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**Horsing Around in Spanish Literature:  
Women Writers and the Erotic Equine**

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A recent study entitled "Erotic Equine Imagery: A Time-Honored Communicative Metaphor in Spanish Literature" (Chamberlin 1-21) documented the vivid and highly effectual use of the erotic equine in every major literary movement before the Spanish Civil War. A woman colleague subsequently urged that even more interesting—and certainly more daring—uses of the erotic equine are to be found in the works of post-Civil War women writers. I accordingly expanded my research into more recent literature. After first reviewing and, in one case amplifying, earlier women writers' use of the erotic equine, I shall here trace the continuing and varied artistry that persisted into the mid-1990s.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest example, to my knowledge, in which a woman writer uses the erotic equine appears in the thirteenth-century *Primera crónica general de España*. Here the *condesa* Doña Sancha sends the king a coded message asking him to release her imprisoned husband, Fernán González, for a conjugal visit: "Sacar al conde . . . que el caballo trauido ninqua bien podie hazer fijos . . ." (2: 420-21). Subsequently, during the Golden Age, María de Zayas in the novelette *Al fin se paga todo* (1637) employs (somewhat reminiscently of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*) the stratagem of drawing a husband away from his marital bed by setting free his horses. In *Al fin se paga todo* it is the husband's own brother who causes the noisy uproar with the horses so that he can deceive and violate his sister-in-law while the husband pursues them. (319-21).

In the second half of the nineteenth century Emilia Pardo Bazán repeatedly uses the erotic equine in her novels. Having previously discussed its multiple uses in *Los pazos de Ulloa* (Chamberlin 404-05), I shall here concentrate on her end-of-the-century *Morriña* (1889). As the novel nears its climax, the widow Doña Aurora Noguiera de Pardinas perceives a developing relationship between her twenty-year-old son Rogelio and the twenty-five-year-old servant Esclavitud. The narrator makes it quite clear that Rogelio has always been dominated by his mother and only now in his (still pre-coital) relationship with Esclavitud is he beginning to experience the first stirrings of independence and masculine maturity. Doña Aurora decides to intervene energetically and divert her son's

attention from Esclavitud. Concerning the latter, she muses: "Voy a darte un rival... y bien bonita. Espérate, rapaza...: contra treta, retreta: ya encontré quien ha de desbancarte" (522). The reader believes—because of the carefully chosen adjectives—that the rival will be a vibrant, beautiful woman, but it is subsequently revealed that the rival is a horse: "una jaca andaluza . . . de entreabiertas fosas nasales más suaves que la seda, de ojo lleno de fuego y dulzura; joven, gallarda, animosa" (522).

As Doña Aurora had hoped, Rogelio does quickly change love objects. He names the mare "Sureña" (Galician for dove), thus giving away the special nickname of affection he had created earlier for Esclavitud. He no longer has time for the latter, because "el tocador de un caballo fino lleva casi tanto tiempo como el de una mujer primorosa" (523). Moreover, Rogelio feels strongly "esa ternura que nace de la posesión," and he also must buy riding gear for himself and his horse: "lo que podemos llamar las galas de boda de la equitación." Then he experiences "todo distracción, todo embeleso en la encantadora luna de miel del muchacho con su caballo" as he is proud to show off his beautiful new mount. In fact, one critic (González [13])<sup>2</sup> believes that Pardo Bazán is suggesting the sex act itself (with orgasm) in the following description:

¡Que inexplicable deleite al pasearla en las frondosas arboledas de la Moncloa, al ver acercarse en carruaje, en cuyo fondo se reclina una bella enlutada, y bajo la fascinación del mirar de la gentil desconocida, ostentar la montura, hacer piernas, caracolear y lucir su gallardía, cubriéndola de espuma y sudor!

¡Qué placer ir variando de aires, ya el rítmico paso, ya el animado trote, ya el ardiente galope; y al halagar con cariñosa palmada el cuello del obediente bruto, sentirle resoplar de placer, estremeciéndose todos sus sensibles nervios y su vigorosa y enjuta musculatura, como talle de jovencilla al rodearlo el brazo de ágil pareja y disponerse al vals! (523)

Although the experience with the horse here serves as an adolescent rite of passage to subsequent intercourse with the female protagonist (as had occurred fifteen years earlier in Juan Valera's *Pepita Jiménez*<sup>3</sup>), Doña Aurora's plan does succeed. As the novel ends, Rogelio has not been able to develop the requisite emotional

maturity to love Esclavitud truly or to protect her from his mother. The latter muses with satisfaction—before Esclavitud's suicide, "Bien se ha portado la jaquita... Merece una libra de azúcar" (529).

