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Monsters, Myths, and Masculinities in Boscán's *Respuesta a Don Diego de Mendoza*

ARTICLES – HISPANIC STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Renowned for its portrayal of conjugal love, Juan Boscán's *Respuesta a Don Diego de Mendoza* also makes use of lesser-studied mythological references to the androgyne, harpies, and King Phineus. Through a consideration of these references in context, namely the poetic voice's description of the couple's union and the rewrite of Petrarch's "Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto", I expose hitherto unexplored tensions resulting from the complex and often contradictory strands of contemporary masculinity that fed into the radical reshaping of gender constructs among the nobility due to the rise of the courtier. In particular, I show how Boscán's social commentary and originality in advocating for a conjugal model also had the potential to spark masculinity-related anxieties, which take the form of monstrosities, among his noble readership during this period of transition.

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Famed for its portrayal of the benefits of marriage, there dwell amid the *terze rime* of the *Respuesta a Don Diego de Mendoza* the mythological figure of the androgyne, heinous harpies, and the cursed King Phineus. The poem, composed by Juan Boscán (*c*.1490–1542) and included in Book 3 of his posthumously published *Obras* (1543), offers a compelling example of conjugal love uncommon in Spanish poetry of the time.[1] In this article I revisit the Catalan's epistolary exploration of love after his marriage to Ana Girón de Robelledo to consider how this poetic deviation from the traditional Petrarchan model of unreciprocated love could be read as bringing to the fore the theme of masculinity for its reader. Specifically, I focus upon Boscán's incorporation of the mythological in his description of the couple's union and the rewrite of Petrarch's "Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto", via the myth of King Phineus, in light of the complex and often contradictory strands of contemporary masculinity that fed into the radical reshaping of gender constructs among the nobility during the rise of the courtier. My analysis exposes hitherto unexplored tensions that help us appreciate more fully Boscán's social commentary and originality in advocating for a conjugal model with the potential to give rise to masculinity-related anxiety among his noble readership during a transition period.

NOBILITY AND MASCULINITY

Spain's transition towards fledgling nation state in the late fifteenth century impacted what it meant to be a nobleman because they spent less time in battle and more at court, where they learned to engage with new discourses of nobility and power to survive (Middlebrook, *Imperial* 2). While war remained an important signifier of masculinity (Martínez-Góngora, "Relaciones" 124), texts such as Fernando de Pulgar's *Claros varones* (1485) introduced chivalric virtues, including the linguistic prowess of *eutrapelia*, as key to the political and social dimensions of the new courtier (Fernández Gallardo 538). The transition to court therefore marked a loss of a previously vital marker of one's social status that occasioned "anxieties" (Gilmore, *Manhood* 4), which may explain why the self-preservatory new social and political discourses surrounding nobility proved so seductive. Mar Martínez-Góngora observes the resultant self-fashioning that saw an inverse correlation between the decreased focus on military service and the rise in popularity of lyric poetry among nobles because if afforded public affirmation of one's aristocratic spirit and masculinity in the absence of battle ("Relaciones" 124).

Another essential aspect of contemporary conceptualizations of masculinity was that of virility. Grace Coolidge ("Contested" 64) highlights the importance of performing male sexuality publicly as a signifier of both "natural" sexual potency and heterosexuality.[2] Displays of virility were foundational because they informed other highly valuable social qualities for men: "[m]ale authority, even male honor, was contingent on male sexual potency" (Behrend-Martínez, *Unfit* xii). An issue arises among Spain's nobility due to the role of marriage—which "had nothing to do with love" (Lewis 16)—being the primary means by which families consolidated their power and wealth, produced legitimate heirs, and conserved their patrimony (Coolidge, "Contested" 66). The survival of one's family name and honour via a marriage contract left little room for a love match, with such a notion considered a bourgeois concern (Ruiz 68).

Additionally, the Catholic Church considered marriage a *remedium concupiscentiae*, a holy act that moderated the (female) libido and protected both parties from the ills of lust and fornication (Reeser 126–7). Marriage, therefore, restrained a husband's virility, which could in turn impact perceptions of his masculinity and honour. Despite the reigning Catholic ideal of sex within marriage being solely for the purposes of procreation (Behrend-Martínez, *Unfit x*), Coolidge ("Vile" 196) has shown that this was not the nobility's lived reality because many enjoyed extramarital affairs without destroying their social standing. Women, however, stood to pay a higher price than men for their actions if discovered. Coolidge goes on to explain that emotionally and sexually stifling arranged marriages—which eventually led to the perception of Church doctrine as a legal more than a spiritual matter—were the impetus behind such thoroughly un-Catholic conduct (Coolidge, "Vile" 196). Breaching Catholic tenets brought not

1 Another example of conjugal love celebrated in Hispanic verse is to be found in the *novohispanic* poet Eugenio de Salazar's *Silva de poesía*. On the topic, see Locke and Martínez Martín.

2 On the topic of men engaging in homosexual acts, see Berco: "Sex between men was fraught, depending on the sexual position, with messages about masculinity and status. It is not surprising, then, in this context of penetrative virility, that sodomy emerged as one of the many means of establishing dominance over other men" (359).

only the possibility of fulfilling one's love and/or desire, but, for men, championed the virility that marked them as masculine and fed into their sociopolitical and financial success by improving their social capital and public image (Coolidge, "Contested" 81).

Virility was also tempered by the resurgence of moderation as a guiding principle, especially in one's sex life (Reeser 14); however, moderation for men never saw the strict calls for virginity and chastity faced by women, such as those in Juan Luis Vives's *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1524, revised 1538). Instead, it presented a barrier to publicizing one's heterosexual sexual contact beyond the expectation of coitus for procreation within marriage. The benefits of moderation for both husband and wife, exemplified by the *remedium*, were outlined by various writers of the time, including Calvin, Erasmus, and Luther (Marías Martínez 111).

