

**VOICING NARRATIVE THROUGH TRANSATLANTICISM AND
TRANSFORMATION IN *HISTORIA DE LA MONJA ALFÉREZ* BY CATALINA
DE ERAUSO**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes various aspects of Catalina de Erauso's *Historia de la Monja Alférez, escrita por ella misma* (1829). The first chapter explores notions of interior and exterior as categories that determine not only the protagonist's movement in space but also their expression of self-identity over the course of the text, focalized through first-person narration. Additionally, the chapter brings to light how the interior narrative parallels Erauso's desire to share their transformation from nun in a Spanish convent to a soldier in the Americas with picaresque tendencies. Erauso leverages the power of exterior appearances through the self-fashioning of their public persona which then leads into discussion of Erauso's dual goal of their narrative—demonstrating the private and public narrative aspects. The second chapter analyzes the roles and social occupations that Erauso undertakes during their life and how these endeavors play into the gendered nature of the text. As the number of social and occupational identities embodied by Erauso grows over the course of the narrative, the leitmotif of staying versus fleeing emerges as an organizing plot device, which is examined in chapter three. This project stands to show *Historia* through a narrative-led analysis to better illustrate the intricacies of Erauso's life and work, connecting the protagonist's literary life to their personal trajectory.

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INTRODUCTION

When reflecting on the many lives that traveled from the coast of Europe to the Americas throughout the 15th and 16th centuries and beyond, the significance of the physical journey that each person took on top of the personal hopes and wishes each may have carried with them forms part of an important history. While most who came to the Americas indeed came in search of personal or economic gain, many travelled to truly begin their lives anew, with new names, identities, and appearances. Catalina de Erauso the “Lieutenant Nun”, who has occupied quite a space in Spanish Early Modern research, is one of the best examples of the exploration of the intricacies of transatlantic travel within their own era. The conversation surrounding Erauso has long consisted of topics on gender identity, murderous sprees, and the transformation of a nun into a Lieutenant under the Spanish crown. The documented progression of this dramatic life change is steeped in colorful firsthand details from Erauso, made even more vivid by Erauso’s dual identity as first a nun, and later as a lieutenant. Erauso’s identity was determined by an interior sense of self as well as exterior factors of the environments they inhabited during their transatlantic journey. Through my research, the focus of Catalina de Erauso’s transformative experience will be seen through a geographical and spatial lens while also considering Erauso’s choices as the author. By studying the symbolic and historical importance of the spaces which Erauso occupies and visits throughout their autobiography, Erauso’s gendered experiences can be further analyzed through the representation of their own actions which will contribute to scholarship by deepening the

complexity with which we understand the protagonist of this study through a more modern conception of how Erauso genders their narrative¹.

One of the polemics that arises in regard to studying Erauso's life is that of correctly gendering Erauso. Given Erauso's gender fluidity over the course of the work, it makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly how to gender Erauso in scholarly study. Most scholars such as Eva Mendieta, Sonia Pérez-Villanueva, Nerea Aresti, and Mia Prensky use feminine nouns and pronouns to refer to Erauso, given Erauso's biological sex and initial upbringing as a female. Throughout *Historia* there is a notable slippage of Spanish gendered pronouns that Erauso uses to describe and identify themselves. As Luzmila Camacho Platero argues, "Catalina solo usara el femenino en ocasiones en las que, debido a las circunstancias, se sentía identificada con ese género en particular, concretamente, en estados de abatimiento, debilidad, desorientación, incertidumbre, miedo" such as when Erauso escapes from Concepción to Tucumán (67). In this moment Erauso says "se ve mi aflicción, cansada, descalza, y lastimados los pies", using feminine adjectives to describe their state (121). While the majority of Erauso's narrative in Spanish employs masculine pronouns and endings, the moments of eruptions into the feminine must be noted. Due to this ambiguity on Erauso's part, this study has chosen to refer to Erauso using gender neutral terminology with "they" and "their" pronouns to honor the vagueness of the narrative and the non-conformist nature of Erauso themselves.

¹ Any further citations in which "she" or "her" appear are choices of the cited author(s), retained to faithfully reproduce their original work.

The first chapter of this analysis presents the idea of the public versus the private in the narrative through the lens of interiority, exteriority, and narrative relativity. The intention of Erauso as narrator plays a crucial role in the determination between the spatial interiority and exteriority of different moments, with the relativity of their choice being the force of categorization. Instead of delving into a study of authorship, I instead shed light on the complex narrative elements that make Erauso's actions and reflections into far more than a simple autobiographical account. Delving into these choices aids in the understanding of how *Historia* is able to manifest both a public and private sphere through the eyes of the narrator all the while allowing for the fluidity and freedom of the retelling of the life that Erauso so clearly demonstrated in reality and here in print.

Mobility continues to play a key role in the second chapter of this thesis, which tracks the different professions that Erauso holds in their lifetime. By categorizing these different roles into official and unofficial, the modes of performance that Erauso employs to survive no matter where they are seals Erauso's fate as a legendary participant in Spanish Colonial transatlantic memory. The range of their expertise in multiple arenas displayed throughout their lifetime works to show how easily Erauso maneuvers themselves in a variety of social spaces. Erauso also develops professionally within the different offices they hold, cementing their place in the New World that was in the process of redefinition during the colonial era with the influx of colonists and immigrants from across the Atlantic.

The final part of this analysis further searches the meaning behind Erauso's relationships with the spaces they inhabit and how they react to them. Between the

dichotomy of staying versus fleeing, Erauso's intricate reactions to their social atmosphere dictate how Erauso wants to be perceived as narrator. Additionally, fleeing from punishment and finding help allow Erauso to demonstrate how they strategically paint themselves to accomplish their narrative task of retelling their life in an honorable and almost mythical way in order to ingratiate the autobiographical narrator to the reader. Furthermore, the roundabout structure of the narrative of Erauso leaving the convent to the ending of *Historia* including a blessing from the Pope echoes further the parallels of Erauso's life and decision-making through their own experience of self-discovery.

My study contributes to the already bountiful body of scholarship on Erauso's life due to its unique perspective from a narrative-centered approach. Other works focus heavily on the gendered implications of *Historia*, the question of authorship, the veracity of the events told, or even the genre of the text as a travelogue or *petición* appealing to the Crown. While all of the previous work on Erauso is highly valuable and have helped inform this study, what remains to be examined is a broader look at Erauso as a participant in a much larger movement of individuals who worked and lived in the same era. By looking beyond the obvious points that Erauso wants the reader to see, such as the acts of defending one's honor and becoming a military hero, the way that Erauso acts and portrays themselves in specific social spaces can become just as revealing as the author's words. Using *Historia* as the true primary text allows for a justification on the part of Erauso's textual representation and the implications of it during the time and in a modern application of the work. This close reading calls for a psychoanalytical approach to the narrative voice, a gendered perspective on Erauso's relationships, and a spatial

perspective on their movements in the Americas. On a larger scale, the focus of this project is to show how Erauso *passes*, in both a gendered sense and a physical sense as a character through the text and geographically across the Atlantic, and how their self-representation may differ depending on the social atmosphere, which can add yet another perspective to the already vibrant work done to analyze Erauso's gendered actions throughout the text.

CHAPTER ONE: INS AND OUTS THROUGH THE INTERIORITY AND EXTERIORITY OF ERAUSO'S NARRATIVE VOICE

In the *Historia* of Catalina de Erauso, the question of authorship of the text itself and what the problem(s) of pondering such questions may bring about usually dominates the discussion of Erauso's work². Instead of focusing directly on the question of Erauso's authorship, this chapter will instead analyze the interiority and exteriority of the text through the respective views of the private and the public. Through this analysis the interiority of the text will refer to the inner thoughts, asides, and comments from Erauso as the autobiographical subject, and exteriority will refer to the situations and events surrounding and explained by Erauso in addition to how they portray themselves in these situations. A closer reading of the narrative choices made in this text will more accurately detail the autobiographical mode of a transatlantic, gender bending traveler of the Spanish Golden Age. *Historia de la Monja Alférez* possesses within it a quality not dissimilar to that of a travelogue or diary of events that happened in the life of Catalina de Erauso, due to its formatting of chapters and constant knowledge of the movements of the protagonist, both geographical and narrative. The deliberate literary choices in the text such as the first-person voice and the way in which the subheadings of each chapter divide the text into distinct periods of time and Erauso's geographical location allow for a

² Christopher Kark, "Latent Selfhood and the Problem of Genre in Catalina de Erauso's *Historia de la Monja Alférez*" (2012), María Esperanza Vargas, *Transgresión, transformación y paradoja en las aventuras transatlánticas de la Monja Alférez, Doña Catalina de Erauso, contadas por ella misma* (2013)

certain element of play within the narrative voice, allowing the reader to always take into account what is intimated versus what is simply being retold.

The freedom of Erauso's narrative voice can be attributed to a more profound analysis of the perspective of *Historia* itself. By categorizing Erauso's passages into either exteriority or interiority, the text can become spatially divided on a figurative level. This distinction transforms Erauso's narrative voice into a perspective that carries with it intention that only Erauso can control as author. The relativity behind this intention will be defined in this analysis through either exteriority or interiority depending on the specific passage, which additionally allows the text to become spatially divided on a figurative level within the narrative itself. Exteriority in reference to Erauso's narrative is defined as an event or feeling that Erauso willingly shares with the reader with the intent for it to form part of their public persona presented within the text. On the other hand, interiority for Erauso consists of the private moments where they confide in the reader, especially things that would not have been public knowledge in the time wherein the events of *Historia* were taking place. The parameters that determine between these two modalities boils down to the intention of Erauso as author, that is to say that Erauso establishes relative spatial categories within their own narrative through their use of the first-person perspective, or whether they choose to speak privately to the reader as an interior space versus where they choose to show off their public persona to the reader as an exterior narrative space. Christopher Kark explains the situation of Erauso's narrative as what he calls the "deictic *I*" in Erauso's text as it "enables Erauso to play with deictic signs at will, assuming the feminine or masculine voice in accordance with the needs of

the moment” (531). Deixis can be defined as “the pointing or specifying function of some words (such as definite articles and demonstrative pronouns) whose denotation changes from one discourse to another” (Merriam Webster). The ambiguity of Erauso’s *I* does in fact let the narrative voice free, allowing Erauso the ability to switch between the masculine and feminine presentations that they display in their work. The concept of interior and exterior voices helps to explain how Erauso employs their *I* via a calculated sense of when to confide in the reader, in this sense read as interior to the “conversation” between Erauso and the reader versus when Erauso chooses to put themselves into a larger, public context thus making the events of *Historia* into a more exterior narrative which includes Erauso, the reader, and the people and events of the narrative.