After the turn of the century, Rosa Chacel, a member of the generation of 1927 and a disciple of José Ortega y Gasset, employs the erotic equine in the novel *Memorias de Leticia Valle*. Planned in Rome in 1925, started in Paris in 1938, and published in Buenos Aires in 1945, this novel has a very young eponymous character who succeeds in seducing her teacher (Don Daniel), the man who commits suicide after a confrontation with the girl's father.<sup>4</sup> The climactic pre-seduction provocation by the protagonist occurs during a public *homenaje* to the city's most famous literary figure, José Zorrilla y Moral (1817-1893). Leticia recites Zorrilla's poem "La carrera," the main focus of which is a runaway horse carrying a Moorish king to paradise. Leticia's every gesture and change of voice is the result of careful calculation aimed at Daniel. From the start, she tries to communicate to him the "impulso de un caballo que no obedece al freno," and she makes her voice sound "como un galope" (127). Emotionally aroused herself, she soon believes that Daniel is also responding and that she can actually feel and hear the beating of his heart, as well as see an accelerated blood flow in his veins. She muses retrospectively, ". . . no había entre él y yo ni distancia ni secreto" (129). And the reader is led to believe that the illicit sex act (which leads to the teacher's suicide), takes place almost immediately after Leticia's provocative reading of the poem.

So important is this poem to *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, and to Rosa Chacel personally, that the author chose to recite part of it publicly in 1993 (*Centenario* 35).<sup>5</sup> Once again, as had occurred in the novel, the city of Valladolid was honoring its native son, José Zorrilla (Rosa Chacel's great-uncle). On this occasion, at age ninety-five, Chacel assumed briefly the role of her own character Leticia, the seducer.

When creative literature in Spain was able to resume after the Civil War, women writers seemed to be slower to employ the erotic equine than their male counterparts. In any case, horse imagery works well for Camilo José Cela in his *tremendista* novel *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942), as Pascual attacks Lola on the freshly dug grave of his brother: "Yo la agarré del pelo y la tenía bien sujeta a la tierra... Ella forcejeaba, se escurría... La mordí hasta la sangre, hasta que estuvo rendida y dócil como una yegua joven" (42).

However, only ten years later similar violence erupts in Ana María Matute's expressionistic novel *Fiesta al noroeste* (1952).<sup>6</sup> Late in the novel, stimulated by thoughts of the approaching seasonal

time when the colts will come thundering down from the mountains, the protagonist (Juan Medinao) takes to aggressive horseback riding for erotic purposes and succeeds in stealing his half-brother's sweetheart. The intensity of Juan Medinao's emotions are communicated in such sentences as the following:

Cuando galopaba . . . los cascos resonaban como tambor . . . . Los cascos eran azules en la oscuridad. Iba a rienda suelta, con el viento partiéndosele en la cara." (81); [and] Saltó a caballo como un lobo que ataca. Al galope, con la misma sed que le había traído, marchó de nuevo a su aldea. (83)

Then, at the climax of the novel, when he actually sees the wild horses approaching, he rapes his half-brother's mother:

Mordió su cuello . . . . La tumbó en las hojas amarillas, cubiertas de viscosidad . . . . Los cascos de los potros estaban ya como en sus venas, dentro de sus ojos. Cruzaban el río resbalando en el musgo y las piedras. Una lluvia de barro cayó sobre ellos, con el grito agónico del potrero. Los cascos se perdieron a lo lejos. Perdiéndose como todo, como todos. (87)

Carmen Laforet's *La mujer nueva* (1955) contains a different kind of violence, armed robbery and murder, but still features prominently a form of the erotic equine in the preparatory, pre-crime characterization of the secondary character Julián Mateo. The turbulent, degenerate nature of the young criminal is communicated, in part, as he repeatedly perceives a young woman (Mari-Carmen) as "la niña-caballo" and her laugh as a "relincho" (176-83). His emotional reaction to her is also expressed in aggressive animalistic terms: "Julián sintió un deseo rabioso de coger a la chica por los pelos, y además poseerla y golpearla. A veces él tenía estos golpes de animalidad brutales" (178). He continues to be obsessed with "aquella mujer-caballo" (199), "la chica-caballo" (200), finding the thought of her *relincho* a powerful stimulus, even as he prepares for his crime against an elderly woman.

