

**“NO ES DE CONDENAR PORQUE PAREZCA
ENIGMÁTICO”: LOPE’S COMMENTARY ON THE
SONNET ‘LA CALIDAD ELEMENTAR RESISTE’**

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On April 28, 1613 Lope de Vega finished and signed the manuscript of *La dama boba* which later he was to give to the talented, well-endowed actress Jerónima de Burgos (rumored to have been his lover). Shortly after Lope finished this work the literary scene in Madrid was electric with discussion about Luis de Góngora’s latest, shockingly innovative poems, the *Polifemo* and *Soledades*, circulated by the loquacious news monger Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza. Although at the writing of *La dama boba* Lope most likely had not seen nor heard of Góngora’s innovative poems, it is my belief that he nevertheless was attempting to mark his position on the percolating issues of lyrical expression and erudite poetic discourse.¹ He did so, perhaps with some irony, by inserting a tour de force sonnet read by the character Duardo to members of Nise’s informal academy and to the populace attending *La dama boba*—a recondite statement of Platonic love and the ethereal truth of the flames of *eros*:

La calidad elementar resiste
mi amor, que a la virtud celeste aspira,
y en las mentes angélicas se mira
donde la idea del calor consiste.
No ya como elemento el fuego viste 5
el alma, cuyo vuelo al Sol admira,
que de inferiores mundos se retira,
adonde el Querubín ardiendo asiste.
No puede elementar fuego abrasarme,
la virtud celestial que vivifica 10
envidia el verme a la suprema alzarme.
Que donde el fuego angélico me aplica,
¿cómo podrá mortal poder tocarme?
Que eterno y fin contradicción implica.²

This sonnet was so important to Lope that he reprinted it on three different occasions: first in the publication of *La dama boba* in *Parte IX* 1617, secondly in *La Filomena* 1621 giving it the title “Castitas res est angelica,” and finally in *La Circe* 1624 providing an extensive line-by-line self-commentary. My purpose in this essay is twofold: to suggest that Lope’s re-deployment of the sonnet with its commentary was more than mere posturing against the vogue of gongorism and second to explore Lope’s personal and psycho-erotic stake in the sonnet by elucidating the content of the self-commentary as a justification of his movement from carnal love to spiritual love. The focus of my study is not the issues of the *gongorists* and *anti-gongorists*, but the significance of Lope’s exercise of poetic self-analysis.

The sonnet’s initial life in the play *La dama boba* took on the air of a set-piece, eliciting Nise’s response of incomprehension: “Ni una palabra entendi”... “Con inquietud / escucho lo que no entiendo” (1.7.539; 562-63) shared most likely by an equally confused audience. In attempting to explain the sonnet Lope presents Duardo rehearsing a proto-commentary: “Calidad elemental / es el calor en nosotros; / la celestial, es virtud / que calienta y que recrea, / y la angélica es la idea / del calor” (1.7.557-62) and an allegorical interpretation of the power of fire and sun, all of which reminds Nise of the academic debates of the schoolmen: “No discurras, por tu vida; / vete a escuelas” (1.7.575-76). Eleven years after writing *La dama boba* in response to “tanta variedad de opiniones” about the sonnet Lope would write a commentary addressed to Don Francisco López de Aguilar ostensibly “para el desengaño de los que se apasionan de los términos nuevos de decir, aunque sean bárbaros, y no reparan en el alma de los conceptos” (*La Circe* 1311).

The sonnet’s appearance in the play was seen by Dámaso Alonso and Emilio Orozco Díaz as a reaction against the new poetry of Góngora. Robert Jammes (with whom I am in accord) disagreed with this position.³ It was only later, through Lope’s successive reprintings of the sonnet that it came to symbolize an iconic rejection of gongorism—an example of substantive “arte, ingenio y erudición” (Lope, *Epistolario* 4: n.479) based on serious content rather than on “las locaciones inauditas, y las Metáforas de Metáforas” of the gongorists (“El teatro a los lectores” *Parte XV*, xxiv). In Lope’s mind the sonnet and its commentary served as an exemplary response to the vituperation of those who were

constantly sniping at his plain style: “con razón Vega por lo siempre llana” (Góngora 286). Lope used it to demonstrate the substance of poetry based on a language of ideas and concepts rather than on what he considered superficial turns of phrase and syntax. “Lope proposes a different type of difficulty, one based on complex ideas or concepts, not elaborate imagery” (Quintero 172). On a personal level, however, it meant more than a rebuttal of his enemies and “los términos nuevos de decir” (1311).

Lope’s predilection and personal ties to the poem manifest themselves in his commentary on the sonnet, an extensive and highly technical *enarratio*, comfortably associated with a tradition of medieval gloss and Renaissance commentary: Servius on Vergil, the *glossa ordinaria* of Scripture, Dante’s *Convivio*, the commentaries on Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, Calvalcanti’s “Donna mi prega,” Pico’s commentary on Benivieni’s *Canzone*, as well as El Brocense’s and Herrera’s *Anotaciones* on Garcilaso. As such Lope’s hermeneutical exercise can be aligned with what Sherry Roush describes as “a sub-category of metacriticism or autoexegesis ... [that] differs from apologies, defenses of poetry, personal statements of poetics, confessions, and autobiographies” (5). It is a unique exercise of exegesis set apart from Lope’s previous self-defense from critics of his “Arcadia y mi Angélica” and his *apologia* for amorous poetry—two dedicatory epistles to Juan de Arguijo published in the 1602 edition of the *Rimas*.⁴

The designs of Lope’s self-commentary: poesis, exegesis and spiritual resolution

Lope’s commentary has been characterized as pedantic and a mere summary of philosophical thought. For Dámaso Alonso “La actividad filosófica de Lope era, pues, no nos engañemos, bien modesta: la de un simple resumidor (457) ... Es uno de esos insensatos alardes de pedantería que se le escapaba a Lope cada vez que el humanísimo poeta quiere chapearse de científico” (461). Such a characterization effectively condemned Lope’s commentary to neglect by subsequent generations of critics. For the most part only passing comments have been made about the obvious references to Pico, Ficino and Plato without an analysis of the actual content and strategies of Lope’s line-by-line exegesis.

Alan Trueblood, however, offered a suggestive observation: “Beneath the pedantry one senses a vital stake” (*Experience* 197).

