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SKIRTING THE MEN: GENDER ROLES IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PASTORAL BOOKS

Elizabeth Rhodes

> "All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts; and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it."[1]

HEN ONE CONSIDERS the enormous and still enigmatic popularity of pastoral books in sixteenth-century Europe, particularly in Spain, the influence of a muted group of consumers on the rise of that genre's popularity becomes a reasonable supposition. That is, the vogue of the "libros de pastores" was influenced by a group of readers—women—whose presence directed the phenomenon, yet whose same presence was erased as the vogue waned. The erasure was due to the muted group's lack of a mode of expression capable of surviving the dominant—male—group's self-interested control over what made "history" and what did not.[2] Jorge de Montemayor's *La Diana* is an especially appropriate book to consider in this light, since historical documents containing reference to it and its

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1 Annette Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism," *The New Feminist Criticism* (London: Virago Press, 1986), p. 160.

2 On the theory of muted groups, see Mary Crawford and Roger Chaffin, "The Reader's Construction of Meaning: Cognitive Research on Gender and Comprehension," in *Gender and Reading, Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts*, eds. Elizabeth Flynn, Patrocinio Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 3-30. (Collection subsequently cited as *Gender and Reading*.)

readers are plentiful, and since it was the first book of its kind, the prototype of the "libro de pastores."

Montemayor's complete works provide testimony of his notably articulate sensitivity to spiritual and emotional issues, an aspect of his creative personality which served him well as he composed *La Diana* and which made his pastoral book eminently attractive to readers of the same sensitivities. It bears repeating that Montemayor began his writing career as an author of religious prose and poetry; he published two collections of religious verse and composed numerous expositions on Biblical texts and Catholic doctrine. However, his "obras de devoción" were put on the 1559 *Index*, and there is no evidence that he wrote any religious literature after the publication of his 1558 *Segundo cancionero spiritual*.

Since they were included on the list of prohibited books, it is likely that Montemayor's same "obras de devoción" were read by one of the Inquisition's *calificadores*, men invited by the Holy Office to evaluate literature for purposes of censorship. Although no such report censoring Montemayor's "obras" has yet come to light, the *calificadores'* evaluations do provide insight into the criteria by which his and others' publications were judged, publications of religious and secular nature. One such report is the "Pareçer çerca de prohibiçión de libros de poësia y otros" by Álvar Gómez de Castro (dating from the 1570's). That document is interesting for its identification of women as especially avid and equally lamented readers of *La Diana* and its two most immediate imitations: "*La Diana* de Montemayor, con otras dos que la han continuado, son cernícalos de uñas entreueladas, parte coplas, parte prosa; quisieron imitar *La Arcadia* de Sanazaro pero infelizmente tienen [?parco] ingenio, muy poco artifiçio, tratan la liuiandad más descubiertamente, por donde mugeres las leen mucho; libros son que se pierde poco en que no los aya."[3]

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Gómez does not rail against

[3] Quoted from the article and edition by P. E. Russell, "Secular Literature and the Censors: a Sixteenth-Century Document Re-examined," *BHS*, 59 (1982), 219-25, at p. 224. Gómez's criteria for evaluating the literature to which he refers are clearly based on standards more related to art (verisimilitude, decorum, and "artificio") than to religion or morality, and he displays an expectable prejudice toward works that successfully imitate the classics. Nonetheless, he also insists on a direct, critical association between women readers and the first three published *Dianas*.

secular literature itself; after stating that he would prefer that everyone spend all idle hours reading "letura de Sanctos," he wistfully reminds his readers *sed non omnes capiunt verbum istud* (p. 223). He does not condemn pastoral literature in general; the prestige he allots to Sannazaro's *Arcadia* is borne up by his support of the classical idea that men "desahogan honestamente su pena" by writing eclogues (p. 223). Neither is it the focus on secular love in pastoral literature that he finds so objectionable, because of Garcilaso he says that "le pueden leer las Vírgenes Vestales" (p. 224).

