

Neither Seen nor Heard: Women in the Spanish Sixteenth-Century Conduct Dialogue

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One can fill many bookshelves with works penned in sixteenth-century Spain that intended to shape the reader. Some of these texts, referred to today as conduct books or courtesy literature, were meant to teach roles and proper behavior for a hierarchical society, thus attempting to inculcate the values of socially correct actions in the audience. While these works treated a variety of topics –eating, drinking, gambling, and the protection of one’s honor, for example– many focused partially or completely on matters related to marriage and family. The discourse directed to the reading public in this particular group of conduct manuals depicted as naturalized the essential characteristics of both sexes, characteristics that were in fact built upon patriarchal ideology. The behavioral paradigms expounded in these manuals formulated the limitations that constituted acceptable ways of living within and outside the family structure. Authors –typically humanists, priests, or monks– frequently utilized the authoritative discourse of religion in the formation of their arguments and inserted oft-repeated material from classical, Biblical, and patristic sources into their works.

This article investigates a particular group of sixteenth-century Spanish conduct books: conduct manuals written in dialogue form within an erudite or humanist tradition. It examines how male writers inserted women into the texts as objects of discussion by the masculine voice and analyzes textual traces of the female reader and female interlocutors. I further explore the reasons for the enforced silence of females in the majority of these books. I do not address actual social practices of the day, but rather how patriarchal ideology influences the construction of –or total absence of, in most cases– the female reader of conduct dialogues as well as the discourse found in these texts. Although courtesy literature has received much attention from scholars, I believe conduct *dialogues* deserve special notice within the broader corpus: unlike a simple treatise the colloquy affords the prospect of including a female voice or presence in a work. While the form itself presents this opportunity, however, the weight of literary tradition and the surrounding patriarchal context compelled authors to exclude females from the conversation.

In the following pages I first discuss relevant aspects of the literary context of sixteenth-century Spain, including conduct literature, a variety of texts treating women, and the dialogue. Second I examine women as objects of discussion in various humanist conduct dialogues. The third section treats textual evidence for women readers or speakers. Finally, I will explore the surrounding context and suggest reasons for the presence and absence of women in the humanist conduct dialogue.¹

¹ I use the phrase “humanist conduct dialogues” to identify a group of works written in a more or less erudite style, authored by humanists or *letrados*. Use of this phrase should not be taken as an

Two important model texts for the broad category of early modern conduct literature in the Peninsula –Baldesar Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* (Venice, 1528) and Giovanni della Casa’s *Il Galateo* (Venice, 1558) – enjoyed various translations and imitations in Spain from the sixteenth century forward. Juan Boscán’s translation of *El cortesano* (Barcelona, 1534) saw sixteen editions by 1590 (Gómez 1988, 102).² Lucas Gracián Dantisco translated and adapted della Casa’s work into Spanish, giving it the title *El galateo español* (Barcelona, 1593). There were five editions of this work by 1599 and another twelve in the seventeenth century (Gracián Dantisco 70-83). The title of Castiglione’s work indicates a noble audience, although the enormous popularity of his book points to a much broader reading public. In it noble men and women debate the qualities of the perfect courtier, encompassing all areas of behavior. *El galateo español*, written for a broad audience, gives primary attention to speech and expressions of courtesy. It offered advice to anyone of any station who wanted to improve their manners and thus gain the approval of others in society (Gracián Dantisco 30).³

Later Spanish early modern conduct manuals, whether directed to nobility, commoners, or an undefined reader, shared with these precursors a desire to shape behavior and regulate the body to conform to norms of what was considered acceptable. There is also anxiety about one’s status in a society undergoing noteworthy transformations, not the least that of the increasing significance of the incipient middle class. The manuals’ very existence, not to mention the popularity of

endorsement of the theories of Jaqueline Ferreras concerning the sixteenth-century Spanish dialogue, which she calls the “diálogo humanístico” (see the introduction and first chapter of her 2002 book, a translation of her original 1996 book in French). The title of my article is an intentional reference to Virginia Cox’s 2000 piece “Seen but not Heard: The Role of Women Speakers in Cinquecento Literary Dialogue”. Cox catalogues several Italian dialogues with female interlocutors but concludes that in most cases their speech supported the patriarchal system. I wish to thank Sarah Sierra and Elizabeth M. Pettinaroli for their helpful comments on drafts of this article.

² See modern editions of Boscán’s translation by Mario Pozzi, Rogelio Reyes Cano, and Teresa Suero Roca. Few recent studies exist on Boscán’s book, but see Javier Lorenzo, Margarita Morreale, and Ignacio Navarrete. Della Casa’s *Il Galateo* had at least seven editions in Italy by 1600 (Gracián Dantisco 1).

³ Although no copies of the *princeps* edition have survived to the present day, Margherita Morreale explains that Inquisition documents in Seville show approval of shipment of “quatro galateos españolas” to Peru in September of 1586, a likely reference to Gracián Dantisco’s book (5). Morreale’s is the only modern critical edition of the work. Also important as an initiator of the genre was Erasmus’s Latin treatise *De civilitate morum puerilium* (Frobe, 1530). This work is analyzed by a number of scholars who study conduct literature, but was not translated into Castilian and would thus have had less impact among the non-erudite reading public in the Peninsula (see chapter two of Correll; Chartier 251-55; and Elias 53-83). For a helpful overview of scholarship on and theoretical approaches to early modern European conduct or courtesy literature see the introduction to Barbara Correll’s *The End of Conduct: Grobianus and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (especially 15-30).

many, show that behavioral norms were changing: in a society where such norms are naturalized one would hardly need to write about them (Elias 54-55).⁴

The particular group of sixteenth-century dialogues I analyze appeared within a tradition of ample textual production treating marriage and women's roles that reached back to at least the fifteenth century and continued into the seventeenth century. From the late Middle Ages through the mid sixteenth century both the sentimental tradition and the *querelle des femmes* were particularly important. Roger Boase explains that the sentimental phenomenon is due in part to the longing of the aristocracy to recuperate past glory and power, but Antonio Cortijo contends that one must also consider the role of merchants, functionaries and bureaucrats, and *letrados* in the production of these texts. In an attempt to increase their prestige and power these emerging classes produced and read works in which love was an equalizing force and virtue was defined by one's behavior rather than bloodline. Notably, these works often introduced a female voice that challenged the constructs of courtly love and its distant *diosa-amada*, albeit a female voice mediated by the masculine writer.⁵

A number of pro- and anti-women works were penned during the same period in the *querelle des femmes* debate. Two of the most important writing against women were *Libre de les dones* (1396) by Friar Francesc Eiximenis and the *Corbacho* of the Archpriest of Talavera Alfonso Martínez de Toledo (1438). The *Libre* of the Franciscan friar was printed in Barcelona in 1495 and translated into Castilian sometime in the fifteenth century. Isabel of Castile owned a manuscript copy of the translation (Brandenberger 251-52). Eiximenis's primary stated concern was theological and not social—he does not give instruction on behavior for the betterment of society, but rather to allow his readers to escape divine punishment by right living (Brandenberger 106). In the *Corbacho* Martínez de Toledo included a general reprobation of licentiousness, but also attacked the ideals of courtly love and sought instead to channel love and sexuality into the approved institution of marriage.⁶ The

⁴ As might be expected connections to Italy for early modern Spanish conduct manuals continued to exist beyond the popularity of the translations and imitations of the *Cortesano* and the *Galateo*—southern Italy, after all, was part of the Spanish empire. In fact, two of the works I discuss were printed in Italy (see discussions below of *Tractado de la hermosura* and *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres*). Despite a respect for Italian culture most manuals examined in this article were not mere imitations of Italian texts but represent an authentically Spanish tradition. They often use other Peninsular texts among their primary sources for imitation, as I explain below in the case of Pedro de Luján's *Coloquios matrimoniales*. Julian Weiss highlights the Spanish-Italian connection in literature of the courtly sphere in the introduction to his list of medieval *querelle des femmes* works in Castilian and Catalan (275). See also Benedetto Croce's classic study for a history of Spanish influence in Italy during this period.

