

Catalina de Erauso - A deviate of seventeenth century Spain

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CATALINA DE ERAUSO—A DEVIATE OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SPAIN

Louis C. Pérez

In our study of literature, particularly of the earlier periods, we often find ourselves trying to discover the spirit of an age. We proceed with a certain faith and conviction in looking for the key to the soul of a people of a given literary epoch. But what we do not find is also important and revealing. There are, relatively speaking, only sparse references to the deviate in 16th and 17th century Spanish literature. Yet the earliest legal records, those of 5th century Gothic Spain, treat the subject, as do the laws of 13th century Castile.¹ Some of these laws seem humorous in today's context, such as the one in *Las siete partidas* of Alfonso el Sabio referring to the "sodomites." After defining sodomy, giving the origin of the term, explaining who could bring charges, stating the death penalty the guilty were to pay, noting exceptions, the law goes on to state that the same penalty should be applied to any man or woman who has intercourse with an animal and that the animal also should be killed in order to destroy any memory of the act.² Interestingly enough, as time passed, the authorities became unconvinced that the death penalty itself was enough of a deterrent to such abnormal practices and so, in 1497, the manner of death was specified—the guilty were to be "burned in flames of fire."³ Still later, in 1598, in order to stamp

¹ Marcelo Martínez Alcubilla, ed. *Códigos antiguos de España*, (Madrid: Administración Arco de Santa María, 1885), I, 5-74: treats Spain earliest laws which appear under the name of *Fuero juzgo o libro de los jueces* (*Codex Visigothorum: Liber Judicum*). Pertaining to our present study, see p. 29. Also regarding other laws and other periods in Spanish history which pertain to laws of abnormal acts, see pages 138 and 649 in the same Volume I. With reference to laws on hermaphrodites, pp. 414-574, it is worthy of note that the word or testimony of a male-hermaphrodite outweighed that of a female—hermaphrodite.

² Martínez V. 428-9.

³ *Novísima recopilación de las leyes de España*, mandada formar por el señor Don Carlos IV. (Madrid: 1805). V. 427.

out this nefarious crime, less proof was required.⁴

The small number of scattered allusions to the male deviate in the literature of the Golden Age is perhaps due in part to the horror with which such deviation was viewed. We learn, for instance, from Marañón's study of the Don Juan in which he concludes that the historical Don Juan belonged to a homosexual brotherhood, that information concerning some notable individuals was suppressed in the 17th century and was not discovered until three hundred years later in a secret file in Simancas.⁵ Sparse though they are, some allusions to the male deviate can be found in theatrical works of the period. A good example is Moreto's play *El lindo Don Diego*, which deals with an eccentric narcissistic fop and dandy. In the novel *Don Quixote* too, we can detect references in isolated places to the homosexual and a character such as Vicente de la Rosa⁶ invites closer scrutiny. In Cervantes' fascinating story in the *Quixote*, "El curioso impertinente" we detect in the relationship of the two friends overtones of abnormality, well-substantiated by the author's telling phrases and the couple's odd sacrifice for one another.⁷ One is even tempted to inquire, who is really being tested in this story—the wife or the friend? It is pertinent in this respect to point out that in the Ariosto episode from which Cervantes borrowed heavily, the husband submits to an unnatural act.⁸ Allusions to the female deviate in

⁴ *Novísima Recopilación* V. 428-9.

⁵ Gregorio Marañón, *Don Juan*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1944), p. 1045. What is interesting is not whether *Don Juan's* historical prototype was a homosexual or not but the trial: "a great number of famous people of Madrid were charged with homosexuality. From servants to buffoons from aristocratic homes, to the lords of these same houses..." And that "the ones of more humble origin were condemned to death and executed in Madrid as required then by the incomprehensible rigor of the law. The 'nobler' sinners were permitted to flee to Italy and France."

⁶ This character appears in an episode in *Don Quixote*, part II, chapter LI. Vicente de la Rosa, an army man convinces the village beauty (Leandra) to run off with him. We later learn that in spite of her attractiveness and willingness to cooperate sexually, he abandons her after stealing only her money. He has no sexual act with her and she is extremely disappointed.