It is understandable that men like Gómez would be disappointed that *La Diana* was not a servile imitation of Sannazaro's book or of Garcilaso's poetry; one of the basic differences between them is the prominent role that women play in *La Diana* as well-rounded characters who are as active and believable as their male counterparts, a characteristic shared by several of the sixteenth-century pastoral books. Therefore, the *calificadores* and other male readers had considerably less material with which they could overtly identify in the *libros de pastores* than in chivalric fiction, for example, which focuses almost exclusively on men or masculine values.[4]

The so-called "liuiandad" that Gómez associates with *La Diana* draws a fine line, for he cites several acceptable "tratados que, aunque escritos con honestidad, el subjecto son cosas de amores, como *Celestina, Cárcel de amor, Questión de amor*" (p. 224). Although the

[4] What little material there is in chivalric fiction with which women could identify directly is cast through the masculine codes of chivalric/courtly love and honor, which generally depersonalize and repress the woman or man who plays the beloved. The well-documented pleasure with which women read books of chivalry does not necessarily indicate that those books reflect the feminine experience with any sort of accuracy at all: research in gender patterns of cognition and reading shows that women are trained by their sex's role in society to identify with and understand a text through the male voice in literature, because it is the dominant one (often the only one). Men, on the contrary, have been typically unable to adjust their reading sensitivities to literature (by men or women) that expresses the female voice because their exposure to it has been so limited. See Elizabeth Segel, "'As the Twig Is Bent...' Gender and Childhood Reading," in *Gender and Reading*, pp. 165-86. Segel studies gender-specific English literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Given the production of gender-specific literature in the sixteenth century and the fact that codes of behavior for men and women were equally (if not identically) distinguished in the sixteenth and the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, it is reasonable to assume that language cognition (and therefore reading patterns) were gender-specific long before the age from which Segel draws her conclusions.

pastoral books like *La Diana* are sentimental, in that they basically consist of love stories, their qualification as lascivious or erotic by Gómez (and some modern critics) is highly suspect.[5] Indeed, most *libros de pastores* do reveal an unusually open contact between men and women, but there is no sex, as there is in some of the books of chivalry, nor are there provocative scenes. In *La Diana*, Sireno and Diana hold hands once and hug once, and likewise Cervantes' Lisandro recalls that he received "el primero y último beso" from Leonida with her dying breath.[6] That is typically the extent of all potentially erotic contact between any of the lovers in this "lascivious" fiction.

One cannot help but wonder if it might be the exclusive attention given to *sentimental* issues in the pastoral books, combined with the significant role of female characters as desiring women in them, that male literary critics have found difficult to identify with all along and have thus censored as erotic and improper. Gómez's notion that pastoral books were "livianos" and not simply among the "tratados de amores," and the belief of other writers of the time that pastoral books were morally noxious, may well have stemmed from two related features of this type of fiction, Montemayor's version in particular. Female characters play a distinctive role in the pastoral books, one which clashed with prescribed behavior for women, and women consequently read pastoral books with special interest and thereby had access to ideas that threatened the established code of sexual conduct (a code prescribed, interpreted, and enforced by men). The American literary establishment reacted in a

[5] Several critics wrongly attribute the equation pastoral = eroticism to Renato Poggioli, who does single out some cases of erotic pastoral literature (i.e., Tasso's *Aminta*) but is careful to distinguish between the calm hedonism of the pastoral impulse and its different manifestations across history. See his collected essays in *The Oaten Flute. Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). John Cull says in this context, "the popularity of the pastoral romances derived from their manifestly erotic nature" ("Another Look at Love in *La Galatea*" in *Cervantes and the Pastoral*, eds. José Labrador and Juan Fernández Jiménez [Cleveland: Cleveland State Univ., 1986], p. 66).

[6] Jorge de Montemayor, *Los siete libros de la Diana*, ed. Francisco López Estrada, Clásicos castellanos 127, 4th ed. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1967), pp. 78 and 87 (subsequent references are to this edition). Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *La Galatea*, ed. Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce, Clásicos castellanos 154 (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1961), I, 51.

similarly negative fashion to the popularity of sentimental fiction in the nineteenth century, a popularity that was inexplicable within the confines of male-defined norms for literary worth and which challenged those same norms.[7]

The literacy of women in itself seems to have met with little ideological resistence from sixteenth-century male authors.[8] The more liberal humanists and religious writers in particular supported the notion that study was morally uplifting exercise for everyone. For example, in the 1529 (Valencia) edition of the anonymous *Spill de la vida religiosa*, Miguel Jerónimo Cruilles wrote in the "Epístola preliminar" to Jerónima Exarque: "Cultivas tu espíritu con lecturas eruditas y de todo género de virtudes elevadas, la nobleza de tu estirpe con el esplendor de las letras... difícilmente encontrarás una mujer perdida que no sea ignorante.... El estudio es, sin duda, algo que en primer lugar ocupa toda la mente del género humano, de qualquier sexo que sean."[9] Nonetheless, while the guardians of public morality were not as concerned that women were able to read as with *what* they were reading, most still held that if women could not be cajoled, flattered, or threatened into reading what men thought they should, then they obviously should not read at all. Luis Vives declares, "Estas tales [las que leen de amores ajenos], no sólo sería bien que nunca hubieran aprendido letras, pero fuera mejor que hubieran perdido los ojos para no leer y los oídos para no oír."[10] Fray Juan de la Cerda writes in 1599: "Ay algunas donzellas que por entretener el tiempo, leen en estos libros [he probably refers to secular fiction], y hallan en ellos un dulce veneno que les incita a malos pensamientos, y les haze perder el seso que tenían. Y por esso es error muy grande de las madres que paladean a sus hijas desde niñas con este azeyte de escorpiones, y con este apetito de las

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[7] See Jane P. Tompkins, "Sentimental Power," in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1986), pp. 81-104.

