Irigaray 48). The implication here is the complete loss of the female identity as well as the total lack of celebration of the female physiology.

These complex ideas of psycho-sexual development can be applied to the female portion writing subject to explain her/his separation from a female gender identity. The prevailing social mores did not allow room for any female achievement outside the domestic or religious realm; moreover, ambition even within those realms was significantly limited. If, as Freud’s theories suggest, women saw themselves from the very beginning as being severely disadvantaged or incomplete men, such a position would leave them in limbo with no manner of achieving their aspirations. The vacillating gender indicators suggest that the writing subject was fully vested in the ideas of a society that separated males from females primarily on appearance and actions.

If the writing subject cannot conceive of the actions of fleeing from the convent, living the free life of a *pícaro*, and certainly not the life of a soldier apart from the male experience, then, it is a fair assumption that the writing subject is operating under such assumptions (Wheelwright 7). Additionally, such actions could not happen in a society in which there were no little girls, only little boys who found themselves set apart because they “lacked” certain physiological characteristics (Irigaray 14). The fluctuating gender signifiers seem to reflect the writing subject’s inherent difficulty associating action and decisiveness with the female sex.

A writing subject is composed of two identities, the “subject” and the “object” (Irigaray 134). This “subject” is “appropriated by the ‘masculine’” and any female who accepts the masculine idea of “subject” “is renouncing the specificity of her own

relationship to the imaginary” (Irigaray 133). It is when the “object” begins to speak that the female’s voice is truly heard. This split reveals the “other” who has not been allowed to speak.

This theory leads to Kristeva’s idea of the true female voice that harkens from a pre-speech, pre-adolescent female that is the voice of the maternal (Abraham). Such a reunion and celebration of the female in the writing subject can provide significant insight. Elements of this voice in the text of the *Vida* provide a pathway with which to access the writing subject and allow it and the historical Erauso to share similar characteristics. All the stylization of the writing as well as the entrenched masculinity of the writing subject can be moved aside in order to reveal this portion of the writing subject’s consciousness capable of elucidating the inner dialogue.

5.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WRITING SUBJECT

The gender split does demonstrate consistency between the historical Erauso and the writing subject, and the literary implications of this split can now be evaluated. As the protagonist revealed a female sex in the text, the writing subject returned to the past in order to justify the choice of the historical Erauso (Juárez “Señora” 186). The *Vida* was the writing subject’s attempt to create a concept of itself (“Señora” 186). While the goal behind the project was probably cohesiveness, there was certainly strain on the writing subject in undertaking this task. Such pressure on an individual or even collective psyche will often be mirrored by moments of tension in the work. These moments of stress offer points at which the work can be evaluated for layers of meaning. Through these seams more of the contours of the writing subject are exposed as these points of conflict reveal a consistency of character.

5.3a FLIGHT FROM THE CONVENT

The moments of tension in the text can be analyzed for additional connections that emerge between the writing subject and the historical Erauso. One of the first moments of tension occurs in the *Vida* as the narrator is describing the gender transformation of the protagonist. The writing subject through the narrator had organized the text in such a manner that it could be understood that the protagonist made a spontaneous decision to leave the convent and live as a male. This impulsive choice was attributed to a violent altercation that the protagonist, still a child, had with an adult nun in the text (34). Following this, the protagonist is presented as simply seeing the opportunity to leave the convent one night, and reacting. The protagonist is presented as rash and willing to make important decisions based on a whim rather than serious deliberation.

While this impression of the brash protagonist does exist in other places in the *Vida*, especially the action sequences that result in violent clashes, there are other indications in the text that such a simple interpretation of the protagonist is insufficient to truly understand this character. The soldiers who wrote autobiographies were more preoccupied with justifying their reasons for writing, and a typical manner of illustrating the worth of their autobiographies was by demonstrating their character through action (Levisi 240). Therefore, it stands to reason that the writing subject would present the protagonist as a decisive soldier who acts quickly and bravely in order to protect both the protagonist and others.

In the case of female soldiers, their desire to be convincingly male often lead to overcompensation so that they became extremely good at their duties and displayed a

level of ability that sometimes inspired envy in the males with whom they worked (Wheelwright 11). In the *Vida*, the writing subject had a motive for presenting the protagonist as overly masculine; therefore even the rashness displayed by the protagonist speaks of conviction and self-confidence, both of which were considered typical masculine behavior. If decisive action was descriptive of the protagonist and males in the text; the conflicted writing subject is, at times, demonstrates another perspective about the preponderance of action in the *Vida*. In order to present a different dimension of the protagonist that might not be so easily exemplified through action, the writing subject also alludes to another characteristic through descriptions: deliberateness.

Although the protagonist did, in fact, display an impetuous temperament at times, the writing subject does not want the reader to interpret the protagonist's escape from the convent and subsequent gender change as an example of a reckless choice. The details with which the writing subject presents the protagonist's escape leave the reader to conclude that it could only be the result of careful planning and would be an important point for the writing subject to make about the protagonist. The constancy that the writing subject believed itself to possess would demand that this decision be attributed only to the protagonist and not be the result of reckless behavior or simply a concession to necessity.

This choice is one that is typical of female soldiers, for many of them made extensive plans before setting out in masculine attire (Wheelwright 19). Therefore, even when some of the details of the flight from the convent were not clearly planned from the beginning; it is imperative to the presentation of the protagonist that the decision to escape life as a female and live as a male not seem incidental. It is plausible for the

reader to understand that the protagonist had not planned exactly where to go after leaving the convent, but given the description it is much more difficult to assume that the escape itself occurred by accident. The protagonist knew to excuse herself at the beginning of the midnight matins service after which she might not be immediately missed. Additionally, she almost certainly knew that the keys to the convent were in her aunt's bedroom, and while she may not have known exactly which door led out of the convent, she knew enough to give herself time to find it. Finally, the things that she took with her, scissors, thread, a needle, and money, in addition to the keys, indicate that she had a well-conceived plan for escape and planned to begin living as a male (35).

The conflicting motives for the flight of the protagonist as planned or as spontaneous can be analyzed to determine if this is consistent with what is now known of the writing subject. The historical veracity of this event does not really affect the reliability of the writing subject because “those historical and novelistic genres that focus on a life story present the greatest potential for overlap of factual and fictional narratives” (Hoesterey 8). Therefore, intent is what reveals the writing subject; all of these elements work together to present a picture of the writing subject that mirrors its concept of itself (Juárez “Señora” 186). This writing subject sees itself as a “coherent” unit (P. Smith 104). It is possible, at the same time, for this cohesive self-construct to use a “double-voicedness” in order to respond to all the various expectations from the reader as to the genre, gender and appropriateness of writing an autobiography at all (S. Smith *Poetics* 50).

5.3b RITUAL OF TRANSFORMATION

Another significant event is the transformation of the protagonist from a young female novice into a young male in search of adventure. The writing subject through the narrator sets aside the social concerns that permeate the earlier discourse as s/he strove to present the protagonist's escape from the convent as a reaction to an adverse situation and an attempt to survive. At the same time, the writing subject suspends the argument that the protagonist clearly planned the escape from the beginning. The writing subject and the narrator present the protagonist's alteration. This description is free from the tension that informed the previous section and can be used for comparison. These stages, in particular cutting the protagonist's hair, all resonate with the beginning of a new life (Perry "Convent" 397). The writing subject fully understands the importance of marking this event in the life of the protagonist as well as offering it to the reader as the beginning of the tale of *la Monja Alférez*. This event is tantamount to "a ritual account of female castration" (Juárez "La mujer militar" 153). The idea of an asexual protagonist is one that is also consistent with the description of female soldiers (Wheelwright 12). The overwhelming need to present themselves as masculine in their assumed persona resulted in the female soldiers performing tasks in a manner that was unmistakably typical of male behavior (Wheelwright 11).

In the text, once the protagonist has arrived at the point of gender transformation, it is contingent upon the writing subject to make this ritual significant. This passage is not long, but every action is intentional. This alteration would be a central point in the narration for any writing subject, but it does take on particular meaning here as s/he attempts to explain the choices of the protagonist. It becomes the moment in which the

intentional choices of the protagonist lead to the creation of the individual who will become *la Monja Alférez*.

The body and the clothes of the female novice become the body and the clothes of a young man. In the text, the protagonist makes pants out of the skirt, and out of a petticoat makes a shirt and shoes (35). From the female clothing that required more cloth, the protagonist fashions male garments, leaving behind both the scapular and the habit. Since each has a religious connotation, these can be read as symbols of the religious life that the protagonist is also leaving behind. It is curious that she does not use them in her new clothing, and when the garments are left behind they are whole and not cut. Their untouched state foreshadows the virginity that the protagonist maintains as a soldier. Additionally, the intact garments demonstrate that while the religious life was not what the protagonist desired, it was still an institution that she respected and whose mandates the protagonist still followed during the unconventional lifestyle that followed.