⁷ I have taken into consideration the possibility of the platonic interpretation of the relationship of the two friends. But, beside the telling phrases, I have also had to consider Cervantes' strong indebtedness to his source (Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*) and the fact that Cervantes has been working in contrasts—point counterpoint—giving us variations on the theme of the two friends. Also that the story of *El curioso impertinente*, is central to the *Quixote* and gathers together all the main threads, including the abnormal, which is not to be overlooked in a complete tapestry of the life of the times.

⁸ I refer to Canto XLIII of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, in which Anselmo submits to an unnatural act with a repusively dirty man in exchange for a most magnificent and sumptuous palace. For examples of allusions to the male homosexual in literature see:

Spanish Golden Age literature are more numerous than those concerning the male, if we bear in mind that it is likely that terms such as “virago” and “hermaphrodite” were often euphemisms for “lesbian.” The plays, poems and explanations of myths in which this theme is present are generally humorous.⁹

We should like to concentrate on a particularly interesting historical figure of the 17th century —Catalina de Erauso, later known as the Ensign Nun— whose life and adventures found their way into literature. We have a portrait of this famous woman done by Francisco Pacheco in 1630. From the picture and from accounts of her contemporaries, we know that Catalina was neither homely nor beautiful, that she had wide, dark sparkling eyes, short hair (in keeping with the period in which she lived), that she had a martial air about her, that she carried her sword well, had a quick and elegant walk, and that her upper lip was covered with a fine dark fuzz. Early in her youth she applied a balm to her breasts to prevent them from developing, which resulted in her being rather flat-chested! Only her hands and feet had a feminine quality.¹⁰

Juan de Mena, *El laberinto de fortuna* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1960), p. 57, *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Trato de Argel in Rudolph Schevill*: and Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín: *Comedias y entremeses de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*, (Madrid: Imp. de Bernardo Rodríguez, 1915-1922), V. 232. There are other allusions scattered throughout Rojas Zorrilla's *Entre bobos anda el juego*. Generally speaking, if a male character with feminine characteristics appears it is likely to be the “gracioso”, which in itself tells us that homosexuals were a topic of derision.

⁹ Works referring to the theme are: *Cancionero de obras de burlas provocantes a risa* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1841), pp. 147-180; Lope de Vega's *Las grandezas de Alejandro*; Luis Vélez de Guevala *La montañesa de Asturias* and *La serrana de la Vera*. As early as the Arcipreste de Hita's *El libro de buen amor*, we have in Spanish literature allusions to the virago. The abnormal woman is also to be found in the chivalresque novels of 16th century Spain. See for example: *Amadis de Gaula*, Libro III, chapter XII on *El Endriago*. For the hermaphrodite, see: J.P. Wickersham Crawford, “Miscelánea.” *Revista de Filología Española*, XII, 189-90; José María de Cossio, *Fábulas mitológicas en España* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1952), pp. 128, 668, 883; Agustín Moreto's *El desdén con el desdén*. Baltasar de Victoria says quoting Quintilian, that nature likes variety and so in spite of the fact that some ignorant persons think that she produces imperfect things, they actually serve to make her more beautiful: *Segunda parte del teatro de los dioses de la gentilidad*, (Barcelona: Imprenta de Juan Piferrer, 1722), p. 60. Hermaphroditic figures decorate many of the old cathedrals of Spain. Also we have paintings of the period that depict the abnormal woman, such as Rivera's *La mujer barbuda*, in which a heavily bearded lady is breast-feeding a babe in arms.

¹⁰ M. Serrano y Sanz, *Autobiografías y memorias*, (Madrid: Librería Editorial de Bailley/Bailliere e hijos, 1905), p. clxi. See also A. Sánchez Moguel. *La Monja alférez* (Barcelona, 1838). There are also in the Archivo Nacional de la Indias in Seville, documents relating to our heroine: *Memorial de los méritos y servicios del Alférez Erauso*.

We have historical documents concerning Catalina's life, an apocryphal biography, and a play by Pérez de Montalbán, *La monja alférez*¹¹ which parallels closely a number of biographical events. We find in the apocryphal story some erotic descriptions, not present in the play, in which the Ensign Nun is involved with other members of her sex.¹² Obviously much more could be said in prose directed at a small reading public, than could be presented in the theatre which was open to all and subject to official censure, even if the censure was inefficient for various reasons. We are not surprised to find that there is a public pose or attitude and also a very private one. Evidently sexual acts between women were publicly abhorred, however prose descriptions of such acts were privately enjoyed. But it is Pérez de Montalbán's play about the Ensign Nun "in which we'll catch the conscience" of the age, and to which we now turn.

