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### **Hidden in Plain Sight: Recent Scholarship in Women's History, Gender History, and Sexuality Studies**

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## **Hidden in Plain Sight: Recent Scholarship in Women's History, Gender History, and Sexuality Studies<sup>1</sup>**

**Allyson M. Poska**

In 2008, I wrote a short article for this journal in which I described the remarkable changes that women's history had already brought to the study of early modern Spain. In the ensuing decade, the research on women in early modern Spain has flourished and the vitality of gender and sexuality studies has deepened our understanding of the diversity of Spanish society. These scholars have not only moved away from the long-held vision of Spain as a society repressed by Catholic doctrine and misogyny but, in the process, they have reconceptualized some of the most basic assumptions about men and women in the early modern period.

### **Women's History, Women's Agency**

Without a doubt, the most important change in our understanding of early modern Spanish women's lives has been a focus on women's agency and an emphasis on intersectional analysis. For decades, the scholarship on women was framed by the early modern prescriptive literature that demanded female submission, humility, and chastity. However, archival research and gendered analysis have moved prescriptions about female behavior to the margins, clearly demonstrating that the expectations of a few, elite, mostly religious men had little influence on the experiences of early modern women. Rather, within the broad framework of early modern patriarchy, Spanish women were able to act independently, achieve success, and exert power and authority in many aspects of their lives. In addition, intersectional analysis has pushed scholars of Spain and its empire to move beyond seeing women as homogenous to considering them as a diverse group of people whose interactions with Spain's legal systems, institutions, and social expectations were constituted by their overlapping identities of sex, race, class, religion, and age.

Feminist scholars have found that Spanish women of all religious backgrounds and races regularly employed the extensive agency that they gained from the property rights enshrined in Castilian law on behalf of their families and their communities. In the late middle ages, Jewish women and conversas proved to be remarkably successful in maneuvering through both the Jewish and the Christian legal systems. Their access to property gave them the financial resources to support themselves, their relatives (both Jewish and Converso), their

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Alison Weber and Marta Vicente for their help on this article.

neighbors, and even provide credit to Christian men and women.<sup>2</sup> After 1492, as *conversas* and *Morisca*s faced increased surveillance for suspected relapse to their former faiths, their precarious status as converts did not stop them from advocating on behalf of their families and communities. As Stephanie Cavanaugh has shown, *Morisca*s in sixteenth-century Valladolid used their access to funds to thwart Christian attempts to break up their community.<sup>3</sup>

Property rights were also critical to the success and financial stability of women of color in the Spanish Empire. As early as the sixteenth century, Native women in the Americas learned to strategically employ both Indigenous traditions and the Spanish legal system to protect and distribute their property.<sup>4</sup> Across generations, free women of African descent owned, traded, and bequeathed property, including enslaved people, ran businesses and used their access to property to influence the lives of their friends and relations.<sup>5</sup> The impact of the Spanish legal system on women of color is particularly vivid in places like New Orleans, where the transfer of the city to Spain in 1763 created a range of new legal opportunities for both free black and enslaved women.<sup>6</sup>

The expansion of transatlantic research and the reconceptualization of Spain and its empire as a single legal entity has revealed important connections between women's legal experiences on the peninsula and those of women in the Americas. On both sides of the Atlantic enslaved women used the legal system to

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<sup>2</sup> See Alexandra Guerson and Dana Wessell Lightfoot, "Mixed Marriages and Community Identity in Fifteenth-Century Girona," Sarah Ifft Decker, "Credit and Connections: Jewish Women between Communities in Vic, 1250–1350," and Natalie Oeltjen "Challenges Facing Mallorcan *Conversas* after 1391," in *Women and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Michelle Armstrong-Partida, Alexandra Guerson, and Dana Wessell Lightfoot (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 17-40 and 41-58. On *conversa* literacy in the sixteenth century, see Sara T. Nalle, "Literacy and Education among Judeo-*conversa* Women in Castile, Portugal, and Amsterdam, 1560–1700," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 69-89.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie M. Cavanaugh, "In Defense of Community: *Morisca* Women in Sixteenth-Century Valladolid," in *Women and Community*, 151-176. For a comparison of *conversas* and *Morisca*s, see Renee Levine Melammed, "Judeo-*conversas* and *Morisca*s in Sixteenth-century Spain: A Study of Parallels," *Jewish History* 24, no. 2 (2010), 155-168. DOI:10.1007/s10835-010-9106-y

<sup>4</sup> See for instance, the translations of women's testaments in Mark Z. Christensen and Jonathan Truitt, eds, *Native Wills from the Colonial Americas: Dead Giveaways in a New World* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Danielle Terrazas Williams, "'My Conscience is Free and Clear': African-Descended Women, Status, and Slave Owning in Mid-Colonial Mexico," *The Americas* 75, no.3 (July 2018): 525 – 554 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2018.32> and Karen B. Graubart, "The Bonds of Inheritance: Afro-Peruvian Women's Legacies in a Slave-holding World," in *Women's Negotiations and Textual Agency in Latin America, 1500-1799*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World, ed. Mónica Díaz and Rocío Quispe-Agnoli (New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), chapter 6.

protect themselves and their families.<sup>7</sup> In Valencia, enslaved women filed suit against their masters who denied paternity over their children.<sup>8</sup> In the Americas, enslaved women of Indigenous and African descent sued for their freedom and to halt abuse.<sup>9</sup>

Following on research begun in the 1990s, scholars have noted women's willingness and skill in turning to the judicial systems (both secular and ecclesiastical) to resolve an array of personal problems, from abusive marriages to disputes over land, contracts, and inheritance. With the Spanish settlement of the Americas and the creation of transatlantic families, women bequeathed and inherited property on both sides of the Atlantic and regularly turned to the courts and to the notarial system to ensure the fulfillment of their own and their families' testamentary expectations and to expand their imperial business interests.<sup>10</sup>

Mobility was another critical component of Spanish women's agency. Far from a culture that supposedly prized female seclusion and stigmatized women's appearance in public, we now know that Spain and its empire was populated by women who moved frequently and easily from place to place. Following on the work of Carmen Sarasúa, scholars have found that women readily traveled across the peninsula in search of employment.<sup>11</sup> More surprising has been the realization

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<sup>7</sup> On enslaved women in Spain, see Aurelia Martín Casares, "Productivas y silenciadas: el mundo laboral de las esclavas en España" and Rocío Periañez, "El acceso a la libertad de las esclavas: ¿liberación o distinta forma de sometimiento?" in *Mujeres esclavas y abolicionistas en la España de los siglos XVI al XIX* eds. Aurelia Martín Casares, Rocío Periañez Gómez (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 174ff.