[8] However, the intellectual level of Spanish women's involvement in literary endeavors still appears to have been far below that of their counterparts in other European countries. See Roland H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971-77).

[9] *Notas sobre la espiritualidad española de los siglos de oro. Estudio del* Tratado llamado el Deseoso, ed. Francisco López Estrada (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1972), pp. 71-75.

[10] Juan Luis Vives, *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana*, Colección austral, 138 (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1940), p. 34.

diabólicas lecturas de amor."[11] Men's support of literate women in the sixteenth century was clearly based on their intention to confine women's reading within highly restricted limits and cater it to encourage emulation of specific, usually religious, role models.[12] Fernando de Vera y Mendoza's delight in his contention that "La Virgen nuestra señora... hizo versos, y tan sentenciosos como los lyricos de su Magnificat" is a double-edged sword designed to inspire women's creative impulses, while leading them into the repressive circle of Virgin-imitation.[13]

Keith Whinnom has shown that, judging by the number of editions produced of certain books in sixteenth-century Spain, very few of what we could call "bestsellers" were secular books of the type enjoyed today. Instead, the market favored books with a moralistic, religious, or historical focus. Any evidence of trends in reading that swerved from those norms (which reflected earlier monastic control of learning) was met with resistance by the establishment. Thus the huge popularity of Montemayor's *La Diana*, which surpassed that of the books of chivalry, was interpreted as a threat, against which immediate steps were taken in attempts to maintain the literary status quo. Fray Pedro de la Vega noted the more constructive, if apparently unsuccessful, steps taken to solve the problem: "Muchos varones doctíssimos, zeladores del bien de las almas, desseando desterrar de las manos de la donzella, y de la buida, y a uezes de la monja... las Dianas, Amadises y demás libros prophanos, de los quales los menos dañosos están llenos de vanidad

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[11] Juan de la Cerda, *Libro intitvlado vida política de todos los estados de mugeres* (Alcalá 1599), fol. 8' (cited by Edward Glaser, "Nuevos datos sobre la crítica de los libros de caballerías en los siglos XVI y XVII," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 3 (1966), 393-410, at p. 406.

[12] See Werner Gundersheimer, "Women, Learning, and Power: Eleanora of Aragon and the Court of Ferrara," and Roland Bainton, "Learned Women of Europe of the Sixteenth Century," in *Beyond Their Sex. Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia Labalme (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 43-65 and 117-28.

[13] Fernando de Vera y Mendoza, *Panegyrico por la poesía* (1627; rpt. Cieza: Antonio Pérez y Gómez, 1968) fol. 56v. On the dynamics of the Virgin role model, see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (1976; New York: Vintage Books, 1983), and Margaret L. King, "Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance," in *Beyond Their Sex, Learned Women of the European Past*, pp. 66-90.

y mentiras, han escripto tratados sanctos en nuestra lengua vulgar."[14]

As Edward Glaser observes and the above quotations illustrate, a clear distinction was maintained between what was acceptable secular fiction for men and what women should read.[15] Criticism of secular fiction varied by sex as well: in the academic, theoretical (masculine) context, books of chivalry were demeaned for their lack of verisimilitude. In reference to women readers, however, the problem was their immorality, which was detrimental to "el bien de las almas." It seems that women's exposure to the pastoral books was making many men uncomfortable, something not surprising, since they are saturated with love stories which take place in the countryside, are removed from the restrictions of courtly (masculine) control, and provide women with authentic voices.