Interior Narration and the Private Sphere

The interiority of *Historia* is the key to understanding Erauso’s *I* as it is in these moments that Erauso truly reveals themselves from a first-person perspective without much influence from other participants within the text. The scene that begins the journey in the text and subsequently the entirety of Erauso’s passing and presentation as a male is crucial in terms of the way that it is in fact a private moment between Erauso’s narration and the reader. Catalina completes their transformation in a private space, completely alone and only later reveals the details of the process via *Historia*. The moment in which Catalina decides to begin this process stems from a moment in which they are alone, having been asked to fetch their aunt’s breviary. Catalina sees the keys to the convent, then feigns illness in order to gain private access to the keys. After gathering the necessities, Erauso says of their first actions that “dejé mi escapulario, y me salí a la calle

sin haberla visto ni saber por dónde echar ni adónde ir. Tiré no sé por dónde, y fui a dar en un castaño que está fuera” (Erauso 95). The shedding of the physical monastic cloak and rushing out into the street having no previous knowledge of the world outside the convent opens Catalina’s world into one with more possibilities and freedom. Though this act of leaving the convent is sudden and undoubtedly not premeditated, Erauso quickly and easily finds refuge in the nearby chestnut grove which was unbeknownst to them before their escape from the convent, signaling the change from a structured, traditional life to one that would come to defy the very social norms Erauso was trained to live by in their earlier life. Within this short personal reflection, Erauso reveals much about the symbolic change that they have just made in their life, while also opening every potential possibility as to what they may do next, in so far as one attains fundamentally greater social freedom through their outward appearance as a man. This literal movement through space and social constructs allows Erauso a newfound fluidity wherein they can define for themselves who they are through their *I* and their multiple active transitions between their interior and exterior worlds. Encarnación Juárez Almendros suggests that the drastic change that Erauso makes in their clothing and physical appearance “representa el corte de vínculos familiares, el comienzo de su autonomía individual y su introducción en el ámbito patriarcal” by choosing to leave behind her veil “por no ver qué hacer con él” (Almendros 60, Erauso 95). In this moment, it is impossible to know if Erauso truly was unsure as to what to do with their habit, but the nonchalant tone toward such an important mark of their soon-to-be previous identity indicates that Erauso at least mentally has officially left the convent life in the past once and for all. The lack of

concern as to being found out, and Erauso's decision to willfully shed their habit and the demonstration of this act in this text as almost an afterthought is the first hint at Erauso's narrative style, as these events come naturally to Erauso to alter their identity in this way. Through the shedding of Erauso's uniform from the convent, they convert their feminine appearance into a new, masculine one by cutting their hair and fashioning men's clothes to wear. By leaving the convent and subsequently undressing themselves, Erauso enters into a mutable space in terms of gender presentation, as they are no longer clearly a woman as they have removed the habit and then transition into their new identity by using their former clothes to make more typical men's clothing of the era including a "basquiña", "calzones", "fadellín", "ropina" y "polainas" (Erauso 95).

Despite the confidence shown in Erauso's transformation, the underlying tone of doubt and hesitancy mixed with an overall lack of specific details as to where they fled to and exactly how they managed to remain hidden for three days in a bush, leaves the narrative with more questions than answers. As Rainer Goetz hypothesizes, the Spanish Golden Age and the growing trend of independent thought in writing gave way to more autobiographical modes of self-expression, and Goetz uses the term "accidental autobiographies" to refer to texts similar to that of Catalina de Erauso's, whose primary purpose was not to recount the life story of its protagonist, but perhaps instead to complete another rhetorical goal (53, 60). Goetz pinpoints the difficulty of assigning genres to self-expressive texts like *Historia* partly because "autobiography was not invented in the Spanish Golden Age" though self-writing became more popular following the Renaissance and the boom of the concept of the *self* (53). Goetz goes on to explain

that the difference between first-person narrative and autobiographical writing “lies in the intentions of the respective authors; in a chronicle, history, or *relación*, the information of the author’s life appears only as a corollary of the main purpose... from the author’s standpoint these life stories have to be considered accidental and circumstantial” (60, original emphasis).

In Erauso’s case, it is never explicitly stated why they wrote *Historia*, though Eva Mendieta notes the existence of several *peticiones* made by Erauso to the Crown asking for payment for past military service (21). These *peticiones* are corroborated by other *relaciones* published in 1625 by witnesses of Erauso’s life, all which seem to lead up to the finale of *Historia*. Upon returning to Spain, Erauso succeeds in seeking a pension from the King and also travels to Rome to receive a blessing from Pope Urban VIII which allows Erauso to spend the rest of their life in men’s clothing. Based on the *peticiones* and the additional *relaciones*, it seems that Erauso’s general purpose is that of a retelling of their travels to the Americas with asides of tales from their past about their compatriots, and memories from their time growing up in Spain in order to make a life for themselves that is not only prolific, but highly honorable. The problem with *Historia* is that the reader must trust Erauso’s “truths” that are told, as Erauso is the only witness in *Historia* itself, despite the aforementioned *relaciones* and general public knowledge of Erauso while they were alive. While it is easy to confirm the broader details of Erauso’s life such as their military service and military promotions, the smaller details of Erauso’s daily life are almost impossible to confirm, leading the reader to rely on Erauso to honestly recount their life. According to Goetz, writing in the Middle Ages leaned

heavily upon the truth, which can be supported by Goetz's reference to Spadaccini and Talens's work on autobiography in Early Modern Spain. They examine *Milagros de Nuestra Senora* to state that "Berceo used to connect his stories to written texts in order to convince the intended recipients of their historicity", which in turn bled into the Golden Ages' thirst for first-person narrative to follow the same precedence (58). With phrases such as "eché por no sé dónde", "entré en Vitoria sin saber dónde acogerme" along with the lack of specificity mentioned in the movements after leaving the doors of the convent gives *Historia* the feeling of happenstance at every corner. These phrases and lack of detail could simply be attributed to Erauso's own narrative choice of treating these moments as nonchalant, thus presenting a mood of such casual nature that the reader inherently trusts Erauso as the text's guide no matter how perilous the situation. The circumstantiality that is present in the scene where Catalina becomes "Francisco Loyola" among other aliases throughout *Historia* further exemplifies how this turning point in Erauso's life has been painted as simply casual, despite the fact that Erauso transforms seamlessly into their new identity.

When Erauso comes out of the chestnut grove after three days of hiding, cutting their hair, constructing new clothing, and forming their new exterior identity, it is comical how easily Erauso remains unnoticed. After having spent days constructing their new identity, Erauso must put it to the test. Erauso says that upon meeting their uncle don Francisco de Cerralta for the first time after changing their identity that "me recibió fácilmente sin conocerme... no me di a conocer" (Erauso 95). Through the agency of their new, masculine identity Erauso gains confidence in this first meeting with someone

who may have recognized them, but Erauso goes unnoticed and passes as a male without any complications from their uncle during the three months of their stay with their relative. Later, under a new boss in Valladolid, Erauso comes into contact with their father for the first time since their escape from the convent some seven months previous. Erauso, now “Francisco Loyola”, finds themselves alone with their father “sin hablarnos ni él conocerme” (96). It appears that both parties do not engage each other, but it is certain that Erauso avoids revealing themselves to their father, reassured that their new identity has truly transformed them into a new person while also keeping secret their true identity from their own father. Erauso overhears their father talking with their boss Don Juan de Idiáquez, the king’s secretary, and Erauso’s father reveals that he has traveled to the city to investigate “cómo se le había ido del convento aquella muchacha”, referring to his daughter who unbeknownst to him stands only steps away (96). Upon hearing this from their father, Erauso immediately leaves saying “sin saberme yo qué hacer” to avoid being found out (97). The progression through this scene is both surprising and awkward, however it confirms the validity of Erauso’s new identity, as it is the first true test Erauso faces as “Francisco”. The moments described in the scene effectively form the last part of Erauso’s change from feminine to masculine and from a private being—literally cloistered—of an upper-middle class family to a public entity that is able to move between social strata as they please.

Several scholars have noted the importance of Erauso’s upbringing in their own self-representation, but also in how they first form themselves within the first few scenes as a man. Sonia Pérez-Villanueva refers to the psychoanalytic ideas of Julia Kristeva,

summarizing that “the female autobiographer needs to abandon her own ‘self’ to acquire a male identity” which in the case of Erauso is shown directly through the subject’s actions (“Crossing Boundaries” 305). Pérez-Villanueva continues that “it is possible that Erauso acquired her new persona through the reflection of her father, Miguel de Erauso, who was probably her ideal of masculinity and her referent to the possibilities of the outside world” as Miguel was likely the main masculine figure in their life before they arrived at the convent (“Crossing Boundaries” 305). Pérez-Villanueva ties in this possibility through the application of Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theories in conjunction with those of Jacques Lacan—specifically that of the mirror and its relationship with the “I”, the “self” and the ego. The modeling of Erauso’s behavior as that of the son of Miguel de Erauso instead of that of the daughter of Miguel de Erauso reflects back to what Lacan calls the “mirror stage” of childhood development wherein a child believes to perceive themselves as a whole being no longer attached to the maternal body, however this image “becomes a fantasy of the self... a narcissistic realm of fantasy and imagination” (Castle 184). While the explanation for the distancing from the maternal being becomes more complicated in Erauso’s case, as they spend several years in a convent surrounded by religious “mother” and “sister” figures among the other nuns before they flee, the primordial basis for Erauso’s ego-centered choice to leave the convent and take up a masculine identity bases itself in their Id, a more instinctual foundation based on Erauso’s pre-convent life. Erauso’s break with the Symbolic order through their act of running away from the convent constitutes itself as an act of foreclosure from a Lacanian

perspective, as Erauso breaks with the gendered subordination of life before their transformation in the chestnut grove (Castle 187).

The newfound confidence of a new external identity evolves Erauso from an escaped girl from a convent into a new, mutable presence with an inexplicable sense of risk, confidence, and independence. Some aspects of Erauso's narrative style remain unchanged, such as lack of specificity, however there are several minor details that perhaps give a glimpse into the mind of the protagonist. Rutter-Jensen contemplates the lack of interiority in the text, referencing Stephanie Merrim's comparison of Erauso and "la narrativa soldadesca", saying that *Historia* and the soldier narrative "muestran casi una completa ausencia de interioridad y de expresiones de emoción o remordimiento y reducen sustancialmente el 'yo' en la *Historia* a la *res gestae*, un locus de eventos externos" (88, Merrim 181). Rutter-Jensen's comparison of *Historia* to other works written by soldiers during the period is key, as they "indican, más que expresiones de objetividad o distancia emocional, métodos para construir la masculinidad según la tradición de la época" (88). While this evaluation may be somewhat licit in a general sense, what some scholars do not take into account is where Erauso does show emotion in the text, although these occurrences are few in number and short in length. The first appears upon the culmination of the Battle of Valdivia, when Erauso saves the company's colors. When being comforted after the encounter, their brother Miguel de Erauso appears, which Catalina says "quien no había visto, y me fue de consuelo" (Erauso 114). This demonstration of specificity toward the emotions upon being reunited with their brother after a battle humanizes Erauso not only as a soldier but also as the protagonist, a

point that scholars miss in their analyses. Erauso's emotions come to a head when they murder their brother Miguel, thereby connecting Erauso's emotions back to someone from their past who knew their original identity as a nun from the convent. Miguel died unaware that their own sibling was not only alive and well, but the very person that took his life, which grotesquely makes this fratricidal moment so shocking for Erauso. This glimpse of vulnerability on Erauso's part makes them more relatable, diminishing the outward appearance that had formerly been demonstrated as near impervious to the events that happen in their life and the actions they choose to take. For the first and last time, Erauso shows remorse for the death of their compatriot, saying "muerto el dicho capitán Miguel de Erauso, lo enterraron en el dicho convento de San Francisco, viéndolo yo desde el coro, ¡sabe Dios con qué dolor!" (Erauso 118). In this scene Erauso demonstrates guilt for consciously murdering their brother, as their victim is not a stranger but instead someone who shares the same bloodline, name, and language.

