



Juan Valera and Juan Ruiz: The Reliance of *Pepita Jiménez* on the *Libro de buen amor* and *La Celestina*

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Pepita Jiménez (1874) traces a religious young widow's seduction of Don Luis de Vargas, a relatively naïve, young seminarian. The novel utilizes many allusions to literature of the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries in order to illustrate the type of rhetoric the young man uses in order to obscure his cooperation with her evolving plan (Lott 71-146; Amorós 35-36, 178-79). As Hoff states, "Luis's writing [...] implies that his erotic desires lie hidden, to be discovered or ferreted out by the discerning reader" (215). This deception continues "until it becomes the predominant issue of the novel" (217), ultimately producing the suspicion that, near the novel's end, Luis "may have succumbed to Pepita's attractions out of lust" (227). In the second part of the novel, "Paralipómenos," Valera's narrator makes several allusions to *La tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, commonly called *La Celestina* (1499), in order to show that Antoñona, Pepita's *ama de llaves*, uses rhetoric from the work that parallels the rhetoric of Don Luis. The present study attempts to show that the rhetoric of Valera's novel proceeds not only from the *Celestina* and Spanish mystical literature, but also, and most pointedly, from the *Libro de buen amor* (1343), in which the Archpriest of Hita admits his erotic inclinations and urges others to copy his own strategies of seduction.¹ Such a revelation complicates the prevalent notion that Don Luis is merely Pepita's semi-willing victim (DeCoster 96), demonstrating that his motives fall within the parameters of the stereotypical male seducer of much pre-modern literature. Amorós is particularly astute in pointing out Luis's reference to "algo que hay en mí que no perdona lo que mi madre perdonó con generosidad sublime [en mi padre]" (185). The allusions, of course, are to the rakish past of Luis's father and to Luis's own libidinous motives, viewed retrospectively and with only a lukewarm sense of guilt. Luis and Pepita exhibit a superficial shyness and, as Valera's not always reliable narrators (Luis, the Dean, and the Transcriber) never seem to tire of pointing out, Pepita is "discreta." Beside this naïveté and charming lack of expertise (a quality discernable in other characters in several early Valera novels) there is in Luis an equal degree of daring and cunning.

A recent study of the incident of the errant mule in the *Libro de buen amor* explains how the work associates the mule with diabolical motives, loss of control, and the eventual

seduction of four willing *serranas* (Hidalgo 289-330). These lusty women thus become instruments of the Devil's work, just as Calisto and Sempronio do in Act One of the *Celestina* (37; I). According to Hidalgo, the symbolic figure of an errant mule or horse harkens back to the writings of Herodotus, Plato, and Plutarch, and extends to works of many modern writers (291). Also in the view of Hidalgo, the diabolical attitude and satanic physiology of the fourth *serrana* project onto the Archpriest suggestions of his own malevolence. Thus, the poetic voice of the Archpriest acknowledges his own corrupt morals. The allegorical nature of the incident, in which the absence of food for a mule-less rider provokes loss of libidinal control, is anticipated in these verses:

Provar todas las cosas, el apóstol lo manda:
 Fue yo provar la syerra e fiz' loca demanda:
 Perdí luego la mula é non fallava viyanda:
 Quien más de pan de trigo busca syn seso anda.
 (*Libro* 950; II)

The Archpriest searches for his mule along narrow paths frequented by muleteers, and thus enters a world peopled with women accustomed to satisfying male desires (Hart 38, 90). The poetic voice explains how the allegorical stance of the episode may not be evident to the reader who wants only to follow the plot: “Fasta qu’ el libro entyendas, dél byen non digas mal, / Ca tú entenderás uno é il libro dirá ál” (*Libro*, 986; II).

