

Men Who Talk about Love in Late Medieval Spain: Hugo de Urriés and Egalitarian Married Life

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The fifteenth century in Spain witnessed an unprecedented emergence of a debate about women. The protagonists of this discussion were normally male. The debate took place in the context of doctrinal texts, instructions to women, courtly literature and treatises devoted to good behaviour and courtmanship. It is also prominent in texts of a medical or religious nature. In all of them, the theme of women, their condition, social role and their habits was one of the most commonly repeated in both the poetry and prose produced in the Iberian peninsula in the late medieval period. Some of this literature addressed the practicalities of the institution of marriage.¹ However, the debate rarely focused on this crucial regulator of coexistence between men and women, and generally mirrored the European discussion about the nature of women. Many volumes in recent years have compiled, edited and glossed the key works of the Hispanic *querelle des femmes*.² There are also a number of studies on the sources and traditions informing two superficially differentiated currents. The first is defined by a somewhat misogynistic approach, generally described as medievalising and with its roots in the Old Testament.³ The second is a more progressive one which has been perceived, not without unhealthy doses of presentism and anachronism, as protofeminist, in defence of women and usually linked to an incipient lay and humanist philosophy. It so happens that cer-

¹Doctrinal letters about marriage in both Castile and Catalonia are studied by Cortijo Ocaña (39–58). From a European point of view, Cartlidge compiles a wealth of literary approaches to marriage between 1100 and 1300.

²Compilations, relevant monographs and studies containing references appropriate to the Hispanic context can be found in Matulka, Ornstein, Whitbourn, Gerli, Mérida Jiménez, Ortas Durand, Solomon (*The Literature of Misogyny*), Archer, Archer & Riquer, and Weiss. From a European perspective, it is important to highlight works such as Bloch's and Blamires's.

³The key to the traceable origins of European misogynistic thinking, most of which is reflected in the Iberian peninsula, is to be found in Biblical sources (*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Genesis, Epistles of Paul*), in epigrammatic maxims by Ovid, Juvenal, Virgil and Valerius Maximus, in certain partial interpretations of the teachings of the Church Fathers and in widely diffused treatises such as Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* and *Decameron* or Andreas Capellanus's *De amore* (Blamires, *Woman Defamed* 6–7). Away from the Mediterranean context and focused on the theme of unhappy marriage, it is worth mentioning the ironically entitled German treatise *The fifteen joys of marriage* (fifteenth century), the *Dispute between God and his Mother* (France, 1317) and Chaucer's episode of the *Wife of Bath*. Capellanus's treatise, for instance, is closely followed in Spain by Martínez de Toledo in his *Corbacho* (Whitbourn 11).

tain authors, such as Giovanni Boccaccio at a European level and Pere Torroella in Spain, have been quoted as champions of both at the same time.⁴

In the last third of the fifteenth century, Hugo de Urriés's work can offer the modern reader a very rare and informative perspective from the points of view of social history and history of ideas. The *Dezir del casamiento* (Poem of Marriage) is a very extensive moralising poem written by Aragonese courtier Hugo de Urriés, known by critics as the *devout lover* of Spanish courtly literature because of his very unusual autobiographical celebration of his life with his wife. Unlike most of the Spanish and European participants in the *querelle*, Urriés addressed the realities of married life and he did so in the first person plural. The poem is an enthusiastic encomium that was completely alien to the Castilian mainstream courtly canon.⁵ The personal and contextual input in this work and its focus on practical aspects of the institution of marriage from a male perspective make it stand out from other contributions. Urriés, who was given a courtly education, was writing from the relative tranquillity of his political position as Juan II of Navarre–Aragón's protégé, in a kingdom that, despite its intrigues, its border skirmishes and its internal struggles, enjoyed relative prosperity and demographic stability (Conde Solares 8–15). In this article, my intention is to analyse the literary, philosophical, and religious traditions informing Urriés's writing as well as the social, biographical, and historical circumstances shaping his ideas about gender relations.⁶ The methodology of this work will serve the purpose of going beyond erudite study of texts, traditions and sources and will try to reflect intimate experiences and beliefs of real people about marriage, perhaps the most important and visible regulator of personal in-

⁴When it comes to the most prolific sources for pro-feminist literature and for the treatises and compilations of virtuous women, Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* is perhaps the most widely used. However, despite being read and very frequently even copied by *cancionero* authors, Boccaccio lacked the prestige of a classical *auctoritas* and his presence was often muted. When collecting their erudition, most authors referred to very accessible sources such as Alfonso X's *General estoria*, Boccaccio's own *De casibus* and *Teseida* (also muted in most cases), Petrarch's *De remediis*, Guido de Columnis's *Historia destructionis Troiae*, Armannino Giudice da Bologna's *Florita* and, sometimes, well distributed works from late antiquity such as Lactantius's *De falsa religionem deorum* (Crosas López 212). Of course one of the most influential traditions for enumerations and biographies of famous women derived from Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*. In Spain, treatises on virtuous and famous women written by Álvaro de Luna (*De las virtuosas y claras mujeres*) and Alonso de Cartagena (*De las mujeres ilustres*) clearly pointed to Boccaccio in their titles and in their contents and structures. Even the Marquis of Santillana must have taken most of the erudition he used in his *Infierno de los enamorados* and *Comedieta de Ponza* from Boccaccio's treatise. The Italian humanist does explicitly acknowledge some of his own sources, such as St Paul, the Bible and St Jerome, without mentioning any of his pagan ones, which must have included Livy, Ovid, Pliny the Elder, Statius, Suetonius, Valerius Maximus, Virgil as well as the late antique Justin, Orosius and the above mentioned Lactantius (Brown xvii-xviii).