The connection between the Erauso siblings also showcases the yet to be discussed aspect of the internal identity of Erauso. The mention of *vascuence*, or the Basque language *Euskera*, first makes an appearance in the text when Erauso makes contact with their brother Miguel upon arriving in Concepción, Chile. Miguel goes down the line, "pasando y preguntando a cada uno su nombre y patria; y llegando a mí y oyendo mi nombre y patria, soltó la pluma y me abrazó, y fue haciendo preguntas por su padre y madre, y hermanas, y por su hermanita Catalina la monja" (Erauso 112). Erauso reveals that they were only two years old when Miguel left home, which explains why Miguel does not know that their sibling is standing right in front of them. Despite this, the

Erauso siblings are immediately connected through their shared heritage which turns into three years of Erauso working under their brother as a soldier without being found out. Vascuence returns in the form of a private moment in which Miguel tries to save his sibling's life after a dispute of cheating in a game. "Entró en esto mi hermano, y díjome en vascuence que procurarse salvar la vida" says Erauso, although this moment is written in castellano, not vascuence (Erauso 116). María Vargas notes the background Erauso had in the Basque language, saying that "Erauso nació y creció dentro de una familia vasca, pasó once años encerrada en un convento de religiosas vascas y, después del escape, vagó por tres años por tierras vascongadas" (52). Vargas continues, highlighting the importance of Euskera in Erauso's travels to the Americas, "el único idioma que Erauso domina eficientemente es el vascuence. También, es muy posible que después de llegar a América, le haya tomado algún tiempo aprender el español y tal vez hasta alguna otra lengua autóctona americana para comunicarse con los nativos con los que después se relacionar" (52). This point about communication shows a level of exclusivity in that the private moment that Miguel and Catalina share about the fight is not one of Spanish soldiers, but of Basque compatriots. The intimate nature of a shared language, and the inside view that Erauso shares of this moment reveal the personal connection that Erauso has back to their mother tongue, homeland, and family.

The final aspect of the interior self-representation of Erauso is that of the pronouns and gendered language which they use to refer to themselves. The translators Gabriel and Michele Stepto touch on this in a note that precedes the 1996 English translation of Erauso's autobiography saying:

“There are several challenges facing the translator who would render Catalina’s memoir in English. One, at least, is insurmountable—there is no English equivalent for the gender inflections of the Spanish adjective” ... “the fact that Catalina almost invariably uses masculine to describe herself is lost in English, as are those rare moments when she chooses a feminine ending” (Stepito xlv).

As *Historia* begins with feminine nouns and pronouns “doña Catalina de Erauso”, “hija del capitán”, “yo muchacha”, along with subtle inclusions of feminine pronouns throughout the text, the question of Erauso’s self-gendering lingers (Erauso 93-94). By introducing themselves using feminine pronouns, nouns, and adjectives Erauso clearly sets the stage for the following scene where they leave the convent and presume a male identity. The sharp contrast not only draws the attention of the reader but makes the reader hyper-aware of not only any gendered aspect of the text from then on, but the gender dynamics of the text as a whole. Upon their transition, Erauso immediately begins to refer to themselves as “entre tantos muchachos...fastidiado”, “entrado en Valladolid”, “me estuve... bien vestido y galán” (Erauso 96-97). These passages place Erauso squarely in a masculine space wherein they are among other men, demonstrating that at this point Erauso does not differentiate themselves from any other clearly presenting “man”. The adjective “galán” is most intriguing as the subtext of this word indicates that Erauso is well-dressed and perhaps even a heartthrob among men. As a man, Erauso not only sees themselves as any different from other males but even superior in some respects, showing that they do not lack confidence presenting and identifying as a man. Howe et al. thoroughly investigate the fascination behind trying to categorize Erauso’s gender

identity and sexual preference, concluding that Erauso's mixed usage allows them to "pass as a man and to enjoy the prerequisites attendant upon membership within the dominant group in society even as it creates a sensation when Erauso's physiology calls into question assumptions of those within her historical sphere" (152-153). Here, Howe et al refer to the privileges associated with being a man in Erauso's era. Erauso joins the "dominant group in society" and reaps the benefits, choosing a career as a soldier and gaining recognition from it as well. The freedom associated with a masculine identity extends beyond the battlefield in Erauso's case. By enjoying the benefits of their new identity, Erauso is able to be intentional in their exploration of a new gender performance, while implementing what Goetz calls the "empirical *I*" defined as "a documentary approach, a chronological structure, a factual intention, and the expressed purpose to provide information to the reading public" while also taking into account Erauso's intentions behind writing the memoir—to receive an encomienda, or title for their work done under the name of the Spanish crown in the so-called "New World" (60). Erauso uses their new identity to explore the possibilities that lie within the male identity in the Americas, and thus documents their successes in *Historia*. The journalistic aspect of Erauso's *I* through Goetz's analysis implies that Erauso wants to report the nature of their actions to the audience in a sincere way. The intention behind treating *Historia* as an experimental diary with truthful accounts and intentions points to how Erauso publicly represents themselves in contrast to the private, interior aspects previously mentioned.

Exterior Narration and the Public Sphere

The public representation within Erauso's text intertwines with the private and personal, however the way in which Erauso displays themselves to others is singular due in part to their new identity, but also due to how Erauso now must grapple with their self-representation in public, which is then reflected in the text. The seed for this tree of complication is planted from the moment that Catalina escapes from the convent, thus beginning a journey in which the public and private become willingly tangled through Erauso's narration. When Erauso leaves the convent, thereby breaking the status quo of the trajectory of their life, they enter into a field in which they can play and control with the interpretation of themselves via their text via and narrative voice. The simple choice of the first-person perspective gives Erauso complete control of all accounts of all events throughout the text. However, given that the accounts in *Historia* are from a first-person perspective, the text raises the age-old problem of putting one's trust in the narrator to accurately detail events and other people in the text. Although this aspect could be potentially problematic in terms of how seriously we should take Erauso's perspective of their life, how accurately Erauso remembers the entire course of their life, and the unsolvable question of Erauso's writing process, they are essential to Erauso's narrative personality. While these are debatable topics, by pondering them, color and perspective are added to *Historia* as Erauso's details can be just as informative in response to the question of narration as what they choose to omit, such as various points within the text where years are skipped over, such as when Erauso stays with their brother for three years, but no further detail is given of how they spend that time. Surely in those three

years there are memorable moments, whether they be flattering to Erauso's character or not (Erauso 113). These unanswered subtleties cannot be made into problems, but they educe a sense of mystery surrounding Erauso and how they present themselves to the public of their era versus the readers of the future.

Erauso's entrance into society, however haphazard it may be, begins their journey of discovering how and where they fit into society. Erauso has often been compared to *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the picaresque elements of the work, drawing comparisons and investigations into if Erauso could be considered a picaresque within *Historia*, especially regarding the episodic division of both texts. Pérez-Villanueva analyzes this in *The Life of Catalina de Erauso, The Lieutenant Nun: An Early Modern Autobiography*, saying that "the text is organized according to Erauso's journeys, as is the case with *Lazarillo de Tormes*" while this assertion links *Historia* and *Lazarillo* in terms of episodic divisions, this type of comparison does not delve into how Erauso's text uses the picaresque to show the protagonist's dynamism through their public actions (77). This malleability of character and gender is played up within the text, as "the mixture of female author with a soldier's *relación de servicio*, as well as the conflation of elements from nuns' spiritual autobiography with picaresque adventures, further problematize the analysis of the story" thus proving a unique hybridity in *Historia*, clearly setting it apart from other similar texts through its ability to veer from one specific genre's restrictions in favor of a more singular narrative mode (Howe et al. 151, original emphasis).

By parting itself from literary tradition, *Historia* comes to represent Erauso as "un personaje de antihéroe, aquel que burla a los otros" (Rutter-Jensen 88). One particular

instance of this is when Erauso is arrested and nearly hanged in Piscobamba for murder. In the very moment of their hanging, Erauso makes fun of the executioner for not being able to get the noose organized correctly saying, “Borracho, pónmelo bien o quítamelo, que estos padres bastan” (Erauso 136). The joke about the religious figures in the moment of their potential demise shows how Erauso functions as their own possible *deus ex machina* in situations of stress—or even death in the retelling of their life. These kinds of transitions allow Erauso as the author to move to their next adventure without dwelling too much on the repercussions and emotions of such moments, giving the text narrative fluidity to move as Erauso wants it to. The narrative escape displayed in Erauso’s near-hanging reflects the actual escapes Erauso makes in their own life, showing an almost unbelievable ability to flee and escape from revealing and harmful situations, or alternatively, to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Apart from Catalina’s movement from the convent to the chestnut grove, all other geographical movements Erauso makes are dotted with the presence of other people, making clear that Erauso did not want to hide their travels once they transitioned into their new identity. The confidence with which Erauso displays their migrations within and out of Spain exemplifies the way in which the tone of the text changes along with Erauso, developing “into an active character who has the ability to obtain knowledge through experience and, consequently, makes decisions about her own destiny in life” (Pérez-Villanueva, *The Life of Catalina de Erauso* 79). Among the first set of larger-scale movements that Erauso includes are those of the travel to Bilbao, including more imprecise language as previously mentioned: “sin saberme yo qué hacer ni adónde ir,

sino dejarme llevar del viento como una pluma” (Erauso 97). While the included metaphor is beautiful in sentiment, there is no explanation as to Erauso’s actual means of navigating to Bilbao. Without such details, Erauso’s safe arrival to their destination comes off as serendipitous and picaresque. This aspect of the narrative is crucial, as being a “soldier” would mean that Erauso would need to possess the ability to be aware of one’s geographical position, let alone their destination and how they are to arrive. This same bravado is demonstrated when Erauso is making their final preparations to arrive to the Americas via Sanlúcar after having traveled through San Sebastián and Seville, casually explaining that in Seville “ajústeme con él [to captain Miguel de Berroiz] en cuarenta reales, y embarquéme y partimos, y bien en breve llegamos a Sanlúcar” (Erauso 98). In the following paragraph, Erauso summarizes their ability to find a ship to take them to the Americas by saying “sente plaza de grumete en un galeón del capitán Estevan Eguiño”, who happened to be one of Erauso’s maternal cousins, “embarquéme, y partimos de Sanlúcar” (Erauso 98). As Victor Rocha states, “prototipo de soldado español, Catalina encarnaba el ideario masculino de conquista” ... “buscaba la fama y la gloria” (7). Through this persona as the ideal soldier traveling to the New World for a title, encomienda, and a variety of other possibilities, of course Erauso would want to appear savvy in terms of their ability to find their way although they had no prior first-hand experience doing this. Despite this, now that Erauso establishes themselves as a man and a soldier working under the Spanish crown, *Historia* finds a rhythm in its travelogue structure, allowing Erauso to talk about more specific episodes of their public interactions with other people within the text.