Relying upon Amezá, Trueblood interprets Lope's Platonic motives in the light of his aging love for Marta de Nevares and a conjectured "incipient decline of his physical powers" (*Experience* 195)—seen as probable indications of his adoption of a more measured, personal view of Platonism. I argue that beneath Lope's well-versed familiarity with the tradition of Christianized Platonism resides a formal yet at core personally meaningful re-evaluation of his *cursus amoris* sublimated in the philosophical-theological constructs of angelic contemplation, Neoplatonist cosmic ontology and supported by an underlying, well-know scholastic discourse on the nature of *amor*, *eros*, *delectio* and *caritas*.

But the questions persist: Were Lope's efforts indeed mere pedantry? Were they the result of a perspective gained by old age and the waning of sexual desire? Were they an attempt to silence his critics through a display of erudition and to reconstitute his reputation as a repentant, chaste cleric worthy of a sought-after position of royal historian? A subtle combination of all these motives most likely played a role in Lope's hermeneutical exercise, but an analysis of the commentary reveals that assuredly not any one of these motives in isolation accounts for the zeal with which Lope argues the case for his 'purified' love. It is my contention that the subtext of Lope's commentary embodies an intellectualized attempt to come to terms with the driving force of *eros* in his life—an *eros* that inflamed his conflicted assessment of self and the women he loved, offering the prospect of a psycho-sexual transformation and reconciliation with an absolute being while inspiring the expression of these realities in writing.

The intensity of this enduring conflict and its expression is alluded to in the *Rimas*: "¿Qué no escriba decís, o que no viva? / Haced vos con mi amor que yo no sienta, / que yo haré con mi pluma que no escriba" (*Rimas*, sonnet 66). It lingers in the contemplative remorse of the *Rimas sacras* which Lope calls up again in his commentary "como dije en el cuarto soneto de mis *Rimas sacras*" citing the final tercets in order to distinguish divine love from the "fuego del amor humano" (1316).

In his correspondence with the Duque de Sessa Lope openly voiced his conflict as priest and lover agonizing over falling in love with Marta de Nevares/Amarilis: "el oficio y la reputación me impiden que puedan reducir esta potencia en acto" while confessing that although his love is spiritual and Platonic, its torment originates more from Pluto than Plato: "Certifico a vuestra excelencia que ha grandes tiempos que es

este amor espiritual y casi platónico; pero que, en el atormentarme, más parece de Plutón que de Platón” (*Epistolario* 3: n.262). The sight and presence of Amarilis causes a tormenting thirst that grieves both body and soul: “Verdad es que *Amarilis* me ha hecho algunas visitas, con cuyo consuelo ... he pasado una sed insaciable, que es lo que más me [ha] atormentado, y templado la de verla, que es lo que más me podía atormentar; así se diferencian el alma y el cuerpo; de entrambos estoy doliente” (*Epistolario* 3: n.319). Years later, given the context of previous correspondance with the Duque de Sessa about his “oficio” as ordained priest, he confides that his exhausted sexual liaison with an aged Marta de Nevares (with whom he had a child) is more like that of a father than gallant suitor “no fuera yo estar celoso; que, como hago más oficio de padre que de galán, no advierto en lo que puedo perder”—“oficio de padre” in my reading is also suggestive of Lope as father confessor. He continues his comments to the Duque openly declaring that his relationship, transformed into platonic love, was no longer in need of Hymenal wedding night celebrations: “y habiendo estas cosas llegado a ser como amores platónicos, ni los Himeneos tiene qué hacer ni los meneos qué ejercitar” (*Epistolario* 4: n.432).

Lope’s vacillating struggle with *eros* also found expression in *Pastores de Belén* (1612) where he questioned Plato’s definition of love as the desire for immortality (*Symposium* 207a) and presented *eros* (“exceso del deseo”) as the basis to aspire to the purity of love (“cuando tan puramente se ama”): “Es amor un *exceso del deseo*, y no como Platón lo define, un deseo de inmortalidad, que cuando tan puramente se ama no da el espíritu parte de sus pensamientos al cuerpo; antes bien, desasido de esta corteza bárbara, *vuela por superiores aires a la región más alta, a la mayor esfera, donde más puro fuego le vivifica y más sabrosa llama le fomenta*” (156, italics added). These thoughts together with Lope’s summary of Plato’s discussion of Eros in the *Symposium* (201d-212d)—which introduces Book V of *El peregrino en su patria* (422-23)—reflect an early perception that Lope would later expand in his commentary with formalized references to the celestial cosmology of Pico della Mirandola, to regions of fire and sun that define the transformation of inflamed passionate love into the fire of “entendimiento seráfico” (1312).⁵ Anders Nygren in his classic study *Eros and Agape* makes a point particularly relevant to Lope’s struggle to reconcile his seemingly contradictory behavior as priest and passionate lover: “Both Eros

and Agape claim to give expression to man's relation to the Divine, and both exercise a formative influence on his ethical life" (Ch. 3, ii, 209)—observations commonly exercised by Renaissance thinkers and Spanish ascetics alike.

In *La Circe* Lope accompanied his sonnet and self-commentary with more than forty-two other sonnets many of which rehearsed the themes of Platonism and Neoplatonic love that lie beneath his yearning for a higher form of purified *eros*, demonstrating "una limpia posición espiritualista" (Alonso 462). His conflicts of conscience reflected through temptations of the flesh and amorous advice to the Duque de Sessa ("pues soy su Ovidio hasta el postrer capítulo de ese *Arte amandi*" [*Epistolario* 2: n.105]) together with his love letters to Amarilis which were shared with the Duque accede now to a intellectualized commitment, a change of disposition heartened by a senescent attempt to transform sexual desire into spiritualized love.

Lope's analytical commentary presents him as a knowledgeable religious cleric, fully aware of the theological and philosophical issues of the movement of the appetite, the role of passion in *amor* and *eros* that surround the understanding and psychological components of physical love as it is transformed into a spiritually motivated Divine Love.⁶ The range of Platonic, Scholastic and theological allusions explicating the verses of the sonnet, not only elevate his reputation beyond that of an ephemeral poet/dramatist, but more significantly invite exploration of the interior substantiation for Lope's highly and formally intellectualized self-commentary. As an exercise of auto-exegesis, it encourages consideration of the poetic and prose texts beyond their interwoven designs of allegorical explication to a personalized subtextual implication—that is, his motivating designs and personal history of sexual conflict that illuminate Lope's preference for this Platonizing sonnet and the need to explain its significance. His struggle with the required chastity of celibacy (reflected in the title given to the sonnet when published in *La Filomena* "Castitas res est angelica" and allusions to the conflict over his reputation and office as priest in his correspondence with the Duque de Sessa expose a conflict of conscience that sought alleviation in poetic and rationalized texts of conversion that would transcend carnal desire as well as the rhetoric of exegesis and personal ambition.⁷ Informing Lope's hermeneutic is the ascetic tradition of the ladder of ascent where physical love is conceived

as a paradigm of the longing for God, transfiguring the desires of nature into the desire for God.

