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CONTENTS

WILLIAM J. KENNEDY, Introduction ........................................ 5

MARGARET A. GALLUCCI, Burned under the Tuscan Sun:
A Newly Discovered Witchcraft Document in the Archivio di Stato, Florence .......... 11

GLEN CARMAN, Redefining Courtly Language: From Castiglione to Boscán ................. 25

RICARDO PADRÓN, The Hero in Drag: Poetry, Desire,
and the Patria in Garcilaso’s Second Eclogue ........................................... 39

EDWIN M. DUVAL, Wrestling Petrarch’s Laurels: Scève, Du Bellay,
and the Invention of the Canzoniere .......................................................... 53

ALAN K. SMITH, Melancholic Constraints:
Gender and Narrative Space in the Early Modern Novella ......................... 75

CARLA BOYER, To Bed by Royal Command:
Marguerite de Valois and Iphigenia at the Altar ........................................... 93

MARY MOORE, Mary Sidney’s ‘Coupled Work’:
Poetry as Performance .................................................................................. 109

ALAN HAGER, Shakespeare’s Twins:
The Case of 2 and 3 Henry VI, Richard III, and Taming of the Shrew ...................... 129

DAVID POSNER, Religious Economies in The Merchant of Venice ......................... 139

JOSÉ R. CARTAGENA-CALDERÓN, Transatlantic Conquests and the Imagining
of Imperial Masculinities in Lope de Vega’s El Nuevo Mundo
descubierto por Cristóbal Colón ........................................................................ 155

ELVIRA VILCHES, Imperial Sissies and Bully Amazons:
Economic Crisis and Gender Inversion in Seventeenth-Century Spain .................. 175

REVIEW ESSAYS

THOMAS CLAVIEZ, Theoretical Specters, Spectral Theories or Global America’s New Clothes on
Daniel T. O’Hara, Empire Burlesque ................................................................. 193

LEE PIEPHO, The Politics of Petrichorism on William J. Kennedy, The Site of Petrichorism .......... 199

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS ........................................................................... 203
IMPERIAL SISSIES AND BULLY AMAZONS: ECONOMIC CRISIS AND GENDER INVERSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

ELVIRA VILCHES

Much might be said of the perfumes and soft odors of these countries, which incline people to idleness and luxury, but it is better to pass these over in silence. Such things contribute more to effeminacy than to the encouragement of virtue.

Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo

The economic and political crisis of seventeenth-century Spain generated a debate that called into question the export of precious metals. Spain’s greatness came from its supplies of American precious metals, yet its failure to develop industry and its dependence on goods and services from other nation states caused its financial collapse. Castile was short of population, food, and money, but not short of ink and paper. The collective awareness of a climate of decline produced massive quantities of contemporary tracts and treatises that specifically addressed the causes of national decay, and whether gold was necessary to the nation, or, on the contrary, was a source of corruption (auri sacra fames). The reforms, remedies, and suggestions recommended in these treatises were known as arbitrios (projects), and their authors as arbitristas (projectors), and all shared the understanding of a degenerative process that involved both human and economic factors. In general terms they considered that the nation could improve its health by fixing taxation, promoting agriculture, industry, and commerce, as well as by returning to the values of the past: frugality, virtue, and military training.

The need for economic reform and the recovery of old customs brought about two parallel discussions. Those supporting a financial solution to Spain’s ills stated that imports should decrease in order to advance national industry and trade. Those who turned their eyes to an idealized past condemned the moral effect that wealth had on the ideals that define the national self. Each interest, however, is one side of the same coin, for both bear on the depreciation of both currency and the individual as projections of the state. These concerns are expressed by a single word, valor, the Spanish noun for both ‘value’ and ‘personal bravery.’ The term valor described by Sebastián de Covarrubias in his dictionary Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española (1611) as a synonym of ánimo ‘effort,’ and tener ánimo ‘to have a brave heart.’ Valor, as Américo Castro argues in De la edad conflictiva, represented the highest value in Hapsburg Spain and constituted the central definition of the national self since it served as a common denominator for citizenship, manhood, and honor from which those Spaniards of Jewish ancestry—conversos—were excluded (26). Valor is also the opposite of fraqueza and debilidad ‘weakness;’ in this sense it was employed by those who saw the decline in terms of economic backwardness since they also took into account human factors such as the moral degeneration of the upper classes (Elliott, Imperial
Spain 257-8). Nonetheless, for many the worry about the valor of the Spanish gentry was so deep and troubling that the urgent calls for investment, production, and employment became a secondary matter. How brave Spaniards ought to behave became a principal source of uneasiness and anxiety that provoked bitter complaints about effeminacy.

In the following pages I look at the ways in which valor is contested in Lope's Las mujeres sin los bombones (1621), a play that Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo includes under the rubric of mythological plays in his edition of Lope de Vega's theatre. The play is based on Hercules' completion of his ninth labor, the taking of the girdle of Antiope, queen of the Amazons. Sailing over the Aegean Sea, Hercules' fleet passes the Bosphorus and the Black Sea to reach the mouth of the Thermopylae River up to Themyscira to conquer the Scythian Amazons (Rothery 33-4). Although there is no mention of the girdle or of the bloody and cruel combat fought by both Hercules and Theseus against the Amazon army, Lope's version follows the events retold by Pausanias, Diodorus Siculus, Justinus, Arrian, Xenophon, and Virgil (Menéndez Pelayo 219-24). As Michael D. McGaha points out, Lope took the outline of the plot from Boccaccio's narrative poem Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia (1340-42), then filled the details with a reading of Pedro de Cieza's Sílvia de varia lección (1540) and, perhaps Jorge Bustamante's Spanish translation of Justinus (158-61). In the play the Greeks lay siege as they await the outcome of Theseus's embassy to Themyscira. The brutal battle between knights and Amazons is substituted by romance, for Theseus prolongs his stay as Antiope seduces him. In the end, the Greeks win, but instead of capturing prisoners and booty as legend has it, they marry the Amazons, who willingly offer them their treasures as dowry. Finally they all travel together back to Greece.

