

COMO SI YO TUVIESE DOS ALMAS:  
JUAN VALERA'S *PEPITA JIMÉNEZ* AND GOETHE'S *FAUST*

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In the «Author's Preface» to the American translation (1886) of his seminal novel *Pepita Jiménez* (1874), the Andalusian diplomat and man of letters, Juan Valera (1827-1905), affirmed that he considered this book «both in essence and form... distinctively national and classic (v).» It is that, certainly, but *Pepita Jiménez* also partakes of a cosmopolitan array of foreign influences, from the classical Greek and Latin to the contemporary, which inform its content and the course of the love affair it narrates. One of the more significant of these influences was that of Goethe, various of whose «classical» works would have an impact of Valera's own literary corpus.<sup>1</sup> The formative role (onomastic and otherwise) of Faust on *Las ilusiones del Doctor Faustino* (1875) and *Morsamor* (1899), two of Valera's other novels, has frequently been noted. Valera had a good command of German; in 1878, he translated various passages from *Faust* into Castilian and in that same year penned the preface to another writer's translation of Part One (*Epistolario* 37-38). He could also be a demanding and even an mordant critic of aspects of the text, as in his essay «Las rarezas del Fausto» (1896), in which he suggests, among other things, that «el imbécil de Fausto no celebró pacto con el demonio sino para cometer delitos inútiles e incurrir en... simplezas» (879).

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<sup>1</sup> Among those writers who have labelled Goethe as a «classical» influence on Valera are: Morente 136, 141; Montesinos 37, 75 *et passim*; Barja 236-38; Lott 198; De Coster 40 *et passim*; Thurston-Griswold 39, 68. Of course, in one sense this involves a fairly liberal usage of the term, as aspects of the German's work were not «klassisch» at all, whereas others most definitely were.

Valera's Faustian bent is apparent throughout *Pepita Jiménez* itself (cf. Dédéyan 245-46). Like Faust, Luis Vargas is a scholar (a seminarian, in this case), though this career is equally sterile for both men. Each must plunge headlong into «real» life with all its polarities and problems. During the course of this process in his novel, Valera's typically pointed irony becomes abundantly clear, for the Spaniard is much younger and more naive than his German counterpart. Faust longs for all knowledge and experience, augmenting his already vast store, while Luis has scarcely acquired any at all in his twenty-two years of life. Initially, the erstwhile sheltered youth considers himself wise and experienced beyond his years, thanking his ecclesiastical mentor and uncle, *el Deán*, with vain words just waiting to be deflated by real experience: «conozco las miserias y locuras de esta vida para escandalizarme ni asustarme de nada» and «Me alegro de no ser cándido y de ir derecho a la virtud... y a la perfección, sabedor de todas las tribulaciones, de todas las asperezas que hay en la peregrinación que debemos hacer por este valle de lágrimas». <sup>2</sup>

Luis is in for a series of spiritual and emotional buffetings, as was Faust pursuant to Mephistopheles' arrangement with the Lord in the «Prologue in Heaven.» But these travails will ultimately all be for the two characters' benefit. Each man will learn —Luis finally terms himself «un santo postizo» (347)— and both authors will conclusively demonstrate what the Lord himself states of man: «Wenn er mir jetzt auch nur verworren dient,/ So werd'ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen.» [If now he only serves me confusedly,/ I shall promptly guide him into clarity]. <sup>3</sup> Once Luis' pseudo-mystical steps are solidly planted back on the earth, as his uncle (not without a touch of sour grapes) states: «Mi sobrino quiso de bóbilis-bóbilis ser un varón perfecto... Lo que importa es que sea un buen casado, y que, ya que no sirve para grandes cosas, sirva para lo pequeño y doméstico, haciendo feliz a esa muchacha» (359-60). Like Faust, Luis finds his true nature and vocation while darkly striving.

