‘las partes donde Amor el cetro tiene’: Uncanonical Love in Francisco de Aldana’s ‘Medoro y Angélica’

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The complexity of the lyric written by some poets of the Spanish Renaissance challenges the broad-brush approach that can affect retrospective readings. One such case is that of Francisco de Aldana (c.1540–1578), who like Garcilaso and Boscán, serves as a quintessential example of the warrior-poet. Educated in Florence, he was a decorated war hero, and author of a rich corpus of verses with a complicated textual history. His poetry was never published in his own lifetime, and so most probably circulated in manuscript form until his brother Cosme de Aldana published Francisco’s works after his death in the Battle of Alcazarquivir, 1578. These collected works then emerged over the course of five printed editions of his poetry.¹ Among these texts, the fragment known as ‘Medoro y Angélica’ furnishes its reader with a very personal and uncanonical reworking of Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*.² Originally cited by Cosme in the 1591 edition as lost, the poem was finally brought to light in 1945 when José Manuel Blecua uncovered a manuscript in the University of Zaragoza that detailed the missing work.³ Since then it has been subject to critical attention, most notably by D. Gareth Walters, owing to its perplexing and intriguing blend of philosophy and unbridled eroticism.⁴

The poem is based upon events from Canto XIX of Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1532) and believed to predate Spanish engagement with the figures

1 For more on the posthumous print history of Aldana’s poetry, see José Lara Garrido, ‘Las ediciones de Francisco de Aldana: hipótesis sobre un problema bibliográfico’, *Revista de Estudios Extremeños*, 42:3 (1986), 541–83.

2 On the disputed fragmentary nature of the poem, see D. Gareth Walters, ‘On the Text, Source and Significance of Aldana’s “Medoro y Angélica”’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 20 (1984), 17–29 (pp. 17–18).

3 José Manuel Blecua, *Cancionero de 1628: edición y estudio del cancionero 250-2 de la biblioteca universitaria de Zaragoza* (Madrid: CSIC, 1945), 326–29.

4 D. Gareth Walters, *The Poetry of Francisco de Aldana* (London: Tamesis, 1988), 54.

of Medoro and Angelica, via the romance tradition, by a quarter century.⁵ Aldana's poetic episode is an elaboration of a glossed sexual encounter between Angelica, the elusive Cathay princess loved and sought by Orlando, and Medoro, a handsome Moorish prince who wins her heart and subsequently weds her.⁶ The decision by Aldana not only to expand upon, or more realistically create, a scene within Ariosto's Orlando furioso in itself merits critical attention. However, it is his focus upon the sensual behaviour associated with carnal acts for consumption by members of the Court that makes this poem unique.⁷ Aldana's poetic practice shall be shown to challenge the entrenched literary ideology of Spanish Petrarchism that dominated love poetry of the era. Indeed, Walters notes that the text's unorthodox approach to love renders it much more difficult to classify in comparison to the generally stable taxonomy of his sonnets.⁸

Although studies by Rivers (1956), Walters (1984), Lara Garrido (1995) and González Martínez (1995) have all acknowledged uncanonical amatory elements within Aldana's poem, my intention is to comprehend better how these elements function and assess their impact upon the interpretation of the text by the reader. Aldana's critical complexities, generated by the confluence of sex, love and spirituality appear to have left him often overlooked, forgotten, or, in the case of Fucilla, written off as a 'mediocre' poet.⁹ I will investigate the elements known to problematize the reading of this poem for both reader and critic so that we may move towards better locating it within the canon of love lyric. A consideration of Aldana's approach to Petrarchism and Neoplatonism will be followed by textual analysis from three distinct but complementary perspectives: the poet as deceiver, theatricality and the representation of female sexuality.

Aldana, Petrarchism and Sensuality

Petrarch's poetics were built upon a complex, overlapping, and somewhat contradictory mix of philosophical influences. These included, among others, a transcendental form of spirituality, as well as a focus upon the physicality of the body epitomized by Petrarch's descending descriptions.¹⁰ However, as is especially clear from the latter half of the Canzoniere, the spiritual vein influenced his textual approach much more than the bodily focus. The

5 Walters, 'On the Text', 17.

6 In this article Aldana's female protagonist will be referred to as Angélica to avoid confusion with Ariosto's version of Angelica.

7 Dolores González Martínez, *La poesía de Francisco de Aldana (1537–1578): introducción al estudio de la imagen* (Lleida: Edicions de la Univ. de Lleida, 1995), 172.

8 Walters, *The Poetry of Francisco de Aldana*, 54.

9 Joseph G. Fucilla, *Estudios sobre el petrarquismo en España* (Madrid: Ograma, 1960), 97.

10 William Melzer, 'Neoplatonism and Petrarchism: Familiar or Estranged Bedfellows in the High Renaissance', *Neohelicon*, 3:1–2 (1975), 9–27 (p. 13).

revived Petrarchan style of the Renaissance, on the other hand, was selective in the philosophical veins it incorporated from the rich fourteenth-century tradition. This is perhaps explained by Ficino's profoundly spiritual syncretistic adaptation of Plato that now lay at the heart of Petrarchism. In order to effect this fusion of pagan and Christian systems Ficino's Neoplatonism had necessitated a separation of body and spirit in a manner that ran contrary to the rich complexity and interconnectivity of both elements as found in Petrarch.

Indeed, Ficino was reliant upon this separation to render potentially subversive ideas, such as that of true love as an endeavour undertaken by two men. This particular example is based upon Phaedrus' speech in the Symposium: 'I would claim that there is no greater benefit for a young man than a good lover and none greater for a lover than a good boyfriend'.¹¹ It is clear that syncretism demanded that Ficino's interpretation of the superiority of this shared male love be rendered as a purely spiritual affair in order to fit the Christian idea of sex as a procreative act between a man and a woman. Ficino's philosophy became popularly accepted as a base upon which to construct love lyric dedicated to the Petrarchan female beloved.¹² Thus the movement said to mimic the poetry of Petrarch himself came to be more readily associated with Ficino's syncretistic philosophy and it was this Neoplatonism, which downplayed the physical and sensorial gamut latent within Petrarch's original poetry, that was later adopted by Spain.