As Erauso moves throughout various geographical areas, it becomes apparent that they decide to change their name along the way various times. By not only changing their physical appearance, but also their public identity in an era when methods for confirming one's identity were more easily circumvented, Erauso is able to mutate their public self at their own free will. Erauso once again takes advantage of the now-antiquated concept of taking one's word as truth which allows them to change their name as they see fit to escape danger, and to continually recreate themselves. The names that Erauso uses during their time as a man include Francisco de Loyola, Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán, and Antonio de Erauso—all of which have connection to noble lineage, which indicates that Erauso had to perform honorably in whatever situation they may have found themselves in not only as a form of self-protection but also as a means to yet again reinvent themselves with every name change. On a narrative level, this opens up the possibility for Erauso to recount those honorable deeds with the aim of persuading their audience to believe that they can be honorable under any identity. The notion of gaining honor and maintaining it under false names comes to a point when Erauso uses a pseudonym in the moment in which they win their promotion to lieutenant. Nerea Aresti comments on this moment in Erauso's life, saying that after having "risked his life to recover a royal standard that had been seized by the enemy" and their subsequent cry to hang an Araucano chief "Alonso Díaz had become the very model of a pitiless and bloodthirsty conquistador" (403). The willingness that Erauso shows in those two moments demonstrates their susceptibility to revert to extreme measures in order to reach promotion, as for men and soldiers operating under the Spanish crown just like Erauso, "it was a matter of both morale and

effectiveness that the main criteria for promotion should be knowledge and experience, rather than noble birth” (Harden 152). Soldiers had to find moments to demonstrate honor, and *Historia* in itself is simply a compilation of such moments in Erauso’s life, meant for the Crown and the public to admire.

Nowhere is the question of honor more prominent than in how Erauso recounts their duels and misunderstandings. *Historia* is laced with scenes of violence sequenced one after the other, and as Eva Mendieta notes, “the seventeenth-century Spanish society was in decline; it was a society characterized by the indiscriminate use of violence. In the opinion of some authors, violent behavior ruled the streets” (103). With this in mind, perhaps it is not so shocking to count the number of duels, disagreements, and attacks in Erauso’s work. However, the value of these scenes from Erauso’s life provide an exact look into how *Historia* and its author wants us to perceive its protagonists’ relationship with the public—in particular with those whom Erauso quarreled. One of the main displays occurs when Erauso goes to the theatre and a person named “Reyes” refuses to move after being asked, as he is blocking Erauso’s view of the stage. Some days later Erauso searches for the man, finds him in the streets, and approaches him saying “ésta es la cara que se corta” while slashing his face, causing a wound worth ten stitches. A sword fight then ensues between Erauso’s troupe and Reyes’ friend falls after Erauso stabs him in the side, leading Erauso to find temporary sanctuary in a nearby church before being taken to jail (Erauso 103).

Heated exchanges that lead to violence appear in several other moments throughout the text, but the fight between Erauso and the man called the Cid in Cuzco is

one of the most dramatic and complex scenes. The Cid instigates the encounter; after having stolen reales of Erauso's winnings from a gambling game, he dares to return and steal another handful from Erauso, to which they respond: "con la daga, clavéle la mano contra la mesa" (Erauso 152). A fierce, bloody duel ensues with two basqueros joining Erauso, helping them to find the Cid who then incites Erauso to attack saying "perro, ¿todavía vives?", to which Erauso responds by running him through with their sword. Mendieta comments that "Erauso's survival was almost guaranteed because she belonged to a group [Basques] whose members were keenly aware of their well-defined rights and obligations" which included helping a fellow countryman should he run into trouble (111). Though Erauso is wounded so seriously that they are later served the last sacrament and given a final confession, the narration of this scene paints Erauso as a stand-up citizen who in the social sphere of the Americas functions as an unofficial keeper of male honor. Scott Taylor notes the difference between male and female honor, stating that "male honor also included much else, including competence in one's trade or office, the management of one's credit and debt relationships, and one's performance in the aggressive, competitive play that composed much of male sociability" (9). Erauso's public performances in gambling halls always demonstrate the same level of responsibility to rules and regulation as shown in their dedication to punish the Cid for stealing, just as in the moments leading up to Erauso's brother telling them to run for their life. In the lead up to this, Erauso's gambling partner says that they "mentía como cornudo" after which Erauso pulls their dagger and runs it through their accuser's chest (Erauso 116). The way in which Erauso is able to put these small details of the life a

soldier in the background, focusing directly on their own display of honor, and the more dishonorable acts of other men they encounter in public spaces clearly demonstrates not only the complexity of the honor system, but also Erauso's prowess in incorporating it into their text to show how honorable they can be under any name and circumstance. The subtlety of *honor* versus *honra* in the Spanish language is important to the context of understanding Erauso's violence. The underlying sense of honor that refers to the safeguarding of blood, lineage, and country against enemies is what pushed Erauso to enact their ability to display *honra* which refers to an exterior reputation of self that Erauso relies on to maintain their identity and not be found out or disrespected in the public sphere. In these scenes, the violence associated with the spectacle of male honor is clearly demonstrated only mere moments after Erauso's retelling of the retrieval of the company colors from the battlefield, showing the two-sided nature of chivalric principle in the life of a Spanish soldier of the era. In one moment, a soldier can perform a task of utmost respect and reverence to the Crown, and in the next they must protect their own personal honor brought about by a dispute in a gambling game, both of which are equally appropriate in the Early Modern context.

The differences in Erauso's public and private representations of themselves open up *Historia* to an interpretation beyond one of genre, making available a closer analysis into Erauso as a potential author and definite protagonist. In this autobiographical mode, the events of Erauso's life in the convent through their travels in the Americas reveal the complexity of what is revealed about Erauso. On a personal level, the reader can get to know Erauso in the moments in which the protagonist is alone, and in the more crowded

moments such as when Erauso is surrounded by enemies in a brawl. The dichotomy between these two elements adds an unexpected complexity, even though there is a serious lack of emotional attachment to the narrative at times from the writer. These expressions are crucial to understanding how Erauso functions in the various roles that they undertake throughout their life, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The choices that Erauso makes in the roles to be discussed can be related back into the analysis that has been done here of how Erauso chooses to operate in specific roles, depending on the nature of the job or position, and how Erauso functions in society in their given role.

CHAPTER TWO: OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL ROLES IN ERAUSO'S TRAVEL WITH JOBS, GENDER, AND ADVENTURE

Throughout *Historia*, the main narrative element that drives Erauso's travels through different cities, countries, and continents is their mobility between the different occupations they uptake. Some of these roles are deliberately chosen by Erauso along the way, while others are presented in an aesthetic of nonchalance—as if they were able to employ them during their travels just in the moment that they need them. Nevertheless, Erauso manages to survive and constantly change their profession with ease. Taking this into account, the way in which Erauso manages to stay in the Americas and out of trouble is through cycles of varied official and unofficial roles and modes of performance. In the context of Erauso's narrative official roles will be defined as occupational roles in which Erauso is paid, shows some manner of leadership or perhaps ownership of a business, or otherwise demonstrates some level of authority in the position they hold. On the other hand, the unofficial roles that Erauso takes have to do more with roles that Erauso finds themselves in, all of which are outside of the professional sphere and allow Erauso to explore more informal modes of subsistence. All the unofficial roles incorporate an uncomfortable situation for Erauso such as running away from danger, confronting the truth of their identity, or even getting themselves into trouble due to their lack of formal occupation. As Erauso moves from Spain to the Americas, and back to Europe, these different roles function as Erauso's keys to society and determine which freedoms and privileges they would have had given the role. Through a reading of *Historia* as a travelogue, the present analysis illuminates Erauso's roles as a key framework to

understanding the progression of their identity as they discover it for themselves. Thus, the journey of Erauso's roles informs the narrative identity that they present in the text.

Official Roles and the Affirmation of the Self

From Erauso's narrative perspective, the official roles they have in *Historia* take up a majority of the text, which indicates that a large portion of Erauso's adult identity found those moments in their life important in the moment of writing this text. This does not come as much of a surprise, given the wide array of jobs they had in their life and several big contributions to the Crown during their time in the Americas, with scholars such as Eva Mendieta aptly calling Erauso a "Jack of All Trades"³. These assumed professions, roles, and titles combined with the duties practiced in each of them lends itself to a self-remembrance of Erauso as the legend that they were to become through their actions and representations of their time in each job—ranging from the most heroic to the purest picaresque. Importantly, it must be acknowledged how Erauso was able to survive in the Americas performing these roles. Through their Basque identity, Erauso was able to find work with relative ease in addition to their supposed cavalier persona within the textual representation of their life, leading them to be able to hold various jobs and positions throughout their life without having to delve into complex explanation about the minute details behind their career successes.

Beginning with official roles, the most salient and retrospective one that Erauso has is that of a nun which begins the narrative. In the end, Erauso was just as much a nun

³ Eva Mendieta, *In Search of Catalina de Erauso: The National and Sexual Identity of the Lieutenant Nun*, page 83.

as they were a Lieutenant, thus the dubbing of Erauso as *The Lieutenant Nun* in English with Spanish versions also retaining this quirky nickname. Being from an upper-middle class family Erauso had no choice but to be put in the convent at the young age of four years old. This was not uncommon among this class of family in the Basque region, as Sonia Pérez-Villanueva notes that Erauso's family "is a clear reflection of the gender roles of seventeenth-century Spain; her brothers joined the army and fought in the wars of the American conquest, whereas three of her sisters were sent to the convent and the other sister lived a married life" (*The Life of Catalina de Erauso* 11). However, Erauso's experience and decision to leave the convent are what make their experience particularly telling of who Erauso was to become. Despite spending more than a decade in the convent, *Historia* itself does not contain much reflection or detail on Erauso's time there other than the mention of a "doña Catalina de Aliri que viuda entró y profesó, la cual era robusta, y yo muchacha; me maltrató de manos, y yo lo sentí" (Erauso 94). The inclusion of the abusive nature of de Aliri hints to Erauso's dissatisfaction with their life as a nun, and even into a telling admission of the abuse they experienced while living there, leading to their escape from the convent in the night. By exiting this all-female space through their own accord, Erauso's retelling of the events of that night show that from the beginning of their journey they were going to be able to escape predicaments and craft new identities and successes no matter their position or place in society.