Behrend-Martínez frames noble masculinity as Spain's hegemonic form at the time, which implies that noblemen's masculinity was idealized.[3] Those not practising this form of masculinity—arguably most Spanish men, whose circumstances afforded no such opportunity—could suffer a degree of anxiety from failing to live up to the model (Behrend-Martínez, "Taming" 344). The potential for anxiety cuts both ways (Behrend-Martínez, *Unfit* 244), however; thus nobles, while practising their niche hegemonic masculinity, were aware that they did not live up to more widespread societal markers of masculinity. We are left to consider the possibility of noblemen's deviations from the socially dominant form of masculinity, practised by most Spanish men and likely known to nobles, fuelling panic about their sense of masculinity (Reeser 30). It is with this in mind that I propose that the lyric turn afforded by court culture offered anxious noblemen a means to cover both bases at once without requiring the wholesale abandonment of the militaristic and sexual themes to which they were accustomed; rather, it resulted in their aestheticization into a form adapted to suit their new surroundings.

We bear witness then to the preservation of ancestral privilege via "a process of transformation from men of arms to men of arms and letters" (Armon 36). This adaptation took place as Italianate metres and style became more popular; these served to inscribe changing norms surrounding nobility into the Spanish cultural continuum, but they also resulted in poetry itself being seen as both courtly and aristocratic.[4] The result, it has been argued, demonstrates the nobility's capacity to adapt to the new sociopolitical climate and reclaim some of the prominence lost after the power shift that resulted from the Peninsula's unification (Lorenzo, "Poética" 38). Nobles could now "rehearse and elaborate the image of a courtier as the new masculine ideal" to which they aspired (Middlebrook, *Imperial* 14), which foreshadows Butler's work on the performativity of gender and identity through the exterior "stylized repetition of acts" (191), in this case the reading, writing, and recitation of love lyric. This helped both to establish and validate the masculine noble identity by virtue of its adoption among the upper echelons of Spanish Renaissance society.

Such a reliance on an externalised, language-based construct of noble masculinity resulted from the lack of a "biologically essentialist basis for gender" (Breitenberg 151). Laqueur elaborates that "Renaissance doctors understood there to be only one sex. On the other hand, there were manifestly at least two social sexes with radically different rights and obligations" (134). What Laqueur terms "social sexes" (8) we understand as unequal contemporary gender constructs of male and female. A key aspect in expressing this "new" noble masculinity, therefore, was the need to distance oneself from all that was womanly, given the anxiety attached to one's legacy being considered suspiciously feminine by one's peers (Martínez-Góngora, "Relaciones" 128). Harry Berger, in his work on Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), a key Renaissance text that Boscán translated for a Spanish readership in 1534, frames it thus:

> the courtier's dependent political status results in peculiar social demands that call for the redefinition of the norms of masculinity. The explicit if informal pedagogy enabling a man to perform as a courtier must also enable a courtier to perform as a man. Thus, linked to the idea of a performable and class-specific nature is the idea of a performable and class-specific gender. (68)

3 For more on hegemonic masculinity, see Connell and Messerschmidt.

4 Boscán's *Carta a la Duquesa de Soma* is a prime example. The letter, which prefaces the *canzoniere* in Book 2 of his *Obras*, achieves the goals of ennobling Italianate poetic forms not only by virtue of drawing upon the standing of its recipient but also by virtue of its circulation among select practitioners of poetry that included Garcilaso de la Vega and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (Lorenzo, "Poética" 25–6).

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He continues, "this is interesting, if only because it reveals the fundamental reliance of the male courtiers' self-definition on gender contrast and relations with women" (63). We note that the dependence upon authority inherent to noble masculinity relied, in part, on articulating an exclusionary "discourse that marks itself, and can only know itself through its differentiation from what it *constructs*" as noble femininity (Breitenberg 154) to enshrine its masculine counterpart and establish a coherent hierarchy.

Love lyric had taken on a new significance at court because having one's poetry circulated and heard by others had become the situation "in which men displayed the cerebral equivalent of chivalric prowess" (Hutson 99). The extremes of emotion endured by the poetic voice of many a Petrarchan lover by virtue of the cold-hearted figure of the *donna angelicata* might appear emasculating; however, Catherine Bates explains that "the more extreme the lover's emotional indiscipline, the more impressive his achievement in containing all that turmoil [...] within literary forms like the sonnet whose verbal economy and metrical discipline made it the supreme example of formal control" (7). The distinction between poet and poetic voice meant that these emotionally wrought displays, which, *prima facie*, could be interpreted as the abandonment of rational thought for emotional excess (Moller 41), or agency for subservience, appeared as examples of "cool authorial judgement" (Bates 7) and erudition for their audiences. There was new-found power in linguistic artifice and in the artful presentation of the self to be harnessed by courtiers (Armon 37). In such a scenario, the female beloved was little more than a stimulus engineered to permit ideal circumstances for a masterful composition that highlighted that the pen was valued as highly as the sword in this new environment.

Love poetry even offered a space for socially acceptable extramarital displays of love, emblematic of the nobility's private affairs, that one could present as advantageous to one's social status because of the poetic skill involved (Coolidge, "Vile" 196). According to Whinnom (27), this idealization of adultery—inherited from the courtly love tradition (Lewis 16)—symbolized one's sexual appetite, thus representing one's virility and masculinity. Desire for one's own wife simply would not do, for she was incapable of occupying the elevated station required. Lewis explains: "How can a woman, whose duty is to obey, be the *midons* whose grace is the goal of all striving and whose displeasure is the restraining influence upon all uncourtly vices?" (45). The inherent power differential of the lord–vassal relationship that informed the courtly idea of the elevated female beloved cannot be found in celebrating one's own "wifely property", even if it were a love match, as it necessitates neither jealousy nor the requisite insurmountable (social) challenge. Only another man's wife offers the opportunity for one to elevate oneself, because she is cast as being of the utmost fidelity; therefore, her sexual unavailability, unlike one's own wife, spurs the continuous pursuit of the male's satisfaction: an enduring, if quasi-spiritual, burning desire that stands as testament to the male's sexuality and masculinity.