The parallel allegorical dimension of *Pepita Jiménez* is at first difficult to discern. The slipshod moral theology and actual waywardness of priests were hotly discussed issues in medieval times, so much so that the expression “mula del diablo” was coined to refer to the type of woman that a sexually frustrated priest might mount in moments of “need” (Hidalgo 297). Valera takes up this same problem of clerical deficiency in his novel. In only his third letter, Don Luis de Vargas speaks of the “escasez de sacerdotes instruidos y virtuosos” (21), words he will reiterate on several other occasions. In the *Libro de buen amor*, the loss of his own mule spurs Juan Ruiz's Archpriest to find another, while in Valera's novel, the loss of the seminarian's own surrogate mule—his priestly vocation—prods Don Luis progressively to take control of (or, in the final instance, enter into) Pepita's “mule”: her lands, her house, her bedroom, and finally her body.

It is the bedroom scene in the middle of “Paralipómenos” that is the true conclusion of *Pepita Jiménez*; by the same token, it is the carnal union of Doña Endrina and Don Melón that concludes the principal narrative of the *Libro de buen amor* (Keller xxix). Both stories continue, however, with superfluous incidents and quasi-philosophical reflections. Valera's depiction of Don Luis's superficial and easily abandoned priestly vocation adopts a middle position between two critical standpoints regarding *El libro*. One is Cejador's judgment that the primary unifying feature of the *Libro de buen amor* is its satire on the deficient education and morality of medieval clerics. The other is Green's belief, anticipated by Lida de Malkiel and seconded by Keller, that the *Libro* is primarily a delightful satire on the mixture of excitement and bungling inevitably involved in every instance of erotic love (Keller xxxii, xl, xlvi-lix). In either case, contrary to Juan Ruiz's depiction of the amatory bungling of his Archpriest, Valera's Luis de Vargas ultimately comes to embody an “amor victorioso” (Azaña, “La novela” 230). Valera's work is also

fundamentally different in its elimination of the *Libro*'s generic identity as an *ars amandi*, a dimension not incompatible with Don Luis, but contrary to Valera's idealist esthetic (Green 43). What remains of the courtly love manual is Valera's attitude that love of the opposite sex brings the lovers closer to godliness and into harmony with Divine Creation (Green 45). Hoff categorically states that Luis employs representations of Pepita that are "reminiscent of those found in the tradition of courtly love": she is ironically and deceptively described in terms of "light," "purity," and "elevated heights" (223).

Valera does not give his reader a particularly clear picture of his heroine, but the details he does provide are important. She has "cabellos rubios" or "cabello rubio" (*Pepita* 36, 105). She is not very tall, and she is passionate and symbolically fertile, as her extremely "feminine" nature suggests. These inferences receive reinforcement from Valera's choice of the name "Pepita"—an encased pepper seed—connoting smallness, a potential fruitfulness, and a certain heat or passion. Pepita and Don Luis, however, have only one child, and here we are obliged to recall Hidalgo's suggestion that the Archpriest's search for a mule involves an animal that is sterile. This infertility allegorically suggests the use of sex for pleasure (Hidalgo 297). In the *Libro de buen amor*, Don Amor advises the Archpriest: "Cata muger donosa é ferosa é loçana, / Que non sea muy luenga, otrosí nin enana" (Ruiz 431, I). He then proceeds to describe the color of her hair: "Cabellos amariellos, non sean de alheña" (432). The ideal lover's features, suggests the Archpriest, are to be diminutive. Much later, in the set piece "De las propiedades que las dueñas chicas han," the Archpriest advises his reader once more that a passionate lover is to be small in stature, adding that her coloring will be light as gold and delicate as a rose. Such a woman is like the seed of a pepper ("pepita"), small in size but explosive in her passions:

Es pequeño el grano de la buena pimienta;
 Pero más que la nués conorta é más calyenta:
 Asy dueña pequeña, sy todo amor consienta,
 Non há plaser del mundo qu' en ella non se sienta.

Como en chica rrosa está mucha calor,
 E en oro muy poco grand preçio é grand valor,
 Como en poco balsamo yase grand buen olor:
 Asy en chica dueña yase muy grand amor.
 (1611-1612, II)

Dueña can mean "nun"; in Valera's novel, upon her aged, first husband's death, Pepita, under the influence of her confessor, had considered entering a convent.

