

AN OVERLOOKED SOURCE OF GALDÓS' *MARIANELA: PEPITA JIMÉNEZ*

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When Benito Pérez Galdós published *Marianela* in 1878, only four years had passed since Juan Valera had published his greatest novel, *Pepita Jiménez*. Although Galdós's work was composed during a period when he was actively engaged in novelistic dialogues, scholars have yet to consider whether *Pepita Jiménez*, with which Galdós was very familiar (Chamberlin 11, Berkowitz 133-34), exerted a significant influence on *Marianela*. A comparison of the development of the amorous relationships in *Pepita Jiménez* and *Marianela* reveals several parallels between the two novels. In each work the male protagonist conceives a future for himself in spiritual terms as a product of his limited knowledge of the material world. Once this individual becomes completely aware of reality he recognizes that the limitations imposed on him by his vision of the future do not permit him to satisfy his inherent physical desires, which leads him to reject that vision in favor of an amorous relationship that fuses spiritual and physical elements.

In *Pepita Jiménez*, Valera narrates the experiences of Luis de Vargas, a young seminarian who returns home to his father's estate after spending the majority of his childhood under the tutelage of his uncle, a dean, who has fostered in Luis a "gran fervor religioso y empeño decidido de ser sacerdote" (*Pepita Jiménez* 32). Although he claims to be "hecho un hombre" (*Pepita Jiménez* 35), before he arrives at his father's estate Luis is blind to reality of the physical world, as he is depicted by the narrator of the novel: "un joven de pocos años, con algún conocimiento teórico, pero con ninguna práctica de las cosas del mundo" (*Pepita Jiménez* 32). His isolated existence and his reading have instilled him with an idealized vision of his future:

Hasta los muchos libros que usted me ha dado a leer, y mi conocimiento de la historia de las antiguas civilizaciones de los pueblos del Asia, unen en mí la curiosidad científica al deseo de propagar la fe, y me convidan y excitan a irme de misionero al remoto Oriente... (*Pepita Jiménez* 44)

Because of limited experience, Luis is not yet capable of realizing that his idealistic aspira-

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tions do not reflect the materialistic nature of his character. This facet of his character begins to surface in the attention he pays to the opulence of his father's estate and to Pepita, whose beauty intrigues Luis even before he becomes aware of his need for physical companionship: "No conozco aún a Pepita Jiménez. Todos dicen que es muy linda..." (*Pepita Jiménez* 37).

Luis's ultimate decision to reject his idealized vision of the priesthood and marry Pepita reflects Valera's conception of love, which cannot be achieved through a spiritual relationship alone. As Carole J. Rupe explains, "El amor verdadero, el bueno y santo, consiste en la unión del cuerpo y del alma, santificada por el matrimonio... Para Valera, entonces, el amor natural y perfecto es del cuerpo tanto como del alma" (19). In *Pepita Jiménez* the love that develops between Luis and Pepita is based on a physical attraction as well as a spiritual commitment. Although Luis leaves the seminary, his religious sentiment continues to grow as a reflection of the harmony that exists between the spiritual and physical dimensions of his marriage, as Luis' father relates in one of the epistolary fragments that close the novel:

No imagines, sin embargo, que la afición de Luis y de Pepita al bienestar material haya entibiado en ellos, en lo más mínimo, el sentimiento religioso. La piedad de ambos es más profunda cada día, y en cada contento o satisfacción de que gozan o que pueden proporcionar a sus semejantes ven un nuevo beneficio del cielo, por el cual se reconocen más obligados a demostrar su gratitud. Es más: esa satisfacción y ese contento no lo serían, no tendrían precio, ni valor, ni sustancia para ellos, si la consideración y la firme creencia en las cosas divinas no se lo prestasen. (*Pepita Jiménez* 211)

Several superficial parallels between Luis and Pablo, the male protagonist of *Marianela*, suggest that Galdós' novel was modeled on *Pepita Jiménez*. Luis and Pablo, both physically attractive young men, pertain to the same socio-economic class. Whereas Luis' father is a wealthy cacique, Pablo is the son of "el más respetado de todos los propietarios ricos del país" (*Marianela* 93). Each male protagonist also loses his mother during childhood. In *Pepita Jiménez* the death of Luis' mother is inferred by a reference he makes to "la memoria de mi madre" (*Pepita Jiménez* 46); the death of Pablo's mother in *Marianela* occurred "en edad muy temprana" (*Marianela* 93). Pablo, like Luis, is drawn to physical beauty, an aspect of his character revealed in his reaction to hearing a textual passage: "anoche leyó mi padre unas páginas sobre la belleza. Hablaba el autor de la belleza, y decía que era el resplandor de la bondad y de la verdad, con otros muchos conceptos ingeniosos, y tan bien traídos y pensados que daba gusto oírlos" (*Marianela* 105).

