

Satire and Invective  
in Enlightened Spain:

*Crotalogía, o ciencia de las castañuelas,*  
by Fray Juan Fernández de Rojas

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## Preface

HAVING WORKED ON THE PRESENT research project for several years, I was recently pleased to read a comment by the essayist Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio who, although unaware that Fray Juan Fernández de Rojas is the real author of *Crotalogía, o ciencia de las castañuelas*, is none the less filled with admiration for his skill in the art of irony and *reductio ad absurdum*. Fernández de Rojas is, Sánchez Ferlosio declares, “el más inteligente de los españoles.”<sup>1</sup> With this comment in mind, I would add that Fernández de Rojas would certainly have appreciated the irony of a critical edition of *Crotalogía*, complete with footnotes, a critical apparatus and even an appendix. Worse still, in the appendix I include some of the mediocre periodical articles that the author condemns in his satirical treatise. Ironies notwithstanding, it is hoped that an annotated critical edition of the text will at the very least awaken new interest in the works of Fray Juan Fernández de Rojas.

I would like to thank Professor David T. Gies, editor of *Dieciocho*, for granting permission to draw some material from two of my previous articles on Fernández de Rojas (see Bibliography for complete details). Thanks are also due to Professor Wyatt W. Anderson, Dean of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Georgia,

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<sup>1</sup> Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, *El alma y la vergüenza* (Barcelona: Destino, 2000), p. 320.

who graciously provided a research account while I served as Acting Head of the Department of Romance Languages. I was thus able to purchase microfilms and consult a variety of primary sources at archives in Spain during the spring of 2000. Finally, I am grateful to the interlibrary loan staff of the University of Georgia, particularly Virginia C. Feher, for always locating items with efficiency and unfailing good cheer.

# Introduction

“El hacer reír no es sino de grandes ingenios”  
Miguel de Cervantes<sup>2</sup>

## 1. FRAY JUAN FERNÁNDEZ DE ROJAS: LIFE AND WORKS

FRAY JUAN FRANCISCO JOAQUÍN FERNÁNDEZ DE ROJAS was born on 23 June 1752, in Colmenar de Oreja, the son of Francisco Fernández de Rojas and Plácida Mateo Agustín. His immediate family was of humble stock and his parents list their profession as “laboradores” in the documents pertaining to Fernández de Rojas’ baptism.<sup>3</sup> It can be stated with certainty that Juan Fernández de Rojas had at least one sibling, for it is known that his liquid assets, consisting primarily of personal correspondence and copies of his published works, were inherited by María del Carmen Arteaga, niece of the deceased. Arteaga was in turn married to Marcelino Fernández de Rebotó, who served as one of Fernando VII’s personal physicians. Given their position it is reasonable to assume that Fernández de Rojas’ extended family was not without means.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Fray Juan Fernández de Rojas in his introduction to the poetry of Diego Tadeo González. See Fray Diego González, *Poesías*, in *Poetas líricos del siglo XVIII*, ed. Leopoldo Augusto de Cueto, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 61 (Madrid: Rivadeneira, 1952), pp. 177-203, at p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> The documents are transcribed by María Rosario Barabino Macía, *Fray Juan Fernández de Rojas: su obra y su significación en el s. XVIII* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1981), pp. 60-79.

By the year 1765, at the age of thirteen, Fernández de Rojas had moved to Madrid, where he took holy orders and joined the Augustinian Order in the monastery of San Felipe el Real. The Augustinians owned property throughout Spain, including houses in the great centers of learning. From Madrid Fernández de Rojas moved to Salamanca with a view to studying theology and Greek. As a member of the Order he was entitled to reside in the premises owned by the Augustinians in that city. It was at the University of Salamanca that he met one of the most influential figures in his life, the renowned professor of theology, Diego Tadeo González. Their personalities complemented each other perfectly. If Fernández de Rojas admired his tutor's erudition and taciturnity, González in turn found an ideal counterpart in his disciple's genuine thirst for knowledge and above all his wit and humor. Their relationship was intimate in a platonic sense, to the extent that González would refer to Fernández de Rojas as the "consuelo de mis trabajos y alivio de mis tristezas."<sup>4</sup> As well as serious study of Greek and theology, González introduced Fernández de Rojas to the delights of poetry and *belles lettres*.

While Fernández de Rojas was a student at Salamanca and still under the tutelage of González, he would meet another aficionado of poetry, José Cadalso y Vázquez. Cadalso, Fernández de Rojas and González shared common interests and the three formed an immediate bond, a bond that would form the basis of the so-called Salaman-can School that flourished during the reign of Carlos III. The group went from strength to strength. Cadalso would introduce a law student by the name of Juan Meléndez Valdés to father González. Meanwhile González, through correspondence with his colleague, brother Miguel de Miras in Seville, had also been introduced to a young student by the name of Baltasar Melchor Gaspar María de Jovellanos. The group eventually attracted the attention of other individuals affiliated with the University of Salamanca, including José Iglesias de la Casa, a theology student, and Fray Andrés del Corral. It was Jovellanos who would subsequently celebrate the felicitous relationships that had developed as a result of the bond forged between González and Fernández de Rojas, as well as the truly fraternal nature of that bond,

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<sup>4</sup> Fray Diego González, *Poetas*, p. 177, n.1.

in a poem dedicated to his "amigos salmantinos," Delio (González), Liseno (Fernández de Rojas) and Batilo (Meléndez Valdés). The first verses read as follows:

A vosotros, oh ingenios peregrinos,  
que allá del Tormes en la verde orilla,  
destinados de Apolo, honráis la cuna  
de las hispanas musas renacientes;  
a ti, oh dulce Batilo, y a vosotros,  
sabio Delio y Liseno, digna gloria  
y ornamento del pueblo salmantino;  
desde la playa del ecuóreo Betis  
Jovino el gijonense os apetece  
muy colmada salud; aquel Jovino  
cuyo nombre, hasta ahora retirado  
de la común noticia, ya resuena  
por las altas esferas, difundido  
en himnos de alabanza bien sonantes,  
merced de vuestros cánticos divinos  
y vuestra lira al sonoro acento.<sup>5</sup>

By February, 1777, after graduating from the University of Salamanca, Fernández de Rojas appears to have been teaching philosophy and theology in Toledo and Alcalá.<sup>6</sup> In 1783 he was dispatched to Rome where he was to attend the election of the Visitor General of the Augustinian Order. A detailed account of the election, with reference to the role played by Fernández de Rojas, was composed by Fray Mi-

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<sup>5</sup> Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, *Obras completas*, 7 vols. ed. José Miguel Caso González et al. (Oviedo: Centro de Estudios del Siglo XVIII, 1984-1999), I, 86.

<sup>6</sup> See Gregorio de Santiago Vela, *Ensayo de una Biblioteca Iberoamericana de la Orden de San Agustín*, 8 vols. (Madrid: Asilo de Huérfanos, 1913-1931), II, 440, and Irene Vallejo González, "Juan Pablo Forner y el 'Parناسo Salmantino,'" in *Juan Pablo Forner y su época (1756-1797)*, ed. Jesús Cañas and Miguel Ángel Lama (Cáceres: Editorial Regional de Extremadura, 1998), pp. 553-64, esp. pp. 557-59.