More recent critical attitudes, such as that of F. Guiseppe Mazzotta, have noted that Petrarchan texts, in particular the *Canzoniere*, were considered to be expressions of 'a poet's deeply divided mind, caught in the fallen world of nature, unable or unwilling to reach grace, and seeking an esthetic redemption'.¹³ Although perhaps a little dramatic in his phrasing, his acknowledgement of self-expression through poetry, as well as its offer of redemption for the poet, shall be shown to fit with the duality of Aldana's poetic deliberations upon amorous themes. In his consideration of love as somewhere between the realms of the spiritual and physical it would appear that Aldana, like Petrarch in the fourteenth century, engages with

11 See Plato, *The Symposium*, trans., with an intro. and notes, by Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 10, 178c.

12 Elizabeth Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style', *The Art Bulletin*, 58:3 (1976), 374–94 (p. 390).

13 F. Guiseppe Mazzotta, 'The "Canzoniere" and the Language of the Self', *Studies in Philology*, 75 (1978), 271–96 (p. 272). For the criticism upon which Mazzotta makes this observation, see Robert M. Durling, 'Petrarch's "Giovane donna sotto un verde lauro"', *Modern Languages Notes*, 86 (1981), 1–20; and John Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics', *Diacritics*, 5 (1975), 34–40.

contradictory influences through the medium of poetry.¹⁴ It is with this in mind that we move to consider how such moments of contradiction are manifested in 'Medoro y Angélica', which leads us firstly to consider the description offered of Angélica.

Angélica's body is subject to blason in the *canone lungo* tradition, a form more readily associated with the Boccaccian poetic legacy. This approach cannot be labelled anti-Petrarchan, although the text does deviate from the more commonly expected Petrarchan approach of the *canone breve*.¹⁵ The rendering of the female form within the poem includes clear examples of *canone breve* staples, such as the hair (30) and forehead (52).¹⁶ The description then extends to the hips (54), the thighs (52), and, by implication, the genitalia (9–16, 55, 63), in a manner that would appear to borrow from, yet surpass, both Italian traditions in its level of descriptive detail. The mention, or implication, of female sexual organs was not unknown at the time and was common in many burlesque and erotic poems of the era within Spain, although this was not the case for decorum-bound love poetry.¹⁷ It has been argued that within burlesque works there are derisively comedic elements present, often in relation to the female figure, which work to distance the reader from the text, as well as its erotically charged content.¹⁸ These burlesque elements therefore permit the reader to interact with the poem while they maintain a safe distance from what could be labelled the gross eroticism underlying the humour. Although Aldana's text is not burlesque, I suggest that a variant form of the aforementioned technique, which functions via the reader seeing through the eyes of another, generates a similar distancing effect.¹⁹

Aldana's take upon the distancing technique may have evolved from the misdirection technique to which Quintillian refers as 'decipiendis

14 I believe it is this return to Petrarch that Fox observes in her article on Aldana. See Dian Fox, 'Frente a frente': Francisco de Aldana and Sublimations of Desire', *Calíope*, 11:1 (2005), 65–86: 'Aldana did not write much of the kind of poetry that we would call Petrarchan love lyric; although thanks to his formation in the Florentine court, he certainly had the opportunity to assimilate Petrarch's influence' (69).

15 On the differences between the *canone breve* and *canone lungo* traditions, see Patrizia Bettella, *The Ugly Woman: Transgressive Aesthetic Models in Italian Poetry from the Middle Ages to the Baroque* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2005), 84 and 134.

16 Line references appear as in Francisco de Aldana, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed., intro. and notes by José Lara Garrido (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000 [1st ed. 1985]), 493–97.

17 On the presence of erotic content in the sonnet form, see Paul N. Siegel, 'The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neoplatonic Love', *Studies in Philology*, 42 (1949), 164–82 (p. 173). With regard to the field of eroticism in the burlesque more generally, see Adrienne Laskier Martín, *An Erotic Philology of Golden Age Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt U. P., 2008); and José Ignacio Díez Fernández, *La poesía erótica de los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: Laberinto, 2003), 122.

18 Rodrigo Cacho Casal, 'El ingenio del arte: introducción a la poesía burlesca del Siglo de Oro', *Criticón*, 100 (2007), 9–26 (p. 15).

19 Burlesque humour as a basis for Aldana's lyric has been discounted previously; see Díez Fernández, *La poesía erótica*, 152.

expectationibus', or the deception of expectation.²⁰ Cacho Casal notes how this technique is reliant upon a process of gradual revelation that thwarts reader expectation through a comedic deception.²¹ This state of confusion, ultimately in the name of humour, has been considered capable of destabilizing established societal parameters and permits the reader to engage with previously questionable material.²² In the case of Aldana the same deception of reader expectation occurs but without the humorous payoff. The confusion that ensues generates the (intellectual) distance that once again diminishes social boundaries and necessitates that the reader approach the text anew in their attempt to render meaning. Therefore, despite the burlesque origin of the technique, it could be considered to share select characteristics with the Brechtian technique of 'making strange', whereby the reader is actively encouraged to consider the quotidian from a new perspective.²³

This variant upon the distancing technique is clearly demonstrated in Aldana's treatment of Angélica. Of particular interest is Aldana's use of Petrarchan staples in his description of the Cathay princess:

Con el siniestro brazo un nudo hecho por
 el cuello a su sol tiene Medoro, ciñe la
 otra el blanco y tierno pecho que es del
 cielo y amor alto tesoro; acá y allá, sobre
 el dichoso lecho vuela el rico, sutil cabello
 de oro
 y al caluroso aliento que salía
 un poco ventilando se movía (25–32)

The free and easy movement of Angélica's golden hair is defined in detail: 'vuela el rico, sutil cabello de oro / y al caluroso aliento que salía / un poco ventilando se movía'. Philips observes that within the medieval period 'loose unbound hair signified an apparently contradictory state—at once sexually attractive and available, and virginal. It is therefore the sign par excellence of maidenhood, an age in which sexual desirability and virginity are intermingled'.²⁴ This interpretation later filtered into the Renaissance as a

20 Quintillian, *Institutio oratoria*, Books VI–VIII, trans. H. F. Butler (London: Heinemann, 1921), 450.

21 Cacho Casal, 'El ingenio del arte', 15.

22 Carmen González Vázquez, 'Aproximación a la definición, origen y función de la risa en la comedia latina', *Minerva: Revista de Filología Clásica*, 16 (2002–03), 77–86 (p. 78).

