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**GREGORIO DE MATOS AND JUAN DEL VALLE Y CAVIEDES:  
TWO BAROQUE POETS IN COLONIAL PORTUGUESE  
AND SPANISH AMERICA**

**Earl E. Fitz**

The Brazilian poet Gregório de Matos (1636-1696) and the Peruvian poet Juan del Valle y Caviedes (c. 1652-1692) were two of the brightest, most refreshing figures in the infant New World literature of the seventeenth century. Both men were impressive and multi-faceted talents; each was a biting satirist, as well as a tender lyricist, and each gave evidence of sincere and deeply held religious convictions. The poetry of these two authors, both of whom were judged to be among the most outstanding literary figures of their age, exhibits a vitality and diversity seldom found in the often excessively ornate and obscure Baroque poetry then in vogue.

Caviedes, born in Spain, emigrated to Peru as a very young man. He did not come to study in Lima, however, that city already being the bustling capital of the Peruvian viceregal territory, but secured employment in the mining industry which had already begun to flourish there. Poverty and ill health appear to have plagued Caviedes his entire lifetime, even though it seems that by the final decade of the century he had achieved considerable renown for his poetic endeavors.\* Caviedes produced more than one hundred and eighty compositions, most of which are satirical, some of which are lyrical or amorous in nature, and others that are of a sacred character. The majority of these works are included in two collections, one entitled *Poesías Diversas* or *Poesías Varias y Jacosas*, and the other entitled *Diente del Parnaso*. This latter collection, for which the author is most famous, is primarily concerned with satirizing the medical profession. His predilection for doctors as the major target for his occasionally brutal assaults appears to have been neither a random selection nor the impersonal indictment of one particular segment of the Peruvian society of his day. Instead, as Glen L. Kolb has observed, it seems probable that Caviedes' abiding antipathy toward doctors was deeply personal in nature.<sup>1</sup> Caviedes did not limit his diatribes to doctors, however. He also railed against pretentiousness, hypocrisy in clerics, venality in politicians, prideful and self-indulgent women, and anyone who was physically different from himself.

Gregório de Matos, the Brazilian counterpart and contemporary to the Peruvian poet,\*\* was born in Bahia as the son of a Portuguese gentleman

who had married a wealthy Bahian matron, the heiress to a substantial plantation. Matos, therefore, was essentially the product of a landholding aristocracy whose wealth was based upon the cultivation of sugar cane and supported by the slave trade. After studying law at the University of Coimbra, he practiced this profession in both Bahia and Lisbon, earning in both cities a reputation for legalistic subtlety, a mordant wit, and a fearless compulsion to expose and ridicule pedants and charlatans. His turbulent life was marred by financial difficulties, conjugal conflict, civil strife, professional disillusionment, and, finally, exile.

The literature and culture of the Baroque era in European arts and letters, an era deeply influenced by the writings and critical theory of Quevedo and Góngora, dominated the intellectual milieu in which Brazil and Peru were settled. It has often been said that the Baroque movement in the Americas began with the first Jesuit missionary to set foot upon the shores of the New World, and it was destined to influence the development of Latin American art and letters for centuries to follow. The distinctive characteristic of the Baroque spirit was its unique capacity to synthesize opposites. Its essence, therefore, involves an artistically creative system in which contrasts, contradictions, and opposing elements are blended together harmoniously to form a new, unified whole. In its larger sense, then, the Baroque impulse was an attempt to reconcile and integrate the elements of the Medieval and the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> The poetry of Góngora, in which one can sense those inner tensions so unique to Baroque art, exemplifies this characteristic by its merging of the religious with the profane and the erotic with the mystical. And it is within this tradition, transplanted in America, that Juan del Valle y Caviedes and Gregório de Matos created a body of verse which is at once satirical, lyrical, and sacred.