During the time he spends under the tutelage of his uncle, Luis is prevented from obtaining a complete vision of reality, a situation that finds a parallel in Pablo's limited awareness of his surroundings. While with his uncle Luis receives information about the world outside the seminary indirectly, which causes him to formulate a fantastic vision of being a missionary priest. This resembles the manner by which Pablo acquires his misconceptions about the physical world, knowledge that he receives indirectly from Nela, as she explains to Golfín:

[...] yo le digo todo. Él me pregunta cómo es una estrella, y yo se la pinto de tal modo hablando que para él es lo mismo que si la viera. Yo le explico cómo son las hierbas y las nubes, el cielo, el agua y los relámpagos, las veletas, las mariposas, el humo, los caracoles, el cuerpo y la cara de las personas y de los animales. Yo le digo lo que es feo y lo que es bonito, y así se va enterando de todo. (*Marianela* 73)

The conception of physical beauty that Pablo formulates upon listening to "algunas páginas sobre la belleza" (*Marianela* 105) read to him by his father and during the course of a conversation with Nela leads him to an idealized vision of his deformed guide (who is described previously in the novel as having a "miserable cuerpecillo" [*Marianela* 68]):

[...] has de saber [Nela] que hay una belleza que no se ve ni se toca, ni percibe con ningún sentido. "Como, por ejemplo, la Virgen María," interrumpió la Nela, "a quien no vemos ni tocamos, porque las imágenes no son ella misma, sino su retrato."

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"Estás en lo cierto; así es. Pensando en esto, mi padre cerró el libro, y él decía una cosa y yo otra. Hablamos de la forma, y mi padre me dijo: 'Desgraciadamente, tú no puedes comprenderla.' Yo sustuve que sí; dije que no había más que una sola belleza, y que ésa había de servir para todo"... Yo le dije a mi padre: 'Concibo un tipo de belleza encantadora, un tipo que contiene todas las bellezas posibles; ese tipo es la Nela.' Mi padre se echó a reír y me dijo que sí...

"Sí, tú eres la belleza más acabada que puede imaginarse," añadió Pablo con calor, "¿Cómo podría suceder que tu bondad, tu inocencia, tu candor, tu gracia, tu imaginación, tu alma celestial y cariñosa, que ha sido capaz de alegrar mis tristes días; cómo podría suceder, cómo, que no estuviese representada en la misma hermosa?" (*Marianela* 105-06)

The process by which Pablo concludes that Nela is beautiful (which he declares on other occasions in the novel [*Marianela* 115, 116]) resembles the intellectual formation of Luis at the seminary. Although Pablo cannot actually see Nela he asserts in the passage above that she is "la belleza más acabada" because he associates her interior qualities ("bondad," "inocencia," "gracia," and "imaginación") and spiritual attributes ("alma celestial y cariñosa," as well as the link that is created above between Nela's beauty and that of the "Virgen María") with her outward appearance. Pablo's spiritual conception of Nela's beauty ("celestial hermosura") inspires him to idealize a future marriage that fulfills his own spiritual needs ("el orgullo de mi alma"): "Yo tendré ojos, Nela, tendré ojos para poder recrearme en tu celestial hermosura, y entonces me casaré contigo. Serás mi esposa querida..., serás la vida de mi vida, el recreo y el orgullo de mi alma" (*Marianela* 116).¹ Similarly, Luis' vision of the priesthood while at the seminary is the product of the association he makes between the exotic places about which he reads and his avowed spirituality:

[...] y aunque ignorante y pecador como soy, me sienta revestido por don sobrenatural y gratuito, merced a la soberana bondad del Altísimo, de la facultad de perdonar los pecados y de la misión de enseñar a las gentes, y reciba el perpetuo y milagroso favor de traer a mis manos impuras al mismo Dios humanado, dejaré a España y me iré a tierras distantes a predicar el Evangelio.

No me mueve vanidad alguna; no quiero crearme superior a otro hombre. El poder de mi fe, la constancia de que me siento capaz, todo, después del favor y de la gracia de Dios, se lo debo a la atinada educación, a la santa enseñanza y al buen ejemplo de usted, mi querido tío. (*Pepita Jiménez* 44)

Luis therefore idealizes his future in a manner that anticipates Pablo. In other words, the limited experiences of both male protagonists during their respective periods of "blindness" inform their spiritual visions of the future.

On an ideological plane, Nela may be said to parallel Luis's false vocation in light of the Comtian interpretation of *Marianela* offered by Joaquín Casaldüero (*Marianela* 23-43).

