Representations of Female Identity in Italy
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Representations of Female Identity in Italy:

*From Neoclassism to the 21st Century*

Edited by
Silvia Giovanardi Byer
and Fabiana Cecchini

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
To the women in our lives, present and past:

Elisa,

Nicoletta

and

Rita
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Silvia Giovanardi Byer
Park University, USA
In contemplating what to write in the foreword for this collection, it
became apparent to me that I owe a debt of gratitude to the female
characters and protagonists of the works of fiction you’ll read in this
collection.

Through their efforts and vision, women now occupy the highest
pinnacles of their professions. They are elected to lead countries; they
conduct unique and inspired research in the arts and sciences; and they
nurture their own daughters to pursue their dreams, less burdened by the
gender barriers so prevalent in our collective history.

This collection of essays is worthy for a number of reasons. Perhaps
the most important is the revelation that despite significant gains, women
of today struggle with many of the same issues that they faced in Ancient
Greece, Medieval Italy and Post-Modern Europe.

The effort was launched after I distributed a call for papers (CFP) for
the 2014 SAMLA conference. I received so many applications to present,
that SAMLA expanded one panel to two panels. Both were marked by
enthusiastic engagement that I decided to ask fellow panelists if they were
interested in publishing their work. As evidenced by the resulting article,
they were very interested. During this same period, Cambridge Scholars
Publishing contacted me to determine interest in publishing the panel’s
work. We were interested and shortly afterward the wheels were set in
motion and we began working on our articles. Park University generously
granted me a sabbatical in Fall 2015 which allowed me to devote
significant time to developing this publication.

The research presented in these essays provides several unique
approaches to women’s identity and its representation in various
modalities through literature, film, drama, history, theory in the
humanities, media and cultural studies. The central theme of the volume
involves the characterization of women, either by female or male authors,
and women as consumers of artistic production in Italian culture or in
relationship to. Some articles take a cross-disciplinary approach to the
topic are particularly innovative because explore ideologies that have not
been yet discussed within their particular realm.

Working with many contributors is always a challenge; however, this
is a fantastic group to work with. I am indebted to all the participants for
working countless hours and redoing the many suggested corrections and re-writing.

This book is a blind, peer-reviewed, edited book, where all articles were looked at by two or more reviewers.

Silvia Giovanardi Byer
INTRODUCTION

GIOVANNA SUMMERFIELD

Whereas woman continues to remain “the dark continent” even for the most inquisitive minds (Freud, The Question of Lay Analysis, 1926, p. 212), attempts have endured the passing of time and relegated her within specific parameters of vulnerability, subordination, and dependence. These subjective perceptions and roles peers and authors have upheld and imposed from antiquity to our contemporary years have been paralleled by female agency and self-actualization on the part of women writers, their works and/or characters. Whereas Sophocles’ male protagonists insisted on pushing the women “inside the house… [for] from now on they must be women and not wander unrestrained” (Antigone, transl. by R. Blondell, 1998, pp.578-9), some of the female protagonists took action, spoke and acted publicly, transgressing the established laws. This volume, which successfully adopts an intemporal, intermedial, and interdisciplinary approach to female subjectivity, brings to the fore the tragedy of Antigone for the readers to witness one of the first puzzling deviations by a strong woman who not only questions reason, law, power, and kinship but at the end destroys the man-centered world created by a selfish Creon, now physically alone and deprived of the earthly authority he had seized.

Andrea Sartori, author of the relevant essay here presented, means not to produce a philological reading of this tragedy. Instead he focuses on the influence Sophocles extended beyond literature to philosophy and psychology, drawing the attention of Western thinkers, from Hegel, Freud, and Lacan to feminists like Beauvoir, Kristeva, Cavarero, and Butler. The latter posits Antigone’s death as a beginning rather than an end: in spite of the fact that it was ordered that she be buried alive in a cave, Antigone’s sacrifice represents an “unbending” (hence her name), uncompromising future. Antigone speaks with the voice of the patriarchal order she resists and opposes (Butler, p.5); she is the voice of the silenced women of Greece who could not attend theatrical performances, who could not act in these performances, and could not actively collaborate in the life of the city. Contrary to the local culture where women were under the guardianship of a male adult, or kyrios, father, brother, or husband.
Antigone, not only frees herself of the yoke of such a monitoring (she kills herself prior to being married to her betrothed, Creon’s son), but she advocates for the rights of her dead brother.

A similar counterpart to the early-modern damsel in distress is proposed by Isabella Canali Andreini in her *Mirtilla* (1588). During the 16th century, after having celebrated the inner and ethereal physical beauty of fair maidens, whose influence on others was ennobling, according to the chivalric code of courtly love, praising the unattainable love object, and following the precepts of a Platonic love, that has no expectation, Italy boasted a score of distinguished women artists and intellectuals who stood out for their talents and their active participation in everyday life, some of them brandishing their pens to prescribe gender equality and valuing female bonding. The readers will definitely recognize the names of Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara, Gaspara Stampa, Veronica Franco, Maddalena Campiglia, Moderata Fonte, and Isabella Andreini. Andreini was a successful actress, who had taken on even male roles in some of the leading plays of the time, one of them being the pastoral *Aminta* by Torquato Tasso.