This transgressive independence continues as Erauso finds their first few jobs dressed in men's clothing and with freshly cut hair. So begins a series of picaresque moments in which Erauso bounces from *amo a amo*, "master to master" around Spain.

The first stop is with a professor of theology, Dr. Francisco de Cerralta, who not only employs Erauso but is also married to one of Erauso's maternal aunts. Cerralta tries to persuade Erauso to stay after three months with Erauso explaining that "él viéndome leer bien latín se me inclinó más, y me quiso dar estudio" (Erauso 95). It seems curious that Erauso obtains these positions simply due to their level of literacy, and Eva Mendieta highlights the historical value of the inclusion of these details saying that "by the sixteenth century, the superiority of Basques and 'labors of the pen' was so well established that it became a literary cliché perhaps even a prerequisite to work within the king's court" (85). Erauso's affinity for Latin clearly comes from the time they spent in the convent, the first real hint that Erauso's success in life can be attributed to their affluent genealogical lineage from the Basque region coming from a *hidalgo* family, which comes to be even more important when they travel to the Americas. Being Basque also afforded Erauso opportunities to work for high level officials such as the King's secretary Juan de Idiáquez in Valladolid as a page, only to leave when Erauso's father appears and talks of Catalina's escape. Erauso continues on as a page but under a different boss, don Carlos de Arellano in Estella in the Navarre province where they stay for two years. Erauso easily fits within the archetype that Mendieta points out, and it is the first continuous manifestation of concrete identity that Erauso uses in the text in a sea of gender and nominal fluidity that follows them into their travels to the New World.

After gaining experience in courts and offices, Erauso decides to set their path toward the Americas by becoming a ship's boy and later a cabin boy under their uncle, Captain Estevan Eguño en route to Cartagena. With this final master that they work

under before the journey who also happens to be a member of their close family, Erauso manages to steal money from their uncle before setting off for new employment. Despite the many months they spend getting en route to the Americas, there is very little description of Erauso's actions and day-to-day thoughts. Erauso explains their process of getting work on the ship in a simplistic manner, as if it were second nature. Mendieta thoroughly reviews Erauso's family tradition in maritime commerce, noting that their father more than likely served in the Latin American colonies, and their "oldest brother, Miguel, went to the Americas" when Erauso was only two years old (71). In addition, Erauso had three other brothers who followed in Miguel's footsteps, dying in the colonies just as Erauso would later on (71). The Erauso family's tendency to gravitate toward the sea is echoed in *Historia*, and Erauso's lack of narration of the lengthy journey could be attributed to this fact. Despite this, Erauso being from a noble *hidalgo* family does not exempt them from needing to provide much description of the jobs they take that would technically be below their station. In addition, Erauso's family past in the maritime industry explains the lack of description of their jobs, implying that jobs such as these simply came naturally to Erauso. Donald Miller comments that Erauso works in "roles that were unacceptable for anyone of noble heritage. This acceptance of physical labor as a source for survival was impossible for persons of her social rank" (33). Despite this, Erauso chooses to rely on their heritage to gain employment no matter how lowly, to protect their new masculine identity (Miller 34). This aspect of Erauso's identity remains unmalleable with Cortney Benjamin highlighting that Erauso's social and genealogical position "offers her a certain amount of legitimacy and protection. It is her Spanish

identity, to a large extent, that allows her to speak to the heads of the Spanish Monarchy and the Catholic Church and to escape serious repercussions for her gender-bending activities” (97-98). By choosing to retain their identity as a Basque after changing their outward appearance, the picaresque roles that Erauso takes during their voyage to the Americas becomes essential to not only their survival but also to their long-term ability to appeal to the Crown and Peninsular readers of their era.

Upon their arrival in the Americas, Erauso’s occupations take a turn away from the chaotic picaresque and into a new mode—the establishment of the self. For Erauso, touching ground in the Americas was their chance to formulate their persona in an environment that would allow them to do so. In contrast to Spain, the Americas offered more opportunities for masculine performativity from all kinds of males. Jason Stinnett comments that “the Spaniards were masculine by virtue of their identity as Europeans”, however this same system and requisite did not apply in the same way in the New World as their “masculine persona is not policed in part according to nobility and title” but rather in regard to their perception by others as a European man (“New World Masculinity” 4). Instead, Erauso uses their social mobility to build their own reputation in a new continent through specific, specialized professions as a merchant, brief stints as a llama driver and assistant to a mine owner. As a merchant in Trujillo, Erauso is able to reach a managerial position and eventually manages to open their own shop. By obtaining power in this way through their work, Erauso fits within the new context of masculinity in the Americas—power obtained through performativity. In this case, this happens to be in the workplace in a non-violent manner, slowly climbing the ladder to the point where

they hold a certain level of authority. For Erauso, finding notoriety in their new public persona validates their choice to leave the convent and set off on a new path, setting the stage for their next occupational step.

In comparison to prior roles, Erauso's true success comes in their career as a soldier for the Spanish crown. Their entrance into the profession is brought about casually albeit controversial in its sexual implication. Upon being found "andándole en las piernas" with the unmarried sister-in-law of their master Diego de Solarte, a merchant, and the chief consul of Lima, Erauso is fired due to their unprofessional sexual escapade (Erauso 109). And so, Erauso reflects saying "hallábame desacomodado y muy remoto de favor" ... "me llegué a una (compañía) y senté plaza de soldado" (109). This is a key moment in the trajectory of not only Erauso's career but their life as a whole. Erauso's reflection of being helpless upon being let go leads them to a fruitful career in the army. It is curious that Erauso transitions into the role of a soldier after such a tumultuous professional background, and how Erauso seemingly stumbles upon the answer being a lifetime of service to Crown and country. They end up spending most of their life in some sort of role as a soldier, lieutenant or otherwise fighting for the Spanish in the Americas. Erauso's ability to rise to this level of importance in a military role can be connected back to their brother's experience fighting in the Americas, but Faith Harden pinpoints exactly how Erauso and "soldiers of modest origins—or in the case of Erauso, occluded nobility—narrate trajectories that reflect and respond to the army's increased opportunities for geographical and social mobility" which is clearly attractive to Erauso given their proclivity to move and change at a moment's notice (154). For

Erauso, this kind of occupational flexibility would have been ideal, and in *Historia* it allows Erauso to reflect on their career “while celebrating the freedoms afforded by a profession often seen as physically and morally hazardous” all which seemed to naturally attract Erauso to the career and keep them employed for several years (Harden 154). Becoming “Lieutenant” after retrieving their company’s colors at the Battle of Valdivia is the high point of Erauso’s military career and affords them a title that they earned through an honorable act for the Crown, albeit under the pseudonym Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán. Through this extra identity, Erauso upholds the image of “a pitiless and bloodthirsty conquistador” which then bleeds into their daily life in the innumerable street fights, slashings, and duels of *Historia* (Aresti 403).

The final incarnation of official roles that Erauso undertakes are those that carry a theme of “returning” both in a literal and figurative sense. The most understated of the roles that falls into this category is that of the events that follow Erauso’s near-mortal duel in Guamanga which then precipitates the reveal of their story and true identity to a bishop in the city. After being inspected and found to be a virginal woman, Erauso is taken to the convent of Santa Clara where Erauso says “púsome el hábito” indicating that they are once again back in the habit of a nun, just as how the story began (162). Erauso stays clothed this way for close to three years, as they are sent to Lima by the archbishop going from convent to convent until it is found that Erauso never professed their vows, at which point they receive orders to return to Spain⁴. The events following Erauso’s

⁴ Erauso states that “volvió de España razón bastante de cómo yo era yo ni había sido monja profesas; con lo cual se me prometió salir del convento” (Erauso 164). The implication here is that since Erauso never actually took their religious vows as a nun,

confession are not heavily discussed in the literature surrounding Erauso's life; however, they seem to forge close bonds with the other nuns there. At the moment of leaving Erauso notes that the nuns sent Erauso on their way with "muchos agradados y regalos y lágrimas" meaning that their time spent cloistered was more emotionally involved—offering a stark contrast in the scenes of leaving convents that appear here and in the first chapter of *Historia* (Erauso 164). The role that Erauso has in the convent does not seem to affect them much after this moment as they are on the way back to Spain, but Erauso spends this time in the convents as an intermediary space with no comment on if they had any role within this cloistered space nor any opinion given by Erauso on the subject. Given this, the years they spend as an adult in the habit perhaps incarnate Erauso's return to Spain with a refreshed identity, having spent the last two years free from reputational ruin thanks to a lack of duels and battles on Erauso's part.

When Erauso sets foot back in Spain, their focus turns to their attempt to be rewarded for their services to the Crown in the Americas despite a few brushes with violence and the law along the way. In Pamplona, Erauso finds work as a page with a Count of Javier, a role not too dissimilar to the work Erauso found after fleeing her original convent at the beginning of their memoir. This connection demonstrates the dichotomy of Old World/New World for Erauso. In the Old World given their background and soon-to-be fame, they are restricted to certain roles given their background. On the other hand, the New World allows Erauso to explore who they had

they should not be allowed to cohabit with other professed nuns, thus they return Spain given that Erauso never wanted and never would become a professed nun, so they had to leave.

become when they first landed on the other side of the Atlantic. The final official role that Erauso takes within *Historia* has to do with the pension they request from the Council of the Indies and from the king himself. Both petitions are successful and Erauso receives money that they use to fund their return to the Americas—which is left out of the conclusion of this version of the narrative⁵. Nonetheless, Erauso does return to the Americas with the documentation of their deeds alongside compensation, effectively retiring as an official asset to the Crown—an ironic conclusion with ambiguity in terms of the discussion of Erauso’s loyalties. However, if anyone were to blur lines it would be Erauso and their capricious ability to keep both friends and enemies guessing their next move.

Unofficial Roles and the Honor of Masculinity

The unofficial roles that Erauso keeps strangely enough may reveal more about their desire to obtain and maintain honor than the official roles they held in their lifetime. From a gendered perspective, Erauso’s personal interactions in these roles with both men and women test the protagonist’s ability to perpetuate the public identity that they have already established. Furthermore, Erauso’s unofficial roles are much less varied, showing with clarity how Erauso carried themselves in their daily life away from their career and other occupational duties. Some situations cause Erauso to have no control over their situation such as in at least three instances, Erauso nearly becomes the spouse of other

⁵ Based on the inclusion of the *relaciones* at the end of the version of *Historia* cited in this study among other first-hand accounts, Erauso returned to the Americas following their meeting with the Pope (Erauso 193-97).

women. In addition, Erauso is attacked by outsiders who do not know their identity or reputation, leaving Erauso defeated and unable to protect their own name. On the other hand, there are many points in *Historia* where Erauso duels or otherwise battles with men who want to test Erauso's honor. All of this is to say that unofficially, Erauso aims to protect their public image no matter the foe they face.