⁵ See Antonio Cortijo, who also describes Boase's theory (Cortijo Ocaña 2-3). For more on women's voices in such works see pages 15-16 of this article.

⁶ Michael Gerli advances this theory in the introduction to his edition of the *Corbacho* (39). For an analysis of the Archipreste's attack on courtly love see pages 39-47 of Gerli's introduction. An anonymous translation / adaptation of *Libre* into Castilian named *Carro de las donas* was printed in Valladolid in 1542. Brandenberger analyzes both *Libre* and *Carro* (81-106, 251-67).

aristocratic and refined ideals of courtly love were thus under pressure from clergy and emerging middling groups writing from outside the nobility.⁷

Many other works giving advice or teaching on marriage appeared from the late Middle Ages throughout the sixteenth century. In a comprehensive study of marriage books written in the Iberian Peninsula from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century Tobias Brandenberger shows the heterogeneity of these works: they produce neither a monolithic model for marriage nor a single image of women. They do share some characteristics, Brandenberger explains. None of the works, not even the lone text with a female author, challenge the system of patriarchy and male superiority; all share a didactic purpose; and most approach the topic from a theological or economic focus –economic in Brandenberger’s vocabulary referring to domestic arrangements and roles, including relationship to extended family and servants. While earlier texts tended towards lists of lists of rules or advice, later works included more theoretical reflections about marriage and incorporated more literary elements, that is, the use of “exemplum, citas de autoridades, anécdotas, poesías u otros complementos” in support of the author’s arguments.⁸ The humanist conduct dialogue is a clear example of this last characteristic.

Why so many texts treating marriage and women’s nature? A comprehensive answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article, but one aspect must not be overlooked. While in the fifteenth century sentimental production and some of the *querelle* works interacted with the ideology of courtly love, by the early sixteenth century the Protestant movement was causing great consternation in the Spanish kingdoms. Marriage was an important topic in this struggle –recall that Martin Luther was a former priest who married a former nun. The Roman Catholic hierarchy affirmed the centrality of marriage in the dispute when the Council of Trent (1545-63) included the nature of marriage and practices surrounding it in its decrees. Many clerics and moralists, however, took pen to paper even before that time to express their views on the topic.⁹ Numerous works in the sentimental tradition were generated during the sixteenth century and these were sometimes read as conduct manuals, but texts on marriage and women’s roles crafted by humanists were different in at least

⁷ For further reading on the medieval expressions of the *querelle* in the Spanish context see the article by Julian Weiss. In his introduction to *La perfecta casada* Javier San José Lera includes a list of texts taking each side of the *querelle* (see notes 30 and 32) and a discussion of the classical and Patristic sources for beliefs about women and marriage (19-24).

⁸ Brandenberger’s comments are on pp. 304-10. There are many recent studies on marriage manuals written in the Iberian Peninsula during this time period. See for example Ana María Díaz Ferrero and María Helena Vilas-Boase Alvim on Portuguese works, as well as an edition of Francisco Manuel de Mello’s *Carta de Guía de Casados* by Pedro Serra. María de Lurdes Correia Fernandes, Isabel Morant Deusa, and Pedro Serra (2001) analyze both Spanish and Portuguese works of the late Middle Ages and early modern periods.

⁹ Declarations on marriage occurred during the third and final period of the Council, from 1562-63. Of the eight works I discuss three were published before 1563. The remaining five were published between 1573 and 1589.

two respects: they were written in a more erudite tradition and, notably, almost never included a female voice. Of this latter group it is conduct *dialogues* that I analyze.

The dialogue was a logical choice for a conduct book primarily because of its didactic nature, but also because it was persuasive, personal, and, in the Spanish context, almost always monologic. These features helped produce its enormous popularity throughout Europe in the sixteenth century. Jesús Gómez catalogues just over 170 dialogues in Latin and Castilian in the Peninsula (1988, 217-36), while other scholars record as many as 260 titles in England (Wilson ix) and at least one hundred in Italy (Burke 1989, 5). More than simply didactic, the dialogue was a persuasive text meant to impart information or ideas that would change behavior (Vian Herrero “Género literario” 7). The sixteenth-century Spanish dialogue engaged in persuasion primarily by using an accumulation of external *auctoritas*, whether *exempla*, *sententiae*, *chria*, or adages. Accretion of these authoritative statements, rather than the logic of an argument, convinced the audience of the correctness of the position presented (Gómez 1988, 51). As with most texts from the period these external proofs were gleaned from Biblical, patristic, and classical sources.

A dialogue also wove personal relationships into the fabric of the work: authors generally presented friends engaged in conversation, recreating an amicable and intimate setting that reduced the distance between reader and text. Authors expressed in their works the belief that this and several other features of the dialogue form made it more accessible to the reading public. Several writers explained in the preliminaries the choice to compose a dialogue precisely because it melded persuasion and teaching with a personal approach. The presence of various interlocutors –and especially of a variety of disciples or learners– would entertain the consumer and heighten his interest. Furthermore, the reader would see himself in one or more of the speakers and identify with the questions asked, with the hope that he would internalize the authoritative answers that were given: the personal nature of the dialogue thus heightened the persuasive power of the text.¹⁰ Although the social dimension of the dialogue was a mere fiction, I believe the form itself supported the aims of a conduct book: this imaginary conversation among social equals would have served as a reminder to the reader that one’s behavior in the real world was being observed and judged by others.¹¹ In most cases there was a teacher figure among the friends who

¹⁰ For examples of such statements see prologues to Juan de Pineda’s *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana*, Salamanca, 1589 (5) and Francisco de Ávila’s *Diálogos en que se trata de quitar la presunción y brío al hombre a quien el favor y prosperidad del mundo tienen vanaglorioso y sobervio...*, Alcalá de Henares, 1576 (“Al christiano y piadoso lector.”). Similar comments occur in other dialogues I do not treat in this article: see prologues to Pedro de Medina, *Libro de la verdad*, 1554; Juan de Guzmán, *Primera parte de la retórica*, 1589; and María de San José, *Libro de recreaciones*, ca. 1589. For a discussion of these and other features of the dialogue as highlighted by the authors, including a defense of the vernacular, see my *Sixteenth-Century Self-Help: Reception of the Dialogue in Spain* (Harllee 91-106).

¹¹ Barbara Correll (23) and Norbert Elias (79-82) contend that Renaissance conduct manuals feature the consideration of what others might think as a means of regulating behavior. Elias explains that this

clearly expounded the authoritative position and would have represented societal pressures to conform. For all these reasons, then, the dialogue ably fulfilled its didactic purpose.

The teaching in conduct dialogues was thus enclosed within a friendly conversation that featured discussions about both men's and women's roles, particularly within the family structure. The interlocutors were almost always men, and women only appeared indirectly in the dialogues as a topic under consideration. Furthermore, textual traces of the female reader –a mention in a prologue, for example– are rare. The absence of women readers in these texts is striking for two reasons. First, one can reasonably assume an active interest in debates about their roles in the family and the wider society. Second, the authors themselves explain their choice of the dialogue form as a conscious move towards the reader, and an attempt to heighten the persuasive power of the text upon him. Authors did not address the potential dilemma faced by the reader who, as in the case of women, finds no interlocutor with whom she can identify in the text. Although their lives were a primary topic of concern, in the arena of the conduct dialogue in sixteenth-century Spain women are nearly completely absent as both readers and speakers.

The dialogue had a distinguished classical pedigree and was a favorite vehicle of humanists for diffusion of knowledge in Latin. Many Renaissance dialogues directly imitated classical works; in Spain the favored model was Cicero. Unlike Plato's famous conversations in which Socrates applied his mayeutic method to students by using questions to draw the truth from them, a great number of Spanish works –and all those examined in this essay– were monologic, speaking only one truth. This closed nature is evident even in the typographical presentation: in a Socratic colloquy each interlocutor's utterance is relatively brief and the give and take of the interaction is easily visible. By contrast, in many Spanish works the teacher pronounces long discourses, punctuated only occasionally by brief questions or comments from the other interlocutors. Even with a multiplicity of voices the message or truth taught was only one. Juan Costa declared in the introduction to his conduct manual, for example, that it was the duty of the author to employ a monologic approach. His intention was not to impress, or worse, confuse the learner, because

como es mi fin enseñar al que sabe poco y las [sentencias] que aquí se tratan son materias morales, he escogido por mejor proceder por conclusiones ciertas y verdades averiguadas que reduzielas a contradiciones dudosas y questiones escolásticas, dejando los discursos methaphísicos para los que leen en cáthedras públicas. (52)

aspect differentiated Renaissance manuals from medieval advice books, which merely passed on tradition to the reader (72). Ana Vian Herrero ably discusses the dynamics and importance of the fictional conversations in the Spanish dialogue (see Vian Herrero 1992, 1988).