According to Casaldüero:

Galdós no ve el proceso de la vida humana respecto al individuo, sino respecto a la especie, a la sociedad, y lo estudia según las ideas de Auguste Comte. Basta recordar que para Comte, la humanidad pasa por tres etapas teóricas diferentes y sucesivas, en el sentido de que cada una de ellas ha sido característica de una época dada de la humanidad y ha preparado la siguiente, pero que han existido y aún existen conjuntamente. Esta evolución la ha formulado en la ley de los tres estados. De estos tres estados, el primero y el último son completamente definidos, mientras que el segundo es más bien indeterminado, consistiendo su papel en servir de puente entre los otros dos. Los tres estados son: el estado teológico, provisional; el metafísico, transitorio; y el positivo, último y definitivo. (*Marianela* 31-32)

Casaldüero sees Nela as a representation of the first stage of human evolution in the Comtian scheme. As such, Nela symbolizes pure theology, which, as Casaldüero explains, is the most pri-

1.- For more on the concept of marriage in *Marianela*, see Robert Kirsner.

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mitive Comtian stage: "El hombre comienza, según Comte, por considerar toda suerte de fenómenos como debidos a la directa y continua influencia de agentes sobrenaturales... A la filosofía teológica le preocupa sólo desentrañar las causas eficientes de los fenómenos..." (*Marianela* 32). Nela exhibits this attitude in her vision of the solar system, which is expressed in a manner that reinforces the association between Nela and theology by recalling the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian theory that was traditionally upheld by the Roman Catholic Church:

¿pues no has querido [Pablo] hacerme creer que el sol está quieto y que la Tierra da vueltas a la redonda?... ¡Madre del Señor! Que me muera en este momento si la Tierra no se está más quieta que un peñón y el sol va corre que corre... La Tierra está abajo... El sol sale por allá y se esconde por allí. Es el palacio de Dios. (*Marianela* 99)

For Pablo (as for Luis with respect to his false vocation), the type of spirituality that Nela embodies will not sufficiently satisfy his needs.

In both novels a transformation is set in motion by a woman who inspires the male protagonist to fully realize his inherent affinity for corporeal beauty, which ultimately causes him to discard his illusory vision of his future: Luis spurns his commitment to the priesthood and marries Pepita, and Pablo forgets his promise to wed Nela and marries Florentina instead. Upon becoming fully aware of his need for physical fulfillment, each male protagonist confesses the error of his illusion to his new partner. Luis exclaims, "Reconozco mi indignidad. No era más que orgullo lo que me movía. Era una ambición mundana como otra cualquiera. ¡Qué digo como otra cualquiera! Era peor: una ambición hipócrita, sacrílega, simoníaca" (Pepita Jiménez 177), which is paralleled in Pablo's discourse:

"Ahora me río yo," añadió él, "de mi ridícula vanidad de ciego, de mi necio empeño de apreciar sin vista el aspecto de las cosas... Creo que toda la vida me durará el asombro que me produjo la realidad... ¡La realidad! El que no la posee es un idiota... Florentina, yo era un idiota." (*Marianela* 208)

At the same time, spirituality is not neglected in the new relationships that Luis and Pablo pursue. As a symbol of the spiritual (as well as physical) facet of the Valerian love that develops in *Pepita Jiménez*, Pepita is frequently described in hyperbolic terms that situate her on a divine plane, as in the following observations made by Luis:

Hasta en su adoración al niño Dios, representado en la preciosa imagen de talla que tiene en su casa, interviene el amor maternal sin objeto, el amor maternal que busca ese objeto en un ser no nacido de pecado y de impureza.

El padre Vicario dice que Pepita adora al niño Jesús como a su Dios, pero que le ama con las entrañas maternas con que amaría a su hijo... El padre Vicario nota que Pepita sueña con la madre ideal y con el hijo ideal... (70)

In *Marianela*, Florentina is described as "tan guapa como la Madre de Dios" (141) and "la Virgen María Inmaculada" (158), terms that, as in Pepita's case, enlist her physical beauty as a conduit to a harmonious relationship².

Once married, Pablo and Florentina share a spiritual bond similar to the one that develops between Luis and Pepita, as Pablo reveals:

Vi el arco iris y me quedé asombrado, mudo de admiración y de fervor religioso... No sé por qué, aquel sublime espectáculo, para mí desconocido hasta hoy, me dio la idea más clara de la armonía del Mundo... No sé por qué, al mirar la perfecta unión de sus colores, pensaba en tí... No sé por qué, viendo el arco iris, dije, "Yo he sentido antes en alguna parte..." Me produjo sensación igual a la que sentí al verte, Florentina

2.- Similarly, Teresa Méndez-Faith (423) asserts that Florentina possesses a combination of physical and moral beauty.