In her “revisited” version, known as *Mirtilla*, Andreini makes sure to underscore a different side of the female characters. Unlike Tasso’s protagonist and other contemporary literary heroines threatened with rape, murder, and bad reputation until rescued by their beloved, Andreini’s nymph is wily, independent, and resourceful. She pretends to have feelings for the satyr (and wrong-doer) while she ties him up and tortures him, pulling his goatee and asking him to eat some bitter herb and then abandoning him as prey for the wild animals of the forest. Above all, Andreini challenges the depiction of the female characters by proposing a real community: “*Mirtilla* concludes with a hymn to female friendship and implies that women can surmount the pains of unrequited love by constructing a world of togetherness and sharing” (Valeria Finucci, 2007, p.39). Melinda Cro, author of this volume’s first essay gives us a more comprehensive picture of the role of women in early modern Europe, both as literary subjects and creators, examining also Campiglia’s *Flori* (published the same year of *Mirtilla*), where virginity is not presented as a restriction but as an effective means to attain independence.

The following centuries were not any easier for women in Europe. On one hand, fathers were coldheartedly sentencing their daughters to a life of solitude and pain by banishing them to convents; on the other hand, artists were warning their female readers about masterful male deceits to gain favors. Elena Cassandra Tarabotti, also known as suor Arcangela Tarabotti, is one of the many young women forced by their fathers, for
familial and patrimonial planning, to a monastic life, a phenomenon started during the Italian Renaissance and unfortunately continuing on to the very end of the 19th century. These miserable conditions are reported in details even in the most popular literature, see Stendhal’s *L’Abbesse de Castro* (1839), Verga’s *Storia di una capinera* (1871) and *La vocazione di suor Agnese* (1890), as well as de Roberto’s *I Vicerè* (1893), just to name a few. The trilogy of suor Arcangela Tarabotti (*Tirannia paterna, Inferno monacale, and Antisatira*) mirrors the works of other young ladies who wrote sitting at a desk at a convent, and, in particular, of suor Isabella Dorotea Bellini, from Catania, praised by Santi Correnti for being one of the very first feminists in the European scene (he states 50 years prior to the first feminist responses in France), and author of *Sintimenti in difisa di lu sessu femminu* (1735), engaged in a true debate with local male intellectuals like Luigi Sarmento, also known as Antonio Damiano, and his work *Lu vivu mortu*. Just like Bellini, Tarabotti, involved in the “querelle des femmes,” in one of her three writings, responds with a re-reading of the role of Eve in creation, and in the last, directly to a male counterpart, Buonisegni and his *Contro ’l lusso donnesco satira menippea* (1638). In this volume, Elisa Modolo analyzes *Antisatira* to underscore the attempt of Tarabotti to reverse the typical arguments of the male tradition and to uncover the biases of the time, insofar as Tarabotti

unveils the social hypocrisy that had seen adornment and ornament as feminine and defined masculinity in oppositional terms to the bad feminine other … she defends a woman’s right to fashion and luxury linking this to the intellectual work that can be considered parallel to the care of the body… and considers the care of self, body, soul, and brain as acts intertwined with, not separate from, the controlling of women’s lives (Elena Paulicelli, 2014, p. 201).

The violations of the female bodies narrated in the *novelas* of writer Maria de Zayas, who is the focus of Silvia Byer’s last essay of part one of this volume, in comparison to famous Italian author Boccaccio and his *Decameron*, are clear and serious opportunities to expose the misogyny of patriarchal Spain. According to Marina Brownlee, Zayas was deeply concerned about the intellectual neutering of women imposed by men and believed, as proved by the forceful monastic wave so popular across Europe, that the primary source of violence was the family: fathers, brothers, husbands. With scores of domestic abuses sometimes culminating in murders, the countless femminicidi of recent years taking place across the Italian peninsula, this topic unfortunately should sound familiar to all the readers.
Family ties are yet again an important theme to better situate and assess the identities of the iconic female characters and authors of modern literature and cinema described in chapter two of this volume. The indissoluble, almost haunting, mother-daughter bond, in Serao’s and Ferrante’s works discussed here by Pia Bertucci, is detrimental in unraveling the deep-seeded secrets in the mind and identity of a woman. It is an intermingling of past and present, a laborious puzzle assembling, a superimposition or life existing in different stages, simultaneously, as Bertucci states, with a morbid and continuous influence of the genitrix, even if physically removed. It is a reconstruction of one’s identity even to the point of questioning it and challenging motherhood itself, in a feverish attempt to delve into inner worlds, almost at the verge of a breakdown and in comparison and in union with other women.

