Dressed Like a Man? Of Language, Bodies, and Monsters in the Trial of Enrique/Enriqueta Favez and Its Contemporary Accounts

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> The Nature you bedevil me with is a lie. Do not trust it to protect you from what I represent, for it is a fabrication that cloaks the groundlessness of the privilege you seek to maintain for yourself at my expense. . . . I call upon you to investigate your nature as I have been compelled to confront mine. I challenge you to risk abjection and flourish as well as have I. Heed my words, and you may well discover the seams and sutures in yourself.
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> —Susan Stryker[1]

In 1823 one of the most scandalous trials of the nineteenth century took place in Santiago de Cuba. A year earlier a housekeeper named Rosa Suárez walked into the bedroom of her master—a well-known and respected Swiss doctor—in order to help him undress and get into bed because she feared he was too inebriated to do it himself. But what she saw when she opened the door stunned her, drastically changed the life of her master and his wife, and shocked the Catholic Spanish colony. Favez was in bed, passed-out drunk, with his shirt open.[2] As she approached, Suárez saw with horror that instead of the flat—and perhaps hairy—chest she expected, there lay before her the body of "a perfect and whole woman."[3] Word spread rapidly. On 24 July 1822 Favez's wife, Juana de León, requested the annulment of her marriage, and in January 1823 she filed a lawsuit demanding that

[1] Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 247.

[2] The spelling of Favez's last name changes in different accounts of the story. Faber, Fabes, and Faver are all found in legal documents and analyses of his life. Following Cuban historian Julio César González-Pagés, I have chosen Favez. See Julio César González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre* (Havana: Editorial de la mujer, 2012).

[3] Ibid., 45. Ana Elena Puga (associate professor, Departments of Theatre and Spanish & Portuguese, Ohio State University) translated all the quotes that appear in this article.

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Favez be imprisoned, publicly recognized as a woman, and punished for his conduct. The police acted swiftly. On 7 February Favez was arrested, and the story he told while in prison stunned the general public and the authorities of the conservative island.

Born in Switzerland in 1791, Favez was identified as a woman and named Henriette.[4] An orphan at a young age, he was taken in by an uncle who served in Napoleon's army. However, to correct what he perceived as unacceptable and troublesome masculine demeanor, the colonel married Favez to one of his fellow soldiers when Favez was fifteen years old. By the time he turned eighteen Favez was already a widow and had lost his only child. Tragedy turned into opportunity, and, taking advantage of the unusual freedom that this lack of familial attachments awarded him, Favez moved to Paris, where he assumed a masculine identity. He studied medicine and became a skilled surgeon. He then served in Napoleon's army as a doctor and a soldier and was taken prisoner of war in Spain, finally seeking refuge in the Caribbean. He arrived in Cuba around 1818 and started practicing medicine. In 1819 he met Juana de León, a poor mulatto woman, whom he soon married. Three years later he found himself in prison accused of the "horrendous and impious conduct" of dressing as a man, of practicing a profession forbidden to women, and of "the detestable, scandalous, and unheard-of crime of marrying a person of the same sex."[5] He was then sentenced to prison and later banned from all Spanish territories for the rest of his life.

Based on the thorough archival work done by James Pancrazio and Julio César Gonzalez-Pagés about Favez's life, I offer a textual analysis of the role language played in the de/reconstruction of Enrique/Enriqueta's bodily, social, and legal identity during the trial against him. Both Pancrazio's *Enriqueta Faber: Travestismo, documentos e historia* (Enriqueta Faber: Transvestism, documents, and history, 2008) and González-Pagés's *Por andar vestida de hombre* (To walk around dressed like a man, 2012) provide exhaustive—and much-needed—accounts of Favez's life before, during, and after the trial. The documents they provide are vital to the project of piecing together Favez's story and gaining a more detailed and nuanced understanding of his ordeal. However, these authors' analyses of Enrique's case have limitations. On the one hand, *Por andar vestida de hombre* is the result of the work of a Cuban historian who lives and works on the island. This grants González-Pagés unique and sustained access to a wealth of archival materials, and it allows him to offer the reader a rich collection of photographs of the original documents and sites of the story. However, as

[4] I am relying here on Enrique's own account of his life, which he provided while in prison and which González-Pagés summarizes. However, González-Pagés also suggests that Favez might have changed some of the details of his birth, family, and upbringing (ibid., 22–23).

[5] Ibid., 84, 62.

is evident from the title, his argument inserts Favez's story into the history of Cuban women and a broader tradition of women dressing as men in Cuba. González-Pagés's argument lacks rigor in parsing out the differences between women who disguised themselves as men in order to accomplish professional or personal goals otherwise unattainable for them and gender-nonconforming individuals who, like Favez, presented themselves and self-identified as the opposite gender consistently throughout their lives. González-Pagés makes his intentions clear in one of the last sections of his book entitled "A Face for Enriqueta Favez."[6] In it González-Pagés describes how he worked with the National Revolutionary Police of Cuba to produce several portraits of Favez, relying on a combination of historical descriptions of Favez and modern facial recognition techniques. He includes three of the resulting images in his book.[7] I argue that this collaboration subjects Favez to yet another unwarranted examination by (academic and law enforcement) authorities and results, once again, in his feminization. On the other hand, Pancrazio's use of the figure of the "transvestite" as the main analytical category of his book is problematic because it conflates transvestism with ritualized forms of gender bending akin to those enacted during popular Cuban celebrations like Carnival, and it conceptualizes the transvestite as a master in the art of deceit.[8] Pancrazio thus reduces performativity to histrionism and dehumanizes Favez by equating gender performance and accomplishment with deception. Despite the contributions, González-Pagés and Pancrazio fail to take into account Favez's will as enacted throughout his life trajectory and, particularly, as expressed in his writings.