BOSCÁN'S *RESPUESTA*

Boscán's *Respuesta a Don Diego de Mendoza* offers a counterexample to Lewis's argument that one's wife cannot offer the suitable means for ennoblement. Dated to late 1539/early 1540 because of its reference to Boscán's recent marriage to Ana Girón de Robelledo (Reichenberger 1), the *Respuesta* forms part of Book 3 of the *Obras* (1543), which contains longer-form poems written in the Italianate tradition and inspired by classical literatures.[5] The poem is in the form of a *terza rima* epistle, novel within contemporary Hispanic circles, thus permitting a certain latitude regarding the themes treated, although it was most associated with a familiarity of tone and a tradition of being read privately (Barlow 387). The innovative poem has been characterized by Clara Marías Martínez as a "canto al amor conyugal y la experiencia autobiográfica del poeta barcelonés" that both defends and exalts his wife and married life (110–11). Specifically, regarding the philosophical slant of the poem, there is a strong framing of the Golden Mean, a rejection of extremes adopted from both Aristotle and Horace, as vital to the happiness of the poetic voice.

Early in the text we are told of the benefits enjoyed by the philosopher figure who manages the nigh impossible task of becoming truly virtuous:

5 On the various sources that may well have fed into Boscán's epistle, see the excellent study undertaken by Marías Martínez.

Quien sabe y quiere a la virtud llegarse,
pues las cosas verá desde lo alto,
nunca terná de qué pueda alterarse. (lines 19–21)[6]

He will ascend, "subirs'á al movedor de todas cosas" (line 28), capable of seeing all the beauty of the natural world (line 25) as well as contemplating its secrets, both great and small (lines 29–30). De Armas (861) notes how Boscán employs a *contaminatio* that draws upon Cicero, Seneca, Castiglione, and Macrobius to frame the philosopher's ascent, change of perspective, and understanding of the insignificance of earthly matters. Boscán's imagery further evokes the idea of (Neoplatonic) ascent in these authors by positing that true harmony is that of the music of the spheres and not the music that stirs the lowly dance of earthly passion (lines 64–6), which is no longer audible to the philosopher (De Armas 862).

Despite the many advantages to be enjoyed from this elevated position, Boscán's lyric voice changes timbre and turns to question humankind's rationale in lauding the merits of this philosophy and approach to life when so often we fail to adhere to its tenets. This reading is supported by De Armas's (866–7) observation that the poet's *contaminatio* also channels Lucian and Menippus to mock the "impossible fiction" of the philosopher character and his ascent as much as those compelled to perform the dance of earthly passions:

Pero es, en fin, en esto lo que entiendo,
que holgamos d'hablar bien cuando hablamos
magníficas sentencias componiendo.

Pero cuando a las obras nos llegamos,
rehuimos mi fe de la carrera
y con solo el hablar no contentamos. (lines 85–90)

The accusation levied is that, in spite of our willingness to revel in the beauty of almost impossible philosophical ideals that promise lofty ends, too often we are either unable or fail to follow through with the requisite actions to fulfil them. As the poetic voice goes on to summarize: "Díxome no sé quien, una vez, que era / plazer hablar de Dios y obrar del mundo" (lines 91–2). Despite our pretensions, we more often than not embody the idiom of being all talk and no trousers.

There is a clear air of social commentary in Boscán's lines, supported by De Armas's reading, that evidences the poet's conscious decision, given that he prepared his own poetry for publication. Boscán's poetic voice takes aim at those who employ impossible transcendental rhetoric to virtue signal as part of performing both their class and masculinity, while at the same time failing to live up to this image through their conduct, whether publicly or privately. An alternative to the extreme virtue associated with the love expressed in contemporary Italianate lyric is presented to the reader:

Yo no ando ya siguiendo a los mejores,
bástame alguna vez dar fruto alguno:
en lo demás conténtome de flores. (lines 100–3)
[...]
No curemos de andar tras los estremos,
pues dellos huye la philosophía
de los buenos autores que leemos. (lines 109–11)

Boscán's lyric voice elaborates an approach that eschews both the demands of unadulterated earthly passion and extreme philosophical virtue that offer little chance of contentment; he instead chooses a higher likelihood of success and the knowledge that he is doing his best: "bástame alguna vez dar fruto alguno: en lo demás conténtome de flores". The metaphor is one whereby, as Carlos Clavería (Boscán 363) notes, flowers are recognized as part of the

6 All references to Boscán's *Respuesta* will appear as line references, as per Boscán (359–74).

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process of fruit production but do not guarantee the successful fulfilment of the plant's fruit-bearing potential in themselves. The means of achieving such contentment is moderation, the avoidance of extreme passion and Neoplatonic adherence, which the poetic voice ascribes to the teachings of Xenocrates and Plato (lines 112–13), although it is also recognizable in Aristotle and Horace. While calls for moderation would have been familiar to noblemen as a constituent component of masculinity, as discussed above, there is a clear difference in how Boscán's lyric voice conceives of the role of moderation in his life. For example, the conceptualization of marriage as a form of moderation could have evoked *remedium concupiscentiae*, recognizable as an obstacle to one's masculinity, as an alternative to existing poetic strategies that offered aestheticized versions of the hunt and militaristic values that fed into the noblemen's rehearsal and maintenance of gender and class distinctions, essential to one's identity during a period of heightened lability founded upon contradictory views of masculinity.