Lope's commentary: The interplay of philosophy and theology

While Lope openly expressed his religious and moral formalism in works such as the religious plays, the *Isidro*, *Soliloquios*, *Rimas sacras* or *Pastores de Belén*, early on in his writing he explored the juxtaposition of secular and sacred themes perhaps represented tangentially by his first collection of two-hundred sonnets in 1602. Lope ends that collection with an iconic sonnet “Siempre te canten santo Sabaot / tus ángeles, gran Dios, Divino Hilec” introduced with the title “Alpha y Omega Jehová.” By so doing he not only effectively sounded the death knell for the thematic clichés of Petrarchism (later openly parodied by Lope in *Rimas humanas y divinas del Licenciado Tomé de Burguillos* [1634]) but more significantly prefigured his eventual embrace of a Christianized Neoplatonism that could explain his love affairs as part of a coherent cosmic design of elemental fire that led to Divine purification and fit comfortably within the designs of post-Tridentine spirituality.

Lope introduces his commentary on the sonnet rephrasing the fundamental argument originally offered by Duardo in *La dama boba* but adding as its source Pico's *Heptaplus*:

La intención deste soneto (llamemos así al argumento) fue pintar un hombre, que habiendo algunos años seguido sus pasiones, abiertos los ojos del entendimiento, se desnudaba dellas, y reducido a la contemplación del divino Amor, de todo punto se hallaba libre de sus afectos; y no es de condenar porque parezca enigmático, siendo tan alta la materia y el sujeto tan digno... Fúndale en tres fuegos correspondientes a tres mundos. El calor es en nosotros la calidad elemental; la celestial es la virtud que calienta; la angélica es la idea del calor; Fuego es elemento en nosotros, fuego es el Sol en el cielo y fuego el entendimiento seráfico; pero difieren en que el elemental abrasa, el celeste vivifica, y el sobreceste ama; así los disputa divina y sutilmente Pico Mirandulano en su Heptablo (1312).

Lope's choice to base his sonnet on the Neoplatonism of Pico's *Heptaplus* has significance beyond its immediate context in a play and beyond that of its later use in an erudite commentary. In a sense it represents a literary coalescence of post-Tridentine moralism and

philosophical syncretism that seeks to unify the *prisca theologia* and sexuality of the ancients with Catholic tradition and Scripture. Lope's explication of the sonnet is laden with a characteristic plethora of citations—from the Platonic and Neoplatonic works of Ficino and Pico, the angelic celestial hierarchy of love and intellect as argued by Pseudo-Dionysius and the wisdom of the ancients (Hermes Trismegistus, Plotinus, Seneca, Lucretius), medieval theologians (Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Lombard—“Maestro de las Sentencias”), the authority of Scripture as interpreted by Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom and allusions to ‘modern’ thinkers and writers (Teófilo Folengo, Andreas Acitores, Daniel Barbaro, Desportes, Alciato, Turnebo).⁸ The avowed initial strata of the sonnet, Pico's *Heptaplus*, actually evolves into a different, more complex intellectual exposition which Lope constructs elucidating each line of the sonnet.⁹

But why the choice of the *Heptaplus*—a recondite and difficult text that explicates in a sevenfold allegory the twenty-seven introductory verses of *Genesis*? Part of the answer may lie in the fact that Lope chose it to confound his detractors by citing an esoteric text that we can assume was not commonly read by aspiring *gongorists*. But also part of the answer can be found in the fact that it signals Lope's embrace of an elevated discourse of philosophical and theological concepts that allegorically explain and justify his desired rejection of physical pleasure.¹⁰ Lope's commentary silently relies upon accepted scholastic concepts of the appetite and passions (“de todo punto se hallaba libre de sus *afectos*”), love and concupiscence counterpoised by an explicit Neoplatonist conception of the cosmos and the role of *eros*. In a sense Lope's commentary—“siendo tan alta la materia y el sujeto tan digno” (1312)—mirrors the esoteric exegesis outlined in the second prologue of the *Heptaplus* where Pico undertook a “theory of allegory...derived largely from the Neoplatonic tradition and particularly ... from this tradition's Christian incarnation in the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite” (Black 2). As will become apparent Lope relied heavily on the Pseudo-Dionysius for his understanding of Divine *eros*, the celestial hierarchy and angelic contemplation of the Divine Love. On an intellectual level it is thus relevant as Black suggests that “the *Heptaplus* should be viewed as an expression of the role of the intellect in man's progress to *felicitas*. . . it shows Pico engaging with the controversy (dating back to the thirteenth century, but still intense during his life and after)

surrounding Aristotle, Averroes and competing interpretations of the nature and action of the intellect” (Black 3). We can only conjecture Lope’s level of awareness of these issues—the passage he cites from Plotinus (discussed later) would suggest he did have some knowledge of scholastic positions regarding the intellect. His comments to the Duque de Sessa about his love of Amarilis also insinuate as much: “vuestra excelencia disculpase mi *loco amor* por sujeto de tantas gracias y partes ... *yo voy en esta materia con sola el alma, dejando ir el cuerpo a viva fuerza de la razon, si bien la causa no admitirá jamás el estilo platónico*” (*Epistolario* 4: n.360. Italics added). What is clear, however, is that Lope at least recognized the difficult obscurity and intellectual challenge of Pico’s Platonic and cosmic interpretations of *Genesis*—a fundamental text of revelation and Christian faith in which God commanded man to increase and multiply. It doubtlessly appealed to him as a basis for his own erudite explication of his wished-for transformation and also for confounding those imitators of Góngora who “piensan que han de llegar a su ingenio por imitar su estilo” (“Papel de la nueva poesía” *Filomena* 879).

