



Marimachos, hombrunas, barbudas: The Masculine Woman in Cervantes

SHERRY VELASCO



iven the frequency and importance of the figure of the masculine woman in parts I and II of *Don Quijote*, it seems that any discussion of the representation of the women in Cervantes's work must inevitably feature an analysis of the *mujer varonil*. The fact that Don Quijote transforms the raw material of the *marimacho* Aldonza Lorenzo into the beautiful and feminine Dulcinea is certainly not new to Cervantine studies. The protagonist, in fact, continues this conversion process throughout Part I of *Don Quijote* with the prostitutes at the first inn, with Maritornes at Palomeque's inn, and again with the bearded priest, whom Don Quijote mistakes for the Princess Micomicona during the wineskins episode in Chapter 35. Likewise, based on Sancho's frequent narratives of *hombruna* types, it would seem that he also shares a special affinity for masculine women, as is evident by his enthusiastic characterization of Aldonza Lorenzo, his story of Torralba during the *batanes* episode in Chapter 20, as well as the narration of his feigned trip to see Dulcinea in Chapter 31 of Part I.

Cervantes's use of the masculine woman in *Don Quijote* has been studied in multiple ways by numerous scholars. Arthur Efron, for example, reviews the re-sexed body changes and their impact in Part II, and Barbara Fuchs analyzes the transvestism and the border crossings of gender, race, and religion in Cervantes's work, while Louis Combet looks to both popular folklore and Freudian theory

to explain the burlesque and comical variations in Cervantes's *hombrunas*. Similarly, Agustín Redondo reads the relationship between the "mujer fálica" Aldonza Lorenzo and the gentle Dulcinea in terms of carnivalesque inversions and Don Quijote's virility, as does Monique Joly, who also discusses the "animalization" of the masculine women. Mary Gossy, on the other hand, posits the Aldonza-Dulcinea couple as symbolic participants in a butch-femme configuration that ultimately excludes the male voyeur. Given that a complete examination of manly women in *Don Quijote* would engage a combination of approaches, influences, and sources, I propose that we revisit Huarte de San Juan in terms of the *mujer varonil*, in an attempt to explore the connection between early modern theories of the physiology of masculine women and the narrative transformations performed by Cervantes's protagonist as well as other characters.

While the influence of Juan Huarte de San Juan's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* on Cervantes has been well pondered in terms of the creation of his anonymous *hidalgo*, less studied is the relationship between Huarte's theory of masculine women and the presentation of the same theme in *Don Quijote*.¹ In his unpublished dissertation, Nelson Madera provides a good start, however, through his preliminary observations regarding the Arcipreste de Talavera, Huarte de San Juan, Jerónimo Cortés, and a few key figures in *Don Quijote*. Similarly, although Jacobo Sanz Hermida's excellent study of bearded women includes extensive material related to iconography and physiology, his application of this research to *Don Quijote* is limited to a general consideration the Dueña Dolorida episode.

If we briefly review early modern medical theories (based on classical Aristotelian and Galenian concepts) in reference to manly women, we are reminded that the particular combination of bodily fluids determines the physical appearance and behavior of the *mari-macho*, who, according to Covarrubias, is defined as "la muger que tiene desembolturas de hombre" (790). Although cold and moist liquids predominate in all women, not all have the same levels of these humors, which are assessed by observing different categories such as intellectual capacity, habits and behavior, voice tenor, body fat and musculature, coloring, facial hair, and physical beauty or ugliness (Huarte 613, 617). According to Huarte's classifications, the woman with the lowest level of coldness and moisture, which would indicate a proximity to the hot and dry composition of most men, is more intelligent, but such a woman is also more disagreeable and

¹See Green, Halka, and Murillo 19–28.

has an aggressive and conflictive personality (614–16). Likewise, since a strong, deep voice is common to the hot, dry nature of men, a woman with a “masculine” voice and excessive facial hair also has the lowest level of coldness and moisture: “tener mucho vello y un poco de barba es evidente señal para conocer el primer grado de frialdad y humedad. Porque, sabida la generación de los pelos y barba, todos los médicos dicen que es de calor y sequedad” (616–17). Moreover, these women are rarely beautiful and frequently display a more muscular physique: “por maravilla sale la mujer hermosa; porque, estando seca la simiente de que se formó, fue impedimento para que no saliese bien figurada . . . La mucha humedad pone las carnes blandas, y la poca, ásperas y duras” (617).² In addition to the characteristics delineated by Huarte de San Juan, lasciviousness is included in Jerónimo Cortés’s account of masculine women in his 1601 treatise *Libro de fisionomía natural*: “La mujer que tiene muchos pelos en las quixadas y junto a la barba, es de fuerte naturaleza, y de condición terrible, y es calida en sumo grado, por lo qual es muy luxuriosa y de varonil condición” (cited in Madera 211).