THE MONSTROUS BISEXUAL

Cohen (9) has argued that threats to ideological outlooks can produce what are portrayed as monsters or examples of monstrosity born from cultural anxieties. This idea of monstrosity as a cultural manifestation of difference, fear, and anxiety at a time of great upheaval sheds new light on Boscán's divergence from established poetic codes, but also allows us to explore how these might have been received by his readership.

Boscán's lyric voice advocates for moderation over extremes before explaining how he has achieved the "estado mejor" though marriage:

> El estado mejor de todos los estados
> es alcançar la buena medianía
> con la cual se remedian los cuidados.
>
> Y así yo, por seguir aquesta vía,
> éme casado con una mujer
> que's principio y fin del alma mía. (lines 124–6)

It has been argued that these lines suggest, for Boscán, the idea of the *aurea mediocritas*, as far as love is concerned, to be aligned with an "estable y cotidiana relacion matrimonial" (Ruiz 67). This stability is itself the result of the transformative process undergone by the lyric voice in becoming one half of a married couple:

> Ésta m'á dado luego un nuevo ser
> con tal feliçidad que me sostiene
> llena la voluntad y el entender. (lines 130–3)

We are told that the fruit of this moderation effected through marriage, which we might conceive as the avoidance of the excesses of emotion embodied by the more performative courtly model, is a "nuevo ser" that draws upon the idea of the Neoplatonic synthesis of lovers' souls realized on the earthly plane.[7] The outcome for the abundantly happy couple, therefore, is a harmony in keeping with the Neoplatonic image, but one which Iglesias (par. 31) holds as constituted by their physical union and which shows marriage to be "le pilier d'une élévation spirituelle" that goes beyond mere bodily pleasure or a focus on the propagation of the species. Iglesias's reference to spiritual elevation is also apposite when one considers that the moderation espoused by the poetic voice need not entail a complete abandonment of Neoplatonic beliefs, which calls to mind March's less successful experience of *amor mixto* (Morros Mestres, "El *Canzoniere*" 256) as well as the more fruitful synthesis of physical and spiritual love that Francisco de Aldana would develop as a result of his straddling Spanish and Italian aesthetics and thought.[8]

7 Clavería (Boscán 364) believed the "nuevo ser" should be read as representative of the birth of the couple's child, whereas I, in line with Pintacuda (468) and Marías Martínez (112), find a Neoplatonic interpretation to be a much more convincing reading.

8 For more on Aldana's synthesis of physical and spiritual love, see Lennon.

Learned readers might have recognized the allusion to the androgynous from Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (189c–193e), if not some other version of its dissemination through Neoplatonic circles by virtue of its translation into Latin by Ficino (1468) and subsequent Christianized commentary (1469), and then through its inclusion in Petrarchan love lyric. The epistle promotes a positive framing of the couple's union owing to its associations with union, balance, and harmony. While Boscán's divergent *nuevo canto* has been identified from Book 2 onwards (Ruiz 64), it could be argued that it is in the *Respuesta* that the song reaches its crescendo.[9] In fact, the lyric voice opens by telling us he so enjoyed Mendoza's letter that his thoughts returned to his "olvidado canto" (line 3), reminding us of the *nuevo canto* begun previously that he will now elaborate with a clarity hitherto unseen in the Spanish poetic tradition.[10]

The expression of union by the lyric voice as he becomes part of a new being in conjunction with his wife recalls the themes of rebirth and renewal found in the closing sonnets of Book 2, including "Otro tiempo lloré, y agora canto" and "Amor me envía un dulce sentimiento" (Iglesias par. 13; Morros Mestres, "Fuentes" 98). Another possible, if more sinister, reading sees the union as the dissolution of the male lyric voice at a time when biological essentialism had not yet taken centre stage, and could be construed as Boscán's poetic voice failing to keep sufficient distance from femininity. The anxieties stemming from such a failure to maintain gender difference and introduce taxonomic instability could give rise to a perceived threat to noblemen's reliance upon poetic conventions to rehearse the gender-based distinctions associated with their class.

There were, of course, positive cultural representations of marriage, some of the most influential of which came to Spain from beyond its borders. D'Agostino (74) recognizes the impact that *Quattrocentro* writers had on Boscán, in particular the inspiration he took from the *De amore coniugali* by Giovanni Pontano (*c.*1461–1503), composed between 1461 and the mid-to-late 1480s. Italian noblewoman Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547) was also at the vanguard when it came to Italianate lyric by virtue of her poetry dedicated to her (deceased) husband, the Marchese de Pescara, which resulted in imitations of poetry dedicated to spouses by Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), among others. Additionally, we might look to Neoplatonist works, such as Baldassar Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), which Boscán translated into Castillian in 1534, and León Hebreo's influential treatise *Dialoghi d'amore* (1535), which advocated for union not only though marriage, but also (through) sex, in a manner divergent from Ficino's commentary on Platonic love.[11] Take, for example, Hebreo's syncretistic reading of Adam and Eve as evidence of the existence of the androgyne. The Judaeo-Portuguese author explains that Genesis presents Adam as an allegory for the androgyne, hence the internal contradictions in the story that imply Eve's feminine presence prior to her "creation", which in turn casts the fabrication of Eve from Adam's rib as the splitting of the dual-sexed being known to us from Aristophanes' speech (Ebreo 278).[12] Marriage and sex offer a divinely sanctioned means for the newly separated halves to come together through corporeal desire as one body to propagate the species made in God's image (Ebreo 282). Furthermore, Hebreo goes on to explain how marriage between man and woman is "the simulacrum of the sacred and divine marriage of the supremely Beautiful with the highest Beauty, from which the whole universe takes its origin", in his most ringing endorsement of the sacrament (Ebreo 329).