Textual analysis can be instrumental in redressing this interpretive oversight. Close textual attention to the documents used during the trial by the prosecution and by Enrique himself provide a better understanding of how, when it comes to tensions mobilized by the transgression of social expectations around gender and sexuality, language functions as both a powerful hetero/cisnormativizing mechanism and a realm of possibility and affirmation. I focus on different instances where language was deployed to enact the disidentification of Favez with the name that allowed him to have a particular career path, social standing, and marital status and the later attempts to subject him to the moral and legal standards that bound women in his time. I examine key aspects of the de/reconstruction of Favez's identity such as the effort to rename Favez "Enriqueta," the use and implications of the word "monster" during the trial, and the linguistic chaos caused by Favez's transgression to legal, medical, and religious institutions and norms. To do so, I consistently refer to Favez using what I believe was his chosen identity. I use masculine pronouns and the name "Enrique," even if at times this creates grammatical ambiguity or incorrectness.

[6] Ibid., 98–108.

[7] Ibid., 98–99, 107–8.

[8] James Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber: Travestismo, documentos e historia* (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2008), 12.

The Performative Production of Enriqueta

In January 1823 Juana de León filed a lawsuit in which she claimed that "a creature dressed as a man" had deceived her "in the most cruel and detestable manner" by marrying her under false pretenses. By then, Juana and Enrique had been married for almost four years, a fact that led to contentious debate during the trial about why Juana had waited so long to accuse Favez.[9] It is unclear at what point Juana discovered that Favez did not have what we might consider normative male anatomy. During the trial Enrique repeatedly said that he had disclosed this information before their marriage, but Juana denied it. In her version, which was accepted by the judge, she realized the truth about Enrique after the wedding but remained silent because she was too ashamed and afraid of both public opinion and possible reprisals from Favez. In her lawsuit, Juana was the first person to use the word "monster" to describe Favez. The wording of the document first refers to Favez as "a woman, the same as I," but the rhetoric then changes: Favez is no longer called a woman but a "creature," and in the last lines Juana begs the authorities to annul her "marriage to that monster."[10] These words, "monster" and "creature," were repeated over and over again during the trial.[11] In a letter dated 24 April 1823, José Rodríguez, one of Juana's attorneys, goes so far as to say that "it is not possible that nature would produce a creature like Favez."[12] Who, then, produced a "creature like Favez," and how?

In *Body Works*, Peter Brooks explains that the monster is not—or at least not only—an individual threat; it is an embodiment that channels concerns about some of the most entrenched social beliefs. The monster represents a semantic excess that cannot be contained by, and therefore defies, the taxonomies devised to give meaning and order to both the social and the natural worlds.[13] He argues that one of the monster's most destabilizing characteristics is its ambiguous relation to prevailing norms of gender and sexuality. The monster, Brooks claims, not only "calls into question all our cultural codes" but "may also be that which eludes gender definition."[14] The fact that gender ambiguity haunts the monster—and in great part accounts for its monstrosity—precludes social acceptance of its sexuality and bars it from erotic fulfillment and romantic love. Perhaps counterintuitively, the monster becomes less frightening once it has been labeled as such. The monster's unique corporeal characteristics both reify disavowed fears

[9] The wedding certificate provides evidence that they were married on 11 August 1819 (González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 27).

[10] Ibid., 42, 43.

[11] For example, in three short letters addressed to the judge on 25, 27, and 29 April 1823, which are reproduced in González-Pagés's book, these words appear more than six times (ibid., 63–67).

[12] Ibid., 61.

[13] Peter Brooks, *Body Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 218.

[14] Ibid., 219.

and provide a safe vehicle for their expression. To classify something—or someone—as monstrous is to "other" that which terrifies us so that we can confront it, even violently, without having to confront ourselves. The monster, by being monstrous, assures us that we are not.

Enrique's trial provides considerable evidence for these fears about social and corporeal destabilization. The lawsuit highlights the connection between Juana's personal grievance and the body politic. Juana explicitly demanded that the court not only recognize the harm that had been done to her but also, and perhaps more importantly, acknowledge that Favez's actions had ridiculed and undermined "the most sacred institutions of our august religion and of the social order."[15] Juana's lawyers were keenly aware that what was at stake was a matter far more grave than the seduction of a young and naive woman by a perverted temptress. Favez was a prominent figure in his town. He was one of the few skilled doctors in the region, and his experience in the army had provided him with better training in the most advanced surgical techniques than his contemporaries. In fact, the doctors who assessed his medical examinations in 1820 were so impressed with his capabilities that they not only gave him permission to practice medicine in Cuba but also appointed him to the colonial institution that oversaw the work of doctors, surgeons, and midwives on the island—the Protomedicato. Taking this into account, we can surmise that the lawyers were acting on the assumption that the harm done to Juana would not be the judge's main concern. What was at stake was the authority of the religious and civil institutions that controlled the island and had granted Favez prestige and recognition.