<sup>9</sup> Nancy E. van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) and Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Jane E. Mangan, *Transatlantic Obligations: Creating the Bonds of Family in Conquest-Era Peru and Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) esp. ch. 3; Ofelia Rey Castelao "Crisis familiares y migraciones en la Galicia del siglo XVIII desde una perspectiva de género," *Studia historica. Historia moderna* 38, no.2 (2016): 201-236 doi: <https://doi.org/10.14201/shhmo2016382237285>; María José de la Pascua Sánchez, "'A la sombra' de hombres ausentes: mujeres malcasadas en el mundo hispánico del setecientos," *Studia historica. Historia moderna*, 38, no.2 (2016): 237-285; Inmaculada Alva Rodríguez, "Redes comerciales y estrategias matrimoniales. Las mujeres en el comercio del Galeón de Manila (siglos XVII-XVIII)," *Revista Complutense de historia de América* 42 (2016): 203-220; Shannon Lalor, "Two Doñas: Aristocratic Women and Colonial Power in Cuba," in *The Spanish Caribbean and the Atlantic World in the Long Sixteenth Century*, eds. Ida Altman and David Wheat (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Carmen Sarasua, *Criados, nodrizas y amo: el servicio doméstico en la formación del mercado de trabajo madrileño, 1758-1868* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1994); Ofelia Rey Castelao, "Mujeres, trabajo y migraciones urbanas en España durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII," *Revista de*

that thousands of women of all races and marital statuses regularly made the Atlantic crossing. By the end of the sixteenth century, approximately one-third of Spanish migrants to the Americas were women and despite the supposed social stigma against women travelling alone, many of these women were unmarried and unaccompanied.<sup>12</sup> During the single women “boom” of 1560 to 1579, there were many women like Marina de los Angeles who asked permission to go to New Spain and Inés del Nuño who went to Honduras, both to work as servants, in addition to the many women who went to Peru in search of husbands.<sup>13</sup> Nor were all these women white. To give just one example, in 1577, Juana Rodríguez, a free black woman, accompanied her free black husband to Veracruz where he intended to work as a diver.<sup>14</sup> By the eighteenth century, women often made the transatlantic journey as a part of imperial colonization schemes to places as disparate as Buenos Aires and San Antonio where their productive and reproductive labor perpetuated Spanish culture.<sup>15</sup>

Even religious women moved extensively both on the peninsula and across the ocean, as Tridentine efforts to impose claustration often faced serious opposition from convents or were blithely ignored.<sup>16</sup> When necessary, religious women created what some have described as portable cloisters by wearing habits and travelling in the company of other nuns. Certainly, Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), a “woman with a mission” as Jodi Bilinkoff has described her, was not deterred by either the horrors of early modern travel conditions or the stinging words of her critics. This determined nun traversed the peninsula in covered

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*Historiografía* 16 (2012): 44-60; Victoria López Barahona, *Las trabajadoras en la sociedad madrileña del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: ACCI Ediciones, 2017)

<sup>12</sup>Auke P. Jacobs, *Los movimientos migratorios entre Castilla e Hispanoamérica durante el reinado de Felipe III, 1598-1621* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995); Victoria Eugenia Corbacho González, “Un género olvidado para un tiempo silenciado: Las mujeres de la emigración a América durante el siglo XVII,” in *De la tierra al cielo: Líneas recientes de investigación en historia moderna*, vol. 2, ed. Eliseo Serrano Martín (Zaragoza: Fundación Española de Historia Moderna, Institución Fernando el Católico, 2012), 887-902.

<sup>13</sup> Allyson M. Poska, “Peninsular Women, Migration, and the Creation of the Spanish Empire,” *World History Bulletin* 33, no.2 (Fall 2017): 6; Amelia Almorza Hidalgo, *No se hace pueblo sin ellas: mujeres españolas en el virreinato del Perú: emigración y movilidad social, siglos XVI-XVII* (Madrid, Universidad de Sevilla, CSIC, Diputación de Sevilla, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Allyson M. Poska, “Campesinas transatlánticas. Las mujeres y la migración en el imperio español a finales del siglo XVIII,” *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*, Debates (19 June 2012) <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/63354>.

<sup>15</sup> Allyson M. Poska, *Gendered Crossings: Women and Migration in the Spanish Empire* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); Lucas Montojo Sánchez, *La mujer peninsular en la Nueva España en el siglo XVI* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Ángela Atienza López, “Las grietas de la clausura tridentina. Polémicas y limitaciones de las políticas de encerramiento de las monjas... Todavía con Felipe IV,” *Hispania: Revista española de historia*, 74, no. 248 (2014): 807-834.

wagons in her quest to establish new Discalced Carmelite institutions.<sup>17</sup> As impressive as her peninsular journeys were, they pale in comparison with the transatlantic and global journeys taken by less renowned but equally as devout religious women like the intrepid Capuchin nuns who travelled from Madrid to Peru and the Franciscan nuns who went from Toledo to the Philippines to found new houses.<sup>18</sup>

Religious women also expressed their independence through the written word. Despite male clerical anxiety about women's writing that frequently resulted in the surveillance over and sometimes censorship of those texts, literacy was central to the expression of many women's spirituality, as well as to the recounting of their visionary and mystical experiences.<sup>19</sup> However, writing in the convent also served much more quotidian purposes. Nuns narrated the histories of their houses, their sisters, and their own spiritual journeys. They composed theatre works to instruct and entertain themselves. From inside the convent, they wrote reams of correspondence in which they exchanged ideas with other female religious, did business with family members and even, as in the case of Sor María de Ágreda (1602-1665), corresponded with King Philip IV.<sup>20</sup> Mariana de San Jose

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<sup>17</sup> Jodi Bilinkoff, "Teresa of Avila: Woman with a Mission," in *A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Essays in Honor of Carlos M. N. Eire*, ed. Emily Michelson, Scott K. Taylor, and Mary Noll Venables (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012): 101-112.