⁵The title *Dezir del casamiento* is given by Sanz & Dutton. Authors that refer to Urriés as the *devout lover* include Tillier (265–74), Marino (13–18) and, more prominently, Whetnall (275–97).

⁶More often than not, scholars devoted to Humanism and the Renaissance have dismissed the extent to which what has traditionally been described as medieval thought and Scholasticism shaped the ideas that were to come. Although referred to education and not to the collective thinking of the educated elites, an example of this slightly radical interpretation can be seen in Kallendorf (vii).

teraction between men and women in the period prior to the changes introduced by the Council of Trent. I will attempt to identify the universal thinking behind Urriés's idyllic account of his life as a married man.

This is feasible because his *Dezir del casamiento* is not only informed by a learned intellectual tradition but it is also very visibly dependent on the subjective view of the author-narrator and on the personal and geographical circumstances in which he was writing. It is not often that the medieval scholar is confronted with a document of such biographical value and such relevance to social history and the history of real people, even allowing for its highly literary nature. Urriés's early biographical details can be extracted from the prologue to his translation of Valerius Maximus, which was published posthumously in 1494.⁷ Urriés entered Juan II of Navarre-Aragón's service around 1428. As the youngest son of Felipe el Celludo, third Lord of Ayerbe, and lacking the noble or clerical titles of his older brothers, he earned the confidence and respect of the royal family thanks to his brave services to Alfonso V during his first Italian expeditions.⁸ Hugo de Urriés stayed in Italy until well into the 1440s, something we can deduce given the absence of documents related to him in the General Archive of Navarre (Conde Solares 77–78). From 1448, Urriés was warden of the castle of Murillo el Fruto, Juan II's cup bearer, and also his knight and captain. More importantly, he also became an influential diplomatic figure, leading ambassadorial journeys to Burgundy and England in the 1460s and 1470s. Some of these diplomatic missions meant that he was away from his marital home in Murillo for over three years (Conde Solares 77–85).

Hugo de Urriés's love and appreciation for his wife can be seen from very different angles. One of the many archival documents about him in the General Archive of Navarre, dated 22 May 1451, refers to Urriés as the husband of María Vázquez de Tejada.⁹ Not being a firstborn son, Urriés had an extremely advantageous marriage and received the manors of Arguis, Nueno and Ordaz from his wife, and as a result of that he appeared on certain documents as the consort.¹⁰ A recurring pattern in these documents is that neither Hugo nor his wife were the permanent head of the household. Economic transactions and communications with the Crown's authority were signed by one or the other, and sometimes by both.¹¹

⁷Urriés's introductory letter to Fernando the Catholic can be found in the incunable volume held at Madrid's National Library (I – 913). See Avenoza; see also Buezo's edition of his prologue and translation.

⁸The Marquis of Santillana mentioned the Urriés family in the 71st stanza of his famous *Come-dieta de Ponza*: Hugo must have been one of the Aragonese captains fighting in 1435 (Kerkhof 561–64).

⁹Urriés's years in Navarre can be easily reconstructed following the numerous accounts documents related to him in this archive (AGN). For this article I have used the following: AGN-Accounts, Box 152, numbers 20, 15 and 30, 30, AGN-Accounts, Box 154, N. 23, AGN-Accounts, Box 156, N. 28, 3, AGN-Accounts, Box 156, N. 28, 4, AGN-Accounts, Box 170, N. 20, 21, AGN-Accounts, Box 170, N. 26, 14 and AGN-Accounts, Box 152, N. 31.

¹⁰AGN-Accounts Box 156, N. 28, 3. Documents that came directly from Juan II reversed this process, and addressed his wife as María de Urriés.

¹¹According to Otis-Cour, this practice was far more common in Southern Europe than it was in other areas of the continent (Otis Cour 28).

Climbing up the social ladder through an advantageous marriage was no dishonour for a man at that time and place. Since approximately one fifth of all couples had only female descendants, it was common for the heir to marry a younger son who had inherited little to no land, but who was happy to provide a dowry (Otis-Cour 30). Hypergamous marriage was common practice in all strata of society in fifteenth century Spain (Urriés's protector, King Juan II, acceded to the throne of Navarre through his marriage with the legitimate heir Blanca of Navarre and the Catholic Monarchs would of course follow suit in this egalitarian model of marriage).