23 Bertolt Brecht, 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 91–92.

24 Kim M. Philips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270–1540* (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 2003), 46. Philips' interpretation of the hair motif also appears in an Italian text on the artistry of gesture from 1616. See Giovanni Bonifaccio, *L'arte dè cenni con la quale formandosi favella visibile, si tratta della muta eloquenza che non è altro che un*

poetic trope and is perhaps best exemplified by its inclusion within Garcilaso de la Vega's 'En tanto que de rosa y d'azucena' as he describes the wind in the hair of the young maiden:

y en tanto que'l cabello, que'n la vena del
oro s'escogió, con vuelo presto
por el hermoso cuello blanco, enhiesto, el
viento mueve, esparce y desordena²⁵

When the descriptive elements of Angélica's hair are considered in relation to the social conventions expressed above, the reason for the relatively uncomplicated description by the poetic yo becomes evident: Angélica's sexual status as a virgin is key to the poem, since she was previously incapable of love and relationships, and this fact is not made clear in any other fashion within the text itself. It is her hair that permits the reader to comprehend that the couple are in the process of consummating their marriage. This poetic trope is then built upon: the use of 'acá y allá, sobre el dichoso lecho' suggests the length, thickness, and tussled messiness of the hair over the bed, which reinforces both the sexual attractiveness and alluring virginal aspects of Angélica beyond the original commonplace. The idea of the hair in motion is then indicated by the use of the gerund, 'ventilando', which suggests the presence of a breeze. Frenk notes that wind was an erotic symbol incorporated into Spanish tradition sometime in the thirteenth century.²⁶ With the couple's sexual experience as the focus of the scene, it is clear that Frenk is correct in her observation that the symbolism attached to Angélica's hair is representative of 'the power of love as experienced by women'.²⁷ The hair and comb motif here employed by Aldana seems to anticipate its use within later poetry. Lope de Vega in a verse interlude of his *Arcadia* may well be viewed as a more rustic, if not naturalistic, alternative to the carefully crafted trope of the hair as a sea upon which the lover has been cast adrift observed in Quevedo's 'En crespas tempestad del oro undoso'.²⁸

facondo silentio (Venezia: Appretto F. Grossi, 1616): 'Crini sciolti: Il portare i crini sciolti era segno d'esser vergine e fanciulla: E però Virgilio di Venere, che fingea d'esser Cinthia, disse: Namque humeris de more habilem suspenderat arcum Venatrix, dederatque comas diffundere ventis [Aen 1.318 f.]' (84).

25 Garcilaso de la Vega, *Obras poéticas y textos en prosa*, ed., with prologue and notes, by Bienvenido Morros (Barcelona: Crítica, 1995), pp. 116–17, ll. 5–8.

26 Margit Frenk, *Symbolism in Old Spanish Folk Songs*, The Kate Elder Lecture 4 (London: Dept of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1993), 2.

27 Frenk, *Symbolism in Old Spanish Folk Songs*, 9. For further proof of wind as a poetic symbol for the female experience of love, see Alan Deyermond, 'Pero Meogo's Stags and Fountains: Symbol and Anecdote in the Traditional Lyric', *Romance Philology*, 33 (1979–80), 265–83 (p. 278).

28 Lope de Vega, *Arcadia*, ed., intro. and notes by Edwin S. Morby (Madrid: Castalia, 1975), 295–96: 'Por las ondas del mar de unos cabellos / un barco de marfil pasaba un día / que,

Variation upon the commonplace generates distance between previous poetic tradition and Aldana's approach, especially when the sense of fulfilment and physical enjoyment is contrasted with the hopeless nature of the lover adrift. This gulf increases when Aldana's assignation of the source of the breeze to the 'caluroso aliento que salía' from the couple as 'el aire cada cual dellos bebiendo / boca con boca al otro, y se convierte / lo que sale de allí mal recibido / en alma, en vida, en gozo, en bien cumplido' (21–22). It could be argued that Aldana's rewrite elaborates upon a naturalistic variant from cancionero lyric that ultimately reverses this idea of distance. This is due to the source of the breeze felt being their own breath, which feeds into the idea of the couple's proximity as they kiss. Aldana's variant therefore stands in opposition to Ficino's theory of a purely spiritual exchange between two men and acts to re-evaluate courtly approaches to love lyric.

The kiss as an exchange of souls can be traced back to the writings of Bembo, among others, and became a trope within Spanish lyric owing to its adoptions by poets such as; Luis Barahona de Soto, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Silvestre and Ramírez Pagán.²⁹ However, the very physical nature of the transfer outlined by Aldana moves beyond Bembo's writings and runs contrary to previous intellectual and spiritual expressions of love in its addition of the physically erotic component.³⁰ Ángel García links Aldana's atypical approach to the belief that 'el beso une más las almas que los cuerpos, pero las almas necesitan a los cuerpos para expresar su unión

humillando sus olas, deshacía / los crespos lazos que formaban de ellos'; Francisco de Quevedo, *Antología poética*, ed., intro. and notes by José María Pozuelo Yvancos (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999), 271–72. It should be noted that Quevedo's 'En crespas tempestad' is but one example of this trope.

29 Felipe Valencia, ' "Acoged blandamente mi suspiro": el beso de almas en la poesía petrarquista española del siglo XVI', *Dicenda*, 26 (2008), 259–90 (pp. 275–76). For more on Bembo and the kiss, see Nicholas J. Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969). Lara Garrido has also observed that the kiss, part of 'la literatura orlándica', stems from two much-imitated models: Boiardo (*Inamorato*, I, XIX, 62) and Ariosto (*Furioso*, VII, 29) with Aldana more closely following the first of these. For more on this topic, see Aldana, *Poesías castellanas completas*, ed. Lara Garrido, 495.