<sup>18</sup> *Journey of Five Capuchin Nuns by Madre María Rosa*, ed. and trans. by Sarah E. Owens. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe Series (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies & Iter, 2009) and Sarah E. Owens, *Nuns Navigating the Spanish Empire* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017). See also her essay "Transoceanic Religious" in *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers* ed. Nieves Baranda and Anne J. Cruz (New York: Routledge, 2018): 315-327. The Routledge Research Companion is also available in Spanish as *Las escritoras españolas de la Edad Moderna: historia y guía para la investigación* (Madrid: UNED, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> For instance, Mother Juana de la Cruz, *Mother Juana de la Cruz, 1481-1534: Visionary Sermons*, edited by Jessica A. Boon and Ronald E. Surtz; introductory material and notes by Jessica A. Boon, translated by Ronald E. Surtz and Nora Weinerth, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series (Toronto: Iter Academic Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016); Cecilia del Nacimiento, *Journeys of a Mystic Soul in Poetry and Prose*, introduction and prose trans. Kevin Donnelly, poetry trans. Sandra Sider, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series (Toronto: Iter Academic Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> María Vela y Cueto, *Autobiography and Letters of a Spanish Nun*, ed. Susan Laningham, trans. Jane Tar, The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series (Toronto: Iter Academic Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016). The articles in the section entitled "Conventual Spaces" in Cruz and Baranda's *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers* provide excellent discussions of the scholarship on the varieties of convent literature, as do a number of the contributions to Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández, eds., *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Farham: Ashgate 2011). On María de Ágreda, see Nieves

(1568-1638), the founder of the Augustinian Recollect Order, maintained an extensive correspondence with a wide network of people, including Pope Urban VIII and the courts of Florence and Madrid.<sup>21</sup> Although the discourse of the Catholic reform emphasized female submission and the constraint of women's spirituality, female piety and religious expression thrived and extended beyond the convent walls. In the Basque country, *seroras*, devout laywomen, were responsible for maintaining shrines and parish churches, while across the Spanish Empire, *beatas* and other laywomen insisted on expressing their spirituality without the restrictions of permanent vows.<sup>22</sup>

Recent scholarship has extensively reconsidered royal and noble women's role in diplomacy and the exercise of political authority at the court in Madrid and abroad. Taking up the work begun more than twenty years ago by Magdalena Sánchez, whose *The Empress, the Queen and the Nun* (1998) opened up an entirely new way of thinking about women and politics, scholars have demonstrated that the Habsburg kings were not lone wolves, but heads of dynasties whose familial connections insisted that they work with, through, and in response to their powerful female relations. Silvia Mitchell has rescued Mariana of Austria from centuries of misogynist stereotypes.<sup>23</sup> Noble women exercised authority through their control over property and acted as guardians of children

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Romero-Díaz "On Female Political Alliances: Sor María de Ágreda's Communities of Letters," *Hispanic Review* 86, no.1 (2018): 91-111.

<sup>21</sup> María Leticia Sánchez Hernández, "Vida cotidiana y coordinadas socio-religiosas en el epistolario de Mariana de San José (1603-1638)," in *Memoria e comunità femminili, Spagna e Italia secc XV-XVII/Memoria e comunidades femeninas, España e Italia siglos XV-XVII*, ed. Gabriella Zari and Nieves Baranda Leturio (Firenze: Firenze University Press—UNED, 2011): 87-109.

<sup>22</sup> Ángela Atienza López, "'No pueden ellos ver mejor...'. Autonomía, autoridad y sororidad en el gobierno de los claustros femeninos en la Edad Moderna," *Arenal* 26, no. 1 (2019): 5-34; Amanda L. Scott, *The Basque Seroras: Local Religion, Gender, and Power in Northern Iberia, 1550-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). On laywomen's spirituality, see Alison Weber, ed. *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern World*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (New York: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> See for instance, Silvia Z. Mitchell *Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman: Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019) and a number of the contributions to a special issue of *The Court Historian: The International Journal of Court Studies*, entitled "The Spanish Habsburg Court during the Reign of Carlos II," 23, no. 2 (December 2018); Laura Oliván Santaliestra "Gobierno, género y legitimidad en las regencias de Isabel de Borbón y Mariana de Austria," *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, (Ejemplar dedicado a: Las reinas y la legitimidad de la monarquía en España, siglos XVII-XX) 31 (2014): 21-48; Alejandra Franganillo-Alvarez, "Isabel de Borbón and the Governance of the Spanish Monarchy," *Early Modern Women. An Interdisciplinary Journal* 12, no. 1 (Fall 2017): 25-47; Gillian B. Fleming, *Juana I: Legitimacy and Conflict in Sixteenth-Century Castile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

and as cultural ambassadors.<sup>24</sup> In fact, in very important ways, just like the historical women themselves, the scholarship on Habsburg women has been a key connection between studies of the Spanish monarchy and the courts and politics of the rest of Europe. The transnational scholarship on noble and royal women has produced collections of essays that allow us to see more clearly how these women were trained and expected to exercise authority across national boundaries.<sup>25</sup> That trend has recently begun to influence scholars working on the political and cultural relationships cultivated by the largely unstudied Bourbon queens.<sup>26</sup> At least two European research groups are producing new scholarship on Iberian women, power, and politics: “Las mujeres de las Monarquías Ibéricas: Paradigmas institucionales, agencias políticas y modelos culturales (siglos XIII-XV)” and “Poder, espiritualidad y género,” which focuses on texts created by and for women about the exercise of authority.<sup>27</sup> This exciting research has clearly demonstrated that royal women were integral to the political workings of the Spanish Crown. However, we still lack modern, feminist analyses of the reigns of many of Spain’s most powerful women, including the Empress Isabella (1503-1539) who served intermittently as Charles V’s regent, as well as Juana of Austria (1535-1573) who ruled as regent for her brother Philip II.

