

**Crossdressing, Crossculture: Conceptions and Perceptions of Crossdressing in Golden Age
Madrid and Tudor-Stuart London**

Brian Watson

English & History

Keene State College

Introduction

This paper came out of interest in the curiously comparable theaters of Golden Age Madrid and Tudor-Stuart London roughly from the mid-sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century. The beginning of this period saw the ascent of Queen Elizabeth in England and the (official) establishment and regulation of the theaters in both countries. The first permanent English theaters were “established in London as a result of the Act of the Vagabonds of 1572” (Cañadas 7). Likewise, Spanish theaters were established in 1568 by the “charitable Confradia de la Pasion...to raise funds for a hospital” (Cañadas 8). Lope de Vega, Spain's most eminent playwright began publishing during this period, and William Shakespeare—England's Vega, in many ways—also composed the bulk of his work in this time. However, the issue that remains the most fascinating in the history of these dual-Golden Ages is the remarkable similarities between Spain and England, especially in their theater conventions and in the ambivalence of the ruling classes towards the theater.

While there are fallacies in comparing traditions between countries with markedly different histories and conventions, Golden Age Spain and Tudor-Stuart London lend themselves easily to such a comparison. Although there are some very real differences between the two cultures, both Spanish and English authorities struggled with the issue of how to regulate and incorporate the highly popular theaters into their ruling structures. The authorities of both countries understood the importance and the power of theater to the general populace, and they attempted to control these theaters through laws and censorship targeting directors, actors, scripts, and even costuming. The latter issue, costuming, rapidly became one of the most important issues in both countries. The Spanish authorities took one particular direction in attempting to remedy the issue, and the English took another route altogether—but both remained plagued by the issue of illicit crossdressing on and off the stage.

The 'issue' of crossdressing, in a very real sense, can be used as a common ground on which to explore Spanish and English cultures in three dimensions: the understanding of crossdressing on stage by authority figures and public audiences, its use as a literary device within popular plays of the era such as William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Pedro Calderon de la Barca's *Life is a Dream*. Finally, an examination of crossdressing allows understanding of its use by actual historical figures such as Mary Firth (i.e. Moll Cutpurse) in England and Catalina de Erauso (i.e. *La Monja Alférez* or the Lieutenant Nun).

The Prologueⁱ

The undeclared Anglo-Spanish War of 1585-1604 overshadowed most of this era, making any comparison between the cultures of Golden Age Spainⁱⁱ and Tudor-Stuart Englandⁱⁱⁱ seem invalid—after all, many histories of the era describe the two powers in diametric opposition to each other (e.g. Jonathan Israel in his *Conflicts of Empires* (see works cited). The War of 1584-1604 was largely driven by religious differences and was a remnant of the Protestant Revolution of Martin Luther. England was devoutly Protestant and Spain devoutly Catholic—or at least their monarchs were—and religious differences led, as they usually do, to political ones. The Spanish began to be (from an English perspective) aggressive Catholic colonialists under a 'black legend' that no doubt encouraged and supported an Irish revolt 1594 against their Queen. From Spanish perspective, the English became backwater, pagan, upstarts who oppressed Catholics in Scotland and Ireland and interfered in Spanish Hapsburg affairs on the Continent^{iv}.

The transition from King Edward VI of England was an especially messy one—his last will decreed that neither of his half-sisters (Mary or Elizabeth) should inherit the throne, but instead a more distant relative should rule. Queen Jane Grey lasted all of nine days on the throne before her support collapsed and Mary, Elizabeth's half-sister regained the throne. Queen Mary attempted to forcefully revert England back to Catholicism, burning at least 300 dissenters who refused^v to convert. After Mary's death in 1553, Queen Elizabeth reconverted England back to Protestantism,

burning dissenting Catholics.

After the re-establishment of Protestantism, King Philip II of Spain, who had once attempted to gain the Queen's friendship, began to turn against her. England supported Protestants in France and the Dutch against the Spanish, and in turn the Spanish sponsored a Irish Catholic rebellion. The raiding of Spanish slave and treasure ships by a Sir Francis Drake was the final straw for King Philip II, who sent a massive armada of ships against the English. Miraculously, for the English, a combination of bad weather and the superior maneuverability of their ships conspired to give them a decisive victory over the Spanish. The aftermath of this battle, combined by Spain's declarations of bankruptcy 1559, 1576, and 1596 marked the beginning of the Spanish decline and the English rise.

