

---

## The Dawn of Maria Genta: Metrics, Textual Criticism and Interpretation in Roi Paez de Ribela B 1439 / V 1049

---

Rip Cohen\*

Data de recepción: 26/11/2020 | Data de aceptación: 17/05/2021

**Abstract:**

This article offers a new critical text of a *cantiga d'escarño* by Roi Paez de Ribela along with an analysis of problems presented by the metrics, syntax, rhetoric and action of the poem.

**Key words:**

Galician-Portuguese lyric; *cantigas d'escarño*; textual criticism; metrics; sexuality.

**Contents:**

1. Text and critical apparatus. 2. Metrics. 3. Rhetoric and Action. 4. Dawn. 5. Open to all.

### *A Alva da Maria Genta: Métrica, Crítica textual, e Interpretación em Roi Paez de Ribela B 1439 / V 1049*

**Resumo:**

*Este artigo ofrece un novo texto crítico de una cantiga de escarño de Roi Paez de Ribela junto com una análise de cuestións métricas, sintácticas, retóricas e pragmáticas do poema.*

**Palavras chave:**

*Lírica galego-portuguesa; cantigas de escarño; crítica textual; métrica, sexualidade.*

**Sumário:**

*1. Texto e aparato crítico. 2. A Métrica. 3. A retórica e a acción. 4. A alva. 5. Aberto a todos.*

---

\* Orcid 0000-0001-8506-879X. [rip.cohen@gmail.com](mailto:rip.cohen@gmail.com). Independent researcher. United States of America.

“Where have you been?!”

Asked of a lover who arrives *very* late, this question is likely to be an accusation. Our *cantiga d’escarnho*, by Roi Paez de Ribela, begins with this interrogation, and the woman’s response appears to be a plausible excuse. Taking Maria at her word, she spent the night with another woman and some lads, all in a tizzy, supplied grain for dinner. Metaphors sketch another scene, which we might call cereal sex: eating grain symbolizes sexual activity (Barbieri, 2006: 153-157). There are questions about the metrics, grammar, pragmatics and meaning of the refrain. The design of the strophic form has been disputed –not the overall aaB form, but whether the metrical irregularity of the verses as presented in the manuscripts is due to corrupt textual transmission. It was suggested *en passant* that this *cantiga* might be an example of accentual verse, where there is a regular pattern of accents but no regularity in syllable counts (Cohen, 2010a: 19). A recent text takes another view: external respension, the most basic principle of composition in Galician-Portuguese lyric, is maintained (Cohen, 2016).<sup>1</sup> Here I offer a slightly different text with a fuller apparatus, defend the proposed emendations, discuss key problems, and suggest some new angles on the tale of *Maria genta*.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Text and critical apparatus

ROI PAEZ DE RIBELA (*B* 1439 / *V* 1049)

aaB (x3): 13’ [7’+5’] || 8

ada eira eã || á

– Maria genta, Maria genta, | da saia cintada,  
u masestes esta noite | ou quen pos cevada?

**(Alva, abríades m’ alá)**

– Albergamos eu e outra | <alá> na carreira  
e rapazes con amores | furt<ar>an ceveira.

5

(– Alva, abrí<ades m’ alá>)

– U eu maj’ aquesta noite | ouv’ i <mui> gran cêa  
e rapazes con amores | furt<ar>an avêa.

(– Alva, a<briades m’ alá>)

1 Verses and cola in the same position in the strophic form correspond from strophe to strophe throughout a poem (Cohen, 2010). In a dozen *cantigas d’amigo* they correspond by pairs of strophes (Cohen, 2018).

2 For editorial criteria and conventions, see Cohen (2018: 74, note 1).

1 Maria genta / Maria genta *B* : Maria genta / maria genta *V* : Mari' Genta, Mari' Genta Parkinson (*iam Lapa, probante Barbieri*) : Maria, Maria genta Cohen  
 4 eu e out- *V* : eu eutra *B* <alá> Cohen (*cf. v. 3*) <dona> Parkinson 5 e]  
*E B* : o *V* furt<ar>an Cohen : furtã *V* : furta *B* : vel possis furt<av>an 6 Alua  
 abra' *B* : alua abra *V* 7 ouuy *V* : õny *B* <mui> Cohen cēa] zeã *V* : cena  
*B* 8 furt<ar>an Cohen : furtã *BV* : fort. furt<av>an 9 Alua a *B* : alua a *V*

## 2. Metrics

The aaB strophe consists of two periods, distich and refrain. Either of these can be divided into two *cola* (hemistichs). In this text the verses of the first period contain two *cola*, and the refrain, which scans 8 (eight syllables, with the final accent falling on the eighth), corresponds *within the strophe* to the first colon of the verses of the first period, which scan 7' (eight syllables, with the final accent on the seventh syllable).<sup>3</sup> But if we leave the manuscript version intact, the only verse that *easily* scans 13' with a perfect division into two *cola* of 7'+5' is I.2 *u masestes esta noite | ou quen pos cevada*.<sup>4</sup> The claim that the overall design of the strophes is

$$13' [7'+5'] \parallel 8$$

rests on the critical text, rooted in a study of the metrics, grammar and style of Galician-Portuguese lyric and the typology and frequency of errors in the manuscripts that preserve this *cantiga*.<sup>5</sup> In poetry, metrical analysis and textual criticism are inextricably interrelated. A textual critic persuaded beforehand of the correctness of a metrical theory may be tempted to edit texts to suit that theory. It might seem difficult to escape this circle, but a healthy approach is to edit a large body of texts in the two 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian apographs, *B* and *V*, without emending for the sake of meter and then see what happens. What happens is a contradiction in method. This same critic, faced with thousands of errors in these manuscripts, will emend for *other* reasons: for instance, there is no rhyme, or no viable grammar, or a word is missing, or there is no discernible meaning. This textual critic will find that emending the text for one of these other reasons often improves metrics as well: for example, a verse that stood out from the rest because it was a syllable short will now conform to all

3 This kind of correspondence is familiar mainly from its use in external responsion (see Cohen, 2003: 44-46; Fassanelli, 2012).