In the works authored by Ada Negri, this intertwining of generations and unique portrayal of mother-daughter relationship is openly more a point of departure: as Ioana Raluca-Larco asserts in her essay, Stella mattutina’s protagonist Dinin, although indebted to her grandmother’s and mother’s experiences, is able to attain an “upward mobility,” breaking the chains of social injustices perpetuated within the matrilineal genealogy. Coming to grips with the past in order to go forward is also the theme of Edith Bruck’s work: a Hungarian “Translingual Writer Who Found a Home in Italy” (Maria Cristina Mauceri), Edith moved to Rome (Italy) from Israel in 1954 to start a new life. The essay by Fabiana Cecchini analyzes the author’s sense of Italianess, her newly acquired female identity, as a Holocaust survivor, a woman and writer who came to feel progressively more Italian through her writing.

Where mothers are absent, sisters are at the fore of the scene in the pages of the books penned by Maria Messina, a talented Sicilian verista. Unlike Vanna, female protagonist of Casa paterna whose self-determined response to her family’s reaction of betrayal and disrespect upon her return home due to her failed marriage, is suicide, as a voluntary abandonment of a life of submission and misplacement, the sisters of “Il telaio di Caterina” and of La casa nel vicolo consciously make the decision to stay within the four walls of their home. They opt to be outside of time in an imagined space created by themselves or deliberately chosen for themselves:

Parlano anch’esse di desiderio di libertà; pur seguendo a camminare per le vietracciate dall’esperienza dei vecchi, sognando bimbi da culiare, una casetta da governare... […] ciascuna esce talora dal cerchio della vita, per entrare, sola e non vista, nel piccolo mondo spirituale che custodisce intatte le forze più fresche, le aspirazioni più nobili [...] (“Il Congedo” in Ragazze Siciliane, 1997, p. 110).
Silvia Tiboni Craft underscores here the necessity for women to create fantastic spaces to define and understand for the process of re-appropriation of their own bodies to start.

Two essays examine different artistic spaces used to impose or challenge gender identities in our modern times: television and cinema. The article by Valeria Federici reminds us of the ever so popular signorine buonasera and the role they played not only within the medium but the culture of the time. They portrayed the venerated donna acqua e sapone, the girl next door, the perfect woman to marry, devoid of physicality – their face and bust were the only visible body parts on the screen – thus sensuality and, who, for 65 years, sat with generations and generations of Italians at dinner time and then bid good night upon the conclusion of all TV programs. A very limited to no space at all is provided by director Paolo Sorrentino to his female characters. Annachiara Mariani points out that oftentimes women are not only relegated to a small cinematic space in Sorrentino’s medial stories but also to a very restrictive psychological one. The two films here examined, and not fortuitously, are Le conseguenze dell’amore and La grande bellezza. The Oscar-winning film-maker is undoubtedly interested in the bourgeois, aged, male, who is forcibly enjoying some peace and quiet and reflects on his life, “interrupted” here and there by a memory or a vision that involves a younger woman. This sporadic and marginal presence of women is equated by Mariani to a celebration of male dominance. Both Ramona and Sofia ultimately exit the screen, physically disappearing due to suicide and car accident, respectively, leaving the male protagonist unaccompanied and free to his indifferent and empty existence.

As a scholar well-versed in the field and an administrator leading academic programs that highlight and celebrate diversity and inclusion, I am not only inspired by the work, tenacity, and talent of our predecessors - within societies that could only offer restrictions and debilitations, they were able to have a voice and to give voice to the innumerable women that shared their conditions – but I am also grateful to the essayists who passionately uncovered, re-read, and re-assessed the works of male and female artists to join and/or expand the current conversation and scholarship on female identity and its representations in the arts and humanities across time, space, and discipline. This volume will be a great resource to faculty and students interested in gender studies, cultural studies, media studies, literature, and art.

In a time where one takes for granted the progress reached in gender emancipation, this collection grants us the opportunity to ponder upon and appreciate our past to act accordingly, in the present. It is a great testimony
of the creative talents here (re)presented but also a modest and genuine expression of gratitude to all the women who have fought and continue to fight for equality and for individual self-gratification in both the professional and personal realms. Though this might seem overly trite and melodramatic, I consider it to be a small token for a giant accomplishment. There is still significant work to be done ahead of us, and for this, dear readers, this volume serves as an invitation for you to unearth deserving and forgotten stories and story-tellers and to spotlight this “dark continent” called woman.
PART ONE:

EARLY AND MODERN LITERATURE:
THE NOT-SO-OBVIOUS ROLE
CHAPTER ONE

“FANCIULLA TANTO SCIOLCA QUANTO BELLA”:
WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN
ITALIAN PASTORAL

MELINDA A. CRO

In act 2, scene 2, the “wise” Dafne refers to Silvia as a simple girl who is as foolish as she is beautiful because she resists the honest love of the young shepherd, Aminta, in Tasso’s eponymous play. This is but one of several problematic portrayals of women in early modern Italian pastoral works. In Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*, for example, women appear either as objects of desire after which the shepherd lusts or as motherly figures commemorated and commended by pastoral society. In Guarini’s *Il Pastor fido*, the nymphs develop greater agency, yet their representation remains problematized by the inherent poetics of pastoral that, according to Renato Poggioli, valorize and prioritize male fulfillment, often at the expense of the female character. Recent scholarship has made great strides in the development of our understanding of the role of women in early modern Europe, both as subject and creator of literary production. One such area, within the Renaissance Italian landscape, is the role of women in the pastoral mode. However, while work has been done to expand our knowledge of female playwrights of pastoral plays like Maddalena Campiglia and Isabella Andreini and to consider their relationship to Tasso, scholarship has yet to more fully integrate their work into larger modal considerations of pastoral. Lisa Sampson, in her work *Pastoral Drama in Early Modern Italy: The Making of a New Genre*, while making reference to the larger framework of the pastoral mode and acknowledging the importance of literary production in the mode beyond drama, focuses primarily on the plays that make up the genre and their intertextuality rather than examining how those plays might dialogue with modal concerns. Maria Galli Stampino also follows this manner of inquiry,
underscoring the “need to inject the consideration of genre into the study of the pastoral, specifically pastoral plays”.4 While generic concerns are valid, I propose to examine the depiction and representation of women in the mode as a whole, starting with the most influential pastoral work in Italian, Jacopo Sannazaro’s Arcadia (1504), one that would not only provide an example for imitation across genres in Italian but also in Spanish and French. Having established the manner in which female characters are depicted in the Arcadia, I will examine how these depictions are either confirmed or challenged in Tasso’s Aminta. Finally, in order to dialogue with the “other” voice, I will examine how two plays, Campiglia’s Flori and Andreini’s La Mirtilla (both published in 1588) received and challenged the depictions of female characters in the Aminta.

**Arcadian Women: Objectifying through the Male Gaze**

The issue of the depiction of women in Sannazaro’s Arcadia has received relatively little critical attention.5 The narrator and the shepherds who “speak” or “sing” in the text are men. Female characters are depicted, but only through the male lens, underscoring the phallocentric nature of the work, and of the pastoral in general if we accept Poggioli’s assertions regarding the primacy of the fulfillment of male desire in the pastoral mode. Thus, women remain depicted as primarily silenced objects with little or no agency of their own. In the Arcadia, women fall predominantly into two categories: either the young and beautiful object of male desire or the maternal figure of consolation, taking the form primarily of Massilia. Each serves as a nexus of artistic creation within the work. The act of sexual desire, often physically denied the shepherd, is enacted or echoed in artistic terms within the text.

According to Ricciardelli, the women in the Arcadia are real, of flesh and blood, and the desires expressed are sensual, reflective of this “reality.” Ricciardelli sees the true protagonist as woman:

> Il vero protagonista, la forza motrice di questo romanzo non è Sincero, Carino o Opico, ma la donna. E la donna non è affatto un essere astratto, ma un essere presentato solo nella sua essenza fisica, corporale, reale. La donna è la causa causantis della felicità o infelicità dei pastori.6

He goes on to insist that Sannazaro’s love for and loss of Carmosina Bonifacio, his childhood beloved who passed away, is the impetus for Sincero’s journey and the entirety of the pastoral composition.7 Nash expresses doubt as to the veracity of the motivation behind the highly conventional inclusion of the love story as Sincero describes it in Prose.
Chapter One

VII. In truth, there is a duality in the description of the Arcadian woman, one that speaks at once of the physical reality of the flesh and also conceives of the feminine in terms of Petrarchan lyric tradition that distances the object of desire from the physical towards the allegorical, underscoring the function of the woman to serve as muse for male poetic inspiration. Nonetheless, there is a definite emphasis on sensuality and physicality in the descriptions of the nymphs throughout the Arcadia that results in a dual conclusion: (1) the woman is considered a material good and (2) feminine beauty is often responsible for rendering the male unable to control himself:

Thus, the feminine beloved is seen as the source of ills and blessings depending on whether she consents to or rejects her lover’s advances.

