The Confederate Amazon

Loreta Velazquez a.k.a. Lieutenant Harry T. Buford: A case study of Cross-Dressing in Nineteenth Century America

These [a half dozen fine wire mesh shields] I wore next to my skin, and they proved very satisfactory in concealing my true form, and in giving me something of the shape of a man, while they were by no means uncomfortable. Over the shields I wore an undershirt of silk or lisle thread, which fitted close, and which was held in place by straps across the chest and shoulders, similar to the shoulder-braces sometimes worn by men. —Loreta Janeta Velazquez

This quote describes the undergarments worn by Loreta Janeta Velazquez to hide her female form while serving in the Confederate Army as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Women soldiers were commonplace during and in the years shortly following the Civil War. Mary Livermore, a nurse for the Union Army, discussed female soldiers in her memoir published after the war. Many newspaper articles also featured stories of women soldiers during and following the Civil War, including one newspaper, Chicago’s The Daily Inter-Ocean, which featured an article on Velazquez. Women soldiers broke cultural gender norms and defied gender expectations by assuming male aliases. Velazquez was no different. Velazquez shattered gender norms and claimed her own independence by taking a male alias and serving in the American Civil War. She wrote her experiences, critiqued nineteenth-century gender roles, and related her personal feelings of pride associated with serving in the Civil War in her memoir, The Woman in Battle: A Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures, and Travels of Madame Loreta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army, originally published in 1876.
Velazquez questioned the restrictions of femininity from a very young age. She discussed her wish to have been born a man from childhood because if she had been a man she would have had the opportunity to explore and discover the world.\(^4\) Velazquez then related the first major defiance of a cultural gender norm of her Spanish heritage, her refusal of the marriage which her parents arranged.\(^5\) The commencement of the American Civil War marked an opportunity for Velazquez to fulfill her lifelong wish for adventure through breaking gender norms and posing as a male soldier.

Velazquez was determined to enter the American Civil War as a soldier. She was prepared to, and ultimately did, outright defy her husband’s wishes for her to stay out of the war.\(^6\) She then prepared her disguise as a male Lieutenant in the Confederate Army.\(^7\) Velazquez sought to embody the entire male role so as not to attract attention to herself, including flirting with and courting women during her years as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford.\(^8\)

Posing as a man was not easy and had serious repercussions for women who were caught imitating male soldiers and officers. In her memoir Velazquez discussed her fears of being caught and the careful concealment of her true identity as a woman.\(^9\) In one instance, the mayor of New Orleans discovered Velazquez to be a woman. The mayor subsequently fined and jailed Velazquez.\(^10\) Velazquez valued her new found freedom and she had initially planned to recruit her own battalion to be under her command during The Civil War. After realizing that these troops would limit her freedom to serve on the frontlines, she gave the battalion to a different lieutenant and went on her own way in the war. She kept with this tradition of personal freedom to go where she pleased throughout her service in the Civil War.\(^11\)

Velazquez continued her opposition to gender roles through writing her memoir. In her memoir she critiqued nineteenth-century gender norms.\(^12\) It was not always easy for Velazquez
to defy and break these traditional roles prescribed to her by society. She described how difficult it was to separate from her long hair and mentions an instance where she resumed female dress for a short time. In the end, Velazquez did not let these challenges break her determination for adventure. Velazquez broke through Victorian Era gender roles and claimed her personal freedom by serving as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford in the Civil War. Velazquez further critiqued feminine gender roles in her memoir, *The Woman in Battle*.

Through Velazquez’s service in the Civil War she gained a certain amount of personal pride in her accomplishments. Velazquez used the Civil War as a launching board into defying gender roles and expectations of the Victorian Era by assuming the alias of Harry T. Buford. Velazquez secured both her freedom and a sense of pride in her accomplishments through her service to the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Secondary sources about Velazquez are fairly limited in their analysis. Instead, authors focus on various narratives featured in Velazquez’s memoir. *Stealing Secrets: How a Few Daring Women Deceived Generals, Impacted Battles, and Altered the Course of the Civil War*, published in 2010 by H. Donald Winkler, includes women who helped on both sides of the war—dressed, mostly, as women. Although Winkler devotes a chapter to Velazquez, he does not analyze her decisions or motivations, but simply tells a narrative of Velazquez’s exploits during the war. He does not call attention to Velazquez’s violation of gender norms in order to do so; he also completely ignores Velazquez’s critique of nineteenth-century femininity.

Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, the authors of *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* published in 1995, call attention to the ways in which women soldiers violated gender norms to serve in the American Civil War, specifically mentioning Velazquez. However, they only devote a page and a half to women who served as soldiers in the Civil War and do not go into any in-
depth analysis of women who served in the Civil War. They leave their argument undefended and underdeveloped.