4 Leaving the first verse of the text as is, we are supposing that the final vowel of *Maria* suffers apocope twice (the opinion of Lapa, 1970, no. 416; cf. Barbieri, 1980: 83; Parkinson, 2018). Cohen (2016) ventures *Maria, Maria genta*.

5 There is corroborating evidence: In *B* (folio 299r) Angelo Colocci indicates in four different places that the verses contain 14 syllables (to the right of I.1, I.2 and II.1-2 and beneath III.1). See Appendix 1.

the other verses in the same text. Eventually our critic, paying attention to all aspects of textual editing and noticing that the number of metrical irregularities has been shrinking, decides to drop ritual obedience and give empirical method a chance. If there is a word with two variant forms, like *el/ele*, or *tan/atan*, or *fez/fezo*, and the form in the manuscripts yields a verse that is a syllable short or a syllable long, while the other variant produces a metrically regular verse, it will make sense to emend, replacing one variant with another (Lapa, 1982: 142-143; Cohen, 2014: 27-28). Over time, the *ex cathedra* mandate “Only correct what is obviously wrong!” should elicit the response, “Obvious to whom?” The more the textual critic learns about metrics, grammar and style, and the frequency and type of manuscript errors, the weaker the notion of “obviously wrong” becomes, since what seems obviously wrong depends on the experience and acumen of the textual critic. The science of detecting errors in a text and the art of correcting them are skills that are not easily learned or taught.

Our analysis of the strophic form is strengthened by relevant evidence. First, in the refrains of two *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (CSM 85, 95) we find the same scansion posited for the verses of the distich in our *cantiga d’escarnho*: 13’ [7’+5’].<sup>6</sup> Here is the refrain of CSM 85:

Pera toller gran perfia | ben dos corazónes  
demostra Santa Maria | sas grandes visões.

Second, the metrical equivalence (noted above) of the refrain and the first colon of the verses in the distich (7’ = 8) is a kind of *internal* responson which is found in twelve *cantigas d’amigo* composed in the form aaB (see Appendix 2) – roughly 11% of the total number of texts in that genre which display that strophic form (105, according to Cohen, forthcoming).<sup>7</sup>

The metrical confusion in the text of our *cantiga d’escarnho* in the manuscripts is due to corrupt transmission. That confusion should not be taken as evidence that the poem is based solely on accentual patterns, without regard to syllable count.<sup>8</sup> Problems in external responson occur mainly in texts preserved by the *BV* branch of the manuscript tradition, where nearly all the *cantigas d’amigo* and poems of *escarnho* and *maldizer* are located (Cohen, 2010: 20). These problems ought not

6 In both texts, however, Mettmann takes the hemistichs as complete verses.

7 The correspondence, in aaB texts, of the verses of the distich is the most basic kind of internal responson.

8 Parkinson (2006: 31-32) detects *concurrent* patterns. The concurrent pattern in our text is regular in the second colon of the verses in the distich, with an accent falling on the second and fifth syllables: *da saia cintada; alá na carreira; furtaran avêa*. See also Parkinson (2010, 2016, 2018). Parkinson (2020) lapses into bluster.

to be attributed to the popular nature of some compositions in these genres; errors in transmission are liberally sprinkled across genres, poetic-linguistic registers and kinds of strophic form. The text of Roi Paez de Ribela presented here conforms to regular metrical practice.

### 3. Rhetoric and action

The dialog between man and woman is well documented in European poetry, ancient and medieval (and can reliably be ascribed to an Indo-European tradition; West, 2007: 69). There are well-known examples in Galician-Portuguese lyric. The dialog under study here is the subject of an essay by Barbieri (2006), to whom we also owe a monographic edition of the poet's work (Barbieri, 1980). In his essay, Barbieri summarizes previous scholarship and offers additional reasons to interpret the text at two levels. At the primary level, the man asks two questions with a tone of accusation: "Where did you spend the night? Who arranged food?" Maria (in strophes II and III) answers both: "Another girl and I slept along the road. Some rowdy lads (*rapazes*) who took a liking to us (*con amores*) stole grain (for us to eat)."<sup>9</sup> At the secondary, sexual level the woman's answer tells another story (as in Pero Meogo 9; see Cohen, 2014: 66-72, Trubarac Matić, 2018).<sup>10</sup> There was an orgy and the lads (1) paid with *cevada* (Barbieri, 1980: 83); (2) sated themselves on the women's erotic services.<sup>11</sup>

In the first verse, *genta* and *saia cintada* suggest that Maria is a *soldadeira* (a figure somewhere between a courtesan and a prostitute). *Genta*, borrowed from Provençal *gent* ("lovely", "gracious"), is not found elsewhere in the Galician-Portuguese lyric but appears in a late medieval poem included by Nunes (1972: 1-5) among the *cantigas d'amor* (but see Ramos, 2019: 213-214). Whether we take it as an adjective, a proper name, or a nickname (Barbieri, 1980: 82), the word *genta* is applied here to a "muller vulgar, de non moi boa fama," emphasizing the contrast between the learned borrowing and the general context of the poem (Garcia-Sabell Tormo, 1991: 169). A *saia cintada*, a skirt tied at the waist by a belt or sash, was worn by respectable married women, but also by *soldadeiras* wishing to give themselves a respectable air (Barbieri, 1980: 82-83; 2006: 150-153).

9 For another interpretation of *con amores* see Barbieri (1980: 84).

10 Numeration of the *cantigas d'amigo* is taken from Cohen (2003).

11 In his essay, Barbieri (2006: 153-157), among other things, documents a sexual meaning for the cereals, notes the connotations of *albergar* (see also Vallín, 1998: 342; Arias Freixedo, 2017: 37-39), reminds us that the erotic sense of *mãer* is found in Latin *manere* (citing Adams, 1982: 178), and calls attention to the sexual overtones of *furtar*.