In the sixteenth century, as since, "good" literature was expected to protect the patterns of behavior acceptable to the dominant group of society, patterns which have long been distinguished by gender. The popularity of the pastoral books seems to have caught the moralists and the censors off guard; too late they discovered that the malleable minds of countless young women had been infested with what they considered to be the wrong ideas. Compared with books of chivalry, pastoral books give little voice to aggressive masculine values and there is relatively little in them to offset all the attention they devote to women and women's concerns. In the "Prólogo del autor" to *La conversión de la Magdalena*, Malón de Chaide complains of writers who,

> viendo que el mundo tiene ya cansado el gusto para las cosas santas y de virtud, y tras esto tan vivo el apetito para todo lo que es vicio y estrago de buenas costumbres... así ceban [nuestra

[14] Fray Pedro de la Vega, *Declaración de los siete psalmos penitenciales* (1599), fol 10[v] (cited in Glaser, p. 403). The lament that women had abandoned their devotional readings in favor of secular fiction seems to have formed part of the misogynist tradition and was voiced well before *La Diana* was published. In the *Corbacho*: "Todas estas cosas [de Boccacio] fallaréys en los cofres de las mugeres: oras de Santa María, syete salmos, estorias de santos, salterio de romance, ¡nin verle de ojo! Pero canciones, dezires, coplas, cartas de enamoradas, e muchas otras locuras, esto sý" (Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, *Arcipreste de Talavera*, ed. Joaquín González Muela [Madrid: Castalia, 1970], p. 135).

[15] Glaser, p. 407.

> gastada naturaleza] con libros lascivos y profanos.... Porque, ¿qué otra cosa son los libros de amores y las *Dianas* y *Boscanes* y *Garcilasos*... puestos en manos de pocos años, sino cuchillo en poder del hombre furioso?... ¿Qué ha de hacer la doncellita que apenas sabe andar y ya trae una *Diana* en la faldriquera?... ¿Cómo dirá *Pater noster* en las *Horas*, la que acaba de sepultar a Píramo y Tisbe en *Diana*? [Montemayor's poem "Píramo y Tisbe" was included in editions of *La Diana* after 1561.] [16]

Malón was obviously referring to the harmful effects such reading had on women, for he says: "Allí se aprenden las desenvolturas y las solturas y las bachillerías; y náceles un deseo de ser servi*das* y recuesta*das*, como lo fueron aque*llas* que han leído en éstos sus *Flos Sanctorum*... y de ahí vienen a ruines y torpes imaginaciones, y de éstas a los conciertos, o desconciertos, con que se pierden a sí y afrentan las casas de sus padres" (I, 26). The grammatical gender becomes masculine and refers to men in reference to readers of chivalric fiction, whose ruinous reading habits will not cause the destruction of parental honor (the responsibility of women) but neglect of moralistic and philosophical works that formed the mainstay of a young *caballero*'s education: "Otr*os* leen aquellos prodigios y fabulosos sueños y quimeras, sin pies ni cabeza, de que están llenos los *Libros de caballerías*.... Y si a *los* que estudian y aprenden a ser cristia*nos* en estos catecismos les preguntáis que por qué los leen... os persuadirán que *Don Florisel* es el *Libro de los Macabeos*, y *Don Belianís*, los *Morales* de San Gregorio... y *Lisuarte*, los *Libros de Clemencia*, de Séneca" (I, 27-28).

Although women were largely blamed for the popularity of the pastoral books, they were not responsible for the genesis of the genre, for the "libros de pastores" were written by men and read by men as well. The fact that the pastoral books addressed specifically feminine concerns seems to have come about by circumstance, not intention. The genre's success is strongly related to three extra-literary trends which encouraged the development of themes and styles of writing that indirectly addressed feminine concerns: the political situation of the aristocracy, which led readers to identify

[16] Fray Malón de Chaide, *La conversión de la Magdalena*, ed. P. Félix García, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1959), I, 25-26.

closely with a literature that rejected historical power in favor of inner worth; the impetus of humanism, which supported the same values as did pastoral fiction, that is, contemplative and conversational heroics; and the influence of religious reformism on secular letters, a phenomenon that promoted exaltation of inner experience and disdain for outer formalities. All three of these factors are reflected in the pastoral books, and all led to increased infringement of literary themes onto the cultural domain of women: emphasis on intimate relationships and affective versus historical experience, and rejection of worldly concerns in favor of the search for emotional fulfillment.

The political role of the Spanish nobility had been and was undergoing dramatic changes during the time when the pastoral books were being written, particularly before 1590. The universal pastoral mode, the primary feature of which is the lament of loss,[17] tapped the sensitivities of the reading aristocracy which, since the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, had been subjected to political maneuvers designed to curtail its power and stress the courtier, not the warrior, as the aristocratic role model. Henry Kamen refers to "the taming of the Castilian aristocracy" in this context and says, "The pacification of the great nobility turned many of them [nobles] to quieter pursuits. Their part in the literary culture of the Renaissance was notable."[18] Simultaneously, humanist culture exalted intellectual prowess and cultural refinement, evidenced by the ability to carry on elegant conversation, sing, and love according to the tenets of Neoplatonism, all of which supported a new system of non-violent heroics radically different from that of the knights-errant who charge through the books of chivalry. Finally, the spiritual upheaval of imperial Spain made men and women alike increasingly sensitive to the importance of inner experience, and made retreat from the world and rejection of worldliness fashionable. The pastoral mode's acceptance of those same values and the strict emphasis on emotional life within the bower were particularly

[17] Paul Alpers, "The Poetics of Pastoral," lecture at Boston University, Feb. 19, 1987.

