Góngora's Filthy Court: "Jura Pisuerga," Tradition and Rupture in a Scatological Sonnet

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Introduction

Scatology, the "logos" of excrement, points to an upside-down ordering discourse in which the grounding of popular tradition or nature disrupts the higher order centered upon the upper body—the heart or the head[1]. The pairing together of lower and upper body, waste and words, emphasizes a playful overturning of values, allows for individual and social release, and expresses the grounds of need that conservative canonicity is thought to ignore. Such low-brow traditions are manifestations of lower impulses that conformist discourses, following Christian and Platonic ideals[2], typically outlaw or repress in order to hide any logos-to-waste connection; a link between, on the one hand, the spirit or breath expelled through the mouth and, on the other, the filth of lower and other bodily excretions.

Conceived as a poetic grammar, the scatological demand allows for a recuperation of immediacy without giving reflective abstraction a short shrift. It may at times, as sacred parody, determine a moral pedagogy to ward off sin, as in John Milton's religious epic, *Paradise Lost*, or Dante's *Inferno* (Lehnhof, 2-5; Goldstein, 60-66). Typically, the scatological poet recovers the immediate bodily content of reality while uncovering the underlying, counter-discursive potentialities of closed discursive systems. The resulting, and ideal, literary production will point to a fuller selfhood no longer tied to the restrictive clothes of a dominant canon—a renewed identity where bodily needs shaping cultural and historical practices are largely conveyed through carnival, satire, iconoclastic character, and other subverting discourses (Blanco, 159-201; Carreira 2021, 112-13; Giles, 4-28; Lázaro Carreter, 145-46; Pérez Romero, 67-72; Martin, 141-45; Lee, 22).

A related interpretation identifies scatology with nothingness, annihilation, or death, all well-known tropes of baroque sensitivities and obsessions. This sensually graphic aesthetic comprises the gamut of artistic expressions, including the religious representations of death and last judgment, as in the so-called "postrimerías," or "last stages," of man's existence. Well-known examples of this seventeenth-century Spanish trend include Francisco de Quevedo's metaphysical poetry and, in the plastic arts, Juan de Valdés Leal's paintings (*In ictu oculi* and *Finis gloriae mundi*). Both artists express an existential and philosophical awareness through such themes as nothingness, the horrors of death, disabuse (*desengaño*), contradictions of time, and a fundamental inadequacy and frustration of the ego. It is an aesthetic characterized by a series of stylistic diffractions and juxtapositions attempting to organize a contradictory world of unease through extreme symbols of *nihilum*—skulls, maggots, decay, tombs, tragic mythological figures, and other

[1] Greek σκῶρ, σκατός, dung, ordure, and λόγος, discourse, speech, i.e., the aesthetical poetics of excrement. Huarte de San Juan discusses whether the brain or the heart is the "principal part" where man's "rational faculty" resides. Following Plato and Galen, he chooses the brain (277-83).

[2] Plato considers visual and poetic art removed from the truth and appealing to man's lower passions, a part that he calls "irrational and lazy and inclined to cowardice" (348) (*Republic* 602c-605c).

grotesque imagery (Balcells, 563-66; Kinkead, 225-36; Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, 233-35; Molho, 133-38, 208-09; Read, 239-47).

Contemporary philosophy, usually following a Catholic, melancholic vein or a Neo-Stoic skepticism inspired by classical authors, also exhibits a nihilistic aesthetic that questions Aristotelian authority and prefers a reasoned examination of nature—a sort of tabula rasa upon which the results of a new epistemology can then be written. One such philosopher, a Portuguese exile in France, Francisco Sanches (1551-1623), in his *Quod nihil scitur*, *That nothing is known* (1581), states: "Autoritas credere iubet; ratio demonstrat: illa fidei; haec scientiis aptior" "Authority bids us believe, whereas reason demonstrates; the former is more suited to faith, the latter to the sciences" (Sanches 94, 172). And he begins his treatise by proposing a radically nihilistic affirmation as the foundation of knowledge: "Nec unum hoc scio, me nihil scire; coniecto tamen nec me, nec alios" "I do not even know this one thing, namely that I know nothing. I infer, however, that this is true of myself and of others" (95, 172). Sanches' work stands out as a significant contribution in epistemology, the problem and method of knowledge acquisition that René Descartes would later take up in *The Discourse on the Method* (Limbrick 55-56).

That true knowledge ought to be based upon nothingness seems to accord with the Bakhtinian series of the grotesque, which destabilizes the clothed, proper, and idealized hero by displaying his naked and filthy body, the symbol of man's "unrealized surplus of humanness" (Bakhtin 1981, 37; 170-71). No ideological system or closed genre can contain man in all his tensions and "dynamics of inconsistency." Thus, the hero carries his comedic image within; he exudes parody: hero and clown at the same time, hero and comic mask. Bakhtin's clothing metaphor, "All existing clothes are always too tight, and thus comical, on a man" (37), points to the insufficiency of the epic genre, a narrative where the hero's flaws may bring him down to carnivalesque performances.

These representations of the lower body are not solely negative. Indeed, the grotesque emphasizes the values of ambivalence, duality, change, and transformation: death leading to birth, abuse leading to praise. Baltasar Gracián reiterates the "postrimerías" message: "el tiempo vuela, la vida acaba, la muerte le coge, la sepultura le traga, la tierra le cubre, la pudrición le deshace" (quoted by Montesinos, 532). Again, the focus remains on the productivity of exemplarity, as in Valdés' works. In the Seville church decorated with these paintings, members of the religious brotherhood would use different sermons to guide their prayers. The sermon on death reads in part, "'To ponder the brevity of life, and certain death… to paint the rigorous danger of death with the greatest grandeur ending in worms; to comfort us in holy alms and exercises of Charity'" (Kinkead, 229). The example of putrefaction, the annihilation of human life, can lead to knowledge, the truth of one's existence encapsulated in a tomb.