The tumultuous Anglo-Spanish relationship in the late 16th century had profound impacts on the Early Modern societies that were expressed in their literatures and cultures—which is something traditional diplomatic or military histories tend to miss or ignore altogether. For example, although a military history might document the dramatic defeat of the Spanish Armada (and the bitterly public decline of the Spanish Hapsburg Empire by imperial overextension) it would not offer explanation for the sudden flourishing of arts in Spain^{vi}. Likewise, a history of the English would detail that they were left financially shaky as a result of the Anglo-Spanish wars—which would lead to the Puritan Revolution—and that the British in later centuries generally tended to gain power at the expense of the Spanish^{vii}, but it would either ignore the flourishing of arts or attribute it to the rising power of England. However, when these two cultures are brought together, it is obvious that the artistic flourishing happened irrespective of the rise or decline of their home countries. Tudor-Stuart and Golden Age Spanish theater offers a valuable space from which their respective cultures can be compared and contrasted.

“A second Daniel, a Daniel, a Jew!”^x

Despite their political differences, the Spanish and English of this time were using the same cultural 'coping' strategies in the post-Reformation years, just to different effects. Both countries were undergoing tremendous change: the Spanish were entering a century of decline and national crisis whereas the English by comparison (despite a Puritan hiccup) were entering a period of history that would eventually result in the British Empire. As a result, the Spanish 'strategy' tended to find threats internally—likely because they suffered major internal issues—and the English seemed to find these threats externally—as in the case of the Spanish Armada. Cañadas states in the first line of his introduction to *Public Theater in Golden Age Madrid and Tudor-Stuart London* that Madrid and London were "rapidly expanding court-cities in a period of national self-definition" (1). The self-definitions of each country had to undergo change in order to alter themselves to the shift that history had taken. Theaters played a indispensable role in this national self-definition through their characters and what the characters represented, but also through their audiences. Theaters in Early Modern Europe, but especially in Golden Age Spain and Tudor-Stuart England were the most popular form of public entertainment, and were vitally important for the development of a national identity.

The theaters of both countries were similar, based on an open-air courtyard design. Both theaters had galleries and rooms in which (better-off) theatergoers could sit, or, for a cheaper fee, theatergoers could also stand in the pit or the patio, an open area in front of the stage. The audience in both cities

came from across the entire social spectrum...the intersections and conflicts between cultural identity and interests of [four] groups—an elite, composed of the aristocracy...a gentry which represented various economic levels, and an amorphous mass of commons...[and] an emerging class...the middling sorts, a group which negotiated the

interests, identity, and values of the other groups in order to define themselves (Cañadas 14).

Playwrights were well aware of this: in Lope de Vega's *Arte Nuevo*, essentially his personal opinion guide to theater, he writes “affairs of honor are the best, because they move all sorts of people most forcefully” (qtd. in Cañadas 20), indeed, it is “the multitude [who] pays for the plays, it is only fair to speak foolishly to give them pleasure” (qtd in Cañadas 22). Both Shakespeare and de Vega, as well as their contemporaries, wrote to a large audience who were attempting to define their identities, personal and national, in a shifting world.

Generally, playwrights in this time tended to define themselves and—by extension— national identity by what they *were not* rather than what they *were*. For example Lope de Vega, the most famous of Spanish playwrights, in his *El niño inocente de La Guardia* (The Innocent Child of La Guardia) offers a vehemently anti-Jewish perspective. The play dramatizes an Inquisition case in which three Jews and six *conversos* (Jews or Muslims who had converted after the Reconquista) were accused of crucifying a Christian child in a blood ritual, a rather fantastic story that was told by the converted Jew Benito Garcia after five days of water torture^{xi}. De Vega's play, by ending with this violent crucifixion, emphasizes both the martyrdom of the child and the anti-Spanishness of the Jews. Likewise, English playwrights such as Marlowe in his *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* also create powerfully negative images of Jews as rich, anti-Christian usurers and sinister manipulators of politics. The difference in the English case was that these plays were set in foreign lands, and tended to concern 'foreign' peoples.