A third kind of violence is linked to the erotic equine in Mercè Rodoreda's 1962 novel *La plaza del diamante*. Here, the feminine protagonist is fearful of painful hymen rupture on her wedding

night, as she tearfully voices "miedo de morir partida." With complete insensitivity, her brutish husband replies, ". . . sí, que había habido un caso . . . [en] que su marido, para no tener que molestar, la hizo abrir por un caballo y de resultas se murió" (51-52).

Similar fears of sexuality linked with punishing violence represented through the horse image are voiced by male writers. Jaime Siles, for example, in a personal interview [2 October, 1989]<sup>7</sup> has stated that his poem *Tragedia de los caballos locos* (1972) reflects his own fears as a young man regarding his sexual desires in conflict with the official Franco-era legal code—because the latter specified the death penalty for sex outside of marriage.

A lighter touch is to be seen in Concha Alós' prize-winning novel *Las hogueras* (1964). The morning after the former Parisian model Sibila has found relief from her sexual frustrations by means of a younger man—and has telltale marks on her body—her husband envisions her on horseback. Then the husband (earlier himself designated as "un caballo viejo y moribundo" [50]) asks:

- ¿Te gustaría tener un caballo?  
 —¿Qué?  
 —Nada... ¿Que si te gustaría montar a caballo?  
 Sibila lo mira extrañada, con la rebanada que muerde a medio camino de la boca. Lo observa como si la cabeza de su marido no anduviera muy acorde.  
 —Pues sí. ¿Por qué?  
 —No. Por nada. Se me ha ocurrido de pronto esa idea. No sabía si te gustan los caballos o no. (148-49).

Although in this instance Sibila does not perceive the sexual implications of her husband's questioning, she herself later views her young lover passing every morning on his motorcycle as "un orgulloso centauro" (203).

By 1978, only three years after Franco's death, the violence associated previously with the erotic equine seems to have been replaced by pleasure and enjoyment. According to Carmen Martín Gaité in her 1978 novel *El cuarto de atrás*, erotic equine imagery was common in climactic scenes of the popular "novela rosa," the kind of romance novel by women writers her female protagonist was accustomed to reading. Thus, in a moment of intense emotion, Martín Gaité has her narrator-protagonist report, "Nos estamos mirando a los ojos ya sin paliativos, el corazón se me echa a latir como un caballo desbocado,

esto del caballo desbocado lo decían también aquellos libros, es difícil escapar a los esquemas literarios de la primera juventud, por mucho que más tarde se reniegue de ellos" (141).

The following year, in *El amor es un juego solitario* (1979), Esther Tusquets presents her completely uninhibited female protagonist (Elia) under a ceiling mirror in a *casa de citas*: "cabalga febril, sin brida y sin estribos, sobre el cuerpo tan joven, lampiño, sudoroso [de Ricardo], . . . [un] cabalgar salvaje." Ricardo soon reciprocates and "cabalga sobre ella, desbocado y feliz" (75). Matters, however, become complicated later during the novel's climactic three-in-a-bed orgy. Ricardo mounts an unwilling Clara "como a una potranca mal domada," but Elia "lo golpea y le desmonta y aparta a Clara hasta el extremo más remoto de la cama" (138). Then Clara watches as Ricardo "la cabalga . . . [a Elia] como un loco" (143).

After the demise of the Fascist censorship, women authors appear free to write about homoerotic relationships, and, as the British writer Radclyffe Hall had done in her 1925 landmark novel *The Well of Loneliness* (36-37 *et passim*), they use equine imagery to explore these relationships. For example, in the 1985 short story *Las virtudes peligrosas*, Ana María Moix creates an irresistible attraction between two women, one of whom is married. After the latter's husband fails in repeated attempts to stop his wife's involvement with another woman, he takes her to the country. There the wife and her suitor take up horseback riding, and the other woman also appears on horseback at night to admire her desired one from a distance. Sometimes it is "una mujer a caballo, entre los árboles, mirando hacia la casa" (31); at other times it is a question of "una semidesnuda en la terraza, la otra cabalgando por los bosques" (35). Although the husband cannot end his wife's relationship—and fails in an attempt to kill the other woman—he certainly expresses his erotic frustration, and gets some relief, when he kills his rival's horse (31-32).