The ambivalence and instability of such grotesque images hold true in baroque as much as in carnivalesque aesthetics. Word play and figurative speech in poetry adds to the ambivalence and unstable content, especially when—as in Góngora's case—they are condensed, intensified, and packed with metaphor, periphrasis, antithesis, hyperbaton, or Latin (ablative and word order) and Greek syntax (accusative) (Alonso 1961, 218-220; Rose, 135; Segel, 101-16). Bakhtin's carnival discourse, though proceeding in a different manner, also suggests ambivalence, instability, and duality leading to an upending dynamic and, in the end, to release and renewal. In carnivalesque speech, vulgar insults may suggest abuse and its opposite, praise. Explaining Panurge's litany to man's genital member

(*couillon*), a vulgar word repeated some three hundred times, Bakhtin notes that such widespread usage is ambivalent, neither negative nor positive: "the ambivalent word *couillon* as a familiar combination of praise-abuse is universal" (Bakhtin 1984, 419). In this example we see, he adds, "an awakening of the ancient ambivalence of all words and expressions, combining the wish of life and death, of sowing and rebirth" (420). The grotesque body, while enacting an aesthetic of becoming and change, inhabits, undermines, and complicates straightforward orthodox practices and rituals.

Bakhtin's hero, made comic by dwarfing and constricting clothes, contains in essence potentialities that promise the outburst of grotesquerie. Somewhat at odds with various early modern tropes that criticize the falsity of art, the validity of this interpretation lies on the fact that those early critiques naturally ignore or belittle the scatological motif in the sense here considered. For example, Juan Luis Vives' denunciation of *veritas fucata*, painted truth, has little in common with scatological considerations. A rather classical idea that rejects the fraud and falsehood of foul poetry, *spurca poesis*, represented as a made-up, adorned woman, Vives conceives of truth, instead, as the perfect good, an unadorned naked woman like Boethius' Lady Philosophy, of Christian and Neoplatonic inspiration (Vives, 66-83; Kluge, 261).

Góngora and Spanish Satire

Vives' pure or naked representation leaves out not only the truth of the belly, but any effective satirical criticism directed at courtly, social, historical, or personal targets. His is a sin-driven rationale. Contrastingly, the corrective of scatology (indeed, of satire in general) sends up high art by subversive ridicule via an open, lower body, vulgar critique. It weakens and subverts persons, practices, and institutions. Irvin Eherenpreis puts it clearly, "satire is traditionally associated with filth, and the satirist is described as throwing turds and urine on those whom he ridicules" (cited by Esty 31). This is partly why some of Luis de Góngora's (1561-1627) output was considered malicious gossip or defamation, *maledicencia*, or personal attacks against specific individuals (Blanco, 173, 178). The writer unleashes his satire, burlesque production, and scatological tropes, against the hegemonic high art of an idealized court and the equally hierarchical epic and pastoral genres, Renaissance traditions consolidated by Garcilaso de la Vega's canonical poetry, which was inspired in turn by Italian and classical models (Blanco, 162-66; Alonso 1950, 59-68; Cortijo Ocaña and Cortijo Ocaña, 84-88; Morros, 28-31).

Scholars have noted, on the other hand, the natural presence of scatological content in Spain's traditional *cancionero* poetry, folk-like lyrical compositions where lower, grotesque body subject matter figures prominently as part of an established "lower" canon. And although contemporaneous and subsequent literary criticism censored it, the practice continued unabated in the early modern period. The tradition displays the self's natural, bodily immediacy as central to satirical structure. In the fifteenth-century *Cancionero de Baena*, for example, poet Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino resorts to scatological and pornographic motifs that pollute the high art of courtly love, "el arte de trobar" "the art of song/poetry." Designed to sing the praises of love and the ideal woman, the *cancionero* is also open to scatological contamination. Responding to Françisco de Baena's scatological counterpoint against him, Villasandino accuses Baena of writing vile poetry as well: "deviera considerar / que en el arte de trobar / mierda es en quanto publica" (216) "he ought

to consider that, in the art of song, everything he publishes is shit." The technique contrasts high and low art, the art of song and its publication, with the immediacy of waste, a move that brings the canonicity of courtly song to its lowest, or negative, value. This satirical tradition blooms and survives well into the seventeenth century with poets like Quevedo and Góngora, though the latter eschews vulgarity and chooses, instead, allusion.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, critic, poet, and painter Juan de Jáuregui (1583-1641) would wage his own aesthetic battle in his *Antídoto contra la pestilente poesía de* Las Soledades, an attack on Góngora's long baroque poem, *Solitudes*. Jáuregui opens his work with an all-out, straightforward scatological assault. His argument connects scatology with bad, anti-canonical poetry to disqualify his opponent as someone either ignorant of canonical rules or one willfully besmirching an honorable tradition. Góngora's poetic triumph and lack of critics, suggests Jáuregui, do not prove a capacity to write heroic verse (*versos heroicos*), nor his valor (*valentía*) or ownership of sword and cape (*espada i capa*), both symbols of caste and nobility. The representatives of the canon, those who *can* write epic poetry and possess valor and sword as members of the high caste, do not fear or shy away from Góngora's challenge. Rather, they keep away out of revulsion at the scatology he exudes and splashes about:

> Si un honbre ultrajara a otros, desafiándolos en pública plaça a reñir con espada i capa, sin duda le aceptarían el desafío muchos. Pero si el tal retador señalase por armas sendos trapos cagados, nadie sería tan poco limpio que saliese al certamen, ni se inputarían de cobardes quantos lo rehusasen. Assí, las más vezes dexan a Vm. por señor de el canpo, viéndole enpuñar un soneto pedorro o merdoso… me resuelbo a no dárseme una castañeta, aunque Vm. desde luego invoque las sucias Musas de su puerco Esgueva, y aunque al punto se desataque o remita mi memorial a los calçones o a los truenos de su Occidente (Joiner Gates, 85).
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> If a man rained outrage unto others and challenged them to fight in the public square with cape and sword, many would no doubt accept the challenge. But if the jouster were to name as weapons some shitty rags, no one would be dirty enough to come out to joust, and all who refused would not think of themselves as cowards. So, most times they leave you lord of the field, since they see you wielding a sonnet smeared with farts or shit… And I am resolved not to care a bit, even if your Excellence will surely invoke the dirty Muses of your pig-dirty Esgueva and at once unloose your clothes and send my criticism to the breeches or thunders of your Occident.[3]

In other words, Góngora's *Soledades* is disparaged as a degenerate and dirty pseudo-epic that threatens an established canon whose flag Jáuregui picks up. It is an

