

Sex, Identity and Hermaphrodites in Iberia, 1500–1800. Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García.

The Body, Gender and Culture 16. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013. ix + 214 pp. \$99.

In this book, Richard Cleminson and Francisco Vázquez García present comparative research into hermaphroditism in Spain and Portugal over the years 1500 to 1800. They explore discourses on hermaphroditism and sex change in both

countries, as well as the medical, legal, philosophical, cultural, and theological frameworks where these discourses were inserted. Cleminson and Vázquez García elaborate on the ideas of the most influential intellectuals in the field, from Foucault and Laqueur to Joan Cadden and Katharine Park, and propose the existence of a sexual ancien régime that coexisted with other socioeconomic expressions of the old regime. Within this framework, modeled upon the medical theories of Hippocrates/Galen and Aristotle, as well as upon popular belief and theological thought, sex functioned as rank, and nature was inserted into a transcendent order. Differences between men and women were not based on biology but on social performativity. This allowed ambiguity and mobility between the sexes, with hermaphrodites being understood not as monstrosities, but as intermediaries situated in the middle of the sex spectrum. At the same time, their existence was subject to severe religious and legal restrictions, challenging the idea that the early modern period was a golden age for hermaphrodites in Europe.

Formally, the book is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 shows how the categories of the marvelous, the magical, and the miraculous operated in the context of Spanish medical and juridical discourses on hermaphroditism. Chapter 2 presents four case studies on hermaphrodites and masculinized women in Spain for the period 1530–1688. Their examination reveals the absence of differences between hermaphroditism and sex change, on one hand, and transvestism, on the other. The inclusion of Catalina de Erauso, a crossed-dressed woman soldier who fought in South America, allows the authors to connect the Spanish context with concurrent ideas in Latin America. Chapter 3 explores how the above-mentioned sexual ancien régime disappeared progressively following the emergence of modern science and the social changes related to the age of Enlightenment. Cleminson and Vázquez García identify three connected processes that affected the sexual old regime in the specific case of hermaphroditism: the naturalization of the monster, the development of modern legal medicine, and the biological basis of sexual difference. These processes led to the disappearance of hermaphroditism: from that moment, it would be considered incompatible with humanity, and cases of apparent hermaphroditism would fall in the category of medical anomalies. Finally, chapter 4 focuses on hermaphroditism in Portugal, including the study of several cases of hermaphroditism and sexual transgression from the 1500s up to the end of the seventeenth century, and the analysis of the thought of philosophers, medical doctors, and theologians. Cleminson and Vázquez García conclude that the Portuguese views on hermaphroditism do not differ substantially from their Spanish counterparts, although the Portuguese medical authorities became a very important influence on European medical thought.

The topic of hermaphroditism in early modern Europe has been the object of study of numerous scholars in the last few decades, either on its own or as a part of general studies on monstrosity. Most of these studies focus on England, France, Germany, and Italy, and very little attention has been paid to hermaphroditism in Spain and Portugal. Therefore, the study conducted in this volume is an important contribution to the field,

especially because of the comparative nature of the research and its innovative focus on an Iberian context. In this sense, it is a book of interest for historians and philosophers of science, as well as for scholars who specialize in Spanish and Portuguese studies and wish to deepen their knowledge on the topics of hermaphroditism, sex change, and transvestism in the early modern period.

JOSÉ PABLO BARRAGÁN, *University of Iowa*