This is especially true for Ergasto, a shepherd who laments throughout the Arcadia the cruelty of his beloved. In the first verse section (Eclogue I), Ergasto tells Selvaggio of the moment he fell in love, a moment that coincides with the beginning of his suffering. His description of seeing her from a distance emphasizes the physical reality of the shepherdess, with her skirts lifted to her knee while washing a garment and singing, evocative of the medieval pastorella/pastourelle:

The corporality of the shepherdess is particularly underscored not only through the mention of the knee and eyes above, but in the fact that she covers herself (“tutta si coverse,” line 78) and falls silent (“la canzonetta sua spezzando, tacque,” line 76), actions that displease the shepherd although he seems to place specific displeasure in the fact that she covers herself (“e mi dispiacque che, per piú mie’affanni, / si scinse i panni e tutta si coverse,” lines 77-78). Ergasto, overcome, faints, and she rushes to him, calling for help. Upon recovering, however, she turns away and is characterized as “pietosa e fella” (line 90) as well as “spietata e rigida” (line 91) and “soperba e piú che ghiaccio frigida” (line 93). While she is beautiful she is at once “piteous” and “cruel,” seen as almost worse than
solely cruel for she is capable of pity, yet chooses not to have any for the lover.

Beyond the emphasis on the aloof beloved that becomes a commonplace in pastoral, women also form the nexus for artistic creation. While characterizing the woman as the protagonist as Ricciardelli does is not exactly representative of the reality of the feminine experience in the novel, the female characters do form the focus of the work through the male gaze. This is particularly clear in Prose III. The shepherds celebrate the feast of Pales. As the narrator enters the temple, he is taken by the murals on the walls. He embarks on a description of pastoral-themed tableaux, including a landscape with bucolic scenes and depictions of several mythological stories associated with pastoral and the esthetic of beauty. However, of particular importance, at least for the narrator, is a scene that virtually comes to life before his eyes—a group of nymphs, laughing at a little ram, are surprised by lustful satyrs who give chase as the nymphs attempt to flee. The emphasis on corporeality in Ergasto’s description, evocative of his raw, physical desire, is embodied in the satyrs, and the narrator’s fascination exemplifies the hedonistic poetics of male sexual fulfillment that characterize pastoral happiness. The narrator, Sincero, takes true pleasure in viewing the painting of the nymphs and the satyrs, indicating that the reader, too, by extension, should delight in this description: “Ma quel che più intentamente mi piacque di mirare erano certe ninfe ignude […]” (p. 76). The male gaze is inextricably linked to pleasure as he views the mural, and the location in which they are found (the temple of Pales, the goddess of the shepherds) seems to give license to this pleasure.

The flight of the nymph is recalled in Prose X wherein two female figures form the focus: Syrinx and Massilia, representative of the two female archetypes that Sannazaro envisions in the pastoral. Syrinx is introduced in conjunction with Pan’s grotto and the sampogna, the pipes that Pan plays. The priest explains that Pan wrought the pipes from Syrinx herself once she was transformed into the reeds. Ovid tells that the nymph had attempted to escape Pan’s amorous advances, but after her metamorphosis she was taken nonetheless by Pan who sang, “This sylvan pipe will enable us always to talk together!” Following this reference is a genesis of the pastoral mode, including references to Virgil and Theocritus. Sannazaro, hence, implies that the flight of Syrinx and her union with Pan gives birth to the pastoral mode. Thus, the subjugation of the feminine will to the male desire creates the framework for the creation of the mode itself and intrinsically defines any reading thereof.
Syrinx, as “mother” (albeit unwilling) to the pastoral, presents a bridge between the two archetypes of the feminine that Sannazaro introduces: a reluctant nymph who is in the end united with her lover and then transformed into a mother figure. It is no coincidence that immediately following the episode in the grotto as the shepherds begin to return home they happen upon the tomb of Massilia, Ergasto’s mother, and the final, ideal iteration of woman, one who accepted love and bore witness of this acceptance through the birth of her child. The tomb, an art object covered in images, was designed by Massilia herself before her death: “[...] lei medesma, essendo già viva, aveva in onore de’ suoi antichi avoli fatte dipingere, e quanti pastori ne la sua prosapia erano in alcun tempo stati famosi e chiari per li boschi, con tutto il numero de’ posseduti armenti.”

This final act of artistic creation, a motif that is associated with the feminine throughout the novel, is inevitably evocative of the act of promulgation and reproduction in the presence of Ergasto at his mother’s tomb. In the description of Massilia, the emphasis is upon her character and is immensely positive, revealing profound respect on the part of the shepherds and narrator: “[...] e vide l’alto sepolcro ove le riverende ossa di Massilia si riposano con eterna quiete; Massilia, madre di Ergasto, la quale fu, mentre visse, da’ pastori quasi divina sibilla riputata”. The entire area surrounding the tomb has been transformed by the shepherds who created a veritable jardin des délices in honor of Massilia. There is a stark contrast between the portrayal of Massilia, the mother-figure, and that of the young beloved. While the latter is lamented and depicted graphically, identified for inciting pleasure and desire in the male viewer, the former is given a quasi-deistic status, accentuating the fact that Massilia exemplifies and reinforces heteronormative social values: she accepted love. The act of artistic creation in the case of both Syrinx and Massilia is paralleled with the physical act of reproduction, each “giving birth” to, respectively, the pastoral literary tradition and a shepherd-poet who sings within the tradition. These two character types (the young beloved and the mother-figure) will form the basis for the past oral feminine archetypes that Tasso offers in the Aminta.