[3] Jáuregui refers to Góngora's series of scatological sonnets and poetry featuring the dirty court and rivers of Valladolid, among which the *letrilla* "¿Qué lleva el señor Esgueva?" reiterates the description of the river as the gutter that carries the city's excrements and urine. As Carreira points out, the critique in *Antídoto* diminishes in value if we consider Jáuregui's own baroque poetry, of such ornate extremes that even Góngora, as well as others, mocked it (Góngora, 332-33, note 54). Jáuregui's poem, *Orfeo*, however, does not quite share in Góngora's excessively syntactic style. Jammes analyzes these scatological poems under what he considers Góngora's "menosprecio de corte" output (1967, 116-26). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

excessive, and unwarranted, reduction of the poem to scatology and its author to the non-gentleman class (or caste) characterized by a series of lacks: courage, cleanliness, sword, and cape—the accoutrements of nobility. Such demotion makes the poet into a revolting carnival clown, placing his dangerous art on a par with belly excretions with the goal of denouncing his outrage (*ultrajar*), the debased gauntlet that Góngora has thrown out as representative of anti-canonical forces vying against Jáuregui's purported gentlemanlike, discursive order. This carnivalesque criticism is intended to blunt the counter-discursive sharpness of *Soledades*, a new and destabilizing type of epic, pastoral or lyrical practice, a baroque undermining of the canon, which, according to Jáuregui, echoes, and in fact can be equated with, Góngora's earlier scatological carnivalization of the Valladolid royal court.

Jáuregui's introductory scatological mockery, and the equally scatological response by one of Góngora's friends, Francisco de Córdoba, Abad de Rute (1565?-1626), show that both negative and positive appraisals by Góngora's contemporaries may veer easily into the humble, visceral, or lower-body imagery either to debase or defend the poet's novelties in style and thematic content. Jáuregui insists on connecting Góngora's filthy satire of the royal court with his serious production with the obvious intent to denounce and devalue it. Rute's answer, *Examen del* Antídoto, consequently flings the scatological content back in Jáuregui's direction. He is surprised about the "bad odor" and "filth" he is reading (*mal olor, inmundiçia*), and equally astonished that Jáuregui will show his worse traits or merchandise, his dirty wares, even his lower body, placing them at the forefront of his attack, instead of hiding them in the nether regions where they belong:

> Maravillóme por estremo […] siendo así, que no hay vendedera, que de la fruta anieja, y podrida haga capa a la sana, y fresca […] pues no en valde la naturaleça, en las partes más ocultas de nuestro cuerpo, dió sitio a las menos limpias […] [Vm.] epiloga quantas suçiedades a dicho, a su pareçer, en muchos pliegos de papel nuestro autor de las *Soledades*, siendo çierto que a de mancharse quien tocare la pez, y que tarde, o nunca perderán su olor los atenores de la inmundiçia […] y verá la poca [raçón] que a tenido en querer ençenagar como a puerco, al autor de las *Soledades*. Vm. lo reprehende por sucio; luego lo a de ser en sí, o en sus obras; si en sí, vaya en buena hora, que Alguaçiles hay de la limpieza, que le saquen prendas […] nadie le a visto en estado que por lo manchado, o lo mugriento, pueda passar plaça de lego en alguna Religión. Si lo es en las obras, o en esta de las *Soledades*, o en otras; no en esta, como consta della mesma, luego en otras; Si en otras, ¿en qué delinquió ésta, que contra ella se arma Vm. de tan asqueroso arnés, y le da con él en cara sin mereçerlo? […] demás de que, si Esgueva es sucio en obras, ¿qué mucho que se descriua por tal en palabras? (Artigas, 400-401; Mancinelli, 117-19).
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> I was astonished in the extreme… because no fruit-selling woman would place the old and rotten fruit on top of the fresh and ripe… for not in vain did nature place our least clean parts in the most hidden recesses of our body… Your excellency makes a list of all the filthiness that, in your opinion, our author of *Solitudes* wrote in many sheets of paper, and claims it's certain that anyone who touches that excrement will be stained and hardly, if at all, will they lose the foul odors of filth… but you will see how wrong you were in trying to cover the author of *Solitudes* in

> mud, like a pig. You reprimand him for being dirty, either himself or his work; if himself, that's good and fine, for there are policemen of cleanliness who will take care of it… [but] nobody has seen him so stained or grimy as to pass off as a low-class cleric. If he is dirty in his work, in the *Solitudes* poem or in others, it is not in this one (*Solitudes*) as we can plainly see. If in other works, where is the crime committed in *Solitudes*, against which Your Excellency has armed himself with such filthy armor and hit him in the face with it without deserving it? […] Besides, if [the river] Esgueva is filthy in fact, why should we be surprised that it is so described in words?

Though Jáuregui's attacks were from the first effectively denounced, not least because in several instances his claims appear weak, trivial, or ill-intentioned (his criticism about the title, *Soledades*, is a case in point), both his opening salvo and Rute's sarcastic response demonstrate the uses of a scatological aesthetic as a way to sort out the limits and capabilities of Góngora's new literary trend, a painful parturition of sorts, the coming up of a literary and cultural movement characterized by innovative, and cumulative, rhetorical means in writing and thinking about the world. By taking on and adopting Jáuregui's scatological strategy, Rute's humorous rejoinder attempts a reversal: to debase the *Antídoto* and to elevate *Soledades*; or rather, to highlight the lack of connection between the two, ensuring that the poem is not turned into the aesthetically filthy output Jáuregui deems it to be.

Jáuregui's disease metaphor (*Soledades* as poison and pestilence, or plague) requires an antidote or medicine to cure the infection, preserving the health of the literary republic, the maintenance of classical tradition. Hence Góngora's transgressive poem may also be equated with heresy, since filth and its opposite (*limpieza*) were common coin when discussing ethnic and religious identity and in determining someone's *converso* ancestry, both in legal inquiries and satirical poetry. Jáuregui, in fact, characterizes Góngora's obscure and complicated style as not wholly "Catholic," common or universal, calling it a "poetic blasphemy," and comparing it with the Druids' pagan, "extravagant rituals" (Joiner Gates, 98-99).