Spanish playwrights, tended to be concerned with the myths of *hispanidad y caticismo* (Spanishness and authenticity), as identified by the famous Spanish critic Americo Castro^{xii}. One reason Spanish playwrights were so concerned with *hispanidad y caticismo* was because the idea of ‘Spanishness’ was a new concept—the Reconquista had just succeeded in uniting disparate groups under one nation. For Castro, the “Spanish national identity emerged out of the interaction of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people” (Cañadas 24-5)^{xiii}. Although the *corrales* closed at the death of Phillip II, his son Phillip III soon reopened them to the public^{xiv}. However, almost immediately the authorities began to try to control them: “Spanish authorities...demand[ed] for instance, that female actresses had to be married, and accompanied by their husbands” (Cañadas, 43), and at first authorities seemed ambivalent about whether or not to allow female actresses, as Ursula K. Heise notes, there is

considerable vacillation at the beginnings of Spanish public theater as to whether institutionalized transvestism should be allowed or not—whether it is more unacceptable, that is, to permit boys publicly to take on female disguise, or to admit women to the stage.

Strikingly, even during this initial period of indecision the issue of transvestism is a “legal problem that occupies and is regulated by Spain's highest legislative authorities” (Heise 359). Heise's observation that many of the highest authorities took notice of the theater, reveals, to some extent, that these authorities were well aware of the effect that theater had upon the Spanish public. Heise goes on to argue that the Spanish were so adamantly opposed to boy actors because they have “what is possibly the most violent history of persecution of homosexuals in Europe” (Heise 362). This is no doubt part of the reason, as the Spanish do seem to have a tormented history with homosexuality^{xv}.

By contrast, the British chose to reject female actresses in favor of transvestite boys. The main difference between theater laws in Spain and in England is that British women were not necessarily prohibited from the stage indeed, “the exclusion of women from the stage [in England] rests on pure social convention, not official decree” (Heise 359). Michael Shapiro in *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage* posits one possible reason for the lack of female actresses in England when he argues that the British were not necessarily “anomalous as some scholars have tried to

maintain... the phenomenon [of transvestites] may represent a lag behind changes taking place on the continent rather than an indication of English sexual attitudes" (Shapiro 31). Shapiro does not offer reasons for this cultural 'lag' beyond suggesting that perhaps Italian *commedia dell'arte* troupes (which were responsible for the spread of female actresses across Europe) did not visit England as much as other countries and that for "political, linguistic, and geographical reasons, [they] exerted more influence on the continent" (Shapiro 33).

However, when Shapiro's *Gender in Play* is read in conjunction with his *Shakespeare and the Jews* another reason presents itself that Shapiro does not suggest. In a chapter discussing the English characterization of Jews (and other groups, such as Dutch, or even the Irish) as "aliens" or "strangers" in London, Shapiro notes that all of these "had one thing in common: they were not English" (Shapiro 181). As a result, they were subject to different laws, and their "allegiance" (181) was frequently questioned by 'real' Londoners. Indeed, memories of the "May Day riots of 1517, in which London's foreign community was attacked...remained alive...[in] 'the spring of 1551...a plot to attack the foreigners was nipped in the bud'" (Shapiro 182) and eight years later more rumors circulated about these 'strangers'. As already stated, England was a country undergoing dramatic redefinition of national identity, and defined itself against certain groups, such as the Spanish or, in this case, the 'strangers'. Culture pervades several aspects of life, and it is possible another reason the English did not have female actresses was that they saw the use of female actresses as 'foreign' and 'strange'. This point is substantiated by the fact that when actresses were finally allowed on the English stage in the post-Restoration years, the dramatic use of female crossdressing immediately ensued in such plays as *The Country Wife*.