[18] Henry Kamen, *Spain 1469—1714. A Society of Conflict* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 22 and 21.

attractive to a people whose sensitivity to spiritual experience was at a peak.

The pastoral mode itself depicts an existence in which inner worth is exalted and outer worth is not an issue. Thus, the facts of their personalities that women have to share with each other and with men are much more accentuated in pastoral fiction than in any other. Characters like Amadís and Oriana share very little but their mutual attraction, sex life, and social rank. Characters such as Sireno and Diana, however, share the physical space in which the significant events of their lives occur within the narration, they both exercise the same "profession" and participate in the same daily activities without sexual distinction, and they are equally dominated by the sentimental existence with which they are obsessed. The very nature of the pastoral narrative as it developed from Montemayor's *La Diana* served to create the type of literary environment in which women's concerns dominate the narration (and indeed, women characters control most of Montemayor's narration): physical action is minimal; proof of worth is non-aggressive and instead is based on virtues of elegant conversation, song, feelings, empathy, and focus on human relationships.

In a literature in which the first plane of the narration takes place within a confined natural space and deals primarily with plots motivated by sentiment and ideological belief, women can take a much more active role as characters and as readers than in books that center around world travels, head-chopping, dragon slaying, and aggressive pursuit of worldly fame and honor. The honor on which the pastoral books depend is more spiritual than the type faithfully pursued by knights-errant; it is based on sincerity and honesty in relationships against all turns of fortune, not on one's political destiny. The importance of this sentimental honor reflects religious issues of the early sixteenth century that found expression in almost every vehicle of culture, issues such as inner piety versus ceremonious faith and the willingness to develop and express one's inner self, even at the expense of one's physical existence. Spanish women, whose notable involvement in reformist, illuminist, and mystic religion is well documented,[19] found in pastoral fiction a

[19] For example, Ronald Surtz, "La Madre Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534) y la

literature expressing concerns similar to those tapped by religious reform: emphasis on experience over book learning, attention to personal growth within a supportive community, all represented in a narration in which power is not judged by sex or rank or money but by *cortesía* and one's ability to endure emotional hardship and be supportive of others. Just as women's participation in religious activities had to occur beyond the limits of patriarchal orthodoxy, so the pastoral books, in which women play significant and meaningful roles, take place in natural settings well removed from patriarchic centers of "civilization."

The relative balance between masculine and feminine experience in the pastoral books, then, is heavily weighted toward what is traditionally considered "the feminine." This situation, however, depends on simultaneous loss and gain from the respective sides of the scale; as the expression "skirting the men" indicates, there are two sides to the problem of gender at hand which are considered here. One is the comparatively passive and effeminate nature of the masculine characters in pastoral books, the other is the bypassing of the shepherds to focus on the shepherdesses who, in a complementary fashion to the effeminate men, take on responsibilities traditionally denied to women in other genres.

The strength of the pastoral characters relative to the world in which they live provides the key to the process of sex-role modification in the pastoral books (pastoral characters being those who participate in the first plane of the narration).[20] Compared to the

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cuestión de la autoridad religiosa femenina," *NRFH*, 33 (1984), pp. 483. Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation*, cited in n. 8 above; Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmo y España*, trans. Antonio Alatorre, 2nd ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966), pp. 69-70 and 176-79.

[20] There are typically two planes of narration in sixteenth-century pastoral books. The first plane consists of the narrative present in which the impersonal narrator relates events that take place in the *locus* as they occur. The second narrative plane consists of the interpolations, past events related by characters who arrive on the pastoral scene from somewhere else. The extent to which the characters who enter the bower manage to assimilate its non-aggressive ideals and communicate their emotional problems within the confines of the *locus* determines the depth with which the pastoral mode functions in the narration as a whole. See Elizabeth Rhodes, "Sixteenth-century Pastoral Books, Narrative Structure, and *La Galatea* of Cervantes," forthcoming in *BHS*. The adaptation of Northrup Frye's mimetic scheme to pastoral theory is being developed by Paul Alpers; see note 17.