The poem itself is an extended celebration of married love. It is made up of four hundred and forty four lines divided into thirty-seven stanzas.¹² The *dispositio* of the poem follows a lineal, rationalistic structure. Urriés illustrates his philosophy of love with examples taken from his private life—it is, without a doubt, a very personal piece of work. In terms of its textual history, the poem is only copied in one surviving witness, LB2, the *Cancionero de Herberay des Essarts*. Its circulation must have been severely limited to the Navarrese court and, considering Urriés's hand behind the selection of materials, the pro-feminist aura of the volume, and the presence of several single-witness poems by Urriés himself, some of them clearly addressed to his wife, it would be reasonable to think of the compilation as a present commissioned by Urriés for his wife, perhaps during one his long ambassadorial absences from their marital home in Navarre.¹³ The quality of the surviving copy in terms of illustrations and ornaments suggests that it was not a luxury copy addressed to the royal family or the higher nobility.¹⁴

His *Dezir del casamiento* is perhaps the clearest marker of the private nature of the volume. Urriés implemented a rationalist, Aristotelian, and, above all, courtly vision of marriage. The Aragonese courtier broke the traditional code of courtly love. This traditional code was based on a conceptual, highly sophisticated, artificial cry of unrequited love for an unattainable, idealised and generally anonymous

¹²In the Dutton coding system, the poem is ID2192, LB2–45.

¹³I borrow this very attractive idea from Whetnall (293). Some of Urriés's absences can be documented: between 1451 and 1456, Hugo de Urriés is quoted by Aragonese chronicler Jerónimo Zurita in a company of mounted captains alongside Juan de Villalpando (Zurita 16). During this civil war, Urriés was held captive by Arnaldo de Chicón (Rodríguez Risquete I, 59). Nevertheless, Juan II's army, with Urriés and Villalpando as commanders, defeated the Prince's supporters, preventing his coronation in Catalonia. Once the rebellion was put down, Urriés returned to his position as warden in the company of his wife in 1456 (AGN-Accounts, Box 152, N. 31). Following Alfonso V's death, Hugo de Urriés accompanied Juan II on his coronation as King of Aragon in 1458 (Conde Solares 79). He then had a very important diplomatic role, dealing with extremely complex ambassadorial missions abroad. He was sent on a single mission to England for two years beginning 13 November 1461 (Amador de los Ríos 254). His second diplomatic journey was a triple mission that would take him to Burgundy, Bruges and, finally, England, between the years of 1466 and 1469 (Calmette 292, 538–42). And his last mission, starting 1473, took him to Flanders, Brittany and England, with the objective of signing a strong defensive alliance against Louis XI of France with Francis II and Edward IV (Fernández Duro 243, 454–55). Urriés returned from this journey in 1475 (Menéndez y Pelayo 304).

¹⁴The patrimonial history of the volume can be followed in Conde Solares (2–5).

lady, always outside of marriage and generally conceived as a courtly game in fifteenth century Spain. Urriés produced a new courtly code of conduct that involved a very egalitarian sense of harmony and decorum in male-female relationships. He did not follow convention.¹⁵ Urriés's life and ideas were far more influential in his writing than any learned tradition.¹⁶ His equal standing with his wife is very clear from the opening stanza:

Occorrido m'a fablar
del gran bien *que* nos *queremos*
desde'l día que nos vimos,
amiga muy singular,
por tal que nos *consolemos*
del trabajo que sentimos.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 1–6)¹⁷

[I just thought I would talk about how strong our love is from the day we first met, my very special friend, so that we can find consolation for the hardships we have endured.]¹⁸

The initial “Occorrido m'a fablar” [I just thought I would talk about] is a very peculiar formula with which to start a courtly poem. It announces, from the very first line, that the author is slightly self-conscious about his chosen approach to the topic. His cautious approach is justified by the lack of a previous model of married courtly love and the highly personal details he is about to make public.¹⁹ This self-consciousness is also very apparent at the end of his narrative, when he pre-empts the conclusion that other men will probably criticise his work as a symptom of being a hen-pecked husband:

¹⁵According to Brooke, much has been ascribed to Islamic influence from Spain in early Provençal lyric which, in turn, was to influence Spain's fifteenth century courtly love revival, but Ovid and the classics were far more prolific when looking for some of the love themes we encounter in the Castilian tradition (Brooke 178). For instance, the idea of the man as a slave occurred in the courtship traditions of Arabic, Languedoc, troubadoursque and Castilian *cancionero* cultures, but Urriés did not seem to follow any of them.

¹⁶“But the romance poets developed their own conventions too, appropriate—in the paradoxical sense in which literary conventions are appropriate to the societies which embrace them—to their own world” (Brooke 178). From a European perspective, Brooke goes on to comment on Wolfram von Eschenbach's character William the Marshal, an Anglo-Norman landless man, the younger son of a baron, who by good service won one of the greatest heiresses in the Anglo-Norman empire, and rose to be regent of England. His wealth was mainly based in his wife's inheritance (Brooke 178). This role model is one that mirrors Urriés perfectly.