"For the apparel oft proclaims the man"^{xvi} - Crossdressing in Spain and England

Within the geopolitical change that Europe was undergoing both England and Spain struggled to redefine their national identities. On a superficial level, both of these countries seemed to take different routes: one chose to define by law what was not Spanish (transvestism), whereas the other's drama and culture defined itself against 'foreigners' and 'strange' conventions (female acting). However, at a deeper level, both of these cultures defined themselves as either *hispanidad y catolicismo* or (in the case of England) as native Englishmen, in contrast to minority groups, which were known variously as *conversos*, 'strangers,' or 'aliens' and included such groups as the Jews, the Irish, and the Moors. Another way of illustrating the root similarity of these two strategies is to point out that although both of these strategies are superficially different, they both resulted in disconcertingly similar effects: *historical* figures who were able to manipulate their cultures in the same way despite being separated by geographic, linguistic, patriarchal, and supposedly rigid cultural borders. These two women are, of course, the famous crossdressers Moll Cutpurse and the Lieutenant Nun. However, before these two women are detailed, a deeper look at how England and Spain in the early modern era understood and treated crossdressing and specifically female crossdressers, is necessary^{xvii}.

In their groundbreaking book *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, mainly focusing on women in the Netherlands find that the tradition "existed throughout Europe, but was strongest by far in the north-west, in the Netherlands, England and Germany" that the "decision to crossdress was a "real and viable option for women" (2), and that the reasons women crossdressed "could be both material, such as poverty, or emotional, such as patriotic fervor or love for another woman, or a combination of these" (2). The phenomenon of crossdressing was also a real and viable problem for authorities: Spain passed laws, edicts and ordinances against female crossdressing in 1600, 1606, 1608, 1615, 1641, 1653, 1672, 1675^{xviii} which to Ursula Heise is "evidence enough that the authorities by no means succeed[ed] in enforcing its elimination" (Heise, 359). Likewise, many Englishmen also "vilified, if not demonized" (Cañadas 64) actors who crossdressed. One anti-theatrical pamphleteer "argued that a man who wore

the clothes [of a woman] would 'adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde'" and that women who crossdressed (offstage) "may not improperly be called Hermaphroditi, that is, Monsters of bothe kindes, half women, half men" (qtd. in Cañadas 64-65).

Indeed, from the Middle Ages onward, officials in Europe were incredibly concerned with clothing and rank, as detailed sumptuary laws reveal. Sumptuary laws, as detailed by Maria Muzzarelli, "regulated the consumption of goods, consisting in the analysis, quantification, or prohibition of various demonstrations of opulence displayed during banquets, feasts, funerals, or in one's attire" (Muzzarelli 597). The effect and purpose of these laws "allowed residents of a city and even foreigners to distinguish at first sight knights, lawyers or doctors...sumptuary legislation thus functioned as an instrument to maintain and reinforce social barriers" (Muzzarelli 599). These were especially enforced during the reign of Queen Elizabeth who was determined "to have the acts of apparel obeyed" (Hooper 473)^{xix}. Similarly, in Spain, sumptuary laws were incredibly specific: one thirteenth-century law detailed the amount of outfits knights could own in a year (four), the materials that could be on saddles (no silk, no plush), the colors that 'infidels' could wear (white, black or brown) and the types of beards Jews or Moors could have (only long)^{xx}. When Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet* "costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, / But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy; / For the apparel oft proclaims the man" (*Hamlet*, lines 556-58) he was offering very real and contemporary advice.

For officials in both countries, even the "idea of female cross-dressing and the mobility it allowed becomes an anxious refrain in moralistic and anti-theatrical tracts of the time" (Emck 76). Katy Emck notes that

for moralists [and authority figures, I might add] female cross-dressing becomes a potent symbol of social and moral disorder frequently associated with a public theater which, in England and Spain, cut across class boundaries and allowed its audience to imagine themselves in different roles and stations in life and, in theory at least, to actually try them out (Emck 76).

The important contrast to note is that despite official and sometimes legal disapproval, plays using crossdressing were *enduringly* popular and continued to be. In England, the popularity and durability of crossdressing as a plot device continued throughout the Elizabethan era into 1642, as Shapiro's catalog of 79 plays featuring "Plays with Heroines in Male Disguise" (Shapiro, *Gender*, 221-223) shows. In Spain, these plays tended to remain the most popular amongst Spanish theater audiences^{xxi}: Katy Emck comments that it was almost '*de riguer*' for Spanish comedy to include a crossdressed actress.