Throughout the play the word that is repeated time and again is valor. Denoting a similar concept as virilitas 'manliness, manhood, strength, vigor, bravery, courage, excellence, gallantry, and fortitude,' valor constitutes a semantic field that denotes all martial virtues in which a knight must excel such as character, honor, and courage. Valor thus, frames the exchange between Greeks and Amazons. Men and women are said to be brave and to have great valor. Conquering the Amazons, on the other hand, is an endeavor that will test the intrepidity and firmness of the heroes. As they meet the warrior women, the Greeks find opponents that measure in equal strength and bravado. This fair exchange of similar ideals of masculinity puts the play in the center of the heated controversy about masculinity and weakness that intellectuals, politicians, and writers were discussing in Hapsburg Spain. The rivalry and admiration that distinguishes knighthood also defines the romantic encounters between Amazons and Greeks since it is the fact of bearing weapons and armor that makes these groups equal and interchangeable. As martial women, Amazons embody the masculine features in which the Greeks see their own virility reflected, but their manliness is problematic because it threatens breaking the gender codes both ways. Not only do Amazons supplant manliness, but fighting, loving, and marrying an Amazon does not prevent a knight from being feminized.

The contest for masculinity and valor, as well as the risks of being feminized, is mediated through colonial takeover. As a manifestation of virility, conquest belongs to the logic of prowess, the exploit, which confers both honor and an honorable source of revenue typical of a border economy whose profits come from colonial possessions rather than labor and production. It is crucial to remember that Amazons are indissociable from wealth. In adapting the traditions of classical myth and medieval travel narratives to the exploration of the New World, conquistadors construct the Amazons as an index of gold, in the same way that smoke signals fire. Then gold and valor intersect as the former proves the achievement of honor and valor. As the Greeks return home, they concede the fulfilling of colonial desire, but towards wealth that goes beyond the typical as a necessary evil to advance the Gospel. With moral degradation. Yet, precious metals are production of the Americas. These views were questioned and when the Indies or the Americas in this respect, Las mujeres sin los bombones disenduring models of masculine civility. While demonstrate Spain's imperial prowess and it strives to reinforce. Themyscira in Scythian imperial prowess, bravado, and gold. The conquistadors and, the ideals and values that once were solid and paragons of masculinity and wealth raise questions of gender. In what follows I look at the ways the awareness of decline, viewed through the devices of

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As John H. Elliott explains in Imperial terms with its imperial demands and obligations had to bend before the harsh realities of am

In 1607 the crown had to cancel its gold, given the resonance of the twelve-year trade. The withdrawal from the aggressive imperial awareness of the dying splendor of Castile and that peace, sumptuary excess, private vice, and the martial virtues of Spaniard males (Elliott, "Texas..."

Economic matters continued to be ignored in 1627, and 1647 were marked by the manipulation of external debt led the crown in these years 1599-1625. Later in 1636 the government restored its original value. The vellón was kept for its circulation in the international trade. Such policy resulted in a good currency (Casey 69). Pedro de Valdenegro saw the currency in respective tracts. In his book he can fix and appoint the value and price of goods and cannot give money a value it lacks in the just description they know to be its intrinsic and essential value. In his treatise on vellón money De la moneda y el valor en esta moneda (1685) he states: In his judgement, the adulteration of the currency is "the property of the king's own subjects." Like the price: "only a fool would try to separate the
ship

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demployment became a secondary matter.

\[ \textit{Las mujeres sin los hombres} \]

In Lope's \textit{Las mujeres sin los hombres}, under the rubric of mythological plays in Hercules's completion of his ninth labor, sailing over the Aegean Sea, Hercules's fleet of the Thermos River up to Themyscira, there is no mention of the girdle of the girdle or of the girdle. Against the Amazon army, Lope's version pairs, Arrian, Xenophon, and Virgil (Menéndez Pelayo) take the outline of the plot from Boccaccio's then filled the details with a reading of Pedro Pacheco's Spanish translation of Justinian's account of Theseus's embassy to Themyscira. By romance, for Theseus prolongs his stay instead of capturing prisoners and booty as their treasures as dowry. Finally they

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Denoting a similar concept of courage, excellence, gallantry, and fortitude, \textit{valor} is the measure in which a knight must excel such as change between Greeks and Amazons. Men

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of honor and valor. As the Greeks return home with women and ships full of gold, Lope's play not only

concealed the fulfilling of colonial desire, but also and more importantly presents an ambivalent position towards wealth that goes beyond the typical stand of Spanish imperial discourse of considering riches as a necessary evil to advance the Gospel. Wealth is the source of greed, corruption, social unrest, and moral degradation. Yet, precious metals are necessary for a state whose economy is based on the mine production of the Americas. These views were asserted when the benefits of having an empire were questioned and when the Indies or the Americas are seen not so much as an asset but as a burden. In this respect, \textit{Las mujeres sin los hombres} displaces a Spanish problem to a mythical locale and provides enduring models of masculine civility. What is really at stake is the integrity of the colonial system to demonstrate Spain's imperial prowess amid sincere concern with the fragility of the values and ideals it strives to reinforce. Themyscira in Scythia is the setting where the envoy of the empire go to regain imperial prowess, bravado, and gold. The conquest of the Amazons, then, functions as a means to restitute the ideals and values that once were solid and firm. It is for this reason that constructing Amazons as paragons of masculinity and wealth raises questions about the notions of material and symbolic value, and gender. In what follows I look at the ways in which this 1621 play stages a dialogue with the national awareness of decline, viewed through the depreciation of the national character.

1. CRISIS AND EROS

As John H. Elliott explains in \textit{Imperial Spain}, during the 1590's the Spanish crown had to come to terms with its imperial demands and obligations. After three bankruptcies (1557, 1575, 1596) Castile had to bend before the harsh realities of an empty treasury and a nation spent.

In 1607 the crown had to cancel its debts once again, but bad finances seemed to go unnoticed, given the resonance of the twelve-year truce with the Dutch that Spain signed in 1609-1621 (285-93). The withdrawal from the aggressive imperialism of the later sixteenth century produced a collective awareness of the dying splendor of Castile and the weakening of the national character. Many believed that peace, unappraisable excess, private vices, and American wealth had caused the degradation of the martial virtues of Spaniard males (Elliott, "The Question of Decline" 241-61).