¹⁷When quoting Urriés's work, I use my own transcription of the LB2 manuscript (British Library Add. Ms. 33382). *Cancionero* materials are referred to with their Dutton ID numbers. The punctuation, accents and regularised u/v are my own. Italics are developed abbreviations.

¹⁸All translations from quoted lines are my own.

¹⁹Ana Orozco (519–30) explored the corpus of *cancionero* poetry in search for comparable works. Nothing came close to Urriés's personal and open celebration of his marriage.

Bien sé que reprochará
algún triste miserable
lo ençima contenido,
el qual entre sí dirá
que'l mostrarme *tan* amable
senal es de ser regido.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 395–400)

[I know full well that some miserable wretch might reprimand me for what I have written, and will grumble and say that if I show such love for my wife, it is a sure sign I am under her thumb.]

Urriés defended himself from his potential critics by stating that mutual love and mutual consent are morally righteous concepts. His gender ideology was based on the mainstream Christian idea which condemns cruel husbands, an idea that can be seen across Europe, from Albertanus of Brescia's thirteenth-century treatises (widely distributed in the humanist circles of the fifteenth century) to the *Canterbury Tales*, to name just a few of the texts. Open condemnation of domestic cruelty was extremely fashionable throughout Europe in the period in which Urriés was writing. Texts such as the fourteenth century English treatise *How the Good Man Taught his Son*, which forbids men from insulting or hitting their wives, were quoted by lay and religious authorities everywhere in the late medieval period (Otis-Cour 165). Urriés used a very personal, rationalistic style where facts, examples and opinions were perfectly differentiated to produce a solid defence of his idea (Parrilla 242).²⁰ His idea was, quite simply, that loving someone who loves you is not a sign of being ruled by your wife, but a matter of being a good courtier as well as showing good judgement and prudence:

Que lo tal correspondiõn
se llama de complacencia,
que no d'otri me regir,
e tal es mi opiniõn
que non usa de prudencia
quien ál muestra infingir,
ca nunca es bien amado
qui sanamente non ama

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 407–14)

[Because this consenting, mutual love that we feel, is not a sign of me being ruled by another. And it is my opinion that those who do not truly love are not acting with good judgement, because they never receive true love from anyone.]

²⁰Whinnom (1047–52) and Macpherson (51–63) analysed Urriés's style and highlighted his use of paradoxes, oxymora and antitheses. García-Bermejo Giner (284), referring to Urriés's *Diffinicion damor* (manuscript NH2, ID2369), considers that Urriés's rationalist philosophy of love could have been underpinned by his Scholastic reading of academic works, some of which must have been French, rather than Castilian, treatises.

Another original characteristic of Urriés's poem is the use of the first person plural when discussing his relationship with his wife ("nos queremos", "nos vimos", "nos consolemos", "sentimos"). His is not the usual instruction to women where the man takes a prominent role. Urriés's is a male voice offering a descriptive, collective view of gender relations rather than a prescriptive one. His account is one of a mutual engagement in which he and his wife are on an equal footing. The virtue of reciprocity in marriage was being praised, at roughly the same time when Urriés wrote his poem, by humanists as well as religious authors. For instance, Franciscan Cherubino da Spoleto in his *Rules of Married Life* (1459) spoke of the joys of "mutual and sincere affection" within the couple, linking marriage to friendship (Otis-Cour 163).

Going back to the opening stanza, we find the first occurrence of what will be a recurring theme throughout Urriés's discourse, his insistence on the deep sense of friendship he feels for his wife (defined as "amiga muy singular"). Again, this is a pattern that talks of a firmly rooted sense of loyalty that went beyond practicalities and social conventions and participated in a modern and, to some extent, egalitarian idea of marriage. This notion of marriage as a special friendship came with deep echoes of St Thomas Aquinas. In a Hispanic context, the idea was explored by Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal's influential and revealingly entitled *Breviloquio de amor e amiçia*, which was to deeply influence *cancionero* culture (Marín Pina 208). Moreover, fourteenth century humanists such as Francesco da Barberino had defined marriage as a "perfect friendship". Humanist Leon Battista Alberti, who wrote in the second half of the fifteenth century, also shared with Urriés the same philosophy of love and marriage. Franciscans, like Bartholomew of Siena, even used their sermons to advise young couples on a Thomist concept of love, friendship and marriage (Otis-Cour 162). Therefore, Urriés's philosophy of love follows Aristotle and Aquinas, avoiding Platonic affectation. Incidentally, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* had been translated by Carlos, Prince of Navarre, following Leonardo Bruni's Latin version and glosses in the style of Aquinas. The work was readily available in both the Navarrese court and Naples (Salinas Espinosa 1456). Urriés's decade in Italy, in Alfonso V's Neapolitan court, is not to be underestimated when deciphering how his way of thinking took shape.