30 This physical manifestation of a spiritual union also runs contrary to Tullia d'Aragona's *Dialogo della infinità d'amore* (1547); see Tullia d'Aragona, *Dialogue on the Infinity of Love*, ed. and trans. by Rinaldina Russell & Bruce Merry, intro. and notes by Rinaldina Russell (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997): 'As this transformation can only take place on a spiritual plane, so in this kind of love, the principal part is played by the "spiritual" senses, those of sight and hearing and, above all, because it is closest to the spiritual, the imagination. But, in truth, as it is the lover's wish to achieve a corporeal union besides the spiritual one, in order to effect a total identification with the beloved, and since this corporeal unity can never be attained, because it is not possible for human bodies to be physically merged into one another, the lover can never achieve this longing of his, and so will never satisfy his desire' (89–90).

amorosa'.³¹ However, Aldana would seem to adopt, redraft and redeploy Bembo's kiss motif to demonstrate a more naturalistic representation that transcends the mere inclusion of the body with respect to the physical expression of the spiritual and moves towards a hybridized approach to love whereby the body forms an active part of the unifying process. This is exemplified in the use of 'mal recibido' owing to its implication that Aldana does not believe the act of love-making itself is enough. Rather he appears to agree with the unity of the physical and spiritual in Plato's Symposium.³²

This stands in stark contrast to Ficino's radical separation of body and soul mentioned earlier. The aliento received as part of the physical exchange, read as both breath and soul, is subject to the spirituality shared by the couple, as indicated by the metaphor of the kiss, and so converted 'en bien cumplido' through their hybrid approach to love. Aldana, it can be seen, does not merely renew the standard contemporary trope; he rewrites it to reflect a new, inclusive approach that embraces hybridity and the adoption of a physical expression of love as vital to the human experience of love.

As with the case of the breeze generated by the couple, the trope of the lover as 'sol' is made specific to them: 'Con el siniestro brazo un nudo hecho / por el cuello a su sol tiene Medoro' (25–26; my italics).³³ This personalization of a Petrarchan commonplace reinforces the aforementioned idea of continuity. Furthermore, when it is considered that Angélica is permitted to touch her sun, there appear echoes of Garcilaso's Sonnet XII which encapsulate the Daedalian caveat that proximity to the sun spells certain death: '¿qué me ha de aprovechar ver la pintura / d'aquel que con las alas derretidas, / cayendo, fama, y nombre al mar ha dado'.³⁴ This is despite the role reversal whereby Medoro embodies the sun, an encomium usually reserved for the female beloved in contemporary Spanish poetics.³⁵ Following the mythical warning, Angélica, like Icarus, should perish although achieve immortal fame as her reward.³⁶ However, contrary to the Garcilasian exemplum, Angélica survives the tactile experience and continues her relationship with Apollo, god of sun and healing, as noted in relation to her curative abilities practised upon Medoro in Ariosto's version of events.

Aldana is once more seen to recast classical tropes: a female lover touches her sun, the male beloved, and survives. This is despite the sensory

31 Miguel Ángel García, 'Sin que la muerte al ojo estorbo sea': nueva lectura crítica de Francisco de Aldana (Mérida: Editoria Regional de Extremadura, 2010), 80.

32 See Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Gill, pp. 25–26, 192d–e.

33 A potentially intentional ambiguitas of the sun image has been noted previously. For more, see Walters, 'On the Text', 23.

34 Garcilaso de la Vega, *Obras poéticas*, ed. Morros, 27 (ll. 9–11).

35 María Pilar Manero Sorolla, 'La configuración imaginística de la dama en la lírica española del Renacimiento. La tradición pertrarquista', *Boletín de la Biblioteca de Menéndez y Pelayo*, 68 (1992), 5–71 (p. 19).

36 For more on the significance of the Icarus myth in Spain, see John H. Turner, *The Myth of Icarus in Spanish Renaissance Poetry* (London: Tamesis, 1976).

focus of this converted trope on touch, rather than sight, which was considered, by Ficino, lowly and more liable to corruption.³⁷ Indeed, Aldana's approach in this regard appears to owe more to that expressed by Nifo's *De pulchro et de amore* (1549): 'si la imagen de lo bello se traslada hasta la facultad imaginativa a través de todos los sentidos, el amor no puede ser sino deseo de disfrutar de belleza a través de todos aquellos sentidos que transmiten al alma la imagen de lo bello'.³⁸ Additionally, when the pleasure of her sexual experience is considered alongside the spiritual motif present in the text, then Angélica's survival may suggest that repetition of her feat is possible unlike in the case of Icarus. Indeed, it could be this role reversal and proximity that allows the renowned ice queen's heart to finally melt and warm to the idea of a sexual relationship: 'un pecho quebrantar de mármol fuerte' (6). The reciprocation of love alienates Aldana's reader due to deception with regard to the expected lack of fulfilment that goes back to courtly love tradition and reminds his reader that they can no longer rely upon standard interpretations of out-dated poetic commonplaces to comprehend his new approach to love.³⁹

Theatricality and Playfulness

The fullness of the description offered of Angélica is made possible through the playful actions on behalf of the character of Amor.⁴⁰ The cherubic deity pays a visit to the sleeping couple and his actions within the text are focused solely upon the reposed figure of Angélica.⁴¹ Therefore, as these deeds centre

37 Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's 'Symposium on Love'*, trans. Jayne Sears (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), 41.

38 Agostino Nifo, *Sobre la belleza y el amor*, trans. Francisco Socas, Colección de Bolsillo, 103 (Sevilla: Publicaciones de la Univ. de Sevilla, 1990), 190.