Economic matters continued to be ignored even when the intervals between the bankruptcies of 1607, 1627, and 1647 were marked by the manipulation of the currency. Constant economic insolvency and the accumulation of external debt led the crown to issue large quantities of coins of pure copper—\textit{vellón}—in the years 1599-1625. Later in 1636 the government recalled the debased currency to inflate it three times its original value. The \textit{vellón} was kept for internal transactions, whereas silver-backed currency circulated in international trade. Such policy resulted in an alarming rise of inflation as bad money drove out good currency (Casey 69). Pedro de Valencia and the Jesuit Juan de Mariana addressed the adulteration of the currency in respective tracts. In his \textit{Discurso} (1605) de Valencia states that "although the law can fix and appoint the value and price of money and enforce its acceptance and use at such a price, it cannot give money a value it lacks in the judgement of men, who will not appraise it at more than what they know to be its intrinsic and essential worth" (cit. Grice-Hutchinson 81). Mariana goes further in his treatise on vellón money \textit{De la moneda de vellón que al presente se labra en Castilla} (1605/1609). In his judgement, the adulteration of the currency was comparable to a "sort of booty snatched from the property of the king's own subjects." Like de Valencia, the Jesuit insisted on the preeminence of fair price: "only a fool would try to separate these values in such a way that the legal price should differ from
the natural. Foolish, nay, wicked the ruler who orders that a thing the common people value, let us say, at five should be sold at ten” (cit. Grice-Hutchinson 82).

The manipulation of the just price of money went unchecked by a majority who also complained about Castile's misery but was more concerned with traditional ideals such as the valor of Castilian men. The double meaning of valor both as worth and bravery makes the economic and the masculine converge. In the same way that the common estimation of the quality of things has been altered, manhood has also been changed, as its old vigor as been depreciated from bravery to weakness. The masculine character of the Spaniards has been deprived of its true value, just as precious metals have been expropriated from the currency. As these two indexes of value are compared through the analogy of both the archetype of virility with that of wealth, facts are left aside and economic knowledge is displaced by narratives that avoid, among other things, acknowledging royal responsibility and, instead, prefer to interrogate gender codes and colonial stereotypes. Shift from the financial sphere to that of the social organization of gender reflects a tremendous uneasiness about economic matters in a cultural framework that extolled martial virtues and despised commerce. It derives from a discourse that views the interaction between Spain and the Indies in terms of a romantic affair between the allegorical representation of the Indies as woman and the emblematic figure of Spain as a brave soldier. This rhetoric extends to other stages as the rise and fall of the Spanish empire is compared to other empires of ancient times. As Spain blames America for feminizing the fatherland, encounters with Amazon, regardless of their location, serve as illusory testing grounds where the ideal of masculinity can be sought and regained.

In a poem dedicated to Nuño de Mendoza, Bartolomé Leornardo de Argensola writes that American gold comes to Spain to effeminate and pervert us (95). The Flemish scholar, Justus Lipsius, expresses a similar opinion in a letter to Argensola (January 1603). Referring to previous exchange in which both had agreed that peace, luxury, and greed are the plague of virile virtue, Lipsius stresses that the Spaniards are getting soft and he concludes: “conquered by you, the New World has conquered you in turn, and has weakened and exhausted your ancient vigor” (Ramírez 355, 372; cited in Elliott Spain and its Worlds, 25). The same gendered tone emerges in clearly erotic terms in Querétaro’s La boda de todos: “Be aware that America is a beautiful and rich whore, who will not be loyal to its pimps, since she has been unfaithful to her husbands.” Those with more pragmatic views explain that American silver caused a false sense of wealth that resulted in the abuse of credit and the lack of investment. Martín González de Celorrio, an official in the chancellery of Valladolid, and author of one of the most important treatises in economic thought, Memorial de la política necesaria (1600), stresses that if Spain had not possessed the Indies, the economy would have been stronger since the lack of gold and silver would have promoted industry and commerce (70). Pedro de Valencia explains in his Escritos sociales (1608) that silver and money are fatal poison to republics and cities because they make people think that these riches will keep them wealthy when agriculture and industry are what give sustenance (cit. Vilar 167). As Elliott argues in Imperial Spain, to believe that gold and silver are the only source of wealth as opposed to work is significant of “a society with a false sense of values, which mistook the shadow for the substance, and the substance for the shadow” (318). This fondness for appearance rather than substance is perhaps what prompted the need to salvage by symbolic means the ideals and values that once were thought to be unyielding.

The projects of these arbitristas or “hombres operativos” as José Antonio Maravall calls them, had little effect on their contemporaries despite the deep insights that current scholars and readers appreciate. In a baroque culture determined by the counterpoint between forces of change and the pressure for tradition, art and literature generally favor operativos” elucidated the causes of Castile’s economic crisis and playwrights such as Lope continued the tradition of natural instincts behave in the realm of professional concern for the nation’s welfare. The speaker of the dramatic monologue of The mounted on an修筑 of the nation to the confines of the city and its story. The preeminence of national history during the Golden Age concerns back in time in order to investigate the past celebratory, exemplary, hortatory, or admonitory, as well as the efforts of nation-building. The model of the Plutocratic as a relationship between aristocrats and the classes, or else they proclaimed the eventual victory (218-21).

Las mujeres sin los hombres presenta a a subject who always exercises control over a subject who always exercises control over Attic hero, whose trajectory oscillates between the definition of virility by contrasting Hercules' inability to contain his weaknesses through men must restrain is dramatized in the scene in the offer. In this respect, Las mujeres sin los hombres praises Spain’s place in world history and culture (1599), El nuevo mundo descubierto por Colón demonstrates the national ideals of moral status in the person of heroes and native villains, as well as by the discovery of the Indies. Don García (El arauaco) and Columbus’ loyalty to the cause of Spain’s missionary and imperial interests and Dulcanghelín (El nuevo mundo) are portrayed as the new heroes. Yet, Indian women such as Freisa (El arauaco) and Brasil (El Brasil) are depicted following the code of chivalry as lascivious, rich, and violent warriors, not as Spanish conquistadors as Crispín de Passe’s America (1564), as depicted in the famous image of Freisa in a lavish banquet, dressed in jewels and wearing a cloak. In the novel, the Indian women such as Freisa and Brasil are depicted as the new heroes of the New World. The overlapping of the monetary and social economy of infinite largess.

Lope’s feminine cast of the New World includes Freisa (El arauaco) and Brasil (El Brasil) who take victory over the Dutch, the former takes the initiative and encourages the Araucan men to excell
ECONOMIC CRISIS AND GENDER INVERSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

for tradition, art and literature generally function in service of the status quo (19-32). If the "hombres operativos" elucidated the causes of Castile's misery and suggested economic reforms to cure the health of the nation, playwrights such as Lope created dramatic subjects to demonstrate how "humankind's natural instincts behave in the realm of providential and social bonds and dependencies," limiting submission of the individual to the confines of the social order (35). In Drama of a Nation Walter Cohen notes the preeminence of national historical drama in Iapushig Spain. The comedias takes current concerns back in time in order to investigate and establish parallels between past and present, whether celebratory, exemplary, hortatory, or admonitory. The belief in the continuity between past and present, as well as the efforts of nation-building, found its ample embodiment in the national history play. Plots typically dwell on the relationship between the monarchy and the nobility, or on conflicts between aristocrats and the classes, or else they produce heroic models that transform immediate defeat into eventual victory (218-21).