Silvia and Dafne: Pastoral Feminine Archetypes

Tasso’s Aminta is the best-known of the Italian pastoral plays and certainly one of the most influential and imitated. As Ultsch affirms: “For any dramatist of pastoral in the late sixteenth century [...] the Aminta was an ineluctable presence, as was the genre’s traditional happy ending”. The story is a simple one: the shepherd Aminta loves the nymph Silvia who, as
Women in Early Modern Italian Pastoral

a follower of Diana, values the hunt and her chastity above all else and rejects his offer of love. Dafne, Silvia’s companion and one versed in the ways of love, chastises Silvia and tries to convince her to give into Aminta’s honest love. Eventually, after several false deaths and miscommunications, Silvia recognizes that she loves Aminta and the two are united, seeking her father’s permission to marry. The possible tragedy is transformed into a comedy and the audience is meant to celebrate. However, the way in which Silvia’s “cruelty” is dealt with is problematic, to say the least, and her companion, Dafne, advocates that Aminta, if he cannot convince Silvia in any other way, take what he desires forcefully. Given the play’s place in theater history and in the genesis of the pastoral mode, the dynamics between these two characters serves as an example, an archetype, for how female characters “should” function in the pastoral play. The silent object of admiration in Sannazaro’s Arcadia has been replaced with one that speaks, but whether the function and agency of the character has changed remains dubious.

Silvia is depicted throughout the play in negative terms, most noticeably by Dafne. In the opening scene of act I, Dafne exhorts Silvia to change: “Ah, cangia, / cangia, prego, consiglio, / pazzarella che sei”. The exhortation to change and the characterization of “pazzarella” is repeated two more times in the same scene (lines 37-38, 165-166), underscoring the wrongness of Silvia’s position and foreshadowing the inevitable transformation that Love has promised in the opening monologue. Throughout the first scene, Dafne underscores the unnatural aspect of Silvia’s refusal to love, providing scores of examples from nature demonstrating that to succumb to the power of love is natural (and, hence, good), contrasting these examples with negative characterizations of Silvia as cruel (“Piacevol padre di figlio crudele,” line 107), dispiteous (“[…] che dispettosa giovinetta!” line 116) and comparing her twice to fearsome beasts, once in line 109 (“Ma quando mai dai mansueti agnelli / nacquer le tigri?) and again in lines 145-146 (“[…] e tu sol, fiera / più che tutte le fere […]”). The implication is clear—all of the natural world loves except for Silvia, hence Silvia is out of place in this natural, pastoral realm where natural law reigns, a natural law that dictates “S’ei piace, ei lice” as sung by the Chorus at the end of act I, scene 2 (line 343). Ultsch also underscores such a reading:

The rejection of Aminta’s love is […] unnatural and represents an unreasonable or insane/unhealthy (insano) defiance of the natural order of the universe. Indeed, in the experienced nymph’s view, an inordinate resistance to love in the name of preserving chastity dehumanizes those
dissenting nymphs who would deny natural instincts and self-fulfillment in the “abbracciamenti” of a male.21

Moreover, Silvia’s declaration that she takes pleasure in the hunt above all else and hence scorns any declaration of love also seems unnatural:

Altri segua i diletti de l’amore,  
(se pur v’è ne l’amor alcun dilette):  
me questa vita giova, e ’l mio trastullo  
è la cura de l’arco e degli strali;  
seguir le fere fugaci, e le forti  
atterrar combatendo; e, se non mancano  
saette a la faretra, o fere al bosco,  
non tem’io che a me manchino diporti.22

Ironically, the chase she describes recalls the amorous hunt as lover pursues beloved and as Cupid “fells” the strong with his own arrows. This blind pursuit of the chase is a topos that Guarini will capitalize on in Il pastor fido with Silvio (the name is no doubt not coincidental), the avid hunter who rejects all idea of love in pursuit of a chase that is, ultimately, fruitless in a pastoral realm where love is valued above all else. One might consider whether Tasso toys with the idea that this blind devotion to the hunt as well as the characterizations of Silvia as more proud and wild than the beasts are indications that Silvia tends towards the virile, so much so that union with a shepherd whose behavior is so far removed from her own, who so completely represents her opposite in passion, is impossible until Silvia’s nature is “tamed” or “feminized.” Thus, the male gaze once more determines how the feminine experience should be categorized and designates what is natural and unnatural, always in terms of male gratification.