Costa, along with most dialogue writers in the Peninsula, aimed to provide straightforward answers rather than to encourage speculation. The need to provide clear examples was motivated by the desire to reach the intended reader, one who was not a member of the intellectual class but rather one “who knows little”, in Costa’s words.¹²

The use of the vernacular increased the accessibility of these books, while the expansion of literacy helped increased their potential audience. The choice of the common language is not surprising, since conduct books were aimed at a broader, non-erudite public. It is interesting, however, that a form used repeatedly by European intellectuals in Latin to communicate with, teach, and persuade one another should also be used so widely in the common tongue. There are approximately three times as many Castilian dialogues as Latin in sixteenth-century Spain, and the proportion of vernacular to Latin texts widens gradually as the century progresses.¹³ The steady expansion of literacy into the middling groups of society and increasing availability of relatively inexpensive books made private reading an ever more popular form of learning. The conduct book in dialogue form, whose intimate topics were well-suited to self-instruction, flourished at the confluence of all of these factors in the latter part of the sixteenth century in Spain. This vehicle allowed humanists and other intellectuals to extend classical and Biblical learned content to a wider, non-specialist audience.¹⁴

On the whole the sixteenth-century Castilian dialogue was a masculine space, a characteristic inherited from its origins in classical literature. The dialogues of Cicero, the preferred model for Iberian works, featured men at leisure discussing matters important to their lives and careers such as the use of rhetoric in the political realm or the importance of friendship. Except for Lucian’s dialogues of the courtesans –satirical works of an entirely different nature written in the second century A.D.– women were hardly visible as interlocutors in the classical dialogue and particularly not in Cicero’s opus (Cox 386-87). Many classical colloquies examine serious political or philosophical themes, topics not considered to be women’s concerns.

Although women figure prominently as a topic in Spanish humanist conduct dialogues, they are not an active presence: male interlocutors discuss women’s lives and how they as husbands and fathers might manage them, but almost always exclude

¹² Successive printings of this work bore different titles: *El ciudadano . . . tracta de cómo se ha de regir a sí mismo, su casa y República* (Pamplona, 1575); *El regidor o Ciudadano* (Salamanca, 1578); and *Gobierno del ciudadano* (Zaragoza, 1584).

¹³ Calculations based on Jesús Gómez’s 1988 bibliography (1988, 217-30).

¹⁴ See Gómez (2000) for a helpful review of criticism on the dialogue in Spain (2000, 169-74). I subscribe to his position that the Spanish sixteenth-century dialogue is generally didactic and is used to convince the reader of received and authoritative truths. Gómez denies that the form is used to present a variety of viewpoints and encourage the reader to choose from among them. His 2000 book also contains a bibliography of sixteenth-century Spanish dialogues which, although it appears to contain fewer entries it essentially has the same works as the 1998 book (175-87). (A different 2000 printing of the same book is titled *El diálogo renacentista*.)

the female voice from the conversation. This is perhaps not surprising given that the civil subject of the time was always masculine, and even texts that discuss marriage and women's behavior are concerned with defining masculine roles (Correll 19). In the majority of the Spanish conduct dialogues authors gave neither voice nor agency to women in the texts they created. As illustrations I will discuss four works printed in the second half of the sixteenth century, although other examples exist.¹⁵

The title of Juan Costa's *Gobierno del ciudadano* (Pamplona, 1575) points to a particular class of men in Spanish society: the *ciudadanos* or citizens who lived off rental or investment income and were part of the lower nobility (Ubach Medina 22-23). A selection from the table of contents further confirms the inscription of a male reader in Costa's text: "Diálogo primero, en que se dize que el ciudadano ha de saber regirse a sí, su familia y casa, para que sepa bien regir la república" or "Diálogo tercero, en que se trata cuál ha de ser la muger que ha de escoger el ciudadano para viuir más descansado" (Costa 501-02). In Costa's view a morally upright male citizen provided the foundation for a well-ordered republic: the household is a kind of smaller kingdom, a reflection of society in miniature. The husband ruled his wife, children, and servants, and attempted to provide a peaceful and prosperous environment in which they could flourish. The health of the city or the state depended on the multiplication of these prosperous, orderly households. The interlocutors insist that a citizen must be virtuous and must govern his household well in order for the wider municipality to function.¹⁶

Juan de Molina's *Tractado llamado Argumento de vida* (Seville, 1550) covers many of the life stages typically treated in conduct books: young and old, rich and poor, married and single, secular and religious. In each brief dialogue two men argue the benefits of each state. Upon analysis, the married/single debate proves to be a discussion by men of the advantages and disadvantages of their respective states exclusively treated from the male point of view. For example, in response to the *soltero* who gives examples of men in antiquity who were murdered by or otherwise suffered at the hands of their wives, the *casado* argues that "te podría yo decir muchos más [ejemplos de los] que por la virtud y excelencia de sus mujeres fueron puestos en veneración" (*Tractado llamado argumento de vida, "Diálogo cuarto"*).¹⁷ The

¹⁵ Humanist conduct dialogues not in this essay are Antonio de Torquemada, *Coloquios satíricos* (Mondónedo, 1553); Juan de Mora, *Discursos morales* (Madrid, 1589); and Marco Antonio de Camós, *Gobierno universal del hombre christiano, para todos los estados y qualquiera de ellos* (Barcelona, 1592). For an overview of Spanish conduct books see Mariló Vigil.

¹⁶ Costa was a professor of rhetoric at Salamanca, and then later of law at several other universities in the Peninsula. He was also politically active in Zaragoza, the city where he was born (Gil 163). For Costa's dialogue see the introduction to the modern edition by Antonio Ubach Medina (7-29) and the article by R. Truman.

¹⁷ Quotations from books without page numbers are referenced by the title of the section cited. When quoting from original texts I have modernized spellings and word divisions. I consulted Molina's and Avila's works in the National Library of Spain, Madrid (call numbers R/15898 and U/4154, respectively). Little is known about Juan de Molina apart from his university education. Brandenberger

argument is whether marriage is a burden or a blessing for men. Despite Molina's claim in the prologue to have written a work that will benefit everyone, women's concerns about marriage are marginalized in this discussion.

Friar Francisco de Ávila's *Diálogos en que se trata de quitar la presunción y brío al hombre...* (Alcalá, 1576) similarly treats men from diverse civil states. Despite the fact that the author employs the gender-neutral *gente* to refer to potential readers in the preliminaries to the text, all of the interlocutors in the twenty-six dialogues are men. *Desengaño*, the teaching figure, is "un hombre de edad, de autoridad, de experiencia, de letras, y dado a virtud" (Ávila, "Materia y argumento del tratado . . ."). The learner is always a man representing a particular group or class. Noteworthy for this study are the following pairs: "hombre señor de pueblos y vasallos" / "hombre vasallo"; "hombre noble" / "hombre de obscuro linaje"; "hombre rico" / "hombre necesitado" (Ávila 187v-88r). Ávila reveals in the prologue his conviction that the dialogue form would allow the consumer to imagine he is one of the interlocutors. He would thus feel the speakers are addressing his problems directly ("Al cristiano y piadoso lector"). The author undoubtedly believed this form would transform his text into something far more personal and immediately helpful than, say, a treatise. He must have assumed that women would not read his book, or that they would benefit just as well from its teachings without any female characters with which to identify.¹⁸

The context for the curious title of Juan de Pineda's *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* is given in an early dialogue when the host (Policronio) asks the teacher figure (Filaletes) to use the metaphor of the vineyard to "descubrirnos doctrinas provechosas para nuestras almas, que a veces están como heredades desamparadas" (161: 45).¹⁹ Not only are the four interlocutors men, but also Policronio has expressly asked for "doctrinas provechosas para *nuestras* almas" (emphasis added). At the end of many days of discussion the men are satisfied with the outcome. Filaletes declares:

discusses his *Sermón breve en loor del matrimonio para mayor alegría y consolación de todos los bien casados* (Valencia, 1528). It is an adaptation of Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii*, which was never translated into Spanish. Molina's *Sermon* was published in one volume with a Spanish translation of Erasmus's *Enquiridion* (Brandenberger 291-92). Rafael Malpartida Tirado analyzes the construction of conversation in Molina's dialogues (73-83), and also has published a modern edition of the work (see *Argumento de vida*).