Las mujeres sin los hombres presents Hercules as an exemplary model of the national masculine subject who always exercises control over passions and instincts, along with the story of Theseus, the Attic hero, whose trajectory oscillates between moments of virtue and vice. Both characters embody a definition of virility by contrasting Hercules's strong opposition to effeminacy with Theseus's temporary inability to contain his weaknesses through self-governance." The body as a site of danger that true men must restrain is dramatized in the seduction of gold and women that the Amazon nation has to offer. In this respect, Las mujeres sin los hombres engages in a dialogue with other Lope's plays that praises Spain's place in world history and celebrate the conquest of the New World. El arauno domado (1599), El nuevo mundo descubierto por Cristóbal Colón (1598-1605), and El Brasil restaurado (1625) demonstrate the national ideals of moral strength, bravery, and self-control by opposing the behavior of heroes and native villains, as well as by presenting the feminine, through a personification of the Americas as a licentious and dangerous Amazon, as a projected threat that is either overcome or left out. Don García (El arauno) and Columbus (El nuevo mundo) are cast as heroes whose sole interest is the success of Spain's missionary and imperial efforts. Indian warriors such as Caupolicán (El arauno) and Dulcanquellín (El nuevo mundo) are portrayed as subverters of order moved by lust and violence. Yet, Indian women such as Fresa (El arauno), Taucana and Palca (El nuevo mundo), and Brasil (El Brasil) are depicted following the code of the allegories of America, in which the continent is personified as a lascivious, rich, and violent warrior woman. In the earliest versions of these allegories, such as Crispín de Passe's America (1564), America is represented as an Amazon, set against backgrounds depicting cannibal banquets, dressed in jewels bearing weapons and holding decapitated heads with a lavish treasure at her feet, surrounded by a jaguar, a dog, big birds, and a winged snake all crafted in a mannerist fashion with the intent to convey savagery and sinister bestiality. The aggregation of nudity, consumption of human flesh, and animality demonstrates an explicit association between excess and wealth. By virtue of this constellation of fantasies and fears, the jewels worn by America and the treasure trove under her feet embody the rich continent that offers gold, indigenous labor, and love for the taking. The overlapping of the monetary and the erotic constitutes the Amazon and the continent as an economy of infinite largess.

Lope's feminine cast of the New World adopts features illustrated by de Passe's allegory of America. Freisa (El arauno) and Brasil (El Brasil) bear weapons, but while the latter praises Spanish rule and its victory over the Dutch, the former takes weapons against the Spaniards, enjoys the bloodshed of war, and encourages the Araucan men to excel in valor and bravery. The Amazonic Taucana and Palca (El...
**2. HEROES AND AMAZONS**

Moving from Asia to America, and from Herodotus to Diodorus to early modern accounts of Iberian exploration, stories about Amazon end and begin again in another time and in a different locale. *Las mujeres sin los bombres* reenacts primal scenes of exploration and conquest. The play opens in media res with the Greeks' landfall in the coastline of Themyscira, where they are welcomed by Montano, an old man, son of an Amazon brought up in secret. Montano tells the Greeks that the Amazon republic was founded following the lead of Lisandra who killed her husband to put end to his abuse and induced other women to do the same. The action switches to the city, where Antiopea and Deyanira fight each other over who will be queen. They compare themselves to men as they quarrel about who is bravest and the strongest. Finally Antiopea is elected queen. To celebrate her inauguration, Antiopea signs new rules that prohibit any reference to men and punish those Amazons who do not excel in fighting. The queen prepares her army as soon as she hears news about the imminent arrival of the Greeks. But being alone she confesses that she welcomes the aggressors because of their perfection, grace, and beauty. The Greeks send Finco, a servant, to spy on the city where he is captured. The second act opens with Finco's release back to the Greek camp. As he starts telling tales about his encounter with so many women, the Amazon queen arrives suddenly to challenge Hercules to a duel. Jason reminds the hero that knights cannot fight women and they decide to explore a diplomatic solution. Theseus is sent to Themyscira as an ambassador, where he stays over a month, during which time he becomes an object of desire of all the Amazons, and Antiopea and Deyanira are rematched in a battle for his love. When Deyanira loses, she takes revenge by offering her help to the Greeks in the third act. Hercules and Jason shun Theseus because they believe he has compromised the reputation of the Greek conquerors, adding insult to injury because his prolonged contact with women has made him one of them. Hercules refuses his proposition for a peaceful solution because Theseus has been made a captain of women and he is viewed as emasculated. Hercules explains that it is impossible to stop brave men from waging war, raping women, and plundering gold unless their adversaries capitulate. As the Amazons surrender in order to get husbands, the play closes with happy couples traveling to Greece in boats full of gold.

The play's preface (dedicated to Marcia Leonarda, the pseudonym of Lope's lover Marta de Neves) explains that Amazons have existed all over the world and they exist even in today's society. Writers from Diodorus to Virgil to Magallanes and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo claim the appearance of Amazons in Africa, Asia Minor, and the New World. Lope stresses that he is not reviewing the history of warrior women to incite his lady to imitate them, but rather to convince her that there is no point in resisting the natural destiny imposed on the female sex, because none of the Amazons was able to vanquish love. The preface establishes the regular occurrence of Amazon kingdoms and empires in the four parts of the world as continuous manifestations that spread geographical connections linked by "and" if we can be understood within the framework which challenges Western thought as it is closing in on openings and endings. In "A Thousand Plateaus between semiotic chains, organizations of social struggles" (517). In the case of Lope's licentious quests and unreachable geographical tantalizing fantasies regarding the many and contrasting competition for mates, Amazon encounter an endless chain of spatial and symbolic juxtapositions exotic populations, bodies to pleasure, pleasure to the body.

Le Gof puts it:

> The strict morality imposed by the Amazonian society disrotting attractiveness: coprophagia and cannibalism. The modesty of clothing, red hair, where, once rid of restrictions, give himself over to polygamy.