Yet despite this attempt to confuse low and high art so as to attack Góngora's new poetry, the issue seems to have been decided in Góngora's favor before his death, even if posterity for the next three centuries would favor Jáuregui's slanted vision. One critical consensus today claims that the poet's innovative output, from 1613 on, is a watershed moment initiating in earnest the Spanish baroque lyrical period and style. The claim refers chiefly to two crucial poems, *Soledades* and *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*, as well as to the immediate and subsequent reaction (for and against) that they and other similar poems set off (Carreira 1998, 225-37; Vilanova, 130-38; López Bueno, 205-08).

In addition to baroque themes and style gleaned from those serious poems, however, critics have noted that Góngora routinely peppers them with low, vulgar, or popular themes. These he uses, of course, in his satirical verse, a second fundamental component of his lyrical production. Some of these satirical resonances were noted by Jáuregui and other contemporary readers, and so popular and scatological content continues to impinge on the poems' ironic, underlying intentionality, as well as in Rute's justifications. One example involves Rute's answer to Jáuregui's scorn over Góngora's claim about the invention of spoons, "[leche] impenetrable casi a la cuchara, / del viejo Alcimedón invención rara"

(*Soledades I*, 151-52; Mancinelli, 164-65). He brings up in his defense noted classical authors, but he also resorts to explanations bordering on triviality and lower-body imagery: the Greek Alcimedón becomes the vulgar, popular Perogrullo—an incarnation of the simpleton who states the obvious—because Jáuregui's absurd contentions, claims Rute, move one to laughter, if not to an upset stomach: "[N]o ay cosa en el *Antídoto* que me parezca más donayrosa, ni que pueda mover más, si no el estómago, la risa" (Artigas, 414).

A similar response occurs when food is associated with a rejection of both poison and appetite, a nonsensical statement, according to Jáuregui, "Manjares que el veneno / y el apetito ignoran igualmente" (*Soledades I*, 865-66; Jammes 1994, 374). It goes without saying that any explanation regarding food will likely involve the stomach, hunger, or bodily need. Rute first agrees with Jáuregui's criticism about poison and food, "los manjares rústicos, y groseros, por serlo ignoran el veneno, pues nunca a nadie en la vida se dio veneno en mondongo" (Artigas 415). But, he goes on to claim, a similar explanation can easily be extended to appetite, since "rustic" and bad food, like Jáuregui's "onion," may be thought of as "ignoring" appetite: for a hungry man will eat anything, the most vile, tasteless foods, even a hard, stale piece of bread, like Lazarillo de Tormes, whose hunger and appetite can ignore the wretchedness of whatever provisions are available, however revolting they might be: "¿Ay cosa (aunque más necesaria) menos apetitosa, que el pan, y con todo comía con tan buena gana Laçarillo de Tormes los mendrugos duros, que se la puso el escuderote su amo?" (Artigas, 415). And so it is that *Soledades*, a seemingly traditional pastoral poem, yet containing veiled, humble content, or potentially satirical resonances, embroidered with new and excessive rhetorical techniques, can lead naturally to attacks and defenses that open up its visceral and bodily semantics—touching even on the picaresque, a genre where the lower body plays a fundamental role, if not *the* role par excellence.

Although this defense seeks to align Góngora's poem with Horace's *aurea mediocritas*, and in praise of frugal, rustic life, Jáuregui's attacks, and consequently Rute's responses, stay within the realm of lower-body, humble vocabulary and themes ("ratero," low, vile, with the meaning of "crawling close to the ground") (Artigas, 454). Such thematic speech and content are justified in elevated style, claims Rute, because poetry allows for "diversity" and juxtaposition, besides the fact that classical and canonical authors have used "low" or common expressions to good effect. He points out that Virgil and Lucan use "vomitar," and that we can find in Garcilaso such words like "alimañas," "súpito," and "Diz que" (Artigas, 433, 458). Moreover, cacophonies occur even with these classical writers, to the point that scatological and pornographic echoes inadvertently slip by (Mancinelli, 153-55).

Critics today have expanded on the topic of low-brow word play in Góngora's serious lyric and have suggested a character motivation. Robert Jammes, to cite but two of his examples, notices the vulgar suggestion in *Soledades I*, line 1063, "bien que su menor hoja un ojo fuera" and the potentially erotic and even ribald echoes of line 893, "Vivid felices" (Jammes 1994, 414-16; 600-601). There is a playful element to the poet's whole output, a "rebellious vitality" even in his serious poems (Blanco, 342-43). Adopting another critic's suggestion (Jesús Ponce Cárdenas), Blanco adds that these poems show, or should be read as displaying, a double semantic level: one serious, the other playful, the latter of which can be thought of as a humorous counterpoint underlying the serious plane. These two opposing poles form a unity that shows intermittent gaps allowing comic, vulgar,

erotic, or otherwise ludic content to peer through. Lázaro Carreter and Carreira have analyzed the poet's "etopeya," or "personal character," as evinced from his serious output. The former suggests for Góngora a "nervous," undisciplined character wasted in "leisure" ("mis ocios"); a split spirit and work tilting between "lo sublime y lo chocarrero," "sublimity and vulgarity" (Lázaro Carreter, 146). Carreira seems to agree: Góngora's poetry is self-deprecating, his poetic message a play of mirrors both funny and vulgar ("chusco"), displaying an ability to laugh at himself (2021, 42). Before them, Alonso had noted Góngora's "chocarrero juego de palabras," "vulgar/jocular word play," in the serious poem "En un pastoral albergue," inspired by Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, about the lovers Angelica and Medoro. Angelica, "la hermosura del orbe," "the beauty of the world," puts on shoes and ties them up "en lazos de oro," "with golden laces," so that she will not be able to run away, "y no se vaya por pies." This low-brow, vulgar line taints any elevated style or content and proves the poet's reflex resort, a tendency to debase, to taint any serious content (1961, 29).

Turning to Góngora's satirical production, a modern critic notes that Góngora's parody of the court lacks "subtleties of structure" and "complex meaning" tied to universal ideas such as love or death. He goes on to say that these poems work best as biographical readings, a mere interest in the "elucidation of contemporary references" (Calcraft, 66). While valid, such remarks seem to dismiss the cleansing rational of the purge as well as the established literary practice of *cancionero* parody, often dismissed precisely because of its vulgar content. Referring to "Carajicomedia," a satirical composition found in the *Cancionero de obras de burlas* (1519), well-known critic Rodríguez-Moñino, in a typical appreciation, labels it "perhaps the most ragged, obscene, and brutal found in all the old Spanish Parnassus", "acaso la más desgarrada, obscena y brutal de todo el parnaso viejo español" (58). By contrast, a Bakhtinian reader like Pérez-Romero suggest that Carajicomedia "destroys two vital beliefs: the focus on the afterlife, and the idealization of society and culture" (70). Indeed, it is through bodily and scatological expression that these compositions may lead to skeptical doubt and nothingness, and thus to a fuller understanding of death and love grounded on social rituals.