¹⁸ The title page of the dialogue shows the author as "el Doctor Francisco de Ávila, Canonigo de la Colegial de Belmonte". He should not be confused with other writers of the same name, one born in 1573. I know of no critical studies or recent editions of this work.

¹⁹ Pineda (1521?-1599?) was born in Madrigal, Ávila, and attended the University of Salamanca. He was a Franciscan friar who served as a preacher and theologian. His other works include *Libro de la vida...de San Juan Baptista* (Salamanca, 1574), the *Monarquía Eclesiástica* (of which only the first part was published, in 1576), and *Libro del paso honroso* (Salamanca, 1588) (Meseguer Fernández viii-xl). On the *Diálogos familiares* and its author see the introduction to the BAE edition of the work by Juan Meseguer Fernández. For the work see also Daniele Domenichini, Barbara Kurtz, and Rafael Malpartida Tirado (135-44).

Si bien os catáis de adonde salimos y adonde habemos llegado, hallaréis que habemos rematado con nuestra *Agricultura Cristiana*, habiendo engendrado a un hombre natural, y después habiéndole cultivado en lo moral, y después habiendo sembrado en él lo que es de gracia y de virtudes; y a la postre, después de la muerte, habiéndole presentado en el juicio universal... (170, 431)

This could be called Pineda's Catholic counterpart to Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*: instead of creating the ideal courtier, the interlocutors have created the ideal Christian man. In the course of their discussions they review every conceivable topic, including suggestions on how to choose a mate and engender children, devotional discussions on how to avoid sin, a lapidary, and a brief *ars moriendi*. Throughout the multi-volume work Pineda draws upon classical and patristic wisdom and the teachings of the Christian scriptures. Pineda situates his colloquy in a *convite* or symposium, a typical setting for classical and Renaissance dialogues. The choice of venue reinforces the masculine nature of the space: the symposium was an arena for men at table who were at leisure to engage in musings about life and philosophy, a place to engage in debate and enjoy one another's company. It was a discussion by and for men.

Pineda includes topics of interest to women in his work –questions about nursing babies, engendering healthy children, and how to conceive male children, for example– but like Molina's *Argumento de vida* it is the masculine voice that pronounces every topic.²⁰ Pineda undoubtedly wished also to create an image of the ideal Catholic woman in his book, but without the intervention of women speakers or actors in the text.

The weight of the above evidence indicates these books were written for men: through an amenable conversation they discuss how to manage women and how to live well in all areas of one's life. The reader is both persuaded of the need to rule women and instructed on how to accomplish the task through personal study. The conduct dialogue thus not only reinforced accepted practice regarding women's submission to male leadership, it also provided advice and support to men as they fulfilled this important responsibility and thus helped shape them as masculine subjects. By attempting to shape women's lives indirectly, through the agency of the male reader, Pineda and his fellow writers become allies to husbands and fathers as they exercise control over wives and daughters.²¹

²⁰ Recent scholarship on advice and practices regarding wet nurses includes articles by Emilie Bergmann and Carolyn Nadeau. Both include conduct manuals as primary sources; Nadeau specifically analyzes Luján's *Coloquios* and two other texts.

²¹ A recent and exhaustive investigation of women's private libraries in Valladolid in fact shows only one conduct manual (the authors use the phrase "libros directivos sobre mujeres") in any of the collections: Guiomar de Berrio, widow of a barber, owned a copy of Pedro de Luján's *Coloquios matrimoniales* (Cátedra and Rojo Vega 178). My own very limited search of inventories of women's libraries available in print confirms the finding: none contain conduct manuals (see the five inventories in Trevor Dadson).

Despite the decidedly masculine tenor of the Renaissance dialogue's classical heritage, some early modern European colloquies included women interlocutors and some women even wrote dialogues. Baldesar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, which was published in 1528 and translated into French and Spanish within a decade, was the first Italian dialogue in the Ciceronian tradition to feature women speakers and may have influenced the incorporation of female speakers into subsequent colloquies (Cox 387).²² Virginia Cox catalogues almost thirty Italian dialogues that included women speakers, several of which were created by women. These dialogues generally did not challenge women's subordination. On the contrary, she found that the women's utterances served merely to "faithfully underscore the dominant discourse of men" (394-97). Janet Smarr's study of women's presence in dialogues counts six female authors in France who together penned some eleven works (283-86).

A number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Peninsular texts in the sentimental or *tratados de amores* tradition include female interlocutors. This tradition dates to the late Middle Ages in the Peninsula and includes the *cancioneros* and the sentimental novel. The woman often engages in spirited debate with her lover about the nature and practices of courtly love. Although not part of the humanist and erudite corpus and not written as works of ethical or moral philosophy, they were nevertheless often read as conduct books. Prominent among these works are *Diálogos de amor intitulado Dórida* by Dámaso de Frías (Burgos, 1593), *Coloquio de la prueba de leales* of Luis Hurtado de Toledo (Toledo, 1537), and *Coloquios de amor y bienaventuranza* by Juan Sedeño (n.p., 1536).²³ *El cortesano* by Luis Milán (Valencia, 1561) also belongs to this group. Ostensibly aimed at the nobility, it reads somewhat like an enacted medieval *cancionero* in which the interlocutors engage in witty and sometimes risqué coquetry, verbal sparring, and recitations of amorous poetry in which women are fully engaged. A cursory reading of any of these works shows that they are quite different from the conduct dialogues I examine in this article.²⁴

²² Three French translations appeared between 1537 and 1592: J. Colin (Paris, 1537), Gabriel Chappuy (Lyon, 1580), and one anonymous translation (Burke 1995, 63-4). Juan Boscán's 1534 Spanish translation is discussed below. For a complete treatment of the reception of *Il Cortegiano*, including an entire chapter on translations, see Burke (1995).

²³ For a selection of texts from this tradition see the anthology edited by Pedro Cátedra, whose introduction to Sedeño's *Coloquios* also contains helpful information (Cátedra *Tratados de amor en el entorno de Celestina, siglos XV-XVI*; Sedeño). Cátedra believes Sedeño's work was published by Pedro Tovans in Medina del Campo (Sedeño 32).

²⁴ Some sentimental novels incorporate epistolary exchanges between the lovers and thus also give space for a female voice through her letters. At least three other dialogues outside the sentimental category included women speakers and two were written by women, a relatively small number in an opus of nearly 170 known dialogues penned in the sixteenth century. Luisa Sigea (1520-60) wrote the erudite *Duarum virginum colloquium de vita aulica et privata* exploring the *vita beata* theme. Francisco Delicado's *Retrato de la lozana andaluza* (Venice, 1528) belongs to the *Celestina* tradition and is an early picaresque work (Damiani 13-14). Discalced Carmelite prioress María de San José wrote *Libro de recreaciones*, probably the only dialogue in Castilian written by a woman, with women interlocutors, and intended for women readers. María creates Carmelite sisters to teach one another about various

The use of female interlocutors in two enormously popular sixteenth-century conduct dialogues published in Spain is striking given their near total absence in the classical dialogue and other Castilian humanist conduct dialogues. I do not analyze the first, Juan Boscán's *El cortesano*, choosing instead to focus on conduct dialogues written originally in Spanish. The second text, Pedro de Luján's *Coloquios matrimoniales* (Seville, 1550), saw eleven Spanish editions and a translation into Italian by 1589 (Rallo Gruss 1). I examine here Luján's book along with other three dialogues with textual evidence of female readers.