The intentional wholeness of these garments is a signal to the reader that even though the protagonist has chosen an unconventional life, the *Vida* is not meant to question the larger social institutions. Typically, the female soldiers were not promoting the liberation of all women, rather they often stringently supported the institutions in which they lived and worked as males (Wheelwright 10). It is clear that both the protagonist and other female soldiers “actively denied their connection to the feminine world,” and strove to prove their masculinity in order to achieve acceptance in the masculine realm (Wheelwright 10). The Catholic Church was a male-dominated institution and the use of these religious symbols in the *Vida* displays the protagonist and the writing subject’s acceptance of its role in society.

5.3c SEPARATION FROM FATHER

There are significant moments in the development of the writing subject that occur in the final breaks with the protagonist's parents. In these situations, the protagonist has direct or near-direct contact with her parents, although neither parent recognizes that the young man with whom they are interacting to be their daughter. The reports of these encounters in the *Vida* are found in relatively brief passages with little accompanying emotion. There is little recorded reaction of the protagonist at the time, but in each case there is a significant change of life direction for the protagonist immediately afterwards. The alteration of plans is her reaction because she rarely expresses emotion. These scenes in the *Vida* show natural expressions of grief and pain although they do not do so in an expressive or overtly sentimental manner.

The encounter with the father of the protagonist is a concise description of the few moments that she spent in the company of her father. The protagonist was already living as a page at the house of a secretary of the king, where she was well treated. One day the father of the protagonist arrives at the house in a state of distress asking to speak to the secretary (37). He addresses both the protagonist and a companion page, but the protagonist does not answer. The other page goes to inform the secretary of his visitor while the protagonist waits in silence with her father.

Erauso's father does not recognize the protagonist as a young male page and does not speak in the text. As Captain Araujo meets with the secretary the protagonist eavesdrops on their conversation, discovering that her father is distressed about her escape from the convent and is in the neighborhood searching for her (37). Again, the *Vida* records no emotion on the part of the protagonist, but her reaction to her father's

distress is a clear indication of emotional stress and uncertainty. The protagonist leaves her post immediately, spends the night in a tavern, and makes arrangements to leave the following morning for Bilbao (37). The following line of narration indicates just how unprepared the protagonist was for the journey, “sin saberme yo qué hacer, ni adónde ir, sino dexarme llevar del viento como una pluma”⁵ (37). The protagonist’s need for escape was so great that she was willing to leave her journey to chance.

The impact of being seen and not recognized by her own father was so great that the protagonist flees without any plan or forethought. This is reminiscent of her flight from the convent, when she arrived on the street with no idea of which way to go. In this scene, the protagonist has narrowly missed discovery and has run away. This situation may have been the motivation for the protagonist’s decision to live in the Americas where she may have hoped for anonymity.

The strong emotion that permeates the passage is indicative of the conflict within the writing subject. While it is not explicitly expressed emotionally, her extreme and spontaneous reaction to seeing her father suggests that the impact on the protagonist was profound. The writing subject has included this encounter with the father of the protagonist to express the difficulty that she experienced in separating from her family. The brevity of the scene underlines the importance and difficulty of reliving such an experience. Both the brief description, as well as the inclusion of the significant shift in the course of the plans of the protagonist; suggest that the writing subject was one who had an intimate understanding of the significance of the situation.

⁵ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads: “...I not knowing what to do nor where to go, but letting myself be carried along like a feather by the wind” (6-7).

5.3d SEPARATION FROM MOTHER

The writing subject demonstrates a similar profound awareness of the turmoil within the protagonist as s/he writes of Erauso's separation from her mother. This scene has two points of conflict for the protagonist, contact with the mother, and the setting (38-39). This encounter with the mother occurs in the same convent from which the protagonist escaped, reflecting not only the protagonist's break with her mother but with the Church as well. After these last ties are severed, the protagonist is free to leave Spain and seek fortune and adventure in the Americas.

After living comfortably for a time in Estella, the protagonist decides to leave. There is no specific motive given for her flight in the *Vida*, the narrator indicates it was “sin más causa que mi gusto, dexé aquella comodidad, i me pasé a San Sebastián, mi patria diez lenguas distante de allí”⁶ (38). The decision to return to the city of her birth without any explanation is an interesting choice for the protagonist and is not elaborated in any way by the writing subject. It is significant that the protagonist did not choose to leave for the Americas directly from that post.

We may conjecture that the protagonist was bored with the settled and comfortable life in Estella and possibly experienced a sense of loss and separation from family. Since the protagonist chose, instead, to return not only to her home town but even to the same convent from which she escaped, it appears the trip represented a decision. By including this scene, the writing subject indicates that the protagonist was searching for something. The encounter between the protagonist and her mother that takes place in the convent is recorded in the *Vida* without much elaboration and functions

⁶ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “...from sheer whim, I gave up this comfort and went to my native place, San Sebastián, ten leagues off...” (7).

in the narration as the protagonist's farewell to her family (38-39). When her mother does not recognize the young male protagonist, the adolescent seems to feel free to truly let go of the life of Catalina and begin to live the life that leads to *la Monja Alférez*.

During this event, the protagonist is also not recognized by the nuns in the convent who invite the young male into the choir (38). This risky and sentimental encounter with both the protagonist's mother and the nuns with whom she had recently lived speaks to the uncertainty of the young protagonist. It appears to be a test of the new identity. If the nuns and her mother did not recognize the male protagonist and return her to Catalina's life, then the transformation must have been a success.

Initially in the text, the protagonist does struggle with the situation, lapsing into a feigned inability to understand the requests of the nuns and quickly retreats issuing many polite statements (39). It is possible that the protagonist had hoped to be recognized and returned to the family life. When not even her mother could perceive her daughter's identity, the protagonist must have felt some disappointment and confusion. This brief section mirrors the Freudian development of a girl who must confront and reject her mother's position in society while being excluded from following her father's place (Irigaray 48). Here, ironically, the protagonist had a very different option from her sisters because she could, for a while, take a place alongside her father. Additionally, it places a capstone on the childhood of the female protagonist as well as the formal relationship between the protagonist and the convent.

When the protagonist pretends to be unable to understand the nuns, the text offers a glimpse into the writing subject as well. If this is not merely the result of confusion because the protagonist is not recognized by her mother, then it may be a situation in

which she intentionally misleads the nuns. It is possible that the protagonist feared that the new male identity might be betrayed by her voice. This could be an early example of the dedication to the male identity demonstrated regularly by the protagonist who was willing to deny a relationship or obfuscate a circumstance to continue the masculine life.

This dedication to the masculine persona can be noted in other female soldier's autobiographies as they took extreme measures to ensure that their female sex was not revealed (Wheelwright 88). Denying herself to her own mother was certainly an extreme form of preserving the protagonist's male identity. Focusing on the break with the Church, another reading of this passage suggests that the writing subject was preparing the protagonist for a life which could not be understood within the rigid confines of the convent. Therefore, the early chapters of the *Vida* which contain the escape, transformation and evaluation of the reliability of the new male identity all demonstrate consistency between the writing subject of the *Vida* and that of female soldiers. Additionally, they establish consistency among the narrator, writing subject, and protagonist.

5.3e RELATIONSHIP WITH BROTHER

As the character of the protagonist develops in the Americas, her relationship with her brother Miguel de Araujo provides further episodes that tie the writing subject to female soldiers. The unusual events in this portion are somewhat difficult to authenticate, since writing subjects in pre-modern autobiographies had more flexibility with the veracity of the account (Hoesterey 8). It seems that the importance of this passage is found in the writing subject's intent rather than in the historical value of the narrative. Additionally, it is important to consider that:

Spanish American autobiographies...are distinctly hybrid texts, and usually appear to be endowed with a multiplicity of purpose: they strive not only to analyze (and eventually discover) the self but to promote, for whatever reasons, an image of that self...This multiplicity of purposes is further compounded by the clear need, shown by these authors, to be representative (of a country, of a social group, of a sex) in ways more extreme than one might expect.” (Molloy 3)

The purpose of this passage in the *Vida* is difficult to determine since it does not primarily promote the masculine nature of the protagonist (54-64). It does, however, allow the writing subject to demonstrate pride in the protagonist’s Basque heritage and sentimentality about her relationship with her brother. In the paragraphs that follow, I will explore a variety of scenes in which the protagonist demonstrates emotion. She shows excitement about meeting Miguel who had left home when the protagonist was two years old. She is also concerned that Miguel might recognize her (55-56). These passages demonstrate a marked amount of emotion expressed by the protagonist and narrator. In the scenes that recount the death of Miguel and the events that follow the narrator expresses sadness about the death of Miguel through an interjection from the writing subject.