If we consider a canonical form like the sonnet, and place its parody next, we can see both the canon and its rupture, restrictive clothes and waste matter, or bodily semantics, side by side, advancing two opposing yet complementary views. This of course happens with all canonical poems, as in Hernando de Acuña's parody, or "lira contrahecha," of Garcilaso's "Oda ad Florem Gnidi" (Rivers, 68, 105). The latter's high style, adopting a modestly "humble" expression, "Si de mi baja lira," is mocked in parody as "De vuestra torpe lira," which begins a series of satirical, stylistic metamorphosis. Regarding the sonnet form, Fernando de Herrera (1534-1597) considers it a representation of poetic unity, "Es el soneto la más hermosa composición i de mayor artificio i gracia de cuantas tiene la poesía italiana i española" (265), "The sonnet is the most beautiful composition, with the most artifice and grace of all Italian and Spanish poetry." Beauty, artifice, and grace, however, suggest for the parodist a disruption by their opposites: ugliness, roughness, and grotesqueness. (Scatological poetry, especially Góngora's, is of course fashioned *with* syntactic "razón," "orden" y "concierto," to use Covarrubias' definition of "artificio." By "roughness," allusion is made to the tawdry content of the sonnet). Since parody's productivity relies upon differences instead of similarities (Sangsue, quoting Linda Hutcheon, 80), canonical force tends to erase or hide those fissures to keep the distorted

court from emerging[4]. By Góngora's time, the widely established practice of the parodied sonnet in Spain and Europe has rendered it malleable to all types of handling.

Góngora's parody of the court

Sonnet 107 in Ciplijauskaité reads as follows:

1 Jura Pisuerga a fe de caballero,
2 que de vergüenza corre colorado,
3 solo en ver que de Esgueva acompañado
4 ha de entrar a besar la mano a Duero.

5 Es sucio Esgueva para compañero
6 (culpa de la mujer de algún privado)
7 y perezoso para darle el lado,
8 y así ha corrido siempre muy trasero.

9 Llegados a la Puente de Simancas,
10 teme Pisuerga, que una estrecha puente
11 temerla puede el mar sin cobardía.

12 No se le da a Esguevilla cuatro blancas.
13 Mas ¿qué mucho, si pasa su corriente
14 por más estrechos ojos cada día?

> Pisuerga is swearing on his faith as a gentleman / and flowing red in shame / to see that, accompanied by Esgueva, / he has to enter and kiss Duero's hand. / Esgueva is a dirty companion / (the fault of some favorite's woman) / and lazy to keep up, / and so he has always run behind. / Arriving at the Simancas bridge, / Pisuerga is afraid, because a narrow bridge / may scare [even] the sea, and not out of cowardice. / Little, foolish Esgueva does not care one bit. / Why would he, since his current flows / through narrower eyes every day?[5]

The rupture of courtly ideals displayed in this sonnet is typical of the poet's scatological output, which offers paradoxical conceits crowned in the end by expected vulgar puns—the "narrow eyes" is code for gutters or anuses. It mimics and mocks high-flown sonnets that describe cityscapes to exalt regional pride or trigger nostalgic themes, *ubi sunt* motifs, or emotive expression. Herrera provides an example of the first kind, one of Santillana's sonnets where distance, hopelessness, and worry may be cured, not by the rivers Tagus or Guadiana, but by Guadalquivir alone (279). Besides situating the speaking

[4] Here and elsewhere "parody" is understood as humorous text (or discourse) that mocks a model text, or proto text, considered as a canonical and ideological category, like the Renaissance image of the ideal courtier in Garcilaso de la Vega or Castiglione. See Bayless' *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 1-7; Rose, 7-19, 279-83. Edwards traces the equation between Greek comedy and scatology, as well as the latter's positive, negative, and ambiguous capacities (163-68). For an overview of parody, see Sangsue's *La relation parodique*, and G. D. Kiremidjian.

[5] Alemany Selfa proved useful in translating the poem. I give a modernized Spanish version of the sonnet.

voice within a familiar homeland, the rivers stand for an idealized space that ignores descriptions suggestive of a materially besmirched urbanity. *Ubi sunt* poetry presents given spaces (cities, monuments, rivers) as markers to emphasize or contrast the poet's loss, nostalgia, or time-related range, as in Gutierre de Cetina's "Si de Roma el ardor, si el de Sagunto" "if Rome's and Sagunto's fire," where the poetic voice compares the pain of cities ravaged by time to the "immortal pain" caused by a woman's "cruelty" and lack of "pity" (*Flores de baria poesía,* 646).

In Góngora's parodic sonnet, by contrast, courtly space, following the tradition of *cancionero* satirical poetry[6] extensively mined by Golden Age poets, unfolds into a celebration of the grotesque body. Scatology disputes, and fuses with, the canon of courtly love and the Spanish tradition of court criticism. The scatological rupture relieves the pressure contained in classical Petrarchan poetry, freeing highly stylized material and exposing its potential weaknesses. Judging Góngora's poetry in general, Lázaro Carreter explains that it opposes the "hierarchical and unitary vision" of Renaissance writers, proposing instead a vision of dispersal and chaos expressed in well-known antitheses and correspondences between two or more "poetical objects" (42-43).