Lope’s aspirations: Platonism and Neoplatonism

Throughout Lope’s works allusion to Plato and the concepts of Platonism are filtered principally through the works of Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Bembo’s discussion on love in the final book of Boscan’s translation of Castiglione’s *El Cortesano*, and Leon Hebreo’s *Diálogos de amor*. Ficino’s transmission of Plato and Neoplatonism was instrumental in framing Lope’s interior discourse on the effects of *eros* in his poetry, prose works and theatre. In Lope’s later works (*La Filomena*, *La Circe* and *La Dorotea*) allusions to Ficino and Plato reveal an assessment that ultimately embraces purity of love and the concepts of Neoplatonism (Trueblood, *Experience* 196-201). Yet in the *Rimas humanas y divinas del Tomé de Burguillos* (1634) we find a capricious Lope assuming a radically different posture playfully mocking the literary conventions of Platonism: “Justificase el poeta de que no nacen flores cuando las damas pisan los campos, porque estima en más la verdad de Aristóteles que el respeto de Platón” (Sonnet 150).¹¹

Lope’s attachment to Neoplatonism in his commentary however reveals a desire to explain experience by appropriating concepts, images and metaphors from a coherent system of idealized love, philosophically

based and theologically validated by Ficino's attempt to Christianize Plato and thus acceptable to post-Tridentine moral idealism. Lope's allusions throughout his commentary imply identification with a long-standing attempt to reconcile the wisdom of the ancients with the truth and authority of revelation, to clothe human desire or its waning with the respectability and pedigree of Christianized Platonism.

Among all the citations and references, however, the more significant for Lope's intellectualization of *eros* are those brokered through Ficino and the Pseudo-Dionysius. First let us discuss Lope's Platonism as found in allusions to Plato's *Symposium*, the *Enneads* of Plotinus, allusions to the *Pimander* of Mercurius Trismegistus, and Ficino's own synthesis of the *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum*.

From the twelfth book of the *Theologia Platonica* (XII, iv: 48) Lope paraphrases a passage in order to support a cosmological view of the Divine Mind that illuminates the soul: "Marsilio Ficino dice que la lumbre de la divina mente no se infunde en el alma, si ella como la Luna al Sol, no se revuelve a ella" (1313). Lope's translation of a phrase from the *Pimander* of Mercurius Trismegistus corroborates his view of the Divine mind: "Y Mercurio en el *Pimandro* introduce la mente divina, diciendo: *Comprehendeme tú, que yo te enseñaré*, y que finalmente, cuando le enseñó, vio en la suya la luz existente, con potencias innumerables, un ornamento sin término y un fuego cercado de gran poder" (1313). Later Lope again addresses the metaphorical significance of 'fuego' calling upon Trismegistus to support an extensive quotation from Pseudo-Dionysius on angels and the biblical theme of fire (to be discussed later): "Y así Trismegisto en aquella antiquísima Teología llamó a Dios, Dios de fuego, Majestad y Espíritu" (1314).

The core of Lope's personal interest in Plato, however, rests upon a well-known section of Plato's *Symposium* (201d-212d) often cited by Renaissance authors of treatises on love dealing with the ladder of love. It is a passage, as previously noted, that Lope summarized in *El peregrino en su patria*. In the commentary, however, Lope makes three separate references to this section which recounts Socrates exchange with Diotima on *eros* as Daemon, the desire for immortality, love as attraction to Beauty —topics also addressed by Pseudo-Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus* (Ch. 4). A particular section of Diotima's conversation (207a) must have resonated with Lope for it thematically addresses sexual attraction, procreation and the ascent to spiritual love.

In explicating the verse “No ya como elemento el fuego viste / el alma” (v. 5) Lope referred to this section of the *Symposium* to describe the initial state of passionate ardor left behind by the lover: “Platón le llama ardor, *amoris ardores insaniunt*, y calor no está fuera de ser entendido por Amor” (1314). A closer look at the context of this citation helps us understand Lope’s interest. Diotima asks: Well, Socrates, and what do you suppose is the cause of all this longing and all this love? (“*Quam huius amoris cupiditatisque causam, o Socrates, arbitraris?*” [Ficino, *Omnia D. Platonis* 250]) She answers: Do you not see how the natural desire of all animate creatures is to procreate and how they are made *insane with the ardor of love*? (“*non vides, quam graviter afficiuntur animantes omnes . . . cum ad generationem toto impetu proferuntur, & amoris ardores insaniunt?*” [250]). Lope’s conflict is implicitly mirrored in the ardor of love that causes insanity reflecting ultimately his amorous obsession and struggle of conscience (“mi loco amor”) to reconcile heart and head with his religious commitment as ordained priest. But the salvific release from the fires of passion is the ascent to the region where angelic fire consumes him (“donde el fuego angélico me aplica” v.12). Lope describes the pure contemplation of Divine Beauty with a second, strategically chosen quotation from a related section of the *Symposium* (211e):

alaba tanto Platón a los que llegan a esta perfección de espíritu, *si cui contigerit ut ipsum pulchrum intueatur, sincerum, integrum, purum, simplicem* con esta exageración: *non humanis carminibus, coloribus, non aliis mortalibus nugis contaminatum, sed ipsum secundum se pulchrum divinum inspiciat* (1317).¹²

This passage is the culmination of Diotima’s description of *eros* where she instructs Socrates of the ultimate ascent to plenitude. The appeal of the material world is discarded as the individual rejects ardent sexual love for the spiritual contemplation of the Good and Beauty. For Lope and for contemporary ascetics and theologians the Neoplatonist realm of Divine Love is contemplated not only by angelic intelligences but by man who ascends purified by the fire of spiritual love, uncontaminated by the ardor of carnal love—a comfortable ideology that could assuage Lope’s conscience and provide theological and philosophical justification in the Plato who had been Christianized by Ficino.

Lope makes a final reference to Plato when commenting on the last verse of his sonnet “y Platón [dice] que el amor *est immortalitatis desiderium*” referring again to the exchange of Diotima and Socrates (207a) where the issue of eros, sexual attraction and the desire for procreation manifests a desire for immortality—a concept that Lope had also appropriated for his discussion in *Pastores de Belén*.