¹¹ Joaquín Ma. de Ferrer, *Historia de la Monja Alférez* (Madrid: Tipográfica Renovación 1918). This is the autobiography of Catalina de Erauso published by Ferrer in 1829 in Paris and considered now her pseudo-autobiography because of a number of errors of fact, anachronisms and undocumented slayings by Catalina. Nevertheless the greater part of the "autobiography" coincides with the historical information we have on Catalina de Erauso. I have been able to consult three copies of Pérez de Montalbán's play, *La Monja Alférez*. One may be found in *Primera Parte de las Comedias del Doctor Juan Pérez de Montalbán*. C.H. Ternaux, ed. (Madrid: 1833). The title is the binder's, the volume being composed of "sueñas." The play itself bears no place of publication or date. Another copy of the play appears in *Comedias varias*, Parte 6, which is to be found in the University of Pennsylvania Library collection. Neither place nor date appears on the play. Both of the above copies have a striking similarity even to the point of misspelling the family name Erauso (Areuso) and producing the same incomplete list of characters in three columns. Both of these plays contain a number of misprints. Hence for this paper I quote from what seems to be a clear, careful and serious printing of the play which appears in the appendix of the 1829 edition of Ferrer's *Historia de la Monja Alférez*, pp. 168-311. Page numbers in parentheses at the end of the quotes will refer to this edition. See also regarding Catalina de Erauso: Stephanie Merrim, "Catalina de Erauso: Prodigy of the Baroque Age", *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, 43 (July-Dec. 1990), 38-41. Rima Gretchen Rothe Vallbona, *Historic Reality and Fiction in Vida y Sucesos de La Monja Alférez*, D.M.L. diss., Middlebury College, 1981.

¹² In one account after arriving in Lima, "he" gives a letter of introduction to a Diego de Solarte who receives "him" with a great deal of affability and pleasantness in his house. But after nine months "he" is asked to leave. The author, supposedly Catalina, explains that the reason was "that he [Diego de Solarte] had in his home two other ladies, his wife's sisters, with whom I [Catalina] used to play and frolic, and particularly with one of them who was more inclined toward me. And one day while we were in the drawing room my head resting on her lap combing my hair and running my hand up and down her leg he looked in through a window grating and saw us..." [Joaquín Ma. de Ferrer. *Historia de la Monja Alférez*, (Madrid: Tipográfica Renovación, 1918), p. 20]. There are other examples of Catalina's masculine bent on pages 36 and 37.

The action begins in Lima, Perú, after Catalina has escaped from a convent to the New World. Disguised as a man "Guzmán" she courts Doña Ana. Catalina's true identity is almost discovered by Ana's brother Miguel, whom she wounds in a duel. Later she kills a man and leaves Lima for a period of three years. Upon her return she learns that Doña Ana has been duped and seduced by Don Diego, who hesitates to marry Doña Ana because he has reason to suspect that she is involved with another man. In order to better convince Don Diego to marry Doña Ana, Catalina reveals her identity to him and explains that she was the other "man." Almost immediately thereafter she finds herself enmeshed in a quarrel and in self-defense kills another man; she is seized by the authorities and sentenced to death. To save her from hanging Don Diego discloses Catalina's secret to the viceroy. When she learns that Don Diego has betrayed her she reacts vehemently and vengefully; she states that she, Catalina, has been a cover-up for Ana's clandestine affair. The marriage between Doña Ana and Don Diego is postponed until the very end of the play, when the Ensign Nun redeems herself by divulging the truth of the entire matter.