As mentioned before, Castiglione's influential *Il Libro del Cortegiano* offers the model for an ideal courtier brimming nonetheless with ambiguity, a problematic work that shares some of the tensions developed in Góngora's parodic turn. These tensions are voiced as biases that Castiglione's courtiers show towards first impressions, noble birth, and a competition to hide their doubtful nobility—themes that in Góngora's sonnet become metaphorical open gutters displayed by such images as the *privado* and the city's polluted rivers:

> Ché se saranno dui omini di palazzo, i quali non abbiano per prima dato impression alcuna di se stessi con l'opere o bone o male, sùbito che s'intenda l'un esser nato gentilomo e l'altro no, appresso ciascuno lo ignobile sarà molto meno estimato che 'l nobile (Castiglione, 43).
>
> For given two gentlemen of the court, neither of whom as yet has shown what he is like by his actions, either good or bad, as soon as it is discovered that one of them was well born and the other not, the latter will be respected far less than the former (56). [7]

In Góngora's sonnet, likewise, the revelation of doubtful nobility brings shame, *vergüenza*, and potentially besmirches a courtier of low birth or his ignoble associates. Góngora's satirical reversal hinges on the appearance of cleanliness *as* pure nobility, the "impressions," *impressioni*, the courtier should have in the opinion of most men, "per la opinion universale." The underlying tautness in the official court allows Góngora's fruitful parody, where competition among "omini di palazzo" intent on securing their reputations by not offending onlookers, "spettatori," shows them taking part in "public combats and games," "spettaculi de' combattimenti e de' giochi" (Castiglione, 44). The courtiers'

[6] The previously mentioned "Carajicomedia," a long satirical poem detailing the lives of prostitutes, parodies Juan de Mena's canonical *El Laberinto de Fortuna*. For the "series" of the body and their redefinition of time and space, see Bakhtin (170-71).

[7] I use George Bull's English translation.

reputation depends upon their public behavior or performance; on impressions they leave behind. And their vaunted grace and "sprezzatura" turn out to be products of simulation, mere surface appearance, words and acts represented in the theater-like space of the court. It is, says Amedeo Quondam, a "teatro delle parole, dei gesti, dei rapporti," creating a discursive grammar or ideological mask of a court in decline, an *ancien régime* (xxxix).

Appearances and competition also figure prominently in Góngora's "Jura Pisuerga," as one river-gentleman is ashamed to be next to another, filthier one. The sonnet mocks Valladolid, the seat of the royal court at the time, and the Spanish nobility represented by excrement-bearing rivers-gentlemen, emphasizing the point that one of them—the type of vainglorious courtier Góngora has no doubt in mind—struggles ridiculously to keep an air of dignity and composure. In the end all three rivers involved, including the loftier and cleaner Duero, must suffer the scatological pollution, suggesting that urban and river geography correspond to courtly, "geographic," cultural spaces.

In high-art Renaissance poetry the river motif usually extols city landscapes and grandeur or is part of the *locus amoenus* in pastoral poems, triggering emotional, nostalgic outbursts (Amann, 241-250). Garcilaso's description of the Tagus river (Égloga III) is typical: "Con tanta mansedumbre el cristalino / Tajo en aquella parte caminaba" (312), "With such stillness did crystalline / Tagus flow at that point." And in *Canción III* another river, the Danube, besides establishing the *locus*, drives the poet's emotive complaint by contrasting it with stylized nature. In both instances the river scene sets up the reader's seduction and the rupture that follows: the Tagus scenes frame the mythological narrative depicted in the nymphs' quilts, while the Danube's clear and quiet current, as well as the springtime scene, contrast with the poetic voice's pain and misfortune (*pena*, *desventura*): "Con un manso rüido / d'agua corriente y clara, / cerca del Danubio… / do siempre primavera / parece en la verdura" (146), "With a quiet murmur / of clear and running water, / near the Danube… / where there always seems to be / springtime in the green."

The sharp, parodic contrast in Góngora's sonnet presents the rivers as hyperbolic, swearing braggadocios far from displaying or suggesting Garcilaso's "manso ruido." And while the canonical model foregrounds stillness, quiet, clarity, and the greenery of spring, Góngora's parody depicts Esgueva, in the second quatrain, with themes that oppose or undermine such imagery—dirtiness, laziness, and images of the lower body: brown colors and behinds, *sucio, perezoso, trasero*. As Esgueva's filth taints the rest of the courtiers and courtly space, the pollution overturns, or weakens, such gentlemanlike values as measure, cleanliness, and decorum. There is also, finally, a potential questioning of such historical and cultural practices like the racist and religiously intolerant laws of "limpieza de sangre," as mentioned before.

The river scenes that ground the poetic canon pollute, in parody, the secular and religious spheres that make up the world of the court as represented by a gentleman, *caballero*, endowed with "faith," *fe*. This ideal Spanish courtier, a fusion of secular and religious worlds, of political and divine notions in keeping with Christian, neo-Platonic thought, suffers a semantic disruption marked by the very first words of the sonnet, *jura* and *fe*, reinforced by the double meaning of "jurar," "to swear" (an oath, upon one's faith) or "to curse," and the concurrence with "faith." This ironic combination of faith and swearing/cursing results in a cleansing pollution involving the rivers and spaces of the Valladolid court as much as the canonical gentleman, a figure that Góngora's *Soledades*, under a baroque, serious register, also places in doubt.

This, at least, is how Jáuregui and like-minded traditionalists judged Góngora's influential innovations. Indeed, the *Soledades* pilgrim shares with the dirty rivers-gentlemen a disbelief in the value of courtly life and a bias that favors the tensions of history and reality, for which he may be considered an "unnatural hero," even if he is also part of the "peregrino de amor" tradition (Beverley 68-69; Jammes 1994, 47-49). If Góngora's serious poem supersedes old-style pastoral heroes, his scatological production accentuates the rupture against those "illustri cavaglier" and "catarriberas," to use his own terms in an early "menosprecio de corte" sonnet (Góngora, 109). The pilgrim, points out a critic, is a stranger on two accounts: he is a foreigner and noble, "foráneo y noble" (Carreira 1998, 228-29). As he is also tainted with the weight of history—the court, honor, silver and gold, "metales homicidas," conquest—his quandary lends itself to critical and satirical appraisal.

In the world of the court, shame, *vergüenza*, results from diminished or besmirched honor, which is intimately tied to cleanliness in every sense—in mores, blood, class, body, and soul. The stained physical body reaffirms man's wholesome totality, opposing the regimented and partial view prescribed by unpolluted honor as represented in religious, social, and secular law. By revaluing shame as a bodily product, the very unseemly discharges cleanse the whole body—the paradox of the purge. The waters of the river, soiled with an excremental "red" color, *Colorado* (line 2), show the courtier's shame to be an empty fear of public ridicule. The double-meaning pun reaffirms the intended message, since "correr," "to run" or "flow," also connotes "correrse," "to be ashamed." This line involves the geographic "body" and the actual body of a filthy, outcast courtier moving into a restricted space that cannot contain him.