Pedro Calderon de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* (*Life is a Dream*) is one such example: the play begins with the crossdressed heroine Rosaura stumbling upon the imprisoned and chained Sigismund, the hero of the play. The contrast between the two characters is palpable: Rosaura, disguised in the clothes of a man, has the agency and power to cross national borders, to wield a sword, and to go on a mission to "revenge a wrong" (Matthews 199). Sigismund on the other hand, who is "dressed in the skins of beasts" (196) is denied agency altogether: he is chained from every limb at the command of his father, the King, who is terrified of a prophecy that Sigismund will bring disaster to Poland. In drawing our attention to Rosaura's transvestism, Calderon emphasizes Sigismund's outfit of animal skin—he is reduced to the level of an animal. By the end of the play, Sigismund has taken his rightful place (and dress) as prince and heir to the kingdom. His first act is to demand that Astolfo, the Duke of Muscovy, marry Rosaura: "Give, Astolfo, give your plighted / Hand here to Rosura, since / It is due and I require it" (Matthews 232). Astolfo protests at first saying that it would be "infamous, a stigma / On my name to marry a woman" (Matthews 232) who has (in)famously crossdressed. However, his hand is forced and the play ends with the promise of double

marriage: both Rosaura and Sigismund have been reincorporated into society.

Correspondingly, the plot of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* also revolves around issues of power and societal control and transition. The play begins with the hero Orlando, who has, like Sigismund, been forcefully kept "rustically at home" by his older brother who "to speak more / properly, stays me here at home unkept" like the "stalling of an ox" in fact, the "horses / are bred better" (1.1 7-10) than Orlando. Both Sigismund and Orlando are forced into states of original nature or brutality—nothing distinguishes them from animals—in fact, animals are better off than them, having some freedom. Orlando flees the home of his dead father and, when he wins a wrestling match before the king, is seen as a threat and exiled to the woods, out of civilization. The heroine Rosalind is also exiled from court by the usurper Duke Fredrick. because she is "her father's daughter" (1.3 1.462). Instead of despairing, Rosalind and Celia decide to find Duke Senior in exile, and they disguise themselves. As Rosalind is the taller, she chooses to crossdress and become (superficially) male giving her the ability of "pass[ing] along / and never stir[ring] assailants" (1.3 1. 520-1). Thus, male clothes in *As You Like It* function to both give Rosalind agency, and mobility, but they also allow her to shape the world around her, in contrast to Orlando, who is pushed into the woods by powers stronger than him. Rosalind is directly responsible for the ending of the play, as she shapes the marriages that will happen at the end. Unlike *Life is a Dream* Rosalind's disguise is not revealed at the end, but the play still ends with her marriage to Orlando.

The similarity of these two plays is quite remarkable when it is considered that they were written by different authors over three decades apart in countries that were superficially alien to each other, separated by the Atlantic Ocean, and had differences in language, religion, and culture. In general scope, the two plays feature liminal male characters who begin at the level of animals and at the mercy of powers greater than them. They also both feature heroines who, by donning masculine clothes, gain agency, mobility, and the ability to shape their individual worlds. In doing so they subvert 'official' constructions of male identity and cultural roles. They, as Emck suggests,

test out the waters of rebellion in ways that echo and at times exceed the male protagonists. They substitute for and deflect some of the burden of that disorder, with their male disguises mirroring the rise in status and the access to self-determinability which the male protagonists desire (Emck 78).

Both male heroes begin at the level of animals, but through interaction with crossdressed heroines they are able to achieve self-determination:

Rosaura educates Segismundo in... the nature of freedom as moral choice and action, Rosalind educates Orlando in reality... Like Segismundo's self-sacrifice in restoring Rosaura to Astolfo, Orlando's self-sacrifice battle with a lion... is the definitive moment of his self-transcendence and maturation (Emck 84)

The final scene of both plays also document the marriage, and one could suggest, the readmittance and reincorporation of the crossdresser/transgressor into society. Emck suggests that by surrendering their disguises, the heroines signal "the return to 'true' femininity that in turn represents a return to society's 'natural' state. They are both reintegrated into society via marriage and their supremacy is suppressed in favor of male voices" (Emck 87). Although dramatists were allowed to subvert and contest social standards and mores on the festive space of the stage, the endings of plays always had to return to socially-acceptable stages—this was an era in which both Elizabethan and Spanish dramatists risked official censorship if they were too liberal in their plots. However, the historical examples of Mary Firth and Catalina de Erauso show that when it came to offstage life, historical figures would challenge and subvert official and legal disapproval.