The research on women and the Inquisition offers a fascinating contrast in both the different trajectories of field in Spain and North America and the impact of agency on the study of women’s lives. In recent years, I have noted a decline in the number of North American scholars working on women’s interactions with the Inquisition; however, in Spain, scholars have continued to explore a variety of topics, including women and demonology, bigamy, ideas about women’s bodies,

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<sup>24</sup> Grace E. Coolidge, *Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Spain* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2011); Noelia García Pérez, “Mencia de Mendoza, Marquise of Zenete: Early Modern Spain’s Cultural Ambassador,” *Early Modern Women. An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 89-100; Gonzalo del Puerto, Mercedes Llorente, y Renato Epifânio, *Mulheres da realeza ibérica mediadoras políticas e culturais - Mujeres de la realeza Ibérica mediadoras políticas y culturales* (Lisbon: MIL & Instituto Cervantes, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino, eds. *Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World (Farham, UK: Ashgate, 2013); María Leticia Sánchez Hernández, coord., *Mujeres en la Corte de los Austrias. Una red social, cultural, religiosa y política* (Madrid: Polifemo, 2019). See also the chapters by Vanessa de Cruz Medina and by Birgit Houben and Dries Raeymaekers in Birgit Houben and Dries Raeymaekers, eds., *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-waiting across Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> See for instance, the work of José Antonio López Anguita including “Sociabilidad familiar e intereses dinásticos: la reina María Luisa Gabriela de Saboya y las cortes de Versalles, Madrid y Turín durante la Guerra de Sucesión española (1701-1714)” in *Construire l’identità nobiliare tra Monarchia Spagnola e Italia. Linaggi, potere e istituzioni (secoli XVI-XVIII)* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019): 251-265.

<sup>27</sup> <https://munarqas.com/reinas-e-infantas-de-las-monarquias-ibericas/> and <https://www.upf.edu/es/web/poder-espiritualidad-genero>

and witchcraft.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, more often Spanish scholars portray the Inquisitional apparatus as an effective mechanism of terror and control, particularly against women, while North American scholars tend to emphasize women's agency in their encounters with the Inquisition, noting the failure to restrict non-marital sex as well as the fact that few women received significant punishments.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, although the Inquisition may have been suspicious of women who had mystical experiences and interrogated them at great length, these encounters did not stop women from believing and asserting the validity of those experiences.<sup>30</sup>

The emphasis on women's agency in women's history has also significantly diminished the utility of the paradigm of honor and shame in early modern Spanish studies. By moving away from an emphasis on prescriptive literature, scholars have reconsidered an understanding of honor singularly focused on female sexuality. However, while many North American scholars only cautiously and sparingly use the term, the significance of honor as a cultural touchstone still resonates for others, particularly those working on colonial Latin America.<sup>31</sup> While there may be societal issues particular to Spanish America that

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<sup>28</sup> María Jesús Zamora Calvo has been active in bringing together the scholarship on women in the Inquisition. She has edited a special issue of *Edad de Oro* entitled, "Mujer e inquisición en las letras áureas," 38 (2019) doi: 10.15366/edadoro, as well as two collections of essays, *Mujeres quebradas: la Inquisición y su violencia hacia la heterodoxia en Nueva España* (Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2018) and *Mulieres inquisitionis: la mujer frente a la Inquisición en España* (Vigo: Academia del Hispanismo, 2017). Another useful collection of articles is Manuel Peña Díaz and Jaqueline Vassallo, coords., *La inquisición: viejos temas, nuevas lecturas* (Córdoba (Argentina): Editorial Brujas - CIECS CONICET, 2015). In addition, the scholarship on witchcraft in Spain has been expanded by scholars who have looked at Spain's other judicial systems for documentation. See María Tausiet, *Urban Magic in Early Modern Spain: Abracadabra Omnipotens* (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), the translation of her 2007 *Abracadabra omnipotens: Magia urbana en Zaragoza en la edad moderna* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2007), and Lu Ann Homza, "When Witches Litigate: New Sources from Early Modern Navarre," *The Journal of Modern History* 91, no. 2 (June 2019): 245-275.

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of this scholarship, see Allyson M. Poska, "Gender on Trial -- Attitudes about Femininity and Masculinity: The Inquisition," in *Judging Faith, Punishing Sin: Inquisitions and Consistories in the Early Modern World*, eds. Gretchen Starr-LeBeau and Charles H. Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 240-251. In Spanish, "El género a juicio: actitudes hacia la femenina y la masculinidad: Inquisiciones," *Juzgar la fe, castigar el pecado: Inquisiciones y consistorios en el mundo moderno* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2020), 262-271. See also Stacey Schlau, *Gendered Crime and Punishment: Women and/in the Hispanic Inquisitions* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Nancy E. van Deusen, *Embodying the Sacred: Women Mystics in Seventeenth-Century Lima* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> On the move beyond female sexuality, see Scott K. Taylor, *Honor and Violence in Golden Age Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). On the use of the term honor, see for instance, María Luisa Candau Chacón, "El Honor y las mujeres," in *Las mujeres y el honor en la Europa Moderna*, ed. María Luisa Candau Chacón (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2014):11-25. Both

highlight the importance of honor, it seems clear to me that this historiographical divergence is in part due to the fact that scholars of colonial Latin America often do not engage with the scholarship on early modern Spain.

The reevaluation of the importance and meaning of honor in early modern Spanish society has also pushed scholars to reconsider how expectations of masculinity impacted men according to class, occupation, and race.<sup>32</sup> Many of the stereotypes of Spanish masculinity are proving to have been overstated or at least significantly contested during the early modern period. For instance, rather than extolling male promiscuity and violence, most prescriptive literature encouraged men to control their sexuality and tempers and admonished them to pursue virtues like fame, dissimulation, and adaptability.<sup>33</sup> Even late medieval priests who engaged in sexual relationships were not just randy, but were attempting to fulfill the expectations of men as patriarchal heads of families that their avowed celibacy denied them.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, unraveling the ways that upper class men attempted to constrain lower class men helps expose the broad array of masculinities and the relationship between those ideals and the realities of men's lives.

Writing was one of the most vibrant expressions of women's agency during the early modern period and remarkable work has been done in the recovery and translation of the texts they produced. Leading these efforts has been Nieves Baranda Leturio and the *Bibliografía de Escritoras Españolas*, <https://www.bieses.net/>. This amazing searchable website has revealed both the sheer quantity of women's writings and the diversity of literary forms employed by them. For instance, among other data, the site reveals that at least 170 nuns authored poetry during the early modern period.<sup>35</sup> That list will no doubt only grow in coming years as the result of other ongoing projects. In 2018 Carme Font (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) was awarded a €1.5m grant by the European Research Council to scour libraries, archives, and private collections in

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Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *Gender and the Negotiation of Daily Life in Mexico, 1750- 1856* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012) and Jessica L. Delgado in *Laywomen and the Making of Colonial Catholicism in New Spain, 1630-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) use the concept of honor to frame much of their arguments about women in colonial society.

<sup>32</sup> Sonya Lipsett Rivera, *The Origins of Macho: Men and Masculinity in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019), ch.1.