The sixteen "Romances amorosos", for example, exemplify much of Caviedes' best lyrical verse. These poems are all written in a plaintive, pastoral style and in a language and sentiment which recall the verses that were often included in the preceding century's Spanish and Portuguese pastoral nove,<sup>3</sup> such as Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana* (1559?) and Bernardim Ribeiro's *Menina e Moga* (1544). "A la muerte de mi esposa", to cite one of the best known, is a moving elegy to the poet's deceased wife. The opening lines of this short "romance" express the sentiments of loneliness and desolation which come to dominate the remainder of the poem:

¡Ay de mí! sólo quedo  
mas no, si me acompaño  
con penas, que son siempre  
compañía infeliz del desdichado

Mi sol! Mi sol ha muerto!  
Me faltan luces y me faltan rayos.<sup>4</sup>

Caviedes devoted a great deal of attention to the theme of love, not only with regard to his amorous verse, devoted to real (as in the case of his wife) or imagined women, but as a general topic in itself worthy of consideration. One of his most interesting compositions of this type is the sonnet, "Catorce definiciones al amor" in which the poet presents various contradictory aspects of this often perplexing sentiment:

Amor es nombre sin deidad alguna.  
Un agente de el ser de cuantos nacen.  
Un abreviar la vida a los que yacen,  
Un oculto querer a otra criatura.  
Una fantasma asombro de hermosura.  
Una falsa opinión que al mundo esparcen.  
Un destino de errar en cuanto hacen.  
Un delirio que el gusto hace cordura.  
Fuego es de pedernal si está encubierto  
aire es si a todos baña sin ser visto,  
agua es, por ser vicio de la espuma,  
una verdad, mentira de lo cierto,  
un traidor que, adulando, está bien quisto  
él es enigma y laberinto en suma.<sup>5</sup>

Caviedes also wrote numerous lyrical poems that dealt with a love for specific women. One of the most entertaining of these is, "A una dama que lo era del interés". This "romance" is a curious blend of satire and lament and it is unique among Caviedes' poems concerning women because it appears to be one of the few in which a personal, intimate type of relationship between poet and subject is reflected. Caviedes alludes to this woman's physical appearance, her great beauty, and expresses his love for her no less than six different times in the course of the poem.<sup>6</sup> But the author's ironic tone and his apparent bitterness stem from a conviction that he was jilted by this lady because of his poverty:

Si el ser pobre es defecto,  
poco en amor reparas,  
si desnudo le pintan,  
mas tu de tal pintura te retratas.<sup>7</sup>

Caviedes then chides the woman for such a display of crassness and materialism. He ends by hoping to wound her vanity and desires that the wrinkles of old age will prick her pride by robbing her of her beauty.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Antonio Candido believes that among Gregório de Matos' best poetry was much of his lyric verse and that, as in the poems of Caviedes, one can appreciate therein the influence of Renaissance lyricism.<sup>9</sup> Commenting further on Matos' lyric poetry, the Brazilian critic writes, "Nela se destacam o idealismo amoroso da poesia renascentista, que é retomado a

partir dos mestres portugueses, e as tensões do espírito barroco, . . .<sup>10</sup> Unlike Caviedes, however, Gregorio de Matos seems to have selected the sonnet form as the most expressive vehicle for his lyrical and amorous sentiments. The Brazilian, like the Peruvian, devotes considerable attention to the study of love as a fundamental though often bewildering life force. Among the Bahian's finest lyrics is sonnet number XXXVII, "Aos meus sentimentos", in which the poet discusses the unsettling emotional state in which he finds himself:

Corrente, que do peito destilada,  
Sois por dous belos olhos despedida;  
E por carmin correndo dividida,  
Deixai o ser, lavais a côr mudada.

Nao sei, quando caís precipitada,  
As flores que regais tao parecida,  
Se sois neve por rosas derretida,  
Ou se rosa por neve desfolhada.

Essa enchente gentil de prata fina,  
Que de rubim por conchas se dilata,  
Faz trocar tao diversa e peregrina:

Que no objeto, que mostra, ou retrata,  
Mesclando a côr purpúrea á cristalina,  
Nao sei quando é rubim, ou quando é prata.<sup>11</sup>

But in addition to composing verses about love as a general theme, Matos could also sing the praises of a particular woman. Sonnet number XVII, "A Maria de Povos, futura Esposa", is an illustration of this latter tendency:

Discreta e formossíssima Maria,  
Enquanto estamos vendo a qualquer hora,  
Em tuas faces arosada Aurora,  
Em tuas olhos, e boca, o Sol e o dia.<sup>12</sup>

And like Caviedes, Matos shows a deep appreciation of the ravages of time upon the object of his love. And in reflecting this theme, sonnet number XVII is also a beautiful expression of the "carpe diem" theme which enjoyed such great popularity during the Baroque age, both in Europe and in America:

Goza, goza da flor da mocidade,  
Que o tempo troca, e a tôda a ligeireza  
E imprime a cada flor urna pisada.