The refrain raises a series of problems. Who speaks? Is it the man, Maria, or another voice? Whom does the speaker address? Is the verb *abriades* an imperfect indicative or a present subjunctive? Does *alva* mean “dawn,” “at dawn” (= à *alva*) or “white/chaste”? If we calculate the number of combinations these possibilities could give rise to, we come up with so many readings that the mind reels. But we can safely eliminate two problems at the outset, based on a combination of metrical and grammatical analysis.

First comes the dawn. In Dinis 17, a *cantiga d’amigo* that has attracted much attention, scholars saw polyvalence in the word *alva*, which recurs throughout the poem, sometimes meaning “dawn” and sometimes “the white one” – that is, “the pure/chaste girl” (see Cohen 2006). For grammatical reasons: (1) I put <a> *alva* when the word is an adjective, “the white / pure one,” following Michaëlis (1895); and (2) I put <aa> *alva* when the word means “dawn” in the phrase “in the dawn” (Cohen, 2003: 602-603). These emendations also made sense of an otherwise anomalous strophic form. Approving them, Parkinson (2006: 32–34) wrote that to take *alva* as a contraction of à *alva* is “anachronistically trying to shuffle the problem off into morphology, by presupposing the morphologised contractions of later forms of Portuguese.” In the *cantiga* of Ribela the scansion of the refrain requires that *alva* be vocative since it cannot be a contraction of *aa alva* (or à *alva* – *pace* Vallín, 1998: 342); and there is no room to accommodate the emendation <aa> *alva* (as in Dinis 17), given that the refrain corresponds metrically to the first colon of the verses in the first period.

The second problem we can safely dismiss is *abriades*. Barbieri (1980: 81; 2006: 158) and Arias Freixedo (2017: 372) see a present subjunctive with optative force, equivalent to an imperative (like *digades* in Pero Meogo 9, vv. 1 and 4). But the only form registered by *TMLG* for the second person plural subjunctive is *abrades*. *Abriades* must therefore be imperfect indicative. Internal resposion between the refrain and the first colon in the distich again confirms the reading.

Who speaks the refrain? Lapa (1970, no. 416) assumes the man is talking. His reading is basically, “Oh, Dawn! Did you really witness that shameless situation?” The elided *me* would then be an ethical dative, here meaning “to my disgrace.” If the woman is talking, *m’* becomes the direct object of *abriades*: “Oh Dawn! You were opening me up there!” This would involve sexual meanings of *abrir*, *me*, and *alá*.<sup>12</sup> Barbieri (2006: 159) suggests that *alva*, taken as a vocative spoken by the man, is polyvalent and can mean “white” or “pure” here. If that much is correct,

12 We find *abrir* used transitively with both literal and metaphoric (sexual) meaning in a *cantiga d’escarinho* of Johan Garcia de Guilhade (Lapa, 1970, no. 206 = B 1489 / V 1100): *ca vos direi do peon como fez, / abriu a porta e fodeu ña vezo*.

we could gloss the resulting sense this way (taking *abriades* as imperfect): “Pure maid, were you, to my disgrace, opening yourself there?” Those tempted to think the refrain is borrowed from another poem and the speaking voice is not the man’s or Maria’s would be hard-pressed to find any meaning relevant to the pragmatics of this dialog. Even if a previously existing verse was adapted to a new context, economy of interpretation requires that (at least) one of the two principal personae speak the refrain.

Let us assume the refrain belongs to one of them. If it is Maria, she answers the man’s question in an aside (as a girl does, in a dialog with her mother, in Pero Meogo 9: *os amores ei*), even though this undercuts the play of literal and metaphoric levels (again, as in Meogo 9), which depends on a modicum of suspense. If the man speaks the refrain, it should still be an aside; otherwise he would be answering his question before the woman has a chance to. If it is the man, the audience is tipped off by the end of the first strophe to the undercurrent of the dialog but still lacks the details which Maria will supply in the next two strophes.

There is yet another possibility. It is conceivable that the refrain is meant to be understood in two distinct ways simultaneously, uttered by both the man and Maria. The man says: “Dawn, were you dawning on that?” Maria exclaims: “Dawn, you were splitting me apart there!” Both would then invoke the dawn –an ancient vocative if ever there was one (West, 2007: 225–227). The man reproaches Maria; she boasts of her sexual prowess. This reading may stretch the matter too far, but the text seems deliberately open to different possibilities.

More must still be said about the dawn. But before taking up general questions of interpretation, we should address the remaining text-critical problems, namely our supplements <alá>, <furt<ar>an>, and <mui>.

The proposed supplement *alá* (v. 4) has already been used at the end of the refrain.<sup>13</sup> This emendation yields yet another example of a specific technique of verbal repetition found in a dozen *cantigas d’amigo* with aaB forms: a word used in the refrain recurs after the first strophe, sparking a link between the two periods.<sup>14</sup>

13 Compare Pero Viviaez 2, where the refrain *e nós, meninhas, bailaremos i* allowed me to emend v. 16 (which scans a syllable short in the manuscripts) by adding the same adverb following the same verb: *bailar* <í> *moças de bon parecer* (Cohen, 2003: 223).

14 Several texts cited here as composed in aaB strophes are not printed in that form in Cohen 2003 but have since been reanalyzed.