Pepita Jiménez is a rich and desirable widow, as Valera's text repeatedly makes clear. Luis's first letter to his uncle, in the initial section of the novel, explains that the village murmurs about "los poco poéticos medios con que se ha hecho rica," adding that in all places, "la gente es muy aficionada al dinero" (13). For this reason, "[D]e este pueblo y de todos los de las cercanías han acudido a pretenderla los más brillantes partidos [. . .]" (14). One of these is the bankrupt Conde de Genazahar, who will play a secondary but nonetheless important role in the denouement of the novel. Another is Don Luis's rakish father, Don Pedro de Vargas, the local *cacique*, who, in addition to his professed love of

the youthful widow, may contemplate expansion of his personal estate. Such a financial motivation is not an unreasonable assumption, since Valera repeatedly shows acquisitiveness rather than spirituality as the primary motivation of his novel's characters. For example, Pepita married the now deceased Don Gumersindo because her own widowed mother had wanted his money. Don Luis exaggerates the case for self-interest considerably, by converting every villager into a flatterer of the *cacique* and his son and by stating of their real or desired money: "Aquí no se habla de otra cosa" (48). His point, nevertheless, is well taken, because characters talk about money quite a bit in the novel. Another illustration of this mercantile attitude occurs when Pepita prays before the statue of the Baby Jesus, not out of religious devotion, but because she wants the Christ Child to hand over Don Luis to her. Pepita's humble origins, her current wealth, and her suitors' greed are similar to those of the situation of the recently endowed widow Doña Endrina in the *Libro de buen amor*—"Biuda, rrica es muncho é moça de juventud" (Ruiz 582)—who is set upon by suitors and other money-seekers:

Con arras é con algos rruéganle cassamientos.
 En menos los tiene todos, que dos viles sarmientos:
 Do es el grand lynaje, son los desdeñamientos,
 La grant rriqueza fase grandes ensalçamientos.

Rica muger é fija de un porquerizo vyl
 Escogerá marido qual quesiere dellos mill.
 (599-600; I)

The similarity of the economic dimensions of *Pepita Jiménez* and the *Libro de buen amor* additionally recalls the importance of money in works like the *Celestina*, which will receive attention later on in this essay. The greater congruency, however, is with *Libro de buen amor*, especially with its set piece rhetorically titled "Enxienplo de la propiedat que'l dinero há." It is instructive to recall its opening lines, quoted below, in the context of Valera's impoverished villagers, bankrupt aristocrats, Pepita's security-motivated mother, and the women who would marry off their daughters to the *cacique's* rich but illegitimate son. As the *Libro* explains:

Mucho faz' el dinero, mucho es de amar:
 Al torpe faze bueno é homne de prestar,
 Ffaze correr al coxo é al mudo fablar,
 El que non tiene manos, dyneros quier' tomar.

Sea un ome nesçio é rudo labrador,
 Los dineros le fazen fidalgo é sabydor,
 Quanto más algo tiene, tanto es de más valor;
 El que non há dineros, non es de sy señor.
 (490-491; I)

In his letter of 20 April, Don Luis tells his uncle, the Dean of the seminary, of his excursion to Pepita's country home at El Pozo de la Solana. Because he does not know how to ride a horse, Luis must go on "una mulita de paso, muy mansa" (59). In light of

Hidalgo's explanation that the *Libro's* mule is a symbol of sterility, Luis's mule can be seen as a sign of Luis's virginity and lack of conscious sexual motivation. His maiden aunt Casilda and the Padre Vicario travel on similar mounts ("burra," "mula mansa") symbolizing the same absence of sexual interest. On the other hand, the sexually profligate Don Pedro de Vargas and Luis's cousin Currito, ride "buenos caballos," an image bringing to mind the traditional tie between horses and sexual energy. This same equine figure characterizes the lust of Calisto and Pármeno in *La Celestina* (Rojas 124, I; Casaldueiro 16). The fact that Valera's more nondescript characters, like the notary and the pharmacist, also ride horses is an acknowledgement of the sexual nature of all humans. The infatuated Pepita appears on a "caballo tordo muy vivo y fogoso, vestida de amazona, y manejando el caballo con destreza y primor notables" (59). The horsemanship of Pepita recalls similar language associated with the sex drive of the *Libro's* Doña Endrina, as diagnosed by Doña Venus:

Todas las fenbras han en sy estas maneras:
Al comienço del fecho syenpre son rreferteras,
Muestran que tienen saña é son muy rregateras,
Amenassan; mas no fieren: en çelo son arteras.