From the beginning of the legal proceedings, the focus was on establishing "the defamation and scandal that [Favez] has caused the Republic."[16] But to guarantee that this damage was not irreversible and could not be replicated, it was necessary to prove that Favez was not an ordinary woman, not even an extraordinary one, but a monster—or, as José Rodríguez, one of the lawyers, described it, that Favez was, quite literally, a freak of nature. Relying on scholars like Doris Summer who have studied the close relationship between gender performance and the consolation of national identity in nineteenth-century Latin America, it is possible to understand the link established between the alleged harm caused to Juana and a far graver one inflicted on the republic.[17] From this analytical perspective, Favez's transgression threatened the organizing principles of Cuban institutions and mores and therefore required (legal and symbolic) mechanisms capable of restoring order. In the trial this was attempted through a double—and

[15] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 42.

[16] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 87.

[17] Many prominent scholars have written about the relationship between gender performance and national identity. Doris Sommer's landmark study *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) is perhaps the most influential.

contradictory—legal and linguistic maneuver. On the one hand, the strictly binary gender norms of the day dictated that Favez had to be "returned" to his "natural sex"; he had to be feminized so that the law could regain control over him by binding his body to the legal and cultural restrictions applied to women. On the other hand, Favez had to be denaturalized to ensure that "other women" could not repeat his actions. In other words, the lawyers needed to show that what Favez did both was done by a woman and could not be done by women.

Consequently, one of the first steps that Juana's legal team took was to demand that a tribunal examine Favez to determine "the sex and the physical impotence of he who is called Enrique Favez."[18] What is important here is that undressing Favez and exposing his body was not enough. It was also not sufficient that witnesses testified that they had seen Favez urinating "in the same posture in which women do it"; that Hipólito Sánchez, one of Favez's neighbors, had seen stains from Favez's menstrual blood on one of his chairs; or that Juana described his breasts in detail.[19] The tribunal was also not satisfied when, in an attempt to avoid a physical examination, Favez himself confessed to having the anatomical characteristics usually categorized as female.[20] If Enrique's legal ordeal began with visual evidence, with people prying and eager to uncover what his clothes were "hiding," it certainly did not end there. The court documents make clear that seeing is never enough. In order to mend what has been broken, the link between authority and vision needs to be made explicit. That is, the trial of Enrique Favez provides evidence that the act of looking needs to take place within the framework of the law, within the language of the law. What is required is a performative act.

A panel of experts was summoned on 8 February 1823, and, after undressing Enrique, they issued the following statement: "It is decided for the moment that [Favez] is effectively a woman . . . without any possibility of being mistaken for the other sex."[21] The key word here is "decided." Favez's sex was something that needed to be "decided" by a tribunal in a kind of reversed sex-reassignment linguistic procedure. His body remained unchanged, but his sex, marital status, property, and profession were all expected to transform after this determination. The experts saw themselves as representatives of science and the law of both God and men and were attempting to recover their legitimacy by exerting their authority over this now-female body. But Favez was not only declared a woman. Throughout the trial the attorneys worked hard to (also) classify Favez as an unnatural

[18] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 42.

[19] Ibid., 44, 42.

[20] Ibid., 51.

[21] The original Spanish reads: "Se decide por lo tanto que es una mujer efectiva, . . . sin que quepa por alguna circunstancia equivocación con el otro sexo." Interestingly, the usually heavily gendered Spanish syntax here avoids the grammatical subject. There is no "ella" or "él" or any other gender markers in the sentence, which, in Spanish, is extremely rare (ibid., 51).

creature, a monster. Brooks has famously stated that the monster "is nothing but a body."[22] He has highlighted the close relationship between the gaze and the monster, and, appropriating Laura Mulvey's famous expression, he has argued that what defines the monster is its condition as "to-be-looked-at-ness."[23] Only by looking at a monster can one recognize it as such. The examination of Favez revealed that the monster was "nothing but a woman." Unlike Frankenstein and so many other "creatures," there is nothing strange or unnatural in Favez's anatomy. What is monstrous, what is scandalous here, is the body of "a perfect and whole woman."[24] The gap between Favez's perceived female anatomy and his actions and speech constitutes his monstrosity. As Laureano Fernández de Cuevas—editor of *La administración, periódico jurídico, administrativo y rentístico* (The administration, a legal, administrative, and financial journal), an influential mid-nineteenth-century Cuban legal journal—wrote, "Enriqueta does not present any of those rare defects of the configuration of the genitourinary apparatus; nothing of androgeneity nor hermaphrodism; but rather [you] will see in her the phenomenon of the starkest contradiction between the moral and the physical elements: the character and inclinations opposed to the fair sex; you will see, in a word, the spirit of a man enclosed in the body of a woman."[25] The tribunal's physical examination sought to astutely locate Favez on the side of the feminine and the monstrous at the same time. This is key, because the categorization of Favez as a (monstrous) woman validates the imposition of the weight of law over the female creature that so threatens society. It is this performative process of resubjectification that legitimizes the subjection and containment of Favez's body and the desires it mobilizes.