Fernan Rodriguez de Calheiros 8 *tardada* > *tarda*  
 Nuno Fernandez Torneol 6 *morre*; *morre* vos *ei* > *morre*rá  
 Nuno Fernandez Torneol 7 *morre*rei > *morre*  
 Nuno Fernandez Torneol 8 *mostrar volo ei* > *mostrardes... mostrassedes*  
 Fernan Fernandez Cogmominho 1 *veer... veerei* > *vi*  
 Afons'Eanes do Coton 2 *chorades* > *chorando*  
 Pero Gonçalves de Porto Carreiro 3 *chor'eu* > *chor'eu*  
 Bernal de Bonaval 3 *atender* > *atendedes*  
 Bernal de Bonaval 4 *ir daquen* > *daquend'ir*  
 Nuno Treez 3 *aduz* > *adussesse*  
 Fernand' Esquio 3 *a las aves* > *a las aves*  
 Afonso X 1 *tarda* > *tarda*

Not by coincidence, the same technique occurs in two *cantigas d'escarnho* by Roi Paez de Ribela, both composed in aaB strophes. In *V* 1026 (Barbieri XIV) *mal*, the last word in the refrain, is repeated in III.1.

Mala ventura mi venha  
 se eu pola de Belenha  
 d'amores ey **mal**.

E confonda-me San Marcos  
 se pola donzela d'Arcos  
 d'amores ey **mal**.

**Mal** mi venha cada dia  
 se eu por Dona Maria  
 d'amores ey **mal**.

Fernand-Escalho me pique  
 se eu por Sevilh'Anrique  
 d'amores ey **mal**.

In *B* 1436 / *V* 1046 (Barbieri XVII) *faz*, the last word of the refrain, is picked up in III.1.

Preguntad'un ricome,  
 mui rico, que mal come,  
 porque o **faz**.



El de fam'e de sede  
mata home, ben sabede  
porque o **faz**.

Mal com'e **faz** nemiga;  
dizede-lhi que diga  
porque o **faz**.

Thus, the supplement *alá* at II.1 is supported by the poet's use of the same technique in two aaB *cantigas d'escarnho* and also buttressed by twelve examples of this technical device in aaB *cantigas d'amigo*.<sup>15</sup> And while *alá* at II.1 vaguely indicates where Maria spent the night, in the refrain it may refer, in the erotic dimension of the text, to the female sexual organs (cf. Arias Freixedo, 2017: 55; compare the sexual reference of the relative adverb *onde* (Cohen & Corriente, 2002: 23-24; Gonçalves, 2016: 575-576).

*Furtã* (II.2, II.2), which the manuscripts offer, is the wrong tense in this narrative of past events, and a syllable is lacking in both verses.<sup>16</sup> Taken together, these two flaws, one metrical and the other grammatical, strongly suggest we should emend. The most likely correction is *furtaran*, which assumes that a superscript abbreviation for *ar* had been lost, or was missed or misread.<sup>17</sup> The pluperfect, if correct, could be used here as a simple past.<sup>18</sup> But it could be taken as a modal pluperfect with conditional force (Larson, 2018: 73). Maria would then be claiming that the boys *would have stolen* the (erotic) grain but could not – because she chastely held them off. Assuming *furtaran* is right, the ambiguity between the temporal and modal senses of the pluperfect –which here contradict each other and are themselves polyvalent– is probably intentional. Possible meanings are: the *rapazes* gave Maria dinner (she protests her innocence at the literal level); the *rapazes* paid her with grain (*cevada* = pay: she confesses at the literal level); the *rapazes* stole her grain (she confesses at the metaphoric level); they would have stolen it (she defends herself at the metaphoric level).

15 Parkinson (2018) suggests <*dona*> in v. 3, and this would work syntactically and metrically, as would <*moça*> or for that matter <*puta*>. But *outra* often functions as a substantive (see Cohen & Corriente, 2002: 37).

16 A historical present would be out of place amid all the past tenses: *masestes, pos, abriades, albergamos, maj'*.

17 The imperfect *furt<av>an*, though less easy to explain paleographically, would allude to an ongoing action appropriate to the erotic level of the text: the boys were snatching grain all night long.

18 The pluperfect *furtaran* is used, apparently, as a simple past tense in *B 483 / V 66* (Afonso X), v. 3, where it is maintained by Ferreira (2018-).

*Mui* (III.1) is an easy supplement (*mui gran* occurs more than 200 times in Galician-Portuguese lyric, according to *TMLG*).<sup>19</sup> Thrice in the *cantigas d'amigo* the supplement <*mui*> *gran* is confirmed by the occurrence of *mui gran* in the same phrase elsewhere in the same text (Johan Vaazquiz de Talaveira 6, Johan Servando 12, Johan de Requeixo 3). Here it adds emphasis to Maria's account of the get-together: *ouv' i mui gran cêa* (there was a *very* big dinner/orgy). At the erotic level, there may be a sexual reference in the deictic adverb *i* (cf. Cohen, 2010b: 29 [note ad v. 26]; Arias Freixedo, 2017: 56).

Now we may ask: How might the audience have reacted to the mockery of Maria? Among men, her promiscuity might stir up a feeling of solidarity. They would recognize the stereotype of a *soldadeira* eager to take advantage of any opportunity. But there is another (feminist?) way of seeing Maria's discourse: she flaunts her erotic skills. The *mui gran cêa* and the *amores* (desires) she provoked –being *genta* (gorgeous) and sporting a *saia cintada* (the skirt would show off her figure)– are verbal and symbolic contextualization clues that transform her defense into a vaunt, as if she were telling her lover: “Count yourself lucky, I'm a hot number!” On this reading, the scene becomes more complex: Maria is proud of her beauty and sexuality. She has been busy all night –in the man's eyes, a *bad girl*– and now that she is back she knows how to handle the lover who scolds her.

There are examples in the *cantigas de mal dizer* of a man who says he desires a woman even though she has sex with someone else (for instance, Lapa, 1970, nos. 207-208 by Johan Garcia de Guilhade). Earlier in the European poetic tradition a man can want a woman who is unfaithful or simply a courtesan from whom fidelity should not be expected. Such situations abound in Roman Comedy, in the love poetry of Catullus, and in the erotic elegy of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. In the examples below, drawn from Greek epigram, I am *not* suggesting any direct literary influence, but merely comparing the action and rhetoric of other poems in this tradition. It is unlikely that any Galician-Portuguese poet drew directly on ancient Roman poetry, and surely none knew Greek. Nevertheless, there had to be continuity in speech genres from Latin to the Romance languages, if, as Bakhtin (1985: 65) says, “Utterances and their types, that is, speech genres, are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language.”