non-pastoral members of their world (who may or may not appear in the *locus* but whose existence is always implied), shepherdesses and shepherds alike are depicted as superior with regard to internal qualities, but they are the same as or inferior to non-pastoral characters with regard to their external relationship to that world. That is, pastoral figures are superior singers, thinkers, conversationalists, and poets, and, most importantly, their ability to explain their life stories in terms of intimate experiences is unparalled. They typically exemplify virtue and good intentions subjected to bad fortune, for which they are admired. Such qualities are made available at the expense of those characteristics typically attributed to a non-pastoral heroine or hero, particularly the hero. In the first narrative pane of the pastoral books, physical aggression as proof of worth is inappropriate except as allegory, such as the attack on the savages in *La Diana*, and external manifestations of social status and political power are rarely if ever mentioned either except in allegorical terms (such as Felicia's palace or Felismena's jewels in *La Diana*, or the tombs in the Valle de los Cipreses in Cervantes' *La Galatea*). Although physical activity in the *locus* is severely limited, emotional and conversational activity continues day and night.

It should be apparent that the human qualities represented in the pastoral books as well as the traditionally heroic qualities eliminated in them effectively rob men of precisely those activities used in other types of literature to make them heroes, while not only leaving intact but emphasizing the traits which are typically assigned to women, such as gusto for conversation and preoccupation with the development of personal relationships.[21] Women thus acquire increased significance relative to men in such a speech setting. In *La Diana*, for example, all of the initial interpolations—Selvagia's, Dórida's, Felismena's, Belisa's—are told by women. Also, as they set down their arms and take up the lyre, masculine pastoral figures acquire heightened sensitivity to feelings, lose the edge of their physical aggression, and are immersed in subjective reality.

The female reader of the sixteenth century would have encountered several structural and thematic elements in the pastoral books

[21] For some interesting observations on sex roles in conversation, see Elizabeth Flynn, "Gender and Reading," in *Gender and Reading*, p. 285.

that would make that type of fiction particularly enjoyable to her. One characteristic that distinguishes pastoral books from other genres of sixteenth-century secular fiction is the freedom awarded to women in them to move about the *locus* and to express themselves openly as desiring human beings who are able to risk, but not forfeit, their honor for love. In *La Diana*, for example, Selvagia, Felismena, and Belisa are all independent arbitrators of their own desire. The book's namesake, Diana, is criticized by Sireno precisely because she failed to act on her own feelings and allowed parental authority to override her wishes.

Women's increased physical mobility and emotional independence is accompanied by an absolute lack of supervision; unmarried pastoral lovers in *La Diana* are frequently described as being alone in isolated natural settings, something which would irreparably damage a woman's honor in any other context.[22] For example, Sireno and Diana bid each other a tearful farewell believing themselves to be alone (although Celio is secretly perched in a tree above them, in order that their parting songs can be subsequently recited by others). The fact that someone is usually listening in on couples' conversations does not alter the fact that they themselves do not hesitate to be alone together. The potential for unmediated contact between men and women is taken full advantage of by the shepherdesses, who do not timidly wait for their shepherds to seek them out, but strike off to find them, with a strength of will and desire equal to that of any male lover. Belisa recalls the moment in her relationship with Arsileo when "toda aquella noche estuve pensando el modo que ternía en descubrille mi mal, de suerte que la vergüença no recibiesse daño, aunque quando éste no hallara, no me estorvara el de la muerte" (p. 150). Felismena, the precursor of the *mujer varonil* figure that was to have such success in the *comedia*,[23] dons the

[22] It is this escape from the rigid rules of courtly behavior, signaled by escape from the court itself, that marks the sharpest distinction between the pastoral books and sentimental books such as the *Cárcel de amor;* the rigid structure of the courtly love code as interpreted in the sentimental books objectifies women and provides for the expression of codified emotions. Thus, in spite of the emphasis on emotional issues shared by sentimental and pastoral books, they are radically distinct.

[23] See Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age. A Study of the* mujer varonil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

shepherdess' disguise to free herself from censure as she searches the world for Félix; shepherdesses by profession were mobile figures whose solitary life in the natural world explained itself. only the disguise as a man (which Felismena had already tried) offered a similar, respectable freedom.