The fifth and sixth lines referred to the specific situation that Urriés and his wife had to undergo: the prolonged absences that only made their love stronger. This theme also appears several times throughout the poem, suggesting that it was written during one of those absences, easy to identify if his life history is traced:

Y empués de los pacimientos
que los sguardes graciosos
en ambos a dos causaron,
ovimos departimientos
de méritos virtuosos
que nos más enamoraron.

(ID2192, LB2-45, lines 156-61)

[And after all the suffering that the absence and the righteous waiting for each other caused both of us, we had to live apart again, which we did virtuously and it made us fall in love even more.]

A lover's absence was a topic which had literary antecedents, in very different circumstances, in Provençal lyric and chivalric romance and poetry. In Urriés's verses it has been decontextualised and set in a very realistic framework. It refers to absence of the husband from the marital home because of his social, political and professional commitments. In chivalric romance, the lover lives in fear of a jealous father: in mainstream courtly love, he pretends to live in fear of a jealous husband (Van Beysterveldt 413–14).²¹ Urriés's use of the theme, however, is radically different because he takes away the element of secrecy. There is nothing secret, illegitimate, or dangerous, about his love for his wife. This is a realistic, down to earth, non-idealised utilisation of courtly love conventions and is unique to his poetry. His poems to his wife must have been written, chronologically speaking, within a period of fourteen years (1461–75) when Urriés was sent on lengthy ambassadorial trips abroad.²²

To put Urriés's *Dezir del casamiento* into context, it is worth mentioning that even though his defence of marriage was a rarity in the Iberian compilations of courtly literature, he was not the only one to write about married life in the literary and intellectual circles of the last third of the fifteenth century in Spain. Other authors, such as Jaume Roig in his *Spill de les Dones* (Mirror of Ladies), also wrote about this topic, albeit from a very different perspective and driven by a different agenda.²³ The primary level of reading of the *Spill* depicts the devastating effects of marriage whilst undermining the credibility of three states or institutions traditionally acclaimed as morally virtuous: virginity, religious education and family.²⁴ Urriés wrote from a personal situation of courtly tranquillity. Roig, on the other hand, as a doctor in fifteenth-century Valencia, was very much in contact with the culture of fear created by the rapid spread of the Black Death in his surrounding environment. As Michael Solomon (*The Literature of Misogyny* 3, 78–79) mentions, some of these antifeminist treatises were written for the purpose of improving public health, an agenda that was completely alien to Urriés. Roig's philosophy of carnal love and marriage needs to be understood in Aristotelian terms, where love

²¹Justina Ruiz de Conde (161) and Michael Harney (112) speak of a realistic type of love, which included marriage and carnal affection, in chivalric fiction. Ruiz de Conde contrasted this type of love with that found in courtly literature. Urriés clearly broke the mould.

²²See footnote number thirteen.

²³An annotated critical edition of the *Spill* has recently been published by Peirats Navarro.

²⁴Strosetzki suggests that the educational treatise written by Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives in 1523 (*De institutione feminae christianae*) was heavily indebted to what he perceives as medieval thinking, represented by the *Spill*. Considering the *Spill*'s circulation and popularity, it is not by chance that Vives's treatise, often pejoratively categorised as *less humanist, more medieval* than Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) or Erasmus of Rotterdam's *De matrimonio christiano* (1526), also describes the profiles of a young maiden, a married woman and a widow, incidentally the main targets of Roig's tirade. According, again, to Strosetzki, his instruction was based on classical philosophy and the Church Fathers and it was "more medieval" than More's and Rotterdam's (27–38).

is originated by an *image* and this *image* is to be apprehended by the *sensus communis* (the common sense) which in turn must be subject to the intellect and to rationality. Aristotle's *phantasia* acts as a link between the senses and the intellect, thus linking this tradition with Galen and classical medical theory (Serés 64).²⁵

The apparent ideological eclecticism visible in some authors should not come as a surprise. The influence of the Church Fathers in medieval Spanish thinking went beyond the stereotypical. Jerome's teaching that corruption attaches to all sexual intercourse, even in a legitimate marriage, had already been theologically—and, most importantly, socially—superseded by St Thomas Aquinas's condemnation of Manichean dualism when it came to women and legitimate marriage. This had consolidated a more balanced doctrine that unequivocally defended the dignity of the institution of marriage for both individuals, stating that love, even carnal love, reflected the love of God (Artadi 24–25). St Augustine also described marriage as fundamentally good and defended the institution against Manichean thinkers for whom all things sexual and material were automatically evil (Otis-Cour 41).