Despite the horrific crimes to which he is party, Faust's inclina-

<sup>2</sup> Romero edition pp. 149 and 164. All further references to the novel will be noted parenthetically according to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Wegner edition, part one, lines 308-9. All further references to *Faust* are to this same edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text. The English translations in brackets are my own.

tion is basically good, even spiritual, as the Lord affirms in the «Prologue in Heaven.» Luis is in large measure likewise, once he recognizes the shallowness of his sainthood which was so inflated with «orgullo» and «ambición» (348 *et passim*; cf. Lott 11 *et passim*). During his night of sin, the young man «había cometido o se acusaba de haber cometido en nada de tiempo todos los delitos, y de haber infringido todos los mandamientos de la ley de Dios. No había quedado pecado mortal de que no se contaminase» (371). His nocturnal escapades figure for him as a veritable *Walpurgisnacht* of «crime,» recalling, in turn, Faust's experiences, though over a less protracted period of time. In this cycle, Antoñona (compared otherwise to Celestina, another tempter, 313), stands, in turn, as a sort of Mephistopheles. So, too, Luis' father, who initially paid court to Pepita, though during the bulk of the novel he works behind the scenes toward her union with his son («me dedico a conspirar contra su vocación» 379; cf. Martin Gaité 20).<sup>4</sup>

Even Pepita herself, who is in essence pure and innocent («una pobre criatura de Dios» 283, as, without any real disingenuousness, she terms herself), knows what she wants and will have it at all costs, «hasta la salvación de [su] alma» (290). In this regard, she could be construed as having a Mephistophelean bent. Her statement that, when it comes to her passion for Luis, she is no «cristiana, sino idólatra materialista» (344; cf. Jiménez Fraud 172) certainly recalls Calisto's outspoken feeling for Melibea in *La Celestina*. Though Faust's demonic companion is also present in spirit, albeit ironically, even if one discounts as hyperbolic Pepita's assertion that she is «una pecadora infernal» (343) or that of Father García Blanco, who in a similar vein termed her «un diablo... seductor» and a «bella enemiga» (2: 477). Moreover, the description the *Deán* offers of her falling in love «como una loca, con un candor y un ímpetu selváticos» (360) are not far off the mark, though she also has a calculating side that instinctively knows how to exploit tears and hysteria. In the words of Lou Charon-Deutsch, Pepita «is not a victim. Rather she plays the role of provocateur» with Luis (99), which again recalls the function of Mephistopheles.

Unlike «der Geist, der stets verneint» [the spirit which constantly denies] (1:1,338), Pepita looks only for an affirmative an-

<sup>4</sup> The aura of Oedipal contest and potential (if not outright) scandal involved in this triangle is certainly in keeping with the thematics associated with Mephistopheles (cf. Cammarata; Maurín).

swer. Her «yes» is nature's eternal reply of life and love, denying the denial that Mephistopheles and, for a time, Luis, embody. The young Spanish widow (Pepita was married to her elderly uncle, though their marriage was probably never consummated, so she remains a putative virgin) could also be compared to Gretchen, who, at least in her mortal incarnation, figures as a much weaker individual. Nonetheless, the effect each woman has on her respective lover is nothing short of redemptive.<sup>5</sup> That is, the German girl and her Spanish counterpart, respectively, each saves the man she loves, from the circumstances into which he has fallen and especially from himself. Neither woman is innocent and each may, in fact, figure in a certain light as a sort of «mala mujer» (253-55 *et passim*; cf. Garabadian 30-33). But the «caída» (352) she causes is ultimately beneficent; Pepita's «culpa» (and Luis', by extension is «felix» (Larsen 229-41). So, in the case of Luis, as in that of Faust (and of Pepita and Gretchen, for that matter), «Das Ewig-Weibliche/Zieht [sie] hinan» [The Eternal Feminine/Draws them onward] (2: 12,110-12,111).<sup>6</sup>

It is in the course of his fall toward felicity and good fortune, into Pepita's anxiously awaiting arms, that Luis writes to his uncle, the cleric with whom he has spent his most formative years to date: «Con todas estas consideraciones procuro hacer aborrecible el amor de esta mujer; pongo en este amor mucho de infernal y de horriblemente ominoso; pero como si tuviese yo dos almas, dos entendimientos, dos voluntades y dos imaginaciones, pronto surge dentro de mí la idea contraria; pronto me niego lo que acabo de afirmar, y procuro conciliar locamente los dos amores» (259). The notion of the «dos amores,» the *loco* variety, as well as its opposite number that by definition is *bueno*, without doubt reinforces Valera's assertion of his novel's *casticismo*. In a sense, the novelist recalls his fourteenth-century *tocayo*, Juan Ruiz, the Arcipreste de Hita, who in the *Libro de buen amor* often seems to praise (with faint damnation) *loco amor*. This debate has been a constant of

<sup>5</sup> Pabón Suárez de Urbina (306), without mentioning Pepita specifically, alludes to «la redención por el amor» as a shared theme in Goethe's and Valera's works; in turn, MacCurdy (327-34), without actual mention of Goethe, discusses the saving «illumination» that Pepita represents for Luis.