It is evident that Lope had more than a casual awareness of Plato and Ficino’s work—his citations here and in *La Dorotea* reveal that he read Plato directly by way of Ficino and not in *compendia* or *polyanteas*.¹³ An extensive citation taken from Ficino’s translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus not only supports such an affirmation but reveals Lope’s awareness of the scholastic issues about the intellect and the contemplation of the Divine. The burning realm of the Cherubim attending Divine Love in the final verse of the octave (“adonde el Querubín ardiendo asiste”) elicited from Lope a reference to Ficino’s ‘argumentum’ about Plotinus’s philosophical description of the intellectual act of contemplating Divine Love, not only ‘seeing’ the Divinity but through the superior power of the higher intellect (reminiscent of David’s Psalm 33:9) ‘tasting’ and ‘touching’ how sweet is the Lord: “A contemplar con él [el Querubín]: *non per quamdam imaginariam intelligentiae perceptionem, sed per verum quemdam virtutis intellectum superioris substantialemque contractum, ubi non videt solum sed gustat etiam atque tangit, quam suavis est Dominus*. Así Marsilio Ficino sobre Plotino Platónico en el libro segundo de la primera *Eneada*” (1316).¹⁴ (Not by a certain imaginary perception of intelligence, but by that truthful intellect of superior power contracted substantively, where it not only sees but also tastes and touches how sweet is the Lord.) The ‘virtus intellectum superioris’ is in effect higher than mere intellect, that substantively identifies with the Divine Being (the Plotinian *nous*) in an affective manner, much like the union reported by mystics where the rational discursive intellect is left behind in the presence of the Divine.

The Pseudo-Dionysius and the definition of Love

At the heart of Lope’s understanding of Divine Love are the works of the Pseudo-Dionysius which not only widely influenced medieval and Renaissance letters but held particular significance for writers and clerics of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.¹⁵ Lope had read Dionysius attentively, probably using Joachim Perionio’s Latin translations *De*

Coelesti Hierarchia and *De Divinis Nominibus* given the details of the cited texts—and not Ficino’s commentary/translation as one might have expected. Significantly Lope calls upon Pseudo-Dionysius at the beginning and conclusion of his commentary. Commenting on the ideas expressed in verses 3-4 “y en las mentes angélicas se mira /donde la idea del calor consiste,” Lope quotes from the *De Coelesti Hierarchia* in order to validate the imagery and significance of fire as symbolic of the transformation of carnal love:

Que los ángeles estén significados por el fuego en la Escritura declara san Dionisio con las visiones de Ezequiel: *Eam enim invenies non solum rotas igneas fingere, sed etiam ignea animalia et viros quasi fulgentes*, y más adelante *Tronos igneos*, y que a los serafines *incensos ex eo nomine Scriptura declarat*; y está esto tan firme, que dice: *Eisque ignis et proprietatem et actionem tribuit* (1314; Perionio *De Coelesti Hierarchia* [Pseudo-Dionysius] ff 32r,34r).

([The fact that Angels are signified by fire in Scripture is declared by Saint Dionysius:] For you will find represented not only fire wheels, but also burning animals and men almost ablaze [and further on] burning Thrones [and Seraphim] ablaze described with that very image in Scripture; [this is so well established that] the properties and action of fire are attributed to them.)

Lope directs us to the importance of this citation from Pseudo-Dionysius indicating that it alone can provide an understanding of the meaning (‘argumento’) of his sonnet: “Y sin otras cosas discurre en *la grandeza deste nombre fuego*, como allí se puede ver tan altamente, que *por este lugar solo queda bien entendido el argumento deste soneto*” (1314, italics added). Wheels of fire, flaming animals, men almost ablaze, burning thrones, the refulgent angelic realm of Seraphim as declared by Scripture allegorically represent for Lope a sacred tradition that transforms the flames of passionate love into the angelic fire of Divine contemplation. In calling upon the angelic realm, Lope (going beyond the “antiqúisima Teología” and the “Dios de fuego” of Trismegistus) draws upon a longstanding theological tradition of angelology (strongly influenced by the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*) which ascribes to angels (“significados por el fuego”) the purity of love and the contemplation of Divinity. Bonaventure, Bernard and Aquinas, influenced in turn by Scripture, the Greek Fathers and Pseudo-Dionysius, bequeathed to the Renaissance an

extensive body of thought about angels and their role in the cosmos.¹⁶

Drawing closure at the end of his commentary Lope quotes Pseudo-Dionysius again on two occasions explicating the final tercet of his sonnet: “El Amor divino carece de fin, como escribe san Dionisio, *De divinis nominibus*, y así dice que es *quasi circulus quidam perpetuus*” (like a certain perpetual circle [1318]). A more significant citation from a well-known, frequently quoted passage of the *De Divinis Nominibus* supports Lope’s concern for divinized *eros* as a sublimation of passionate affection. Lope translates portions of it into Spanish while quoting directly from the Latin:

Lope

El divino Hieroteo, *De amoris Laudibus*, dice deste Amor, o sea divino o angélico o humano, que impele a las cosas superiores, que miren las inferiores, *prospiciant et consulant*, y que las iguales *inter se societate iungantur*, y que las inferiores *se convertant ad superiora* (1317).

Dionysius (Perionio Translation)

HIEROTEI SANCTISSIMI VIRI verba ex libro *de amoris laudibus*. Amorem sive divinum, sive angelicum, sive spiritualem, sive, ut ita dicam, animale, sive naturalem vim *quandam coniugentem miscentemque* intelligamus, quae superiora quidem impellit, ut inferioribus *prospiciant & consulant*, paria autem, ut *inter se societate iungantur*, inferiora vero ut *se convertant ad superiora*. (f. 119r-v)

(These words from the *Praise of Eros* by the most holy Hierotheus: When I speak of *eros*, whether divine, angelic, spiritual or animal, we should think of a unifying and co-mingling force which moves the superior to provide for and counsel the subordinate, equal however, so that they be joined in communion with each other, and the subordinate is converted into the superior.)