The first of these four dialogues is Friar Francisco de Osuna's *Norte de los estados...* (Seville, 1531). It is important among conduct manuals for several reasons, not the least because the author claims it is the first such book for laypersons in Spain. Indeed, *Norte* was published almost twenty years prior to *Coloquios matrimoniales* and *Tractado llamado argumento de vida*, the earliest of the other works in this study, and at a time when as many dialogues were penned in Latin as in the vernacular. In the prologue Osuna discredits other texts that discuss the topic of marriage for being deficient in providing practical advice. His discourse underscores that he conceived *Norte* as belonging to the popular self-help category, a work meant to provide specific help to the reader. Just as clergy and religious have their rules of life, wrote Osuna, so also "los casados han menester señalado doctrina y regla que hallarán en este libro muy cumplidamente" ("Prólogo del libro llamado Norte de los estados..."). The comparison between the rule of life for a monk or nun and his "doctrina y regla" signals Osuna's desire to construct models of masculine and feminine piety for lay persons.²⁵

monastic practices in a kind of conduct book for nuns. The work conforms perfectly to the canons of the classical and Renaissance dialogue but is conspicuous because it is not monologic, utilizes women speakers, and refers to women readers. Written in about 1585, it remained unpublished until recently but enjoyed wide circulation in manuscript form inside and outside Carmelite convents. See Alison Weber's introduction in a recent bilingual edition of the work. The authorship of the medical dialogue *Nueva filosofía de la naturaleza del hombre* (Madrid, 1587) has been a matter of debate. Antonio Prieto (313-14) claims the author was Miguel Sabuco, while others attribute the work to his daughter, Oliva, whose name appeared on the title page and in the preliminaries of the princeps. For a recent treatment of this work that affirms Oliva's authorship see an English translation and edition by Mary Ellen Waithe, et. al. (Sabuco and Sabuco de Nantes y Barrera). Ironically this new edition of the book is listed in the WorldCat database with the father's name first.

²⁵ Osuna (1497-ca. 1542), a Franciscan ascetic, was well-known for several of his writings: Teresa of Ávila named his *Tercer abecedario espiritual* (1527, 1537, and others) as her teacher in the mystical practice of "oración de recogimiento" (Teresa de Ávila 118), and his six collections of Latin sermons were published in numerous editions throughout Europe (Gutiérrez 528, note 7). Osuna and his works on prayer are frequently studied as part of the ascetic-mystical spiritual ferment in the early sixteenth century, but his *Norte de los estados* has received much less attention. For a recent treatment of Osuna see Jessica A. Boon. On *Norte* and Osuna's other works see Jesús Gutiérrez. Dana Bultman discusses *Norte* in a chapter of her 2007 book. There is currently no modern edition of the dialogue, although in a conference abstract Dana Bultman states she is preparing one (see <http://www.stoa.org/kflc2/view/abstract.php?id=284&cf=6>).

Unlike many sixteenth-century dialogues, Osuna writes himself directly into the work without so much as a veil of a fictional character: the two interlocutors are Villa Señor, a man Osuna names as his disciple in the prologue, and *el autor*. In another departure from the typical dialogue, Osuna's work follows Villa Señor through various life stages. Their conversations in book one treat his bachelorhood, book two his marriage, and book three his recent widowed state. Villa Señor asks friar Osuna to preach the sermon at his wedding and later at his wife's funeral, and both sermons are integrated into the dialogue text. The biographical approach added interest to the work, helping the reader identify with the life problems Villa Señor confronted, with the effect of conditioning him or her to accept the advice offered by the teacher figure / author.

Also of interest is the fact that *Norte de los estados* gives nearly equal attention to men and women in most topics under consideration. A perusal of the table of contents of book two, on marriage, shows that alternating chapters are directed toward husbands and wives. For example, the chapter entitled "de como el marido debe proveer su casa" is followed by another "de como la mujer ha de servir su casa". The topic of book one is virginity, and even here Osuna takes a balanced approach: he uses the masculine form *el virgen* in three chapter titles while in two others he uses the term *los vírgenes*, which can refer to both men and women. In the chapters in question Osuna appears to speak at times to young men, at times to young women, and at times to both. In the prologue he mentions specifically the importance of young men maintaining virginity until marriage. While conduct books generally stressed female chastity, in this case the Franciscan places equal emphasis on both sexes.

Like most conduct dialogues Osuna inserts women into the text as objects of discussion; however, he diverges from the norm by also including a trace of the female reader. The third book is about widowhood, but here only *la viuda* is named in the chapter titles. The introduction to book three gives the reason for this one-sided approach: Villa Señor suggests that Osuna give advice on widowhood in general and says that since

hay por nuestros pecados más viudas que viudos, aun que debería ser al revés, y las mujeres se aplican más a lo que es de religión *bien será hablar en la regla con ellas que la tomarán presto*, y los viudos que la quisieren seguir, bien sabrán tomar de ella lo que les conviene, que todo lo hace mudar el hombre. (Fol. Cxliiii-v, emphasis added)

Through his interlocutor Osuna here inscribes the presence of both female and male readers into the text, claiming that men will know how to apply the rules to their situation. Villa Señor's odd comment appears to circumvent the express purpose of Osuna's work, since he suggests that women will submit to the author's teaching because of its religious nature while men can choose to obey or not according to "lo que les conviene". The distinction Villa Señor draws between men and women in his

audience is manifest: women are more religious and therefore the friar should address them directly. They seem to function as passive receptacles who take in all they read and will naturally submit to the teaching. Men, on the other hand, can take from his comments whatever they decide will serve them regardless of the fact that the section is addressed to women, since men know how to manipulate or transform (*mudar*) what they see in order to apply it to their particular situation. Villa Señor, then, describes men as active readers who will discern what is best for their situations. By contrast, women require teaching that is explicitly written for them, as if they lack the capacity to judge for themselves. Such stark differentiation of the essential nature of the sexes, as well as emphasis on women's passivity, were accepted as universal truths authenticated by antiquity.

Osuna's work seems to move towards women readers in ways conduct dialogues discussed above do not. He includes them in the text, however briefly, and he directs teaching to both men and women. But there is a limit to the shape and agency Osuna gives to women. His female reader is passive, and no female voice is heard in the text. Osuna creates a life-like interlocutor and follows his joys and sorrows in marriage. Osuna and Villa Señor talk about the latter's wife, and genuinely mourn her death, yet the writer never gives her a voice or even a silent presence in the text. She is only real to the extent that masculine speakers give her shape and life.

In his prologue to *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres* (Milán, 1580) Juan de Espinosa states that he wrote "un Dialogo intitulado Micracanthos cuyos exemplos... son specialmente enderezados al hombre" (19), of which no extant copy exists (14). In Espinosa's eyes *Laude* thus completed a pair of books. According to the author both dialogues aimed to provide examples of virtuous lives to emulate and wicked lives to avoid. In addition to a defense of women the work includes a conduct book in miniature with advice for the four life stations of women: unmarried daughters, married women, widows, and nuns.²⁶

There are traces of both women and men as readers in the preliminaries to this text. In the prologue the author refers to his female readers, hoping that

las que aora viven y las demas que les suscederan; tengan en la memoria é imiten las virtudes de las buenas [mujeres], y escarmentando en el vituperio y condemnation de las malas, huyan de aquel camino por donde ellas fueron, aquellos ignominiosos precipicios y naufragios, y finalmente, aquella pena eterna en que por sus vitios incurrieron. (19-20)

²⁶ From a minor noble family, Espinosa was a soldier and emissary for the Spanish crown in Venice. He worked for Charles V and Phillip II keeping abreast of the activities of the Turks. His other works include *Micracanthos* (mentioned above) and a collection of proverbs. These biographical details are found in modern editions of the dialogue by Angela González Simón (Espinosa 9-10) and José López Romero (9-14). Malpartida Tirado includes *Laude* in his study of the conversational nature of Golden Age dialogues (127-35).