39 On the lack of fulfilment, see Alexander A. Parker, *The Philosophy of Love in Spanish Literature 1480–1680* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 1985), 16. On the difficulties faced in separating the courtly love tradition from Neoplatonic spirituality and the legacy of Petrarchism within Spanish Renaissance poetry, see Alfredo Mateos Paramio, 'Francisco de Aldana: ¿un neoplatónico del amor humano?', in *Estado actual de los estudios sobre el Siglo de Oro. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas del Siglo de Oro*, ed. Manuel García Martín, 2 vols (Salamanca: Ediciones Univ. de Salamanca, 1993), I, 657–62: 'La obra de Aldana se escribe en la segunda mitad del s. XVI. En esta época son dos las corrientes que mezclan sus aguas en la retórica del Eros: una, la tradición cortés; otra, el neoplatonismo amoroso que, cuajado en los tratatti d'amore (Ficino, Bembo, Castiglione y Hebreo), además de conceptos platónicos, neoplatónicos y aristotélicos integra muchos elementos del amor cortés. Por ello se hace difícil separar ambos caudales, que tan entrelazados discurren, por ejemplo, en Herrera y Garcilaso, ordenando sus pasiones' (p. 657).

40 For more on the figure of Cupid in the Renaissance, see Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2010).

41 Note that Amor is not present in Ariosto's original text. His addition may evidence Aldana's indebtedness to Ovid, particularly the Odes, and Pseudo-Ovid's *Elegia de pulice*.

on the newlywed bride, they necessitate consideration of the descriptive details related to her within the poem:

La sábana después quiétamente levanta,
al parecer no bien seguro, y como espejo
el cuerpo ve luciente, el muslo cual
aborio limpio y puro;
contempla de los pies hasta la frente las
caderas de mármol liso y duro, las partes
donde Amor el cetro tiene,
y allí con ojos muertos se detiene. (49–56)

This verse depicts the actions of Amor after the couple have consummated their vows. However, it also offers a non-Petrarchan view of Angélica through the eyes of a presumed male poetic voice. Spearing notes how this was common in the Middle Ages and may suggest an indebtedness on the part of Aldana to this context:

Most, though not all, of the fictional watchers are certainly male, one reason being that, within the patriarchal society of the Middle Ages, it is only from the male and therefore public side of the public/private boundary that the private can be made public. And most medieval writers are male; thus, insofar as their narratorial positions are realized as those of watchers, the same pattern will be likely to apply.⁴²

Therefore the inclusion of body parts such as, ‘muslo’, ‘caderas’, and ‘las partes donde Amor el cetro tiene’ can all be considered the product of this unseen male viewer who also serves as the poem’s narrative voice.

The sheet is reminiscent of the drapery used in Baroque art and may echo the image of curtained, private chambers in court.⁴³ It adds theatricality to the scene as an invasion of privacy, while it simultaneously functions in a manner akin to the sculpting technique of *draperie mouillée*. Clark explains:

This device was used from archaic times onwards, the earliest sculptors seeming to recognize how drapery may render a form both more mysterious and more comprehensible. The section of a limb as it swells and subsides may be delineated precisely or left to the imagination; parts of the body that are plastically satisfying can be emphasized, those less

English translation of *Elegia de pulice* as per David H. Brumble III, ‘John Donne’s “The Flea”: Some Implications of the Encyclopedic and Poetic Tradition’, *Critical Quarterly*, 15 (1973), 147–54 (pp. 148–49); original Latin text attributed to Ofilii Sergianii, *Poetae Latini Minores*, ed. Nicholas Eloi LeMaire (Paris: LeMaire, 1826), VII, 275–78.

42 Anthony Colin Spearing, *The Medieval Poet As Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1993), 24.

43 Spearing, *The Medieval Poet As Voyeur*, 17.

interesting can be concealed; and awkward transitions can be made smooth by the flow of line.⁴⁴

In Aldana's text the reader is made a voyeur to an unnatural performance through a process that Taylor brands 'narrative aposiopesis'.⁴⁵ Taylor's approach can be viewed as the employment of a climactic description in relation to the physical form; in this case that of Angélica. This description should flow, logically, towards a poetic climax. However, the narrator must at the last moment silence himself as an agent. It is this last-minute frustration of the climax that creates a voyeuristic reader and leaves them tantalized.⁴⁶

The voyeuristic element of the gradual reveal in Aldana's text, heightened by the use of 'quietamente', however, renders an effect quite different from that at work within the static confines of some plastic arts. The undisclosed element is not fixed as in painting and so is free to shift as the description evolves, which in turn creates a playful anticipation of what is to be next revealed by Cupid.⁴⁷ This facilitates an approach whereby, in true Petrarchan tradition, the full body is never considered holistically.⁴⁸ It invites Aldana's readers to let their imagination fill the blanks and excite their own sense of arousal, for in reality 'there is no mystery about the whereabouts of what is concealed, only about its nature'.⁴⁹ Therefore, partly in concurrence with Taylor, I also consider this technique, and the process it engenders in the reader, to create a desiring response. The erotic build-up of Cupid's revelation, the detention of his gaze without express reference to the genitalia, is frustrated, and readers are implicated as excessively erotic voyeurs due to their imagined conclusion.⁵⁰

Within the stanza there are secondary effects observed in relation to the aforementioned gradual revelation. It is noted that each line acts to shed a descriptive layer of the female form as it approaches the ultimate reveal: the sexual organs. This measured approach builds upon the theatricality of the 'sábana' with the revelation. Tension for the reader is first signalled by Amor's uncertainty: 'levanta, al parecer no bien seguro'. His tentative movement serves to once again heighten the erotic tension, for Amor's

44 Kenneth Clark, *The Nude*, Bollingen Series 35.2 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), 119.

45 For further elaboration, see Mark Taylor, 'Voyeurism and Aposiopesis in Renaissance Poetry', *Exemplaria*, 4 (1992), 267–94.

46 For Taylor's own example of this technique in action in Ovid's *Amores* I.5 (see Taylor, 'Voyeurism and Aposiopesis', 271–72).

47 For a useful comparative example to illustrate the inability of the plastic arts to reproduce narrative aposiopesis it is useful to consider Peter Paul Rubens, *The Little Fur* (Helen Fourment), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, c.1638.

48 Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women', 386.