The passage is key to understanding Lope’s reliance upon Pseudo-Dionysius for it highlights the divine, angelic, spiritual or animal intercommunion of *eros* that governs all of man’s actions, explaining the unifying driving force of *eros* that inspires and motivates behavior and thus provides a conceptual resolution for Lope’s conflict. The passage appealed to Lope for it contains an often-quoted definition of *eros*—a passage that was translated, discussed and commented upon by medieval theologians and Renaissance humanists (including Ficino in

the *Convivium*). Although Lope omitted part of the definition of *eros* as *virtus unitiva* in this reference to Pseudo-Dionysius, he had taken this same phrase and associated it with Bernard of Clairvaux earlier in his commentary. The phrase is not trivial because Lope's earlier reference to Bernard implies an entire substratum of thought on the subject: "*Virtus unitiva* llamó al amor Bernardo; luego esta unión no sólo se hará con los ángeles, pero con el mismo Dios" (1313).¹⁷ But the phrase *virtus unitiva* as such does not appear in Bernard's writings. Lope mistakenly attributed it to Bernard for two reasons: 1) Bernard's established reputation for espousing Divine Love in his *Sermones in Cantica Cantorum* and the letter *De diligendo Deo*¹⁸ and 2) he associated Bernard with the phrase that had come to summarize the tradition of medieval theologians and philosophers who had cogently discussed the nature of *eros* as referenced by Pseudo-Dionysius, principal among them Thomas Aquinas. Even though Aquinas does not appear in Lope's commentary, it was Aquinas who exercised a dominant role in the scholastic debate and writings defining *eros* and *agape* in terms of *amor*, *dilectio* and *caritas*, which in turn was firmly influenced by the Neoplatonism of Pseudo-Dionysius. Lope as it appears was not unaware of this scholastic debate. Aquinas had dealt directly with these issues in his commentary on the *De Divinis Nominibus* of the Pseudo-Dionysius and in the *Summa Theologiae* as well as the commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.¹⁹ The definition of love as *virtus unitiva* is addressed by Aquinas in the formal scholastic nomenclature of *dilectio* and *amor*—Latin terms for *agape* and *eros*. *In librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio* Aquinas writes:

Dionysius shows how the terms *agape* [*dilectionis*] and *eros* [*amoris*] were used in Scripture...For each term signifies a certain uniting force [*virtutis unitivae*], insofar as it unites the lover with the beloved, since they desire each other and the same thing; and conjointly [*coniuntivae*], since both are joined at the convenience of the other by inclination, according to which two loves are had for each other, and co-mingling [*concretivae*] differently according to which in such a joining the differences of both lovers remain, when one is superior and the other inferior. (Aquinas *Opera omnia. Librum B. Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio, Cap. 4, Lectio 9*)

Denis the Carthusian (1402-1471), often considered the last of the Scholastics, compared the force of carnal love (*virtus unitiva*) with the sublimity of spiritual love, concepts not unfamiliar to Lope:

for example, this comparison consists in this: just as carnal love [*amor carnalis*] effects a carnally vivifying and prolific union of its own genus joining body and soul, so also even better and much more sublime does spiritual love [*spiritalis dilecti*] vivify, unite, soothe and join the lovers and transform them into each other (481).

These were issues that undoubtedly found resonance with Lope who had struggled to reconcile love affairs with religious commitment and who in his erudite, ‘enigmatic’ commentary sought to divinize his experience of *eros* with a purified, intellectualized exercise describing the nature of spiritual love. Accepting an impetus for reflection after some sixty plus years of struggle with the sexual and spiritual forces that provided personal, religious, conceptual as well as literary inspiration, Lope could justify his commentary both as an intimate as well as philosophical explanation—even though it may have appeared as a recondite, enigmatic exercise to some of his contemporaries and registered as pedantic to later generations.

Conclusion

Lope’s display of erudition in his commentary carries a particular function distinct from his well-known penchant for overwhelming his reader with citation after citation, suggesting a purpose other than pedantic display of knowledge. Dámaso Alonso concluded emphatically that Lope was not a philosopher and much less would we call him a theologian; but to my mind, as I have argued elsewhere, given his wide-ranging reading, he was intensely aware of the relevant issues that impinged upon the literary expression of his worldview (Brown “Lope de Vega” 31; “Lope Writing Poetry” 353; “Rhetoric” 516ff). While philosophers and theologians of his time, as well as his detractors, might have considered his sonnet and commentary literary pedantry and a popular if enigmatic reflection on the underlying conflicts of concupiscence, *eros* and spiritual commitment (“lo que en este soneto pareció a los críticos de este tiempo enigma” 1313), Lope had a more complex agenda than that of a pedantic rejoinder to his critics. I contend

that there was a part of him that projected his commentary as a personal hermeneutic suffused in a substantive explanation of Neoplatonically inspired *eros* and contemplation of the Divine; as such it was replete with human failings, slips of memory, minor errors of attribution and tinged with motives of vindication. It served not only to confound his detractors, but perhaps in a deeper sense, signified resolution of his life-long struggle to reconcile carnal obsession with the transcendence of spiritual desire particularly in line with the Pseudo-Dionysian definition of an all encompassing, unifying force of carnal and spiritual love (*virtus unitiva*). Lope, however, in the final analysis was painfully aware of his all too frequent failures to reach this ethereal state, but at least he could be consoled by the philosophical/theological justification that sexual love could be purified by the fire of ascent to Divine Love. Recall his description of love for Marta de Nevaes using a rhetorical metaplasm to characterize his conflict of flesh and spirit: “Es este amor espiritual y casi platónico, pero que en el atormentarme más parece de Plutón que de Platón.” His efforts of poetic explication and textual exegesis reveal an inherited, systematic and redemptive worldview of angelic spirits performing their divinely assigned tasks and functioning within a Neoplatonic Christian cosmos that organized the heavens and man’s place within them.

Lope’s hermeneutical exercise can be contextualized within an intellectual, meditative and affective tradition that draws from medieval and renaissance exegetical practices. Lope reflects aspects of this tradition not only because he attempts to explain and clarify the meaning of his poetic text but also because he effectively becomes his own reader, critic and aesthetic arbiter adopting the language of Neoplatonism tempered by scholastic interpretations. Lope’s self-commentary brings to the surface the deeper, polemical subtext of the transformation of Neoplatonism into a Christianized idiom that was consonant with a Tridentine religious hegemony. Considering Lope’s exposition in this light, it coincides with an ascetic tradition of writers and theologians who explain the love of the divine in treatises (Bernard, Aquinas, Denis the Carthusian, and Spanish ascetical writers) as well as the poetry of John of the Cross, Fray Luis de Leon and the testimony of the mystics. It draws from a tradition of idealized love bequeathed by Dante and Petrarch altered and renewed by an ethos of the self projected through an intellectualized transformation of the *eros* of passion sublimated in

the *eros* of divine yearning and contemplation: “Es amor un exceso del deseo, y no como Platón lo define, un deseo de inmortalidad” (*Pastores de Belén* 156), although arguably Lope throughout his own writing about “un exceso del deseo” did indeed achieve a level of immortality.