Throughout the first scene of act I, Dafne is Silvia’s complete inverse—she succumbed to love, was “conquered” (“vinta,” line 68ff) and, after a night of pleasure, foregoes following Cynthia.23 Dafne emphasizes a physical union and sexual gratification, not marriage. The importance of marital bliss is left unanswered, or rather pushed aside, in Tasso’s work. Tirsi, in act 2, scene 2, rejects the possibility of marriage as the bitter part of love, but insists he partakes in the “sweet” (i.e. the physical): “I diletti di Venere non lascia / l’uom che schiva l’amor, ma coglie e gusta / le dolcezze d’amor senza l’amaro” (lines 128-130). Dafne and Tirsi’s characters are adamant in what they find most entertaining—love without commitment, pursuant to the natural laws of love that govern Arcadia. Moreover, Tirsi praises Dafne’s wisdom in 2.2, sharply contrasting his later condemnation of Silvia in act 3, and serving as a reminder of the
importance of observing the laws of love in Arcadia: “A te non manca / né saper né consiglio. Basta sol che / ti disponga a voler” (lines 107-109). While physical passion is not solely what Aminta seeks, it is represented by Dafne and Tirsi as a means by which to access the beloved when the beloved is as cruel and immoveable as Silvia. Hence, violence against and subjugation of the feminine are deemed acceptable when female behavior err from the “norm.”

The means by which Dafne and Tirsi envision this union taking place is further problematized by the decision that the only way to awake love in Silvia is through rape. They plot to have Aminta surprise Silvia in a nearby spring where she bathes, nude, and to let nature take its course. In Dafne’s mind, force is the only way to secure Silvia’s conversion to the ways of love:

È spacciato un amante rispettoso:
consiglial pur che faccia altro mestiero,
poich’egli è tal. Chi imparar vuol d’amare,
disimpari il rispetto: osi, domandi,
solleciti, importuni, al fine involi;
e se questo non basta, anco rapisca.
Or non sai tu com’è fatta la donna?
Fugge, e fuggendo vuol che altri la giunga;
nega, e negando vuol ch’altri si toglia;
pugna, e pugnando vuol ch’altri la vinca.24

Dafne’s characterization of women is contradictory and particularly disturbing in light of what immediately precedes it: the satyr’s monologue wherein he, too, comes to the same conclusion as Dafne—if he cannot have what he desires from Silvia, he will take it by force:

io, perché non per mia salute adopro
la violenza, se mi fe’ Natura
atto a far violenza ed a rapire?
Sforzerò, rapirò quel che costei
mi nega, ingrata, in merto de l’amore … (2.1.78-82)

Both Dafne and the satyr, using similar lexical choices, advocate violence in order to attain their desired ends, an end that seems to be sexual gratification veiled as love. Tirsi transmits this plan to Aminta, who rejects such a plan initially. Tirsi frames taking Silvia as corresponding to her true, inner desire:

Perché dunque non osi oltra sua voglia
prenderne quel che, se ben grava in prima,
al fin, al fin le sarà caro e dolce 
che l’abbì preso? (2.3.68-71)

Despite protestation, Aminta gives in and follows Tirsi. The beloved, unnaturally cruel and cold, is unable to determine her own desire and mind and is in need of male subjugation in order to integrate into pastoral society.

The violation of Silvia’s body with the idea that her mind/heart will follow is not expressly carried out. While the satyr does capture her, nude, and tie her to a tree with her own hair, he is interrupted by Aminta who scares him off. However, the shepherd then hesitates to untie her, taking advantage of the satyr’s escape to gaze upon that which has long been denied to him:

Come la fuga de l’altro concesse
spazio a lui di mirare, egli rivolse
i cupidì occhi in quelle membra belle,
che, come suole tremolare il latte
ne’ giunchi, si parean morbide e bianche. (3.1.72-76)

As Campbell points out, “one has the sense that she has been violated anyway” by the masculine gaze, despite how “respectful” Tirsi assures the audience it was.25 In essence, the male gaze carries out what the satyr threatened and violates Silvia’s modesty. Her flight upon being freed is characterized by Tirsi as cruel and lacking in gratitude for Aminta, but if we follow Campbell’s indication, then Silvia was ravished, not only by the satyr, but by Aminta as well, and Silvia’s reaction (“Nulla rispose, / ma disdegnosa e vergognosa a terra / chinava il viso, e ‘l delicate seno / quanto potea torcendosi celava”, 3.1.87-90), indicates as much. Her silence recalls that of the shepherdess before Ergasto’s gaze and juxtaposes with Andreini’s comic reversal of the scene in her play, La Mirtilla, wherein Filli uses speech and wit to extricate herself and imprison the satyr (act 3, scene 2).26