Oh, nao aguardes que a madura idade  
Te converta essa flor, essa beleza,  
Em terra, em Cinza, em pó, em sombra, em nada.<sup>13</sup>

Other poems in which the Brazilian poet sings the praises of a particular woman include sonnets number: I, "A Dona Angela . . ."; II, "A mesma D. Angela"; and IV, "Retrata o autor à D. Angela".

Exemplifying the corrosive effect of the passage of time and also the "carpe diem" theme is sonnet number CI, in which Matos, according to Moises, demonstrates, "... a idéia da 'firmeza na inconstancia,' que é urna das través mestras da poesia camoniana".<sup>14</sup> As the poet expresses it:

Nasce o Sol; e nao dura mais que um dia:  
Depois da luz, se segue a noite escura:  
Em tristes sombras morre a formosura;  
Em continuas tristezas a alegria.

Porém, se acaba o Sol, por que nascia:  
Se tao formosa a luz é, por que noa dura?  
Como a beleza assim se transfigura?  
Como o gôsto, da pena assim se fia?

Mas no Sol, e na luz, falta a firmeza;  
Na formosura, nao se de constancia:  
E na alegria, sintase tristeza.

Começa o mundo, enfim, pela ignorancia;  
Pois tem qualquer dos bens, por natureza,  
A firmeza sómente na inconstancia.<sup>15</sup>

Although both of these poets composed a great deal of amorous, even carnally inspired lyric poetry, both men were equally sincere in creating a sacred poetry which reveals their deep and genuine religious convictions. Considered from this new point of view, it is more apparent that the Liman and the Bahian have left us a poetic legacy dominated by the Baroque concept of Art as, "... a mixture of religiosity and sensualism, mysticism and eroticism, earthly and carnal values and spiritual aspirations".<sup>16</sup> Each poet, therefore, reflects the essential spirit of the Baroque age, an era in which suspended conflict and spiritual contradiction were important elements in artistic activity. Their work vibrates between the sacred and the profane, the lyrical and the obscene, the sublime and the crude.

Caviedes' religious compositions have received much less critical attention than have his more well-known satirical and lyrical poems and include numerous sonnets and "romances". The religious poetry of Caviedes, like that of Gregório de Matos, follow essentially conventional seventeenth cen-

ture themes: songs in praise of the Virgin and the Christ Child, sonnets devoted to the greater glory of the Crucifixion, "romances" which describe the orthodox Catholic concept of the Trinity and, most apparent of all, the poetic speculations on the nature of Sin, penitence, forgiveness, and ultimate salvation.<sup>17</sup> As Kilb says, "Nowhere in Caviedes' writings is the Baroque religious complex more evident than in the poems concerned with the existence and nature of God".<sup>18</sup>

In such poems as "Por qué dejó Dios su creencia a la fe y no a la evidencia" and "Prueba que se ve a Dios más patente, cuando al hombre le parece que no hay Dios", Caviedes' innate skepticism concerning the existence of God is quelled by his desire to believe that He truly does exist. Caviedes argues in both these poems that since man is foolishly skeptical of even the most obvious truths, God chose to obfuscate His existence so as to test the power of man's will to believe in Him. The author suggests, therefore, that God's purpose in making man skeptical of His existence was to intensify his belief once his doubt has been conquered by the will and the need to believe. The poems dealing with faith, doubt, salvation, the trinity, and nature of God are written in an essentially clear, direct, and straightforward manner with few of the rhetorical devices and conceits peculiar to so much Baroque poetry.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, those poems addressed to the Virgin are characterized stylistically by the usage of numerous poetic devices including conceits, hyperbole; antithesis, return, and syntactical inversion. A frequently recurring image in this religious poetry is that of the innocent Christ suffering crucifixion while the poet, the basest of sinners, remains alive and well. God's willingness to sacrifice His only son for the love and salvation of mankind is then presented to the reader as the basic unifying force behind human existence.