This trend of very little analysis continues with *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, written by Elizabeth D. Leonard and published in 1999. In her section devoted to Loreta Velazquez, Leonard begins with a brief narrative of Velazquez’s experiences during the war and follows with a section on the objections to Velazquez’s memoir by various members of the American public after Velazquez’s memoir by various members of the American public after Velazquez its publication. One of these people was Jubal Early, a former General in the Confederate army. Early wrote a letter in 1878 to Congressman W. F. Slemons claiming that Velazquez’s *The Woman in Battle* was completely fictitious.

Leonard writes:

> Early argued that even if *The Woman in Battle* were presented as a work of pure fiction, it would be one which Southerners should consider libelous, and he went on to detail the many aspects of the book that defied both history and good common sense, at the same time raising serious questions about Velazquez’s moral integrity.¹⁴

Early seemed to be more outraged at the fact that a woman could have possibly done all that Velazquez claimed to have done, than Velazquez actually serving as a soldier. He frequently mentions how Velazquez was not a “true type of Southern woman.”¹⁵ Early seems very threatened by the masculinity embodied by Velazquez in *The Woman in Battle* and responds by saying Velazquez’s accounts could never be true.¹⁶

In *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy*, published in 1943, Bell Irvin Wiley writes about soldier life in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Wiley focuses a lot of attention on the everyday camp-life, the beginning of the war, enlisting soldiers, hardships of the war, and the battles of the Civil War. In the concluding chapter of this book, Wiley writes two paragraphs about women soldiers, including very limited information on
Loreta Velazquez. Throughout the rest of his book, Wiley absolutely ignores women soldiers. In the section where Wiley does mention Velazquez, he calls into question whether or not she even served or played any role in the Civil War saying, “If Madame Velasquez’s [sic] account be true, her career was indeed a phenomenal one; if it be false, she deserves high rating as a fictionist.”

Although very informational, these sources provide little to no analysis of Loreta Janeta Velazquez. They simply narrate her adventures during, and sometimes following, the Civil War. This paper will delve further into the analysis of Velazquez and her entry into the Confederate Army of the Civil War. When these authors do pose an argument, it tends to be for the purpose of discrediting Velazquez’s experiences during the war, such as is seen in All the Daring of the Soldier and The Life of Johnny Reb. This paper accepts that Velazquez did serve in the Confederate Army as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. This paper strives to relate some of Velazquez’s experiences before and during the Civil War for the purpose of examining the ways in which Velazquez defied and fought traditional roles placed on women.

Although Lillian Faderman’s book To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America – A History, published in 1999, is not focused on women soldiers in the Civil War Faderman gives a clear view of nineteenth-century gender roles. To Believe in Women is focused on lesbian partners who played a major role in the advancement of women in America. This book also discusses how these women contributed to America through challenging feminine gender roles. Faderman states that her work varies from previous historical scholarship by focusing “on how certain late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women whose lives can be described as lesbian were in the forefront of the battle to procure the rights and privileges that large numbers of Americans enjoy today.” Through her discussion of lesbians breaking American gender norms information can be gathered as to the ways in which Velazquez broke
Victorian era gender norms and the difficulties faced by women who subverted these gender roles.

Anya Jabour’s essay entitled “Southern Ladies and She-Rebels; or, Femininity in the Foxhole” is about southern manners and ideals of southern women. In this essay Jabour discusses the ways in which manners and submissiveness create the ideal southern women. This essay will give insight into the reasons that Velazquez felt the need to explain why she had dressed as a man and joined the Confederate army.

Stephen Berry’s book, *All that Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* also does not cover the subject of women soldiers, but it does discuss the ways in which men and women interacted during the Civil War. For the purposes of this paper, it was useful to include this source as a reference when discussing Velazquez’s flirtations and courtships. Berry claims that his historical scholarship varies from previous scholarship by emphasizing “the fact that they were men.” He goes on to state about the outbreak of the Civil War, “more immediately it was a test of manhood, a test an appalling number welcomed as an opportunity finally to measure up to their own standards for themselves.” This source will provide support for the decision Velazquez made to complete her disguise by flirting with and courting other women.