<sup>33</sup> Shifra Armon, *Masculine Virtue in Early Modern Spain* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Edward Behrend-Martinez, "Taming Don Juan: Limiting Male Sexuality in Early Modern Spain," *Gender and History* 24, no. 2 (2012): 333-352. On the regulation of male sexuality directed at foreign men, see Edward Behrend-Martinez, "Spain Violated: Foreign Men in Spain's Heartland," special issue "The History of Early Modern Masculinities; L'histoire des masculinités modernes" *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 4 (2015): 579-594 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2015.1028338>

<sup>34</sup> Michelle Armstrong-Partida, *Defiant Priests: Domestic Unions, Violence, and Clerical Masculinity in Fourteenth-Century Catalunya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.bieses.net/la-poesia-conventual-de-los-siglos-xvi-a-xviii-2/>

search of letters, poems and reflections written by women from 1500 to 1780. Dr. Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) is heading up a transatlantic group of scholars working on a project entitled “La conformación de la autoridad espiritual femenina en Castilla,” which is editing texts by visionary women and compiling a catalog of holy women before Teresa of Ávila.<sup>36</sup> The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe Series has been critical to the translation in English and publication of works by early modern Spanish women. In the past decade, the series has published nine texts by Spanish women complete with helpful introductions and other relevant materials, and more are in the queue.<sup>37</sup> Finally, as literary scholars have moved into the archives, they have uncovered an array of writings by women beyond the traditional genres and integrated indigenous, African, and African-descended women who engaged with the Spanish empire’s extensive notarial culture into the literary corpus.<sup>38</sup>

Spanish theater studies and musicology have also been enhanced by a focus on gender, agency, and intersectionality. Scholarly editions and translations have expanded access to works by female playwrights whose renown in their own time was lost in the subsequent formulation of the literary canon.<sup>39</sup> Women were ubiquitous on and around the early modern Spanish stage; they were creators, producers, performers, consumers, patrons, and subjects of theater. Gender analysis not only brings the work of female playwrights like María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-1650?) to the forefront and provides a broader context to understand their works, but also forces us to reconsider the female characters

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<sup>36</sup> <http://visionarias.es/proyectovisionarias/>. This project is being undertaken in coordination with the project “Power, Piety and Gender (Castile, 1400-1550): The Emergency of Female Authority at Court and Convent” discussed above.

<sup>37</sup> In addition to other texts in the series already cited in this article, Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barrera, *The True Medicine*, ed. and trans. Gianna Pomata (Toronto: Iter Academic Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010) and Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, *The Life and Writings of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza: Autobiography, Poetry, Correspondence*, ed. and trans. Anne J. Cruz (Toronto: Iter Academic Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> See for instance, Sara Vicuña Guengerich, “Inca Women under Spanish Rule: *Probanzas* and *informaciones* of the colonial Andean elite,” in *Women’s Negotiations and Textual Agency in Latin America, 1500-1799*, Women and Gender in the Early Modern World, ed. Mónica Díaz and Rocío Quispe-Agnoli (New York, Routledge, 2017).

<sup>39</sup> Feliciano Enríquez de Guzmán, Ana Caro Mallén, and Sor Marcela de San Félix, *Women Playwrights of Early Modern Spain*, ed. Nieves Romero-Díaz and Lisa Vollendorf, trans. and annotated Harley Erdman, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Toronto and Tempe: Iter Press and ACMRS, 2016); *El muerto disimulado / Presumed Dead*, by Ângela de Azevedo, ed. Valerie Hegstrom, trans. Catherine Larson. Aris & Phillips Hispanic Classics (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018). See also the essay by Amy Williamsen, “Women Playwrights,” in *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers*.

and relationships in works by male authors including Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, women were deeply engaged with the production and consumption of music. Women who could play instruments could get dowry waivers to enter convents and music was written for and played at the profession ceremonies of nuns in New Spain.<sup>41</sup> Even Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695) created a vibrant soundscape through her use of musical ideas and contrasting silences.<sup>42</sup> Noblewomen used music and music patronage to expand their public presence and exert cultural authority.<sup>43</sup> The arts were not only for pleasure, they were opportunities for women to display their talents, wealth, and power.

Studies of the Spanish Enlightenment have been reinvigorated by the integration of women into intellectual and artistic spheres as well as into intellectual developments in the rest of Europe. Recent collections have expanded the canon, rediscovering eighteenth-century women writers, including Inés Joyes y Blake (1731-1808) and María Rita de Barrenechea y Morante (1757-1795). Elite women in both Spain and Spanish America hosted salons where artists and intellectuals debated the most current scientific ideas and cultural works. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Junta de Damas, the women's arm of the Madrid Economic Society, quickly became the driving force behind elite women's charitable work and promoted new medical and scientific technologies and

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<sup>40</sup> Carmen Sanz Ayán, "More Than Faded Beauties: Women Theater Managers of Early Modern Spain," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 114-121. [10.1353/emw.2015.0025](https://doi.org/10.1353/emw.2015.0025); Anne J. Cruz and Maria Cristina Quintero, eds., *Beyond Spain's Borders: Women Players in Early Modern National Theaters*, Transculturalisms, 1400-1700 (New York: Routledge, 2017); Nicholas R. Jones, *Staging Habla de Negros: Radical Performances of the African Diaspora in Early Modern Spain* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), chapter 3; Margaret E. Boyle, *Unruly Women: Performance, Penitence, and Punishment in Early Modern Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Miguel Alejandro Valerio, "The Queen Sheba's Manifold Body: Creole Black Women Performing Sexuality, Cultural Identity, and Power in Seventeenth-Century Mexico City," *Afro-Hispanic Review* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 79-98.

<sup>41</sup> Cesar Favila, "The Sound of Profession Ceremonies in Novohispanic Convents," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13, no. 2 (May 2019): 143-170.