In a poem by one of the masters of Hellenistic epigram, Asclepiades, a male speaker confronts the dilemma posed by making love to a courtesan (*AP* 5.158 = Asclepiades 4, Page, 1975; translation from Bing & Cohen, 1991: 131).

---

19 Another possibility is that *grã* (*BI*) represents *grande*, which makes a supplement unnecessary.

Once I was playing with alluring Hermione  
 Who had a gleaming girdle of flowers, O Paphian,  
 Lettered in gold, reading: “Love me wholly  
 And don’t be hurt if another has me.”

The man is forewarned. The girl’s general availability is literally written on her –in gold, no less. The inscription on her girdle says, in effect: “Enjoy me as much as you can, but there is no use getting upset at what I do with others.”<sup>20</sup>

A few centuries later, in an epigram of Meleager, a man who is outraged by what he takes to be signs of infidelity and promiscuity in his lover orders her to get out (*AP* 5.175 = Meleager LXX in Page, 1975; translation from Whigham, 1975: 24).

Foresworn now the love vows!  
 and your proclivities  
 Zenophile  
 clamour from your appearance:  
 those ringlets, dripping  
 with fresh application of seductive scents,  
 those eyes,  
 heavy with sleepless nights,  
 and *what* is that flower doing  
 dangling behind your ear?  
 and your hair, matted  
 tousled in who knows what love-tussles–  
 besides which, you’re *smashed!*

Go! The guitar thrums.  
 The castanets clatter.  
 Go! Woman common to all.

In the situation in our *cantiga d’escarnho* by Roi Paez de Ribela, the man suspects what Maria has been up to, and she confirms his suspicions through a metaphoric system that both builds on and contradicts her literal-level excuse. Yet he does *not* tell her to go. Although he bemoans her night-time play (or remunerated activity), there is no indication in the text that he wants to be rid of her. Those who wrongly take *abriades* as a subjunctive think the man swallows his male pride, saying more or less, “Oh well, now open up to me too!” Though wrong about the grammar, they are probably right about the mixed reaction. However indignant he may feel, her lover thinks Maria well worth waiting for.

20 The “Paphian” is Aphrodite. The ambiguities of this epigram (Bing, 2000) are relevant to our text.

## 4. Dawn

In the last part of his essay, Barbieri (2006: 157-163) argues that our *cantiga d'escarnho* is a parody of the Provençal *alba*. Despite much effort over the years, no evidence has been adduced to support the notion that any Galician-Portuguese composition can be classed as an example of this genre.

There are, however, at least two poems of Pero Meogo (5 and 9) that seem to deal with dawn. It should be stressed that in the secular lyric the word *alva* appears only in our text of Roi Paez and in Dinis 15 and 17. In Meogo 5 *levou-s'aa alva* (“She arose in the dawn”), though widely accepted, is my conjectural supplement.<sup>21</sup> This supplement was arrived at by working backwards from the verse *levantou-s' <aa> alva* in Dinis 17, a text which (scholars agree) was modelled on Meogo 5. There is moreover compelling comparative evidence which supports the assumption that the meeting of girl and boy (= *cervo*) in Meogo 5 takes place at dawn.

Trubarac has demonstrated that a Serbian spring ritual song provides an excellent parallel for Meogo 5; and that a section of a Serbian ballad *exactly* matches Meogo 9 (Trubarac, 2010: 22-42; Trubarac Matić, 2018). In the song, the girl meets the stag at dawn. The Serbian ritual takes place before daybreak and at dawn, in the spring and, in some cases, by a water source. The specification of place, time of day, and time of year is typical of ritual performances. These astonishing parallels from a conservative poetic tradition on the other side of Europe, in another branch of the Indo-European language family, require a re-evaluation of the *cantigas* of Pero Meogo (see Cohen, 2014: 10-14, 73-74). They also provide additional (wholly unexpected) support for the supplement *levou-s'aa alva* in Meogo 5. It is, then, highly probable that Meogo 5 describes a ritual encounter that takes place at dawn; that in Meogo 6 the girl greets her stag-lover around dawn; that Meogo 8 and the celebrated dialog between mother and daughter in Meogo 9 take place after the girl and the boy have met at dawn. Be these things as they may, I believe that to understand *Maria genta* we should look closely at Meogo 9.

The dialog between mother and daughter in Meogo 9 is structured in three parts, each consisting of two strophes. The mother asks the girl why she is late; the girl says a stag muddied up the stream (preventing her from drawing water); the mother, rejecting this explanation, accuses her daughter of having been with her lover. The refrain, *os amores ei*, is spoken throughout by the girl as an aside. Here is the text (Cohen, 2014: 42).

21 In each of the first two strophes of Meogo 5 a hemistich is missing in the manuscripts. The supplement *levou-s'aa alva* first appears in Cohen (1996: 45, note 41; cf. Cohen (2003: 421). For a justification of this supplement, see Cohen (2014: 44-45).

PERO MEOGO – 9

aaB (x6) 10' [4'+5'] || 5

i-a // a-a (I-IV); i-o // a-o (V-VI) || ei *cobras alternantes I-IV*

– Digades, filha, | mha filha velida,  
por que tardastes | na fontana fria?  
(– **Os amores ei**).

– Digades, filha, | mha filha louçana,  
por que tardastes | na fria fontana?  
(– **Os amores ei**).

5

Tardei, mha madre, | na fontana fria,  
cervos do monte | a agua volv<i>an.  
(**Os amores ei**).

¡Tardei, mha madre, | na fria fontana, 10  
cervos do monte | volv<i>an a agua.  
(**Os amores <ei>**).