Competing emotions surround Erauso’s relationship with Miguel. After their first meeting, Miguel petitions the Governor to keep the protagonist in his company. The Governor initially refuses and the narrator comments “Mandóme entrar el Governador, i en viéndome, no sé por qué, dixo que no me podía mudar”⁷ (56). In this description, the narrator asserts a sense of frustration that s/he still felt years later. As the narrator overtly questions the dismissal, the writing subject indicates that the protagonist truly desired to stay with Miguel. In the *Vida*, the narrator describes Miguel’s reaction to the refusal of

⁷ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “The Governor ordered me to be brought in, and , after looking at me, said (I don’t know why) that he could not transfer me” (33).

his request saying “Mi hermano lo sintió y salióse”⁸ (56). It appears that both siblings are disappointed. Although the protagonist is granted leave to stay with Miguel, later in the narration she reveals the strain of maintaining a close relationship with him as she sabotages their relationship by seducing Miguel’s mistress.

According to the *Vida*, the protagonist becomes such a confidant of Miguel’s that he took her with him on several occasions when he went to his mistress’ house (57). The conflict grew out of the protagonist’s trips to visit Miguel’s lover without him. When Miguel discovers the relationship, he forbids the protagonist to return to his mistress. Miguel distrusts her, and caught her leaving the house of his mistress. Their disagreement escalated into a fight and the protagonist was banished to Paicaví (57).

This type of behavior toward other females was typical of the female soldiers (Wheelwright 10). What is unclear is whether this behavior resulted from lesbian attraction or from imitation of male behavior because there are incidents of both. In spite of the clear literary allusions to the *Don Juan* character as well as the social conventions that encouraged this type of male behavior, the real significance here is the familial relationship between the protagonist and Miguel.

This pursuit of Miguel’s mistress seems intentional and even malicious behavior on the part of the protagonist who has already demonstrated in earlier passages that she has no intention to physically consummate relationships with women. Therefore, the attention given to this bond indicates that there must have been stress on the protagonist to maintain the male identity while living with a sibling. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there is the possibility that writing subject needed the protagonist to take from Miguel the social position granted to a son (Juárez “La mujer” 157). This desire may not

⁸ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “My brother withdrew, disappointed” (33).

have even been conscious for the protagonist, but the writing subject certainly seems to understand the value of legitimizing the protagonist as a male by taking the life and social position of her brother.

The writing subject clearly presents the protagonist as antagonizing Miguel in this passage, and provoking a fight that could have easily been fatal for either. If the protagonist had killed Miguel, she would have proven the valor of the male persona and, after a fashion, would have been able to replace Miguel as his father's son. This motivation would have also established the masculinity of the protagonist and, therefore, the right of the writing subject to undertake the writing of an autobiography (157).

It is clear that here the writing subject is continuing to defend the right to present the story of *la Monja Alférez* in an autobiographical form. The fractured and fictive persona is to be expected in an autobiography written by a female (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). The writing subject, using the mask of the male protagonist, creates "an iconic representation of continuous identity that stands for, or rather before, her subjectivity as she tells of this 'I' rather than of that 'I'" (*Poetics* 46). Therefore, the usually unemotional protagonist can show a more vulnerable side during the passages that speak of both the love and jealousy for Miguel. Further, the sometimes conflicting representations of the protagonist in the *Vida* can be seen as slips of the mask that is the male identity in the process of being created. Behind the narrative, however, is the writing subject who is working all these disparate threads of the plot into a cohesive image of the protagonist who reflects the ideas and beliefs of the writing subject.

In the case of the quest of the writing subject, the early conflict with Miguel over their lover did not lead to the legitimization of the protagonist by taking the social role of

her brother; rather, after a brawl with Miguel it leads to her banishment. Unfortunately for the protagonist, the exile was a denial of her desired objective of taking her brother's birthright rather than the necessary victory and ascension to the position of son. Therefore, the protagonist must suffer a series of trials in order to earn another opportunity to confront Miguel. These hardships allow the protagonist to experience success through bravery or cunning (Levisi 240).

Before her final confrontation with Miguel, the intervening circumstances in the text offer the protagonist a chance at redemption by presenting additional opportunities to prove her masculinity and worthiness. The well-known battle in the text in which the protagonist recaptures the company's standard and received the title of ensign occurred during this time of exile (59). However, after this battle, the protagonist is reconnected with Miguel who goes on to ensure that the protagonist is allowed to keep the recovered standard. Later, Miguel intervenes again after the protagonist has another fight while gambling (63).

These appearances by Miguel and the aid he gives the protagonist seem like the intervention and protection of an older brother who mitigates the damage done by a raucous and incautious younger brother. This type of relationship shows genuine affection on the part of Miguel for the protagonist. They are not instigated by the protagonist, however, and while grateful, she does not seem to turn to Miguel when in trouble.

The insinuation of the writing subject is subtle but perceptible. It would have been quite simple to omit these instances of aid that Miguel offers in a brotherly way, but the writing subject does not want to leave the reader with the impression that Miguel was

unkind or pleased with the exile of the protagonist. When the opportunity arises to displace Miguel, the protagonist does not realize that her opponent is Miguel. The distress that the protagonist experiences at his death appears to be genuine grief at the loss of a sibling.

The passage in the *Vida* in which the duel is described begins with an uncharacteristic lament, “[j]ugava conmigo la fortuna trocando las dichas en azares”⁹ (62). The same writing subject who so carefully crafted a protagonist who decides her own fate at this point allows Erauso to become the “sport of Fortune” (199). The vulnerable and faltering protagonist reflects the emotional price the writing subject pays for including this story of achieving the social status of a male through the death of Miguel while at the same time crafting his loss for the protagonist. The protagonist’s sense of insecurity and hesitancy is consistent with earlier scenes in which she displays emotion, such as her breaks with the convent, and her parents, in which she is characterized as out of control of her future.

The vantage point of the narrator, who views the whole incident from the distance of time, seems to encompass the totality of the loss in a way that was not possible for the protagonist, who had never known Miguel as a child. Growing up in the convent, the protagonist was separated from her brothers, although the historical Erauso probably lived in the convent with at least three of her sisters.¹⁰ This relationship with Miguel is the only sibling relationship that the protagonist develops in the *Vida*. The impact of both the relationship and the loss of Miguel is demonstrated by its inclusion in the narrative as well as the emotion that is expressed in these scenes. The writing subject values this

⁹ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “I was the sport of Fortune, which turned my joys into disasters” (37).

¹⁰ In Note 3 from Chapter I that follows Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation, he states that three of Catalina’s sisters also lived in the same convent. They were Mari-Juan, Isabel and Jacinta (300).

relationship and highlights the closeness, conflict and deception that is central to the growth of the protagonist.

Miguel's death in the text is marked by the emotional toll that it extracted from the writing subject, narrator, and protagonist. The protagonist becomes involved in the duel in which Miguel is killed when a friend, Juan de Silva, visits her in prison and asks her to be his second in a duel with Francisco de Roxas. The protagonist initially refuses to participate but agrees when Silva declares that he would rather stand alone than entrust his safety to any other (64). As the duel begins, the protagonist does not participate until Silva is injured. After the original combatants fall, their seconds continue the duel until Miguel is fatally wounded by the protagonist.

Miguel speaks and the protagonist recognizes his voice, but asks him to identify himself (65). At this point, the narrator speeds up the pace of the narration. After Miguel and the others ask for a confessor, the protagonist runs for the Church of San Francisco. Both Juan and Francisco die at the scene, but Miguel is taken to the house of the Governor and treated. Miguel recognizes the protagonist as his assassin, although he does not fault her for his death. As he is dying, he is denied wine for his pain and describes his doctor as “[m]ás cruel anda vuestra merced conmigo, que el Alférez Díaz^{11,12}” (65).

In the text, the protagonist witnesses Miguel's funeral from the choir and the narrator freely expresses the anguish that she experiences. This pain seems to continue even into the present in which the narrator is retelling this memory. The description of the sorrow is brief, but typical of the narrator as s/he describes the protagonist's great

¹¹ In Vallbona's appendix, according to José Higuera y Lara's *testimonio*, the historical Erauso used the name Alonso Díaz de Ramírez de Guzmán in the battle in which she won her title of Ensign (132).

¹²Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “You are more cruel to me that Ensign Díaz was” (42).

pain that only “sabe Dios con qué dolor”¹³ (65). It is somewhat ironic, however, that a few lines later, the narrator admits that the protagonist does not come forward about the events of Miguel’s death although she waits in the area for eight months until the affair is settled (66). Although she is deeply saddened by Miguel’s death, she does not abandon her male life. Her reaction substantiates the idea that she achieves the place of son/male through the death of Miguel. As the protagonist gains the coveted position of male, the writing subject also moves toward legitimacy.