The playwright, Pérez de Montalbán, succeeds in putting a mirror to society in this play. In it we witness attitudes of Catalina brought about by public opinion, and we gather information about practices of the period that are not contained in the historical accounts of her life. In addition, the author gives us a feeling of the turbulent life Catalina must have led. There is little doubt that Catalina is a virago with its full implications: a lesbian. In the play she appears dressed as a man, a common role in the theatre of the period, hence not altogether significant for our present purpose. What does seem strange is that unlike similar situations in other plays, her manservant is unaware of her personality or identity. Her mannishness is often referred to, and the poet attributes to her virile qualities of the period: virtue, bravery and loyalty. "How is it possible that in a feminine breast/ exists such manly daring?"¹³ her brother comments in an aside. Then quite in keeping with the practices of the *comedia* of the period, some classical or historical "matrona" figures are brought to the attention of the audience, leading the brother to conclude "What wonder that a Basque woman, engendered in the harsh mountains that produce iron, equals them?"(210) Catalina seems to require a male role in life. She suffers all discomforts and pursues all courses

¹³ See p. 210 of Pérez Montalbán's play. *La Monja Alférez* which appears in the appendix of Ferre's *Historia de la Monja Alférez*, 1829 edition. All translations are mine and I put the page numbers in parentheses. See note 11.

in order to retain the appearance of a man. She appears to be on the verge of volcanic anger at one point late in the play when she is reminded of her sex. The viscount tries to reason with her. Why is she so incensed at being labeled a woman, if she is indeed one. "I will not admit to it, nor do I want anyone to call me one." (308) The playwright repeatedly underscores her spirit, courage and bravery and on at least one occasion suggests that Catalina is struggling to express her yearning for liberty and freedom of movement in a very straitlaced society. Unfortunately however, her lack of beard and moustache, which one of the characters tells us denotes bravery (185), is constantly made sport of and contributes to the anxiety and tension in her. Machín,¹⁴ the servant, greets his master, Catalina, when she returns to Lima after three years' absence, with the comment: "Time seems to have had no effect on you, I thought that you would have a long flowing moustache by now, and here after three years you are bald of beard." (221) When Doña Ana is duped by Don Diego, Ana discovers the deceit, among other ways, because as she touches the imposter's face in the darkness, she comes upon his beard.

In the play, Catalina's brother, friends, even clergymen, try repeatedly to reform her, to modify her true nature, her true personality, to get her to wear dresses. Her answer is almost epigramatic: "The prettiest petticoat is not equal to the lowliest of trousers." (287-8) When she returns to Spain from Rome, dressed as a male, the bishop orders her detention for this infraction. She despises feminine attire and to her "Two hours in a dress are like two thousand years" (285) she exclaims angrily, and adds, "Although I can't deny it [that I am a woman] I don't want to look like one." (285)

Catalina's attitude toward her own sex and her decided preference for men's dress and ways leave little doubt about her personality. Dramatizing Catalina's love life, however, presented a number of challenges to the author. The theatre was being periodically attacked for immorality.¹⁵ Hence the playwright had to be resourceful and astute in depicting love scenes relating to her life. How far did Catalina go? Was she really, in modern terms, a lesbian? The author's attitude seems to be, for those uninitiated in the aesthetics of the 17th

¹⁴ The servant's name "Machín" is the diminutive for "manly." This is not insignificant since in the comedia of the Spanish Golden Age, the servant often reflected the true character of his master. The name "Machín" then is another clue for the audience to understand Catalina's true personality.

¹⁵ See: E. Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España* (Madrid: 1904).

century Spanish theatre, one of fence-straddling or underplaying of the heroine's true self. For it may be argued that he gives us enough information to make a conservative interpretation: Catalina's interest in women could be termed purely materialistic—she accepts money from Ana. Even the actual love scenes between women are presented in sufficiently ambiguous light by Pérez de Montalbán as to lead to a sanctioned conclusion. Also when the moment of sexual truth arrives and Doña Ana invites the heroine to her bed, Catalina falls back on her vow of chastity, and then the author, in order to prevent further problems of this kind, submits Ana to seduction by Don Diego in a scene highly reminiscent of Don Juan and the Duchess in *El burlador de Sevilla*. Nevertheless, if we bear in mind that the audience was invited to participate in the play, to search for truths, to look beyond the surface, to interpret, and that it had learned from experience to be suspicious and cynical, it had enough information from which to draw an accurate picture. The facts are in the entire play: Catalina is a strange woman who abhors not only woman's apparel, but all things associated with her sex. Her lines to Doña Ana when she is about to enter Ana's bed chamber: "My beloved Ana . . . all I fear, my dear is your danger in my good fortune"(200) or: "we are alone now/ can I merit your embraces/ which my heart firmly adores, after so long an absence, Doña Ana?"(223) are not to be lightly dismissed. But even if the audience in general did not hold these utterances of love to be completely sincere and convincing, it most assuredly had to be moved by what was for Catalina the supreme sacrifice—her disclosure to Don Diego, after swearing him to secrecy, that she was indeed a woman and that she was Ana's only lover. Her confession is obviously done out of love and to make of Ana an "honest woman." Historically, Catalina's true identity was not known until 1623, when believing that she was near death from wounds she had suffered in a duel, she divulged her secret to a priest.¹⁶ Pérez de Montalbán had seen the dramatic and artistic possibilities of such a revelation and exploited them in his work.