– Mentir, mha filha, | mentir por amigo,  
nunca vi cervo | que volvesse\_o rio.  
(– **Os amores ei**). 15

– Mentir, mha filha, | mentir por amado,  
nunca vi cervo | que volvesse' o alto.  
(– **Os amores ei**).

*B* 1192 f. 253v *V* 797 f. 125r-v

1 uelida *B* : ne naa *V* 8 do monte a augua *Varnhagen* : do monte a augua  
do mōte *BV* 8, 11 auga *Cohen* (2014; iam *Braga* in v. 11) : auga *BV*, *edd.*  
volv<i>am *Varnhagen* : uoluã *BV* 9 amores ey *V* : om. *B*

Several elements in this poem appear in Ribela's *Maria genta*. In both texts a greeting doubles as an accusation.<sup>22</sup> In both the response is a transparently false excuse that tells the truth at a symbolic level. And the refrain in both poems tells the real story.

<sup>22</sup> See Martin de Caldas 5.3 *por que tardastes, á mui gran sazon?* And Fernand' Esquio 4.6-7 *Que adubastes, amigo, u tardastes noutro dia, / ou qual é essa fremosa que vos tan ben parecia?* Compare *GÁRREME D+ON BENÉS* ("Tell me where you have come from" H17) in Corriente (2009: 126).

There are of course important differences. True to their respective genres, one text maintains stylistic dignity throughout, despite the erotic metaphors, while the other rings out in a lower linguistic register.<sup>23</sup> In Meogo 9 the mother dominates, with four strophes to the girl's two; in Ribela's song it is Maria who speaks two out of three strophes. And in marked contrast to the demure girl responding to her mother, *Maria genta* is willing to confess the outlines of a nocturnal orgy at the primary literal level, and supplies some erotic details at the secondary, metaphoric level. The girl in Meogo 9 appears to be timid and reticent; Maria seems to be boasting (so I have argued) about her sexual powers.

Still, more striking than the differences is the similarity in the overall structure of the discourses. The sequence of speech-actions is essentially the same: (1) someone greets another person who is arriving late, and the greeting, in the form of a question, functions as an accusation that this other person has been engaged in sexual activities; (2) the accused offers a defense which, through a metaphoric system, admits the truth of the accusation; (3) the refrain, spoken as an aside, works like a recurring bass-line reinforcing the erotic dimension of the situation.

The similarity between the two texts extends to a metrical correspondence mentioned earlier. In Ribela's song the scansion of the refrain is equivalent to that of the first colon of the verses in the first period.

$$13' [7'+5'] \parallel 8$$

This is also the case in Meogo 9.

$$10' [4'+5'] \parallel 5$$

In Ribela's poem, 8 corresponds to 7'; in Meogo's, 5 corresponds to 4'. There are nine aaB *cantigas d'amigo* where the correspondence is exact (where  $n = n$ ), but Meogo 9 is one of only three texts where this correspondence is of the type  $n' = n+1$ . This similarity between the poems of Ribela and Meogo is striking because the phenomenon is so rare.<sup>24</sup> Taken by itself this might seem a metrical oddity. Added to the similarities in action and rhetoric, it acquires impact as evidence.

Rather than look, as Barbieri does, to an Occitan genre as a model for *Maria genta*,

<sup>23</sup> The register can be gaged by the emphatic placement of the words *cevada*, *ceveira* and *avêa* (the latter two found only here in the secular lyric) at the end of the first period, immediately before the refrain.

<sup>24</sup> The other examples are Torneol 8 and Dinis 16 (strophes I-IV). Barbieri (2006: 151) says that in *Maria Genta* Roi Paez de Ribela imitates aspects of Torneol 8.

we should weigh the likelihood that Roi Paez de Ribela is paying tribute, through parody, to a text closer to home. The poems of Pero Meogo were evidently much admired in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the imitation of Meogo 5 in D. Dinis 17 shows. And Meogo 9 is the concluding song and virtuoso climax in a sequence of nine *cantigas d'amigo* (Cohen, 2014: 68, 76-80) which would have been known in courtly circles by the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Could it have been Meogo's masterpiece that inspired Roi Paez to compose his miniature gem?

## 5. Open to all

This *cantiga* has provoked a variety of interpretations. That is partly the result of a corrupt text and some questions of grammar, but it is also a fruit of the many meanings and possible combinations of meaning in and between literal and metaphoric levels of discourse. Here I have tried to explore –and, where possible, to clarify– problems of textual criticism, metrics, grammar and interpretation, but in such a highly crafted and enigmatic composition certain matters will remain open.

## References

B = Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisbon), cod. 10991.

V = Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Rome), cod. lat. 4803.

Adams, James Noel (1982). *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Arias Freixedo, Xosé Bieito (2016). “Denominacións metafóricas dos órganos sexuais femininos, vinculadas ao campo sémico do aloxamento, nas cantigas de escarnio e maldizer.” In Eirín García, Leticia, & López Viñas, Xoán (eds.), *Lingua, texto, diacronía. Estudos de lingüística histórica*. Monografía 9 da *Revista Galega de Filoloxía*, 33-58. A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña.

Arias Freixedo, Xosé Bieito (2017). *Per Arte de Foder. Cantigas de escarnio de tematica sexual*. Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich (1986). “The Problem of Speech Genres.” In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Ed. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barbieri, Mario (1980). “Le poesie di Roy Paez de Ribela.” *Studi mediolatini e volgari*, 27, 71-74.