Maguer que *faze bramuras* la duena, que se doñea,
Nunca 'l buen doñeador por esto enfaronea:
La muger byen sañuda é qu' el ome byen guerrea,
Los doñeos la vençen, por muy brava que sea.
(632-633, I; emphasis mine)

For her part, Pepita makes sport of her friend's visible distress and equestrian ineptitude: "[L]a culpa es del señor deán, que no ha pensado en que V. aprenda a montar" (64). In his letter Luis adds: "Mi primo Currito volvió a embromarme sobre mi manera de cabalgar y sobre la mansedumbre de mi mula [. . .]" (65), concluding, "aquella noche dije a mi padre mi deseo de aprender a montar" (67). This act of mounting and riding refers not only to a horse, but to the sprightly Pepita herself. In the verses of the *Libro*, quoted immediately above, Doña Venus explains that a resourceful lover breaks in a woman, as a rider dominates a snorting mount.

In his letter of 7 May, Luis describes how his father made him learn to ride the horse Lucero, presented as a "saltador, lleno de fuego" (74). Via its meteorological relationship to the goddess of love, the animal is also a symbol of Pepita, the very woman hinting at Luis's potential virility. In the letter dated 12 May, Luis boasts of how he finally rode Lucero to Pepita's house, and how the stallion "se alborotó más y más y empezó a dar resoplidos, a hacer corvetas y aun a dar algunos botes" (77). Chamberlin (399-405) analyzes the incident as an example of similar erotic equine imagery that will soon begin to appear in several narratives of Galdós, including *Doña Perfecta* (1876), *Gloria* (1876-1877), *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-1887), and *O'Donnell* (1904), in addition to various novels by Pardo Bazán and Clarín. All of this equine imagery in the first part of *Pepita Jiménez* foreshadows the unobserved but brilliantly framed intimacy between Don Luis and Pepita, soon to occur in "Paralipómenos."

In his first letter to his uncle, Don Luis points out that his own father is among Pepita's suitors. Later on, in "Paralipómenos," we learn that there was in the recent past a second prominent suitor, the Conde de Genazahar (127-28). The prominence of these two admirers creates a certain deadline for any courting of Pepita by the young seminarian, who finds himself pressed to take his final vows after his current vacation. The same suggestions of a competition and a deadline are also present in the *Libro de buen amor*, where Trotaconventos summarizes the situation of the panicky Don Melón and Doña Endrina:

Amigo, no vos durmades, que la dueña que desides,
 Otro quier' casar con ella é pide lo que pedides:
 Es ome de buen lynaje, viene donde vos venides;
 Vayan ante vuestros rruegos, que los ajenos conbides.
 (713, I)

According to Hidalgo's explanation, it is only because the Archpriest loses his customary "mule" or concubine that he soon is able to "mount" four others (i.e., *serranas*). Similarly, it is only because Pepita flirts with Luis, thus distracting him from his priestly vocation, that he ends up making love to the attractive (and increasingly provocative) widow. Hidalgo (297-303) shows how Juan Ruiz repeatedly demonizes each of the four concupiscent mules (women). In the Archpriest's mock-theological rhetoric, each woman will thereafter prowl the world seeking the destruction of more souls like that of the Archpriest himself. Valera, anchored in his own secular anti-asceticism (Azaña, *La novela* 229), does not think like a fourteenth-century cleric, even an heretical one. He leaves this anachronistic role to the benevolent, mild-mannered Padre Vicario. From his own extradiegetic position as a defender of paganized freedom—a cause that he that he will champion again in the "Epílogo-Cartas de mi hermano" (especially 213-14)—Valera allows his narrator to spoof the moralizing rhetoric of the Archpriest. Thus Valera uses the mule incident of the *Libro de buen amor* to ridicule the notion of demonic or immoral females given over to sexual enjoyment. In addition, he shows that Pepita and Luis will continue to be the same entirely healthy, normal, and—above all—moral people that they were before they enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh. From the repeated allusions to Satan throughout Valera's text (Chicote 92-93), it can be seen that he is creating a parody of the obsolete demonizing, arguably, already parodic rhetoric of the Archpriest. Don Luis refers to his sexual inclinations as "demonios" and to his and Pepita's romantic inclinations as "arte diabólico" (*Pepita*, 89). In turn, the narrator of "Paralipómenos" quotes the Padre Vicario as characterizing Pepita's would-be erotic tempters as the demons Leviatán, Mamon, and Asmodeo. He subsequently makes references to "pateta," "mengue," and "Lucifer" (107). Romero points out that these words are probably intended to intensify the novel's characterization of Pepita as an "hechicera" (187, 252).