<sup>42</sup> Sarah Finley, *Hearing Voices: Auralities and New Spanish Sound Culture in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, New Hispanisms Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita, "Pushing Boundaries: Women, Sounding Spaces, and Moral Discourse in Early Modern Spain Through the Experience of Ana de Mendoza, Princess of Eboli (1540-92)," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 5-29 and "The Contribution of the Requesens Noblewomen to the Soundscape of Sixteenth-Century Barcelona Through the Palau de la Comtessa," in *Hearing the City in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Tess Knighton and Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita (Turnhout: Brépols, 2018): 197-218. See also Lucía Gómez Fernández, *Música, nobleza y mecenazgo. Los Duques de Medina Sedonia y Sanlúcar de Barrameda (1445-1615)* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 2017).

ideas.<sup>44</sup> The talents of women were recognized by their male peers, as women were admitted to the most prestigious artistic academies, including the Academia de Bellas Artes and the Real Academia Española.<sup>45</sup> Mónica Bolufer Peruga (Universitat de València) has been central to highlighting the role of Spanish women in the Enlightenment. Through the research project CIRGEN “Circulating Gender in the Global Enlightenment: Ideas, Networks, Agencies” funded by the European Research Council, Bolufer and her colleagues are exploring the role of women in the translation of works relating to the *querelle des femmes* across the Spanish Empire and creating a database of those translations.<sup>46</sup> This new understanding of women’s participation in the Enlightenment brings Spain into line with the broader cultural and intellectual changes of eighteenth-century Europe.

Finally, we are beginning to see how early modern women’s experiences evolved over the life-cycle. Recent research has begun to provide some insight into the lives of girls, both fictional and actual. Images of the Virgin provided examples of modesty and piety for girls and the education of *infantas* was focused on their future roles as consorts in foreign courts.<sup>47</sup> In some ways, girls’ experiences seem much like today, constrained by social norms and grounded in spiritual struggles and familial conflict.<sup>48</sup> Upon reaching adulthood, women without husbands encountered a complex combination of opportunities and constraints. Some thrived on the autonomy and economic independence that came with not having a husband, while others suffered from the emotional and social isolation of abandonment.<sup>49</sup> Here too I note a significant difference in the

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Mónica Bolufer Peruga, and Catherine M. Jaffe, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson, eds. *A New History of Iberian Feminisms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Manuel-Reyes García Hurtado, ed. *El siglo XVIII en femenino: Las mujeres en el Siglo de las Luces* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2016); Elena Serrano, “Chemistry in the City: The Scientific Role of Female Societies in Late Eighteenth-century Madrid,” *Ambix* 60, no. 2 (2013), 139-159.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, “Women as Public Intellectuals during the Hispanic Enlightenment: The Case of Josefa Amar y Borbón’s *Ensayo histórico- apológico de la literatura Española*,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment*, 113-114.

<sup>46</sup> <https://cirgen.eu/>

<sup>47</sup> See the chapters by Charlene Villaseñor Black, Martha K. Hoffman, and Laura Oliván Santaliestra in Grace Coolidge, ed. *The Formation of the Child in Early Modern Spain* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> See the chapters by Jacqueline Holler and Barbara Mujica in Elizabeth S. Cohen and Margaret Reeves, eds. *The Youth of Early Modern Women, Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> Ofelia Rey Castelao, “Crisis familiares y migraciones en la Galicia del siglo XVIII desde una perspectiva de género,” *Studia historica. Historia moderna* 38, no. 2 (2016): 201-236; see also the articles by Ofelia Rey Castelao and Pilar Pérez Cantó and Esperanza Mó Romero in Pilar Folguera, Virginia Maquieira d’Angelo, María Jesús Matilla Quiza, Pilar Montero López, María

scholarship. With their easy access to the archives, many historians in Spain continue to publish quantitative analyses of women and household structures in the different regions of the peninsula, while demographic studies by North American scholars have almost completely disappeared.<sup>50</sup>

The vibrancy of the scholarship on early modern Spanish women is remarkable. Women are no longer side actors in world run by and for men. Rather, we understand the extent to which women had agency in their own lives, even as their choices and experiences were framed by differences based on race, class, age, religion, and free/unfree status. Indeed, so much of what we know of early modern Spain is the product of the creativity, the energy, and the determination of women whose contributions were acknowledged at the time, but have been forgotten in the intervening centuries.

### **Queering Early Modern Spain**

Early modern Iberia has also proven to be fertile ground for scholars interested in people who engaged in homosexual sex, people whose gendered performance did not match their biological sex, and people with non-standard bodies. In fact, scholars can smirk ironically that the very institutions charged with investigating people who did fit into the sex/gender binary and people who engaged in criminalized sexual activities created the historical record and preserved the life stories of the very people whom they found problematic in one way or another.

In the past decade, the scholarship following up on what Josiah Blackmore and Gregory Hutcheson called “Queer Iberia” has been led by scholars of colonial Latin America who have focused not only on retrieving the histories of queer individuals but also deeply interrogating the creation and interpretation of the documentation produced by the Inquisition and other Iberian judicial institutions.<sup>51</sup> As Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici remind us in their introduction to the first of two special issues of the *Radical History Review* on Queering Archives, “The formulation “queering archives,” therefore, is about recalling and renewing the historical imperative to apply critical pressure to the type of knowledge we inherit in relation to sexuality and gender and the manner through which we inherit it.” They go on to note that sexuality and gender are constructed and given meaning in the interaction of the narrations of subjects

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Jesús Vara Miranda, eds., *Género y envejecimiento: XIX Jornadas Internacionales de Investigación Interdisciplinar* (Madrid: UNAM ediciones, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Many of the contributions in Francisco García González, ed., *Vivir en soledad. Viudedad, soltería y abandono en el mundo rural* (España y América latina, siglos XVI-XXI) (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2020) rely on demographic analysis.

<sup>51</sup> Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson, eds. *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

themselves, the institutions whose documentation created the archive, and the ongoing processes of preserving and cataloguing those archival materials.<sup>52</sup> Although the articles in both of these special issues range broadly in geographic and temporal terms, the need to problematize the archive is particularly important in the Iberian world, where Inquisition archives have been a primary, although not the only, source of information for queer histories. The narratives of people who engaged in homosexual sex and of people with nonnormative bodies or whose gender performance does not match their biological sex are not spontaneous representations of their sexual selves, but were formulated within the framework of specific medical, legal, and religious discourses that simultaneously coaxed out and silenced different aspects of their personal stories in the process of reproducing predetermined race and gender categories.<sup>53</sup> As the late María Elena Martínez noted, the case of Juana Aguilar, like that of many others declared nonnormative by authorities, only exists through “colonial, misogynist, and homophobic” filters.<sup>54</sup> Thus, scholars must be wary of such narratives and always be attentive to the assumptions and strategies behind both the interrogations and the testimonies they produced.

Indeed, because of, rather than despite, the challenges of extracting queer histories from Spanish archives, scholars engaged in this research have not only retrieved these previously “hidden” histories but produced thoughtful analyses of people whose bodies and/or sexual practices brought them into contact with judicial authorities. Generally, these cases and the personal narratives that they created provoke more questions than they answer -- an outcome that, while frustrating, is also invigorating for our field of study.