- Barbieri, Mario (2006). “L’Alba parodica di Roy Paez de Ribela: *Maria Genta, Maria Genta da saya cintada* (B 1429 / V 1049).” In Beltrami, Pietro G. et al. (eds.), *Studi di Filologia Romanza offerti a Valeria Bertolucci Pizzorusso*, vol. I: 149-163. Pisa: Pacini.
- Bing, Peter (2000). “The Writing on the Girdle: Asclepiades 4 Gow-Page (AP 5.158).” *Alexandrian Studies II in Honour of Mustafa El Abbadi*. In Abd-El-Ghani, Mohamad et al., *Bulletin de la Société archéologique d’Alexandrie*, 46, 245-248.
- Bing, Peter, & Rip Cohen (1991). *Games of Venus: An Anthology of Greek and Roman Erotic Verse from Sappho to Ovid*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Cohen, Rip (1996). “Dança Jurídica”, *Colóquio-Letras*, 142, 5-49.
- Cohen, Rip (ed.) (2003). *500 Cantigas d’Amigo: Edição Crítica / Critical Edition*. Porto: Campo das Letras.
- Cohen, Rip (2006). “Girl in the Dawn: Textual Criticism and Poetics”, *Portuguese Studies*, 22.1, 173-187.
- Cohen, Rip (2010a). “*Cantar Igual*: External Responson and Textual Criticism in the Galician-Portuguese Lyric”, *La corónica. A Journal of Hispanic Languages, Literatures & Cultures*, 38.2, 5-25.
- Cohen, Rip (2010b). “Three Early Galician-Portuguese Poets: Airas Moniz d’ Asme, Diego Moniz, Osoir’ Anes. A Critical Edition”, *Revista Galega de Filoloxía*, 11, 11-59.
- Cohen, Rip (2012) [posted 2018]: “The Unwanted Dawn: A Metrical Dialogue. by Morris Zabo.” Available at [https://www.academia.edu/37976811/The\\_Unwanted\\_Dawn\\_A\\_Metrical\\_Dialogue\\_2012](https://www.academia.edu/37976811/The_Unwanted_Dawn_A_Metrical_Dialogue_2012) (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Cohen, Rip (2014). *The Cantigas of Pero Meogo*, Edited with Introduction and Commentary. Washington DC: Virtual Center for the Study of Galician-Portuguese Lyric. Available at <https://blogs.commonsg Georgetown.edu/cantigas/files/2013/05/Cohen-Meogo-NOVISSIMA-EDITIO-371a-rev3-Edition-mjf.pdf> (accessed 27 Nov. 2020)
- Cohen, Rip (2016). “Roi Paez de Ribela Maria Maria genta a new critical text.” Available at [https://www.academia.edu/28438296/Roi\\_Paez\\_de\\_Ribela\\_Maria\\_Maria\\_genta\\_a\\_new\\_critical\\_text\\_2016](https://www.academia.edu/28438296/Roi_Paez_de_Ribela_Maria_Maria_genta_a_new_critical_text_2016) (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Cohen, Rip (2018). “Metrics and Textual Criticism in the *Cantigas d’amigo*: External Responson by Pairs of Strophes”, *Revista Galega de Filoloxía*, 19, 75-93.
- Cohen, Rip (forthcoming): *aaB Cantigas d’amigo* (vol. 1: *Critical Edition*; vol. 2: *Girl-Song: Form, Action and Rhetoric in aaB Cantigas d’amigo*).
- Cohen, Rip, & Federico Corriente (2002). “Lelia doura Revisited”, *La corónica. A Journal of Hispanic Languages, Literatures & Cultures*, 31.1, 19-40.