Like Don Melón and Doña Endrina, not to mention Calisto and Melibea (*Celestina* 120-21, I), Don Luis de Vargas requires the services of a procuress in order to achieve intimacy with Pepita Jiménez. This *alcahueta*, who is actually enlisted by Luis's father, Don Pedro, is Pepita's long-time *ama de llaves*, Antoñona. Don Luis's arranged reconciliation between her and her previously abusive husband later repays her services. Such a situation, in which a servant acts as a *tercera*, is a violation of Don Amor's advice to the

Archpriest in the *Libro de buen amor*: “Que bien leal te sea, non sea su sirvienta” (436; I). This situation may also send the knowledgeable reader in search of sources in the *Celestina*, where one of the author’s declared purposes is to point out the danger of confiding in servants (addendum to “Prólogo,” 27, I). It may also reveal Valera’s “anxiety of influence,” a possible attempt to “hide” one of his sources (Bloom 7). The narrator of “Paralipómenos” first deems Antoñona the owner of “una portentosa facilidad para las artes y los oficios,” a designation that could well allude to *Celestina*. His second comment refers more etymologically to the name of *El libro*’s Trotaconventos: “En todas las casas entra y sale como en la suya” (*Pepita* 95), a phrase also comparable to Don Amor’s description of Trotaconventos: “Toma de unas viejas, que se fassen erveras, / Andan de casa en casa é llámanse parteras” (440, I). Like the village women who enter unannounced into Luis’s room and Trotaconventos and her extemporaneous visits to her most willing nuns and maidens, Antoñona “[v]iene a verme, entra en mi cuarto [. . .]” (95). The *ama* is strong like *Celestina* and sprinkles her speech with Caló and numerous vulgarities (Whiston 36-37), recalling *Celestina*’s use of sexually explicit language. Similarly, *Pepita*’s platonic statements to Don Luis and the Vicario, “Yo también creo que amaba a V. antes de verle” (165) and “Yo [. . .] me le representaba galán, enamorado, olvidando a Dios” (111), have allusive force. They recall similar neo-platonic statements of Calisto to Melibea that serve to equate human eros with a divine gift. The two most memorable of these comments are: “En esto veo, Melibea, la grandeza de Dios” and “Melibeo so é á Melibea adoro é en Melibea creo é á Melibea amo” (31, 41; I). When Antoñona convinces *Pepita* to meet in private with her soon-to-be lover, the younger woman responds “yo por él daría hasta la salvación de mi alma,” (120), echoing Luis’s words “hasta de Dios me olvido” (85). These words, in turn, reverberate with those of Don Melón in his “seduction” of Doña Endrina: “Tienpo es ya pasado de los años más de dos / Que por vuestro amor me pena: ámovos más que á Dios” (*El libro* 661, I). Even closer to Don Melón’s expression are Don Luis’s words upon gazing into *Pepita*’s eyes: “Al mirarlos así, hasta de Dios me olvido” (95).