5.3f DRAMATIZED DIALOGUE

Before leaving this incident with Miguel, the dialogue should be analyzed. The dramatic nature of the dialogue is obvious in the passage. Another distinguishing trait about the dialogue is that it purportedly recounts exactly a conversation that occurred years earlier. While these dramatized dialogues could represent a possible point of entry for another author, they are consistent with the genre and reveal information about the writing subject (S. Smith *Poetics* 45). It is clear that the writing subject was under a considerable amount of strain while writing this section of the narrative. Reliving such an experience would, in effect, mean recreating the events. As an autobiographer recalls such trauma, s/he

...has to rely on a trace of something from the past, a memory; yet memory is ultimately a story about, and thus a discourse on, original experience, so that recovering the past is not a hypostasizing of fixed grounds and absolute origins but, rather, an interpretation of earlier experience that can never be divorced from the filterings of subsequent experience or articulated outside the structures of language and storytelling. As a result, autobiography becomes both the process and the product of assigning meaning to a series of experiences, after they have taken place, by means of emphasis, juxtaposition, commentary, omission. (*Poetics* 45)

¹³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “...God knows with what grief!” (42).

Adding the dramatized dialogue is the writing subject's way of reliving a traumatic event as s/he retells it. When words fail her/him, s/he supplements the scene with dialogue that is familiar to her/him and to the reader. While the created exchange between the protagonist and the dying Miguel does seem contrived, it also impacts the reader. Miguel calls the protagonist a "traitor" (65). This suggests the tension that the female portion of the writing subject is experiencing while at the same time it reflects the uncertainty that s/he feels as a collective writing in a male dominated literary genre.

Particularly in the dramatic passages of her text, where she speaks directly to her reader about the process of constructing her life story, she reveals the degree of self-consciousness about her position as a woman writing in an androcentric genre. Always, then, she is absorbed in a dialogue with her readers, that "other" through whom she is working to identify herself and to justify her decision to write about herself in a genre that is a man's. (S. Smith *Poetics* 50)

Applying Smith's work to the *Vida*, the description of Miguel's death occurs at the moment at which the masculinity of *la Monja Alférez* is affirmed by replacing Miguel as a son and is a central passage in her life story (*Poetics* 50). This pivotal moment of achieving the value of the male identity ironically demonstrates the writing subject's awareness and concern about writing in the autobiographical genre.

By inserting direct dialogue, the writing subject is recreating this event, and actually "reveal[ing] more about the autobiographer's present experience of 'self' than about her past, although, of course, it tells us something about that as well.

Fundamentally, it reveals the way the autobiographer situates herself and her story in relation to cultural identities and figures of selfhood" (*Poetics* 46-7). This dramatic strategy of the writing subject demonstrates her/his struggles for legitimacy, as s/he feels compelled to authenticate her/himself through male behavior. Unfortunately, the

protagonist gains what she wants by replacing her sibling. The tension results from the sense of loss and accomplishment that the protagonist must experience simultaneously.

There is one additional element that should be considered before the problematic dialogue is left. The idea that the dialogue is unexpected and seems false may, in fact, be a modern prejudice that it is unfair to level at an autobiography from this time period.

The pre-modern writing subject made assumptions about the communality of the autobiography in which the first-person writing subject was:

the locus of strategic and moral debates closely related to action and held in a language shared by an entire community, inner thoughts were taken to be as clearly articulated as public ones, and accordingly, the difference between them and overt speech was a matter of contingency. Any dramatic author could make his or her hero recite long soliloquies; likewise, any novelist, historian, or court lawyer could reconstruct the thoughts of his or her characters or clients. That the three genres of discourse were so close in their treatment of other minds should not surprise us; they all focused on human action and its motivation, and, as such, were equally preoccupied with the links between visible deeds and inner deliberation based on moral and strategic reasoning. Seen from outside, the “I” appeared thus analogous to a *deliberation chamber*, rather than to an absolute *origin* of solitary discourse.” (Pavel 25)

Therefore, the dialogue in the passage about Miguel’s death could be expected, and it framed the attack in terms of the Spanish collective. The choice by the writing subject to develop the scene in such a manner expressed her/his emotions within the familiar exchange.

The dialogue that is produced in the moments of tension in the text serves a dual purpose. The first reason for the dialogue is to mitigate the effect of the strain by keeping the attention of the reader focused on the action. Additionally, the dialogue bolsters the writing subject’s faltering confidence while describing such an emotionally-charged event. The choice of the autobiographical genre is also called into question as the writing subject struggles to control the narration.

The writing subject is at all times mindful of the reader. Therefore, even in moments of stress the writing subject finds a way to retain the attention of the reader. The writing subjects of soldier's autobiographies are constantly placing their protagonists in perilous situations in which the protagonist can demonstrate his bravery or cleverness (Levisi 240). Admirable personal characteristics are displayed during the scenes of action, not through long personal reflections (Levisi 240). The addition of dialogue continues the action rather than requiring a long period of introspection that would not interest the reader.

The conflicting emotions that the protagonist would have experienced can be sidestepped in favor of returning to the action. It is not entirely avoided, however, as the protagonist is portrayed at the end of the chapter as witnessing Miguel's funeral with "sabe Dios con qué dolor"¹⁴ (65). At this point, the dialogue can serve to remind the reader of the universality of Erauso's loss. Applying Pavel's idea to the *Vida*, the protagonist's interior thoughts were akin to a "deliberation chamber" in which the shared social mores were processed and therefore, the writing subject is simply externalizing these ideas (25). Even in moments of great emotion and uncertainty which are not explicitly expressed in the text the writing subject can have the protagonist vocalize certain thoughts. The externalization of these thoughts allows the writing subject an outlet and with the release of these emotions into the collective, the writing subject has succeeded in returning to an emotional equilibrium at which the narrative can continue.

5.3g SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS

The final examples of the development of the writing subject in the text are the episodes that focus on sexual encounters between the protagonist and women. Having

¹⁴ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as "God knows with what grief!" (42).

already identified that the gender split is actually quite typical of the female soldier, these sexual encounters can now be examined in their context as well. The protagonist's interest in females qualifies as both male and female behavior, although a female posing as a male would have recognized the importance of imitating this particular facet of male conduct. Males at this time were expected to be heterosexual; any homosexual contact between males was not only prohibited by both canon and civil law but punishable by death. Female homosexuality, as long as it did not involve penetration, was generally not regarded as a threat to society (Velasco *Lieutenant* 15). It seems that this social tolerance for female attraction was something that the writing subject understood and wanted to use to the advantage of both the protagonist as well as for itself.

The instances of seduction in the *Vida* could be considered to bolster the male identity of Erauso, and even add to the acceptance of the masculine protagonist. Additionally, these scenes could be considered titillating for the reader without threatening the reader's sexual identity. All of these aims were accomplished by maintaining the virginity of the protagonist. The writing subject also understood the inestimable value of female virginity at that time and in that culture. The readers were able to access the story of *la Monja Alférez* because her life had already been sanctioned by the Pope.

The reactions of King Philip IV and Pope Urban VIII upon hearing Catalina recount her story, as recorded later in the memoirs *Vida I sucesos de la Monja Alférez* (ca. 1625), confirm that it was because of the uniqueness of her position as a valiant woman soldier-and, more importantly as an "intact virgin"-that brought her such acceptance. (Myers "Lieutenant" 141)

It is clear in the *Vida* that the writing subject intends to tease the readers with these encounters while devoutly preserving the virginity of the protagonist. The importance of

this is so great that it is the first and most convincing proof that the protagonist offers the Bishop as confirmation of the veracity of the story (112). The two women who inspect the protagonist to determine the sex of the individual also verify that Erauso is a “virgen intacta, como el día en que nació”¹⁵ (112). The virginity of the protagonist does not negate other violent acts such as the various murders that she commits outside of military service, but it does seem to counterbalance the male life lived by a female.

Another point that should be considered is the placement of such narratives by the writing subject. These liaisons with women did not begin until the protagonist had arrived in the Americas. This is consistent with Wheelwright’s findings about the behavior of female warriors that indicate that the romantic relationships were primarily a function of the male role, rather than representative of a lesbian attraction (13). That the trysts grew ever more involved over the course of the *Vida* could indicate that the protagonist was expressing a sexual desire in addition to merely imitating male behavior, however.

The scene in which Erauso decides to end her male lifestyle and “reveal” her sex to the Bishop, therefore, is significant and has various levels of meaning. As a plot point, this is the climax of the *Vida*. Here, the male guise is discarded and the protagonist no longer has the overwhelming need to protect the male identity. Additionally, once the female sex of the protagonist is confirmed, there are no more scenes involving a super-inflated male persona who constantly battles, both physically and psychologically, to navigate a dual gender. As Wheelwright indicates is true for other female soldiers, the protagonist has tremendous difficulty returning to a female role (Wheelwright 12).