The role expected of women is clear: imitate the good examples and do not follow the bad. The author takes pains to craft a text suited to moral and ethical apprenticeship: his own description of *Laude* in the preliminaries identifies it as monologic, with examples that do not require deciphering.

The male reader also appears in the prologue. As was typical in early modern texts Espinosa discusses at length his future response to anticipated criticism and states that “speraré gratamente con deseo y humildad la corrección [sic] de los buenos y sabios varones...” (21, emphasis added). This refers not to the audience in general, but to male readers. Despite his earlier allusion to contemporary and future female readers, the author does not expect, nor does he invite, constructive criticism from women. They can and should learn from his work, but are not invited to join the critical conversation about its worth or its defects. This is to be expected in a patriarchal society where authority figures, especially the church and moralist writers, consistently insisted that women live quiet lives in the private sphere and strongly discouraged any attempt to employ a public voice. The world of printed books and of public debate about ideas was not legally forbidden to women, and although in actual experience women did engage in proscribed behavior patriarchal structures and institutions certainly exerted strong pressure on women not to do so. Espinosa’s text continues to exclude women from the discussion. As with other dialogues, male interlocutors here discuss women, their worth, their problems, and how to manage them properly, but do not speak directly to them nor allow a woman’s voice in the conversation. Unlike the texts discussed in the first part of this essay, Espinosa does imagine a female reader.

In the conduct book section the discussion concerns how men are to control daughters, wives, and widows. Through his mouthpiece Philalithes –whose name means “friend of truth” (35)– Espinosa includes such conventional advice as having unmarried daughters avoid drinking much wine, all books that are not “honestissima y buena”, and conversation with men, including even more than what is minimally necessary with an older confessor. More stringent methods are used for daughters who have “alguna sinistra [sic] y obstinada inclinación”, including that parents should use corporal punishment (suggested for both sons and daughters) (242). The book underscores the importance of enclosing wives in their homes as a means of keeping them safe from sexual temptation, thereby protecting the wife’s reputation and the family’s honor (248-50). Philalithes also warns that women should not openly look at men –their gaze should be kept lowered or hidden behind a veil. Freedom of movement, of the gaze, and of speech is associated with sexual license (241-50). Strict enclosure is also recommended for widows, despite the reality that upon her husband’s death a widow became the head of the household and inherited responsibility for and authority over children and servants (Fernández Alvarez 125). The need to leave the house to work and provide for her household is dismissed with the suggestions that the widow pray, fast, and remarry as quickly as possible (Espinosa 270-73).

While these comments will appear extreme to moderns, recall that they occur in a work that defends women. Philalithes, who is unmistakably the teacher figure, declares repeatedly that women are more chaste and virtuous than men and that no one should consider them less worthy. In fact, the impetus of the dialogue is the disappointment expressed by Philodoxo because his wife has just birthed a daughter, and his misogynistic statement that this causes him more grief than if mother and child had died in childbirth (Espinosa 36). Philalithes chastises his friend for such an ignorant and unchristian opinion and exhorts him to rather praise God for the gift of a daughter. In the ensuing dialogue Philalithes uses the authoritative classical and Biblical texts, popular sayings, and simple logic to refute arguments for the inferiority of women. At every turn Philodoxo is forced to concede the correctness of his friend's views.

Espinosa thus joins the *querelle des femmes*, the centuries old debate on the nature of women, on the side of women. He is also, however, a defender of contemporary, accepted practices that inhibited their freedom and agency. While these two views may appear to us to be contradictory, their juxtaposition was completely logical at the time. As a defender of women Espinosa can imagine females who will engage his text and learn from it how to live a worthy life –this is the reader who appears in the prologue. Nevertheless, throughout *Laude* women appear as objects to be managed and controlled, a control that begins with the male teacher figure –and the author behind him– who shapes the conversation and all the arguments it contains. Espinosa does not reject the patriarchal ideology that legitimizes domination of women by husbands and fathers. He does, however, object to derogatory comments about women that he and others of his day considered defamatory.

Maximiliano Calvi published *Tractado de la hermosura y del amor* (Milán, 1576) in order, he declares, to help his audience find a way amongst the treacherous paths of human affairs. Love and beauty together are “la moneda que mas corre, y la que mas facilmente se puede y suele falsificar,” as Calvi warns, proving the need for a trustworthy guide in human affairs (“El auctor al lector”). The author vows that the truths expounded in his dialogues will undeceive the public of their mistaken notions concerning these matters, as well as provide a theoretical foundation for practical decisions and actions. Calvi's dialogues join an ample group of works on the theme of love in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁷

Confident that his subject will interest everyone, from the beginning of his work Calvi creates a clear teacher and guide. The dialogue is a debate between two friends concerning the nature of beauty and of love, but one soon surmises that Filalethio (*amigo de la verdad* according to Calvi) is the authority and Perergifilo (*porfiado* due

²⁷ According to Andrés Soria the book's contents imitate two earlier works: the renowned Neo-Platonist *Dialoghi d'amore* (1535) of León Hebreo and *De amore* by Agostino Nifo (302-04). Calvi was born in Italy, studied law, and moved to Milan where he worked in the *Magistrado* of Phillip II and rose to prominence in the duchy. He also wrote *Del profundo pensamiento amoroso* (Milán, 1579) and was known for his knowledge of languages (Soria 302). I know of no modern editions of Calvi's works.

to his persistent questions) rather easily acquiesces to his friend's greater knowledge. Later in the discussion Perergifilo begs Filalethio to tell him what human beauty is in order to "desengañarme desta enemiga mía, que con su vista me paró qual me habéis visto" –he is referring to an encounter with a beautiful young woman prior to their conversation that threw him into a state of confusion (5r). The work is divided into three parts: book one treats beauty, book two love, and book three is a treatise on erotic love.

Parts of Calvi's volume are heavy on moral teaching: he makes clear in book one that physical attractiveness is a mere shadow compared to spiritual beauty and virtue, and is thus much less important (9r). The work dissects and explains beauty as related to both women and men, though more attention is given to females. As is typical in such conduct books, Calvi especially focuses attention on the significance of chastity as the prime virtue needed for women of every station in life. For example a glance at the table of contents reveals the following chapter heading: "De que toda mujer de cualquier estado que sea puede alcanzar el título de cumplidamente hermosa". Whilst one might expect to find hints on how to improve appearance or maximize one's best physical features for effect, in fact it is an apology for modesty and chastity as the highest virtue for all women. Immediately following this chapter is a conduct book in miniature for unmarried, widowed, and married women, with the obligatory recitation of famous chaste women from history.

Textual evidence for the female reader occurs in this section of the book. Perergifilo thanks Filalethio for answering his questions and teaching him to "saber las partes que ha de haber en una mujer cumplidamente hermosa" (46v). Perergifilo now asks him to explain

entre tantas virtudes que habéis comprehendido debajo del concierto de ellas me dijessedes las que más importan...y que aquellas me las desmenuzassedes algo más particularmente cada una por sí, juntamente con algunos ejemplos de mujeres que hayan sido de ellas [i.e. las virtudes] dotadas, para que viéndose que las passadas fueron dignas de alcanzarlas *no se pierdan de ánimo las presentes y futuras en general de dessearlas y procurlas.* (46v, emphasis added)

The passing comment is reminiscent of Espinosa's mention of present and future readers in the prologue to *Diálogo en laude de las mujeres*. Although this reference is less explicit, Perergifilo's comment about his female audience dismantles the fictional illusion Calvi has thus far created –it is found in the dialogue itself and not in the preliminaries. It places Perergifilo in the odd position of signaling that the conversation in which he is engaged is in actuality a teaching tool, in this case especially for women, and brings someone who might have been captured by the fiction of the conversation back to herself. Metatextual comments of this nature, like

that of Villa Señor in *Norte de los estados* mentioned above, appear as one of many didactic techniques implemented in the sixteenth-century Spanish dialogue.