Carmen Martín Gaité also describes homoerotic feelings in her 1992 novel *Nubosidad variable*. Here the coming together of two women (after failed heterosexual relationships) has been facilitated in their novel-long correspondence by a "código de sobreentendidos" (335). This code includes equine imagery, as one of the two women records her feelings in a *Centauro*-brand notebook (321, 322), nicknames her car "Centauro" (321), recites García Lorca's poetry, and calls her friend a "caballo sin freno" (334), after speaking of "escarceos amorosos" (60). (The DRA defines *escarceos* as "Tornos y vueltas que dan los caballos cuando están fogosos o el jinete a ello los obliga" [and] "Comienzo o iniciación de una relación amorosa" [I: 578]).

A similar example occurs in a novel by a male author. In Luis Goytisolo's *La cólera de Aquiles* (1979), the equine imagery enables a lesbian protagonist to understand her sexual orientation. Goytisolo has told me that the episode was a contribution by his wife and came directly from one of her dreams (personal interview, 7 May 1993)).<sup>8</sup> In *La cólera de Aquiles*, the lesbian narrator-protagonist (Matilde Moret) reports the following recurring dream, which she first experienced during her adolescence:

Yo me encuentro hacia la mitad de la cuadra y gateo y gateo bajo los vientres enormes de caballos, entre sus patas, como a lo largo de un túnel. Juraría incluso que en sueños posteriores, recientes, la hilera de caballos— todos iguales, rubios, de monta—reaparece a manera de referencia constante. (264-65)

This dream serves to characterize the protagonist in two interrelated aspects. First, it helps to delineate her feelings for her deceased father, concerning whom she had earlier said, "... mi forma de querer a papá tenía algo de incestuosa" (112). Her fondest memory of her father is that of his "haciéndome montar sobre sus rodillas, como a caballo" (112) and "las risas que soltaba papá cada vez que me hacía trotar sobre sus rodillas" (285). He also had her "montar caballos de verdad," when she was never afraid, no matter how hard they would gallop (112). Secondly, her identification with her father (a "reconocido mujeriego" [247]) helps confirm her lesbianism. As for him, her libido and desires for conquests are directed at women. She wishes she had "llegado con mayor prontitud a la conclusión de que lo mío son las mujeres. Como lo eran para mi padre" (267-68).

Women writers also confront male homoeroticism—both as a threat to a heterosexual relationship and as feelings worthy of exploration—by using equine imagery. Reflecting perhaps on a personal experience,<sup>9</sup> Amparo Amorós in "Soneto a una ínsula barataria" presents a narrating feminine voice that reproaches a boyfriend for his masochistic homoerotic vulnerabilities:

Gustas de chulos, sí, barriobajeros  
de macarras, de cachas garañones,  
de horteras paqueteros maricones.  
..... (33)<sup>10</sup>

From a different perspective, Mercedes Abad's humorous short story "Dos socios inolvidables o El eroticismo a la lógica" (1986) presents a Dr. Watson who desires to seduce his Sherlock Holmes, thus making the latter "hábil en lides eróticas y semejante a un potrillo desbocado" (89). Holmes, however, ever the controlled logician, prefers autoeroticism during a cold shower (94).

Even before focusing upon lesbianism in *Las virtudes peligrosas*, Ana María Moix had explored the possible love life of a female centaur in the novel *Walter, ¿por qué te fuiste?* (1973).<sup>11</sup> Moix's centaur is the mate of the main character Ismael, a cowboy clown who works in a travelling circus. In his nightly act, Ismael is assisted by Albina, "mitad mujer, mitad caballo" (43), a creature with "patas traseras idénticas a las de los caballos de verdad, pero las delanteras casi iguales a los brazos de cualquier mujer, . . . con la parte delantera del cuerpo . . . idéntica a cualquier mujer" (44). Not content to present a mere circus "freak," Moix reveals the thoughts and feelings such a creature might have. These include how a seemingly normal girl realized that she was becoming more and more like a horse, how she has to cope with jealousy when her mate seems interested in real women, and how she will confront her unique old age. Most graphically, Moix details the problems of lovemaking. The understanding cowboy has not only been willing to engage for seven years in the most unusual foreplay, but he also risks his life copulating in her favorite position (face to face, *not* mounted as an animal):<sup>12</sup>