49 Taylor, 'Voyeurism and Aposiopesis', 274.

50 Spearing observes a similar frustration of the voyeur's arousal in *Tristan and Isolde* (see Spearing, *The Medieval Poet As Voyeur*, 87 [and more generally pp. 64 and 71]).

uncertainty fails to betray just how far he will go after he uncovers Angélica's sleeping body. Additionally, this cautious approach manipulates Aldana's readers, for they are cognizant that they may exit from or choose to stay within the text as the tension and the state of the description builds; a description which, when we consider the body parts, is most definitely expected to end one way. However, the progressive tension instilled by Aldana also presents his readers with a further dimension for consideration. The aforementioned deception of expectation, I believe, is inherent within the descriptive elements of the stanza. Consider the image of Angélica's thigh, described as 'cual aborio limpio y puro'. The adjectival use of *aborio* here highlights the statuesque, pale ivory colour to be associated with the flesh of Angélica's thighs. Yet, this adjective would have been more readily associated with the flesh of the beloved's neck, given its use as a trope by, among others, Garcilaso, Jorge de Montemayor and Herrera.⁵¹ Thus, the combination presented within the text serves to disorientate readers accustomed to the petrified Petrarchan periphrasis evoked by the colour and requires them to reassess it from a different vantage point.

Aldana is not only seen to appropriate the colour's more common connotation and employ it in a sensual context; his employment also subverts and contorts the original Petrarchan periphrasis via the creation of a new association outside the rigid confines of the *canone breve* with its focus on colour.⁵² It is in addition to this exploitation of colour that the poet also makes use of the proximity of the thighs to the intimate regions. He engages in a play on *aborio* as an alternative name for the *madrona* tree, thus the connotation of Angélica's 'fruit' as both 'limpio' and 'puro' takes shape. Just as in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, where the rose is used as a leitmotif for virginity, Aldana here represents it as the fruit of the *madrona* in a manner akin to Garcilaso's references to fruit within Sonnet XXIII.⁵³ By extension, the description of the hips as 'de mármol liso y duro' can be considered to compound the image and connotations of *aborio*—smooth, unblemished, white marble—in allusion to the youthful and virginal aspect of Angélica. The use of 'liso' would also be applicable as a descriptor of her skin—without wrinkles or age spots—whilst 'duro' speaks to its taut and firm appearance.

I have observed that the poem's narrator is careful to couch the aforementioned potentially unacceptable body parts within the confines of easily identifiable crystallized Petrarchan tropes. These unique pairings can be viewed as reliant upon the Petrarchan trope to cushion the reader-audience from the unfamiliar elements. Thus, the impact of the body parts is

51 Manero Sorolla, 'La configuración imaginística', 34–35.

52 Parker, *The Philosophy of Love*, 62. For more on the importance of colour in the *canone breve*, see Bettella, *The Ugly Woman*, 84.

53 Garcilaso de la Vega, *Obras poéticas*, ed. Morros: 'coged de vuestra alegre primavera / el dulce fruto, antes que'l tiempo airado / cubra de nieve la hermosa cumbre' (p. 43, ll. 9–11).

dampened and so allows them to evade the decorum filter of the reader. Subsequent detection could be deemed to come too late for the new pairings, for they have already been assimilated and accepted due to their faux-Petrarchan appearance. The reader is then left to contemplate to what extent such material should have been considered inherently offensive to serious poetic sensibilities in the first instance, with ideas of sex, sensuality, and physicality seen as intrinsically neutral, and the focus shifted to their interpretation as colouring reception. Ultimately, Aldana's playfulness leads to reader engagement on a more meaningful level whereby they must take responsibility for the attribution of any transgression of decorum, as well as the degree of its disconformity with traditional boundaries of literary genres (or codes).

The end of the stanza promises, in line with Taylor, an anticlimactic tacit recognition of Angélica's genitalia. This is done in conjunction with an image of love rather than lust, for love is heralded for its possession of a seat of power within the implied intimate regions: 'las partes donde Amor su cetro tiene'. This combination of physical intimacy and love, although alien to Spanish sonnetteering, was already present in other works, such as Henry Constable's *Diana* of 1592. There was evolving, as Siegel notes, a recognition that love and lust do not necessarily 'differ in aim or in nature, but in duration'.⁵⁴ Therefore, any stigma shifts from the act itself to the intention of those involved and contributes to the overall framework of the much more naturalistic and sensual depiction of love mentioned earlier.

Literally playfulness is not only restricted to Angélica in this text, indeed it can be seen to extend to Medoro throughout the poem. His conspicuous absence from the descriptive details highlighted by the lyric voice, as well as the lack of any attention whatsoever from Amor, together imply a selective process to avoid the pre-existing associations between the sleeping male nude and Neoplatonic spiritual transcendence; an image Aldana did not wish to recycle but rather subvert through his focus on the sleeping female figure throughout the poem as a symbol of his hybridized view of love.⁵⁵ Another consideration would be that the lack of attention paid to Medoro reflects the tastes of a presumed male readership, and while on the surface this may seem exclusionist, it could also be considered to throw into relief a playful technique on the part of Aldana with regard to the idea of proximity. This is exemplified by Amor's perception of the couple as related by the poetic voice:

Entre ellos iba Amor pasito y quedo los bien
ceñidos miembros más ciñendo,

⁵⁴ Siegel, 'The Petrarchan Sonneteers', 172.

⁵⁵ On the sleeping male nude as a Platonic figure, see Maria Ruvoldt, 'The Sleep of Reason', in her *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep, and Dreams* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2004), 6–39 (p. 7).

y al dulce contemplar gozoso y ledo,
todo se está moviendo y sacudiendo; (33–36)

Although applicable to Medoro, the description may be considered to conjure a confused kinetic image of interlaced limbs and energetic paroxysms between the couple without any facet unique to the male figure. This image of passionate, frenzied movement builds with the movement of Angélica's hair owing to the breeze. Aldana's idea for a sensual yet spiritual union acts as an alternative to Neoplatonic spiritual union and implies that this moment is that of their fusion. Amor, whose presence was said to trigger (erotic) frenzies and confused (physical) states, strengthens the idea of this hybrid union taking place.⁵⁶ The reader is left unable to disentangle the multi-limbed being; it is unclear where one body begins and the other ends. Contemplation of this physical union having led to a unified being recalls the image of the androgynous discussed in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*,⁵⁷ one of the most important texts behind the ficinian development of Neoplatonic love theory, as well as the tale of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,⁵⁸ part of the poetic bedrock in the Renaissance.