Throughout the play we can detect the prevailing attitude of the period toward the deviate—an attitude in many ways not too different from that of our times. In the notions and views characters express, we sense the pressures to which the abnormal person was subjected. We note the awkward way in which society dealt with the lesbian, leading us to suspect that society probably created many more problems than it solved.

¹⁶ See: M. Serrano y Sanz, *Autobiografías y Memorias*, p. CLXI.

Perhaps due to women's restricted role in society, we have very little evidence of what women themselves thought of lesbians.¹⁷ Generally, the virago was considered a sort of spectacle and in our play the heroine is blatantly aware of it. When she refuses to dress femininely for a visitor, her cynical explanation in part is that the visitor comes to see her in male attire, "a woman dressed as a woman, after all is no strange sight." (285) She is also looked upon as a prodigy: "A woman soldier, a nun ensign," says Sebastián, one of her protectors, "is the strangest prodigy we have seen in our times." (281) Like Fernán Gómez of Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, Calderón's Segismundo of *La vida es sueño*, and Tirso's Don Juan of *El burlador de Sevilla*, Catalina is considered a monster of nature, a very popular theme in the theatre of the Golden Age. Sebastián informs her that a royal counsellor wishes to visit her: "He wants to see me!" she exclaims. "Am I perhaps a monster or some conjured-up beast? . . . hasn't he ever seen a beardless man?" (280)

On several occasions during the play the author verges on revealing to the other characters Catalina's identity: first with her manservant and later with her brother. The dramatist teases the spectators and maintains their interest. Finally the moment arrives when the heroine informs Don Diego that she is a woman. Don Diego, typical of the "galán" role he is portraying, is not at a loss for words. After wondering out loud how a woman could have won so many battles in the field, how such bravery could be contained in a weak feminine breast, and how her true sex could be kept a secret for so long, he ends by saying "and if you adore Doña Ana am I to believe that you love another woman, being a woman yourself? Don't try to give credit to impossibilities." (246-7) Don Diego, reflecting perhaps an official attitude, refuses to accept the likelihood of such a relationship.

Catalina's own relatives do not disregard her existence, although her actions are demeaning and insulting to them. The heroine's father writes to her brother to inform him that she is now in the New World. In the letter he refers to the "affront your sister has done us absenting herself from San Sebastián thirteen years ago in male

¹⁷ We can get an idea from an incident that appears in the apocryphal autobiography of Catalina's life: "One day while in Naples, taking a walk along the pier, I noticed two ladies who were talking to two young men laughing [at me]. They were looking at me and as I looked at them one said to me: 'Lady Catalina, where are you going?'" I answered: Ladies . . . to give you a hundred blows [on your head with my hand] and a hundred slashes to anyone who wishes to defend you." They said nothing and left, "[Ferrer, *Historia de...*, 1918, p. 109].

attire.”(182) The word “excess” appears often throughout the play and serves as an underlying motif. The brother’s solution to the problem created by Catalina’s abnormality is to convince her to enter a convent. If this fails he plans to take her life, so that she will not continue to be an affront to the Basque people. Catalina escapes from this brotherly plan by wounding him seriously, leaves him at a hermitage and flees.