. . . ella se agita con toda la energía y el peso de su cuerpo caballuno. Con frecuencia, debido a los violentos movimientos orgásticos, ha estado a punto de aplastarlo con las patas traseras. Incluso, en una ocasión, él salió disparado de la cama y dio media vuelta por los aires. Por eso acaba ella siempre llorando, cuando hacen el amor, porque sale él malherido de la aventura: cuando no le da un golpe de herradura en la cabeza, le mete una oreja en un ojo, o le daña los labios con los largos dientes. Pero él la consuela, insiste, no puede resistir las lágrimas de la mitad mujer. Ya aprendemos el modo de hacerlo, Albina, no llores. (45-46)

In addition to trying sincerely and courageously to satisfy her physical desires, Ismael is also attentive to Albina's psychic needs, with



generous time, attention, and words of encouragement. He listens to her anguish about being different from other women, reassures her that she is attractive (44), and allows her to cry on his shoulder (52). Understandably, he does need periodic escape from this domestic situation. Whenever he seeks late-night solace in bars, the centaur is always on the street at a respectable and non-compromising distance to make sure that he is able to get home ("lleno el cuerpo de alcohol y la mente de sombras" [55]), and she also gets their circus act going the next afternoon if he is hung-over (56). Albina's essential goodness is repeatedly perceived by Polaco John, the circus dwarf. He expresses his affection for her: ". . . tú único mujer en el mundo que no poder ser puta, ni casarse, ni poner hijos en este mundo cruel, no ambicionas coches, ni lujos capitalistas, tú mujer ideal" (53). Nevertheless, the solution to Albina's problems, in the final pages of the novel, turns out to be suicide. And when the grieving "cowboy payaso" tries to retain custody of the body, he is beaten and she is trucked away by insensitive workers from the Matadero Municipal—one of them cursing: "coño . . . mitad caballo, mitad mujer, joder . . . sólo me pagarán la mitad del precio estipulado" (255).

Another distinct setting for important equine references is the anthropological novel. In Mercè Rodoreda's unfinished, posthumous *La muerte y la primavera* (1986), the author sets her story in the neolithic world of primitive seasonal and life-cycle rites. In a time of seasonal change, with the end of winter (death) and the beginning of spring (new life), the horse becomes an important bridging symbol, not only for the narrator, but for the entire village. Even the primal myth regarding the creation of the village itself is equine-centered (31, 32). Rodoreda's narrative captures a time before the medieval Church succeeded in banning equine-centered fertility rites, which often included sacrificial slaughter of the horse and communion-like feasting on its flesh.<sup>13</sup> Thus, one reads in Rodoreda's novel about *costumbrista* feasting not only on *caballos* and *yeguas*, but, most importantly, on equine embryos (31).

Appropriately, the words *caballo* and *relinchar* recur throughout the novel. Also, the favorite place of burial is the trunk of large trees, because, after the preparation of the body and before it is inserted, the tree resembles "un caballo abierto destripado" (22). Moreover, the village always keeps an official, well-treated prisoner whose obligation is to imitate the horse, and especially to perfect the art of neighing (61, 64) so that real horses actually respond in kind. Erotic concerns are repeatedly signalled by equine imagery: pregnant village women dance joyously in front of the horselike

prisoner (61), and when the narrator's libido diminishes, his own wife responds to the *relincho* of a younger man and he is left only with the recurring "hedor de caballo muerto" (128, 134, 135).

Another contemporary writer who uses erotic imagery is Ana Rossetti. Although the horse is not among her more common symbols, it is definitely present in her works. For example, in her first novel, *Plumas de España* (1988) she is playful as she acknowledges that adolescent girls are frequently interested in horses. One female character says to another:

"De adolescente ¿a que te gustaban los caballos?  
—¿Eso qué tiene que ver?  
Ah . . . te gustaban. Elige centauro, unicornio  
o chulo merendero." (44)<sup>14</sup>

In the same novel, Rossetti's narrator has a female character say to a male counterpart, "No ande con escarceos bajo mi falda" (19).