This research began with looking at male impersonation in the 1800s. Suzanne Caro, a librarian at Mansfield Library, mentioned a woman doctor who served in the Civil War and this led to specific women who served as men in the Civil War. It was immediately fascinating and a search on Worldcat led to the only two memoirs published by women who served as soldiers in the Civil War, those of Loreta Janeta Velazquez and Sarah Emma Edmonds Seelye. These memoirs varied considerably, and the research was narrowed to one memoir; the memoir of Velazquez—originally published in 1876.
As stated in the introduction, this paper will address the ways in which Loreta Janeta Velazquez questioned and rebelled against gender norms in order to quench her thirst for adventure and discovery. This paper will highlight the ways in which she critiqued the treatment of women in the writing of her memoir and the challenges that came along with the strong defiance of society’s expectations based on her gender. The beginning of this paper is devoted to establishing that women soldiers were commonplace during the Civil War. This will include a quote from Mary Livermore, a nurse in the Union Army, and various articles from newspapers which were published from the dates of 1861 until 1898.

After this brief introduction to women soldiers, this paper will delve into the memoir of Velazquez. Velazquez wrote her memoir entirely from memory due to the loss of her notes during the course of the Civil War. This is bound to affect the factual accuracy of the sequence of events related throughout her memoir. Velazquez openly admits this in the “Author’s Prefatory Notice” placed in the beginning of her memoir. She states, “The loss of my notes has compelled me to rely entirely upon my memory; and memory is apt to be very treacherous, especially when, after a number of years, one endeavors to relate in their proper sequence a long series of complicated transactions.” Many readers of Velazquez’s memoir opposed, discounted, or denied the accuracy of the narratives contained in the memoir. As related in All the Daring of the Soldier, Jubal Early was an opponent of Velazquez’s memoir shortly after it was published. In 1878 Early wrote a letter to Congressman W. F. Slemons saying that he believed Velazquez’s account to be complete fiction. Bell Irvin Wiley also doubts Velazquez’s accounts in The Life of Johnny Reb when he briefly mentions women soldiers. He states, “a story so remarkable as to create doubt of its authenticity is that of one Madame Loreta Velasquez [sic] as told by
herself."\textsuperscript{23} Despite the opposition to Velazquez's memoir, H. Donald Winkler acknowledges in Stealing Secrets that Velazquez's entire memoir could not have been complete fiction:

The accuracy of Loreta's memoir continues to be an issue with scholars. Some claim it is all fiction, but in doing so ignore a newspaper report about the arrest of a Lieutenant Bensford (undoubtedly Buford) when it was discovered that he was actually a woman. The article gives her name as Alice Williams, one of the aliases Loreta used.\textsuperscript{24}

Winkler then goes on to write that Velazquez's memoir is complex enough that it would be difficult to make-up and cites a 2007 program on the History Channel which presented Velazquez's account as factual.\textsuperscript{25} Winkler does concede that the two men who could have "verified" Velazquez's memoir, Brig. Gen. John H Winder and Col. Lafayette Baker, died before Velazquez published her memoir.\textsuperscript{26} Despite reader's opposition and denial of the factual accuracy of Velazquez's memoir, this memoir does portray Velazquez's personal experiences of the American Civil War.

This paper does not strive to tell historical events in order relating to Velazquez's Confederate service. It strives to portray Velazquez's deliberate refusal of gender norms in order to claim her own personal freedom and the ways in which she critiqued women's role in everyday life. This memoir is a reflection of the way Velazquez personally experienced the war and the ways in which she chose to portray herself to the American public. This paper will show the ways Velazquez defied nineteenth century gender roles and took control of her independence by serving as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford during the American Civil War.

The American public knew of various women soldiers during and shortly following the Civil War. Mary A. Livermore served as a nurse in the Union Army estimated a number amount relating to women soldiers who served for the Union Army in her memoir, My Story of The War:
A Woman’s Narrative of Four Years of Personal Experience as Nurse in the Union Army, and in Relief Work at Home, in Hospitals, Camps, and at the Front, During The War of the Rebellion:

Some one [sic] has stated a number amount of woman soldiers known to the service as little less than four hundred. I cannot vouch for the correctness of this estimate, but I am convinced that a larger number of women disguised themselves and enlisted in the service, for one cause or other, than was dreamed of.\textsuperscript{27}

This quote along with several newspaper articles, which featured articles on women soldiers during and after the Civil War, shows that women soldiers were fairly commonplace during and briefly following the war. Two newspapers published several articles in 1861. The Daily Cleveland Herald ran two articles in 1861, one in October and one in November. Both of these articles featured women who had been found out for their sex during the early portion of the war.\textsuperscript{28} The Ripley Bee, based out of Ripley, Ohio, also featured an article entitled “The Woman Soldier” in August of 1861. This article featured the army’s discovery and imprisonment of a woman who disguised herself as a man and served as a soldier.\textsuperscript{29}