The Cutpurse and the Nun

The final, and finest examples of the continuities and similarities between Golden Age Spain and Tudor-Stuart England are the historical figures of Catalina de Erauso and Mary Frith. Catalina de Erauso (1592-1650) was a female crossdresser who spent most of her life in colonial Spanish America as a *condottiere*, an adventurer and a gambler. Born to upper-class parents in 1592, she was placed in a nunnery at fifteen, from which she escaped in 1600. Fashioning a pair of men's clothes for herself and cutting her hair, she traveled around Spain, and worked various jobs until she ran into her father in Valladolid: “the two of us didn't speak to each other, nor did he recognize me” (Erauso, 7). Her superficial clothing prevents recognition by her father, uncle, and her brother from recognizing her—revealing the high level of importance attached to clothing in Spanish culture. Indeed, throughout her narrative, Catalina de Erauso places high importance on clothing by frequently noting and describing the outfits she gains throughout her adventures^{xxii}.

Catalina's adventures seem to repeat in cycles with every city she visits. Two episodes are characteristic: her visit Charcas and to Piscobamba. When she arrives at Charcas, she finds a job hauling and selling wheat and is successful at it: “my master... liked the deal so well he sent me back...on the same errand” (Erauso 39). Next, she goes to play cards until trouble seems to find her: a merchant says that he will raise her “a cuckold's horn!” (Erauso, 40), and in the resulting battle for honor, she “runs him through, and down he went” (Erauso 40). She flees to Piscobamba, whereupon she plays cards again and a “Portuguese fellow... [called her] 'the devil himself!' [and] stretched his hands on either side of my head and said 'I've lost my father's horns'” (Erauso, 41) also gets “run... through, and down he went, dead” (Erauso, 42). In both cases, Catalina is called a cuckold, the worst insult possible against a Spanish man, and in order to ‘fill’ her role, and she is forced to fight for her honor.

Catalina's story also reveals another aspect of gender in Early Modern Spain: it was not the biological, physical category as it is in the modern world: early modern Spaniards “assumed that manhood was revealed, in a large part, through a person's behavior” (Behrend-Martinez, 1073) and their clothes, as noted earlier. When Catalina is ordered “stripped and tied to a rack” (Erauso 37) for torture, there is no anxiety from her over physical discovery. Indeed, when the torture finishes, the judge commands “take that lad down” (Erauso, 37). When Catalina, on what she thought was her deathbed, confesses that she is actually a woman to the Bishop of Guamanga, the news is a “source of amazement to the people who had known me before” (Erauso, 67) because her acting/self-fashioning was so convincing. Like Rosaura, whose crossdressing enables her attainment of agency as well as support and forgiveness of Prince Sigismund, Catalina de Erauso also receives popular acclaim. In returning to Europe, she is granted forgiveness as well as money from the King Philip IV and a dispensation from Pope Urban VI to continue her life in men's clothes. Even though there are several laws against crossdressing, Catalina survives—possibly saved by popular conceptions of women crossdressed as soldiers as was so popular in Spanish theater at the time. Of course, playwrights wasted no time in dramatizing her life: a play by Juan Perez de Montalvan titled *Comedia famosa de la monja Alferez* (*Comedy of the Famous Lieutenant Nun*) was published a year after Catalina's return to Spain.