Germane to discussion of the androgynous in the Renaissance is the slippage that was taking place between the terms androgyne and hermaphrodite, even among poets (Gilbert 10–11), which presented them as interchangeable, thus paving the way for what I believe could have been an alternative anxious reading by Spanish nobles. The united couple comes to take on the guise of "a monstrous hybrid, characterized not only by a merging of the two sexes, but by the deformation of each required to effect the union" (Freccero 149). Jones and Stallybrass

9 Morros Mestres ("Fuentes" 101) posits that Ana's first appearance in Boscán's poetry is in Book 1: "Del amor por doña Ana creo que Boscán habla en el poema que cierra el libro I, pero todavía no lo hace en los términos en que lo hará cuando ya se haya casado con ella en septiembre de 1539. Sin embargo, en ese poema introduce ya elementos que aparecerán en los sonetos del libro II y en la epístola del libro III, al referirse a su futura esposa como un nuevo amor."

10 As noted by Morros Mestres ("El *Canzoniere*" 251–2), it is true that Boscán draws on March to shape the sonnets that constitute the point of inflection for his *nuevo canto*.

11 For more on Neoplatonism, including Ficino and those who followed him, see Lennon 7–48.

12 For more on Hebreo's syncretistic union of Genesis and Plato, see Rothenberg 44–53.

(80) agree that, in the absence of absolute gender categories, such struggles often gave rise to a fear rooted in a figure of ambiguous sex, which concords with Crawford's findings that the androgyne had been linked to "sexual de-differentiation" (65). Freccero notes how the hermaphrodite had long been a derogatory concept that readers might have recognized from Plato, Ovid, and Dante (348). Among these, it is contemporary interest in the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus from Book 4 (lines 274–388) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that I believe offers the most revelatory means of understanding the gender-related monstrosity at play.

The myth sees Salmacis, an atypical nymph who favoured sunbathing over hunting, spot the handsome young figure of Hermaphroditus as she gathers flowers by her pool. Yearning to possess him, she finds her attempts to woo him rebuffed. As he bathes naked in the waters of her pool, she, having kept watch nearby, dives in beside him and attempts to rape the youth. Hermaphroditus resists her as she coils around him and begs the gods to grant him to her. In answering her prayers, the gods make their bodies one—both male and female.

Ovid's version of events in the *Metamorphoses*, as well as variations thereupon that were in circulation throughout Europe from the Middle Ages onward, such as the *Ovide moralis*é (*c*.1317–28) and Giovanni di Bonisignori's *Metamorfoseo volgare* (1497), meant that many were familiar with Hermaphroditus's fate. In the Spanish context, Restreppo-Gautier's research (192) suggests that there was a range of reactions, including acceptance, with Sebastián de Covarrubias's Emblem 64 of his *Emblemas morales* (1610) and both the poetry of Sebastián de Horozco, his father, and Juan Perez de Moya's *Philosof*ía *secret* (1585) representative of those who saw it as either monstrous or the natural result of God's will, respectively. While interpretations ultimately relied upon the given author's allegorical reading, the myth did serve to foreground the instability of gender and was subject to a reading that saw the female as a drain on Hermaphroditus's masculinity (Jones and Stallybrass 97). Covarrubias's Emblem 64, for example, was understood to constitute "a warning to men who adopt female characteristics, qualities, or manners, and indeed, *to anybody who crosses or breaks down gender categories*" (Restreppo-Gautier, 195, my emphasis). It is perhaps telling that the term hermaphrodite comes from the male character's name, despite it being Salmacis's wish that they be united, as if the legacy should be that of the event when male perfection was contaminated by her lowly effeminacy. For Spanish noblemen, with their shared belief that one should distance oneself from all that is feminine (Martínez-Góngora, "Relaciones" 128), the evocation of ambiguity by Boscán may have appeared to be a warning that interstitial monsters that threaten what it is to be a man are the price paid for the erosion of distinct gender roles.

Even if the lens of the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus myth were abandoned, the couple's union still throws into relief the alteration of the set roles and implied power dynamics in the text between lover and beloved. I do not concur fully with Middlebrook's point that we see "modern views about gender" ("Poetics" 157) per se, but I acknowledge a departure from standard representations of the female beloved as the *donna angelicata*. Indeed, there is clear movement away from the familiar rhetoric of absence, pain, and hopelessness often associated with a Petrarchan beloved and towards a reformulation that envisages her as a "compañera del varón […] de la relación amorosa", although I would not go so far as to echo Ruiz's label of "coprotagonista" (65), given her lack of voice and autonomy in the poem, which also fits the idea of the obedient wife. Such a departure, as radical as it was within the uncertain terrain of noble masculinity and its complex links with Spanish poetics, could have propagated further anxieties because of the confusion it invited between the typically differentiated roles of male lover and female beloved that helped underpin one's sense of self among the nobility.

We arrive, thus, at a strange juncture that could see a description of the consummation of one's marriage vows through intercourse—also in lines 178–80, 254–5, 337–45, and 343–5—portrayed as somehow unmasculine among the noblility. I wish to make it clear that I am not arguing that the act of heterosexual intercourse was perceived as emasculating; rather, it is that Boscán and his lyric voice's performance fall foul of the "powerful set of social codes" that Gilbert (51) observes were essential in communicating one's gender and status to others *au fait* with that same system. This understanding complements Martínez Góngora's point ("Entre" 249) that discussions of conjugal love in lyric were at odds with the overarching codes of noble masculinity and read as a bourgeois concern. After all, we know that both male and female members of the nobility were enjoying (extra)marital sex out of the public eye, but Boscán published a poem that markedly deviates from, and comments upon, the new masculinity of

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court culture, thus highlighting not only its artifice but also his refusal to perform social codes which risked impacting the poem's reception and his poetic legacy.