Given Huarte’s classification of the loud, clever, muscular, hairy, and homely women with the low levels of the “feminine fluids,” it would seem that according to Sancho’s description, Aldonza Lorenzo is a perfect match for early modern medical and psychological doctrines regarding the masculine woman. Despite the narrator’s reference to Aldonza as “de buen parecer,” Sancho describes her as the ultimate *marimacho*:

Sé decir que tira tan bien una barra como el más forzudo zagal de todo el pueblo. ¡Vive el Dador, que es moza de chapa, hecha y derecha y de pelo en pecho, y que puede sacar la barba del lodo a cualquier caballero andante, o por andar, que la tuviere por señora! ¡Oh hideputa, qué rejo que tiene, y qué voz! Sé decir que se puso un día encima del campanario del aldea a llamar unos zagales suyos que andaban en un barbecho de su padre, y aunque estaban de allí más de media legua, así la oyeron como si estuvieran al pie de la torre. Y lo mejor que tiene es que no es nada melindrosa, porque tiene mucho de cortesana: con todos se burla y de todo hace mueca y donaire. (I, 25; 312)³

Likewise, Maritornes, “ancha de cara, llana de cogote, de nariz roma, del un ojo tuerta y del otro no muy sana” (I, 16; 198), in

²For a discussion of “ugly” women in *Don Quijote* see Fernández de Cano and Martín.

³Quotes from *Don Quijote* are taken from the edition of Murillo.

addition to her extracurricular activities with certain guests at the inn, would also pertain to Huarte's and Cortés's classification of women with high levels of the masculine humors, as would both Sancho's characterization of Torralba as "algo hombruna, porque tenía unos pocos de bigotes" (I, 20; 242) and his references to Dulcinea's manly activities and stature, and her "olorcillo algo hombruno" in Chapter 31 of Part I (I, 31; 383–84).

The recurrence of the masculine, hairy woman in Part I of *Don Quijote* is not lost on those in Part II who are familiar with the first part. Even Sancho learns how to perform the narrative gender change from masculine to feminine as he transforms the ugly and smelly farm girl, "no de muy buen rostro, porque era carirredonda y chata" (II, 10; 110) and who behaves "como si fuera hombre" (II, 10; 111), into a princess-like Dulcinea who sparkles in gold, pearls, diamonds, and rubies. Of course Don Quijote, unable to see Sancho's creation, attributes this metamorphosis to evil enchanters in a reverse process that traces the transformation from beautiful to grotesque: "No se contentaron estos traidores de haber vuelto y transformado a mi Dulcinea, sino que la transformaron y volvieron en una figura tan baja y tan fea como la de aquella aldeana . . . me dio un olor de ajos crudos, que me enclabrinó y atosigó el alma" (II, 10; 112).

The Duques likewise play their own games of sexual and gender reconstruction when they orchestrate the theatrical scenes in Part II based on their reading of Part I. It is not by chance that in Chapter 35 of the second part the role of the outspoken and demanding Dulcinea, who has been transformed from "gentil dama en rústica aldeana" (II, 35; 314), is played by a page "con un desenfado varonil y con una voz no muy adamada" (II, 35; 315). Similarly, just as the bearded priest in Part I was initially prepared to play the role of the Princess Micomicona, the tragic curse befallen both the Dueña Dolorida ("con voz antes basta y ronca que sutil y dilicada") and her attendants is precisely the sudden appearance of excessive facial hair (II, 38; 330).

Despite the obvious inspiration from Part I, those in Part II who orchestrate the "hairy" plots had plenty of supporting material from popular culture, since hirsutism and the "hairy maiden" motif maintain an established tradition in both iconography and hagiography. Stories of bearded female saints were well circulated during the Middle Ages. Women such as Saint Galla and Paula of Ávila grew beards in pious attempts to avoid marriage. The most famous bearded saint, nonetheless, was Wilgefortis or Uncumber, also known as Librada in Spain (see Hotchkiss 23). Librada's prayers were answered when she suddenly grew a long curly beard, which

was revealed when she let her veil slip during the unwanted nuptials. Not surprisingly, this hairy sight prevented her betrothed from completing the wedding ceremony (Bullough 56–57). Despite the dramatic use of the veil in both cases, Librada's facial hair saved her from obligatory participation in heterosexuality, while Cervantes's *dueñas barbudas* lament that their hairy curse would preclude welcome opportunities to unite with the opposite sex: "Pues aun cuando tiene la tez lisa y el rostro martirizado con mil suertes de menjurjes y mudas apenas halla quien bien la quiera, ¿qué hará cuando descubra hecho un bosque su rostro?" (II, 39; 338).