<sup>6</sup> Concerning Valera's interpretations of Mephistopheles and Gretchen, see Pageard 1160-63 and Dédéyan 243-45; Along these same basic lines, Dédéyan suggests how various women in *Las ilusiones del doctor Faustino* represent for the protagonist «l'éternel féminin» (247).

Spanish Peninsular literature, though, as usual, Valera, gives his theme a new and typically ironic spin. *Pepita Jiménez* is no *exemplum ad contrarium*. The novelist, rather, shows pointedly that what the young seminarian, in all his arrogant naïvete had imagined to be *loco amor*, is *bueno*, for the soul, as for the body.

Luis, the letter writer is, nonetheless, a typically Faustian man, a prey to forces that at least initially seem in opposition. His statement of feeling «dos almas» in himself recalls Faust's famous lament that would, in turn, characterize so many other individuals' internal struggles in his wake:

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,  
 Die eine will sich von der andern trennen:  
 Die eine hält in derber Liebeslust  
 Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;  
 Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust  
 Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.  
 [Two souls dwell, alas! within my breast,  
 Each strives to be rid of the other:  
 One, in the frenzy of its carnal love, clutches,  
 the world with clinging organs to itself;  
 the other heaves itself violently from the dust  
 toward the exalted ancestral fields.] (1:1,112-17)

Like his predecessor, Luis is torn between opposing inclinations, principally the earthly and the spiritual. But Valera adds an additional dimension to the mixture, for finally the polarity the former seminarian incorporates into himself becomes a unity (at least to the degree that his or any other nature is capable of that fusion). If the harmony is more or less complete, he nonetheless occasionally experiences wistful second thoughts concerning the priest he might have been. His father characterizes these in the following terms: «Luis no olvida nunca... el rebajamiento del ideal con que había soñado. Hay ocasiones en que su vida de ahora le parece vulgar, egoísta y prosaica, comparada con la vida de sacrificio, con la existencia espiritual a que se creyó llamado en los primeros años de su juventud» (390-91).

But then, as always, Pepita «acude solícita a disipar estas melancolías, y entonces comprende y afirma Luis que el hombre puede servir a Dios en todos los estados y condiciones, y concierta la viva fe y el amor de Dios que llenan su alma, con este amor lícito de lo terrenal y caduco» (391). Hence; his physical and spiri-

tual union with Pepita effects in his own soul a reunification. Between his soul and hers there occurs a spiritual conjoining where their two become as one. Indeed, the «dos amores» that have generally conflicted the culture before them are harmonized (though not homogenized) into one love that is both heartily, in effect, an Andalusian heaven on earth: «todo lo van mejorando y hermo-seando para hacer de este retiro su edén» (290). Some writers have argued that in *Pepita Jiménez* a strictly earthly love supplants the heavenly.<sup>7</sup> But this is not the case: the two loves, like the two souls they represent, are united into one. The quotation from Lucretius engraved on the pedestal of a statue of Venus displayed prominently in the lovers' new Garden of Eden: «Nec sine te quidquam dias in luminis oras/Exoritur, neque fit laetum, neque amabile quidaquam» (393), elucidates this union. The author is completely in earnest concerning the import of this expression for his terrestrial/celestial couple (cf. Whiston 24-25). Their union of soul(s) and general plenitude, effected certainly under the profound influence of another Germanic philosophy, *krausismo*, are both spiritual and temporal and as complete as any can be in this mortal sphere.<sup>8</sup>

Without Pepita and the ultimate harmony she incarnates, Luis would, in effect, be another doctor Faustino, whose weak frame and «ilusiones» are finally torn apart by the irresolvable conflicts he feels (cf. García Cruz 157). But with Pepita, Luis no longer exists in the diminutive. In the section «Vor dem Tor» [Outside the Gate], where the «zwei Seelen» passage occurs, Faust emerges from the physical and emotional obscurity of his monkish study into a rustic scene of peasants rejoicing at the Easter season. The imagery is of «thaw and growth, rebirth and revival, hope, release and freedom» (Williams 80-81; cf. Storz 174-79; Arens 124-39). But Faust retreats from this joyous scene back into isolation and internal dilemma, whereas Luis remains in his Andalusian Eden with the woman who has saved him from a denial of himself and what he is (cf. Bianchini 35-36). His soul may still be somewhat polarized or otherwise divided, though to a considerably less severe degree than is the case with his German predecessor.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance: Rodríguez and Boyer; García Blanco 2: 476-79; cf. Montesinos 112-14; Valera Jácome 148-57; Bianchini.