Tying into the theme of how the role of potential spouse forms part of Erauso's textual identity, the occurrence of three almost-marriages that Erauso experiences demonstrate how the protagonist intends to distance themselves from legalities surrounding gender conformity. Erauso's master at the time is Juan de Urquiza, who attempts to arrange a marriage between Erauso and Urquiza's mistress doña Beatriz in order to save Erauso from punishment after attacking Reyes. As Courtney Benjamin notes, Erauso "plays a particularly passive role in this scene. Urquiza and Beatriz arrange the relationship and Beatriz actively pursues Erauso" providing "a spectacle of forbidden sexuality" (150). By remaining the third, passive wheel, Erauso avoids any responsibility in the matter—thus nullifying any interest on Erauso's part in terms of marriage. This level of disinterest in legally binding oneself to another person—let alone a woman—by Erauso occurs again when Erauso is offered marriage by the family who saves them during their flight from Concepción. After only eight days, they are offered a chance to take over the patriarchal role of the family by marrying the daughter of the couple. Erauso responds in the narrative in regard to the appearance of their potential wife, describing them as "muy negra y fea como un diablo, muy contraria a mi gusto, que fue siempre de buenas caras" (Erauso 122). While it is completely plausible that the woman

promised to Erauso was ugly, what is more likely is that Erauso uses this explanation in the text as a kind of “getaway” from the situation. Erauso should have been more than thankful to the family for saving their life, as they were on the brink of starvation, hypothermia, and certain death when they were found. However, instead of showing requisite gratitude by becoming the heir to the role of patriarch of the family, Erauso uses the daughter’s supposedly bad looks as their scapegoat from the situation. In these moments, one can certainly feel for Erauso as it is clear that they do not want to be legally bound to another person no matter the gender. By rejecting a socially advantageous position as the masculine head of the household, Erauso chooses to evade their incorporation into the family and other societal traditions manifested by colonial law through the Spanish conquest. Erauso instead victimizes themselves as the recipient of an ill-fated match to the daughter, choosing to commit a faux pas in the face of those who they should be most thankful to.

There are also a number of instances where Erauso becomes a victim without cause or solution, a rare occurrence within *Historia* with both occurring when Erauso tries to reach Rome to appeal to the Pope. The first of these occurs in Piedmont when Erauso is mistaken for a Spanish spy on their way to Rome for the Jubilee year. Erauso notes that “mandándome volver atrás” after spending fifty days in jail, they must turn to “mendigando” to go back to Spain (Erauso 168). They finally get back to Spain, visit the Council of the Indies and again try to get to Italy. On the way, just outside of Barcelona, the group Erauso travels with is attacked and their clothes are taken, but their papers are salvaged after some discussion with the attackers. Erauso says that “proseguimos nuestro

camino a pie, desnudos, avergonzados y entramos en Barcelona el sábado santo de 1626, en la noche, sin saber, a lo menos yo, qué hacer” (170). However, this rare admission of true destitution and helplessness from Erauso is followed by action to save them from trouble. As a victim, Erauso does not identify their attackers, nor do they attempt to fight back in these two given situations. Rhetorically speaking, the way in which Erauso paints this event is uncharacteristic in comparison to their other confrontations throughout *Historia*. Being back in Europe, perhaps the Old-World terrain and their proximity to Spanish authorities at the time of the event required them to show more restraint than usual as a way to appeal to the powers that were at play at the time that the story was retold. At this point in the narrative, because Erauso is seeking help from the Crown to receive a pension, Erauso is trying to keep their reputation clean and wants the king and Pope to know all the trouble Erauso is going through to be a good Christian and a faithful countryman thereby martyring themselves in the eyes of elite and royal audiences after a lifetime of scrapes, duels, and murders in the New World.

In what is seemingly the role that occupies most of the text, Erauso manages to duel and flee in almost every situation they encounter, mostly happening in the Americas. There is a wide variety of scenes that fit into this category, but the shared characteristic of all of them has to do with Erauso protecting themselves in some capacity. For Erauso, protection of the self is key to surviving in the New World under their new identity, and the various pseudonyms they create throughout their travels. Through dueling and being on the run, Erauso's roles in these scenarios help to rhetorically shape the protagonist into an honorable person, but more importantly an honorable man in society. The episode

involving Pedro de Chavarría and his wife brings about a unique side of Erauso—their involvement in protecting the life of doña María, Chavarría's wife. Chavarría finds out his wife has been unfaithful to him, leading him to murder his wife's lover and then sets out for his own wife in a fit of rage. Erauso inadvertently gets involved when doña María pleads to be saved and taken to La Plata. This outright display of masculinity on Erauso's part by taking doña María with them to La Plata, all the while harboring doña María as a fugitive from her own punishment. This physical movement and the freedom to do so are particularly unique in the fact that Erauso does not give it a second thought to help doña María from her violent husband. All of this is to say that this act ends in a fight with Chavarría which Stinnett comments saying, "for Spanish men in the New World, any perceived offence of honor required vengeance, more often than not, the drawing of swords" (*Confessing Nuns* 94). Erauso was no stranger to this, and ultimately paid the price of a five-month convalescence for the aid given to the wife of Chavarría. Ironically enough, Erauso's agency that they possess is due to their identity, and doña María thus gains mobility and agency due to Erauso's freedoms. Simply put, if it were not for Erauso testing the roles of honor and masculine privilege in this episode, the adulteress wife would have never made it to La Plata and Erauso would have one less story that tells of their bravery and willingness to help a damsel in distress.

After this, Erauso's long and drawn-out dispute with the Cid, the man that Erauso kills after steals Erauso's winnings multiple times, keeps them on their toes as they traverse multiple cities to escape punishment for the murder of the Cid. Again, Erauso's mobility as a man in the New World allows them the ability to at least attempt to flee

from persecution which reoccurs in various other disputes that follow. In these moments, Erauso seems inexplicably able to slip out of the hands of their pursuers, making the text itself “flexible and slippery, impossible to pin down” as Benjamin puts it (161). Here, the binarism between honorable and dishonorable is put to the test. Will Erauso have to face consequences for their murdering of the Cid? Or will Erauso get away with this murder due to their inherent ability to justify their cause? After all, the Cid was the instigator of the whole debacle, stealing some of Erauso’s gambling winnings—a faux pas in the honor books of the time. In true Erauso form, the answers to both of these questions are avoided as they manage to escape the chase through the help of some basquero friends and a kind bishop. All of these traits such as a tendency to violence, hot-headedness, anger, and hostility certify that *Historia* “is a male-focused autobiography that reflects what was considered to be a male sensibility” through Erauso’s self-portrayal (Martín 140). Erauso’s memoir itself ends with several instances of masculine behavior a notable one being when an Italian soldier calls the Spanish “arrogantes, aunque no de tantas manos como blasonan” to which Erauso is obligated to respond in an equivalent manner (Erauso 172). “El más triste Español es mejor que el mejor Italiano” responds Erauso, which then begins the duel in which the Italian is killed (172). Yet again, Erauso shows fierce loyalty to the group to which they belong, thus showing pride in who they are as well, not allowing anyone, especially an Italian, to disparage their motherland. In the final scene shown in *Historia*, Erauso is in Naples and two women call Erauso “Señora Catalina” to which Erauso responds “Señoras putas a darles a ustedes cien pescadozas, y cien cuchilladas a quien las quiera defender” (175). In this last moment, Erauso not only

puts down the women who so dared to offend Erauso by referring to them as a woman but goes so far as to openly challenge anyone who would like to defend the honor of said ladies. In this unofficial context, Erauso unleashes the ultimate test of a man's honor—to threaten to kill a woman who overstepped her boundaries to offend a soldier of the Spanish Crown. As this is the last line that Erauso narrates in the text, it stands as the mic-drop so to speak in terms of what lengths Erauso is willing to go to in order to protect their identity after having received blessings from the Spanish king and Pope Urban VIII to live their life in male dress. Not even two women from another country should even attempt to test the one and only Lieutenant Nun.

In all, the roles that Erauso fulfills in *Historia* are just as unpredictable and playful as the text itself. The unpredictability of the text comes directly from Erauso's actions, and the playfulness is introduced in how each scene is retold through Erauso's perspective. Nevertheless, the time spent working or fulfilling certain obligations is not lost on Erauso. No matter if the memory is short or long, a part of it is carried with Erauso throughout the text and more often than not is tied to another part of their life. This dedication to the remembrance of an extravagantly violent and eccentric lifetime of work on Erauso's part is admirable, from the first role as a nun to the very last as a protector of their own identity that they worked so hard to achieve. While certain jobs or titles are more notable than other, Erauso's overall experience in multitudes of arenas demonstrates the fluidity and public freedom afforded to them through the new identity and persona they take up upon leaving the convent in the first chapter. The open ending

that Erauso leaves with *Historia* can only make readers wonder exactly what Erauso did when they finally returned to the Americas.

CHAPTER THREE: SPATIAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS BEHIND ERAUSO'S DILEMMA, TO STAY OR TO GO?

One of the most notable characteristics of the narration of *Historia* is the wide variety of environments that surround Erauso through their travels. Through religious spaces, violent spaces, and areas of travel, the way in which Erauso sees themselves and functions among others is largely determined in terms of where Erauso is physically located at that time in the retelling of their life. The choices that Erauso makes within these spaces function as a way to understand their relationship to the people, areas, and situations that they have relationships with whether they be amiable or dangerous. Thanks to the diversity of roles Erauso has which was discussed in the previous chapter of this study, this chapter will nearly parallel those same roles by shedding light instead on Erauso's reaction to the different settings of their life. The choices that Erauso makes of where they travel to, find shelter, and choose to stay or flee reveal a much stronger sense of Erauso's inner thoughts surrounding their self-representation in their own work, thus adding to the narrative of Erauso as the wily protagonist who decides when they will reveal their secrets and successes and when to hide their failures and troubles. Through a categorization of Erauso's surroundings as either a place they flee from or a space in which they find themselves or perhaps something else, the binarism of Erauso's decision making in *Historia* forms part of the more complex innerworkings of Erauso as protagonist and narrator. Recognizing that the nature of the narrative that Erauso presents is dependent on what Erauso chooses to display, Erauso's spaces are presented in a way to show Erauso's prowess in thriving no matter their environment.

Fleeing from Their Punishments and Their Past

For Erauso, one of their most valuable traits or at least actions they employ throughout their lifetime is their ability to find successful exits from situations in which they no longer want to belong, or sometimes to an even greater extent situations that put them at risk or mortal danger. Due to their propensity to be combative, this trait is particularly useful for Erauso while also functioning as a literary device in their narrative. In real life, it allowed Erauso to maintain their safety and even protect their identity, while from a literary perspective it progresses the episodic plot along from one escape to the next. While Erauso portrays a very cavalier attitude in nearly every social interaction, it is odd that running away from trouble would be their survival mechanism. Yet over the course of *Historia*, the instances of running away steadily decrease in frequency within the narrative. Generally speaking, Erauso turns to fleeing when they face punishment no matter the degree or when they risk exposing their true identity or past that would otherwise jeopardize the public persona they want to project. With this in mind, the consideration of the exact rationale behind escaping social spaces must be taken from a perspective that places Erauso's self-preservation as their main priority. This physical manifestation on Erauso's part of safeguarding their secret by removing themselves from precarious situations highlights Erauso's spatial awareness in their newfound environments upon leaving the convent.