NOTES

¹ Even before the appearance of Góngora's works the poetic scene in Spain was undergoing transition. Lope had sensed these circumstances and set himself in opposition to the encroaching new modes of poetic discourse. For Lope's role in the polemic surrounding Góngora's poetry see Emilio Orozco Díaz *Lope y Góngora frente a frente* (1973). Menéndez Pidal's "Obscuridad, dificultad entre culteranos y conceptistas" perhaps best addresses Lope's subsequent conflicting assessment of Góngora. See Roses Lozano and María José Osuna (*Las Soledades; Góngora vindicado*) for the issues and relevant bibliography on *Culteranismo* and *Conceptismo*. López Bueno argues for a different focus after 1630 of "partidarios y detractores de uno u otro bando de una casi secular polémica (llámense los cultos y los llanos, llámense los gongorinos y los antigongorinos; pero no se llamen nunca culteranos y conceptistas: conceptistas eran todos en el siglo XVII)" (17). I am indebted to my anonymous readers for their incisive readings and constructive suggestions.

² I have used Blecuá's edition of *La Circe* for the text of Lope's sonnet and commentary, the *Epístola a Don Francisco López de Aguilar* (1311-18). Translations from the Latin throughout are my own unless noted.

³ In his edition of the *Soledades* Jammes stated: "dice un poco precipitadamente D. Alonso, ... Orozco lo cita y da un paso más, precisando que esta 'reacción y defensa' es 'contra el nuevo Góngora de las *Soledades*'... No creo, pues que este soneto sea un hito significativo en las polémicas antigongorinas; Pero puede demostrar que ya en 1613, y antes de que se discutieran los poemas de Góngora, cierto sector del público se interesaba por el debate sobre claridad y oscuridad en poesía" (674-75 n. 96). Montesinos corrects Schevill: "creo que Schevill yerra al comentarlo así en su edición de la comedia: 'In this sonnet Lope ridicules his affected contemporaries who favored conceptismo and culteranismo in poetry.' No hay tal cosa ... el soneto en cuestión será todo lo laberíntico que se quiera, pero no es ni culterano ni conceptista" (*Estudios sobre Lope de Vega* 161 n. 62).

⁴ For a discussion of these essays see Brown ("Lope de Vega" and "Lope Writing Poetry").

⁵ Lope's reference to *amor* as "exceso del deseo" corresponds to the meaning of *eros* as 'yearning'—a concept Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite addressed in the *De Divinis Nominibus* (*Complete Works* 4, 15, 713a), and which Lope developed with greater detail in his commentary as will be discussed later. Anders Nygren explores the dichotomy of Christian love and Hellenistic *eros* (yearning/desire) which includes but is not limited to erotic love pointing to Plato's distinction between *eros* as sensual love and *eros* as supersensible, heavenly love (Introduction, 44-57, Ch. 2, ii, 175-99 and Ch. 3, ii-iii, 208-19). Nygren's concept of Greek *eros* and Christian *agape* has been refined by Osborne who challenges "Nygren's supposed contrast between the classical and the Christian" (223). See also her discussion of *philia* and *eros* (passim) and relevant passages from the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (202-10). Halperin ("Platonic

Eros”; “Why is Diotima a Woman?”) provides an exhaustive analysis of classical, philosophical and modern interpretations of Platonic *eros*.

⁶ Carreño (“Amor regalado”; “Los mitos”; “De mi vida”) and Sánchez Jiménez (*Lope pintado*) have studied Lope’s self-representation and the fashioning of his literary personae throughout his writings. Of particular interest to our discussion is their study of Lope’s religious commitment as a devout cleric and confessive repentant within the context of the multiple religious works he wrote. (“Introducción” *Rimas sacras* [2006] especially the section “Ya soy sacerdote y rey” [45-54]).

⁷ Sánchez Jiménez makes the observation that the “furor neoestoico de los primeros años del gobierno de Olivares” (46) coincided with the publication of Lope’s *La Circe* (1624) and that in order to foster his aspirations for the position of court historian “Lope llevaba tiempo intentando modificar o incluso abandonar su persona de experto amoroso” (73). *La Circe* represents “la nueva transformación del narrador-autor en ‘platónico cisne’ (‘La Circe’, cant. 1, estr. 2) que canta pudorosamente unos amores castos” (73). Given this context an added shade of meaning could be applied to Lope’s explication in his commentary of the phrase *Castitas res est angelica*: “que este verso diga que se mira en ellos [los ángeles] se entiende por las palabras de Crisóstomo: *castitas est res Angelica, per hoc enim solum homines angelis assimilantur*” (1313). Lope appropriated the text from St. John Chrysostom’s homilies (*Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* [considered spurious by scholars], Homilia xlii, cap. xxii, viii, 464), most likely from a compendium of ‘sententia’ such as *Sanctarum Autoritatum* where the text reads: “Ioh. Chrysostomus super Matth. Omnes virtutes spirituales, res sunt angelicae: praecipue tamen *castitas, res est angelica. per hanc enim solum singulariter homines angelis simulantur, & vincitur natura virtutibus*” (f. 232). (John Chrysostom the [*Opus Imperfectum*] in *Matthaeum*. All spiritual virtues are angelic matters; especially *chastity which is an angelic matter*. For through this alone men singularly become like angels and nature is conquered by virtues.)

⁸ Lope’s predilection for certain authors (religious and secular writers, as well as authors of *compendia* and *polyanteas*) occur throughout his writings. For example, Teófilo Folengo (author of macaronic verse and the mock epic *Baldus*) reappears under his pseudonym Merlín Cocayo in Lope’s sonnet 139 “Señor Lope: este mundo todo es temas” *Rimas humanas y divinas del Licenciado Tomé de Burguillos* (See Careño’s edition n9 327).