Aristophanes said that Zeus split the mortal race and had their genitalia moved to permit copulation.⁵⁹ Therefore, the speech could function as an advocate for the respect of the pleasurable and physical nature of sexual intercourse since it was a divine gift from Zeus that allowed for a partial recreation of the 'primordial unity' they had once enjoyed.⁶⁰ Furthermore, as a gift to mankind, it represents the stratum that man should adhere to, rather than the wholly transcendental spirituality of Neoplatonism that would once again invoke divine ire. Such an interpretation of events may even have appeared acceptable to a hierarchical culture, such as Spain's, that was au fait with the Christian ideal that everything has its place and purpose in the world.⁶¹ The focus on the feminine as the sole representative of this androgynous entity may be traced to the Ovidian myth surrounding its creation, for

56 Darlene C. Greenhalgh, 'Love, Chastity and Women's Erotic Power: Greek Romance in Elizabethan and Jacobean Contexts', in *Prose Fiction and Early Modern Sexualities in England, 1570–1640*, ed. Constance C. Relihan & Goran V. Stanivukovic (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 15–42 (p. 20); Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1986), 80.

57 Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Gill, pp. 21–27, 189–93.

58 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. Books 1–8, trans. Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, 3rd ed. (London: Harvard U. P., 1977), 196–204.

59 Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Gill, pp. 23–24, 190c & 191c.

60 Sergius Kodera, 'Renaissance Readings of Aristophanes' Myth from Plato's *Symposium* (189C–193D)', in his *Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 213–49 (pp. 216–17).

61 Ecclesiastes 3:1: 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven'.

it was Salmacis who initiated the supplication to the gods that resulted in the transformation of both the nymph and Hermaphroditus into one body composed of both sexes. Thus, with Salmacis as the focus and catalyst for change, the tale offers the presumed male lyric voice a poetic approach that allows for the continued consideration of the female physical characteristics that have captivated him from the start. Indeed, with the maintained emphasis on the female, there develops a neutral space between the explicit consideration of the female and the implicit description of the androgynous. Contemplation by Aldana's readers results in this space functioning as an area of interplay whereby any acceptance generates alternatives to the contemporary Neoplatonic theories that disparaged sensual love.

Indeed, the depiction is also of Platonic origin and offers a different conception of the role of sex, love and the place of man in the world. It also acts as an opportunity for Aldana to (re)appropriate playfully and selectively a classical text in a manner akin to the interpretation of Plato performed by Ficino.⁶² Medoro, in the context of Aristophanes' speech and without further consideration of Plato's Symposium as a whole, could be deemed to have formed a cohesive, loving whole with Angélica via the images presented within the poem. His identity is incorporated into a new being, that of the indiscriminate limbs, and concretizes the merits of love partly rooted in physicality for Aldana. This physicality shared by the couple is what requires us to now consider the sexual awakening of the virgin bride Angélica.

Sexual Awakening

It is clear that line 55, 'las partes donde Amor el cetro tiene', already presents a tacit reference to Angélica's sexual physicality but it does not deal with her transition from virgin to married woman. With regard to this point an analysis of lines 9–16 will prove illuminating:

En la cueva de Atlante, húmeda y fría, la
somnolienta Noche reposaba,
y Cintia al rubio hermano y quería
restituir la luz que dél tomaba, con el
rosado manto abriendo el día la blanca
Aurora flores derramaba, y los caballos
del señor de Delo
hinchían de relinchos todos el cielo (9–16)

The stanza offers a description of a cave that appears to recapture narrative details proffered in Canto XIX. However, a reader may well choose to read the extended metaphor as an allegory for Angélica's genitalia, as well as

⁶² Kōdera goes so far as to label Ficino's interpretation of Plato 'a textbook case of deliberate misreading' (see Kōdera, 'Renaissance Readings', 213).

a general sense of sexual awakening within Angélica.⁶³ The use of 'húmeda y fría' refers not only to the cave in which they shelter, rather it functions on a secondary level where it signals the recognized physiological feature of womankind as colder and more predisposed to excessive levels of phlegm than men.⁶⁴ Atlas, here, is used metonymically as he 'holds the tall pillars which keep earth and heaven apart'.⁶⁵ This conflation of significations locates the experience of Angélica's sexual awakening between the realms of (Neoplatonic) spirituality and earthly physicality; a hybridized space imbued with connotations applicable to both words, yet simultaneously neither. Within this space no previously fixed concept can remain cohesive; therefore, ripe for exploration, the new space permits Aldana's reader to explore and awaken to the physicality of unfamiliar body parts presented within the text, while they recognize Petrarchan staples in a setting both familiar and unsettling. A metaphorical playground, the safety provided by familiarity can be considered akin to the distancing technique elaborated upon earlier: partial recognition allows for engagement with previously familiar and static concepts in a new fluid manner as the space engenders reclassification of previously fixed concepts in a dynamic setting that does not harbour extra-textual rules with regards to sex, sensuality and spirituality to which the reader may be primed. Ultimately, the space, while suggesting loss (of boundaries and fixed points), signals the opportunity for (re)discovery; such an opportunity is key to the idea of sexual awakening.

The image of 'Noche' as 'somnolienta' within the cave reinforces the forgotten and lost qualities of the cave imagery as torpor-ridden Night has taken her place here and reigned for so long that even she has fallen prey to fatigue. Night, revealed to be 'Cintia', is the virgin huntress and twin sister of Apollo.⁶⁶ Therefore Cintia, as the long-standing inhabitant of the cave, may embody Angélica's maidenhead that now wishes to 'restituir la luz' of Apollo, her 'rubio hermano'. The link between Medoro and light, since he is referred to as Angélica's 'sol', implies his role as the bringer of this light. As an image of transformation it signals Angélica's transition from virgin to wife here via the coming dawn, which draws upon the cyclical essence of

63 'The erotic significance of the cave as a symbol of the vagina is likewise suggested in Aldana's poem. Other mythological allusions add to the sexual symbolism: the reference to flowers being scattered as the red traces of dawn become discernible in the sky is realised through the verbs "abriendo" and "derramaba", both of which have clear sexual overtones' (Walters, 'On the Text', 21–22).