But Favez refused to accept that he was either a monster or a woman. He challenged the tribunal's reading of his body, and he did not acknowledge their authority. Even when subjected to the most powerful institutions of his time, Favez remained unapologetic, to the degree that the interrogation session of 12 February ended abruptly because "the judge could no longer bear these statements [Enrique's denials] and decided to leave."[26] Enrique admitted to wearing men's clothes but claimed that this did not constitute "any crime within the realm of the human."[27] On the contrary, he contended that wearing the clothes of a man, far from hurting people, allowed him to help others and contributed to society: "By changing my dress I have not offended society directly or indirectly, by having previously studied Medical Science and Surgery at the University of Paris and practicing

[22] Brooks, *Body Work*, 218.
[23] Ibid.
[24] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 45.
[25] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 55.
[26] Ibid., 60.
[27] Ibid., 71.

with felicitous success . . . I have not harmed anyone but rather have done a very considerable good."[28] Furthermore, when the judge accused Favez of taking advantage of Juana's candor and ignorance, Enrique vehemently denied it and gave a simple and stunning response: "What happened with Juana de León . . . was by mutual accord and for love."[29]

In addition, even though Enrique was forced to sign as "Enriqueta" and use female pronouns to refer to himself after 11 February 1824, Favez only used the literary conventions associated with female writing in his time in one letter—dated 30 April—when asking for mercy. In it, he talks about "the fragility of my sex" and requests the tribunal to take pity on his "deplorable situation."[30] However, this tone seems more a costume than a return to a—supposed—original biological self, and one gets the sense that this was when Favez's cross-dressing takes place. When Enrique was deprived of official existence, after his property was seized, his title was revoked, and his friends and protectors abandoned him, he attempted to protect himself by strategically wearing the ill-fitting cloak of stereotypical female weakness. Nonetheless, contrary to the social, religious, and legal conventions of his time, Enrique did not use his most feminine voice to repent. While he accepted the actions for which he had been charged, he stubbornly maintained that they did not constitute any wrongdoing. Furthermore, he showed neither remorse nor desire to change, and he boldly concluded his plea with the request to be acquitted and set free immediately: "Since the character of extreme criminality that had been imputed to my case has been dispelled and it has come to light in the aforementioned that by no expressed law should I be subject to a corporeal punishment and even less to temporary imprisonment, and since in such cases the Spanish constitution, in article 296, allows for the benefit of bail, I am ready to obtain my liberty . . . as befits me as a person pure, simple, and worthy of justice. Ut supra [As above]."[31]

Time and again Enrique skillfully drew on his limited knowledge of the law and the scarce resources available to him to contest the judge's interpretation of him and his actions. In spite of this, on 19 June he was declared guilty. The judge's statement in court echoed Juana's initial claim by explicitly stating that Favez was a public threat and highlighting that his actions had not only harmed the plaintiff but also transgressed natural, human, and divine law:

> Because of the mockery and dark outrage that this one has dared to inflict on the divinity, contracting matrimony with a person of the same sex, in which horrible and impious conduct she sinned against our august religion and the reverence of such a holy sacrament, after

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 59.
[30] Ibid., 71.
[31] Ibid., 72.

> having perpetuated the horrible fraud of being baptized as a man, reaggravating more and more the crime that cloaks these actions in the unprecedented depravity with which she used the person of León . . . and because in the same manner the offense and scandal that she has inflicted upon the Republic, no less than with such delinquencies as the disguise of a man, which is condemned by all the laws of the universe . . . with insult and mockery of the respectable Court of the most Excellent Sir Captain General of the Island, and of all the other authorities and corporations constituted on it, we naturally condemned and condemn the aforementioned Doña Enriqueta Faber to suffer reclusion in the Casa de las Corrigendas located in the city of Havana.[32]

The judge sentenced Favez to ten years in prison and condemned him to perpetual exile from all Spanish colonies once the incarceration term had concluded. But Enrique remained undeterred. He appealed his conviction, tried to escape, and twice attempted suicide. With his relentless—and at times desperate—actions, Favez continued to push the legal system of his time and managed to have more than two-thirds of his prison sentence overturned. On December 1823 he arrived in the Casa de San Juan Nepomuceno de Recogidas to begin serving his time.[33] Seven months later, in June 1824, Ignacio de Pluma, the director of the detention center, wrote a letter to Francisco Dionisio Vives, governor of Cuba, in which he described Favez's disruptive conduct and begged him to approve the immediate expatriation of Favez.[34] After following legal protocol, Vives received authorization to expedite Favez's exile, and de Pluma swiftly arranged his departure in an American ship bound for New Orleans (where Favez claimed he had distant relatives) on July 31 1824, one year and four months after his arrest.[35]

Enrique was not subdued by the trial. Even though he began dressing as a woman, signing with a female name, and using female pronouns, Favez refused to abide by the rules that sought to confine him to gendered spaces of punishment and contrition. In this sense, Favez's case shows that, as Judith Butler puts it, the "policing gaze cannot fully control the body it seeks to regulate."[36] This lack of control was made particularly evident in the exact place where the rule of law should have been able to consolidate itself: the trial. The minutes of the trial show that Enrique's mere presence unleashed moral, social, and linguistic chaos. Favez was tried and sentenced, but the challenge he posed to the society of his time and that he still poses to ours has not been resolved; the key witness was language itself. As Peter Brooks explains, the monster "calls into question the language we use to classify

[32] Ibid., 87.
[33] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 91.
[34] Ibid., 92.
[35] Ibid., 93, 94–95.
[36] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 165.

and control bodies."[37] The language used during the trial demonstrated this disruptive potential and its ability to contest the disciplining discourses that shape and contain social and physical bodies. As the trial advanced, the language of the courtroom became more unstable and ambiguous, more monstrous. Phrases of grammatical impossibility abounded. Over and over we run into expressions like "the so-called Enrique is equipped with all of the private parts of the feminine sex" or "I know don Enrique Favez, and I know for a fact that he is a woman."[38] The court secretary fluctuated between using the name Enrique or Enriqueta, and there is a constant back and forth between masculine and feminine pronouns in the transcript. Even the document that officially declares Favez a woman is signed by "Enrique," not "Enriqueta."[39]

These linguistic maneuvers attest to the unresolved tensions produced by Enrique's presence and his refusal to abide by governing standards of sexuality and gender identity and expression. If, on the one hand, the documents display traces of the deployment of hetero/cis normativizing discourses, then, on the other hand, they highlight the inherent potential of language as a means of resisting and challenging such epistemic violence. The attempts to restore (social, moral, and even natural) order by unveiling Enrique's "true identity" (a de facto reclassification that was meant to return Favez to "her proper place") fell short, and these efforts only emphasized the role of language in the de/reconstruction of identity. Favez's case is an example of the constant tug-of-war between established paradigms and any individual's ability to assert his/her/their own way of being in the world.