Four of Caviedes' sonnets, "A San Antonio Abad", "A Dios sacramentado", "A la Cruz en que Murió Cristo", and "A Cristo" particularly demonstrate the author's talent for religious mysticism. These poems are positive in attitude and concentrate upon the union of the human soul with its divine creator. Christ, depicted as the "amante" or lover of the soul, is described as the "mejor Cupido"<sup>20</sup> who aims his arrows of divine love at the hearts of those mortals who are sincere in their desire for union with Him. The language used in these poems is reminiscent of the symbolic vocabulary employed by the sixteenth-century Spanish mystics, like Santa Teresa de Jesus or San Juan de la Cruz. This suggests, moreover, that Caviedes was thoroughly familiar with the work of his European predecessors. One of his finest mystically inspired poems is "A Cristo":

Congojado mi espíritu cobarde,  
vergonzoso y confuso, llega a veros  
que, aunque mucho he tardado en conoceros,  
tengo un Dios como Vos, para que aguarde.

El jornalero soy que, por la tarde,  
llegó a la viña donde a otros jornaleros  
que madrugaron más, tantos dineros  
les disteis como a aquel que llegó tarde.  
Mi maldad, mi desgracia y mi pecado  
de quien soy me han tenido siempre ageno,  
teniéndooos con los vicios olvidado.  
ciego de torpezas, de miserias lleno,  
mas, para pecador tan obstinado  
hay un Dios que infinitamente es bueno.<sup>21</sup>

Gregório de Matos, too, is concerned with the unification of man's mortal soul and Christ's eternalness, with the purgation of sin and doubt, and with ultimate salvation. Matos' sacred verse, like that of Caviedes, reflects the carefully balanced, though seemingly discordant nature of Baroque poetics — the desire to depict earthly pleasures and the fear of eternal perdition. In sonnet number I, "A Jesus Cristo Nosso Senhor", Matos likens himself to a sheep who has strayed from his shepherd's sight:

Se urna ovelha perdida, e já cobrada,  
Glória tal e prazer tao repentino  
Vos deu, como afirmais na Sacra História:

Eu sou, Senhor, ovelha desgarrada;  
Cobrai-a; e não queirais, Pastor Divino,  
Perder na vossa ovelha a vossa glória.<sup>22</sup>

In sonnet number II, "A Jesus Cristo crucificado, estando o poeta para morrer", the figure of Christ pinioned upon a cross, suffering so that sinful mankind might be saved, is the imagetic heart of a theme which the Brazilian poet, like the Peruvian, often utilizes. As he writes:

Meu Deus, que estais pendente em um modeiro,  
Em cuja Fé protesto de viver;  
Em cuja Santa Lei hei de morrer,  
Amoroso, constante, firme, e inteiro:

Neste transe, por ser o derradeiro,  
Pois vejo a minha vida anoitecer,  
E, meu Jesus, a hora de se ver  
A brandura de um Pai, manso Cordeiro.

Mui grande é vosso Amor, e o meu delito:  
Porém, pode ter fim todo o pecar;  
Mas não o vosso Amor, que é infinito.



Esta razao me obriga a confiar  
Que por mais que pequei neste conflito,  
Espero em vosso Amor de me salvar.<sup>23</sup>

The more mystical theme of unification of the mortal soul and God's omniscient being is apparent in sonnet number III, "Buscando a Cristo":

A vós, pregados pés, por nao deixar-me,  
A vós, sangue vertido, para ungir-me,  
A vós, cabeça baixa, pra chamar-me.

A vós, lado patente, quero unir-me,  
A vós, cravos preciosos, quero atar-me,  
Para ficar unido, atado e firme.<sup>24</sup>

The essential theme here expressed, that of the sinner who begs for and receives forgiveness in the arms of the Lord, is fundamentally the same concept Caviedes expresses in many of his sacred poems.

Matos, like Caviedes, seems to resort more heavily to the use of poetic devices when he waxes mystical in his sacred poetry. Sonnet number XIX, "Achando-se um braço perdido do Menino Deus de N. Senhora das Maravilhas, que desacatarem infíeis na Sé da Bahia", is a prime example of Matos' skill in this regard. This sonnet also reflects the conceit of the part in its relation to the whole, the one to the many:

O todo sem a parte nao é todo;  
A parte com o todo nao é parte;  
Mas se a parte o faz todo sem a parte,  
Nao se diga que é parte sendo todo.