Amazons belong to the margins and the other world, Amazons are believed to mate with men who are related to monsters. Hercules, the Amazons amidst a list of extraordinary creatures: man-eating birds, and triple-headed dog Cerberus, since the hero's defeat of Antiopea follows at the Cretan Minotaur. The horizons of far away realms of fantasy and liberation. Their monosyllabic name (Seven Theses), serve as secondary bodies, social practices, and other social customs can be figures in recurrent tales of distant lands oscillator because they become more and more.

Myth and exploration intertwine as knotted heroism. In the account of his first voyagers announcing the Discovery—"Letter to (February 12, 1493)——Columbus states that leagues east-southeast of Española. Almost
Indies convey for early modern Europeans bodies of pleasure. Contrary to Spanish invite men to seduce them. Their carefree of gold. In El nuevo mundo they give both sure to refer indistinctly to both gold and the Amazons follows these same lines. If the imperial envoy, in Las mujeres the early modern Spaniards knew as the East gate over the moral effect of wealth and the

AZONS

oros to early modern accounts of Iberian another time and in a different locale. Lason and conquest. The play opens in media where they are welcomed by Montano, an is the Greeks that the Amazon republic was ad to put end to his abuse and induced y, where Antiope and Deyanira fight each men as they quarrel about who is bravest brate her inauguration, Antiope signs new amazons who do not excel in fighting. The imminent arrival of the Greeks. But being of their perfection, grace, and beauty. The captured. The second act opens with Fino's put his encounter with so many women, the duel. Jason reminds the hero that knights solution. Theseus is sent to Themyscira as time he becomes an object of desire of all battle for his love. When Deyanira loses, ird act. Hercules and Jason shun Theseus the Greek conquerors, adding insult to injury of them. Hercules refuses his proposition of women and he is viewed as emanci men from waging war, raping women, and azons surrender in order to get husbands, is full of gold.

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND GENDER INVERSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN 181

establishes the regular occurrence of Amazons in time and space, associated with the advancement of kingdoms and empires in the four parts of the world. The preface, I would add, constructs Amazons as continuous manifestations that spread and rearrange by an accumulative array of intertextual and geographical connections linked by "and" in a series of instances. These connected conceptual segments can be understood within the framework of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of the rhizome which challenges Western thought as it is chiefly concerned with origins, foundations, ontologies, beginnings and endings. In "A Thousand Plateaus" they write: "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (517). If the case of Lope's early modern text, the Amazon as a rhizome maps infelicitous quests and unreachable geographies over Asia, Africa, and America, impossible treasures, and tantalizing fantasies regarding the many different sexual encounters that men can have if there is no competition for mates. Amazon encounters are rhizomatic, since they never reach conclusion, but open an endless chain of spatial and symbolic juxtapositions that link women to land, land to gold, gold to exotic populations, bodies to pleasure, pleasure to gold, and gold to Amazons.

The conquest of Amazons tests both men's physical virility and sexual vigor and once again opens another assemblage in which warrior women conjoin with other figures belonging to a transcontinental and transatlantic geography of the mind peopled with exotic and fantastic creatures where, as Jacques Le Goff puts it:

The strict morality imposed by the Church was contrasted with the disconcerting attractiveness of a world of bizarre tales, which practiced coprophagy and cannibalism; of bodily innocence, where man, freed of the modesty of clothing, rediscovered nudism and sexual freedom; and where, once rid of restrictive monogamy and family barriers, he could give himself over to polygamy, incest, and eroticism (197).

Amazons belong to the margins and thus they suggest fantasies of imperial takeover. In the New World, Amazons are believed to mate with cannibals and to own the largest treasures. In classical myth, Amazons are related to monsters. Hercules's famous twelve labors places Antiope (Hypolita), queen of the Amazons amidst a list of extraordinary creatures that includes, among others, the nine-headed hydra, man-eating birds, and triple-headed dog Cerberus. The myth of Theseus reiterates the same connections since the hero's defeat of Antiope follows after his victories over the fire-breathing bull of Marathon and the Cretan Minotaur. The horizons of far away lands are both dark regions of uncertain danger and the realms of fantasy and liberation. Their monsters, as Jeffrey Cohen refers in his article "Monster Culture (Seven Thesess)," serve as secondary bodies through which the possibilities of other genders, other sexual practices, and other social customs can be explored (18). Amazons, along with cannibals, are typical figures in recurrent tales of distant lands organized in inversion to one's own. Their presence is always elusive because they become more and more remote as conquest and civilization advance.

Myth and exploration intertwine as knights and conquistadors meet in equal efforts to prove their heroism. In the account of his first voyage, included both in his Diary of His First Journey and the letters announcing the Discovery—"Letter to the Sovereigns" (March 4, 1493) and “Letter to Santángel" (February 12, 1493)—, Columbus states that the Amazons lived in the Island Matinino, located just twenty leagues east-southeast of Española. Almost two decades after the discovery of the Indies, Garcí Rodríguez
de Montalvo published the fifth volume of his Amadis cycle, which was named *Serges de Esplandían* (1510), a best seller that went through six Spanish editions during the century. Montalvo tells the story of the virgin queen called Catalía, ruler of the great island California, celebrated for its abundance in gold and precious stones. The popularity of *Amadís* from 1508 on rivaled the popularity of the letters of Columbus and Vespucci and Peter Martyr's *Decades*. In *Books of the Brave* Irving Leonard shows that all this literature, and especially the *Sergas*, had an incalculable influence on the exploits of Cortés and Pizarro (46-63). As conquest shifted to the mainland, Amazons became an endless pursuit. Juan de Grijalva was searching for Amazons during his 1518 exploration of Yucatán. The following year the same goal is entrusted to Hernán Cortés by Diego de Velázquez, governor of Cuba, as the conquistador prepared to explore Yucatán. The warrior women surface in his “Fourth Letter” (dated October 15, 1524), addressed to Charles V. Cortés writes that his lieutenant, Cristóbal de Olid, has heard from the chiefs of Ciguatán about an island some ten-day’s journey from their province, rich in pearls and gold and inhabited only by women (Cortés 184). The same quest continues with Francisco de Orellana as he goes down the Marañón river in 1542, where “he found Amazons who were fighting in front of all Indian men as female captains” (Irving 59).