As Judith Butler has sufficiently stressed, this performative nature of language does not mean that naming oneself is enough to change ideology. It does, however, carve out a space for resistance and agency: "It is not that everything is accomplished through language. No, it is not as if 'I can say I'm free and then my performative utterance makes me free.' No. But to make the demand on freedom is already to begin its exercise and then to ask for its legitimation so to also announce the gap between its exercise and its realization and to put both into public discourse in a way so that that gap is seen, so that that gap can mobilize."[40] Enrique's refusal to abide by the definition of himself and his actions that the attorneys advanced was an ingenious attempt to mobilize precisely this gap. Through his own speech, he constantly sought to move attention away from his anatomy and refocus it on the positive outcome of his behavior, his intelligence, his professionalism, and his generosity. Favez agreed that his nature was extraordinary, but his phrasing carefully constructs this as an advantage, not as a monstrosity.

[37] Brooks, *Body Work*, 220.
[38] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 19; González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 45.
[39] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 20.
[40] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 68–69.

With his bold actions and uncommon personality he had healed the sick and served Cuba. He had taken in an ill and poor mulatto woman, and, after restoring her back to health, he had shared his home and his name with her. Enrique's narrative of himself counters the visual and lurid rhetoric of the trial. This is relevant because, as Brooks explains, language is one of the few spaces available to those considered monstrous to "deconstruct the defining and classifying power of the gaze, and to assert in its place the potential of affect created in interlocutory language—as used, notably, in the relation of love."[41] In Favez's case, this is made particularly evident in his personal writing to Juana.

In the private archive of the Quintín del Río family in New Orleans, Gonzalez-Pagés found two letters that he claims were penned by Favez and addressed to Juana, but doubts about the authenticity of the documents remain.[42] Since the scope and constraints of this article do not allow me to contribute to the verification process of these documents, as in the rest of my analysis, I trust Gonzalez-Pagés's archival work and remain open to reviewing my argument if consensus is reached that the letters are not original. The first letter was written soon after Favez's arrival, in August 1824, and the other is dated 23 May 1846, twenty-two years later. They are both love letters. In them, Favez describes the time at Juana's side as "the happiest days of my life," and he defends their union as an act of love—not of deceit—by saying that "it was all of them who did not understand that we loved each other in spite of everything."[43] He explicitly declares that he does not feel remorse and that, if necessary, he would do it all over again. Both letters appeal to the performative character of language to assert his masculinity. He uses masculine pronouns in almost all cases, reiterating that he thought of himself as a man, and he signs with his chosen name: Enrique.[44] Enrique uses the space within the discourse of love and affection to uphold the name and the love of his choosing and to rewrite his own story.

Favez was never recognized as Enrique: he did not recover his property, his medical title was not acknowledged in Cuba or in the United States, and he never saw Juana again. Nevertheless, Favez's personal letters and the documents analyzed attest to his resolute defense of his actions, his love for Juana, and his chosen identity through a sustained and astute use of the juridical, moral, and medical discourses available to him. It is unfortunate, then, that both Pancrazio and González-Pagés fail to notice that their own works reiterate the normalizing efforts of the trial and reposition Favez precisely within the identity categories that he fought so hard to avoid.

[41] Ibid., 219.
[42] I thank reviewer D for pointing this out.
[43] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 96.
[44] I have provided translations of the full texts of these letters in the appendix.

What's in a Name?

Both Pancrazio's book, *Enriqueta Faber: Travestismo, documentos e historia*, and González-Pagés's book, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, refer to Favez as Enriqueta, employ mostly female pronouns, and characterize Favez mainly as a woman dressed as a man. In different ways, both texts treat Favez's assigned sex at birth as the defining part of his identity and limit Enrique's masculinity to his clothing. González-Pagés sees it as a disguise, and Pancrazio sees it as transvestism.

Enriqueta Faber: Travestismo, documentos e historia is a sympathetic and rigorously documented analysis of Enrique's life. But the main argument of this book, which equates Favez's life story with a prolonged act of transvestism, is both flawed and unfortunate. From the first page, Pancrazio describes Favez as "the famous doctor-transvestite woman," and in the second footnote of the book, he explains that "the alternation of gender is precisely the point of transvestism."[45] Throughout, he relates transvestism to theatricality and illusion and likens it to a "chameleon-like or impersonator's nature" that allows an individual to identify him/her/themselves with "camouflage or signification itself."[46] He conceptualizes the transvestite as a figure that "provokes nervous laughter, seduces and terrifies, . . . and marks the limits of Cuban culture," and he argues that the case of Favez "is not the only example of transvestism in Cuban culture and literature. This practice is flaunted on the streets during Carnival, in the spectacles of cabaret, and in Santería."[47] Pancrazio conflates different types of gender-bending practices with gender-nonconforming identities, which is problematic, because, as Judith Butler stressed in "Critically Queer" (1993), doing so erroneously equates performativity with concrete performances. Here, Butler is responding to the critique of Eve Sedgwick (and many others) that she had overlapped performativity and drag in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler calls this understanding a "misapprehension," explaining that she never meant to say that "gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on as one puts on clothes in the morning."[48] She advises caution against simplistic readings of drag as performativity. "Readers have often cited the description of drag as if it were the 'example' which explains the meaning of performativity," she writes. "The conclusion is drawn that gender performativity is a matter of construction, who one is on the basis of what one performs."[49] Pancrazio cites Butler, displaying his awareness of this argument, but he misses the point by explicitly stating that he prefers the