Newspapers continued to publish articles on women soldiers who participated in the Civil War several decades after the war’s end. The Chicago Tribune, Chicago, Illinois; The Congregationalist, Boston, Massachusetts; The Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles, California; and The Morning Oregonian, Portland, Oregon each featured at least one article on women soldiers ranging in publication dates from 1888 until 1898.\textsuperscript{30} An article featured in Chicago’s The Daily Inter-Ocean in 1874, two years prior to the publication of her memoir, focused on Loreta Janeta Velazquez and her service in the Civil War.\textsuperscript{31} The American public knew of women soldiers, including Loreta Janeta Velazquez, during and briefly after the Civil War; newspapers featured countless articles from all areas of the United States. These women challenged nineteenth-century gender roles by serving as male soldiers in the Civil War. Women soldiers subverted traditional gender roles by assuming male identities. In Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender,
Bullough and Bullough claim "many women still found the easiest way to escape their restrictive assigned role was to pass as a man rather than to fight what they believed to be an almost impossible battle against male prejudice."\textsuperscript{32}

Velazquez opposed gender norms prescribed to women from childhood. Velazquez's service as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford on the side of the Confederacy during the American Civil War enabled Velazquez to lead a life of adventure, but she began questioning gender roles long before this. Velazquez began questioning gender roles from a very young age. Velazquez discussed in her memoir her wishes from childhood to have been born a man. Velazquez explained how she "was especially haunted with the idea of being a man," in the first chapter of her memoir. She wished to be a man such as Christopher Columbus because she would be free to "discover new worlds, or explore unknown regions of the earth."\textsuperscript{33} Velazquez associated being a man with personal freedom and the chance for adventure. Lillian Faderman, in \textit{To Believe in Women}, claims many women "envied the broader freedoms of young men of their class."\textsuperscript{34} Although Faderman was referring to women of the nineteenth-century wanting access to higher education, this desire for freedom also applied to Velazquez. This wish was only the beginning of Velazquez's challenges to and questioning of traditional femininity.

Velazquez not only wished she were a man, she openly admitted this to readers of her memoir. Velazquez wrote of her earliest account when she actually broke a gender norm through her decision to marry her first husband. She wrote of the time she refused an arranged marriage, a tradition of her Spanish heritage.\textsuperscript{35} Velazquez's parents had arranged her marriage with a man by the name of Raphael, but Velazquez questioned the authority of her parents to arrange this marriage and soon rebelled. "A marriage by parental arrangement was the last thing in the world to suit a scatter-brained, romantic girl like myself, whose head was filled with all sorts of wild
notions, and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that I rebelled."\textsuperscript{36} Although she blamed being "scatter-brained" and "romantic" for breaking from this tradition, she later mentions how American girls told her that in a "free country" a woman "could not be compelled to marry any particular man if she did not choose to do so."\textsuperscript{37} This appears to be the main reason for Velazquez to break her parents' arrangement.\textsuperscript{38} She claimed some personal freedom by marrying the man of her own choosing, which marked her first break away from culturally forced gender roles.

Velazquez wrote of her wishes to have been born a man, her appetite for adventure, and The American Civil War provided Velazquez with a way to fulfill these desires, but only by breaking nineteenth-century gender roles. Velazquez desired to break through "the cult of true womanhood" and Faderman explained this as "the nineteenth century's version of the feminine mystique," which, "worked to convince women that their families needed their total attention, and that to spend her life providing such undivided attention should render any true woman happy."\textsuperscript{39} Velazquez refused this notion of femininity and was determined to fight in the American Civil War.

Velazquez had to assume a male identity in order to serve in the Confederate Army. Her first order of business was to try to convince her husband that she should serve alongside him, but she was prepared to defy him if he opposed her entry into the war. Velazquez's husband fervently opposed her entry into the army and tried to convince her of the evils of men by dressing her as a man and taking her to various bars. On this first time out in public as a man, Velazquez's husband provided her with one of his suits and they left for a night in the bars with other men waiting for the coming war. He thought that Velazquez would hate the way men acted out of women's sight and was sure that this plan would convince his wife to stay home from the
war. Velazquez planned the deception of her husband before ever approaching the subject of war with him. Velazquez was extremely dedicated to the Confederate cause. She wrote in her memoir: “I was perfectly wild on the subject of war; and although I did not tell my husband so, I was resolved to forsake him if he raised his sword against the South.” She did not outline all of her reasons for supporting the Confederacy so fiercely, but wrote on her plan to enter the Confederate Army at all costs:

Having decided to enter the Confederate service as a soldier, I desired, if possible, to obtain my husband’s consent, but he would not listen to anything I had to say on the subject; and all I could do was to wait his departure for the seat of war, in order to put my plans into execution without his knowledge, as I felt that it would be useless to argue with him, although I was obstinately bent upon realizing the dream of my life, whether he approved of my course or not.