Despite his vital role in bringing Italianate lyric to Spain alongside his friend Garcilaso de la Vega, Boscán's interest in Petrarchism waned (Heiple 103).[13] It is important to remember that Petrarchism had become the face for the various traditions that had informed Italianate lyric (Martínez Martín 110) and was often used as an all-encompassing term. Lorenzo has framed Boscán's relationship with Petrarch as eristic (*"Nuevos"* 94) and, in agreement with Navarrete (73), envisages the movement away from Italianate lyric as rooted in the Catalan's elaboration of erotic codes that include the possibility of mutual love and an end to suffering (112–13).[14] Such suffering formed a key part of the performative extremes endured by Petrarchan poetic voices that Boscán sought to avoid through his practical philosophy for happiness in marriage (Martínez-Góngora, "Entre" 433; Cruz 44).

PHINEUS AND THE HARPIES

Boscán's divergence from Petrarchism in the *Respuesta* gives rise to our second example of the link between monstrosity and masculinity in his lyric. Lines 154–62 of the verse epistle offer a rewrite of Petrarch's sonnet "Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto", a fact also noted by Marías Martínez (121), and present an opportunity to explore again the impact on the reader of Boscán's alteration of the female character from beloved to wife.[15] In particular, lines 154–6 reference the trope of the bed as a battlefield:

> El campo que'ra de batalla el lecho,
> ya es lecho para mí de paz durable;
> dos almas ay formes en un pecho.

We are invited to contrast the lyric voice's experience of the space as one of peace and spiritual union with the figure of Ovid's pained lover who had to endure the uncomfortable couch in *Amores* 2.2.[16] This is the same image of discomfort that Petrarch had incorporated into his own sonnet:

> Lagrimar sempre è 'l mio sommo diletto,
> il rider doglia, il cibo assentio et tòsco
> la notte affano, e 'l ciel seren m'è fosco,
> et duro campo di battaglia il letto. (lines 5–8)

Boscán's recasting of the bed in a positive light as a result of the lovers' union dramatically alters the tone typically associated with the well-known image.

The narrative of Petrarch's poetic voice is one of loneliness; the laughter and food that once signified joy have grown bitter. Garcilaso struck a similar tone by employing the same bed-cum-battlefield motif in his sonnet "Pensando que'l camino iba derecho", which originally appeared in Book 4 of Boscán's *Obras*: "y duro campo de batalla el lecho" (line 8) (Vega 107). Boscán's text strays from Petrarch's model in its replacement of absence, pain, and hopelessness with

13 Heiple acknowledges: "Not only had [Boscán and Garcilaso] introduced Petrarchan forms of expression into Spanish, but they represent the first reaction against them." We see in Boscán and Garcilaso, therefore, a condensation of the movement experienced in Italian poetry that saw Petrarchism, hailed in Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), cede its dominance to the Renaissance appetite for adapting classical materials into vernacular verse forms, as espoused by Bernardo Tasso in the preface of his *Libro primo degli amore* (1531) (Heiple 104–5).

14 Marías Martínez agrees with the eristic framing and describes the epistle thus, "Esta composición constituirá, así, del intento de Boscán de superar la poesía petrarquista" (116).

15 "Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto / non fu quant'io, né fera in alcun bosco, / ch'i' non veggio 'l bel viso, et non conosco / altro sol, né quest'occhi ànn'altro obiecto. // Lagrimar sempre è 'l mio sommo diletto / il rider doglia, il cibo assentio et tosco, la notte affanno, e 'l ciel seren m'è fosco, / et duro campo di battaglia il letto. // Il sonno è veramente qual uom dice, / parente de la norte, e 'l cor sottragge / a quel dolce penser che 'n vita il tene. // Solo al mondo paese, ombrose, piagge, / voi possdete, et io piango, il mio bene" (Petrarca 1046).

16 See Ovid (*Heroides* 320–5): "Esse quid hoc dicam, quod tam, mihi dura videntur / strata, neque in lecto pallia nostra sedent, / et vacuus somno noctem, quam longa, peregi, / lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent?" (lines 1–4) [What shall I say this means, that my couch seems so hard, and the coverlets will not stay in place, and I pass the long, long night untouched by sleep, and the weary bones of my tossing body will ache?].

presence, joy, and everlasting peace, which has been interpreted as being related to the beloved's transition from *amada* to *esposa* as well as "la celebración de un amor cumplido" (Ruiz 65). The figurative battle is no more for Boscán's poetic voice, and the break with the militaristic focus, as well as Petrarch's model, again highlights a possible threat that creates a site of anxiety for noble masculinity, given that we know the importance of Petrarch's poetic legacy and the aestheticization of prior "masculine" activities for codes central to the rehearsal and reinforcement of one's identity.

The anxiety is furthered as the rewrite continues with the radical transformation for the better of the bitter food as a result of the couple's reciprocal love:

> La mesa en otro tiempo abominable,
> y el triste pan que'n ella yo comía,
> y el vino que bevía lamentable,
>
> infestándome siempre alguna harpía
> que, en mitad del deleite, mi vianda
> con amargos potajes envolvía,
>
> agora el casto amor acude y manda
> que todo se me haga muy sabroso,
> andando siempre todo como anda. (lines 157–65)

The descriptor "en otro tiempo abominable" may be read as representative of the lyric voice's prior struggles with the extremes of emotion and unreciprocated love typical of the *donna angelicata*. Therefore, the harpy, a female monster and goddess (March 177) that torments the dining table, serves to connote the figure of the goddess-like *amada* in a negative light in line with the poetic voice's prior experiences. Such a reading accords with the idea of Petrarchan beloveds as unnatural "beautiful monsters composed of every individual perfection" (Cropper 376), who are reimagined via the metaphor of the human–bird hybrid. Here the harpy becomes the monstrous metaphor that "embodies the existential threat to social life" because of its destructive potential (Gilmore, *Monsters* 12). The choice of the beastly mythological figure itself is perhaps a conscious decision to develop the monstrous potential of Petrarch's presentation of Laura as a composite of body parts alongside his frequent comparisons of her with the winged figure of an angel.