Antoñona’s matchmaking prowess, together with her ability to quiet *Pepita*’s fears of abandonment, recall Don Amor’s verses: “Do están estas mujeres [i.e., procuresses] mucho se van alegrar: / Pocas mugeres pueden dellas se despagar” (442; I). Moreover, when we read Don Amor’s advice to the Archpriest, that he seek out a “mensajera de unas negras pegatas, / Que usan mucho los frailes” (441; I), we think of the Padre Vicario, a secondary Trotaconventos, who so praises Don Luis, that he is the primary “culprit” in bringing the seminarian to *Pepita*’s attention. The priest is, as Valera’s narrator points out, both Cupid’s and Don Luis’s “palomito mensajero” (Whiston 45). However, as the subsequently distressed *Pepita* objects, there is an irony: “—Pero ¡Qué diferencia entre los encomios de usted y mis pensamientos! Usted veía y trazaba en D. Luis el modelo ejemplar de sacerdote [. . .]. Yo, en cambio, me le representaba galán [. . .]” (111). Furthermore, when Don Amor expresses to Trotaconventos his fear that the faithful young widow Endrina will refuse him (785-791; I) because she had been married to another without having children, we encounter an ironic precursor to *Pepita*’s dismal, childless marriage to the octogenarian Don Gumersindo.

From all of the foregoing parallels, we can see that Valera, beginning with textual allusions to the *Libro de buen amor*, gradually allowed his mind to create a secondary, but

only occasional, intertext with *La Celestina*. It is interesting that Valera, perhaps recalling several of the discoveries of nineteenth-century philologists included in this present article, was able to avail himself of numerous parallels between the *Libro* and the *Celestina*. More recent critics have designated far fewer convincing similarities between the two works, such as the many moralizing passages (Lida de Malkiel, *Dos obras* 21-43) or the procuresses' casting of a *Philocaptio* spell, respectively, on both Endrina and Melibea (Severin 122-27). One of the more illuminating theories current during Valera's time was the young Menéndez y Pelayo's belief that the Archpriest's physique, as described in the *Libro*, was calculated to portray the "sexually potent male" (Keller xxxviii), a notion at the heart of the present study. When one compares the heroines of *El libro*, *La Celestina*, and *Pepita*, the fact that only two, Endrina and Pepita, are widows, suggests that the device of the *tercera* in Valera's novel may derive from the text of the Archpriest. Both widows additionally end up marrying their "seducers": the traditional Doña Endrina, supposedly "passive," demands enticements from Don Melón and Trotaconventos, while the modern Pepita, more "liberated," turns the tables and becomes a most willing beguiler of her chosen suitor. Contrary to the more "typical" circumspect women presented in the *Libro de buen amor*, Doña Endrina, after a brief hesitation, reveals few scruples (Paolini). Valera appears to become a participant in what Hoff calls the "tradition of male self-projection in the construction of femininity" (220). As Valera's own introduction to a contemporary edition of *La Celestina* shows, he was blind to the incitement to physical love on the part of Melibea and the other female characters in the work (Valera, "Nueva edición de *La Celestina*," 1025-29). Pepita's prompting of Don Luis, therefore, did not proceed from Rojas's work. On the contrary, all of Valera's widely dispersed references to the *Libro de buen amor* emphasize the same desire that his novel foregrounds.

As stated by Valera's friend, Menéndez y Pelayo, and as alluded to earlier in this study, the detail of *Pepita Jiménez* that critics most neglect is the Dean's description of Don Luis.² Some five centuries earlier, the priestly narrator of the *Libro de buen amor* had provided description of Don Melón similar to this:

[E]ra un buen mozo en toda la extensión de la palabra: alto ligero, bien formado, cabello negro, ojos negros también y llenos de fuego y de dulzura. La color trigueña, la dentadura blanca, los labios finos, aunque relevados, lo cual le daba un aspecto desdeñoso; y algo de atrevido varonil en todo el ademán [. . .] (144)

These words are not so much a description of a typical young seminarian on the verge of Holy Orders, but, rather, that of a potential lover. The words constitute a "modern" parallel to the Archpriest's presentation of Don Melón, one that María Rosa Lida de Malkiel apparently overlooked in her catalogue of works and characters influenced by the *Libro* ("Introducción" 40-44).