Velazquez alluded to more than just a simple allegiance to the Confederacy in this quote. When Velazquez wrote of the dream of her life, this dream did not apply to the Confederacy. The dream Velazquez was relaying was her dream of being a man and leading the exciting life of an explorer. This proves that the Civil War provided the launching pad for Velazquez’s life of adventure. While providing an opportunity for Velazquez to gain personal freedom, Velazquez still needed a complete disguise to assume the role of a Confederate soldier.

Velazquez’s disguise as a man was a multi-faceted process involving both her disguise and learning to flirt with women. The first part of Velazquez’s entry into the Confederacy, as well as her entry into actively breaking gender norms, was to hide her sex and disguise herself as a man. Velazquez wrote about her disguise, the hardships and emotional experiences in having to
hide her sex, and her fear of being discovered. She dedicated many pages of her memoir to outlining the specifications of hiding her sex.

The first step Velazquez took towards her identity as a Confederate officer was to buy a Confederate uniform. Velazquez had a tailor make her a Confederate Uniform before she left for New Orleans. Until reaching New Orleans she wore padding underneath her suit to give her the build of a man, "but the padding was very uncomfortable, and [she] soon made up [her] mind that it would never do for a permanent arrangement." Velazquez hired a tailor to make her a half dozen thin, wire mesh shields. She layered these shields next to her skin and placed an undershirt of either silk or lisle over the mesh shields; all of this was held in place by straps which were similar to the shoulder-braces that would have been used by men during this time period. She remarked in her memoir, "A great many officers in the Confederate army have seen the impressions of these straps through my shirt when I have had my coat off, and have supposed them to be shoulder-braces." Velazquez not only had to change her style of dress in order to give off the impression of a man; she also visited a barber. She had her hair styled in a man's style and had a male friend help her with her transformation by teaching her to walk and present herself in a masculine manner.

Velazquez completed her disguise by embodying the entire male role. This embodiment included learning to court and flirt with ladies, which she often did. Velazquez recalls a number of women who she flirted with or courted during the War in her memoir. If Velazquez had not romantically interacted with women, she would have attracted attention to herself. She was posing as a single officer of the Confederacy and was surrounded by soldiers who were constantly flirting with or courting women. Velazquez wrote about quite a few flirtations with women throughout the Civil War.
Velazquez wrote of the first time she indulged in flirting with women during her service as a Confederate soldier. Velazquez wrote about flirting with a girl who lived in Arkansas. This girl initiated the flirtation and Velazquez described her decision to participate in this flirtation by writing:

I had some curiosity to know how love-making went from the masculine standpoint, and thought that the present would be a good opportunity to gain some valuable experience in that line; for it occurred to me that if I was to figure successfully [sic] in the role of a dashing young Confederate officer, it would be necessary for me to learn how to make myself immensely agreeable to the ladies... I flatter myself that during the time I passed for a man I was tolerably successful with the women; and I had not a few curious and most amusing adventures, which gave me an insight into some of the peculiarities of feminine human nature which had not impressed themselves on my mind before, perhaps because I was a woman.\(^47\)

According to Stephen Berry in *All that Makes a Man*, "a woman was not merely to be courted, as the saying went, but wooed and won."\(^48\) Although this flirtation with the girl from Arkansas was very short-lived, Velazquez claimed that it was "immensely amusing" and it allowed her to learn useful ideas in wooing women.\(^49\) This showed how Velazquez played the role of a man convincingly, adding to her disguise. Berry states, "men believed that women were supposed to bear witness to male becoming, to cheer men to greatness, and to comfort them along the way."\(^50\) Velazquez needed to prove that she was able to win women’s hearts portraying a nineteenth-century masculine ideal.

Velazquez engaged in many flirtations and a few courtships over the course of the Civil War, but the most serious was with a woman from Memphis. Phil, a soldier friend of Velazquez, introduced Velazquez to this woman, whom Velazquez called "Miss M." in her memoir. Phil decided that Velazquez should accompany him to visit Miss M. and her sister. During the course of this visit, and the subsequent visits, Miss M. developed feeling for Velazquez. At first, Velazquez tried to talk up her friend Phil, but this proved useless. Miss M. was absolutely set on
the affections of the man she thought to be Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Velazquez told Phil about Miss M.'s feelings, reassuring Phil that she did not return Miss M.'s feelings. Phil tried once more to win over Miss M., but Miss M. was still set on Harry Buford.  