*Las mujeres sin los bimbres* evokes the same endeavors as Hercules and Theseus reenact the rites of exploration and conquest. In the tradition of Renaissance travel, *America*, as Anne McClintock puts it, had become a “porn-tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind in which Europeans projected their forbidden sexual desires and fears” (22). Exploration and conquest involve the crossing of the dangerous borders of the known world, along with the ritual feminization of the *terra incognita*. This compensatory gesture not only reestablishes the line between known and unknown, but also the boundaries of those who participate in this liminal condition. For this reason, as McClintock argues, scenes of discovery are suspended between male megalomania—with its fantasy of unstoppable rapine—and a contradictory fear of engulfment, with its fantasy of dismemberment and emasculation. McClintock illustrates this argument with a close reading of the famous engraving by Jan van der Straet titled *America* (ca. 1575). The contrast between the foreground and the background suggests that America’s invitation to being conquered also poses the threat to dismember her suitor. For her representation also includes a dark side that is suggested by a cannibal scene of a banquet in progress, and by the machete leaning by the trunk of the tree by America’s side. The allegory represents the desires and the fears of colonial plunder. If the foreground gives an accurate rendition of nature, the edges are reminiscent of those of colonial maps, typically marked with cannibals, mermaids, and monsters; they are threshold figures that indicate failure of knowledge, representation, and therefore possession (23-28).

In *Las mujeres sin los bimbres*, the scene of discovery is marked by the arrival of the Greek fleet to Scythia and Montano’s long speech chronicling the story of the Amazons, in which they are described as the cruellest killers who, in order to free themselves, slaughtered husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. Montano’s tale fills the brave Greeks with wonder. Hercules stands in awe because the female villains of Montano’s tale exceed the ferocity of all the monsters he had fought previously. In conquering Amazons the Greeks enter a contest of valor to test their own chivalric worth and the patriarchal order they represent. On the Scythian frontier the Greeks demonstrate the ideals of bravery and nobility that Hapsburg Spain holds as the central pillar of the empire. Alonso de Ercilla, the author of the famous epic *La Araucana* (1597), describes this pillar as a innate inclination to courage: “Brave gentlemen, whom innate bravery alone has brought you to explore the southern hemisphere” (canto XXI, 52). The Conqueror’s esteem and honor are strongly reinforced by responding to the challenge of unknown territories and as it provides ultimate proof of defeating the monster, of formation of western masculine identity. In the man, in the sense of *vir*, implies an ought-to-be taken-for-granted” (49). Such a given belief that imposes on every man the duty to assure of hero or brave conquor rests in the ideal demands whose purpose is to exalt masculine by pursuing glory and distinction in the past by stepping down from the masculine into which can only be addressed by a frantic in which produce the most visible signs of man.

Lope’s dramatic narrative facilitates affordable and secure. Combining conquest for the exaltation of male heroism in a romanticizes the fear of the female by turning the home where the conquerors feel less vulnerable as the domestic that, in the end, annul *Amaltea* admission into the patriarchal order. In the end, and become dependent on the power relation, both sides get what they really want. The conqueror gets his gold, and take everything home. The most masculine men and true love.

The happy ending confirms the foreshadowing with the ways of martial women. Abby W. S., through love, or even better, through both, to enhance their sense of their own worth and heroism rests with the death of the Amazon presents the conversion of the Amazon as a barbarian other and the white European barbarian abandons his/her own cultural lineal monogamy (48). In Lope’s play the archetypes of masculinity that Amazons as being superior, the warrior women emphasise their own masculine threat. Within the party the Amazon occupies the realm of the feminine what woman brings is matter. The same spirit of his *Physics* Aristotle clearly states that matter the female side there is no order, no generation for order and meaning that comes with cost *sin los bimbres* echoes a tradition of Spain that explain love as the appetite that matter and shortcomings of their civilization as the interaction with men to satisfy such an irre
ultimate proof of defeating the monster, of that other, that has to be ejected in order to fix the reconfirmation of western masculine identity. In Masculine Domination Pierre Bourdieu writes that “being a man, in the sense of vir, implies an ought-to-be, a virtus, which imposes itself in the self-evidence, the taken-for-granted” (49). Such a given becomes also a trap because it amounts to a permanent tension that imposes on every man the duty to assert his manliness in all circumstances. The collective notion of hero or brave conqueror rests in the ideal of honor which, in turn, posits a system of inaccessible demands whose purpose is to exalt masculine values that encourage a ‘real man’ to increase his honor by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere. This drive also involves the fear of losing face by stepping down from the masculine into the feminine. The ideal of virility is a source of vulnerability which can only be addressed by a frantic investment in masculine games of violence and especially those which produce the most visible signs of masculinity such as combat sports (50-2).

Lope’s dramatic narrative facilitates the pursuit of virility by making “pornotropic” fantasies affordable and secure. Combining conquest and romance softens the fear of the feminine. Love allows for the exaltation of male heroism in a more comfortable fashion because the romantic element neutralizes the fear of the female by turning the liminal space into a domestic—marital—one closer to home where the conquerors feel less vulnerable. Love sets the path for reproducing familiar structures of the domestic that, in the end, annul Amazons as bodies marked by fear and desire and allow their admission into the patriarchal order. In this way they are introduced to and into the “traffic in women” and become dependent on the power relations between men and men. The happy ending suggests that both sides get what they really want. The Greeks are able to conquer the Amazons, marry them, have their gold, and take everything home. The Amazons, on the other hand, get what they desire the most, the most masculine men and true love.