In the collection of short stories *Alevosías* (1991), Rossetti uses equine imagery in various phases of female-male encounters. In "La presa," for example, she describes a lust-driven propulsion of two bodies establishing physical contact: "Se precipitó, como un tiro de caballos salvajes, enredando en las piernas y en los brazos de ella las extremidades propias" (168). In "La venganza," foreplay includes ". . . el galope desbocado de sus manos. . ." (168), and later, the female narrator expresses her desire to "sentarme sobre ti y cabalgarte, y sacudir ante ti el bamboleo de mis tetas que tú querrás chupar, . . . y obligarte a que me frotes a la misma velocidad de mis vaivenes" (176). In "La noche de aquel día," lovemaking is primarily ". . . la galopada sobre el cuerpo desnudo del muchacho" (52), while in "La vengadora" it includes ". . . el galopar sobre el sofá, . . . procurando que el entusiasmo del garañón no decayera" (68). Female orgasm is described in "La sortija y el sacrilegio" (1990) not only with equine imagery, but also with metaphorical spurs. Whereas Ramón del Valle-Inclán, in one of his *Comedias bárbaras*, had a woman request a man to wear spurs (*Cara de Plata* [97]), Ana Rossetti presents a woman wearing her own figurative spurs. This character experiences:

violencia . . . por los relámpagos que le serpenteaban en el vientre; un potro, no domado, parecía galoparle entre las piernas y sus manos crispadas arañaban la colcha. El espasmo final le sobrevendría cuando,

desgarrada por sus propias espuelas,  
 enloqueciese hasta precipitarse, y despenarse,  
 y acabar. (121)

In a personal interview (12 April 1995), Ana Rossetti has stated that the use of erotic equine imagery in her works is completely spontaneous and unpremeditated; she was not even aware that she had been using it. Nevertheless, upon reflection, she remarked that she does feel that equine imagery helps her to communicate effectively precisely what she wishes to say.<sup>15</sup>

Clara Janés, however, uses equine imagery in her novel *Los caballos del sueño* with a non-erotic connotation (216), but with an erotic one in her poems "Cabalga escalada de nardo" (*Eros* 1981) and "Yo cabalga la torre de Gálata" (*Creciente fértil* 1989). The latter contains no metaphorical spurs, but does climax with comets:

Yo cabalga la torre de Gálata  
 mas la torre en mi cuerpo  
 se convierte en sauce  
 agitado por el viento  
 e inicia un juego que me funde.  
 Me transformo en rocío en sus hojas  
 apreso en mi transparencia  
 los destellos de noche...  
 Todo es oscuridad,  
 un fluir de oro entre las piernas  
 y un cóncave abandono a sus halagos,  
 mientras aún erecta la torre en mí sumida  
 vuelve a soltar  
 su desbandada de cometas. (52)

Almudena Grandes' first novel, *Las edades de Lulú* (1989), is so explicitly pornographic that erotic equine imagery is far too subtle for the context.<sup>16</sup> In her second novel, *Te llamaré Viernes* (1991), the narrator does describe the coupling of the male and female protagonists (Benito and Manuela) in terms of the erotic equine: "la tarde anterior [ella] le había cabalgado lentamente" (215) and "[ahora otra vez] le cabalgaba lentamente" (216). Benito and Manuela's relationship had not always been so satisfactory, for he had earlier perceived her in terms of a "yegua" (84) and experienced an arousal which terminated in a spontaneous ejaculation. And, on a later occasion, he also committed what is now called "date rape." Concurrently, his closest friend (Polibio) has a prosti-

tute girlfriend with a “boca levemente caballuna” (49), who—in terminology that goes back hundreds of years—works out of his tavern as a “trotona” (297).<sup>17</sup>