[45] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 11.
[46] Ibid., 49.
[47] Ibid., 50.
[48] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1993): 17.
[49] Ibid., 24.

word "transvestite" (understood as a supposedly "chameleon-like" figure) to "transsexual" to talk about Favez because of the latter's resistance to descriptions that focus only on performative play.[50] By drawing a parallel between Enrique's life and the ritual forms of transgression enacted during Carnival, which many other scholars have described, Pancrazio aligns Favez with a subversive gender-bending desire that Enrique did not appear to articulate.[51] Favez did not change his gender expression back and forth at will; he was forced to do so during several—often tragic—moments of his life.

I realize that bringing up terms such as "transsexual" and "transvestite" is both anachronistic and problematic. The modern understanding of the term "transsexual" is attributed to Magnus Hirschfeld, a German sexologist and founder of the Institute of Sexual Research, the most advanced and liberal center for the study of sexual diversity of its time (1919–33). The term was introduced to differentiate between "transvestites," defined as people who cross-dressed for erotic or other reasons, and individuals who wished to permanently and physically transition to the other sex and therefore sought medical interventions that would make their bodies conform as much as possible to the anatomical characteristics associated with the opposite sex. However, the concept did not gain popularity until 1952, thanks to the much-publicized sex reassignment surgery of former US Army GI Christine Jorgensen some 130 years after Favez's trial.[52] Also, as David Valentine notes in *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (2007), "to imagine historical subjects as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' or as 'transgender' ignores the radically different understandings of self and the contexts that underpinned the practices and lives of historical subjects."[53] But since Pancrazio uses such words to describe and analyze Favez's life story, we must ask ourselves what their implications are and whether Enrique's ordeal is best described as a prolonged act of cross-dressing and a conscious attempt to destabilize social constructs. As Jay Prosser shows in his brilliant reading of Judith Butler's work, the transsexual can pose a challenge for some strands of queer and feminist theory because his/her desire to *be* rather than to *perform* an identity seems to represent a reliteralization of sex.[54] The transsexual does not see himself or herself as performing gender; she or he seeks to embody the gender that expresses his or her understanding of self. Countering Butler's well-known analysis of the documentary *Paris Is Burning*, Prosser argues that Venus Extrava-

[50] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 46, 47.

[51] See, for example, Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[52] Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 18.

[53] David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 30.

[54] Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1998), 48. See in particular Prosser's analysis of Butler's chapter on the documentary *Paris Is Burning* in *Bodies That Matter*, 21–60.

ganza—one of the transvestites interviewed in this film—was not murdered because she was a woman of color but because she failed to be one. The gap between her gender performance and the materiality of her body is what gets her killed. So if Venus Extravaganza was murdered for having a penis, Favez was thrown in jail and lost his professional title, properties, and wife for not having one. By likening Favez's imprisonment, suicide attempts, and exile to the ritual transgressions of Carnival, Pancrazio reduces performativity to histrionism and dehumanizes Favez by problematically equating gender performance and accomplishment with deception. Pancrazio's insistence that Favez was a woman who successfully passed as a man leads him to describe Favez as a professional (gender) performer, by which Pancrazio implies that Favez has expertise in the arts of impersonation and trickery and is an untrustworthy character. Indeed, Pancrazio explicitly says that Enrique's testimony should not be trusted: "As in any historical study, it is necessary to take into account the source of this information. The individual who testifies is a transvestite, that is, a specialist in the art of deceit. Therefore, all of his or her testimony is questionable."[55] Pancrazio associates Favez's omissions and possible manipulation of information not with the fact that he was imprisoned, alone, and facing severe—maybe even deadly—punishment but with the fact that, as a transvestite, he was a "specialist in the art of deceit." As Prosser stresses, interpretations like the one advanced by Pancrazio are particularly problematic when talking about people who, like Favez, have endured violence not for being who they are but for having been perceived as not being who they say they are.[56] This notion that gender-nonconforming people are guileful and dishonest is a major shortcoming of Pancrazio's book and constitutes a blind spot for an otherwise lucid and rigorous scholar.

A mild and well-intentioned form of this misconception can also be found in González-Pagés's book. From its title, *Por andar vestida de hombre* portrays Favez primarily as female and inserts his life into a historic narrative of women dressed as men. "Otras vestidas de hombre" is the title of the last chapter of González-Pagés's book. The sections of this chapter include "Mujeres que pasan por hombres" (Women who pass as men) and "Escritoras, arqueólogas, reinas y revolucionarias también se vistieron de hombre" (Female writers, archaeologists, queens, and revolutionaries also dressed as men). González-Pagés's argument lacks rigor in parsing out the differences between women who disguised themselves as men in order to accomplish professional or personal goals otherwise unattainable for them and gender-nonconforming individuals who, like Favez, presented themselves and self-identified as the opposite gender consistently throughout their lives. For example, González-Pagés places James Barry (1789/99?–1865), a British surgeon who lived and died as a man and never disclosed his