¹⁵ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “a maid entire, as on the day I was born” (117).

The gender signifiers in the *Vida* reflect the difficulty of writing the changing genders of the protagonist for the writing subject as well. The female references reinforce the state of powerlessness to which the protagonist has returned. After a female soldier had either been discovered or had chosen to reveal a female gender there were few options for her (Wheelwright 81). The officials needed to place her in “safe, female hands and in an appropriately domestic role” that would clearly end her “temporary aberration” (Wheelwright 81). This echoes the plight of the protagonist exactly in the *Vida* as she is immediately clothed in female attire and sent to a convent where she waited for an official response from the Church about her status as a nun (112).

In a matter of days, Erauso went from an authoritative male to a helpless female. The writing subject keenly expresses this loss of freedom and emphasizes it by returning to the feminine gender signifiers. Additionally, the writing subject uses verbs that reflect her new status. Instead of using verbs that indicate action such as “salí a la calle”¹⁶ (35) now the protagonist is passive, for example: *lleváronme*¹⁷ (113) and *le pedí licencia*¹⁸ (114).

The writing subject uses this language to reflect the protagonist’s limited freedom as a woman and reinforces the powerlessness of the protagonist as a female. When she is incarcerated as male, she maintains a sense of control over her destiny. As a female, she no longer expresses that sense of entitlement. The writing subject is again demonstrating a characteristic that is typical of other female soldiers—the sense of the importance of the individual. This is not a plea for female liberation; it is a clear statement against the

¹⁶ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “[I] sallied forth into the street” (3).

¹⁷ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as “leading me beside him” (118).

¹⁸ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “I asked leave” (123).

unfairness of treating this female as a woman. The use of the female signifiers even seems ironic in this case.

As the protagonist returns to male dress and behavior at the end of the *Vida*, the writing subject's position on her gender is evident. This action expresses "a desire not for the physical acquisition of a male body but for a male social identity" (Wheelwright 13). How the I/Erauso protagonist ended her days is not included in the text. Instead the *Vida* ends with her as a male, prepared to defend her lifestyle (Juárez "Señora" 190).

5.4 CONCLUSION

The I/Erauso protagonist who charges at her detractors at the end of the text serves as an indication that *la Monja Alférez* cannot be understood in a simple paradigm and that this individual will not quietly become submerged by oblivion. The mere fact that a version of the *Vida* still exists today is testament to the success of the text. Since these females were considered anomalies, their stories were often purged from the historical record, with Joan of Arc being a singular exception (Wheelwright 109). In order to deal with those who were left, the stories were often revised to "to conform more closely to prevailing understandings of sexual difference" (Wheelwright 109). If their stories were not lost, they often became iconic or discredited. *La Monja Alférez* has indeed become an icon, representing something new to each subsequent generation, ranging from monster to feminist. Unfortunately, in this process, the writing subject becomes lost or confused with the protagonist in the text. However, through the combined efforts of the writing subject, protagonist and narrator, an idea of what women and women writers were at this time can be glimpsed.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Over the course of the *Vida*, the writing subject utilizes the narrator and the protagonist to convey various messages about female autobiography. Conversely, those textual tools reveal the contours of the writing subject her/himself and give insight into the phenomenon of female writing subjects at that time.

Because of the apocryphal nature of the *Vida*, it cannot be read as an analysis of the historical Erauso. Neither can it be considered an original. The communal nature of the work, however, provides valid insights into the collective nature of the writing subject within the text. Analyzed through multiple authorship, the value of the work lies in the reader's perception of the text as a whole. To a reader in the early 21st Century, the insights that are available through the work are considerably different from those gathered by a reader in another century. The ongoing interest in the text demonstrates the importance of understanding it in its own context as well as noting the continuing impact that the *Vida* has on the following centuries.

6.1 THE PROTAGONIST

The protagonist is a separate entity from the historical Erauso. The historical Erauso is established through the documents and *testimonios* that follow the *Vida* in Vallbona's edition although these texts give little insight into who she was as a person. For the purposes of this analysis, however, the character of the protagonist in the text is the entity of interest because this character carries the messages from the writing subject.

The protagonist is the character who acts out the events retold in the narrative. This character is typically silent, with any direct utterances coming from the narrator or in the form of direct dialogue that is intended to be read as a collective discourse (Pavel

25). In the *Vida* she is presented as a Basque native by birth, who escapes the life of the convent and fashions a new life as a male. She first lives as a boy in Spain, taking a variety of jobs to survive. She then leaves for the Americas where she works as a shopkeeper and eventually becomes a soldier. As a soldier, she embodies the valiant ideal of a Spanish soldier and gains the rank of ensign.

6.1a CONFLICTING NATIONALITIES AND GENDERS

One of the first messages in the text concerns the conflicting nationalities and genders given for the protagonist. Her Basque nationality and female gender are established in her childhood years. In the birth narrative she is identified as a native of San Sebastián and given the surname of “Araujo” (33). The title of the *Vida*, however, uses the Spanish “Erauso”. In the birth narrative, the narrator establishes that Erauso was born the daughter of Capitán Miguel de Araujo and María Pérez de Galarraga i Arze (3).

The protagonist’s Basque identity is consistent throughout the *Vida*, although she is not associated with the name “Araujo” or “Erauso” in text. As a soldier the male protagonist uses the name “Alférez Díaz” (65). This reference appears in the text when her brother Miguel refers to her as the one who fatally wounded him in the duel (65). Even with the different surname, she still identified herself as Basque the first time she meets Miguel (56). Clearly the Basque identity was important to the protagonist although subsequent name changes¹ have minimized her association with that nationality and subsumed her into the larger Spanish identity.

This vacillation of nationality mirrors her gender fluidity. Although she is introduced as female, throughout the *Vida* the protagonist demonstrates a preference for

¹ The names associated with the historical Erauso are Juan de Arriola y Arauso, Pedro de Orive, Alonso Díaz de Rada, Francisco de Loyola, Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzman and Antonio de Erauso (56).

the male gender. At the end of the narrative, although she reveals her female sex under duress, she goes to Rome to meet with Pope Urban VIII to receive sanction to dress and live as a male² (122-23). The protagonist, in a manner consistent with other female soldiers, is willing to go to great lengths to maintain her male identity (Wheelwright 88). Her situation is unique however, as she actually attained official approval to continue living as a male after she “revealed” her female sex.

6.1b IMPORTANCE OF MALE IDENTITY

The primary reason she was granted leave to continue to dress and act as a male is that she maintained her virginity during her time as a female soldier. This was accomplished because the protagonist became the guardian of her own chastity. The strict code of honor delegated that responsibility to a male family member, but as the protagonist separates from both her familial and gender role, she becomes accountable for protecting what Mujica calls a woman’s most significant female asset at the time (163). As a male, the protagonist is quick to defend her own honor. There are numerous examples of this in the narrative, but the final scene ends the text in a definitive manner. One day after her audience with the Pope, the protagonist encounters two young women, one of whom insults her. She angrily rebuts and insults both the women, as well as any man who would defend them (124). Although the reaction is rash and overstated, it reflects the intense desire of the protagonist to demand respect for her masculine persona.

This distinctive pride in her male identity is one of the singular most defining descriptions of the protagonist and is one that separates her from other females in the narrative. Her actions and presentation indicate that the protagonist cannot be considered female in the text when she is using her male persona. On the other hand, one of the

² This event is also borne out by historical documents (122-23).

defining traits of the female characters is that they are always under the expected control of a male (Braccio 204). The romantic encounters, likely included to establish the masculinity of the protagonist, also reinforce female stereotypes that provide a contrast to the behavior of the protagonist. Applying Wheelwright's work, the narrator demonstrates Erauso's "desire for male privilege and a longing for escape from domestic confines and powerlessness" as she emphasizes this distinction (19).

The protagonist's male identity was maintained by her female virginity and allowed her to transition identities from female virgin soldier to female virgin nun and back to female virgin male. If she had had sexual intercourse, her status would have changed from virgin to transgressor regardless of the valor of her masculine persona. The importance of her choice to remain a virgin was of inestimable value to Erauso. Even as she flirts and sometimes has sexual contact with women, she always leaves before intercourse. In the case of Doña Beatriz, who demands intimacy from Erauso, the protagonist forcibly removes herself from the situation before she is discovered (47). The female combatant needed to maintain a position of "genderlessness," not only to protect her male identity but also to demonstrate control over what was considered a female's greatest weakness (Wheelwright 12). Her dedication to remaining sexually neutral offered her an opportunity to achieve a position of great power.