The erotic equine reappears in Almudena Grandes' third novel, *Malena es un nombre de tango* (1994). Here, the female narrator-protagonist recalls her decision to engage in intercourse for the first time: “. . . mis oídos se rindieron al tronador galope de un caballo lejano, que se acercaba deprisa, y presentí que no hallaría ninguna banqueta donde enganchar mis pies, los dedos ya moviéndose, nerviosos, para impedir que saliera corriendo tras él” (194). A short time earlier, she and her suitor Fernando had almost consummated their relationship on a parked motorcycle as “dos jinetes dementes, solos en el mundo, a lomos de una moto de la segunda guerra mundial” (188). Later in the novel, a description of an unsatisfactory sexual experience contains a further reference to the erotic equine. After a male partner's speedy ejaculation, the protagonist reports, “. . . me descabalgó, con la misma educación con que me había montado, [y] no entendí qué estaba pasando” (315). Finally, the erotic equine is also useful in the protagonist's insulting rejoinder to her unmarried sister's happy announcement of pregnancy: “Sí, eso suele ocurrir. No supongo que te vayan los caballos” (386).<sup>18</sup>

As Wendy Doniger has said, “The horse is a symbol of lawless animal passion. . . [and] no one who has ever seen horses mating ever forgets it, [for] mares and stallions are ferocious in their foreplay, and the size, prominence, and animation of their sexual organs burn into the retina of the witness's unconscious” (25). Certainly Jung acknowledged the horse as one of the most powerful archetypes in the human psyche (II, 277-79), and Rowland has commented that the horse's “head with glorious mane and upstanding ears [is] the quintessence of the phallic animal” (104). Thus, it is no surprise that recourse to equine imagery has helped women writers express themselves and communicate effectively with their readers from medieval times to the present day.<sup>19</sup> Erotic equine imagery has proven itself to be a resilient, vibrant, and adaptable communicative metaphor in the works of women writers, regardless of literary movements and genres. Its specific use, of course, varies with the times, as well as with the talent of each author. Even during the era of Francoist repression and censorship, erotic equine imagery continued to be employed by women writers, although it often reflected negative qualities of violence and fear. Then, after the end of the Fascist dictatorship, it became again associated with joyous activity. And in the present time of

greater political, economic, and psycho-sexual freedom for women, the erotic equine is expressed by means of daring innovations and a perspective of sexual frankness as Spanish women continue to comment upon, and often celebrate, human sexuality.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Many colleagues, working in the fields of Spanish, Latin American, and other national literatures, have contributed examples which are used in this study. Although these friends are too numerous to mention here, I am grateful to each.
- <sup>2</sup> It is a pleasure to thank María del Rocío González (University of Kansas) for allowing me to read her study in manuscript form.
- <sup>3</sup> For details, see Chamberlin 399.
- <sup>4</sup> Concerning the inspiration for this novel, Rosa Chacel has said:
 

. . . estábamos en la Academia de Roma. Mi marido y Valverde [otro pintor] dicen—Tienes que leer este libro de Dostoyevsky [en que] un hombre maduro seduce a una niña y la niña se ahorca.—Entonces, eso me recuerda a mí un caso que había sucedido en la provincia de Valladolid: un maestro que había seducido a una niña de unos diez años. A mí me había impresionado mucho porque yo conocía al maestro. Yo había dicho cuando ocurrió aquello que a lo mejor fue la niña la que sedujo a él porque era tan guapo. Entonces, les dije—Yo un día escribiré una novela en que sea una niña la que seduce a un señor respetable, y será el señor el que se tenga que colgar. Eso es la génesis de *Leticia*. (Myers 287)
- <sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Carol Maier (Kent State University) for sending me this article, which contains details of Valladolid's *homenaje* to Zorrilla on the centenary of his death.
- <sup>6</sup> For discussions of expressionism in *Fiesta al noroeste*, see Berrentini (412), Nora (266), Jones (10), and Jerez Ferrán (218-27).
- <sup>7</sup> It is a pleasure to thank Jaime Siles for this interview granted at the University of Kansas on the occasion of a joint poetry reading with Guillermo Carnero.
- <sup>8</sup> Luis Goytisolo generously granted this interview at the University of Kansas the day following a well-received lecture.
- <sup>9</sup> Amorós herself has said concerning *Quevediana*, the collection of thirty sonnets, in which "Soneto a una insula barataria" appears: "Al fin y al cabo, mi irritación al concebirlos era tan visceral como intelectual y—

por tanto—no sólo encontraba causa en mi vida, sino en la de tantos otros anónimos compañeros de viaje cuya voz suplanté” (“Palabras previas” 9).