Mary Frith, alias Moll Flanders, (1589-1659) was a female crossdresser in London who, according to her own *Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith*^{xxiii} set herself up as a fence for thieves and as a pimp of men and women. The beginning of her autobiography begins around the age of 20 (not “reckon[ing] my childish ignorances and... sallies... for it is no matter to know how I grew up to this” [Nakayama, 22]) when she is tricked by her ‘friends’ onto a ship bound for Virginia because they thought her “untoward disposition” would be broken by “some Jack[’s]... dominion over me [which] might subdue the violence of my spirit, or else I should be so broke by hard labor that I would of my own accord return to a womanly and civil behavior” (Nakayama 22-23). On the ship, she is mocked

and teased by sailors and thereupon presents herself to the captain in a “submissive gesture” (Nakayama 24) and convinces him to let her escape—which is her last moment of powerlessness until her death from dropsy in 1659.

By 1602 she had begun dressing in men's clothes, and soon became well-known as “a trafficker in stolen goods as a panderer” (Nakayama xlv). Indeed, her infamy seemed to have no bounds: by 1611^{xxiv} a play (*The Roaring Girl*) was been written about her by playwrights Middleton and Decker: a good example of the rate to which culture, history (in the figure of Moll), and theater interacted in this era. The same year she was arrested for the loosely-defined charge of “trespassing against public morality” (Ungerer, 67), but principally for appearing on the stage of the Fortune (in Middleton and Decker's play) “in mans aparell & in her bootes & with a sword by her syde” (qtd. in Ungerer 66). She was detained in the Bridewell correctional facility^{xxv} for a few months, but again appears in court records in February 1612 for the same offense: this time however, she “wept bitterly and seemed very penitent” but her penitence was “since doubted she was maudelin drunke, beeing discovered to have tipled of three quarts of sacke before she came to her penance” (qtd. in Baston 318). The author however, notes that the preacher was “extreem bad” (ibid.) and “so wearied the audience that the best part went away, and the rest taried rather to heare Mall Cutpurse then him” (ibid.). Baston comments that Moll was able to adopt

at least the external signs of conformity [by weeping]... and exploiting the ineptness of the authority figure... Moll Cutpurse subverts the intended display. Ironically, it is for subversion of the power structure for which Moll is being punished in the first place... through her apparent acquiescence to ritual humiliation of public shaming, Moll subverts the power mechanisms of the community with individual charisma (Baston 318).

Rosalind may have provided the example on the stage of Shakespeare, but Moll brought the subversion of Rosalind to life. Moll's survival until her death from old age (74) and dropsy depended in no small part upon her popularity not with the 'best part' that Baston's source describes, but with the lesser part—the part that “taried rather to heare Mall Cutpurse then him” (Baston 318). The lesser parts were likely familiar with Rosalind and accepted the subversion that Moll Cutpurse represented—otherwise, she likely would have been killed as an 'alien'.

Although there are differences between the women, just as there are differences between England and Spain, the strategies that they used were the same: through crossdressing both women were able to gain more agency and power over own their lives than authority figures or the law would have liked or allowed. As with Rosalind and Rosaura, Mary Frith and Catalina de Erauso's stories are remarkably similar: both are placed in positions of powerlessness until they act, or self-fashion, and use the superficial power of men's clothes to gain the agency and the power to do as they see fit. Mary survives the only way she says she can: through crime. Likewise, Catalina essentially wanders from place to place, swept up in the heavily masculine culture of Spanish America. Both women realize—on some level—that they have to 'act' or self-fashion, and form an image for themselves. Moll Cutpurse achieves this through her public persona (reaching the height of self-creation in playing herself on the stage of the Fortune in 1611), and the Lieutenant Nun achieves this by playing into the hyper-masculine stereotypes of conquistadors. Like Rosalind and Rosaura, Mary and Catalina adopt male clothing “for a particular practical purpose” (Baston 321) but, in doing so challenges and subverts the era's patriarchy. Her use of male clothing allows them, in 'real' life, the same agency that Rosalind and Rosaura accessed on stage.