[55] Pancrazio, *Enriqueta Faber*, 12.
[56] Ibid., 47.

assigned sex at birth, and Luisa Capetillo (1879–1922), the Puerto Rican radical feminist who was arrested in 1915 for walking the streets of Havana dressed in masculine attire for the purpose of advancing gender equality, in the same category of "women dressed as men." But unlike Capetillo, Favez never turned his case into an argument for the advancement of women. He did not say that his longing to be a man resulted from his desire for an education, and not once did he argue that his trial could have been avoided if women had the possibility of being surgeons and going to war. On the contrary, Favez explained on numerous occasions that from a young age he felt a strong inclination toward masculine manners, and he described the harassment and suffering he endured as a result: "I have suffered indignities and other afflictions attributable only to the vigor of my naturally strange character, with which nature endowed me, singling me out for one of the many phenomena of feminine passions and giving me a strong propensity for masculine manners."[57] Accounts that frame his story as one of many instances of women dressed as men disregard Favez's more complex self-understanding and confine him to the biological and social boundaries that he so vehemently rejected.

The effort to feminize Favez is clearest in one of the last sections of González-Pagés's book: "Un rostro para Enriqueta Favez" (A face for Enriqueta Favez).[58] In it, González-Pagés explains that as part of his research in 2009 he worked with the National Revolutionary Police of Cuba to produce several portraits of Favez through the combination of available descriptions of Favez and modern facial recognition techniques.[59] After a detailed account of the methods followed to re-create Favez's face as accurately as possible, González-Pagés presents three images. Reading the book, I had been waiting eagerly for the results and was surprised when confronted with them. The images show a young woman with pale smooth skin, soft features, and—in two out of the three depictions—carefully groomed blond hair. I was disappointed to see that, once again, the sex that Favez was assigned at birth had prevailed, even in the context of a narrative that recounts his desire to not be seen that way. But I was particularly stunned by the fact that Favez seemed to have also undergone some sort of beautification procedure, or at the very least a kind of historical face peel. The face that stared back at me from the page bore little resemblance to the unattractive, smallpox-scarred person whom his contemporaries had described.[60] Despite González-Pagés's explicit emphasis on scientific techniques, some of Favez's

[57] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 71.

[58] Ibid., 98–108.

[59] Ibid., 98–104.

[60] For example, on 21 April 1820 Nicolás del Valle and Lorenzo Fernández, both colleagues of Favez in the Protomedicato, described Enrique in their joint deposition as "a native of Switzerland, four-feet-and-ten-inches tall, white in color, blue eyes, a small forehead, blond hair and eyebrows. Lumpy nose, small mouth, clean-shaven, with many pockmarks from smallpox, 25 years of age, religion Roman Catholic" (ibid., 28).

most salient characteristics—such as the scars on his face—were erased in order to produce a more attractive and feminine version of his appearance.

González-Pagés carefully details the history of how facial identification methods have been used in criminology.[61] He is thus well aware of what Benjamin Singer calls "the collusion of the medical gaze with the criminological project," which in the nineteenth century linked specific physical traits to criminal deviance.[62] Nevertheless, González-Pagés shows not a hint of irony when he describes his use of these same procedures in order to (re)produce Favez's portrait. The resulting images provide evidence that 190 years after the trial another panel of experts was policing Favez's appearance—except that this time, instead of accentuating the traits that in Favez's time would have shown his depravity and criminal nature, the Revolutionary Police strove to give Favez a face as far removed as possible from that of a criminal or a monster: the face of a white woman. Despite the hard work and good intentions of González-Pagés and the police experts involved in this arduous process, the resulting image of Favez is not that different from the judge's sentence that Enrique wear "the correct dress for her sex."[63]

The images in González-Pagés's book provide evidence that the Cuban historian sees Favez as a woman and asks us to do the same. However, these portraits can be more productive if we look at them through the lens of Jay Prosser's reading of autobiographical pictures of transsexual people. Prosser argues that because photos of transsexual individuals—particularly those in transition—denaturalize the gender binary and contest notions of bodily normalcy, they pose important questions not so much about the bodies on display as about the gaze that looks at them. Therefore, the most important question these pictures pose is, "How do we look?, where 'look,' as Teresa de Lauretis has suggested in the context of lesbian and gay film theory, should be heard as both transitive and intransitive verb. That is, how we look at the other and what look our own bodies cast to the world. How is our reading of the transsexual invested in and produced by our own gendered and sexual subject positioning, our own identifications and desires?"[64] Enrique did not have the opportunity to legally change his name or to undergo any kind of procedure that would have helped his body match what I have taken to be his preferred identity. We do not know if he would have wanted to do so. There is also no way to know whether he would have remained a woman if he had been allowed to study medicine, go to war, and marry Juana as a woman. But it is important to acknowledge that we are not that

[61] Ibid., 99–101.

[62] Benjamin Singer, "From the Medical Gaze to Sublime Mutations: The Ethics of (Re)Viewing Non-normative Body Images," in Stryker and Whittle, *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 604.

[63] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 85.