Em todo o Sacramento está Deus todo,  
E todo assiste inteiro em qualquer parte,  
E feito em partes todo, cada parte  
Em qualquer parte sempre fica todo.

O braço de Jesus nao seja parte,  
Pois que feito Jesus em partes todo,  
O todo fica estando em sua parte.

Nao se sabendo parte dêste todo,  
Um braço que lhe acharam, sendo parte,  
Nos disse as partes tôdas dêste todo.<sup>25</sup>

This poem, which also makes use of paradox and antithesis in its representation of the fragment and the totality, also suggests the extent to which the presence of "cultismo" and "conceptismo" can be seen in Matos' work. Antonio Candido, in fact, believes that:

O jogo das palavras — que soubera explorar na poesia satírica com chiste e malabarismo — torna-se aqui pesquisa das emções raras, desvendamento das contradições, busca da unidade sob a diversidade, tentativa de pacificar ou desvendar as antinomias.<sup>26</sup>

The religious poetry of both the Peruvian and the Brazilian suggests a strong, vital sense of sin, the desire for forgiveness, and a mystical yearning to integrate their souls with God. It seems clear that despite their nonconformity, even truculence, in dealing with social and intellectual matters of their time, both Caviedes and Matos were unshakable in their devotion to a just, uncorruptable, and benevolent God. Yet, despite their religious humility and devotion to the noblest aspects of Catholic Christian dogma, and Matos were, no doubt, painfully aware and deeply ashamed of clerical vice and corruption.

Caviedes, for example, wrote at least six poems (which appear in *Diente del Parnaso*) that are unmistakably anticlerical in tone and sentiment. Kolb sees a definite relationship between Caviedes' acrimonious satire of doctors and the priests of the day. He has written:

The priests were accustomed to receive fees for the funeral services they performed, and it seemed to the poet that if the latter were not actually in league with the medical profession to murder for profit, they at least aided and abetted the quacks in their nefarious activities.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Liman poet did not infrequently excoriate clerical outrages, the primary fame of Juan del Valle y Caviedes rests upon his attacks on the medical practitioners of the time. His most notorious work, *Diente del Parnaso*, is a collection of forty-seven poems (the Vargas Ugarte edition), most of which are "romances" satirizing the medical men of seventeenth century Lima. In the "Copla de el autor", which opens this work, Caviedes describes what will follow as:

Guerra Física, proezas medicinales,  
hazañas de la ignorancia, sacadas a  
luz por un enfermo que milagrosamente  
escapó de los errores de los médicos  
por la protección del Señor San Roque,  
abogado contra los médicos o contra la  
peste, que tanto monta. Dedícalo su  
autor a la muerte, emperatriz de médicos,  
a cuyo augusto, pálido cetro la feudan  
vidas y tributan saludos en el tesoro de  
muertos y enfermos.<sup>28</sup>

Caviedes asserts that the incredulous laughter which the physician's

efforts should have inspired in people was healthful for the patients but that they should have first laughed at themselves for being so naive as to believe that the doctors had ever understood their malady in the first place. So in this introductory piece Caviedes reveals the alleged purpose of his writings; the satirical poems are intended to inspire laughter, which promotes good health, and thereby counteract the deleterious ministrations of the doctors.<sup>29</sup>

Although Caviedes makes mention of nearly thirty different physicians in his satirical poems, three in particular bear the brunt of his verbal castigations: doctors Bermejo, Machuca, and Liseras. Bermejo is often attacked as being bombastic and arrogant and is the subject of twelve separate poems in *Diente del Parnaso*. The author reserves his most biting comments, however, for the fact that Bermejo had a rather large clientele of women patients in Lima. In the "Respuesta de la Muerte", Part II, Caviedes declares:

Bermejo con mucho amor  
cura a las damas, de suerte  
que se las come la Muerte  
lo mismo que el buen doctor.  
El Adonis matador  
es, y por cierto aforismo  
él se receta a sí mismo  
en geringas por delante,  
remedio que es importante  
para el mal del priapismo.<sup>30</sup>

And in "Parecer que dá de esta obra la Anatomía del Hospital de San Andrés", Caviedes carries this idea still further, suggesting that there were many girls in Lima who did not consider themselves "women" until they had received Bermejo's "special treatment", ". . . el requisito/del médico de las damas".<sup>31</sup>

The Peruvian poet launches a bitterly personal attack upon Doctor Manchuca in "Loa en aplauso de el Dr. Francisco Manchuca por haver curado a una prima del autor y averia muerto como los que cura" and writes:

Verdugo atroz, inhumano,  
cuya bárbara fiereza  
de idiota ignorancia es tanta  
que no perdona bellezas;  
  
Mal haya el oficio infame  
que escrúpulo a un hombre deja  
de cometer homicidios  
por su supina torpeza!