In his prologue to the New York translation, published by Appleton in 1887, Valera speaks of the *panfilismo* of his novel (*Pepita* 220). Valera, however, may say this with a wink to his more lettered readers, because the twelfth-century Latin comedy *Pamphilus* is one of the most recognized sources of the *Libro de buen amor*. Since Valera's time, there have been

numerous unsuccessful attempts to relate *Pamphilus* or its simulacra to the *Celestina* (Lida de Malkiel, *Dos obras* 11; Severin 122). It is from *Pamphilus* that Juan Ruiz probably extracted the episode involving Doña Endrina and her “seduction” at the hands of Don Melón that the *Celestina* later copied. Through the intertext that Valera creates with both works, it appears that he wants to suggest to his reader that Don Luis, despite obvious hesitations during the early letters of “*Cartas de mi sobrino*,” soon metamorphoses into something very different from the passive pupil of Pepita Jiménez. The anonymously authored *Pamphilus*, or “pseudo Ovid,” is a popularizing, even parodic recreation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. The latter is a work to which the Archpriest’s text repeatedly alludes and whose words Valera’s novel approximates on one occasion (Keller xxvi, xlii; Romero 237). All of this underlines the transformational nature of Don Luis’s character. It is a transformation that Valera seems anxious to present. In the Archpriest’s own parodic gloss to the section titled “*Esta es oración qu’el Arçipreste fizo á Dios, quando començó este libro suyo*,” the commentator states that the soul “*trae al cuerpo á fazer buenas obras, por las quales se salva el ome*” (8; I). In his novel, Valera presents an opposite perspective, duplicating the Archpriest’s true intentions that are momentarily subverted in the pseudo-religious gloss. That is, he pays homage to the body because he sees in the satisfying of its demands a necessary prelude to the salvation of the soul. As Don Juan de Vargas emphasizes in a penultimate comment on the spiritual harmony of Pepita and Luis: “*La piedad de ambos es más profunda cada día, y en cada contento o satisfacción [. . .] ven un nuevo beneficio del cielo, por el cual se reconocen más obligados a demostrar su gratitud*” (211-12).

It is unfortunate that one of the novelist’s earliest and best annotators, Manuel Azaña, led readers astray by declaring that in Valera “[L]o típico es su sordera para la poesía de la Edad Media” (Prologue xlv). Likewise, two of the critics most consistently attuned to the Cordovan novelist, Cyrus DeCoster and Leonardo Romero, respectively, have termed Valera’s enthusiasm for medieval literature and Juan Ruiz “at best lukewarm” and “poco entusiasta” (DeCoster 80; Romero 234). There is, of course, a considerable difference between enthusiasm for something and finding it useful for literary purposes. When one recognizes the degree to which *Pepita Jiménez* alludes to and actually incorporates features of the *Libro de buen amor*, it is easy to see that Valera wished to present his protagonist, Don Luis, as a would-be priest who was badly outfitted for the universal activity of romantic love. He also wanted to offer him as a virile young male totally equipped to take on the role of beguiling lover that his clerical predecessors, the Archpriest of Hita and his double, Don Melón, had so effectively played in the Middle Ages. Indeed, Valera’s criticism of priestly celibacy derives closely from the courtly idea that this behavior was not “in harmony with the order of Nature decreed by God” (Green 44). Bueno speaks of a “ley natural que afecta por igual a hombres y bestias” in the *Libro de buen amor*. It is a natural law that “aminora en parte, si no niega totalmente” the priestly commitment to purity of mind and body: “Resalta así el contraste entre el orden natural creado y aprobado por Dios frente a las leyes eclesiásticas antinaturales, según su modo de pensar” (Bueno 97, 88). Or, as Evans and Thomas state repeatedly, *Pepita* presents “a critical view of the priesthood as especially ineffectual on the practical level of meeting basic human needs,” both those of others and those of the priest (479). Thus Valera strengthens his novel’s criticism of unfit clerics like the Padre Vicario and others like him. Additionally, the novel

underlines the frequently artificial barrier between ecstasy and sanctity, already manifest in Don Luis's initial attachment to the language of the Spanish mystics.³