In terms of same-sex relationships, while the foundational works on men, sodomy, and the Inquisition appeared in last decade of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century, recent research has built upon those studies, revealing the extent of the prosecution of sodomy in the Inquisition and other tribunals which had jurisdiction over the heresy.<sup>55</sup> Rocío Rodríguez Sanchez has

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<sup>52</sup>Daniel Marshall, Kevin Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici, “Editors’ Introduction,” in *Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings*, special issue of *Radical History Review* 120 (Fall 2014), 3-4 and *Queering Archives: Intimate Tracings*, special issue of *Radical History Review* 122 (Spring 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Marta Vicente, “Queering the Early Modern Iberian Archive: Recent Trends,” *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 42, no. 2 (2017), 47-48; María Elena Martínez, “Archives, Bodies, and Imagination: The Case of Juana Aguilar and Queer Approaches to History, Sexuality, and Politics,” *Radical History Review* 120 (Fall 2014), 164 doi 10.1215/01636545-2703787

<sup>54</sup> Martínez, “Archives, Bodies, and Imagination,” 165.

<sup>55</sup> Among those key studies, see Rafael Carrasco, *Inquisición y represión sexual en Valencia: historia de los sodomitas (1565-1785)* (Barcelona: Laertes, 1986); Federico Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies Will Burn: Prosecuting Sodomites in Early Modern Spain and Mexico*

studied 638 cases of sodomy from the Inquisition tribunals of the Crown of Aragón, Jaume Riera i Sans examines 272 cases in Aragon alone over 500 years, Zeb Tortorici has found 129 references to sodomy among laypeople in Mexican archives, and Fernanda Molina has explored 171 cases in the viceroyalty of Peru.<sup>56</sup> These authors remind us that men engaging in the *pecado nefando* were regularly subject to surveillance and these sexual encounters were the sites of enactment of a variety of expressions of masculinity, sexuality, and power both among men and between individuals and judicial systems.

Scholars have also brought women's same-sex relationships out of the historiographic shadows. In her masterful book, Sherry Velasco demonstrates how pervasive not only cultural representations, but also personal knowledge of female desire was. One of the most striking aspects of her book is her analysis of trials of women who engaged in relationships with other women and the fact that witnesses testified that they had known for years that the women in question were living together as a marital couple and/or engaging in sexual relations.<sup>57</sup> Nor were the sexual acts between women unfamiliar to or unexplored by religious, judicial, and medical authorities. They attempted to define and redefine the difference between "perfect" and "imperfect" sodomy.<sup>58</sup> These works and others have provided scholars with the basis to argue that the concept of queerness existed long before the nineteenth-century construction of homosexuality.<sup>59</sup>

For many of us, the narrative of Catalina de Erauso (b.1592) exemplifies the complex experiences and understandings of sex and gender in the Spanish empire. Wherever one stands on the veracity of her "memoir," her story has pushed us to reconsider how early modern Spaniards understood people who did

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(Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); and Christian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy, and Society in Spain's Golden Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Rocío Rodríguez Sánchez, *Sodomía e Inquisición: el miedo al castigo* (Conesa: Ushuaia Ediciones, 2014), Jaume Riera i Sans, *Sodomites catalans. Història i vida (segles XIII-XVIII)* (Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2014), Zeb Tortorici, *Sins against Nature: Sex and Archives in Colonial New Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018) and Fernanda Molina, *Cuando amar era pecado: Sexualidad, poder e identidad entre los sodomitas coloniales (Virreinato del Perú, siglos XVI-XVII)* (Lima: IFEA, Plural Editores, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> Sherry Velasco, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), esp. ch.3. For the three *procesos* against Inés Santa Cruz y Catalina Ledesma, see Federico Garza Carvajal, ed., *Las Cañitas. Un proceso por lesbianismo a principios del XVII* (Palencia: Simancas Ediciones, 2012). For a discussion of the research on women, same-sex relationships, and the Inquisition, Rafael Manuel Mérida Jiménez, "Mujer, sodomía e Inquisición," in *Mulieres inquisitionis*, 215-238

<sup>58</sup> Fernanda Molina, "Femina cum femina. Controversias teológicas, jurídicas y médicas en torno a la sodomía femenina en el mundo hispano (Siglos XVI-XVII)," *Arenal: Revista de historia de mujeres* 21, no.1 (2014): 153-176.

<sup>59</sup> Mehl Allan Penrose, *Masculinity and Queer Desire in Spanish Enlightenment Literature* (Farham: Ashgate, 2014).

not conform to biologically-assigned sex and gender expectations.<sup>60</sup> Yet, Catalina was far from alone. Scholars have uncovered a number of people whose gender performance differed from their assigned sex at birth. The Mexican “Mariano” Aguilera, who had been born an “andrógino” and raised as a girl, petitioned authorities to be declared a man and to be able to wear men’s clothing and marry a woman. Although his petition was denied, his request reveals that far from a rigid sex and gender binary, early modern Spaniards understood sex and gender as fluid and changeable.<sup>61</sup>

Often it was neither the differences in their genitalia nor their nonconforming gender performance that brought them before authorities, but the fact that those differences led them to contravene the laws on or expectations of marriage or express or enact heretical ideas about the sacrament of marriage. Although the Corregidor who initially brought the case against Eleno/ Elena de Céspedes, who married both a man and a woman, was concerned about sodomy, they were convicted of “disrespect for the sacrament of marriage,” not for having a nonnormative body.<sup>62</sup> In the case of María Yta, who lived as Don Antonio, they were denounced by their wife Doña Martina after five years of marriage and only in the wake of Don Antonio’s failure as a colonial administrator.<sup>63</sup> These nonconforming people faced what were, no doubt, terrifying interrogations and constant surveillance.

An important consequence of queering the archive, and its concomitant reappraisal of the intellectual frameworks that bound both interrogators and

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<sup>60</sup> Eva Mendieta, *In Search of Catalina de Erauso: The National and Sexual Identity of the Lieutenant Nun* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, 2009) and “Catalina de Erauso – ‘the lieutenant nun’- at the turn of the twenty-first century,” in *Women on the Edge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Lisa Hopkins and Aidan Norrie (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019): 227-246. For more on the text, see Sonia Pérez-Villanueva, *Vida y sucesos de la Monja Alférez, Catalina de Erauso: An Early-Modern Autobiography* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014); Matthew Goldmark, “Reading Habits: Catalina de Erauso and the Subjects of Early Modern Spanish Gender and Sexuality,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 24, no.2 (2015): 215-235.