After leaving Memphis, Velazquez and Phil left for the Battle of Shiloh where Union forces killed Phil. Velazquez came back to camp after the battle and found she had received a letter from Miss M. Velazquez admitted to both the humor of this situation and the remorse she had for having let this courtship go on for so long and for having stolen Miss M. from Phil:

I could not help laughing a little as I read it, and yet I felt really sorry for the writer, and reproached myself for having permitted my flirtation with her to go to the length it did. The case was a particularly sad one, for the reason that the man who loved her devotedly, and who would doubtless in time have succeeded in curing her of her misplaced affections for the fictitious Lieutenant Buford, was among the slain at Shiloh.

These courtships were the perfect conclusion to Velazquez's disguise. They diverted prying eyes of the men who served alongside or traveled with Velazquez. These flirtations aided Velazquez in keeping her sex hidden from others during the Civil War. Though Velazquez needed to engage in these flirtations for the purposes of passing as a man, she realized the women she flirted with and courted sometimes developed very real feelings for Velazquez. Velazquez felt remorse for the attachment these women developed for her, but realized that flirtations and courtships solidified her identity as a man. Velazquez needed a solid male identity to cover her true identity as a woman; if she were discovered as a woman she knew she would face punishment from the legal system.

Velazquez discussed multiple times in her memoir of instances when she was afraid of being discovered as a woman. She was terribly frightened of what would happen to her if her disguise was found out by anyone. In an instance when Velazquez felt her mustache coming loose in the middle of a dinner party, she described her feelings in this passage:
To say that I was frightened, scarcely gives an idea of the cold chills that ran down my back. The ridicule of my entertainers, and especially of Miss Sadie, was the least thing that I feared, and I would rather brave any number of perils at the cannon’s mouth than to repeat the emotions of that dreadful moment. Such a situation as this is ludicrous enough, but it was not a bit funny for me at that time; and I was on pins and needles until I could get away, and take means to secure the mustache firmly on again.\textsuperscript{54}

Velazquez’s fear of discovery was well founded. A woman could be fined and jailed for posing as a man. Velazquez experienced this punishment first hand while she was on a visit to New Orleans. The first instance in which her sex was suspected, and then discovered, was on a trip to New Orleans. A Confederate officer arrested Velazquez and took her to the mayor of New Orleans. Velazquez fought the charges at first, but after some time she decided it was best to tell the mayor that she was indeed a woman. After she confessed to the mayor, she hoped that he would let her go free, but the mayor had other plans for Velazquez. Women of the nineteenth-century were expected to be feminine and virtuous. Berry mentioned these virtues in his quote, “It has been suggested, for instance, that men of the nineteenth-century wanted their wives to be pure, pious, domestic, and submissive.”\textsuperscript{55} Velazquez’s masculine behavior seemed to disgust the mayor and so he imposed a fairly harsh punishment. The mayor of New Orleans fined Velazquez ten dollars and sentenced her to ten days in jail.\textsuperscript{56}

Velazquez was angry about the mayor’s decision and reported her feeling in her memoir:

I thought that this was pretty rough treatment, considering all that I had done to serve the Confederacy. From the outbreak of the war I had been on active duty in the face of the enemy, and had taken part in some of the hardest fought battles in the war, while my persecutor had remained at home enjoying his ease, and taking good care to keep out of danger.\textsuperscript{57}

Velazquez was not deterred from her quest to defy gender roles and find adventure through serving in the Confederate Army by a fine and a few days in jail. She was not yet ready to give up her new life which was filled with excitement. She fled New Orleans and rejoined the
Confederate Army elsewhere.\textsuperscript{58} She was determined to continue breaking gender norms to keep her freedom, while also taking caution not to be discovered again as a woman in New Orleans. Remaining with her tradition of keeping a grasp on her own personal freedom, Velazquez related her initial plan to recruit her own troops.

Velazquez’s initial plan upon entering the Confederate Army was to recruit her own troops to be under her charge during the Civil War.\textsuperscript{59} Once Velazquez had recruited her troops, she realized commanding her own battalion would limit her freedom to serve where she chose during the war. She then turned over command of her troops to Lieutenant De Caulp because they were going to be stationed in Florida, and Velazquez desired to serve on the front lines. In her memoir she expressed her desire to lead a life “of more stirring adventures than [Velazquez] probably should [have been] able to do if permanently attached to a particular command.”\textsuperscript{60} This passage proves Velazquez’s desire to keep her newly found freedom and her reasoning for critiquing the way her sex was treated. She wanted to fully experience life as a man. Velazquez also critiqued gender roles when she related her experiences as Harry T. Buford.