Ultimately, it is not violence but rather the power of guilt and compassion that will lead Silvia to pity and, then, convert to love. The shepherd, believing the false report of Silvia’s death, throws himself from a mountain (but is saved by a miraculous fall) and Silvia, going to retrieve his “lifeless” body but finding him living, rejoices and declares her love. The principle action of the play (the satyr’s rape, Aminta’s rescue, Silvia’s false death, Aminta’s false death, the lovers’ reunion) takes place offstage and is reported back by use of messengers dialoguing with the shepherds’ chorus. Action is removed from the play, focusing the stage on the poetic
exhortation and rhetorical games of persuasion centered on love. Structurally reliant on report and description, the play underscores passivity and a lack of agency that is firmly contrasted in Andreini and Campiglia’s works. This manner of structuring the play recalls the *Arcadia* of Sannazaro that emphasizes narrations of past actions, reporting female action through the male voice, always mediating the feminine with the masculine. Moreover, despite the loud voices of Dafne and Tirsi, and even the Chorus, resonating with a purported desire to love freely, the ultimate or final message of the play reaffirms heteronormative social practices through the union and anticipated marriage of Silvia and Aminta, a reaffirmation in line with Sannazaro’s work.

Tasso creates of Silvia and Dafne two archetypes that will become important for proto-feminist revisions of the pastoral play. In defining these archetypes, roles by which other playwrights will be inspired, we might define Silvia as the “unloving beloved nymph” and Dafne as a revision of the mother-figure from Sannazaro, now acting as a “counselor-companion,” related to the “theatergram,” as Louise George Clubb terms it, of the *balia* or nurse in comedy. Opposed completely to the comedic theatergram of the *giovane innamorata*, Silvia is the nymph who, sought after by the shepherd, rejects his love (and any type of romantic love in general). In descriptions by other characters, she is described primarily, as are the nymphs and shepherdesses in Sannazaro’s *Arcadia*, as incredibly beautiful, capitalizing upon Petrarchan lyric imagery, but when it comes to describing her personality, little is said that is not reflective of a negative view. She is cold and cruel, has little agency of her own, and is often depicted as needing to be manipulated in order to return her to the “natural order” as Tasso and Sannazaro envision it—one which reinforces heteronormative values and conceives of the pastoral universe as a realm wherein women should accept love and marriage as the most advisable path. In this light, Silvia’s “cruelty” throughout reflects the male perception of a woman who refuses to reciprocate love. Her unattainability at the outset of the play colors the way in which she is read, further problematizing feminine representations in the pastoral play. Dafne is the companion who, versed in the ways of love, attempts to persuade her young friend to embrace Love’s path and forego her foolish and naïve fascination with the hunt and chastity (in essence, to convert from Diana to Venus). These two archetypes are modified and multiplied in the works of Andreini and Campiglia, two female playwrights who draw upon the *Aminta* for inspiration in their own pastoral plays.
Revising Archetypes and Recuperating Feminine Agency: Flori and La Mirtilla

Whereas romantic love remains the dominating force of the Aminta and earlier conceptions of the male pastoral, women writers experiment with other forms of love, weaving a new contribution into the already complex tapestry of pastoral conceptions of love. The male writers focus upon romantic love and the means by which fulfillment of that desire may be obtained, typically through the subjugation of the beloved. The women writers, however, present a more nuanced and varied view of love, subverting the phallocentric norms by returning agency to the female characters. The beloved nymph in the feminine pastoral loves also, sometimes with a passion that challenges that of the shepherd. Moreover, romantic union (and sexual union) is not the priority for the nymphs in these plays. Rather, they seek to maintain friendships, show mercy and compassion, and, in the case of Flori, prize chaste love over sexual gratification. Through the plays by Campiglia and Andreini, we have the opportunity to examine the revision of the pastoral feminine archetypes set out by Tasso in the Aminta and to establish how these women writers recuperate feminine agency.

Campbell and Stampino identify the female characters of the Aminta as being of particular interest for revision among female playwrights who “sought to subvert some of the play’s key elements” (48). The pastoral is particularly suitable to subversion given the highly codified and conventional nature of the mode. The possibility for subversion in the pastoral mode, for example, is capitalized upon later in the French tradition in the form of Charles Sorel’s scathing satirical take on the Astrée, the Berger extravagant (1627). Indeed, even in Tasso’s play we can identify double discourses that lead to ambiguity in meaning (for example, in the Mopso speech) 30 Campiglia and Andreini capitalize upon the multivalent possibilities of the conventional form to create new dialogues surrounding the female characters that form the central focus of the bucolic realm.

The first indication of the shift in focus and agency can be noted in the choice of title. Where Sannazaro places emphasis on the pastoral land itself that formed the poetic landscape to which Sincero escapes, Tasso relocates the attention from the setting to Aminta, the faithful lover-shepherd. In appropriating the pastoral form, the women writers select female characters’ names for their titles, a practice seen in the Spanish tradition with Montemayor’s Diana (1559) and echoed in the French tradition with Honoré d’Urfé’s Astrée (1607-1627). The subtle shift is nonetheless important in that it refocuses the work on the feminine rather than the