Urriés decidedly followed this pro-marriage doctrine. To give his text credibility he referred, sometimes very clearly, to his own experience of a happy marriage. In a corpus of literature (the Spanish *cancioneros*) that is normally lacking this type of personal and emotional display, his work was certainly conspicuous.²⁶ His attention to detail when describing past events reinforces the idea that his dialogue with his wife was not a rhetorical pose but a very real love letter. For instance, Urriés recalls giving his wife one of his letters when they met in Castronuño when the Queen visited the village:

Y el processo abreviando,
bien sabes que procuré
de levar nueva muy cara,
en Castronunyo estando,
a la reyna, con quien sé
que vi tu hermosa cara
(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 216–21)

[And, cutting short the process, you know that I tried to bring you my love letter when you were in Castronuño with the Queen, who was present when I saw your beautiful face.]

²⁵Michael Solomon has recently published a new monograph about medical writing in late medieval / early modern Spain (*Fictions of Well-Being*).

²⁶A point of comparison could be Gómez Manrique. He also wrote at least two poems referred to his wife Juana de Mendoza, and these clearly went beyond the formulae of *insincere* courtly love conventions. In his poem to his wife on the occasion of the death of two of their sons (Dutton ID1876, MN24–35) Gómez Manrique also praises the virtues of his wife in a heartfelt fashion. However, this is primarily a Petrarchan consolatory poem with political connotations (see Morros Mestres 125–27). The other poem (Dutton ID1874, in MN24–31, MP2–7 and MP3–39) is just a short dedication to his wife (nothing to do with Urriés's long, rationalistic disquisition). Neither of them is a self-standing celebration of married love like Urriés's. None of the very few surviving *cancionero* poems about the spouse shares these characteristics.

This type of detail about a public man's private life with his wife is previously unknown in Spanish courtly poetry. Urriés uses such realistic elements to reinforce his eclectic philosophy of married love, one in which Aristotelian rationalism is merged with a mostly aesthetic Platonic twist. Both philosophies come together in harmony:

Precepto es general
que primero escoger
que amar el hombre deve,
mas amor es espeçial:
a quien muestra su poder
no consiente que lo prueve,
(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 25–30)

[It is known that, as a general rule, men should try to choose who to love, but when love itself steps in, it cannot be put to the test.]

Urriés challenged the old “precepto” that talked of choosing a correct suitor instead of being guided by fickle love. However, his view is far from radical. He acknowledges the power of love but he subsequently celebrates how by following his rationalist idea of love, he actually made the right decision. He talks of the extreme joy he felt when he realised that he was “bien acertado” (line 135) because he made his choice based on the love he felt for the woman who was to be his wife. This rationalistic philosophy of love was challenged in some contemporary texts, such as the *Tratado de cómo al ome es necesario amar*, which denied free will and free choice when it came to love (Cátedra 122). Other fifteenth century authors, such as Luis de Lucena in his *Repetición de amores*, agreed with Urriés that no man can claim to be deprived of his free will, even when love is involved (Cátedra 173). Both take a very Christian approach to love.

The process described by Urriés is one where love and judgement work together in harmony. Feelings are controlled by rational decisions and informed choices are made based on a love that is judged to be honest and positive:

E como yo me fallasse
de aquel en ti veyendo
súpitamente forçado,
ante que me recordasse,
en vivas llamas ardiendo,
en mí fuy maravillado,
ca çierto gran novedat
mi espíritu sentió
con el tal ençendimiento,
mas juzgo por calidat,
e bien presto conçibió
ser nuevo namoramiento.
Extremo gozo sentí
quando en mí recordé

por aver bien acertado,
e de fecho consentí
el amor, e proposé
de ser tu enamorado.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 121–38)

[And, since I found myself compelled by love in your presence, before I could compose myself, I was burning with the flame of love, and my soul felt this new and marvellous feeling. With such overpowering emotion, my soul soon enough realised that it was love that I was feeling. I felt deep joy when I came to my senses and saw that I had made the right choice, and then I agreed to love you and asked you to love me back.]

The force (“forçado”) and the feeling (“mi espíritu sentió”) are tamed by judgement (“juzgo”) and love is rationalised and conceptualised before the conscious decision to fall in love is taken (“e de fecho consentí [. . .] de ser tu enamorado”). Therefore, Urriés does not believe in astrological determinism (not even as an aesthetic pose) and bluntly rebuffs fatalism when it comes to love (as also explained by Rodríguez Risquete II, 207).

Urriés’s courtly ideal of marriage was one that rejected *amor hereos*, the sick love fatally linked to death in Hispanic culture, which is best portrayed in *La Celestina*. Urriés warned against the dangers of a love that, without reaching the fatalistic characteristics of such *amor hereos*, could be damaging to courtly practice and moral health. His ideological agenda was one that promoted courtesy as an ideal of life (Buezo, “Mosén Hugo de Urriés” 35). His vision of love was optimistic rather than fatalistic. When it came to gender relations, he put his emphasis on free will. But even when love was honest and conducive to marriage, the pre-married stage was not exempt from damaging side effects and transformations in those who experienced it:

el qual faz de los activos
e negoçiantes discretos
sin la voluntat forçar,
ser mucho contemplativos
y en negoçios indiscretos,
e la qualidat mudar.
Pues *quien* es contemplativo
e todo el tiempo despiende
en gemir e sospirar,
oçioso e *non* activo
según *que* se m’entiende
lo podremos bien llamar.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 103–14)

[Without infringing free will, it turns active and rational men into sighing and longing people, changing their essence. Because those who spend all of their time sighing and loving can be called, in my opinion, idle and unindustrious.]