As the protagonist claims her masculine traits, she becomes action-oriented and capable of determining her own future. The narrator frames the final scene of the *Vida* to emphasize this characteristic as the women at the end of the *Vida* sardonically ask her "Señora Catalina, ¿dónde es el camino?"³ (124). Rather than asking where she will go, they are questioning her future. Her fierce response "Señora puta, a darles a vuestras

³ Fitzmaurice-Kelly translates this as "Whither away, my lady Catalina?" (144).

Mercedes cien pescosadas i cien cuchilladas a quien lo quisiere defender”⁴ makes much more sense as it is considered from her perspective (124).

6.1c EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Her masculine identity is supported by the educational level that she demonstrates on several notable occasions in the *Vida*. While it does not represent an exclusively male trait, upper class males did receive a superior education in that time in Spain so that they could manage properties, and participate in government and business (Caldaso 180). This is an issue for many critics as they attempt to determine the historical Erauso’s involvement in the *Vida*. Unfortunately, this is a difficult task to prove unless the original copy of the text appears.

For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to state that the protagonist clearly received a solid education, probably in the convent, before she transitioned to a male gender. This is referenced several times in the text, first by the university professor who tried to persuade her to continue her study of Latin, and later by the shopkeeper, Juan de Urquiza, who puts the protagonist in charge of several of his stores (36, 47). The narrator’s subtle reminders of the protagonist’s education have two main functions: to reinforce her masculine persona and to support the writing subject’s claim of legitimacy in the genre of autobiography. The protagonist’s educational level reflects her abilities to succeed in the masculine world of education and academia as well as underlines the difference between her and other females.

⁴ Fitzmaurice-Kelly’s translation reads “To give you a hundred thumps on the scruff of your necks, my lady strumpets, and a hundred slashes to anybody who tries to defend you” (144).

6.1d LITERARY TYPES

The differences between the protagonist in the *Vida* and other females are highlighted through the literary comparisons that the narrator uses to develop the protagonist. Throughout the text, iconic male types illustrate the protagonist's male development. The early comparisons between the protagonist and a *pícaro* draw a protagonist who is learning to survive in an unfriendly environment as well as to live as a male. Her comparisons to the *Don Juan* character demonstrate that she has been so successful in her male presentation that she has to escape forcefully from several situations in order to preserve her masculine identity. As she becomes "one of the boys" and dispels "any sense of sisterly solidarity" the separation grows between the protagonist and the typical female (Wheelwright 10).

As the protagonist becomes a *mujer varonil*, the reader is offered a literary type that can explain some of her unusual behavior. This manly woman character takes on most of the traits expected of a valiant soldier, who through some biological error may have been born the wrong sex (Irigaray 48). This allows the narrator to frame most of the text in the arena of soldier's autobiography. As the protagonist is established as a male, and then as a male soldier, finally she is a masculine enough character to present her story in the context of a soldier's autobiography. This masculine protagonist is carefully constructed over the course of the *Vida* by the narrator.

6.2 THE NARRATOR

The narrator is the entity used by the writing subject to frame the life story of the protagonist, maintain the pace of the narration and at times directly address the reader. The writing subject configures a narrator responsible for the inclusions and exclusions in

the text as well as interpreting the events for the reader. The narrative in the *Vida* is retold from a “homodiegetic” perspective in which the narrator both retells the events as well as participates in them (Genette 245). In addition, the *Vida* is an autobiography which requires the narrator to balance the presentation between the “I now” and “I then” perspectives (S. Smith *Reading* 59). While managing the temporal differences, the narrator is also navigating two genders. Balancing these conflicting identities, the narrator exhibits a “double-voicedness” which reflects the problem of a collective writing subject telling the life story of a female in the male-dominated genre of autobiography (S. Smith *Poetics* 50).

One solution to the problem of multiple positions of the narrator is to focus on the narrator’s intent rather than her accuracy allowing the character to be viewed as a whole, rather than as a fractured entity manipulated by multiple authors (Deck 244). Moreover, this approach allows for the message of the narrator to become more prominent than the veracity of her/his account. This approach, however, does not allow the conflicts to be seen in the text as it submerges them into a cohesive and not necessarily representative writing subject.

6.2a GENDER

The ongoing question of gender must be addressed in each manifestation of Erauso in the *Vida*. Erauso as narrator is assumed to share the gender of the protagonist with at least some of the writing subject, but because of multiple authorship cannot be limited to a single gender. However, her/his most significant contribution to this topic is how s/he portrays the protagonist. S/he has successfully “crossed the gender wall” because s/he can depict the protagonist as masculine (Finney 164-65). The narrator

presents the protagonist as a male in an authoritative manner which ensures the success of the character.

S/he successfully negotiates the gender divide by aligning the protagonist with the powerful in society: males, conquerors, and by asserting the rights given to her through the papal dispensation. The skillfully worded text consistently uses masculine interpretations of the protagonist's choices; she thinks and acts as a male, she uses the language of the powerful conquering Spanish and ultimately the writing subject chooses the masculine genre of soldier's story/autobiography to frame her life story. All these choices demonstrate the masculinity of the character. Even within the structure of the autobiography, the narrator overcomes the moments of tension by inserting direct dialogue (S. Smith *Poetics* 50).

The autobiographical genre is a good fit for the life story of a valiant soldier, while the confessional style of a female religious autobiography does not offer the same advantages. The choice of the writing subject to frame the protagonist's life story as a soldier's autobiography allows her/him to bypass the expected apologetic posture of a female writer. Even though this writing subject is a collective, there are still associations with the female Erauso that must be confronted. Applying Fernández's work to the *Vida*, one means available to the writing subject to establish the authority to write in this genre is to appropriate the legitimacy granted to the historical Erauso by this "higher power," i.e. the King and the Pope (21-22).

As a result of this special permission, the narrator was also able to tell the life story from an endorsed position, not from a posture of apology. The empowered narrator does not express regret for writing the *Vida*; rather s/he emphasizes the characteristics

that prove her entry to be legitimate. Although the narrator is also affected by the multiple authorship of the text, s/he is read as a single, although at times inconsistent character.

6.2b CONFIGURATION OF THE PROTAGONIST

The single most important contribution of the writing subject by means of the narrator is her/his configuration of the protagonist. While the narrator guides the development of this character in the text, s/he also reveals something about herself. Looking at the information that s/he includes as well as that s/he excludes allows for valuable insight into the narrator. S/he inserts her/himself into the narration through the use of the first-person singular, *yo*, starting at the first line of the text (33). A significant jump occurs very early in the narrative after the narrator briefly covers the protagonist's early childhood until she is left at the convent (33). The same line of the *Vida* ends with the protagonist as a 15-year old novitiate (34). This significant time of formation in the life of the protagonist is not mentioned at all in the *Vida*.

The time period in which she formed her gender, national and religious identity, and was educated are all absent from the narrative. Applying Wheelwright's work to the *Vida*, this portion of the life story would not have contributed to the "genderless" position that the writing subject wanted to achieve for the protagonist (Wheelwright 12). During these eleven years the protagonist was living a feminine life even though it was not of her own choosing. It is an understandable, although intriguing, omission and one that is consistent with the genre of soldier's memoirs which were often written with the understanding that they could "clarify the events for the historical record" (Malloy 4).

A notable inclusion is the elucidation of her sex at birth which is established as female. There are numerous feminine references to the protagonist as a child and an adolescent in the convent (33-34). The spectacle surrounding the protagonist was focused on the gender change that the character had undergone and the narrator confronts it in a direct manner by establishing her as a female in the first line of the narrative.

Some of the exclusions in the narrative cause tension as two competing versions of the event occur. The protagonist's motivation for leaving the convent is one such episode. The events in the narrative are ordered so that the conflict between the protagonist and another nun precedes her escape. If this dispute were the impetus for her flight, it indicates the protagonist was merely reacting to the situation with little forethought. However, the manner in which she runs away from the convent suggests that she planned to leave at the first opportunity as well as change her gender. The scene in which the protagonist undergoes the gender change is described as a rite of transformation (Perry "Convent" 397). Although it is not resolved in that episode, later decisions demonstrate that the protagonist has clear ideas about her future and is dedicated to its' implementation at almost any cost.

A final manner in which the narrator configures the protagonist is through a series of literary comparisons, the *pícaro*, the hero in *capa y espada* plays, and the *Don Juan* character. Each association develops the masculine identity of the protagonist in a manner that establishes the legitimacy of presenting the life story of *la Monja Alférez* in this context. The *pícaro* character portrays the young protagonist as she learns to live as a male and survive by her cleverness. As she develops confidence in her masculine persona, the protagonist demonstrates characteristics of the hero in the *capa y espada*

plays and strenuously defends her honor. The comparisons to the *Don Juan* character show a supremely confident protagonist who thoroughly embodies the masculine ideal and attitude toward women. In this respect, she is very similar to female combatants who teasingly imitate seduction of women in order to embellish their masculine reputations (Wheelwright 13). The protagonist and narrator, however, never cross the line and initiate sexual intercourse because the virginity of the protagonist is her most significant asset.