Velazquez not only broke away from gender norms and expectations placed on women, but also critiqued the treatment of women in her memoir. One instance where Velazquez critiqued men’s and women’s roles was after her discovery of her sex in New Orleans and in response to her fine and imprisonment. Velazquez was absolutely appalled that she had been punished for choosing to do men’s work instead of women’s work. She wrote:

My sex had been discovered; and notwithstanding my motives for assuming male attire, and my exemplary conduct while doing a soldier’s duty, I had been subjected to gross indignities, simply because I chose to perform a man’s, rather than a woman’s work. This galled me, especially as my secret having once been revealed, it would now be more than ever difficult for me to figure successfully as a man, and I knew that I would constantly be in danger of detection.\textsuperscript{61}
This quote brings to the forefront both Velazquez’s frustration with being born a woman and with traditional female roles. She believed that she should have been able to do men’s work if she felt it necessary; because of this belief she remained determined to serve the Confederacy as a soldier.

Velazquez not only critiqued women’s roles after being fined and imprisoned, she also did this when she resumed female attire for a brief period of time. “I have no hesitation in saying that I wish I had been created a man instead of a woman. “This is what is that matter with nearly all the women who go about complaining of the wrongs of our sex.”62 Because Velazquez wrote about these critiques, she shows that she actively critiqued her prescribed gender roles and wanted the public to join with her against these repressive forces. Velazquez openly admitted that women could, and should, be able to do work labeled traditionally as men’s work.

It was not always easy for Velazquez to go against so many gender norms of the nineteenth-century. Faderman stresses the difficulty faced by women who broke gender norms stating, “it took tremendous will and a sense of mission in the mid-nineteenth century for a woman to dare to assert herself as a ‘strong-minded female’ (the term was not a compliment).”63 When Velazquez was in the process of making herself into Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, she talked of the hardest part of her transformation, getting her hair cut to a man’s style at a barber shop. “The only regret I had in making up my disguise, was the necessity for parting with my long and luxuriant hair.”64 In this statement Velazquez portrayed how hard it was to part from certain areas she deemed as feminine. Velazquez went on to relate another difficulty she had when dressing as a man had taken a toll on Velazquez and she then decided to take up female attire for a short period of time.
This challenge came after the Battle of Shiloh. Velazquez was burying the dead of the Confederate Army, when a shrapnel explosion fired by Union forces wounded Velazquez’s shoulder. Velazquez felt that the doctor who was examining her arm was about to find out her sex, so she told the surgeon that she was a woman. Because she had again been discovered, she resolved to leave this regiment as well. The doctor to whom she had revealed her sex helped her get transportation papers before the rest of the regiment was aware that a woman had been discovered among the wounded. This instance of the surgeon discovering Velazquez as a woman was hard for her and afterwards Velazquez took time away from the army to heal and resumed women’s dress. The challenges which faced Velazquez in disguising herself did not dissuade her from serving as a soldier in the Civil War. She yearned for adventure and freedom. The only way to achieve this was to continue to challenge and break through gender norms by taking up the identity of a man, Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Even after the close of the Civil War, Velazquez remained proud of her accomplishments she felt she had attained during the war.

Although the outcome of the war and the loss of the Confederacy saddened Velazquez, she was proud of her service as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Velazquez reiterated this in the sections of her memoir dealing with her life after the Civil War. In one instance of personal pride for her accomplishments she wrote, “I felt that I had reason to be proud of my war record, and was the better satisfied with myself, as I knew that I had won the approbation of noble-minded men whose esteem was well worth winning.”

This personal pride was intense for Velazquez, but she still felt the need to defend her service in the Confederacy to the American public. Velazquez described the challenges of embodying such opposition to nineteenth-century gender roles:

All I claim is, that my conduct, under the many trying and peculiar circumstances in which I have been placed, shall be judged with impartiality and candor, and
that due credit shall be given me for integrity of purpose, and a desire to do my whole duty as I understand it. For the part I took in the great contest between the South and the North I have no apologies to offer. I did what I thought to be right; and, while anxious for the good opinion of all honorable and right-thinking people, a consciousness of the purity of my motives will be an ample protection against the censure of those who may be disposed to be censorious.  

Velazquez felt the need to explain her service in the Civil War to the American public and took pride in her service as Harry T. Buford. Velazquez broke Victorian gender roles and suffered repercussions from getting caught as a woman during the war. She felt the public needed to know why she made the decision to masquerade as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford to evade judgment from the American public for breaking social norms. In her essay titled “Southern Ladies and She-Rebels; or, Femininity in the Foxhole,” Jabour discusses how manners and submissiveness governed southern women in the Civil War Era. Jabour claims, “While their mothers counseled patience, these daughters of the Confederacy chafed under Yankee rule and struggled with the rules of lady like propriety. Often...they concluded that the display of southern loyalty was more important than the ideal of the southern lady.” Velazquez needed to explain to the American public why she decided to betray southern ideals for women. She did what she thought was right for the nation and was proud of her service in the Civil War.