Although both of these women became celebrities—Moll through her infamy and criminality and Catalina through her fame and soldiery—the survival of their stories give modern readers a glimpse of historical reality of how gender and social roles largely worked out in reality, removed from the wishes and ordinances of authorities. These two figures were able to become 'male' and

achieve the mobility and agency that came with it. Mary Frith and Catalina de Erauso are historical examples of the subversion of state power and authority. The opportunities provided to these two women through crossdressing were a moment of history produced by a series of chance events; first, the theaters of both countries underwent renaissances as their popularity and importance increased in this era; second, the theaters became vital in processes of national self-definition that were necessary given the historical context and included redefinitions of gender as well; third, the use of crossdressing on the stages of both countries to grant female figures agency provided a powerful cultural context that Mary Frith and Catalina de Erauso would tap into in order to gain greater agency and power over their own lives.

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- i Most of this reconstruction of history is based off of Andrew Pettegree's *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*. (see works cited)
- ii Roughly between the end of the *Reconquista* and Columbus' expeditions in 1492 and the death of Pedro Calderon de la Barca in 1681. (Cañadas, Introduction)
- iii This includes the golden 'Elizabethan era' but I see the era as continuing through the reign of James I, despite some of the difficulties he faced. (Cañadas, Introduction)
- iv I cannot help but to note another way in which the two countries differed: one was ruled by a king and the other a queen. It would be interesting to examine Spanish perceptions of Queen Elizabeth, especially given their recent (negative) history with their 'first' queen as well; Joanna (the Mad) of Castile and her relationship with the *comunero* revolt. Did this create or reinforce stereotypes of women as indecisive and weak? Regardless, this should serve as a reminder that not all drama is on the stage, and national drama is just as important to national identity.
- v Haigh, 101: though many sources list this number as higher, Haigh identifies 300 as the bottom-line estimate.
- vi An artistic flourishing among decay was not completely unprecedented nor would it be the last time it happened: e.g. the *fin de siecle* in Austria in the 1880-90's, or possibly modern-day Detroit.
- vii An interesting microcosm of this history can be found in the history of the phrase 'the empire upon which the sun never sets': John Smith of Jamestown in the early 17th century notes that "the brave Spanish soldier brag[s] the sun never sets in the Spanish dominion" (Bartlett 388), but when England reached its height in the 19th century many bragged the same of England. (see works cited)
- x *The Merchant of Venice*, Gratiano, Act IV, scene 1. (see works cited)
- xi James Reston has a detailed account of Garcia's torture in *Dogs of God: Columbus, the Inquisition, and the Defeat of the Moors* p199-202. (see works cited)
- xii This is likely because the idea of "Spain" as a country was still a new idea—the Reconquista ended in 1492.
- xiii Canadas argues against Castro's interpretation, saying that he replaces a myth of "Spanish national identity ...[with a] prescriptive model of essentialist cultural identity" (25). I disagree with his interpretation based on my own observations, but this is not the space in which address that. (works cited, and personal opinion)
- xiv Canadas, 10. (see works cited)
- xv Heise, 362-64 (see works cited)
- xvi *Hamlet*, I. 558 (see works cited)
- xvii Although the history of sexuality plays a large role in the history of crossdressing, I will attempt to look at crossdressing and its impacts in a more cultural and gendered way.
- xviii Heise, p. 359, Erauso, p. xi. (see works cited)
- xix Hooper does not go into any sort of detail on why Elizabeth was so determined to enforce the sumptuary laws—is it perhaps because she felt insecure in her power as a woman and felt the need to visually enforce social rank and order in England? More research into sumptuary laws across Europe is needed, as Muzzarelli also notes. (see works cited)
- xx *The Business History Review*, 99-100. (see works cited)
- xxi Heise, 359-60 (see works cited)
- xxii Erauso, pages 10, 15, 29, 37, 42, 74, 76, and 78. (see works cited)
- xxiii Ungerer, on page 62, raises some doubt as to whether the *Life and Death* is authentic, but the majority of critics treat it as it is, so I will follow in their footsteps. Regardless however, his documentary evidence proves that Moll did exist, and the records of her show her subversion of normal gender roles. (see works cited)

xxiv Mulholland, 30. (see works cited)

xxv As Ungerer notes, Bridewell also hosted other female crossdressers that less is known about—*e.g.* Joanna Goodman, Mary Wakeley, and Katherine Cuffe (Ungerer 66)--giving further evidence that female crossdressing was both occurring and repressed in Early Modern England. (see works cited)