64 Women had long been recognized as physically colder than their male counterparts (see Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck [London: Heinemann, 1943], 458). For more on the relationship between women, bodily temperature, moisture, and the humours in the Middle Ages, see Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1995), 33 and 184 in particular.

65 Homer, *Odyssey*, I, 52–54; English translation as per Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans., intro. and commentary by A. T. Murray (London: Heinemann, 1919), 7.

66 Jenny March, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (London: Cassell, 1998), 69.

night and day from nature to portray Angélica's offering up of her maidenhead as a fundamental part of life. When considered alongside the presence of Apollo in the stanza, no stranger to sex himself, latent connotations within Latin, Italian and Spanish poetry are revived. If nothing else, a reader would most probably have been aware of Garcilaso's portrayal of Apollo as attempted rapist and grieving lover in his third eclogue, itself based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁷ It is in this manner that the poem's narrator suggests sexual awakening as 'la somnolienta Noche' is replaced by 'el Rosado manto' within Angélica, who like Daphne, is described as 'ninfa' (69).

Aldana's use of Apollo, known for his disastrous pursuit of Daphne, prompts consideration of his use in this narrative of consensual consummation. Thus, Apollo becomes the symbol of transition and change, and steps into the role of the inevitable replacement of Cintia within the natural cycle. Note, for example, the reference to Apollo's whinnying horses: 'y los caballos del señor de Delo / hinchían de linchos todo el cielo'.⁶⁸ The bridled image may act as a motif for sexual frustration on behalf of Angélica, while it simultaneously hints at a desire to love and be loved after a run of failed suitors, in Ariosto's text. However, the discordant horses may also prove to have a dual nature, for they also mirror the frenetic and amorous movements of the androgyne and Angélica's hair and recall the realization of this desire by the newlywed couple.

As god of the sun it is clear that Apollo's presence is what cues 'el rosado manto' that heralds the day and permits 'la blanca Aurora' to scatter her flowers. Within this image the importance of the common colour combination of 'rosado' and 'blanca' within Spanish Petrarchan lyric cannot be ignored. This coalescence of colours is associated with periphrastic representations of the delicate colouring of the female face via pairings that included roses/milk, roses/lilies, and roses/snow.⁶⁹ Here, however, Aldana can be observed to play with reader expectation based on the Petrarchan pairing of colours. Their presence, as a metaphorical representation of the spilt blood from Angélica's ruptured hymen, requires the reader to reengage with material made strange by Aldana in order to create a new context for the calcified trope and allow the extraction of meaning from the metaphor. It was in this way that Aldana introduced his readers to the possibility of a successful relationship based on both physicality and spirituality between a man and a woman.

67 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Miller, 34–42.

68 Whinnying horses have been noted as a common symbol of sexual virility, perhaps most notably in Góngora's *Polifemo* (see Walters, 'On the Text', 22).

69 Manero Sorolla, 'La configuración imaginística', 14–16.

Conclusion

Francisco de Aldana's 'Medoro y Angélica' should be recognized as much more than an elaboration of, or homage to, Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, as it serves to redefine our conception of Golden-Age love and its expression in Spanish lyric. The textual relationship with Ariosto cannot be denied but the carefully engineered message exemplified within Aldana's poem is unique. In essence, the text can be considered to act as a poetic advertisement for a new approach to poetical representations of love. It is a sensual love, one that brings forth the undertones of physicality latent within Petrarch, although remains sensitive to the spirituality offered by Neoplatonic sources deemed suitable by Aldana. These would appear to include writings by Bembo and Nifo, while the lack of physicality and subordination of the female form results in a dismissal of Ficino. Furthermore, it presents a more cohesive view of the female body while simultaneously employing a distancing technique to ensure that the bonds of decorum are set aside and the reader is given the opportunity to consider afresh the uncanonical body parts, free to ponder the role these oft-neglected body parts play in Aldana's hybridized unification of lovers. The exploration of the body is carefully crafted by Aldana to toy with his readers and coax any extant erotic potential, by which they are then implicated. Perhaps the only true elucidation of the erotic is presented allegorically in the guise of a setting in the second stanza in a cunning show of poetic technique that leaves readers unsure if the text's eroticism is all of their own making.

For the reader willing to engage with the hybrid text, primed as it is for the exploration of pre-existing values and the extrapolation of new ones, the patina of contemporary imitative models is dismantled and the underlying stresses exposed. These poetic tensions point to a hybrid love, framed by Aldana's own interpretation of Plato's *Symposium*, which stands in opposition to mainstream philosophic trends. The choice to employ a Platonic element, Aristophanes' speech, signals an indictment by Aldana for the selective use of Platonic texts within the age and clearly shows how it is possible to engineer and redeploy a selective reading in accordance with one's own sensibilities.

Neoplatonism and Petrarchism are re-forged by Aldana to serve his cause in much the same way that they had been through the writings of Ficino and the Academies. The Neoplatonic concept of the union of souls to create a cohesive spiritual whole metamorphoses into Aristophanes' physical and spiritual union of both elements to form a Child of Moon, with all the sexual ramifications required to make hybrid union between male and female possible. Petrarchan tropes and descriptive elements from both blason traditions are combined with bodily elements unique to Aldana in serious love lyric, such as the hips, thighs, and by implication, the female genitalia. This generates a revived Petrarchism that harkens back to the importance placed on the senses, embraces the physicality of the female body, and is able to treat those fragmented elements with delicate and decorous descriptive detail. Thus, without fear of inherent physicality and sensuality, Aldana reworks poetic tradition to allow a greater freedom to explore aspects of the literary representation of love previously considered off-limits within the serious love lyric. This challenge to contemporary poetic sensibilities ultimately raises questions for the reader with regard to decorum,

transgression and the boundaries of literary genre in a manner much richer in its complexity than previously may have been expected.