The happy ending confirms the foreshadowing preface regarding the impossibility of vanquishing love with the ways of marital women. Abby W. Kleinbaum writes, “To win an Amazon, either through arms or through love, or even better, through both, is to be certified a as hero. Thus men told of battling Amazons to enhance their sense of their own worth and historical significance” (1). In classical encounters male heroism rests with the death of the Amazon. Yet, as Alison Taufier contends, Spanish chivalric romance presents the conversion of the Amazon as an idealized conception of the proper relationship between the barbarian other and the white European male. Persuaded by patience, good example, and reason, the barbarian abandons his/her own cultural practices and submits to the patriarchal institution and patriarchal monogamy (48). In Lope’s play the convincing factor is the representation of the Greek heroes as archetypes of masculinity that Amazons aspire to imitate and possess. Admiring men that they esteem as being superior, the warrior women emphasize their anatomic sexual difference and therefore cancel out their own masculine threat. Within the parameters that divide the roles of male and female in procreation, Amazons occupy the realm of the feminine. What man brings to procreation is the form of the progeny; what woman brings is matter. The same opposition works for the difference between matter and idea. In his Physics Aristotle clearly states that matter desires form as the female desires the male (24; 1922a). On the female side there is no order, no generative power but chaos, and consequently there is a strong desire for order and meaning that comes with containment, domination, and control. In this respect Las mujeres sin los hombres echoes a tradition of Spanish texts (including Libro del Buen Amor and La Celestina) that explain love as the appetite that matter feeds for form. Amazons come to terms with the imperfections and shortcomings of their civilization as they are forced to break their own rules prohibiting ordinary interaction with men to satisfy such an irresistible need for love and procreation.
The mating of Amazons and Greeks is not easily resolved. Amazons make the labors of heroes more complicated, in that by appropriating their masculinity, Amazons put maleness itself under scrutiny. As Kathern Schawr writes, "female masculinity is an addition that presupposes the possibility of loss, a break in the referential system stating linking masculinity to men" (38). Encounters between men and martial women provide the appearance of mutually idealized masculinity because the doubleness of martial women enables them to battle knights and at the same time provide the prize, the wife, the idealized feminized body that remains when the armor comes off. Men are required to identify with other males but they are not allowed to desire them. Conversely, they are discouraged from identifying with those whom they are to desire, that is women, because that will be taken as effeminacy. With a heterosocial conclusion in which Amazons become wives, the happy ending might go an astray: someone will be feminized by this encounter. This condition's prolonged stay in Themiscira brings about this concern, as both he and his peers will doubt of his valor. By staying with the Amazons Theseus lives the fantasy of being the only man in a city of women. Paradoxically the demands of passion are not taken as a validated expression of maleness, but rather as the humiliation of becoming a woman. Antiope inverts the dynamics of the principle of the inferiority and exclusion of women by establishing herself as the subject controlling the 'traffic of Theseus among women.' Theseus loses his self-control and has given himself to excess. Love has exhausted his capacity to fight, and his withdrawal from battle implies that other men cannot validate his maleness and certify his membership in the group of real men. In the end This fault serves to highlight Hercules's heroic virtues and to emphasize his esteem as the archetype of masculinity and chivalry, and as the exemplary conquistador. He insists on carrying on with conquest, as a rite that sets up, as Bourdieu puts it, a "veritable test of manliness oriented towards the reinforcement of male solidarity" (52). Conquest becomes marriage, the legitimate acquisition/transmission of wealth, and enables masculine domination to perpetuate itself.

3. BULLIES AND SISSIES

Passion can transform men into sissies by diminishing their valor with lust and voluptuousness. Theseus becomes the victim of sissification as he is engulfed by all excess and pleasures that Antiope, as an Amazon embodies. This effeminization thus demands a constant showing off by the man that in the end weakens and exhausts his valor. Theseus's flaw is reminiscent of Lipsius's comments regarding the inversion of roles and positions that have taken place between the metropolis and its territories—"Conquered by you, the New World has conquered you in turn, and has weakened and exhausted your ancient vigor." In "Nationalizing Sissies," José Piedra argues that in the colonial scenario Spanish conquistadors and gentlemen acquire a place in the hierarchy of power associated with colonialism by subjecting someone; a sissy—the loser, the lessened men, the native, the feminine, the other, the homosexual—to their bullying behavior. The "bully/sissy exchange" involves both the compulsion to test male power and prowess and a constant provocation. Bully/sissy dynamic works at two levels. In the colonies native men are said to be effeminate because of the temperate climate of the Indies and the abundance of what nature has to offer (Cárdenas 175-7). In the metropolis American wealth has inclined the nobility to luxury, idleness, and self-indulgence (Fernández Navarrete 21-5). In a colonial setting the positions can be inverted as the sissy carries on provoking and seducing the bully to entrap and engulf him (370-5). I suggest reading the dispute on national valor as a sign that the empire was undergoing a "sissification." This embarrassment is articulated by adopting and reversing a logic that Piedra describes as the "systematic bullying and sissification of a colonized target" (370). Colonial traditions set up the sissy as a target of scorn who assumes the 'ultra feminine' behavior that is perceived as passive and forever ready to suit the bully's whims. Lope's plays offer many operas of valor. El Brasil restituido celebrates the protestant Dutch rebels. El nueve points out, constitute the definition of a truly indigenous male (12).

What Maravall calls "decadence" can be modern contemporaries consider cowardice as a sin in times of crisis. In the mind of orthodox the empire unsettles the established social colonized are doubly misplaced, for they are the changing of location. The excess that the mega is what used to be brave soldiers. Opulence a captivating seduction that the New World produces seems virtue. What seems to affect the most pleasing offers. The most irresistible invitation to the colonies—tries to disempower the colonizer its imperial bravado. What seems to be an apparent fact, an advantage that the colonial landscape inanimate inclination towards the pursuit of gold, Flesh and wealth intersect as colonial body colonizer is overwhelmed. Such largess, fish of Amazons as an index of gold, constitutes giving is mere generosity whose goal is the plunder, treasures, and people, is chaos that has to be main interest is investment, profit, and return.

The happy ending of the play with the manhood, and economic values have become largesse. The engulfing seduction of that the sex that always reinforces desire and makes liberality the feminine. In Las mujeres sin traction by the possibilities of enjoying multiple At this turning point the risk of being tamed since their true value can only be demonstrated. Thus the play stages the advance of the empire, maleness, and the treasury. It markets the Amazons as the best investment.
Amazons make the labors of heroes more onous put maleness itself under scrutiny. As that presupposes the possibility of loss, a by to men” (38). Encounters between men dized masculinity because the doubleness same time provide the prize, the wife, the nes off. Men are required to identify with sely, they are discouraged from identifying e will be taken as effeminacy. With a be happy ending might go astray; someone y in Themisctra brings about this concern, with the Amazons Theseus lives the fantasy demands of passion are not taken as a vali of becoming a woman. Antiope inverts the n by establishing herself as the subject ses his self-control and has given himself to drawer from battle implies that other men he group of real men. In the end his flaw his esteem as the archetype of masculinity on carrying on with conquest, as a rite that riented towards the reinforcement of male acquisition/ transmission of wealth, and

bully’s whims. Lope’s plays offer many opportunities for bullying displays in order to reassure Spanish valor. El Brasil restituido celebrates the victory of the Spanish soldiers—miles christianus—over the protestant Dutch rebels. El nuevo mundo and El arauco domado, as José Cartagena-Calderón points out, constitute the definition of a transatlantic imperial masculinity through the conquest of the indigenous male (12).

