

Title: “Shaking Off The Veil”: The Exploration of Clothing as a Tool of Transformation and Transient Experiences Throughout Various Binary Barriers of Life in Medieval Spain

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In the memoir, *Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World*, examining the use of clothing during sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain reveals the continuous presence of clothing in the life of Catalina De Erauso as an important tool for their own survival and self-expression. Clothing is examined through evolutionary anthropology, explaining its importance as an essential part of human history. Clothing has been used as a tool for survival, and later, as a tool for self-expression (Hogenboom). Next, clothing is examined through a queer lens, with the discussion engaging Freudian psychoanalytical theories on cross-dressing as being symptomatic of deviant and abnormal behavior, but through contemporary research, is disputed and rejected as being abnormal.

Normalizing cross-dressing allows for understanding the purpose of clothing in Catalina De Erauso’s journey. Marjorie Garber’s foreword prevents taking a cultural relativist perspective when analyzing the text (xxiii). Although important in framing the memoir, this perspective shies away from engaging problematic psychoanalytical discourse on cross-dressing that has been disproven. Here, the research conducted aims to provide a modern perspective of the memoir, providing context to the use of clothing, and a new understanding of cross-dressing, without dismissing the various possibilities of its uses. De Erauso’s ability to use clothing as a tool allows for their transformation and provides them the ability to transcend various binaries in early modern Medieval Spain. Clothing becomes symbolic of De Erauso’s ability to switch throughout each binary, such as socio-economic statuses, environmental, physical, and mental spaces, and between their given and chosen identities.

Works Cited

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