A mi prima machucaste,  
Machuca y ya que ofensa  
ha sido contra mi sangre,  
la he de vengar con mi vena.<sup>32</sup>

He also chastizes Machuca for believing he had attained profound heights of medical knowledge when, as Caviedes would have it, he had only as much valid information as the poet and even less common sense.<sup>33</sup>

Some of Caviedes' cruelest satire was inspired by the physical deformities of certain doctors. The poet did not always bother to distinguish between cases of genuine medical ignorance or malpractice (problems which could be corrected) and the physical (or racial) characteristics which the physicians were powerless to change.\* There are, for example, several poems in which Caviedes derides Dr. Liseras specifically for being a humpback. The "romance" entitled "A un desafío que tenía dicho corcobado con un cirujano tuerto, sobre salir discordes de una junta", is one of these and refers to Liseras directly:

Liseras, un corcobado,  
con un cirujano tuerto,  
ambos del arte, y entrambos  
sin arte, por ser mal hechos,  
tuvieron unas palabras  
sobre matar a un enfermo,  
que por matar estos diablos  
se mataran ellos mismos.<sup>34</sup>

Caviedes' theme in this poem is that two physicians (both deformed) cannot agree as to the true nature of a certain patient's malady, and so they decide to settle their dispute with a duel to the death. But both are hopelessly inept and ludicrous as armed warriors and so Death (for Caviedes, the patron saint of the medical profession) finds it necessary to intervene, explaining that if they were truly effective physicians he would gladly see them destroy themselves. But as it is, both are such disastrous incompetents in the arts of healing that Death finally cries out in frustration:

—No haya más, fuertes guerreros!  
envainen esas espadas,  
mis dóciles instrumentos;  
que dos tan grandes idiotas  
me está muy mal el perderlos,  
pues no tiene otros mayores  
la milicia de Galeno.<sup>35</sup>

The two medics then make peace and set off arm in arm to cure an elderly man. This patient, though ravaged by the passage of time and by disease, had nevertheless been able to cling to the thread of life; but upon unhappily re-

ceiving "the cure" devised by these two doctors, he dies immediately and is dispatched into the waiting arms of Death.

As can be seen from these selections, the prevalent tone of *Diente del Parnaso* vacillates between satiric invective and a form of ribald, often crude humor. As a humorist, Caviedes is most effective in his ability to combine unexpected and unusual elements so as to elicit surprise and a startled, comic response in the reader.

Like Caviedes, Gregório de Matos is most remembered and acclaimed for his satirical verse. The Bahian lawyer, reveling, wenching, and playing his *viola*, led a bohemian life that was utterly at variance with the established social conventions of the time; a life that was, for some people, a scandal.<sup>36</sup> But it was Matos' acid tongue and his sardonic sense of humor which earned for him the sobriquet of "Boca-do-Inferno". Matos' best satire springs from what must have been an unusually gifted mind, from a singular lack of fear in speaking out against wrongs and wrongdoers, and from a belief in the nobility of human integrity, not in the nobility of lineage or social position.

Unlike Caviedes, however, the "Devil's Mouthpiece" did not belabor an entire vocation, such as medicine. Matos' best satire, which, like Caviedes', often seems personally motivated, frequently evolves into a kind of social sermon, however. In such poems as "Ao Governador Antonio de Sousa de Meneses, chamado o 'Braço de Prata' ", "Benze-se o Poeta de várias ações que observa na sua Patria", and "Descreve o que era naquele tempo a cidade da Bahia", for example, the poet criticizes specific figures and aspects of seventeenth century Brazilian society, especially that pertaining to the author's native Bahia. In the work dedicated to the Governor, Matos shows that he, like Caviedes, does not shrink from tweaking the nose of very important and powerful people:

Sor Antonio de Sousa de Meneses,  
Quem sobe ao alto lugar, que nao merece,  
Homem sobe, asno vai, burro parece,  
Que o subir é desgraça muitas vêzes.