While remaining proud of her experiences, she never forgot her dedication to the cause of the war. Even though the Confederacy fell, Velazquez remained hopeful about the future of the United States:

All the bright dreams of four years ago had vanished into nothingness, and yet I could not regret having played the part I did...There were good and bad in both sections, [Union and Confederacy] and I believed that if the good men and women, both North and South, would now earnestly and patriotically unite in an endeavor to carry out the ideas of the founders of the government, they would, ere many years, be able to raise the nation to a pitch of greatness such as had yet been scarcely imagined.
Just as Velazquez had felt great excitement for the beginning of the Civil War, she felt excitement for the continuation of the United States. Velazquez had betrayed southern ideals of femininity and she needed to express the reasons behind her actions, while staying true to her nation. She now felt as fiercely about the unification of the North and the South as she had felt about the Confederacy.

The American public knew of women soldiers during and shortly following the Civil War. These women broke cultural gender norms by taking male aliases and serving as soldiers in the Civil War. Loreta Janeta Velazquez was one of these women soldiers. Velazquez had wished to have been born as a man since birth. She wished to discover the world and to have amazing escapades, which in the nineteenth-century were unheard of for women. Velazquez first talks about actually breaking gender norms in her marriage to her first husband, an American soldier. This marriage was in opposition to the arranged marriage her parents had planned for Velazquez.

The American Civil War provided the fulfillment of Velazquez’s wish from childhood to explore the world as a man could. She defied her husband, took up men’s dress, and played a man’s role all while fighting for the Confederacy as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford. Velazquez discussed her careful disguising of her sex and the punishments for being found out to be a woman. Velazquez was determined to keep her personal freedom throughout the war. She had originally planned on recruiting her own battalion to lead, but when Velazquez realized that she would not have the freedom to fight on the front lines she turned the troops over to a different lieutenant.

Velazquez did not stop with the breaking of gender norms; she critiqued these norms and roles in her memoir. She highlighted her frustration of being barred from what was traditionally thought of as men’s work. Velazquez also talked of the hardships that came with assuming a
male identity. She discussed how hard it was to part with her long hair and mentions an occasion when she resumed female dress for a brief amount of time. Though it was not always easy to go against cultural gender norms, this did not deter Velazquez from serving in the American Civil War and fulfilling her lifelong dream for exploration and personal independence. As well as breaking these cultural gender norms, Velazquez gained a certain measure of pride through her service as Harry T. Buford. The American Civil War provided the chance for seizing personal pride while gaining the freedom she had yearned for since childhood.

2 Mary A. Livermore, *My Story of the War: A Woman’s Narrative of Four Years Personal Experience as Nurse in the Union Army, and in Relief Work at Home, in Hospitals, Camps, and at the Front During the War of the Rebellion* (Hartford, Connecticut: A. D. Worthington and Company, 1889), 119-120.
4 Velazquez, *Woman in Battle*, 42.
5 Ibid., 44.
6 Ibid., 51-57.
7 Ibid., 57-63.
8 Ibid., 75-88, 188-189, and 221-223.
9 Ibid., 77.
10 Ibid., 177-182.
11 Ibid., 70-73 and 83-87.
12 Ibid., 184.
13 Ibid., 63 and 224-231.

Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier*, 257.


Berry, *All that Makes a Man*, 9.


Livermore, *My Story of the War*, 119-120.


"The Woman Soldier," *The Ripley Bee*.


"A Confederate Amazon."


Velázquez, *Woman in Battle*, 42.

Faderman, *To Believe in Women*, 183.

Velázquez, *Woman in Battle*, 43-44.

*Ibid.*, 44.


Faderman, *To Believe in Women*, 256.


Berry, *All that Makes a Man*, 86.

Velázquez, *Woman in Battle*, 75.

Berry, *All that Makes a Man*, 85.


Berry, *All that Makes a Man*, 85.

57 Ibid., 180.
58 Ibid., 181-182.
59 Ibid., 70-73 and 83-85.
60 Ibid., 87.
61 Ibid., 184.
62 Ibid., 130.
63 Faderman, To Believe In Women, 260.
64 Velazquez, Woman in Battle, 63.
65 Ibid., 224-227.
66 Ibid., 224-231.
67 Ibid., 518.
68 Ibid., 606.
70 Velazquez, Woman in Battle, 518.
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