A purge metaphor also appears in the *Cancionero de obras de burlas* in the tale of Juvera[8], a fat giant whose grotesque body becomes the allegorical residential space of all social classes and the representation of societal (dis)order. The author of the satirical poem may have been an opposer of Isabel la Católica as she was fighting to access and keep the throne of Castille, which would confirm the importance of historical contexts upon satirical production (Cáseda Teresa, 67-70). The tale closes with a purge, an outcome suggestive of a return to legal and social harmony. Juvera's ample body lodges the papal legate as well as the lowest classes and most disreputable people. His belly alone can accommodate a market:

> La barriga es una plaça / donde se faze el mercado, / tan grande y tan abastado / como la ciudad de baça, / do veres, como mosquitos, / rapazes siempre corer (*Cancionero de obras,* 47).
>
> The belly is a plaza where the market is held, as large and well-stocked as the city of Baza, where you will see little children run around like mosquitos.

The image of the well-stocked market and its location on Juvera's belly suggest the proximity of the market, the city's economic order and figural mouth, to the giant's stomach, lower body, and the food expulsion that ensues. The stirring swarm of children heightens the sense of chaos and new life attached to the belly and its products. What then

[8] For the purge as common medieval motif in early modern Europe, see Persels, and Beechy, who study Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*.

follows is the description of the purge as it upends hierarchies and reconfigures geographic and cultural spaces:

> El baçin para cagar / mira bien donde ha de ser, / dende roma agibraltar / si pudiere bien caber (51).
>
> The shitting vessel, be careful where it has to be, from Rome to Gibraltar if it can fit.

The vessel containing the purge extends over all of Europe, from Rome, the classical and religious source of knowledge, law, and literature, to Gibraltar, the edge of known Western civilization. This contaminating purge stresses the inevitability and potentiality of physiological, natural forces, and places the materiality of the body over the intellectual dominance of prescriptive structures or civilized institutions. As suggested before, parody maps the courtly city by re-inscribing it in a type of scatological geography. The filth that in Góngora's sonnet stains the gentlemen-rivers may reflect contemporaneous ideas about Valladolid contamination. For a modern reader it may suggest a "map" allowing chronological jumps from past to present, thus linking scatology with ecology, a naturally environmental connection between "skatos" and "oikos."

The city, court, and culture of devalued, outdated *courtoisie* produce their contamination and resulting cleaning purge out of their own functional existence. It is an outcome brought about through the dirty blending of low and high expression, themes, and behaviors. In the sonnet, the river-gentleman Pisuerga, assumed to be clean and honorable before Esgueva's pollution, is not as pure as we might have thought. If bodily diarrhea pollutes Esgueva, going on to soil Pisuerga, we know the latter suffers already a case of fouled, cursing logorrhea: "Jura Pisuerga." The respectable gentleman professing honor and capacity for shame is a man whose courtly language exceeds measure and lacks purity. The parody sets things right by pairing dirty logorrhea to its counterpart and true companion, diarrhea, so that the partial, repressed body of the courtier achieves wholeness thanks to the excretory trope—the linkage between the upper and lower body.

In exposing the limits of the ideal Spanish courtier, parody demotes honor to a superficial attitude that relies far too much on empty ritual and public impressions. Nor is this to be considered an anachronistic critique or misjudgment on the importance of ritual hand-kissing as a sign of servitude or loyalty, for in the sonnet the loyalty ritual is not undertaken in humility; rather, its significance appears tainted by an undignified intention. It is a degraded shame brought about by lower body impulses rather than by any moral or disinterested motivation. As in Castiglione, competition and spectacle weaken the courtier's ideal image and affect ritualistic traditions. Both gentlemen, the ideal one and his parodic copy, are swayed by the power of public spectacle and by the competition that may grant them the status of favorite or *privado*, a position that a female lover, or *privada*, may facilitate by selling out, that is by soiling, her body.

Pisuerga's desire to maintain appearances and keep dirty Esgueva at arm's length as he approaches Duero, a grandee that might offer a *privanza*, reproduces Castiglione's model of first-impression appearances and courtly antagonisms. The model incorporates the formulaic salutation of hand-kissing to gain Duero's favor and vie with those whose lack of ritual mastery condemns them to the ignoble spaces outside the court. Parody

reduces hand-kissing to contamination, the metaphorical kiss of two rivers converging, a satirical paradox found in other works sharing similar, carnivalesque content. Like the squire in *Lazarillo de Tormes* demanding empty salutatory ritual (102; Santa Cruz, 55), Pisuerga readies to observe the kiss before a loftier Duero. But his mask of cleanliness keeps little of value underneath and cannot conceal the vainglorious profanity of his swearing logorrhea. This mask, the social performance of a ritualistic ceremony ("besar la mano"), is further weakened or besmirched by a rival companion, the second, blatantly dirtier courtier who shames him with public pollution. Esgueva, a mirror image of Pisuerga, uncovers him as a counterfeit courtier and unmasks a filthiness the latter would rather hide, unsuccessfully so, given his already soiled mouth.

The motif of the kiss reinforces the critique of courtier and court as the two dirty gentlemen approach the more respectable and cleaner one, Duero, and plant the fouled kiss on his hand. Esgueva's scatological portrait in the second quatrain replaces Pisuerga's depiction in the first. Flowing through the courtly city of Valladolid, collecting all excreta and turning urban space into a gutter (Ciplijauskaité, 337), Esgueva plainly represents the court as a pestiferous cesspool, at which point parody and contemporary depiction may very well come together, so that the scatological trope, in merging with perceived reality, crystallizes in a historical present and stakes out the "biographic" geography and the ekphrastic "face" of the royal city of Valladolid due precisely to the definitions, colors, and smells of actual contamination. Pollution becomes real and present, modern and immediate. Besides potentially depicting a social and historical reality, the resulting picture suggests an anthropological or zoological content: scatology may reveal the species of animal and foodstuffs man eats by the scats that litter the range where man-as-animal moves. Elsewhere Góngora makes this plain by referring to excrement through euphemisms that eschew vulgarity, as in the sonnet mentioned before, "mud with parsley and mint," "lodos con perejil y yerbabuena," directed this time at the Madrid court. As Carreira points out, the phenomenon of excrement-covered streets, and the rudimentary method for scraping fecal matter away from the polluted city, would later be referred to as "Madrid's tide," "la marea de Madrid," a vulgar joke to supply the landlocked city with its own scatological sea and coast (Góngora, 109).