While the bearded saints may have been known for their virtue, other cases of women with excessive facial hair or even full body hair were read as evil, as they were attributed to the dangerous imagination of their mothers during conception. Pierre Boaistua and Ambroise Paré explain the origin of the monstrous hairy maiden in terms of the mother's powerful gaze during sexual relations:

Una joven velluda como un oso, a quien su madre había engendrado tan deforme y repulsiva por haber mirado con excesiva atención la efigie de un San Juan cubierto de pieles sin curtir, imagen que estaba fijada a los pies de su cama mientras concebía.⁴

The power of women's imagination to transform primary and secondary sex characteristics is also noted by Antonio de Torquemada in his *Jardín de flores curiosas*. Torquemada describes a woman dressed in men's garb who not only intended to perform the male gender role but also desired so intensely to become a man anatomically that her genitals actually transmuted and as a result, she was able to marry another woman: "que la imaginación intensa de verse en el hábito de hombre tuviese tanto poder que viniese a hacer el efecto, ella se convirtió en varón, y se casó con otra mujer" (190).

Given that gender transgression was believed to cause physical alterations of sex assignment, others insisted that women's beards were the result of unpoliced gender border crossings and therefore it was men's responsibility to control women and prevent them from acquiring a beard, the visual sign of strength and power. The Clerk of Enghien, for example, wrote: "Boldly keep your wives, that their beards do not descend to their waists. Women ought not to be bold. They have no beards and don't you doubt it a bit. A bold woman is

⁴Paré 46. Just as Paré compares the joven velluda to an "oso," Redondo argues that the oso in *Toboso* provides another example of the carnivalesque inversion in Cervantes's work (16–17). See also Huet 19–23.

against nature, for a woman ought not to have a beard either by law or by natural reason" (cited in Friedman 129). Similarly, the author of the *Libro de buen amor* warns his readers about hairy women: "Guárdate que no sea vellosa ni barbuda:/ ¡que el infierno de ti a tal mujer sacuda!" (Ruiz 130).⁵ Sebastián de Covarrubias, on the other hand, in his *Emblemas morales* offers the iconographic image of the famous bearded lady Brígida del Río, otherwise known as "la barbuda de Peñaranda," to represent androgyny, which, according to the author, is neither masculine or feminine but a third term considered, nonetheless, to be "siniestro y mal agüero."⁶ Other artists, such as Fray Juan Sánchez Cotán, also painted portraits of Brígida (Pérez Sánchez 67–69). However, regardless of the various ways in which Brígida del Río was interpreted by her contemporaries, according to early modern documents these anomalies were marketable, as the "barbuda de Peñaranda" received twelve *reales* for exhibiting her "freakish" appearance in Valencia (Pérez Sánchez 68). This voyeuristic interest in observing the hairy spectacle is also documented by the commission of various portraits as well as the exhibition of the painter and model in action. In 1631 a Venetian ambassador describes his pleasure in watching José de Ribera painting Magdalena Ventura: "En la habitación del Virrey estaba un famosísimo pintor haciendo un retrato de una mujer de los Abruzzos, casada y madre de muchos hijos, la cual tiene el rostro totalmente viril, con más de un palmo de barba negra bellísima, y el pecho completamente peludo, su excelencia tuvo el gusto de enseñármela, como cosa maravillosa, y verdaderamente lo es" (cited in Pérez Sánchez 80).

Not surprisingly, considering the seventeenth century's fascination with "monstrous" anomalies, Sancho's apparent interest in women's facial hair and his awareness that the bearded woman was a deterrent to heterosexual desire were not lost on Avellaneda in his continuation of Cervantes's work. When describing what type of lover he would prefer, Avellaneda's Sancho insists that "ha de ser, si lo hace, hermosa y de linda pezuña, y amostachada, para que nadie me la aoje ni desencamine" (330). Of course the old and ugly prostitute Bárbara disagrees with Sancho's hairy preferences: "Necio sois—dijo Bárbara—en quererla amostachada, pues no hay Barrabás que se llegue a mujer que lo sea" (330).

Avellaneda's Don Quijote likewise maintains his ability to transform repulsive women into examples of superior beauty. Bárbara,

⁵See also Redondo 13.