In his notes on Boscán's poetry, Clavería comments on the ability of harpies to rob and poison food (Boscán 365); however, given the Catalan's command over, and preference for, classical references over Petrarchan ones (Martínez-Góngora, "Entre" 430), I believe that its significance has hitherto gone unnoticed. The links between harpies and food are evocative and invite the reader to recall the story of King Phineus, which received its most extensive treatment in Book 2 of Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica* (lines 164–499). Zeus sentenced Phineus to blindness, a prolonged life, and to be tormented by harpies who either stole or ruined his food, although they always left him with just enough to survive and endure his wretched situation further:

> But swooping suddenly through the clouds to his side, the Harpies continually snatched the food from his mouth and hands with their beaks. Sometimes not even a morsel of food was left, at other times just enough for him to stay alive and suffer. Furthermore, they would shed a putrid stench upon it: no one could bear even to stand at a distance, let alone bring it up to his mouth – so terribly did the remains of his meal reek. (Apollonius Rhodius 129, lines 178–94)

The "putrid stench" left over the scraps after the harpies have eaten their fill could be read as a comment on the causal link between *amor heroes* and the loss of appetite typical of the male lyric voice of the period (Capellanus 186).[17] We also note Phineus's compulsion to remain and indulge in the fetid food scraps: "But a truly painful and unending necessity compels me to stay there and, staying, to put it in my cursed stomach" (Apollonius Rhodius 133). The need to persist in such an accursed activity reminds us that the desire endured by the poetic voice "no

17 "He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little."

es un amor de alegrías y satisfacciones, sino un amor de sufrimientos" (Aparici Llanas 147). The compulsion also connotes a compromised will, as exemplified in Petrarch's "Qual piú diversa et nova" (Petrarca 651–3):

> Ma io incauto, dolente,
> corro sempre al mio male, et so ben quanto
> n'ò sofferto, et n'aspetto; ma l'engordo
> voler ch'è cieco et sordo
> sí mi trasporta, che 'l bel viso santo
> et gli occhi vaghi fien cagion ch'io pèra,
> di questa fera angelica innocente. (lines 39–45)

In this example the lyric voice appears to exercise free will to choose a fate; however, his volition has been compromised not only by grief and suffering, but also the blindness and deafness occasioned by desire that leads the poetic voice to such a sorrowful fate. Similarly, Boscán's Phineus-like poetic voice is unable to escape his compulsion to stay and ingest the meagre, malodorous morsels. Additionally, the blindness that formed part of Phineus's punishment may have a threefold significance. It may be that the blindness is akin to the form discussed in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* that clouds one's memory and causes one to conceive of past loves as a source of pleasure (Marías Martínez 118), hence the decision to stay; or that which leads one to pain as presented in Petrarch's "Qual piú diversa et nova" above. Additionally, it could represent a metaphorical contributory blindness on the part of the poetic voice that precludes true love (Capellanus 32–3).[18] By this I refer to the inability to see beyond the promise of the lofty heights with which the truly virtuous Petrarchan lover is to be rewarded in return for the hyperbolic, if performative, suffering the poetry requires him to endure in order to ennoble himself. Phineus's experience of suffering is presented as analogous to that of the Petrarchan lover; the myth acts as a microcosm for all the prior experiences of the lyric voice that allows Boscán to recast it in an unfamiliar fashion that, when considered afresh by his reader, could discourage adherence to the pain-filled and pain-fuelled model. Monsters, as Gilmore reminds us, are "indispensable in dealing with the challenges of life" (*Monsters* 190), such as the quests for love, happiness, and self. They attract our attention and offer a form of cognitive challenge, which in this example sees the reader invited to rethink their engagement with the Petrarchan model of unrequited love by suggesting similarities between Phineus's torturous relationship with the harpy and the Petrarchan lover with his female beloved. From the vantage point of a married man in a loving reciprocal relationship—and redolent of the self-conscious reflection of Petrarch's opening sonnet "Voi ch'ascoltate in rime spare il suono" in which the Tuscan's poetic voice casts his mind back to the folly of youth[19]—Boscán's lyric voice warns us by levying the damning charge that there never was any sweetness amid the agony.[20]

The reciprocal and loving relationship that frees Boscán's lyric voice from a Petrarchan fate worse than death, when read via the mythological allegory, sees the female beloved cast as the goddess Iris who Rhodius tells us interceded on Phineus's behalf to rescue him:

> Thus she spoke and swore by a libation from the Styx, which for all the gods is most terrifying and awesome, that never against thereafter would those Harpies go near that house of Agenor's son Phineus, for this was also fate's decree. They yielded to her oath and turned around to hasten back to the ship. (Apollonius Rhodius 137, lines 291–7)

There is a wonderful play upon the mythology at this juncture because Iris, goddess of the rainbow, was also the sister of the harpies, whose names vary across sources, thus suggesting their commonality as women. The female beloved of the epistle offers a sense of harmony, reminiscent of the state that Juan Luis Vives believes a good wife brings to her husband (Iglesias

18 "You should know that everyone of sound mind who is capable of doing the work of Venus may be wounded by one of Love's arrows unless prevented by age, or blindness, or excess of passion."

19 "in sul mio primo giovenile errore / quan'era in parte altr'uom da quell ch'i' sono" (Petrarca 5, lines 3–4).