It may be the independence to act on their feelings which he shepherdesses display, as well as their life out of doors where they are free to roam the *locus* at will, that both threatened the male establishment, leading the pastoral books to be read as immoral, and appealed to their women readers at the same time. The paradoxes of behavior acceptable for women in sixteenth-century Spain are described by Selvagia in terms of emotional confinement when she insists, "Creo que no ay más baxo estado en la vida que el de las mugeres, porque, si os hablan bien, pensáis que están muertas de amores; si no os hablan, creéis que de alteradas y fantásticas lo hazen·...si callan dezís que son necias; si hablan, que son pesadas.... Assí que no está en más pareceros la muger buena o mala que en acertar ella a no salir jamás de lo que pide vuestra inclinación" (pp. 38-39). Women's sexual and physical confinement is exposed by the wife in Fray Domingo de Balatanás' *Enchiridión de estados* (1555): "Nosotras desuenturadas siempre encerradas en casa. Que aunque no os podamos sufrir dentro no nos es licito salir fuera, ni podemos dezir nuestra pena, para descansar.... Y lo que es peor que siendo el varon y la muger yguales en la paga de la deuda conjugal: Dios y natura nos hizo tan vi[r]tuosas, que no la pudiessemos pedir sin nuestra afrenta: ni la pudiessemos dar, sin perder nuestra honrra; ssino siendo muy importunadas, y con mil regalos requestadas."[24] The above quotations, written by men, are vividly represented in a fictional context by María de Zayas y Sotomayor's *Desengaños amorosos*.

Pastoral fiction, which depicts women as desiring as well as desired characters, was doubtless an affront to those who believed forthrightness about feelings or desire on the part of women to be indecorous, since, as countless writers of the age declared, "a las mugeres de honra no basta la abstinentia sola del peccado, mas aun

[24] Fray Domingo de Baltanás, *Enchiridión de estados, donde se pone lo que deuen guardar los que tienen el estado del matrimonio: y los eclesiasticos: y los religiosos, hombres y mugeres* (Sevilla, 1555), fols. cxxxii^{v} and cxxxv^{r}.

para librarse de la sospecha del, les conuiene huir todos aquellos inconuenientes è indiçios que pueden causarla."[25] Appearing virtuous probably did not allow for such activities as spending the *siesta* alone with two young men beside a remote spring, as Selvagia does (p. 63).

The difference between the object of courtly love and the shepherdess is the latter's fallibility as well as her desire. Pastoral books display errors on the part of women as well as men, who commit the same sins of excess and fall victim to the same pitfalls of bad luck as their male counterparts. Thus, in relation to each other, pastoral characters are equals in the face of love; the women as well as the men tend to reify their beloved during the period of lament over their bad fortunes, and both tend to confront the object of their love face to face at one moment or another, driven by desire. Throughout their emotional experiences, male and female characters are represented as possessing equal experiential and intellectual authority.

One of the most distinctive features of the pastoral books is their communal structure through which the stories of several pairs of lovers, not a single pair, are simultaneously developed. The various stories told across the first plane of the narration become dependent on each other for continued development. For example, in *La Diana*, Silvano and Selvagia are eventually paired, even though each one originally appeared in the *locus* because of a relationship with someone else. Likewise, Felismena orchestrates the reunion of Belisa and Arsinio, and it is because of her defense of the attacked nymphs that the trip to Felicia's palace is brought about for the four other characters who go there. This structure, which allocates more or less equal importance to a series of stories rather than subjugating peripheral material to the adventures of just one pair, might have held particular appeal to feminine readers; research shows that in female-controlled institutions, communality is valued more than

[25] Juan de Espinosa, *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres* [1580], ed. Ángela González Simón (Madrid: CSIC, 1946), p. 268. Aside from standard literary sources such as the works of Cervantes, non-fictional examples abound of the notion that it was woman's responsibility not only to be virtuous but appear to be so: "que los principes y los sacerdotes y las mugeres, no basta que sean buenos sino que lo parescan" (Baltanás, fol. cxiiii').

in those controlled by men.[26] Also, the nature of the pastoral mode reduces or nullifies class and sex role distinctions by emphasizing inner worth over power, and thereby recognizes authority based on personal experience. This process creates a terrain on which women exist as equals with men, unfettered by excessive idealization (a form of subjugation). Also, members of the pastoral community are quite involved in each other's lives and are willing to take risks for each other. Anthropological studies indicate that in communal egalitarian societies, in which mutual efforts directed toward the well-being of the group far outweigh the desire for power, women figure predominantly as respected members of the community.[27]

Another characteristic of books like *La Diana* which would have had special meaning to women readers is their unique focus on emotional problems. As the critics of this type of literature pointed out time and time again, the pastoral books are collections of love stories which tell of difficulties in people's relationships. The progression of the first narrative plane depends on the characters' sharing their love experiences with the community, which enfolds them as they go through the ordeal of recalling their past misfortunes and nurtures them through the painful process of confronting unsuccessful love. Political and social motives are cast aside to focus directly on the fate of love subjected to time and fortune. The motivations for the characters' actions are for the most part emotional and are directed toward fulfillment of the desire for a happy relationship, not desire for the suffering one finds in the sentimental books or the quest for fame and honor of chivalric romance. (Although the characters often express delight in their suffering, the nature of the narration, which progresses in history rather than dwelling on the eternal suffering present, makes clear their desire to resolve their problems.)