<sup>61</sup> María Elena Martínez, “Sex and the Colonial Archive: The Case of “Mariano” Aguilera,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 96, no.3 (2016): 421–443. For more discussion, see also the forum on this piece <http://hahr-online.com/maria-elena-martinez/#more->.

<sup>62</sup> For the case, see Richard L. Kagan and Abigail Dyer, *Inquisitorial Inquiries: Brief Lives of Secret Jews and Other Heretics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), chap. 2. Aurelia Martín Casares and Magdalena Díaz Hernández, “Nuevas reflexiones sobre “Elena, alias Eleno de Céspedes,” transgénero, redes sociales y libertad en la España del siglo XVI,” *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 41, no. 1 (2016) Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1218>; see also Velasco, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain*, chapter 4.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas A. Abercrombie, *Passing to América. Antonio (Née María) Yta’s Transgressive, Transatlantic Life in the Twilight of the Spanish Empire* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

witnesses in cases concerning people with nonnormative bodies, has been a move away from associating those people and their bodies with monstrosity. While it is true that early modern Spaniards believed in the existence in an array of “monstrous” creatures, they also clearly distinguished between bicephalous beings in myth and the sometimes complicated bodies of their friends and neighbors.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, many of these cases raise questions about the medical definitions of sex. Although Thomas Laqueur’s theory that the one-sex model dominated until the eighteenth century has largely been discredited, many scholars continue to engage with that idea, even if as a straw man.<sup>65</sup> That early modern Spaniards recognized the diverse nature of human bodies is clear from the studies of hermaphrodites and others whose bodies confounded social, medical, and juridical expectations of male and female. The firm belief that all bodies were made by god, the idea that biological sex was unstable and that it was at least possible for an individual to change from one sex to the other, and that genitalia were not the only means to determine one’s sex created intellectual space for a spectrum of non-binary individuals. As a result, Inquisitors, sometimes out of curiosity, sometimes out of prurience, sometimes in a misguided search for religious heterodoxy, undertook extensive examinations of people’s minds and bodies.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, both Inquisitors and medical authorities realized that, because bodies were so variable, it was sometimes challenging to determine what should be considered that person’s appropriate gender performance.<sup>67</sup>

These studies of same-sex relationships, gender performance, and nonnormative bodies reveal the complicated understandings of sex and gender in early modern Spain and its empire. They are also critical to reconsidering descriptions of Spain as retrograde and repressive. Rather, they provide a context for seeing early modern Spain as a society where people privileged the realities of bodies and desire over societal prescriptions. These works also make early modern Spain relevant to twenty-first century conversations, as they provide a

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<sup>64</sup> Some scholars still place hermaphrodites in that category. See, for instance, Victor Pueyo Zoco, *Cuerpos plegables: anatomías de la excepción en España y en América Latina (siglos XVI-XVIII)* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2016) and Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity, and Hermaphrodites in Iberia, 1500–1800* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013).

<sup>65</sup> On this issue Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013) and Michael Stolberg, “A Woman Down to her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” *Isis* 94, no.2 (June 2003): 274-299. For an example of this engagement with Laqueur, see Cleminson and Vázquez García, *Sex, Identity, and Hermaphrodites in Iberia*.

<sup>66</sup> François Soyer, *Ambiguous Gender in Early Modern Spain and Portugal: Inquisitors, Doctors and the Transgression of Gender Norms*, *The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World*, vol. 47 (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Marta V. Vicente, *Debating Sex and Gender in Eighteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) and Tortorici, *Sins against Nature*.

deep historical context for considering the meanings and experiences of LGBTQ, intersex, and other non-conforming people today.

### **For the Future**

As vibrant and provocative as the recent research on women's history, sex, gender, and sexuality in early modern Spain has been in the past decade, there is still much to be done. More than ever, Spanish scholars are both leading and participating in European-wide projects and some recent pan-European collections of scholarship have included important contributions on Spanish women, but in general, research on Spain is rarely described as the driving force in the scholarship.<sup>68</sup> Current funding and collaboration structures have played a significant role in this marginalization. Although Spanish scholars can access European Union funding for transnational projects, for the most part, North American scholars cannot. Only by building stronger connections with our colleagues in Europe can our work help to move Spain from the periphery to the center of European scholarship.

Additionally, the fact that in the United States, there are few opportunities to be trained by historians whose specialty is early modern Spain has had a deleterious effect on the scholarship. Unaware of the recent scholarship, thesis advisors with expertise in other parts of Europe often perpetuate outdated notions about Spanish women, sexuality, and gender. Furthermore, many young scholars working on early modern Spain are only tangentially connected to our professional organization (ASPHS), the pressing issues of our field, and the dynamic between Spanish studies and early modern studies more broadly. We should do more to reach out to these young scholars and integrate them into our scholarly world.

Finally, better integration of the study of women, sex, and gender in early modern Spain into research by both new PhDs and senior scholars will help move the field away from the margins. As a women's historian, I always contextualize my work in terms of the politics, economics, and cultural expectations of the time; thus, it is incomprehensible to me that one might study Spanish politics, economics, religion or culture without considering the role of women, gender and/or sex. Yet some of the most important scholars in our field steadfastly assert that they "do not study women." I hope that this essay serves as a provocative reminder of the need for Spanish studies to be more inclusive of our research.

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<sup>68</sup> Even I found it hard to get scholars to integrate Spanish women into their essays for the collection that I coedited. Allyson M. Poska, Jane Couchman, Katherine A. McIver, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Although many of the authors in a more recent collection, Amanda L. Capern, ed., *The Routledge History of Women in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019), clearly made an effort to include Spain, none of the essays is by a specialist of early modern Spain.

For too long, scholars were blind to women's dynamic legal, political, economic and spiritual activity and the extent of nonconformity because we believed the propaganda articulated in early modern prescriptive literature. Fortunately, in the past decade, a remarkable array of hard working, innovative scholars have uncovered a Spain and a Spanish empire full of women of all races and classes and religious backgrounds lending money, running business, searching for spiritual perfection, writing texts, and moving across oceans. Non-binary people were part of, not apart from, their communities and homosexual desire frequently triumphed despite the admonitions of clerics and jurists. This much more fascinating early modern Spain was always there, it was just hidden in plain sight.