20 Pintacuda takes a similar stance when he describes the epistolary poems as "un segnale dell'autore maturo, che non riesce più a credere nell'ideale petrarchista" (480). Marías Martínez makes a similar observation: "En la epístola encontramos el mismo despertar y el mismo reconocimiento de los errores pasados" (114).

par. 44), in lieu of the cold-hearted and freakish fictitious composites representative of the female beloved's role in love lyric. She is a life companion (lines 217–19) who is as content to spend her time in the company of her husband and children as she is in conversation, whether idle or about great authors from long ago (lines 265–76), in a reference again indebted to Vives (Iglesias par. 42). But it is in her capacity to undo the woe wrought by the heinous harpies that I infer a final threat to the contemporary poetic code of noble masculinity: its (earthly) conclusion.

Boscán's epistle could be read as a conclusion to the *nuevo canto* begun in Book 2 that charts the lyric voice's transition from youthful folly to the wisdom that comes with both maturity and marriage. The decision to root the end of the lyric voice's journey in fulfilment and physical love offered a model of finality for the Spanish canon hitherto unseen in its take on Petrarchan poetics, although it was known in other national traditions. Indeed, it was the replicability and open-ended nature of Petrarchan love, which, while sublimated, endured beyond the death of the beloved, that meant the form was ideally suited to serving as a means of rehearsal and reinforcement of masculinity and status. Boscán's support of a means of curtailment that also expressed his contempt for the existing model would have been damaging enough, but his insistence on the power of the wife figure, shown through her comparison to the goddess Iris, may have sounded the death knell for the *donna angelicata*. Boscán's lyric voice departed from Petrarch's trajectory of earthly to divine love[21] through dedicating itself to the singular reciprocal love of the wife (Marías Martínez 116). I consider this decision to be commensurate with the growing acknowledgement of the benefits of marriage, the role of the body in Neoplatonism, and the poetry of Pontano and Colonna.

CONCLUSIONS

The shift from battlefield to court necessitated a radical rethinking of the systems that demarcated and maintained the performance of gender differences among the nobility. From amid ideas and influences that abounded at the time, which did not include biological essentialism, the Italianate love lyric popularized by Boscán and Garcilaso played a vital role. Through its capacity to aestheticize activities traditionally marked as masculine and its radical differentiation of male and female conduct, the lyric turn to Italianate love poetry offered a shared set of performable social cues that allowed noblemen to elaborate and rehearse representations of themselves for scrutiny and esteem by their peers.

The performance of masculinity is a key topic in Boscán's *Respuesta a Don Diego de Mendoza*. The text is a Horatian verse epistle that continues the *nuevo canto* of Book 2 and serves, in my opinion, as a manifesto for his vision of the future of Spanish poetry. As also observed by De Armas, the Catalan offers social commentary specifically for those who unthinkingly rehearse the torturous circularity of Petrarchan lyric, revelling in its impossible philosophies and aesthetics which offer no comfort when compared with the joy to be derived from embracing the *aurea mediocritas*.

Boscán's lyric voice advocates for the more manageable goal of moderation and the rewards it can offer; for example, the image of spiritual union with the beloved, alongside many of the benefits of marriage and coitus. Boscán's older and wiser poetic persona eschews the excesses of earthly passion as well as those associated with the Italianate tradition he had once helped spread throughout Spain, so as to enjoy a simpler life with his wife, children, and grandchildren. It is in extolling the virtues of married life that the poetic voice deviates from the established Petrarchan poetic codes that fed into ideas of noble masculinity and identity, thus inviting the possibility of both a misreading and misunderstanding. Through Cohen's work on cultural anxieties, in particular those surrounding gender categories, we understand how the ambiguously sexed figure comes to be not only as a challenge to one's sense of masculinity, but also monstrous.

Later in the poem, when reflecting on the folly and ill-fated loves of its youth, Boscán's lyric voice purposefully invokes the monstrosity of harpies in the process of rewriting Petrarch's "Passer mai solitario in alcun tetto". Re-envisaging his youth by way of a reference to the classical myth of King Phineus's torment, the brutal and grotesque episode becomes a way for the poetic voice to communicate the negativity he now attaches to his experiences of the

21 Petrarch's *canzoniere* concludes with "Vergine bella, che di sol vestita" (Petrarca 1610–13), a prayer to the Virgin Mary.

contemporary model. In line with the idea of the text as a manifesto, a comparison is invited whereby the reader might think of Phineus, unable to escape the heinous hybrids who torment him relentlessly, as akin to the male lover endlessly tortured by the hyperbolically beautiful composite that is their female beloved. Phineus's loss of free will and incessant agony are to be contrasted with a more mature Boscán's contentment found through marriage, thus signalling a perceived superiority of the latter over the former at a time when the hierarchy of matrimony and celibacy was a hot topic. While a clear call to action, the lauding of marriage and conjugal love failed to perform within the scope of the poetic code that served a key social role in marking the gender and class differences of the nobility at a time of heightened lability; in essence, Boscán's alternative had the potential to be read as unappetisingly and detrimentally bourgeois.

Let us not forget Boscán's reframing of the beloved, which would also have presented a stark warning to those curious about his deviations from the contemporary model that lies at the heart of the text. The clear movement away from the figure of the *donna angelicata* in the section outlining their physical (and spiritual) union has already led scholars to conceive of modernized gender norms and the wifely beloved as a co-protagonist in the poem. My nuancing of these views aside, there can be no doubt that the recasting of the beloved as Iris—goddess, sister of harpies, and intercessory saviour of Phineus—and the associated deviation from an ending that lauds the movement of love from the earthly to the divine in favour of a joyous reciprocal love shared with one's wife exemplifies a *nuevo canto* fit to outperform that of Petrarch in the Spanish canon.

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