Tractado de la hermosura y del amor applies to both sexes the teaching that virtue is more important than attractiveness, but Calvi measures masculine beauty in an entirely different manner from feminine. While feminine loveliness depends upon chaste and modest behavior, handsomeness in a male is a sign of majesty and of his potential for great deeds. Filalethio contends that “es cierto que los que...son [hermosos] exceden a los otros en majestad, y se tienen por más bastantes para grande hazañas” (54v). For this reason, when the time comes to select a general for an army, the “más gentilhomme” amongst the candidates should be the first choice. In a man, therefore, physical beauty is a sign of greatness. In a woman, it is a trigger for men’s sexual appetite and “generalmente los mueve a desseo de gozarla” (44r). A man’s beauty only adds to his greatness, while in a woman it is associated with sexual arousal and temptation.

As previously mentioned Pedro de Luján’s *Coloquios matrimoniales* enjoyed great editorial success. Luján did not add new doctrines to the ample literature already in print on the topic of marriage and family, but instead collected material from three contemporary best-sellers and other texts. The majority of the content comes from Antonio de Guevara’s *Relox de príncipes* (Valladolid, 1529) and *Epístolas familiares* (Valladolid, 1539-41), with much of the rest being taken from Pedro de Mejía’s *Silva de varia lección* (Seville, 1540) (Rallo Gruss 4). Guevara’s popularity is well known, and through the end of the seventeenth century Mejía’s *Silva* enjoyed at least thirty-two Spanish editions and seventy-five translations published across Europe, as well as being the object of several imitations (Castro 53-54).²⁸

The view of marriage and gender roles advocated by Luján in the *Coloquios* is therefore like that put forward by a number of writers in sixteenth-century Spain. He principally emphasized three aspects of the new conception of matrimony: as the joining of “voluntades afines,” including the ability to choose one’s mate; as a haven of companionship in a private space, one especially important for the self-actualization of the wife; and as one in which wives are given specific tasks that convert them into the driving force for the home and family (Rallo Gruss 39). Luján also followed the strict division of gender roles common at the time, which included calls for women’s silence and enclosure in homes or convents as means of protection from sexual sin. He lists the duties of husbands and wives in contrasting pairs: husbands earn money while wives must take care not to misspend it, for example, and men deal with a variety of people while women ought to interact with only a few (Luján 151).

²⁸ Biographical details on Luján are scarce. According to María Isabel Romero Tabares he was the son of an artisan (*bordador*), studied civil law, and worked as a lawyer and printer in Seville in the sixteenth century (20-26). Recent work on Luján includes Asunción Rallo Gruss’s introduction to a critical edition of the *Coloquios matrimoniales*; analysis of the same work by Brandenberger (270-89); and a study of images of the woman in Luján’s two works, the *Coloquios* and his chivalric novel *Don Silves de la Selva* (Sevilla, 1546), by Romero Tabares.

There are several unique features in this work, however. Luján is one of few dialogue writers in sixteenth-century Spain to create female interlocutors. His teacher figure, Dorotea, is “casada, y assaz instructa en la lengua latina, y muy leyda en diversas historias . . .” (67). The other primary interlocutor is Eulalia. She is perhaps named for the character in *Conigium*, Erasmus’s famous dialogue on marriage, although in *Conigium* Eulalia is the one who gives advice. Luján’s Eulalia is Dorotea’s friend, and the work traces her personal struggles through various stages of life. Like Osuna’s *Norte de los estados* it covers a considerable time span: Luján’s creative arrangement allows the public to follow Eulalia from her single state through marriage and pregnancy. Though quite unusual in the dialogue form this biographical approach is appropriate for the topic. In the course of six colloquies the audience meets Eulalia’s husband, who also receives instruction from Dorotea, and the sons of the two women. The reader is not surprised to see Dorotea’s son teaching Eulalia’s son how good children should behave.

Luján was obligated to create a female character who knew Latin, certainly an unusual level of education for most women at the time, for without such knowledge Dorotea’s frequent referrals to erudite works would lack verisimilitude. Her advice is salted with quotations from Scripture and classical literature that reinforce standard contemporary teachings on women’s issues and women’s behavior. Dorotea explains in the fourth colloquy how she has obtained such a good education. Her father was “de mediana condición, y vivía en su hacienda en la cual se ocupaba poco, porque con una vez que hablaba a su criado que en ella tenía de lo que había de facer bastaba para tres y cuatro meses”. Freed from the need to attend closely to his business he devoted himself to study, reading aloud and commenting on his books to the entire family, including his daughters and his wife as they sewed. Dorotea says that “como yo entonces tenía pocos cuidados y buena memoria, quedóseme mucho dello en la cabeza. Y también leo en algunos libros de romances buenos, de los que mi padre dejó” (208). In Luján’s book Dorotea thus imbibed knowledge directly from authoritative classical and Biblical texts, receiving her education notably aurally from her father but also through later private study on her own.

Given the context of a patriarchal society that encouraged women’s silence and a church that forbade women teachers, it is surprising to see Dorotea rebuke and instruct Eulalia’s husband Marcelo in the third colloquy. At the conclusion Marcelo utters the astonishing comment that Dorotea’s instruction has produced such a drastic change in his outlook that “mucho me ha vuelto la voluntad para ser otro de lo que solía ser, y cuasi puedo decir que por ti soy tornado hombre” (159). In how many sixteenth-century didactic works can a female voice be said to have made a man into a real man? Dorotea herself recognizes the irregularity of her actions, declaring that surely “esto parece falta de seso, una mujer querer aconsejar a un hombre” (139). However, she justifies her transgression on three counts: that the couple needs her help, that she and Marcelo were raised in such close proximity as to practically be family, and the affection she thus has for him. One surmises that the anomaly is also permitted

because the author of the text is male and Dorotea is clearly his mouthpiece. In an act of rhetorical ventriloquism Marcelo and, by extension, the wider audience is taught by a woman who is in reality a man.²⁹

Dorotea wisely counsels Eulalia and Marcelo separately to change their behavior as if the peace of their marriage depended entirely on each individual's action. Thus Eulalia is told that her refusal to respond in kind to Marcelo's anger, even if violent, will produce peace: "si nosotras somos pacíficas, ellos se tornan pacíficos para no reñir con nosotras y nunca hacernos mal alguno" (104). In turn, Dorotea chastises Marcelo for his womanizing and gambling, and admonishes him to be "manso y no bravo en casa" (146). When he protests that he would love his wife more if she modified her behavior, Dorotea declares, "Múdala tú, que yo sé que ella también la mudará" (157). Some conduct books placed the burden of keeping the peace in marriage solely on the woman. Dorotea gives equal responsibility to both spouses for maintaining the relationship.

Although Luján never mentions women readers, surely both men and women were the intended public for the *Coloquios matrimoniales*. Women would especially have been attracted by the female characters and the topics included: of the six colloquies in the book three are specifically directed to women's concerns. The others contain advice for husbands, children, and the elderly. The presence of the two female interlocutors in these dialogues creates the intimate ambience of advice given from a woman to her friend, reinforces the personal nature of the conversations, and provides interest for the female reading public.

As previously mentioned, only three other dialogues outside the sentimental tradition employ women speakers. Why, then, would Pedro de Luján have departed from his classical and humanist Castilian models and employed female speakers? Perhaps he intended to capitalize on the popularity of dialogues by Erasmus treating similar topics that also contained women speakers. Vernacular translations of Erasmus's colloquies were in print in the 1520s, and were extremely popular during the '20s and '30s across Spain.³⁰ The intense interest in the topic of marriage and in conduct books at the time probably assured that the book would attract the traditional (male) reader. Although Dorotea exercises uncommon freedom of speech and shows unusual erudition in instructing both Eulalia and Marcelo, her advice supports the patriarchal system as advocated by her creator. Her presence as a teacher figure is an

²⁹ For an analysis of French dialogues where ventriloquism works in the opposite direction –a woman writer speaking through male interlocutors– see Ann Rosalind Jones.