In addition to lower body imagery (*privado*, *trasero*), lazy men (*perezoso*) infect the court and in fact become favorites controlled and dirtied by their kept women (line 6), in turn depicted like blameworthy courtesans *and* latrines. The parenthetical line, "(Culpa de la mujer de algún privado)," an apparent aside dismissively appended, connects the image of woman, a stereotypical symbol of lust and sin, to the scatological trope. Besides the meaning, "the blame of a favorite's woman (lover)," the line points to the related term, "privada," a "latrine." A latrine or excremental pool, and chief cause of pollution in court and nature, woman is thought to sully gentlemen and rivers both, a misogynist *topos* comprising "sexual and scatological disgust" (Persels, 158): the courtly woman, a courtesan, stains his lover, the favorite[9] or *privado*, via her sexual sins. The double or triple meaning of *privada*, the represented loose woman, courtesan, and public latrine, is now made responsible for a total pollution involving courtly space, royal court and city, as well as any notion of honor, decorum, or propriety. She first discharges her filthiness on Esgueva, then over other courtiers (Pisuerga and Duero), and finally over the whole

[9] A *privado* was a favorite who flattered and schemed to gain the favor of a rich nobleman or prince, becoming his "private" servant, i.e., his factotum or employee.

geographical, natural and moral space of the court—all three rivers, the city of Valladolid, and the royal court therein. Góngora puts a finishing touch by offering a parodic etymology in another sonnet: Valladolid is so named because it is a "valley of [foul] odor," "valle de olor."

As canonical selfhood and high art spaces prove incomplete, the excretory trope comes to loosen up existing discursive restrictions. The attempt at completion renews the style and metaphors of poetic language by literally purging overused clichés, resulting in a revival of style and themes, among them a re-reading of urban spaces that incorporates bodily geography. Words such as *valle*, *rosa*, *damas*, *vergüenza*, *ojos*, or *fe* no longer lead to any canonically ideal turn. Instead, thrust onto the lower level of the physiological body, they recuperate their visceral undertones. "[L]a puente de Simancas," can no longer lead to a love-charged reverie, instead turning into an anal "bridge," while the eyes, "ojos," another unequivocal Renaissance motif that conjures up a woman's beauty, redirects the poetic expression toward the dirtiest trope of the lower body. Likewise fear ("Teme," "Temerla"), an emotional outpouring usually associated with love sickness, is now connected to the lowest bodily function, defecation (lines 10-11). The *seat* of the royal Spanish court, Valladolid becomes the rear, physical space that supports it by the production of renewing filth. The paradox of the scatological trope unmasks the court's idealized geography by presenting degraded courtiers that pollute it with their linguistic and visceral excretions as personified rivers cutting their dirty swaths across it.

The scatological trope exploited by Góngora remains multifaceted and, to a certain extent, applicable to different periods that use the carnival component of the purge to question high literary expression, especially when those times lean more, arguably enough, towards pessimism, doubt, reaction, sensuality, decadence, or death (Steadman, 112-17). The body remains the basis for a reappraisal of all canonical matter. Juvera the giant contains the whole world in his body, all institutions and market forces taking place inside, pairing together spirit and flesh thanks to the grotesque trope, not unlike Alcofrybas' bodily and discovery experiences inside Gargantua's mouth (Auerbach, 269). In this sense, the Valladolid court becomes the grotesque body where giant rivers contain, and expel, all social institutions; where courtiers and men of all classes besmirch one another and, in so doing, reveal the split fissures in social institutions and cultural practices. Word and deed, spirit and body, clean and dirty airs combine in an ironic mixture that is "free and untrammeled." Auerbach further explains that this is "as much a style of life as a literary style; it is, as in Socrates (and in Montaigne too), the expression of the man" (281). This is perhaps another way of phrasing Bakhtin's analysis about the recuperation of man's whole humanness.

The grotesque imagery of life and death (and other baroque symbols) may arguably perfect the aesthetic unity of high art depictions of selfhood regardless of historical period or literary genre (Torre, 398-427). Full, corporeal representation can only be achieved—or so the carnivalesque poet would have it—through scatological illustration, a distorted, brutal, pessimistic, yet organic and happy method. On the serious side, Neostoic imagery of decadence and death for moral or philosophical purposes becomes commonplace for baroque poets and painters both. As noted earlier, nothingness may be conceived as sublimating or obviating scatology. If that is so, one of Góngora's canonical sonnets, "Mientras por competir con tu cabello," concluding literally in nothingness, *nada*, would be exemplary. Carreira rejects its characterization as a baroque production, dismissing it as

juvenilia and servile imitation of Bernardo Tasso that carries only token meanings of *desengaño* or *carpe diem* (1998, 297-98).

Nevertheless, Góngora's imitation, Tasso's original, and other similarly inspired poems spring from the same classical and contemporary well, and show the "violence," "tension," and "darkening world vision" characteristic of the baroque (Ciplijauskaité and Carballo Picazo, 430-31; Quint, 143-47). The poem, for another critic, although a classical imitation of *carpe diem*, focuses too much on decay and thereby on pictorial representations of *vanitas*, which emphasize death and nothingness as examples leading to fundamental truths (Wagschal, 104-114). And as mentioned before, Quevedo's religious and Neostoic poetry focuses on the troubling paradoxes of time, life, and death. The concluding lines in one of his sonnets, "he quedado / presentes sucesiones de difunto," inspired by Seneca's *cotidie morimur*, "we die every day," suggest selfhood to be a succession of deaths occurring in the present, continuously, until the end (Balcells, 563-64). Recall that Valdés Leal's painting, *Finis Gloriae Mundi*, represents death and annihilation in a foul tomb as a moral lesson to keep from sin. On one level, the painting overturns caste-determined orthodoxy as the prelate and knight are foregrounded, and debased, as rotting corpses crawling with vermin, demonstrating the intricate complementarity between canonical and visceral expression.

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