[64] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 223.

far removed from the tribunal that judged Favez to be only a monster or an impostor so many years ago. In other words, it is important to reflect on what Enrique's story says about us and about our understanding of gender and sexuality as historical identity categories. In this sense, my analysis of Favez's trial aligns with what Laura Doan calls queer critical history by supporting her argument that gender and sexuality as categories for historical analysis are particularly productive due to their "capacity to pose questions rather than provide answers about sexual identities we already [think we] know."[65] Therefore, more than establishing transhistorical continuities that contribute to trans, lesbian, or queer genealogies, I am interested in the potential that queerness as methodology—not only as epistemology—has to illuminate unexplored or obscured aspects of the past and the present and "to enact new futures."[66]

Despite the indisputable legal and social advances of the past decades, recent events in the United States reveal the persistence of beliefs that people whose gender identity does not match the assigned sex at birth are deceitfully "dressing up" as a man or a woman.[67] Narrating Favez's life as the adventures and misfortunes of a woman dressed as a man, as González-Pagés and Pancrazio have done, flattens the complexity of his story, reproduces misconceptions about gender-nonconforming individuals, and misses the opportunity to articulate a more complex historical understanding of gender and sexuality. Susan Stryker's work is exemplary in this regard. She has explored the long and complex history of how individuals who do not conform to sexual and gender conventions have been described as deviant and monstrous. However, she appropriates the slur and lays claim to it, appealing to "the dark power of [this] monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself."[68] Since for Stryker "language . . . is the scalpel that defines our flesh," this resignifica-

[65] Laura Doan, *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 90.

[66] Ibid., 23. Doan's understanding of queer critical history requires the difficult yet productive "disentangle[ment of] queerness-as-method from queerness-as-being" (ibid., xii).

[67] I am referring to tangible advances not only in legislation and access to public services but also in public recognition. Examples of this new visibility of trans people include the cover of *Time Magazine* dedicated to transgender actress Laverne Cox; the success that put Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* on the best-seller list of the *New York Times*; the visibility provided to transgender issues by Caitlyn Jenner through her reality show *I Am Cait* and her moving speech at the Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly Award ceremony in 2015; and Sarah McBride's historic address at the Democratic National Convention in 2016. Recent cases in popular culture in the United States include Caleb Hannan's infamous article in the sports magazine *Grantland*, "Dr. V's Magic Putter," 15 January 2014, http://grantland.com/features/a-mysterious-physicist-golf-club-dr-v/; Kevin D. Williamson's op-ed piece, "Laverne Cox Is Not a Real Woman" in the *National Review*, 30 May 2014, http://www.nationalreview.com/article/379188/laverne-cox-not-woman-kevin-d-williamson; and the interview with Laverne Cox and Carmen Carrera on *The Katie Couric Show*, 9 January 2014, Disney/ABC.

[68] Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein," 246.

tion process is rooted in a profound reworking of what she calls the phallogocentric structures of language.[69]

So what's in a name? How should we talk about Favez? From where or how should we look at him? Was Favez a brave soldier, a skilled doctor, a perverted impostor, a feminist pioneer, a skillful impersonator, an impious woman, a trans pioneer, a monster? Was he all of these things at once, or perhaps none of them? One might also ask whether our anxiety (or at least mine) to find the "right" pronoun or name is simply problematic in itself. I do not know. But I want to end with this sense of discomfort about language, looking, and naming and with the hope that we can manage to make our language and our laws more welcoming, more effective and affective, less obsessed with examining people and declaring them male or female. I would like to argue, in other words, that we should go back to the trial and embrace its linguistic ambiguity and instability as productive chaos; that we push the boundaries of our language and critically examine the multiple and often conflicting regulating discourses and desires that inform it; that, as Stryker suggests, we make language more monstrous in the hope of opening up a space for diverse ways of mobilizing desire, identities, and bodies. I want to end with the hope that, after so many years, we will finally stop putting Favez on trial and instead take Jay Prosser's questions seriously: "How do you look? What do you see here? And what does what you see here reveal about you?"[70]

About the Author

Juliana Martínez is assistant professor in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at American University, Washington, DC. She focuses on the intersection of body politics and violence in the Latin American and US Latino context. Her two main areas of research are gender and sexuality, particularly transgender studies, within the Latin American and US Latino context and the representation of historical violence in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Latin American cultural production. Professor Martínez is also associated faculty at the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program, and she is affiliated with the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS) at the same institution.

[69] Ibid., 253.
[70] Prosser, *Second Skins*, 234.

Typesetter: Please insert a line's space between the date and the start of the first letter as is done with the second letter.

Appendix

I provide here the full text of the two letters that, according to González-Pagés, Favez wrote to Juana after his exile:

New Orleans, 20 August 1824.
Juana my love:

I am already very far from you as I promised before our disgrace began. . . . I don't know how it all began, my whole life has really been like a novel. That journey to the Island of Cuba did not allow me to stay the same woman, or rather the same man. I still keep the smell of the sea, the screams of the people who passed by me, the insults, Juana's fear that they would discover us.

I am about to embark on the last of my journeys, and all these papers remind me of a scandalous past of which I do not repent and hope you do not either. Juana, I don't know if we will be able to see each other again someday, but I am sure that if we did, I would be willing again to suffer at your side.

Loving you,
Enrique[71]

Nueva Orleans, 23 May 1846.

Juana my love:

I cannot believe that what they tell me is true. You cannot have died without me seeing you, my life will end if I do not have the hope of reliving the happiest days of my life, which were at your side.

I never blamed you for what happened, it was all those who did not understand that we loved each other in spite of everything.
I just wish that what they tell me is a lie; please write to me, if only to know that you are alive.

If you die, a part of me will die, the best part of all, I swear that I will no longer be [able to be] the same. Please give me some sign of life.

Loving you,
Enrique[72]

[71] González-Pagés, *Por andar vestida de hombre*, 96.
[72] Ibid., 97.