Erauso's episodes of running away can be further classified with the first type having to do with Erauso running to escape punishment for a crime or action they committed. The provocative social atmosphere that surrounds Erauso before their flights

out of dangerous situations can be attributed to what Soraya García-Sánchez calls Erauso's "personalidad, muy violenta y a la constante defensiva, queda definitivamente resuelta en sus desafiantes encuentros con cualquiera que deshonre su persona" (67). The attribution of Erauso as defensive of themselves and their honor adds yet more depth to the explication of why someone like Erauso would run from consequences when they seem more than willing to fight at a moment's notice. In the episode of Erauso's fight in Charcas with the Sevillian merchant over a game of cards, this sentiment is brought forth. The Sevillian man taunts Erauso with insults regarding cuckoldry, leading to both drawing their daggers. The crowd calms the two of them, but on the way home Erauso comes across the same merchant, which ends with the Sevillian's demise. Erauso says that after this "acudió gente al ruido, acudió justiciar, que me quiso prender; yo resistí, y recibí dos heridas" before fleeing for sanctuary in a church and later to Piscobamba (Erauso 134). Here, Erauso's resistance against justice is easily understood because they killed the Sevillian to defend their honor. Not to mention, Erauso was more than likely followed home and tracked by their ill-fated opponent, a tactic that seems to have taken Erauso by the smallest of surprise. Unfortunately, in Piscobamba Erauso is again insulted. This time a Portuguese man by the name of Fernando de Acosta exchanges words with Erauso calling them "la encarnación del diablo" to which Erauso responds that Acosta speaks foolishly (135). They go on to draw daggers, much like the prior episode mentioned, and again Erauso is followed home and defeats their attacker. This time, Erauso recounts "miré por allí y no sentí quién nos hubiese visto. Fuime a casa de mi amigo Zaragoza callando mi boca, y acostéme" (136). Through the mirrored

replication of this kind of duel, Erauso chooses to flee to a space where they believe they will be safe—momentarily—in addition to ensuring that no one saw them kill the Portuguese man. This tinge of paranoia on Erauso's part of monitoring a public space before fleeing to a very private home of a friend communicates how Erauso as a protagonist chooses to recover from their public displays of honor protection. Their investigative approach to the finale of the duel shows pensiveness and planning that is not as obvious in other areas where they show physical violence in public followed by retreat to a controlled space.

The curious nature of Erauso's comportment is also visible in their relationships with women in *Historia*, particularly their romantic encounters with women. Apart from the potential marriages that were discussed in the previous chapter of this study, there is another instance of exceptionally open flirtation between Erauso and two women who happen to be relatives of their boss. Erauso talks of one particular woman with whom they shared a moment in which “un día, estando en el estrado peinándome acostado en sus faldas, y andándole en las piernas...me decía que fuese a Potosí y buscase dineros, y nos casaríamos” (Erauso 108). In this instance, this physical intimacy that Erauso retells with this woman portrays a potential hope for the future of this semi-couple. However, after being found out by their boss, Erauso is fired and must leave. Despite the closeness demonstrated between Erauso and their lover, the finale of Erauso leaving and moving on without ever referencing this woman again nor returning to see her again denies the woman's offer of marriage. This deceptive tendency is echoed in the near marriages that Erauso partakes in, although Erauso must leave in order to escape any further punishment

from their boss or the woman's family. Luzmila Camacho-Platero discusses this scene as well, saying that "la única empresa que podía tener en mente era la de burlar el sistema para tener acceso a las ventajas del patriarcado, para lo cual optó tanto por airear sus conquistas donjuanescas como por explotar el status quo" (73). By manipulating the social situation of the environment of their workplace, Erauso is able to insert this small scene that shows their sexual prowess while also victimizing the manner in which they were forced to leave their job due to their amorous affair. Placing the blame onto someone else other than themselves for their firing masks Erauso's lack of professional responsibility and restraint puts the power dynamics of their role and identity in question, as Aresti says that Erauso "elected to follow the path of virtue. In a society that was strongly misogynist, but only partially organized along the lines of sexual difference" which allowed Erauso sexual fluidity and the ability to offset liability for their sexual escapades (408).

Erauso also shows a tendency to leave situations that force them to confront their past or potential discovery of their original identity. The beginning chapters of *Historia* contain several of these events, including when Erauso goes by "Francisco Loyola" while working as the king's secretary under don Juan de Idiáquez. Erauso's father arrives one day, asking to speak to don Juan however Erauso's father fails to recognize his own child before him. Erauso's father speaks to Erauso's boss saying that "se le había ido del convento aquella muchacha, y eso le traía por los contornos en su búsqueda" (Erauso 96). Upon overhearing this from their father, Erauso leaves immediately knowing that the search is on for them. More confrontations occur between Erauso and family members

such as their uncle Eguiño, who they work under and steal money from, then get away in the night when the ship makes plans to return to Spain (99-100). The brief interactions between Erauso and their brother Miguel de Erauso are fraught with a complex array of emotions. When they meet in the port of Concepción, Miguel calls out their sibling's false name though recognizes they are Basque and asks about any news of his family especially his "hermanita Catalina la monja" to which Erauso deflects saying "fui a todo respondiéndolo como podía, sin descubrirme ni caer él en ello", effectively deceiving their brother into believing their false identity (Erauso 112). The Erauso siblings end up spending three years together without Miguel ever discovering his sibling's secret. After a short dispute over Erauso seeing their brother's mistress without approval, the siblings lose touch until Erauso recovers the company flag in the Battle at Valdivia. Miguel comes around again when his sibling is embroiled in scandal again after killing a lieutenant and judge following a civil dispute, who tells Erauso to run for their life. Here, the Erauso siblings conspire to save the protagonist's life despite Miguel knowing their sibling was guilty of the crimes they committed. Erauso runs from punishment, but they are also running from their brother in the sense that if they are prosecuted for their crimes, it is possible that their past may come into question—which would mean that their brother would likely figure out that his sibling has been by his side in the Americas for many years. This concept comes back to haunt Erauso when they unexpectedly kill their brother on a dark night, with each Erauso sibling being the second in another man's duel. The founding of Erauso as who we know them to be today truly begins in this moment, when Erauso refuses to reveal themselves to their own brother in the moment of

his dying breath. The accidental murder signifies that for the protagonist, they will be doomed to never be able to return to life as it once was due to their inability to share the truth of their origins when it will not benefit them directly.

Finding Help and Staying Steadfast

The way in which Erauso is able to successfully maneuver their social movement after finding themselves in trouble is through a series of networks that allow them to get help and to stay in positions that keep them immune from the punishments of their own transgressions. In these scenarios, Erauso is not the agent of salvation. The help comes from outside sources and people that happen to want to help Erauso, intervening on their behalf. These available entities are presented as casual happenstances that Erauso does not take credit for, a rare occurrence in *Historia*. Erauso's lack of credit on their own part in terms of the appearance of these aids and interventions guides the reader to see that they create the narrative to be on their side as they find help. The people that end up aiding Erauso's evasion of punishment oddly enough tie closely into their personal history by them being Basque or an ecclesiastical figure, just like Erauso once was. Conversely, there are specific spaces that Erauso finds useful to them when they need it most such as sanctuaries and occupations that safeguard Erauso and allow them to remain camouflaged in neutral environments. In all, Erauso draws on their past and uses these domains without compromising their public persona to achieve ultimate social fluidity which humanizes Erauso and makes them all the more admirable in their efforts to live freely despite their many serious transgressions such as murder and thievery.

A notable trend that Erauso is able to come by when they are in less than fortunate situations is that of seemingly random Basques aiding in their journeys to new towns when Erauso was in desperate need of financial assistance but more specifically legal aid after committing serious crimes. William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao speak on the phenomenon of Basques and their communal spirit in *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* which states that:

“Basques in the New World acted, at least on occasion, as a self-aware ethnic group. This awareness was translated into collective actions, mutual assistance a common stance toward outsiders, and a perception on the part of the outsiders that the Basques were set apart from other Iberian and Creole (New World-born persons of European descent) groups” (74).

Taking this into consideration, Erauso formed part of a much larger network of people from their homeland and specific geographic region than what *Historia* alludes to. There are references to numerous Basques that help Erauso avoid capital punishment and torture, with the most serious event occurring in La Plata incidentally after an argument with a fellow Basquero. Erauso is falsely accused of murder and is sentenced to torture to extract a confession. At this moment “entró un procurador alegando ser yo vizcaíno, y no haber lugar por tanto a darme tormento por razón de privilegio” (Erauso 131). This implies that due to Erauso’s status as a noble Basque, they are exempt from torture—a unique benefit to their heritage. Erauso adds that the punishment handed down is ten years sentence in Chile without pay which “de eso apelamos agenciado paisanos, y se fue siguiendo, no sabré decir cómo, hasta que salió un día sentencia en la real audiencia, en

que me dieron por libre” (131). Erauso’s dependence on their countrymen to help free them from legal responsibility from a false accusation is taken lightly in this case, although it was taken all the way to the Royal Court for appeal. Their affiliation with other Basques allows them to form part of a social group that is self-sustaining and supportive of its members. Finding allies in their social strata in the Americas allows Erauso to circumvent the legal system and their own will to live at the same time.