<sup>8</sup> Among those commenting on the role of *krausismo* in the development of ideas of harmony and unity in *Pepita Jiménez*, see: Pérez Gutiérrez 41-45, 52-53 *et passim*; García Cruz 140-58; Cate-Arries 325-44; Abrahamson 225-43.

It is not that Valera considers the ongoing polarization of the soul of Faustian man as another of what he elsewhere would categorize as «las rarezas del *Fausto*.»<sup>9</sup> He understands that the dilemma is real, poignant, and almost omnipresent. Nor is the resolution he seems to offer in *Pepita Jiménez* just another one of the ironic «rarezas de Valera,» as certain critics have implied (Feal, Turner). The solution is not perfect, as Luis still feels traces of the old duality, though it apparently is as close to perfection as Valera believes can be expected in the modern world. Moreover, it becomes clear that the Spanish novelist felt, in his own right, a particularly soulful kinship with Goethe and his *Faust*. In a sense the two works and their authors are kindred souls of sorts, though, ultimately, the spirit *Pepita Jiménez* and *Faust* embody may well be as polar as those «Seelen» the German magus senses striving in his breast. The Spanish text signifies potential reconciliation, while its German antecedent symbolizes ongoing strife. It may well be that Luis would be damned within the Faustian framework of continual striving, for he has found the time, place, and *persona* he wants to occupy. Yet the new Eden he and Pepita erect is not synonymous with stasis. After all, he left the seminary and clerical contemplation for the millrace of active life. In this context, his lapses into melancholy contemplation of what might have been are perhaps more blameworthy (if not actually damnable) than his enjoyment of bucolic bliss with Pepita and the family they raise together. However, Valera intends his novel to stand as an *exemplum* of *beatus ille*, rather than *damnatus ille*. Finally, the life Luis and Pepita lead is a veritable hive of activity: they are at one with nature, and nature is never static. Life constantly moves on and though he and Pepita are happy and contented in their country retreat, neither Luis nor lover can or ever will say «zum Augenblicke»: «Verweile doch! du bist so schön!» (1:1,700) [to the moment: Tarry! thou art so beautiful!] (1:1,700).

Shortly after he published *Pepita Jiménez*, in an essay entitled «La originalidad y el plagio» (1876), Valera wonders that since «todos los poetas se copian, ¿en qué consiste la originalidad?» He concludes that «la verdadera y buena originalidad ni se pierde ni se gana por copiar pensamientos, ideas e imágenes, por tomar asunto de otros autores.» He even posits that «tampoco digo yo

<sup>9</sup> Among the many critics discussing the polarity Faust and his progeny of the «zwei Seelen» are Obenauer 48-49, Kroner 161-62, and Paldiel 193-207.

nada que sea original, nada que no esté dicho y repetido de mil modos diversos. No se escribe siempre para decir cosas nuevas, sino para recordar las ya sabidas a los que las tienen olvidadas, o para enseñárselas a los que, por no acudir a las fuentes, las ignoran por completo» (462-63). In a letter to Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo concerning his prologue to the translation of *Faust I* (dated 24 August 1878), Valera noted, obviously from personal experience: «Difícil es decir nada nuevo, bueno, sobre Goethe y su obra, después de tanto como ya se ha dicho» (*Epistolario* 37-38).

He also recognizes that «Goethe no quiere la mera imitación» («Sobre el *Fausto*, de Goethe» 534-35), in his own work, and, by extension, in those who would follow his creative footsteps. *Pepita Jiménez* is no exercise in mere imitation; Montesinos is correct in his sweeping assertion that «todo cuanto hace es valerescos» (1). But by the same token, the novel's mimesis involves no «decir y pensar cosas raras» for their own sake. Rather, his imbibing at the Faustian «fuente» involves what Valera considers «la verdadera originalidad»:

está en la persona, cuando tiene que ser fecundo y valer bastante para trasladarse al papel que escribe, y quedar en lo escrito, como encantada, dándole vida inmortal y carácter propio... Basta con pensar, sentir y expresar lo que se piensa y se siente, del modo más sencillo. Entonces sale retratada el alma del que escribe en lo que escribe; y como el alma es original, original es lo escrito» («La originalidad y el plagio» 462).

The soul of Luis de Vargas, in its multiplicity and its unity, is Valera's, as, by extension, it is Goethe's.

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