6.2c CONFIGURATION OF OTHER CHARACTERS AND THE “REVELATION” OF THE PROTAGONIST’S SEX

The writing subject focuses the narrator primarily on the delineation of the protagonist. As a result the other characters are mainly drawn to illuminate a particular trait, and fall into three categories, foils who demonstrate her honor and resolve, love interests who denote her masculinity, and family members who unintentionally aid her in her dedication to her masculine identity and allow her emotional expression.

The other characters in the narrative help the protagonist develop as decidedly masculine. Her masculine persona, however, comes to an abrupt end in the scene in which she reveals her sex to the Bishop. This significant scene is configured by the narrator as the climax and emphasizes the protagonist’s ability to determine the course of her life. She realizes that she is in an inextricable situation after the murder of *El Nuevo Cid* and finds herself in the house of a sympathetic Bishop (110). She makes the choice to save her life by sacrificing the secret of her masculine identity to the compassionate Bishop. Just as the protagonist is in control of the creation of her masculine identity, she manipulates the circumstances under which this persona will be “revealed.” The hand of

the writing subject, although never directly visible, guides the development of the protagonist through the narrator.

6.3 THE WRITING SUBJECT

The writing subject expresses the same need for legitimacy that the protagonist and narrator seek. While all three entities need for the protagonist to be seen as male to sanction her actions, the writing subject is the Erauso entity that must prove the writing subject's right to use the genre. This is important because the writing subject is the psychological collective "by which and against which the external world can be posited" (P. Smith xxvii).

In the case of the writing subject, however, there is always the issue of multiple authorship that must be considered. This is complicated by the iconic view of the protagonist that is confused with the historical Erauso that, nevertheless, presents a cohesive image. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, the writing subject cannot be a single, unified presence, it is still read as a amalgamated entity in the text. Even within a writing subject that is assumed to be a single identity, however, a multiplicity of subject positions should be expected (P. Smith 108). This anticipation of flexibility allows for a greater understanding of the writing subject and for multiple authorship.

Inconsistencies and tensions that arise in the narrative represent core human experiences that are simply put into written form in the text. The writing subject is using the process of writing to realize her/himself more fully. S/he is both the source and the product of her/his own autobiography (P. Smith xxvii). Her/his actualization is complicated by her/his need to use language as a medium to describe this process. Language is both limiting and limitless as it both controls the writing subject and is how

the writing subject controls the protagonist and narrator (P. Smith 110). Not only is her/his ability to express her life story affected, s/he is also in a situation where s/he must use the medium established by males in order to relate this unique story.

This divided writing subject is grappling with language, its own interior conflicts and its varying gender preferences. One manner of approaching the writing subject is considering its role in the context of a premodern autobiography. The perspective of these writing subjects was considered candid although they contained contradictions (Pavel 22). They relied on a communal sense of “common moral values” that they promoted even if their own actions did not (Pavel 22). Therefore, the writing subject’s intent becomes more important than her/his veracity (Deck 244).

The issue of an amalgamated writing subject in the male dominated genre of autobiography is one of the writing subject’s principle preoccupations. S/he is associated with the female protagonist and historical Erauso, but is not solely female because of the influence of male authors, editors and copyists. Even still s/he is faced with the same task as male autobiographers, justifying her/his work (Molloy 4). In her/his case, however, there is an expected position of apology that has been adopted by other writing subjects of female autobiography. The writing subject in the *Vida*, however, does not undermine her/his own abilities in the autobiography rather s/he highlights the same male qualities as her/his male soldier peers, valor, honor and nationalism. The refusal of the writing subject to submit to a position of apology and accept the mantle of female writing subject speaks to her/his collective perspective as well as a fervent desire to present this autobiography as a life story that is worthy of writing.

The collective writing subject's authoritative position presents a threat to the society because s/he presents a female protagonist and "if women begin to speak and act from the same ground of cerned subjectivity and identity as men have traditionally enjoyed, a resistance is automatically effected in a sense" (P. Smith 137). Applying Sidonie Smith's work to the *Vida*, the writing subject minimizes the peril s/he poses by emphasizes her/his separation from the protagonist's female sex (*Poetics* 55). Establishing the protagonist as a virgin is central to succeeding in this endeavor. As a female virgin, the writing subject proves that the narrator can control her sexuality, which was considered dangerous and destructive (*Poetics* 55). The protagonist's position of power came from her ability to "renounce sexuality. Erauso knew that to get approval for the life he had made for himself, he should emphasize his virginity" (Perry "Convent" 406). As the writing subject aligns her/himself with the power structure and complies with the most important social codes s/he gains approval that s/he could not win through the lifestyle of the protagonist.

In order to fully develop the masculine identity of the protagonist, the narrator uses action sequences to demonstrate these characteristics. The writing subject understands the importance of these scenes to bolster the legitimacy of the text as they prove the masculinity of the protagonist. The protagonist survives a series of adversities to prove that she can overcome the perceived weaknesses of her gender (Juárez "Mujer militar" 155). The battle scenes, the romantic scenes, and the death of Miguel all demonstrate the validity of the protagonist's male persona.

The presentation of the life story of the protagonist in the form of a soldier's tale added to the acceptance of her soldier identity. The focus on action was an expected

manner of developing the character while an introspective monologue would have been out of place in the genre (Levisi 236). In order to tie herself clearly to the protagonist, the “female” part of the writing subject has the narrator cast the protagonist within the first-person narrative. The chronological ordering of the events, summary presentation of childhood, focus on action and awareness of the reader were all typical of soldier’s tales (Levisi 236-40). As the picture of the writing subject gains focus, there is the lingering question of comparison between that subject and the historical Erauso.

6.4 RECONCILING THE WRITING SUBJECT WITH THE AUTHOR

The current consensus of critics is that the historical Erauso was likely involved in some way with the production of the original text, although they do not admit that she was the author of the *Vida* (8). There are others, however, that believe the historical Erauso should not be so easily dismissed as the author of the text (Juárez “Autobiografías” 161). While this topic cannot be answered definitively without the original manuscript, there are some evaluations that can provide important illumination.

6.4a WRITING SUBJECTS IN FEMALE SOLDIER’S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

In the *Vida*, we must see at least a portion of the writing subject in the company of her/his peers, other writing subjects telling the life story of a female soldier. There are several distinguishing characteristics that bind this group together that can be compared with those identified in the writing subject (Wheelwright 9-10). One of the defining characteristics of this group was the concept of individual liberation (Wheelwright 10). These female soldiers were not asking for equal access for all women to the power and position of males. As a matter of fact they consistently demonstrated a male attitude toward other females, who were perceived as a threat to their masculine identities

(Wheelwright 10-12). This concern mirrors the protagonist's attempts to separate herself from her femaleness to establish legitimacy for her male identity.

As the writing subject seeks endorsement in autobiography, it must clearly divide the Erauso protagonist from other females in the text. Although these romantic episodes are almost humorous as they recall the *Don Juan* character, their intent is quite serious. The male behavior of the protagonist that denigrates females also underpins the writing subject's position that it has overcome the supposed weaknesses of the female sex (S. Smith *Poetics* 55).

The strength or masculinity of the protagonist is further demonstrated when her virginity is confirmed in the *Vida* (112). As a male, the protagonist was both a valiant soldier and a rogue who killed many men in disputes. The virginity of the female protagonist validated the actions of protagonist as a male. In order to gain acceptance for her actions as a male after her sex was revealed, the female soldier's "denial of her sexuality" was a key component (Wheelwright 12). As her fame spread "great emphasis was placed on her virginity or sexlessness in popular representations" (Wheelwright 12).

While these characteristics demonstrate similarities between portions of the writing subject and the writing subjects of other female soldier's autobiographies, there are other questions that are raised about why the historical Erauso is denied authorship of the *Vida*. The educational level of the historical Erauso has always been a sticking point in this debate. The writing subject clearly demonstrates a great familiarity with different literary types and traditions, and there is no clear evidence of such an education for the historical Erauso. In the *Vida*, however, the writing subject refers several times to the education of the protagonist who can read Latin and manage accounts in shops (36, 44-

45). There could be sexist reasons that the historical Erauso is denied authorship of the *Vida* while male soldiers writing autobiographies were not (Juárez “Autobiografías” 161).

The gender vacillation of the protagonist is another issue that is often cited for separating the historical Erauso from authorship. The Erauso entity is so divided in the text that the historical Erauso would not have the literary ability to manage the character. The search for the authentic voice of the writing subject is quite complex and the search itself is complicated by multiple authorship as it is impossible to distinguish where other authors, editors and copyists have made changes to the text. The gender divide in the genre, however, is consistent as female writing subjects attempt to appropriate a medium that is male dominated and oriented to tell a life story in a framework that also male controlled. A female writing experiences a spilt simply by attempting to represent herself in this manner (Irigaray 133-34).