⁹ Lope actually references the *Heptaplus* only twice (at the beginning with a citation from the second prologue of Pico’s commentary and later in a passing comment on verse five (“cuyo vuelo el sol admira”) with the statement: “y fuego le llamó Mirandulano en el capítulo I de su Heptablo”). In comparison Lope makes more significant allusions to Pseudo-Dionysius (the *De Divinis Nominibus* and the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*) and Ficino’s translation of Plato’s *Symposium* and the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

¹⁰ Dámaso Alonso points out Lope’s appropriation of Pico’s *Heptaplus*: “Tanto los pasajes de la comedia como los de la epístola son traducción casi literal de Pico”

(n.47 459), and he discusses the influence of Pico on other sonnets of *La Circe* (461-65) concluding with some interesting allusions not irrelevant to aspects of my thesis about Lope's deep-seated psycho-sexual agenda: "Ni me voy a detener ahora en ver cómo estas migajas de filosofía espiritualista le sirven de 'fermosa cobertura' para sus sacrílegos amores con Marta de Nevares" (465).

¹¹ See a related discussion of Lope's attitudes toward Platonism in Brown ("Reading Lope" 356-62); overall Lope seems to vacillate about Platonism assuming multiple postures serious as well as sardonic throughout his writings. Aurora Egido summarizes the relevant classical, courtly and medieval literary traditions of *amor* in discussing Lope's treatment of love in *La dama boba* (351-56). See also Holloway's discussion of Neoplatonism in *La dama boba* with significant references to Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium* and Castiglione. In a study of Plato and Ficino in *La Dorotea*, Trueblood comments on the Platonically inspired sonnets of *La Circe* although he does not discuss at length Lope's re-deployed sonnet and its commentary (*Plato's Symposium* 507). See also *Experience and Artistic Expression in Lope de Vega* (190-201). In my approach to Lope's expression of love and *eros* as carnal and spiritual I am at odds with A. A. Parker's view that in Lope's poetry "There is *no cult of a spiritual love in a realm above sensuality... Love is always carnal, and inconstancy and infidelity are essentially cynical or shameless... Erotic love can clash with a higher duty... but although his religious poetry is very moving it is never mystical, just as his love-poetry is never Platonic*" (133, italics added). Alban Forcione perhaps best summarizes my position regarding Parker's approach. Forcione found it "... not entirely satisfying. One might wonder, for example, what to do with the inspired Neoplatonism of Lope's sonnets to Amarilis... or his penetrating analysis of the intimate relations of eroticism and poetic creativity in what probably is the greatest anatomy of erotic experience in Spanish literature, *La Dorotea*" (271).

¹² Lope misread Ficino's text copying *carminibus* for *carnibus*. The full text reads: "Quam felix illud spectaculum fore putamus, si cui contigerit, ut ipsum pulchrum intueatur sincerum integrum, purum, *simplex*, [sic] non humanis *carnibus*, [sic] coloribus, non aliis mortalibus nugis contaminatum, se ipsum secundum se pulchrum divinum inspiciat" (*Omnia* 251). (How happy would we consider the spectacle of those whose lot it is to look upon beauty itself, sincere, complete, pure not contaminated by *mortal flesh*, ornamentation and other nonsense, but simply to examine Divine beauty in itself.)

¹³ For a discussion and bibliography on the issue of Lope's use of encyclopedia and *polyanteas* see Brown ("Lope de Vega" 31; "Rhetoric" 512ff). Four years before publishing *La Circe*, Lope as an official censor wrote the 'aprouacion' for Fray Baltasar de Victoria's *Teatro de los Dioses* (1620). In his brief description of Baltasar's work Lope exemplified his own broad conception of tradition and authority effectively parsing the significance of the *prisca theologia* and implying a basis for the multiple secular and religious citations in the later exegesis of his sonnet: "vna leccion importantísima a la inteligencia de muchos libros, cuya

moralidad emboluo la antigua Philosophia en tantas fabulas para exornacion, y hermosura de la Poesia, Pintura y Astrologia y en cuyo ornamento, los Theologos de la Gentilidad, desde Mercurio Trismegisto, hasta el diuino Platon hallaron por symbolos, y Hieroglificos la explicacion de la naturaleza de las cosas, como consta del Pimandro, y del Thimeo que los Egipcios por cosas sagradas tanto escondieron del vulgo” (1620, f 4r).

¹⁴ This passage, however, is not from the second book of the first *Ennead* as Lope mistakenly reported but from the third book of the first *Ennead*. If Lope used the 1615 edition of Ficino’s translation/commentary it is conceivable that he incorrectly copied the heading of the page “LIBR II ENNEAD. I” in the middle of which began his citation (Ficino, *Plotini Platoniorum* 17).

¹⁵ Luis M. Girón-Negrón studies the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on 16th-century Spanish mystical theology and religious writers, Luis de Granada, Juan de Ávila, Luis de León, Pedro de Alcántara, particularly Teresa de Ávila and John of the Cross. “Numerous manuscripts and editions of the Areopagite’s *oeuvre* have survived in various Spanish libraries, both in the Greek original and in Latin translation, the latter also accompanied by the medieval commentaries” (Girón-Negrón 165). Teodoro Martín’s introductory study to *Obras completas del Pseudo Dionisio Areopagita* provides a comprehensive list of the works of Dionysius and their role in Spain.

¹⁶ David Keck discusses the import of the scholastic view of angels “as ‘intelligences’ or ‘separated substances’ or ‘spirits’ from the perspective of their natures” (73) arguing for the transformation of angelology that was effected by the Franciscans, most notably Bonaventure, and the Dominicans, principally Aquinas (71-95; 129-152).

¹⁷ Two of the earliest translators of Pseudo-Dionysius, John the Sarazin and Robert Grosseteste, had rendered Pseudo-Dionysius’s definition of *eros* as: *Amorem ... unitiuam quamdam concretiuam...virtutem* (*Eros...a certain uniting and concrete force*) (*Dionysiaca* I, 225). Later commentators simply referred to it as: *virtus unitiva et concretiva*.

¹⁸ Bernard’s discussion of Love draws upon Biblical as well as Pseudo-Dionysian concepts which were also employed by scholastic theologians and philosophers. In *De diligendo Deo* (Caps.VIII-X, XV), cloaked in his customary rhetorical and homiletic style, Bernard addressed four levels of love in the pursuit of union with God which can metaphorically be related to the transformation from passionate love to Divine Love that preoccupied Lope.

¹⁹ See Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Distinctio XXXVII, quaestio I, articulus I: “Dionysius IV. cap. de div. Nom. sic difinit amorem. *Amor virtus est unitiva...*” On the *Summa Theologiae*, see I, q.xx, a.1: “Praeterea. Dionysius dicit IV, cap. de div. Nom. *Amor est vis unitiva, & concretiva.*”

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