A fortunilha, autora de entremezes,  
Transpoe em burro herói que indigno cresce;  
Desanda a roda, e logo homem parece,  
Que é discreta a fortuna em seus reveses.

Homem sei eu que foi Vossenhoria  
Quando o pisava da fortuna a roda;  
Burro foi ao subir tao alto clima.

Pois, alto! Vá descendo onde jazia  
Verá quanto melhor se lhe acomoda  
Ser homem em baixo do que burro em cima.<sup>37</sup>

In the second of the abovementioned works, Matos sarcastically observes:

Dêste beatos fingidos,  
Cabisbaixos, encolhidos,  
Por dentro fatais maganos,  
Sendo nas caras uns Janos,  
Que fazem do vicio alarde:

Deus me guarde!

Dêstes avaros mofinos,  
Que poem na mesa pepinos,  
De tôda a iguaria isenta,  
Com seu limão e pimenta,  
Porque diz que queima e arde:

Deus me guarde!

Que atropelando a justiça,  
Só com virtu de postiça,  
Se premeie o delinqüente,  
Castigando o inocente  
Por um leve pensamento:

Anjo bento!<sup>38</sup>

And in the third of these three works, he notes with disgust:

A cada canto um grande conselheiro,  
Que nos quer governar cabana e vinha;  
Nao sabem governar sua cozinha,  
E podem governar o mundo inteiro.

Muitos mulatos desavergonhados,  
Trazidos sob os pés os homens nobres,  
Posta nas palmas tôda a picardia,

Estupendas usuras nos mercados,  
Todos os que nao furtam muito pobres;  
E eis aqui a cidade da Bahia.<sup>39</sup>

Matos did not spare anyone; rich or poor, powerful or weak, male or female, light skinned or dark, all were potential targets for his satire. He attacked vice, corruption, incompetence, and artificiality wherever and whenever he found it. The poet's personal disappointments are constantly reflected in his work and it seems likely that these events fueled the sharp criticisms he makes of his society. And in this sense, Matos and Caviedes both show themselves to be social reformers, sensitive to the abuses and injustices which surrounded them on a daily basis.

Stylistically, Gregório de Matos was among the first in Brazil to introduce indigenous words and expressions into his poetry. This tendency somewhat tempers his acrid sense of humor with the rich flavor of a new and exotic world. An outstanding example of his implementation of nativist vocabulary in satirical verse is the sonnet, "A Certo Fidalgo Caramuru", in which the word-play on "cu" is of special interest as is the titular usage of the Indian word "caramuru" which refers to a certain kind of large Brazilian moray eel:

Um paiá de Monal, bonzo bramá,  
Primaz da Cafraria do Pegu,  
Que sem ser do Pequim, por ser do Acu,  
Quer ser filho do sol, nascendo cá.

Tenha embora um avô nascido lá,  
Cá tern tres pela costa do Cairu,  
E o principal se diz Paraguaçu,  
Descendente êste tal de um Guinamá.

Que é fidalgo, nos ossos cremos nós,  
Pois nisso consistia o mor brasão  
Daqueles que comiam seus avós.

E como isto lhe vem por geração,  
Lhe ficou por costume em seus teirós  
Moder os que provêm de outra nação.<sup>40</sup>

It has often been argued that Gregório de Matos was not a completely original creative spirit, that he may have even been guilty of plagiarizing some of the poetry of Góngora and Queyedo. His artistic debt to the Spanish masters is clear (as is that of Caviedes) but his verse also shows the influence of Camões. His greater significance in the realm of Brazilian literature, however, arises from the candor and freshness of his poetry and the creative impulse of his impudent spirit. Armed with a rapier wit and biting tongue, he slashed right and left into the sham and hypocrisy of his young but growing nation. If one were to seek a motto for the labors of Gregorio de Matos, it might well come from the opening lines of one of his most famous poems:

Eu, que nao sei calar,  
mas antes tenho por míngua,  
nao purgar-se qualquer lingua  
a risco de arrebentar:  
Vos quero, amigo, contar,  
pois sois o meu secretário,

um successo extraordinário,  
um caso tremendo, e atroz;  
porém fique aqui entre nós.<sup>41</sup>