<sup>10</sup> The entire poem reads as follows:

Gustas de chulos, sí, barriobajeros  
de macarras, de cachas garañones,  
de horteras paqueteros maricones  
y embozados marchosos navajeros.

Nunca vi tal desfile de rokeros  
visitar los poéticos salones  
de dama alguna, ni tantos cabrones  
pasearle los versos en vaqueros.

ceñidos de bragueta y, pendencieros,  
someterla a su caña por cojones.  
Majos de plexiglás engominados  
pueblan tus fantasías pintureros  
y son los nueve musos con que pones  
casa en la villa para putañeros.

- <sup>11</sup> Subsequent writers addressing emotional problems of female centaurs include the Brazilian novelist Moacyr Scliar in *O centauro no jardim* (1980) and the Spanish *cuenterista* Miguel Riera in *La rara anatomía del centauro* 1991. In Scliar's work, both the male protagonist and his wife are centaurs. In addition to being Jewish, both have occasional species identification problems when it comes to love and copulation objects. In Riera's *La rara anatomía del centauro*, the female centaur (like her two male counterparts) in captivity and reproductive exploitation experiences a loss of libido that even aphrodisiacs cannot remedy.
- <sup>12</sup> Other once-taboo aspects of Moix's novel include an unexpected onset of menstruation, first lesbian and heterosexual experiences, and the seduction of a seminarian shortly before he is to take his vows.
- <sup>13</sup> In the eighth century, the Pope himself participated in the campaign against the eating of horse meat (Baum 55).
- <sup>14</sup> In spite of the traditional affinity between the unicorn and the maiden (as depicted in art), women writers have shown little interest, to my knowledge, in the unicorn, unlike the male author of the 1987 Premio Planeta novel *En busca del unicornio*: Juan Eslava Galán.
- <sup>15</sup> It is a pleasure to thank Ana Rossetti for this interview, and for her fine lecture “Mis aprendizajes: la seducción de las palabras,” given at the University of Kansas (11-12 April, 1995).
- <sup>16</sup> In *Las edades de Lulú*, the word *caballo* helps communicate the opposite meaning: impotence. The narrator-protagonist says, “Gus, eunuco contemporáneo, completamente impotente ya por el caballo, estaba a mi lado jadeando y resoplando” (253). Here one encounters the contemporary use of *caballo* as a euphemism for heroin (undoubtedly via

the English-language "horse"). A similar usage had also appeared in Fermin Cabal's 1981 play *El caballito del diablo*, where *caballo* signifies heroin at least seven times—and never has any erotic implications. Two years later, in Rosa Montero's *Té trataré como a una reina* (1983), "caballo" signifies heroin (26,27), but "galope" indicates coitus (100) and "trotona" prostitute (180).

Marihuana, on the other hand, does help create a mellow, romantic mood in Blanca Andreu's 1982 poem "Di que querías ser caballo esbelto," a work in which the lover is also addressed as "caballo mitico" and "caballo griego" (34). For a discussion of Blanca Andreu's lifelong interest in and affection for horses, see Ugalde 248.

<sup>17</sup> For details, see Chamberlin, "Erotic" 2-3, 20, and note 16 above.

<sup>18</sup> In addition, the virility of the protagonist's womanizing uncle and grandfather is communicated by the fact that both ride their horses aggressively at night wearing little or no clothing (107, 132, 352).

<sup>19</sup> The erotic equine is an aspect of artistic creativity that twentieth-century Spanish women writers share with their counterparts in other countries. Daring and innovative as Spanish women writers have shown themselves to be, it is, nevertheless, in Mexico, in Laura Esquivel's 1989 *Como agua para chocolate* (both novel 58-59, and subsequent film), where sexual intercourse on horseback is most exuberantly presented. In Argentina, a popular song suggestive of intercourse on horseback becomes the appropriate title of Luisa Valenzuela's 1982 story "De noche soy tu caballo." In the United States, the well-known science-fiction writer C.J. Cherryh in *Rider at the Gate* (1995) depicts telepathic sexual communication between humans and horses on a distant planet (34-41, 356-402). Other notable American examples are the Native American Joy Harjo's *She Had Some Horses* (63-64), Susan Block's "Esther" (238), Olive Ann Burns' *Cold Sassy Tree* (160-74), and Suzanne Miller's "Taos Spring" (145-46).

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