Narrative material of this type offers particular potential to women readers who, as a sex, are more inclined than men to enter into the human relationship presented by stories, searching out interpersonal motives, allegiances and conflicts, rather than reading

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[26] Crawford and Chaffin, p. 23.

[27] Eleanor Leacock, "Women in Egalitarian Societies," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), pp. 11-35.

in terms of the perspective of a single character or the author.[28] Feminist research shows that "men define themselves through individuation and separation from others, while women have more flexible ego boundaries and define and experience themselves in terms of their affiliations and relationship with others."[29] Thus the exclusive attention to human relationships of pastoral fiction and its communal structure correspond to gender-specific reading patterns of women.

The censorship of such fiction, in which women figure freely and predominantly as equal partners in narrative meaning and structure, is lamentably understandable when one recalls that they were written for a society in which the male establishment willed it that "la doncella cristiana no haga más que orar y callar, y obrar con sus manos, y obedecer a sus padres, y viuir en recogimiento y honestidad."[30] The pastoral books, for their representation of women as free-moving and free-thinking beings, provided absolutely unacceptable role models for "la doncellita que apenas sabe andar, y ya trae una *Diana* en la faldriquera."[31] Most of those responsible for judging the acceptability of such literature for women ruled against it, and typically concluded, along with Antonio de Porras, "Ojala que todas las mugeres no se ocupassen en leer otra cosa, sino los euangelios, y epistolas de San Pablo."[32]

Although the role of women within the confines of the first narrative plane of pastoral fiction might be interpreted as liberating for the woman reader, when considered in light of the interpolations related on the second narrative plane and in light of the inevitable direction of the plots toward marriage, which typically represents women's absorption by an institution, pastoral fiction provides only a brief, interludic escape from the confines of surrounding society (true to the pastoral mode, which is basically

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[28] David Bleich, "Gender Interests in Reading and Language," in *Gender and Reading*, pp. 234-67.

[29] Patrocinio P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading," in *Gender and Reading*, pp. 31-62 at pp. 54-55.

[30] Gaspar de Astete, *Tratado del gouierno de la familia, y estado de las viudas y dõnzellas* (Burgos, 1603), p. 183 (cited in Glaser, p. 407).

[31] Malón de Chaide, I, 25.

[32] Antonio de Porras, *Tratado de la oración que se divide en tres partes* (Alcalá, 1552) [all folios are unnumbered].

escapist). In spite of the relative freedom with which they move about the *locus* and their independence in trying to deal with their own, individual problems, the female characters in *La Diana* and many of its continuations are subject to events dictated by men. Even Sireno, who complains of Diana's fickleness, cannot lament only of her changing her mind but must also consider the role her father played in her decision to marry Delio. Likewise, Selvagia's life is not only ruined by the inconstancy of Arsidoro, but she is swept away from the love quadrangle in which she was enmeshed by her father. Belisa falls victim to what she feels are her obligations to repay with kindness Arsenio's love for her, which conflict directly with her obligation to herself to develop her emotional involvement with his son.

Felismena, the character typically designated as the only one with sufficient will and constancy to overcome her problems, is not as much a credit to womanhood as she is to manhood: her power at arms and even her speech habits are decidedly masculine and aggressive, to say nothing of the fact that a woman falls in love with her and dies of that love. Constance Jordon makes a valuable point about humanist defenses of women which describes characters such as Felismena as well: "The women who illustrate feminine excellence are noted for acting courageously and intelligently—in short, in a manner specified as virile. These women logically prove the worth of their sex by denying it: a strange form of defense. While it questions sexual stereotypes, that some women can do men's wok, it also seems to confirm gender-related values, that everything female is inferior."[33]

When considered in light of their fictional totality, the ultimate standards of behavior, even in pastoral fiction, are those imposed on women by men. However, in the process of their approach to those standards, during which they recognize, express, and act on their own desires, female pastoral characters display vivacity, refreshing fallibility, and depth of personality. At the nexus of humanism,

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[33] Constance Jordon, "Feminism and the Humanists: The Case for Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defense of Good Women*," in *Rewriting the Renaissance. The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 242-58, at p. 252.

religious reform, and the vogue of pastoral literature occurred the flowering of a genre in which women were represented in a context they could identify as theirs, a genre in which the narrative structure itself as well as the content appealed to their experience as a sex. In the pastoral books, women are depicted in an idyllic world that not only recognizes the emotions and desires of women and men as being of paramount importance in life, but depends on those emotions and desires almost exclusively for the narration itself. Recognizing themselves and their concerns therein, they read.

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