As has often been noted by diverse scholars of Latin American literature,\* the poetry of Juan del Valle y Caviedes and Gregório de Matos is comparable in style, form, tone, and content. Both men wrote sacred, satirical, and lyrical verse and both were rebels in an age and in societies which courted a controlled conventionality in word and deed. Both poets were gregarious, intelligent, and outspoken and both were irretrievably attracted to the physical passions of human existence, even while creating some of the most poignant spiritual confessions of their generations. As Matos flayed away at the false, the venal, the pompous, and the hollow ostentation of his beloved Bahia, so, too, did Caviedes rail at the sham, vice, hypocrisy, and institutionalized ignorance of his viceregal Liman society. Both Gregório de Matos and Juan del Valle y Caviedes castigated ecclesiastical corruption, denounced medical quackery, and attacked legal and political chicanery at every opportunity. Neither poet hesitated to publically criticize even the most prestigious officials with stinging, undiluted invective. In its radically different aspects, the lyrical, religious, and satirical verse of these two outstanding figures also reflects the complex *Zeitgeist* of their age. Their poetry represents not only the essential aspects of the Baroque era but also forms a worthy expression of humanity's eternal quest for truth, justice, and humility.

#### FOOTNOTES

\*His "Carta a la Monja de Mexico" suggests that he was not unknown to the great Mexican intellectual, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz.

\*\*There is no known evidence, however, that Matos and Caviedes were personally acquainted, although it is certainly possible that each was aware of the other's considerable reputation.

■ Among these, the name of Father Antonio de Vieira is perhaps the best known and respected, especially in terms of his being literarily representative of an entire age.

\*This can be seen in his racially inspired attacks upon one Dr. Pedro de Utrilla, a man to whom the poet refers as a "sambo" doctor, a person of Indian and Negro blood. ("Al casamiento de Pedro de Utrilla", *Obras*, p. 248.)

+ Although this assertion is of questionable relevance since theirs was an era which, among other things, stressed the worthiness of Imitation as a valid art form in and of itself.



\*cf: Samuel Putnam, *Marvelous Journey: Four Centuries of Brazilian Writing*, Knopf, 1948; and Arturo Torres-Rioseco, *The Epic of Latin American Literature*, Univ. of California, 1942.

1. Glen L. Kolb, *Juan del Valle y Caviedes* (New London: Connecticut College Press, 1959), p. 9.
2. Massaud Moisés, *Literatura Brasileira Através dos Textos*, (Sao Paulo: Editôra Cultrix, 1971), p. 79.
3. Kolb, op. cit., p. 30.
4. Juan del Valle y Caviedes, *Obras*, Ruben Vargas Ugarte, ed. (Lima: Tipografia Peruana, 1947), p. 78.
5. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
6. Ibid., pp. 56-58.
7. Ibid., p. 56.
8. Ibid., pp. 56-58.
9. Antonio Candido & J. Aderaldo Castello, *Presença da Literatura Brasileira*, I (Sao Paulo: Difusao Europeia do Livro, 1971), p. 71.
10. Ibid.
11. Gregorio de Matos, *Obras Completas*, Vol. 1-7 (Salvador: Editora Janaina, 1969), p. 41.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Moises, op. cit., p. 47.
15. Matos, op. cit., p. 42.
16. Afrânio Coutinho, *An Introduction to Literature in Brazil*, trans. by Gregory Rabassa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 99.
17. Kolb, op. cit., p. 40.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 41.
20. Caviedes, op. cit., p. 25.
21. Ibid., p. 24.
22. Matos, op. cit., p. 37.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 38.
25. Ibid., p. 39.
26. Candido, op. cit., p. 71.
27. Kolb, op. cit., p. 44.
28. Caviedes, op. cit., p. 212.
29. Kolb, op. cit., p. 14.
30. Caviedes, op. cit., pp. 226-27.
31. Ibid., p. 220.
32. Ibid., pp. 259; 261.
33. Ibid., pp. 259-60.
34. Ibid., p. 237.
35. Ibid., p. 238.
36. Samuel Putnam, *Marvelous Journey: A Survey of Four Centuries of Brazilian Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 60.
37. Candido, op. cit., p. 82.
38. Ibid., pp. 83-84.
39. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
40. Ibid., p. 81.
41. Matos, op. cit., p. 261.

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