It is no surprise that Catalina, driven to feelings of guilt by public opinion, is unable to accept what she is—to come to terms with herself. Her boldness and daring at times seems to reflect this struggle between her true nature and external social pressures. Her suffering and fear of being unmasked are recurring notes in the play. She reacts with extreme violence to conservative views of the times, hurling damaging insults and dispensing physical punishment. On more than one occasion we hear from her lips that she would rather die than have her true identity known. Society has been successful in impressing on her the shame of her abnormality. “Why would I want to go on living if they find out that I am a woman?”(265) and later she tells Sebastián that she abhors what she is (a woman).¹⁸ Only at the very end of the play does she forgive Don Diego for betraying her by disclosing her sex. To avoid being considered a woman she would sacrifice everything, that is, everything except her soul. We are made aware throughout the work of the physical and psychological suffering she endures. Often she tells us how she is mistreated: “Of the serious insults, affronts, infamy and vituperation that I have suffered and still suffer.”(395)

At one point late in the play, Catalina is compelled to enter a convent, which was no haven in the period, for it held many persons unwanted by society or detrimental to its smooth functioning. We know for example that an adulteress, if she was fortunate enough to escape death, was sent to a convent when her “crime” was discovered.¹⁹

¹⁸ Of course it may be argued that these lines reveal that Catalina does not want to live in a society in which a woman plays a subservient role to the man. However, in view of the evidence and arguments we have been presenting, it is more likely that Catalina can see meaning to her life only if she plays the role of a male, her true role.

¹⁹ This is already reflected in the laws of Alfonso el Sabio, *Códigos antiguos*, 1,645. Although later laws stipulated harsher punishment we know from the plays that the solution for an adulteress continued to be banishment to a convent and the loss of all her worldly goods. Recall also that although Cervantes sets his story of *El curioso impertinente* in Italy he is talking about the situation in Spain. Camila, the adulteress of the story, enters a convent where she dies. Also, it often occurred that women who sinned publicly with a man ended up in a convent or monastery. (*Novísima recopilación*, V. 419).

Once in the convent, we suspect that Catalina was baited by her companions; we do read that violence was done her. In any event she asks to be released but her request is denied. Finally she becomes violent, raises mayhem and is expelled at the insistence of other nuns. This strongwilled woman knows no other way to react except energetically, with uncontrollable anger and fury: "If I could only tell you the agitation, rage and ire that is engendered in my heart on such occasions." (248-9) The dramatist also makes reference to the fact that Catalina had been placed in a convent at an early age because her parents were aware of her abnormality.²⁰ It was the solution that her brother had later proposed to her, not only for her own good but for that of the family.

As is well known, one of the Horatian tenets of the writers of the 16th and 17th century was to teach. Events, incidents, accounts, myths and legends were often modified and depicted as they should have happened in order to set a good example for contemporary and future generations. Thus we learn at the end of the play, when "all's well that ends well," that Catalina's hang-up was due to her lack or inability to exercise her free will judiciously. In the play she conquers or defeats all her opponents, much like Segismundo in *La vida es sueño*; and like him she discovers finally that the greatest victory is the one that we achieve over ourselves. Though the change in her character seems rather rapid for our modern literary taste, it is tied in with an act of honor and an example of Christian virtue—she forgives her main offender, Don Diego. In her last lengthy speech, she resigns herself to being a woman, and Sebastián, her protector, praises her for her victory:

You have gained more
by conquering yourself than
by conquering enemy armies. (310)

The playwright invites the audience to accept that Catalina's particular problem could have been solved by exercising strength of character through free will and faith. We hasten to point out that in Catalina's case, this is the poetic solution not the historical one.

Pérez de Montalbán's play reflects what is perhaps the more common attitude and reaction toward the deviate—the hard line. The other view, as we might suspect, is the one suggested by Cervantes when he touches on the theme of the virago in his novel *Don Quixote*, in which he alludes on many occasions to the question of abnormality, sparing not even Dulcinea. Cervantes rounds out the topic he has

²⁰ See page 248 of our play in which the heroine confesses that even as a child she preferred boy's games and toys to those of girls.

been pursuing with a plea from one of his mannish characters:

"Your Excellency may say what you like," replied Rodríguez (the virago of the play within a play) "for God knows the truth of every matter, and good or bad, bearded or smooth-faced, we are our mothers' daughters just like other women, and it was God who sent us into this world. He knows why He did so, and I cling to His mercy and not to anybody's beard."²¹

Hence as in every age, in questions of human feelings and understanding, the poet lights the way.

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²¹ Miguel de Cervantes, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: The Viking Press, 1949, 11, 768.