The antidote to this indiscreet, confused, contemplative, sighing and longing state was precisely marriage, which brought peace, fulfilment, and legitimacy to those who felt the honest type of love. In his view, love did not end with courtship but in fact improved with marriage. It brought tranquillity and legitimised and rationalised human relationships. Urriés considered that pre-married love could be harmful to day to day activities and interests. A good marriage, on the other hand, brought peace of mind:

pues se puede pensar
que d'amar e ser amado
su fin es tranquilidat.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 356–58)

[Because it is right to consider that the purpose of loving and being loved is tranquillity.]

His rational, pragmatic and harmonious courtly love is depicted as intrinsically better than both the volatile love experienced during courtship and the ill-founded and empty *amor hereos*, which was also the main focus of most medieval Spanish misogynists. Instead, married love can be applied to real life resulting in the emergence of a fulfilling partnership. There is not love that came out of “*ociosidat*” (idleness) but one that was calm, honest and constructive, not destructive, very different from the one portrayed in the very fashionable (yet entirely fictional) sentimental novel of the period. In this, once again, Urriés’s vision of married love was a visibly sincere and realistic one:

Dizen que ociosidat
es d'amores la portera
como causa preparante,
mas do la conformidat
se presenta, la bandera
de amor va más avante

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 61–66)

[Some say that idleness is the first symptom of love as well as its cause, but where mutual consent occurs, love flies its flag even higher.]

Despite the old fashioned distinction between pre-Trentian marriage and the more modern idea that was to follow the Council of Trent, Urriés’s views were far from revolutionary in fifteenth century Spain. They were, indeed, revolutionary in the context of the relatively restrictive courtly love poetry conventions—hence his need to *justify* his approach at the beginning of his poem—but his ideas reflected commonly accepted views of his educated contemporaries.²⁷ The Tametsi decree of

²⁷Courtly literature addressing polemic topics often received responses from other courtiers. Even though this is only circumstantial evidence of the social normality of his views, no courtly controversy sparked by Urriés’s poem has survived.

1563 reinforced the canonical regulations of marriage (Arellano & Usunáriz 7). However, the idea of mutual consent had been firmly established in Spanish civil law right from Alfonso X's *Partidas* in the thirteenth century (Otis-Cour 55). The *Partidas*, the most extensive compilation of Western secular law since Justinian and perhaps the most important legal document produced in the Spanish Middle Ages, were seven codes that regulated life and human relations. The fourth code was devoted to marriage. Its location at the centre of the seven laws was not by chance. According to Alfonso X, they were in the middle just like the heart was in the middle of the human body (Arellano & Usunáriz 7). The influence of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* was evident in them (see Carpin). According to the fourth *Partida*, marriage ensures the population of the world, it prevents fornication and it promotes peace and friendship where relatives live in harmony and the name of the Lord is blessed (Stone 33). Moreover, relatively early and more localised historical documents such as town ordinances and statutes (for instance, *fueros* dated between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries) also offer interesting insights on traditional gender relations. Heath Dillard states that "both as heiresses of municipal property and as individuals capable of transmitting it to their children or to other heirs, women were a formidable presence in the property structure of the towns" (Dillard 26). The stress on the individual, rather than on the lineage, confirms that, from very early times, marriage was set to unite two people rather than two families.

The idea was already rooted in the real life of both the middle and lower classes in the fifteenth century. "La conformidat", which should be understood as mutual rather than imposed consent, was what made love and, more importantly, marriage work in practice. Preconceptions about the widespread practice of arranged marriage and about the condemnation of all carnal pleasures throughout the Middle Ages are set aside when we think of fifteenth century Spain. Such preconceptions can easily be explained because of the sources used by historians to recreate what the medieval institution of marriage would have been like. Most of these documents are deeds dealing with the transmission of property and can give the impression that love did not play any part (Otis-Cour 19). This is why Urriés's work is invaluable when it comes to exploring real human relationships. This idea of love and consent was what gave the institution of marriage its legitimacy and what honoured and dignified the free will of husband and wife, something that the Catholic Church had always championed, albeit on occasion unwillingly, throughout the entire Middle Ages.