What Maravall calls “decadence” can be seen as the inversion of the bully/sissy exchange, since Lope’s contemporaries consider cowardice as a side-effect of a general trend that destabilizes all kinds of value in times of crisis. In the mind of orthodox scholars, politicians, and even playwrights, the degradation of the empire unsettles the established social modes and values. Consequently, the roles of colonizer and colonized are doubly misplaced, for there is a change of roles and costumes, as well as a transatlantic change of location. The excess that the metropolis enjoys thanks to the Indies causes the sissification of what used to be brave soldiers. Opulence and splendor are, in this instance, an oblique reference to the captivating seduction that the New World projects over Spain, feeding and softening at once its urge for imperial virtus. What seems to affect the metropolis are the many possibilities of enjoying a wide array of pleasing offers. The most irresistible invitation is the insistent provocation with which the colonized—or colonies—tries to disempower the colonizer by demanding a constant posturing that ends up weakening its imperial bravado. What seems to be an abundance of temptations for both the body and the soul is, in fact, an advantage that the colonial landscapes offer. Gold is blamed for altering what many consider an innate inclination towards the pursuit of glory, whereas Eros is one of the empire’s most staple imports. Flesh and wealth intersect as colonial bodies offer both for the taking in such a liberal fashion that the colonizer is overwhelmed. Such largess, illustrated both by de Passe’s allegory and the construction of Amazons as an index of gold, constitutes what Hélène Gixous calls “the realm of the gift,” because giving is mere generosity whose goal is the other’s pleasure. Uncontrolled nature, the offering of land, treasures, and people, is chaos that has to be contained by property, by “the realm of the proper” whose main interest is investment, profit, and reciprocity, power, money, or status (86-7).

The happy ending of the play with the victory of Mars over Venus, suggests that political splendor, manhood, and economic values have been recuperated. But what still remains is the fallout of female largesse. The engulfing seduction of that the Amazon as rhizome, an endless series of lands, gold, and sex that always reinforces desire and makes her suitors fear to be dispossessed and slip into boundless liberality the feminine. In Las mujeres sin los hombres Theseus is entrapped by this provocation. Attracted by the possibilities of enjoying multiple gratifications, the warrior takes pleasure in being taken. At this turning point the risk of being tamed is mitigated by the obsessive repetition of colonial triumphs, since their true value can only be demonstrated by the reiteration of martial rites of domination and appropriation. Thus the play stages the advantage of a border economy whose assets reinvigorate at once the empire, manliness, and the treasury. In a time when valor and virtus were facing bankruptcy, Lope markets the Amazons as the best investment.

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ECONOMIC CRISIS AND GENDER INVERSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN 189


NOTES

1. The collection of early modern economic treatises compiled by Manuel Colmeiro in Biblioteca de economistas españoles de los siglos XVII y XVIII (1910) includes a total of 405 works from which 165 titles were published between 1598 and 1665 (Vilar, Jean 172).

2. In “El motivo de la aurea sacra famae,” Lila Schwarz discusses the relevance of this classic theme in early modern Spanish moralist literature. George Mariscal’s “The Figure of the Indiano” analyzes the symbolic function of gold in early modern Spanish culture in relation with residual ideologies of purity of blood.

3. For a discussion on the comedias and the economy see William Blue, Spanish Comedies.

4. A total of five royal bankruptcies will follow in the years 1607, 1627, 1647, 1653, 1680.

5. The traditional nobility was incapable of seeking wealth by proper means according to the modern mercantile economy, was capable of blocking the way of those who would have been able to open other channels for society, had they been assisted by the power they did not have (Maravall 31).

6. The assets of conquest and colonialism were preferred to those of trade, labor, and what today we call liberal professions. See Castros, De la edad conflictiva.

7. This concern uses gender to explain the imbalance of exports and imports. In Hapsburg Spain it was customary to say that ‘Spain is the foreigner’s Indies,’ and that ‘they treat us like Indians.’ “After exploiting the Indies, which paid a high price for Spanish goods, Spain was in turn exploited” because the country was paying a high price in precious metals for foreign goods. (Vilar 160). Elliott discusses the liability of the Indies for Castile’s ruin in “Spain and its Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” in Spain and its Worlds.

8. “Advertir que América es una ramera rica y hermosa, y que, pues fue adúltera a sus esposos, no será fiel a sus rucianes” (268).

9. See Vilar, Literature y economía.

10. For the representation of exemplary figures from antiquity as models of action during the Renaissance, see Hampton, Writing from History (1-30). In End of Conduct Barbara Correll discusses the humanist tradition of civil discourses that define the process of molding a national masculine subject through regimes of strong and self-perpetuating internal controls. Mar Martínez Góngora analyzes the formation of masculine civility in sixteenth-century Spanish texts in “Mujeres, Erasmo y la feminización del ciudadano” and “El discurso humanista de educación masculina.”


12. Rijksprentenkabinett, 188 x 220mm. Amsterdam. In his description of the allegory included in his Iconologia (1593), Cesare Ripa depicts a semi-naked woman with a feather headdress, carrying an arch and arrow with a ferocious cain.

13. Spanish letters possess an ample repertoire, McKendrick, “Women Against Wedlock,” las amazonas (1596); Tirso de Molina’s La gran Cenobia (1625) and La hija del a Solís.

14. “Valientes caballeros, a quien solo / no polo.” I thank Ricardo Padrón for suggesting

15. See Rubin, “Traffic in Women” and See building in colonial America see Herrman for her comments and valuable assistance.
an arch and arrow with a ferocious caiman and a decapitated human head under her feet. (10). Ripa's version includes the most salient features of previous artists who also portrayed the continent as an Amazon and stressed nudity, cruelty, and animality. For representations of America see Honour, *New Golden Land*.

13. Spanish letters possess an ample repertoire of stories about Amazons. See Irizarry, “Echoes” and McKendrick, “Women Against Wedlock.” Amazon plays also include *Las justias de Tebas y la reina de las amazonas* (1596); Tirso de Molina's *Las amazonas de las Indias* (1629); Calderón de la Barca's *La gran Cenobia* (1625) and *La hija del aire* (1632, 1634), and *Las amazonas* (1657) by Antonio de Solís.

14. “Valientes caballeros, a quien solo / el valor natural de la persona, / os trajo a descubrir el austral polo.” I thank Ricardo Padrón for suggesting this translation.

15. See Rubin, “Traffic in Women” and Sedgwick, *Between Men*. For the role of the Amazon in nation building in colonial America see Herrmann, “Amazonic Ambivalence.” I am indebted to Gina Herrman for her comments and valuable assistance in writing in a language that is not my native tongue.