6.4b SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GENDER DIVISION

While the gender division of the writing subject and the protagonist is explained as a part of the process of a collective writing subject in a male dominated genre, it can nevertheless be evaluated from a different perspective. As the writing subject was attempting to create itself in and through the text, its task was further complicated by the gender division of the protagonist. The ensuing moments of tension in the text expose more of the writing subject.

The protagonist’s flight from the convent takes on additional layers of meaning as its value to the writing subject becomes clear. The perspective difference for either an impetuous or deliberate motivation for leaving the convent transforms the protagonist’s

reason for escape. If the protagonist left on impulse, then her subsequent transformation from female to male appears more impulsive, however, if she meticulously planned the flight from the convent, then the gender change looks intentional. A premeditated gender alteration lends credibility to interpreting her escape from the convent as a conscious decision as well in the *Vida* (35).

Before the protagonist leaves Spain, she must first break with both of her parents. These encounters initially leave her confused, but ultimately provide the impetus for her to move forward with her life as a male. The intent of including these scenes is not clear, although they do emphasize a dedication to her masculine identity as she would prefer to separate herself from her parents rather than relinquish her life as a male. This position is affirmed as she later develops a contentious yet close relationship with her brother Miguel whom she eventually kills. It is possible that these inclusions suggest the presence of another author who included them for their entertainment value rather than to advance the plot of the *Vida*.

The relationship with Miguel takes on a parallel significance for the writing subject. The protagonist is proving her masculinity as a soldier and the collective writing subject is demonstrating her/his right to place this life story in the framework of autobiography. The relationship with Miguel provides both the protagonist and writing subject an opportunity to gain legitimacy. As the protagonist kills Miguel she takes his place as a son in their family, even if she is not cognizant of this motivation (Juárez “Mujer militar” 157). The writing subject has brought the protagonist through a series of obstacles that have proven her masculinity (Levisi 240).

The events in question extend from the moment the protagonist is banished for seducing Miguel's lover to the brother's death (57, 64). As the protagonist establishes her masculinity in this most primal of ways, the writing subject also benefits from the increased social standing that is granted the protagonist (Juárez "Mujer militar" 157). In the *Vida*, the narrator expresses great remorse on the part of the protagonist for the death of Miguel (65). It is significant however, that she does not abandon her male guise even in the face of such sadness. This bears out in a consistent manner the importance of the masculine identity for the protagonist.

The romantic encounters with women are demonstrative of both female soldier and male behavior, and the virginity of the protagonist validates both interpretations. There are notable differences in the protagonist in these episodes and in the scenes after she has revealed her sex. As a male, she demonstrates confidence and control while as a female her posture is subservient. The fluctuating gender signifiers denote the different social positions of the male protagonist and female protagonist. The female soldiers demonstrate similar changes of position, as soon as they reveal their sex they are placed in a female setting thus normalizing their position socially (Wheelwright 81). This reinforces the idea that this was an individual revolution rather than a social one. The female soldiers became a "temporary aberration" rather than a rallying point (Wheelwright 81). The writing subject in the *Vida* realizes the importance of maintaining social mores in order to maintain her/his position of authority and protect the text.

The motivation of the writing subject is to use the narrator and the protagonist in text to prove the value of telling the life story of *la Monja Alférez* in the masculine domain. The writing subject uses each entity to add a different dimension to this effort.

The message of legitimacy that the writing subject crafts is designed to establish the worth of the protagonist, narrator or writing subject.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The most important message brought by the protagonist's mostly silent manifestation is that she is masculine. A female at that time who was considered a strong individual was expected to demonstrate her strength in the appropriate feminine realm of family as a wife, mother, sister, daughter, etc. or as a female religious. Even in those domains, however, there were strictly prescribed roles for the females. Any transgression of these positions could be harshly punished.

In the case of the Erauso protagonist, the writing subject understood that it must present this character as worthy of male status in order for her to gain popular acceptance. The narrator and writing subject were aided in their task by the Pope's ruling that allowed the historical Erauso to continue to dress in male attire, but they still faced a public that was not as convinced. The popular opinion is represented at the end of the *Vida* by the insult hurled at the protagonist by a woman. The harsh and immediate reaction of the protagonist demonstrates her sensitivity to the criticism. Some members of the public were fascinated by her story while others were frightened or repulsed.

In order to reiterate the masculinity of the protagonist, the writing subject focuses the narrator on the traits that are most important to establish this identity, her masculine identification and her dedication to this identity. The protagonist associated herself with many masculine traits such as a proclivity for action, a romantic interest in women, a strong sense of honor, serving as a valiant soldier and possessing an educational

background worthy of her status. All of these characteristics bolstered her masculine identity.

Her unwavering dedication to this identity is demonstrated many times in the *Vida*. Even before she transforms her gender, the protagonist exhibits her absolute intent to control her own life. The characters who try to control her through force are never successful. She flees the convent and the university professor's house when she was beaten, and she violently confronts different antagonists such as Reyes and *El Nuevo Cid* when they attack her honor (34-35, 36, 46, 101-103).

Throughout the *Vida*, her masculine affiliation is revealed as her actions can be compared to popular and literary figures. The *pícaro* enhances the image of the protagonist who can learn to survive through her cleverness as she endures the sometimes harsh lessons of her masters. The *Don Juan* comparison further establishes her masculine identity as well as separates her from her femaleness. The *mujer varonil* and the soldier's tale comparisons establish this masculine identity's right to present the life story in this genre.

In the case of the narrator, s/he achieves her own masculinity by emphasizing the masculine acts of the protagonist. Her/His complicity allows the protagonist to be transformed from a powerless female novice to an ideal soldier over the course of the narrative. S/he guides the story through the birth narrative, gender transformation, development of the male persona to the heroic achievements of the soldier, the daring romantic escapades and finally to the "revelation" of her sex and the resulting consequences. As the narrator successfully presents the protagonist as male, s/he guides the reader's understanding of this complicated character. The narrator presents the

protagonist as a female who successfully navigated a male identity and ultimately achieved a status that combined both genders successfully. This presentation of the protagonist as a valiant male is coupled with the Pope's dispensation of the historical Erauso's actions. This forceful description of the protagonist allowed the narrator to tell the story from a position of authority in the male dominated genre.

For the writing subject, the masculine presentation bolsters her/his own legitimacy as well. As the writing subject struggles to write itself into being through the text, it faces two particular issues, genre and gender. It chooses the genre of autobiography and writes from a position of authority, based on the historical Erauso's papal dispensation. As the writing subject in autobiography, it confronts the issue of female writer by proving that the protagonist has overcome the "escaped the drag of the body, the contaminations of female sexuality" (S. Smith *Poetics* 55). The writing subject is convinced that the life story of *la Monja Alférez* is a valuable contribution, and is willing to establish legitimacy so that the story can be told in the form of a soldier's tale.

The writing subject in the *Vida* carefully establishes her/his legitimacy over the course of the *Vida* in order to demand respect for her/his work. The challenge was to present the protagonist as an anomaly rather than a crusader whose story was nevertheless entertaining, edifying and valuable. The writing subject creates alliances with writing subjects of female soldier's autobiographies, males and females, authorities and outlaws. The protagonist moves from female novice to male *pícaro* and *Don Juan*, through experiences designed to test, demonstrate and ultimately vindicate her masculinity and place in society.

While the apocryphal nature of the *Vida* makes it impossible to determine all the changes that the text has incorporated, it is also true that the story is worthy of being heard and that the text should not be overlooked simply because the protagonist is female. As a reader in the early XXI Century, the messages that I perceive that the collective Erauso entities deliver are insights into being a women and a writing subject in the XVII Century. While this text does not advocate liberation for all females, it does cause the reader to pause and consider why this particular female was capable of success, even at the cost of her female gender identity. The collective writing subject was determined to succeed on masculine terms, even though the female portion of the writing subject was provided almost no tools to do so. The protagonist's absolute devotion to this identity and powerful lifestyle withstood separation from birthplace, regional identity, family and even gender. The sacrifices the protagonist was willing to make give the reader pause, although she is safely presented as an anomaly.

When the *Vida* was written Spain had not yet reached the turbulent XVIII and XIX centuries in which the ideals of the *Ilustración* and the French Revolution took hold and the desire for modernity and equality became more widespread. This text seems to foreshadow some of the questions that Spain would be facing in the upcoming centuries, not the least of which was the role of women in the society. With foremothers such as the iconic and unforgettable *la Monja Alférez* who captured the nation's attention at a time of prosperity, transition and tradition; she and others like her presented different women's life stories to a society that assigned them very particular social roles. This is the story of one very exceptional female's life.

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