Yet another group that provides assistance are members of ecclesiastical groups such as priests and bishops. What sets Erauso apart in this aspect is the positive view of the clergy that differs greatly from other texts of the same period, which employ negative clericalism that is simply not present in *Historia*. The most notable occurrence of Erauso’s favorable view of clerical figures occurs in Guamanga after Erauso murders the Cid. In the moment, the *corregidor* tries to arrest Erauso when the bishop comes out and says “Señor alférez, déme las armas”, “démelas que seguro está conmigo, y le doy palabra de sacarle a salvo aunque me cueste cuanto soy” (Erauso 159). Incredibly, this bishop offers Erauso protection from persecution without really knowing who Erauso is. This is especially ironic given Erauso’s personal history with the church, exemplified by their abandoning of their role of non-professed nun back in Spain. Despite this, Erauso “a pesar de romper con la norma de enclaustramiento conventual, seguiría manteniendo intacto su voto de pureza con Dios”, which comes to light as Erauso grows confidence in the bishop that saved them (Rocha 9). The *corregidor* returns again to pursue Erauso, but the bishop talks him out of it, which softens Erauso when the bishop begins to question Erauso about their past. Erauso shares the whole story along with an unexpected

confession of “soy mujer, que nací en tal parte, hija de fulana mi tía; que allí me crié; que tomé el hábito; que tuve noviciado; que estando para profesar, por tal ocasión me salí” reminiscing their transgressions and finally concluding that “hasta venir a parar en lo presente, y a los pies de su señoría ilustrísima” (Erauso 160). The bishop and Erauso grow a friendship, especially after Erauso is found to be an in-tact virgin. Aresti claims that “Erauso may have transgressed a good many of the strictures governing women’s lives, but she remained a virgin... in the post-Tridentine world, virginity had become a key element of female virtue” allowing Erauso to mingle among ecclesiastical groups after their confession through their successful balancing act of guarding both their masculine and feminine virtues (405). Had Erauso been found to not be a virgin, it is possible that the Bishop of Guamanga would not have shown Erauso the same level of clemency or kindness given the murderous and sinful past of Erauso. After all, the priest saved Erauso in the middle of an arrest and even petitioned the *corregidor* to allow Erauso to remain in the bishop’s care, bringing to light the question of the bishop’s intentions with Erauso’s life and his participation in Erauso’s confession of their true identity to him (Erauso 160). In this social backdrop, Erauso’s background with the church informs their experience in other arenas, allowing them to have insight that “early modern Spanish moralists invoke the importance of female sexual purity as the requisite basis on which all other womanly traits are constructed” (Martín 141). This insight on Erauso’s part ends up saving them from retribution from the Church as their “status as virgin and nun effectively exempted her from the punishments commonly invoked for the types of transgressions she committed” (142).

Erauso is able to access yet another concept of their world that brings them comfort. Their ability to stay in jobs that suit them and their unquestionably finessed ability to find sanctuary allows them to occupy spaces in which they are provided protection. The inclusion of these spaces in Erauso's memoir are key to understanding the mastermind behind Erauso's long-term plan in *Historia* to illustrate the moments which suit them best, showing them in their prime as they succeed professionally and find help in religious spaces through their own accord. However, there is a notable lack of movement that these two concepts share that differentiates them greatly from all other scenes in the text. In the professional roles where Erauso succeeds, they spend months or even years without changing profession. On the other hand, when Erauso seeks sanctuary in churches, they are forced to remain in place while they wait for a moment to escape or the chance to plead their case. The stagnancy that Erauso experiences and chooses in these venues are a departure from the norm for Erauso as the sword-wielding escape-making protagonist, juxtaposing them with their own narration of silence and lack of explanation.

Although Erauso's professions have been thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter of this study, what has yet to be discussed is the specific spaces that allow Erauso a certain level of comfort as they travel across and to the Americas. The first instance of this is Erauso's experience in the maritime world during their initial voyage from Europe. Erauso works on a number of different ships divulging that "pasé algunos trabajos en el camino por ser nuevo en el oficio", indicating that it took time for them to get used to the work onboard (Erauso 99). What must be recognized during Erauso's voyage is the lack

of social interaction that Erauso shares with other people on the boat, making the absence of description of their surroundings unquestionably odd. Even if their family history in the business is taken into consideration, Erauso would have been stuck on these boats for months on their way to the Americas encountering people along the way, getting to know the crew, working alongside them, and living in close quarters for long periods of time on the open sea. Taking all of this into account, no matter the family history this would have been incredibly uncomfortable for Erauso while also living a life far different from what they would have been accustomed to. Given that Erauso is in a privileged position in this moment as a male entity able to travel to the Americas, making the contrast to their experience and the female one of immobile Spanish women a stark one. Susan D.

Amussen and Allyson M. Poska discuss this, saying that “transatlantic migration left hundreds of thousands of women, from the wives of colonial administrators to the wives of ordinary men, in charge of households and family estates... left to fend for themselves or became dependent on friends and family, living in social limbo often for much of their lives” (4). Though Erauso was in a socially “higher” position in the convent before they left, the silence they offer in return of the opportunity to start afresh in the New World is echoed transatlantically by the destitution of societally normal women who were left in Spain, unable to access the kind of travel and social climbing that Erauso captured in their early years of life, continuing on into adulthood. Erauso is able to climb so far socially that they join the army and become a lieutenant, a role they actively take on for five years. During this time, Erauso speaks on their success in just a small handful of battles. While in reality Erauso was experiencing a heavy amount of geographical

mobility in this job, professionally they were bound to their role. In several instances they had six and nine month-long stays in certain areas of conflict, which *Historia* fails to document fully with the exception of a sentence or two summarizing the outcome of each clash with the natives of the area. Notably, Erauso succeeds in their military stunts as well, forgoing the admissions of outright confidence in their role by instead coolly sharing their wins and emitting an air of ease and confidence in this role, despite their lack of personal freedoms within it as they are required to fight when and where they are needed.

Erauso's ability to stay put is echoed in their multiple escapes from the law, ultimately ending up in churches to protect them from justice being served. Yet again, *Historia* itself shies away from exuberant details on Erauso's decision-making as they go to the churches and the time they spend within the religious walls, which forms part of the interior narration discussed in Chapter One of this study through its lack of intimacy and sharing of details with the reading audience. Erauso seeks refuge in cathedrals multiple times, all of which follow a duel or disagreement that ends in violence, leaving Erauso vulnerable to punishment if they were to stay in a public space. The first time this occurs is after Erauso kills the lieutenant and judge in Concepción. Miguel de Erauso tells their sibling to escape to save their life, to which Erauso recalls "salí y entréme en San Francisco que es allí cerca...luego el gobernador Alonso García Remón cercó la iglesia con soldados, y así la tuvo seis meses" (Erauso 116). During this time, friends come to visit Erauso, offering them words of support. What is more impactful is the amount of time Erauso spends waiting in the Franciscan church and how this time is

described. As Erauso is effectively imprisoned in the church without being found guilty, but slowly “fueron arrimándose intercesiones, y se quitaron las guardas, y fue cesando el sobresalto”, showing that Erauso just had to outwill the governor in his attempt to capture Erauso for trial (Erauso 116). This is not an isolated incident as Erauso goes to “coger iglesia” for a few days after the duel in Charcas as well (Erauso 134). Incidentally, Erauso also uses sanctuary to recover from their wounds when they are too weak to skip town on foot, mule, or horse. After the escapade of Chavarria’s wife and the duel in La Plata with the husband which takes place in the San Agustín convent Erauso ends up being saved by “dos frailes de San Francisco, que es allí en frente, me pasaron y entraron allá...recogido por caridad, asistido en la curación por aquellos padres, estuve retraído cinco meses” (Erauso 140). This time, Erauso is freed due to the fact they were helping Chavarria’s wife flee from her murderous husband. Erauso’s ability to be welcomed back into the church following their initial break with it in the first episode of *Historia* makes their spatial transformation all the more dynamic given the aid that the church gives to Erauso despite not knowing anything about them other than their injuries.

The space that caps off the end of *Historia* is that of Erauso’s meeting with Pope Urban VIII, making this event the ultimate example of Erauso’s positive representation of male ecclesiastical figures in their work. Being in the presence of the head of the Roman Catholic church, Erauso has succeeded in their ability to inhabit any space that they choose, even the Vatican. Not only do the physical spaces that Erauso enters play into this, but also the social interactions that they have along the way help to dictate the way in which they react to their surroundings. Given that Erauso’s characterization as

protagonist is just as adaptable as their narration, it comes as no surprise that they can easily mutate themselves from one area to another without consequence in order to allow their transformation to blossom across the world, eventually even receiving a blessing from the Pope that allowed them to live out their life in “hábito de hombre, encargándome la prosecución honesta en adelante” (Erauso 173). This word of advice from Urban VIII sticks with Erauso, as in the last scene their own natural tendency toward violence appears when two women call Erauso “Señora Catalina” which according to Mateo Paganini preserves the memory of Erauso’s “toque de travesura y de burla a los oficios que implica el relato, el permanente juego con el velo y la fuga, la escena carnavalesca y un poco hostil” which always allows them to carve their own path no matter in which direction it may go (173).

CONCLUSION

Erauso's experience modeled through these three modes of perspective bring this particular text into a more modern viewpoint. Erauso is both a narrative character and historical person unique in their ability to harness more than one characteristic of themselves, folding together their violent nature and their transformative choice in terms of their identity simultaneously. This analysis has aimed to present Erauso in a light that is truer to the nature of the protagonist, while also celebrating the intricacies that make Erauso distinct from similar characters and narratives of the same era. While the chapters of this thesis rely on categorization to aid in the theoretical approach to each topic, the irony of studying Erauso is that in their lifetime they almost always broke with any traditional means of labeling and fitting into a "box" that society or any institution tried to impose. By celebrating this rather than fighting against it, more scholarly studies could use this as a tool to further research on rule-breaking and rebellion in socially anti-restrictive figures of the past.

Despite the large amount of work on Erauso's life, there is still more to be done in terms of new viewpoints with which to guide the discussion of *Historia*. The transformative aspect of this work in Erauso's life has been commented on, but more close readings of the text in the future could yield even more magnified approaches to gender studies in the Early Modern and transatlantic context. For example, I envision developing this project to explore further Erauso's narration which has been introduced in the first chapter of this study. The inclusion of indigenous people in *Historia* and their narrative representation is fascinating but would require further research that was beyond

the scope of this study. Erauso is not unique in that their life has been documented, but their life itself is what makes their story particularly compelling. For modern readers and students of Spanish, I think this work itself could become more mainstream with more modern approaches to Erauso's voice. Further researching the implications of a gender non-conforming protagonist who participated in this particular period could open further comparative analyses between Erauso and other transnational or gender-nonconforming autobiographies of their time.

Another point that could be taken further in terms of scholarship is that of the narrative relativity of Erauso's narrative. The interiority and exteriority of *Historia* make it markedly similar to the rule-bending demonstrated in Erauso's own life. Taking into account all of the elements of Erauso's work and life bring more to the table than simple a "spectacle" of a person who bent rules and changed their own identity, which will lead to further conversation about the implication of narrative voice in works like Erauso's. Recognizing Erauso as perhaps part of a larger group of people than previously thought could open more areas of focus into those who did not fit the mold of the typical transatlantic traveler. Maintaining focus on the atypical writers and chronicles of Erauso's era could bring about new literary approaches and critical theories for future scholars of the field.

Far too often, the past is painted as a restrictive and polemic space that was too different from our current-day dynamic to understand. *Historia de la Monja Alférez* honors the past while also connecting with the future, avoiding the limitations of critical paradigms and allowing the text to speak for itself through a fresh point of view. The

protagonist willing to stand up for themselves, to break boundaries, and live how they chose resonates with the world we live in today, marking the fact that literature has always been a place where history can connect with other spaces and times. Each reader of *Historia* can see a bit of themselves or someone they know in Erauso despite the difference in time periods, which makes this work all the more valuable. If Erauso had lived in this day and age their life would still form part of the important framework surrounding gender non-conforming individuals, as they would have forged their own path no matter their circumstances, a lesson that anyone in any era who reads *Historia* can admire.

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