Finally, it is necessary to point out that, even in its structural dimensions, there is a hint of the *Libro de buen amor* in *Pepita Jiménez*. Valera's novel may be divided into three parts. The first, which constitutes the first section of "Cartas de mi sobrino," recounts Don Luis's ignorance of women and his inability to acknowledge his own fascination with Pepita. The second part, comprising the second half of "Cartas de mi sobrino" and the first half of "Paralipómenos," narrates Pepita's (and, concurrently, Don Pedro de Vargas's) lessons on what Luis must do to become a proper "man." The third section, the conclusion of "Paralipómenos," presents Luis putting into effect the lessons that Pepita and Don Pedro have given him. The brief final section of the novel, "Cartas de mi hermano," is largely redundant, merely serving to philosophize and tie up loose ends. Keller divides the *Libro* into three similar parts: (1) "Melón's ignorance in amorous matters and his failure at courtship"; (2) "the instruction given him by the gods of love"; (3) a final section in which he "continues to follow the guidance offered [. . .] and wins the lady's charms" (xxix). Keller also points out that the putative author, Juan Ruiz, has a hazy existence at best and that the *Libro* exists in three different manuscript forms, known as Toledo, Gayoso, and Salamanca, suggesting that a minimum of three, but most probably more, authors had composed the work. Valera's novel makes a similar suggestion. The first part is presented as the work of Don Luis, but with allusions to unquoted letters written by his uncle, the Dean. The second part, a third-person narrative, is offered as the probable work of the uncle. However, within the uncle's narrative, there appear numerous metadiegetic interruptions by a voice that sounds like that of Valera (*Pepita* 150-51, 178-83). The third formal section is the work of Luis's father, Don Pedro, and it too contains allusions to unseen letters written by his brother, the Dean. Finally (though it appears first), we have the note of the Transcriber, who states that he has altered and censored the other parts that he has decided to present to the reader. Given the plurality of narrative voices, the *Libro de buen amor* and *Pepita Jiménez* exist as "communal" compositions in which the intertextual nature of literature is highlighted at the expense of the credit traditionally assigned to a single, identifiable author. Thus, both the *Libro de buen amor* and *Pepita Jiménez* give an exemplary preview of what some twentieth-century critics, such as Roland Barthes, had termed the "death," or at least the reduced role, of the notion of "author" in guiding the interpretation of literature (Barthes 142-47; Culler 65-67). The intertextual nature of *Pepita Jiménez* and its illustrious antecedents both reduces our notion of Valera's inventiveness and calls attention to his marvelous re-use and contemporization of classical material.

Notes

- ¹ The argument presented here does not deny that the core of *Pepita*'s anecdote originates in a situation that occurred in Valera's extended family (Azaña, "La novela" 215-16). Some other incidents in Don Luis de Vargas's story originate in various periods of Valera's own life and from his ideas on love (Azaña, "La novela" 218-25 and especially Trimble 27-35), but these are related largely to his aesthetics and what one might call his monism-inspired unity of body and spirit.
- ² Although most critics believe that Valera intended that readers identify the Dean as the writer of "Paralipómenos" and the editor/assembler of the entire text, Amorós (181-83) shows that objections remain.
- ³ Bueno categorically states that "elementos de índole eclesiástica, más o menos acentuada, pululan a lo largo y a lo ancho de la obra del Arcipreste de Hita" (3), both as nonsensical theology and saintly examples that the faithful are called upon to revere and emulate (25-28, 48-52). Likewise, Valverde theorizes that the *Libro*'s focus on the contradictory life of the country priest—morality and pleasure—is resolved in favor of natural pleasures not in conflict with divine law (28-29). The same is true of *Pepita*, where the Dean, the Padre Vicario, and Luis prove to be priestly types of contradictory inclinations and limited talents. Luis's letters make copious allusions to priests who were kings and saints and that, thus, seem worthy of emulation, but whose lives were hardly exemplary in all aspects. Juan Ruiz makes liberal sport of his priests' pastoral ineffectiveness (Bueno 53-80), and Valera highlights the ineptitude of Luis, the Dean, and the Padre Vicario.

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