By asserting the equality of the sexes in concluding the marriage contract, the Catholic Church was in fact taking a stand against male supremacy (Duby 17). Marriage through love was not just a romantic fiction.²⁸ By the fifteenth century, both lay and Christian writings defended the ideas of mutual consent, love

²⁸Gabriella Zarri (132) considers that matrimonial love was born as a consequence of the Protestant Reform. This idea is very difficult to defend if we consider the wealth of evidence to the contrary offered by Otis-Cour.

and even validated clandestine marriages precisely because they came as result of two people's free will (Otis-Cour 161). Medieval Scholasticism insisted on a mechanistic view of the Sacraments, influenced by Aristotelian categories. Mutual consent in marriage was far more important than the legal blessing (Artadi 24). Ruth Mazo Karras has recently published a ground breaking monograph that highlights the extent to which traditional marriage was not the only socially accepted form of partnership throughout the European Middle Ages. In fact, it was not until as late as 1215, with the Fourth Lateran Council, that the Church would make provisions for marriage as a Church ceremony (Lacarra Lanz, *Marriage and Sexuality* xi).²⁹ The formal Christianisation of marriage took place through several stages between the Lateran and Trent councils but the underlying Roman, Visigoth, and even Celtic consuetudinary law never disappeared. Christianisation of marriage in Spain occurred mostly through doctrines such as the *Lex Divina*, the Impediment of Inequality, the Doctrine of Indissolubility, and in particular through St Augustine's multi-stranded definition of marriage as spiritual union, sacrament and remedy (see Reynolds). The first humanists in Italy and Urriés in Spain did nothing other than reflect what was already a widely accepted idea of marriage in late medieval Europe.³⁰

Mutual consent is explicitly introduced into Urriés's poetry when he talks of the free choices that his wife made during courtship:

Assí bien, empués d'aquesto,
dos grandes competidores
de mí, contigo estando
en modo assaz honesto,
te davan grandes loores,
tus virtudes blasonando,
a los quales denegar
te vi tu garrida mano

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 240–47)

[And after that, I had two main competitors for your love, and both loved you and behaved in an honest fashion when they were in your presence, praising your virtues. But I saw your gentle hand reject their suit.]

His beloved could have chosen someone else but freely decided her destiny. In order to highlight how her free will played a pivotal role in this process, Urriés even praises the honesty of his competitors, thus enhancing his appreciation of his wife's decisions. Matrimonial politics in that period in Navarre-Aragón were far from being male-dominated. Women of all social backgrounds were active players, not just pawns in this diplomatic game (Dawn-Bratsch 58–89; Mazo Karras). The

²⁹Lourdes Albuixech studied how the topos of the *malcasada* in pastoral lyric was quite often a reflection of the irrelevance of the sacramental blessing in the real marriages of the lower classes. Her work highlights how pastoral romance normally offered a negative image of married life.

³⁰Fourteenth century humanists such as Francesco da Barberino or Cino Rinuccini had highlighted the harmony between intellectual life and marriage.

archives of Zaragoza, for instance, show a number of matrimonial capitulations in the fifteenth century where men provided the dowry to the woman's family (García Herrero 381–98).³¹ This was, without a doubt, the situation in which Urriés found himself. Mutual consent was something that Urriés linked with good religious practice:

Ca en amores tan largos
como fueron los nuestros,
bien se puede presumir
que ovo tragos amargos
e plazibles acuestos
e desseos de morir,
de los quales proceyó
el tracto de casamiento
e su conclusión final
que del todo nos hunió,
con libre consentimiento
e conjunción divinal.

(ID2192, LB2–45, lines 359–70)

[Because in a love story as long as ours, of course we had our highs and lows, as could be expected, and we longed for death, but it all brought about the celebration of our marriage, which joined us together forever through free mutual consent by God's will.]

“Libre consentimiento” (free mutual consent) and “conjunción divinal” (divine harmony) are unequivocally intertwined in his line of thought. This is by no means surprising. Urriés will then insist on the “concorde ayuntamiento” (mutually agreed partnership) that was blessed by God himself (“que dios nos ha dado”). Positive and equal gender relations were part of his Christian idea of marriage.

Urriés unambiguously promoted the notions of achieving a righteous relationship with God through marriage, avoiding *amor hereos* and praising one's own wife. A deeper level of reading reveals that, in the last third of the fifteenth century, Spanish thinking about the institution of marriage was generally liberal and that this line of thought was informed by what has been traditionally defined as a medieval frame of mind, one that was shaped by Aristotelian categories, Scholasticism, the Church Fathers and underpinned by legal codes and philosophical milestones in the vernacular, such as Alfonso X's *Partidas*. Courtly love poetry in the Spanish fifteenth century was a revival of an old poetic canon dating from the High Middle Ages. Urriés broke this literary code by simply reflecting accepted contemporary views on marriage rather than archaic genre conventions. The notion of author, authority, and the relevance of biography and the author's life experience when addressing universal issues are also shown in a clearer light. Hugo de Urriés's work is illuminating, because it is not often that the medieval scholar is confronted

³¹Such matrimonial capitulations were often written after the engagement but before the Church ceremony (García Herrero 383–84).

with such a self-evident symbiosis between an author's work, his biography and the social pragmatisms of his time. Hugo de Urriés enables the modern reader to see beyond the contemporary stereotyped perception of medieval thinking when it comes to gender relations and marriage.

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