⁶See Sanz Hermida 465, 468, and Smith 16–17.

for example, is described by the narrator as a woman past fifty with a very wicked face, a scar about five inches long on her right cheek, and breasts that were “negras y arrugadas, pero tan largas y flacas, que le colgaban dos palmos” (322–23). Not surprisingly, Don Quijote insists that Bárbara is the beautiful Amazon Queen Cenobia. At the end of Avellaneda’s novel, however, Don Quijote is unable to see the very female condition of his new squire, who is actually a pregnant woman dressed as a man: “Llevóla el buen caballero sin saber que fuese mujer, hasta que vino a parir en medio de un camino, en presencia suya, dejándole sumamente maravillado el parto” (463).

While the obsessive behavior of the anonymous hidalgo in Cervantes’s novel, which causes a drying up of the brain (“se le secó el cerebro”), seems compatible with Huarte’s treatise on humors and *ingenios*, I would argue that Don Quijote’s ability to transform the *hombrunas* into beautiful and feminine damsels in Part I also reflects Huarte’s interpretation of classical mutability theories for masculine women. In addition to the classifications based on levels of heat and moisture in the body, Huarte also attributes physical appearance and transgressive social behavior to a *prenatal* transmutation. Consequently, he demonstrates how one’s physiological sex (without surgical reconstruction) proves to be a non-fixed, mutable process, as he offers a medical explanation for individuals whose behavior and appearance do not correspond to their biologically assigned sex. As described by Huarte, masculine women, feminine men, and homosexuals were originally destined to be born of the opposite sex but the temperature of the bodily humors changed during gestation and caused the genitals to “transmute” before birth:

A quien esta *transmutación* le aconteciere en el vientre de su madre, . . . muchas veces tiene Naturaleza hecho un varón, con sus miembros genitales afuera, y sobreviniendo frialdad, se los vuelve adentro; y queda hecha hembra. Conócese después de nacida en que tiene el aire de varón, así en la habla como en todos sus movimientos y obras. (608–09, emphasis mine)

Huarte’s prenatal theory of sexual transmutation is likewise evident occasionally in postnatal, usually adolescent cases of women who are spontaneously transformed anatomically into men: “Y que se hayan vuelto mujeres en hombres después de nacidas, ya no se espanta el vulgo de oírlo; porque fuera de lo que cuentan por verdad muchos antiguos, es cosa que ha acontecido en España muy pocos años ha” (609).⁷

⁷According to Jerónimo de Huerta in his 1629 translation of Pliny’s *Historia Natural*, this postnatal “metamorfosis o transmutación” may be attributed to a premature birth that caused a defect in genital development (Sanz Hermida 467–68).

Ambroise Paré's 1585 treatise on monsters, *Monstruos y prodigios*, also describes various cases of young women who suddenly acquire primary and secondary male sex characteristics. Paré cites, for example, the case of María Garnier who, not unlike Aldonza and her talent for salting pork, was "en el campo persiguiendo con bastante celeridad a sus puercos que iban a entrar en un trigal, halló una zanja y quiso cruzarla; al saltarla, en el mismo instante se le desarrollan los genitales y la verga viril, al haberse roto los ligamentos que anteriormente los tenían cerrados y prietos . . . Se reunieron médicos y cirujanos . . . y decidieron que era hombre, y ya no mujer" (42). Paré explains that this transmutation is possible due to the insufficient temperature of the fluids, which changed later. But this "metamorphosis," according to Paré, is *not* possible from men to women because nature tends to perfect itself by becoming more masculine instead of moving toward the imperfection of femininity.⁸

Regardless of whether these spontaneous mutations are prenatal or postnatal, the process that is described by Huarte as a sexual "transmutación" reappears in Part I of *Don Quijote* in the multiple *transformaciones* performed by the protagonist and again in Part II by the readers and participants of Part I. Moreover, it is Don Quijote's own humoral imbalance that originally allows him to perform the narrative transformations from masculine to feminine, just as nature occasionally transmutes men to women before birth and women to men after birth. The result, it seems, is that Don Quijote's unstable reality, which is subject to random mutations ("las cosas . . . están sujetas a continua mudanza") (I, 8; 130) proves to be an accurate reflection of the "fluid" state of gender identity and sex assignment during the early modern period.

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⁸Eusebio Nieremberg, in his *Curiosa filosofía y tesoro de maravillas* (1630) also refers to the change from female to male in terms of sexual improvement: "mejoró de sexo" (cited in Sanz Hermida 467). Other cases of women who are anatomically transformed into men are provided by Antonio de Torquemada in his *Jardín de flores curiosas* (1570). He describes Phetula, for example, who "se le hizo el cuerpo de varón, todo velloso, y le nació la barba, y la voz se le hizo áspera" (189).

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