³⁰ Dialogues on the topic of marriage by Erasmus translated into Spanish include *Uxor mempsigamos* (1527), *Colloquium Proci et Puella* (1528), and *Colloquium Senile* (1528), as well as an adaptation into Spanish of *Encomium matrimonii* by Juan de Molina (the *Sermón en loor del matrimonio* mentioned above) (Gómez *Diálogo* 165, note 43; Bataillon 282, note 10). Gómez lists nine dialogues by Erasmus with female speakers, including *Uxor* and *Proci* (*Diálogo* 129).

anomaly, one that I believe Pedro de Luján accepted in an attempt to attract women and to enhance the persuasive power of his colloquies.³¹

What conclusions can be drawn from the above evidence regarding the textual presence of women as interlocutors or readers? In the sixteenth-century humanist conduct dialogue authors only occasionally mention a female reader in their works. When she does appear she is a spectral figure with little real shape or vitality, mentioned in only passing by her creator. Her role is that of a passive receptacle who simply receives what she is taught, learning chastity and submission in silence. Compared with the larger number of similar texts where they do not appear, these women readers seem almost accidental.

Eulalia and Dorotea in Pedro de Luján's *Coloquios matrimoniales* are unique as female speakers in this corpus, but their presence is ambivalent. Their conversations and Dorotea's teaching support the patriarchal system and they do not advocate greater autonomy for women. Yet, as Janet Smarr rightly points out in the case of French dialogues, their simple presence is significant for its potential to create "real openings...for the inclusion of women in what we can call the cultural conversation" (10). If most conduct dialogues use an authoritative masculine voice to inculcate patriarchal ideology in readers, Dorotea at least allows the audience to hear a feminine voice. Even perhaps against the wishes of the author Dorotea's existence as an intelligent woman who speaks her mind could provide a model for women.³² In the Spanish humanist conduct dialogue as a whole, however, the potential for influence towards change that Dorotea's presence might encourage is diminished because of the paucity of women interlocutors.

Having analyzed and summarized the brief appearances of women I am left to contemplate their near total silence and erasure in the works I analyze, a silence that, at least for us today, is intensified by the knowledge that women's lives are a primary topic of the conversation. When investigating a marginalized group such as early modern women, one scholar advises readers to interpret the silences, the gaps, and the margins in texts (Waller 246-47). With an understanding of the surrounding social and literary context firmly in mind, the silence and absence of women in this corpus can indeed speak. What does it communicate?

First, because of the influence of patriarchy and perhaps more so in humanist conduct manuals than in other works, even reading is a gendered activity. Men did it

³¹ According to Pedro Cátedra and Anastasio Rojo Vega, the contents show that *Coloquios matrimoniales* was written for men (178). I do not dispute this opinion, but believe that the uniqueness of this female teacher figure in the humanist conduct dialogue in the Spanish sixteenth century warrants an explanation.

³² This observation is inspired by similar comments by Elizabeth McCutcheon regarding female speakers in Erasmus's colloquies (qtd in Smarr 9).

in order to learn the accepted social codes that allow them to correctly govern their own behavior, that of their families, and, depending on their class or status, the surrounding society. This is not to say that men enjoy unbridled freedom in early modern Spain, for their behavior is also constrained by expectations attached to their state. By contrast women do not need to read conduct literature, for they will be shaped by their husbands and fathers who consult the books. This attitude can help explain the near total absence of females in the conduct dialogue.

Second, patriarchal ideology also influenced the writers' imagination concerning potential audience: they were unable to conceive of a conduct dialogue created expressly for women. In my view writers squandered an opportunity to more powerfully extend the influence of their ideas to a new audience, for although women represented only a relatively small percentage of the reading public they were consuming books in greater and greater numbers during this time.³³ Many moralists—in some cases the same humanists who authored conduct manuals—railed against the influence of chivalric romances, love poetry, and the like on females, and called for learned men to compose suitable books for them. Yet authors of conduct dialogues did not rise to the challenge.³⁴ Instead, women who consumed these books did so against the expectations of the authors and were left to discover what was expected of them by listening silently to the dialogues of men who discussed their lives and concerns. The print history of these works seems to confirm the seriousness of this missed opportunity. While a few books discussed here enjoyed more than one edition, the only conduct dialogue with female speakers, *Coloquios matrimoniales*, was a best-seller with at least eleven editions in the sixteenth century. Surely female readership helped account for the enormous popularity of this work.³⁵

³³ Literacy rates in early modern Europe are notoriously difficult to determine and estimates vary widely. It is likely that in sixteenth-century Castile between two and sixteen percent of women could read, and most would have been nobles or wives of merchants and artisans. From one third to three quarters of males were literate. Literacy rates among men and women both rose steadily during the sixteenth century in Spain and across Europe. Determining what books women read or owned also presents difficulties, since *post-mortem* inventories of women's libraries would have included books originally owned by their husbands. With this limitation in mind, two comprehensive local studies of private libraries in sixteenth-century Spain show that approximately 40-50% of women's books were religious, mostly books on prayer and devotional aids. No other category comes close, though histories and *libros de entretenimiento* together comprised from five to twenty percent of titles (Cátedra and Rojo Vega 117; Prieto Bernabé 468). Cátedra and Rojo Vega, who analyzed private libraries in Valladolid from 1529-99, find that over seventy percent of literary works owned were related to *caballerías*. José María Prieto Bernabé studied private libraries in Madrid from 1550-1650 (the chapter on women readers is in volume 2, pages 453-73). For more on female literacy in early modern Spain and the types of works read see Philippe Berger, Cátedra (1999), Sonja Herpoel, and Lisa Vollendorf (chapters 3-5 and 8). For a helpful survey of various studies on literacy in the Peninsula see Viñao Frago.

³⁴ For examples of diatribes against reading thought to be harmful to women see Juan Luis Vives's *De institutione feminae christianae* (Antwerp, 1523) (43-53) and Luis de León's *La perfecta casada* (Salamanca, 1583) (111-12).

³⁵ There were, of course, many avenues for the education of women beyond reception of the printed book by individual readers, including a thriving business of pamphlets and broadsheets, aural reception

The failure is especially stark in the conduct dialogue, for in it authors extend themselves toward the audience more than in simple prose. Many highlighted their election of the colloquy, along with the vernacular tongue and a less erudite style, when they communicated with the public in the preliminaries to their works. They chose the dialogue form precisely in order to increase the persuasive power of their arguments, so they said, creating works that were more personal and more enjoyable. I believe the dialogue furnished a natural opportunity for moralists and others to reach out to women by including female interlocutors. Within artfully created conversations women could teach women or men could teach women, all fitting neatly within patriarchal strictures. Oddly, the only work with female interlocutors contains a woman teaching a man.

Yet perhaps the form and heritage of the dialogue were themselves barriers to women readers, speakers, or writers. Recall that many Spanish dialogues –and especially the heavily didactic ones like conduct manuals– persuaded readers by using an accumulation of external *auctoritas* (*exempla*, *sententiae*, *chria*, or adages), content primarily gleaned from classical, Biblical, and patristic sources. Such material was less familiar to those without a university education and this would have inhibited women who might have contemplated crafting a dialogue. University-educated male authors may have had difficulty even imagining a woman’s presence in a conversation of this nature, leading to dearth of female interlocutors in their dialogues. Furthermore, would it not stretch verisimilitude to include women in a gathering of male friends at leisure discussing their lives and problems, as is often the setting in the humanist conduct dialogue? Although Juan de Pineda, for example, emphasizes the universal attraction of his work as a flavorsome stew of ideas concocted to appeal to all tastes, he also notes that his dialogues are labeled *familiares* because they are conversations between friends (5). Friendships in sixteenth-century Spain did not generally cross the gender line.

I believe this failure of imagination by male writers led to the nearly complete textual absence of the female reader and interlocutor in the humanist conduct dialogue. Authors could not envision women with enough interest or intelligence to read a conversation based on the erudite content mentioned above, even when that content was expressed in the vernacular and in simple terms for the non-learned public. In the end authors found it more believable, and perhaps more comfortable, to preserve the sanctity of the masculine space of the dialogue, maintaining women’s silence and absence by excluding them as both interlocutors and readers. Contemporary standards of decorum, informed by patriarchal ideology, insisted that matters concerning women were best settled in the company of men.

of printed works, and popular folk literature including ballads sung at work or play. Furthermore, convent libraries contained many manuscript works for the education of nuns. My point is not that women were not learning –whether from books or other sources– but that humanist writers apparently chose not to create conduct *dialogues* expressly for women readers using a form that they themselves believed heightened a work’s persuasive and didactic power.

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