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de mi alma... Ahora puedo decir que idolatro a un ángel. El estúpido ciego ha visto ya, y al fin presta homenaje a la verdadera hermosura. (*Marianela* 220-21)

The resolution of *Pepita Jiménez* appears to reflect Valera's personal conviction that the principal objective of love between human beings is procreation, a goal that is achieved in the novel with the birth of a son to Luis and Pepita. Although in *Marianela* Pablo and Florentina are not described as having a child, Francisco Penáguilas (Pablo's father) implies that the arranged marriage (which will only occur if Pablo regains his sight) is meant to ensure a future heir to the family fortune, a sentiment that also lends primacy to procreation:

Soy rico. ¿De qué me sirven mis riquezas?... Ya sabe usted, señor don Carlos, que mi primo Faustino ha muerto en Matamoros. No tiene hijos: le heredamos mi hermano Manuel y yo. Esto es echar margaritas a puercos, y no lo digo por mi hermano, que tiene una hija preciosa, ya casadera; dígolo por este miserable que no puede hacer disfrutar a su hijo único las delicias honradas de la buena posición... La felicidad de mi hermano y la mía dependen de que yo tenga un hijo que ofrecer por esposo a Florentina... Mi ciego no servirá para el caso ... pero mi hijo Pablo, con vista, será la realidad de todos mis sueños y la bendición de Dios entrando en mi casa. (*Marianela* 139-41)

Furthermore, Francisco's confession recalls the sentiment of Luis' father, Pedro de Vargas, who gives voice to Valera's belief that the "primer fin del amor humano es la conservación de la especie" (Rupe 18):

Tener un hijo santo hubiera lisonjeado mi vanidad; pero hubiera sentido yo quedarme sin un heredero de mi casa y nombre, que me diese lindos nietos, y que después de mi muerte disfrutase de mis bienes, que son mi Gloria, porque los he adquirido con ingenio y trabajo, y no haciendo fulleras y chanchullos. (*Pepita Jiménez* 199)

Galdós may have emulated *Pepita Jiménez* in order to complement the Comtian backdrop that Casaldüero has shown to inform *Marianela*, which, like Valera's depiction of a successful amorous relationship, views procreation as the culmination of a symbiosis of physical and spiritual bonds between human beings:

Con Florentina incorpora también Galdós una de las concepciones de Comte: la de la Virgen. Según el filósofo francés la utopía de la Virgen-Madre será un ideal límite para las mujeres más puras y nobles, muy a propósito para expresar de una manera concisa el progreso humano, llegando hasta el punto de sistematizar y por tanto de ennoblecer la procreación... Al unirse Pablo a Florentina está representando el novellista esta coronación de la evolución de la Humanidad. (*Marianela* 35)

When he responded to *Pepita Jiménez* with *Marianela* Galdós engaged Valera in a literary dialogue, a tendency exhibited by Galdós on several occasions during the late nineteenth century. Galdós's involvement in several such dialogues, which have been studied by scholars such as Vernon A. Chamberlin, Stephen Gilman, Walter T. Pattison, and Juana Truel, coincided with his increased interest in utilizing the novel as a vehicle for expressing his discontent with Restoration Spain. Chamberlin sees the presence of this attitude in *Doña Perfecta*, first published in 1876, which he considers to be Galdós's reaction to the idealism of *Pepita Jiménez*. According to Chamberlin, Galdós saw in Valera's novel a glorification of traditional Spanish society, that is, "a deliberate refusal [by Valera] to see, a will rejection of the reality of nineteenth-century Spain" (12), during which the nation was torn by civil wars, unstable governments, ineffective constitutions, and the persistent repression by the landed aristocracy of the rural lower class. While the parallels identified by Chamberlin suggest that Galdós may not have agreed with Valera's idealized vision of rural Spanish life, the similarities between the trajectories of the amorous relationships in *Pepita Jiménez* and *Marianela* suggest that he reevaluated his decision to depict in the resolution of *Doña Perfecta* a "complete negation of Valera's idealistic vision of triumphant love" (Chamberlin 13). As such, the parallels heretofore established between *Marianela* and *Pepita Jiménez* demonstrate a facet of Galdós's experimental technique during the latter decades of the nineteenth century that Gilman observes: "each novel is a revision and reexamina-

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tion of the preceding one" (75). Only two years after he published *Doña Perfecta* (1876), Galdós reveals that he had reexamined his hostility toward Valera's idealism, which he tempered in *Marianela* by modeling the evolution of the relationship between Pablo and Florentina on the spiritual and physical bonds that develop between Luis and Pepita in *Pepita Jiménez*.

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