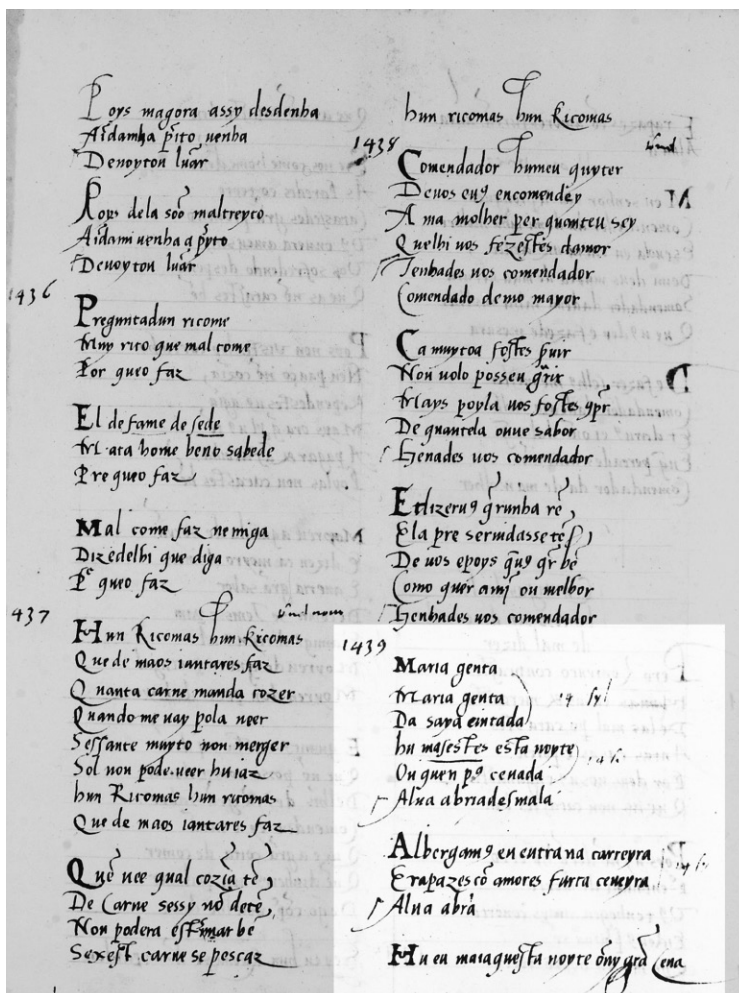


- Corriente, Federico (2009). "The Kharjas: An Updated Survey of Theories, Texts and their Interpretation", *Romance Philology*, 63.1, 109-129.
- CSTM = Mettmann, Walter (ed.) (1959-1972). *Afonso X, o Sábio. Cantigas de Santa Maria*. 4 vols. Coimbra: Por ordem da Universidade.
- Fassanelli, Rachele (2012). "Questioni metriche galego-portoghese. Sulla cosiddetta *Lex Mussafia*." *Ars Metrica*. Available at [https://ars-metrica.germ-ling.uni-bamberg.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Fassanelli\\_2012\\_Questioni-metriche-galego-portoghese.pdf](https://ars-metrica.germ-ling.uni-bamberg.de/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Fassanelli_2012_Questioni-metriche-galego-portoghese.pdf) (accessed 27 Nov. 2020)
- Ferreiro, Manuel (dir.) (2018-). *Universo Cantigas. Edición crítica da poesía medieval galego-portuguesa*. Universidade da Coruña. Available at <http://universocantigas.gal>
- García-Sabell Tormo, Teresa (1991). *Léxico francés nos cancioneiros galego-portugueses: revisión crítica*. Vigo: Galaxia.
- Gonçalves, Elsa (2016). *De Roma ata Lixboa. Estudos sobre os cancioneiros galego-portugueses*. Ed. de João Dionísio, Henrique Monteagudo & Ana Maria Ramos. A Coruña: Real Academia Galega.
- Lapa, Manuel Rodrigues (ed.) (1970) [1965]. *Cantigas d'escarnho e de mal dizer dos cancioneiros medievais galego-portugueses*. Vigo: Editorial Galaxia.
- Lapa, Manuel Rodrigues (1982). *Miscelânea de Língua e Literatura Portuguesa Medieval*. Coimbra: Por Ordem da Universidade.
- Larson, Pär (2018). *La lingua delle cantigas: grammatica del galego-portoghese*. Rome: Carocci.
- Michaëlis de Vasconcellos, Carolina (1895). "Zum Liederbuch des Königs Denis von Portugal", *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 19, 513-541, 578-615.
- Nunes, José Joaquim (ed.) (1972) [1932]. *Cantigas d'amor dos trovadores galego-portugueses*. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade.
- Page, Denys Lionel (ed.) (1975). *Epigrammata Graeca*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Parkinson, Stephen (2006). "Concurrent patterns of verse design in the Galician-Portuguese lyric." In Whetnall, Jane, & Deyermond, Alan (eds.), *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Colloquium* (Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar, 51), 19-38. London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London.
- Parkinson, Stephen (2010). "Voz e letra da lírica medieval galego-portuguesa." ("Plenary lecture given at the 5th International Colloquium of the Associação Hispânica de Literatura medieval - Seção Portuguesa, November 2010. No Actas were published."). Available at [https://www.academia.edu/38440820/Voz\\_e\\_letra\\_da\\_l%C3%ADrica\\_medieval\\_galego\\_portuguesa](https://www.academia.edu/38440820/Voz_e_letra_da_l%C3%ADrica_medieval_galego_portuguesa) (accessed 24 Jan. 2021).

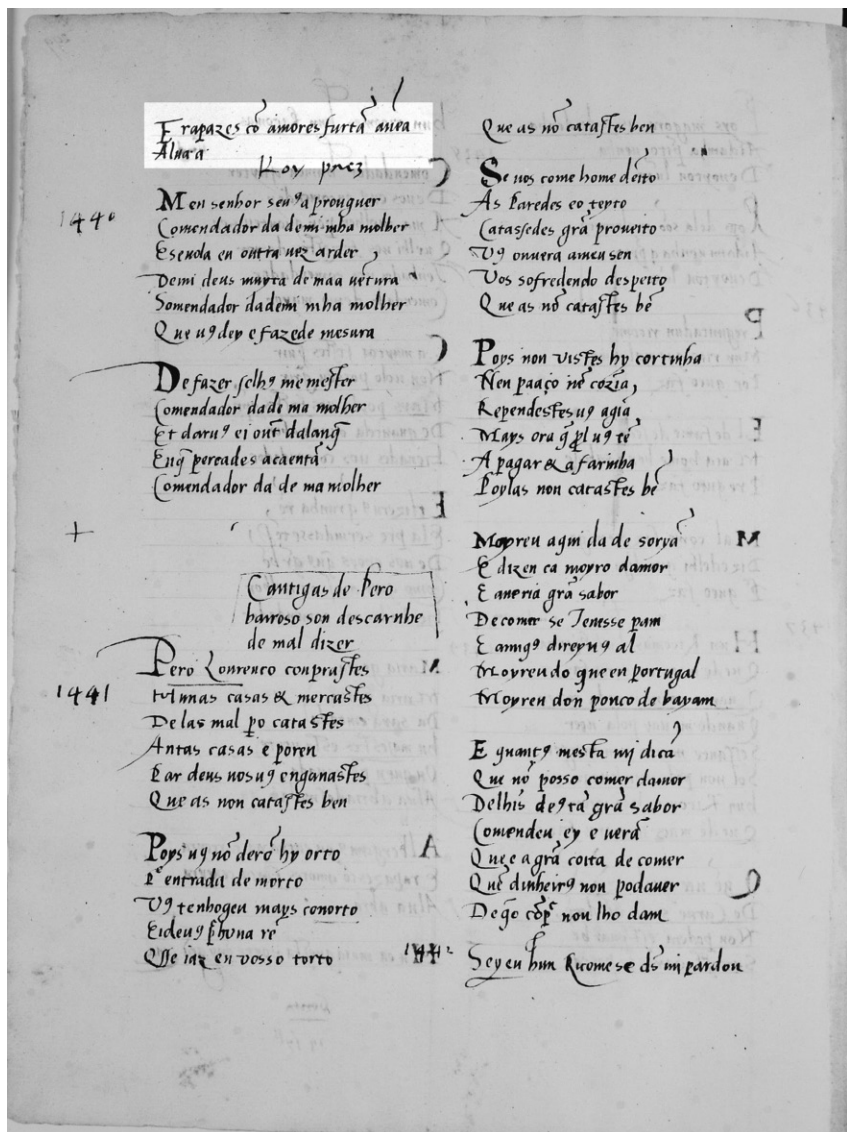
- Parkinson, Stephen (2016). “Métrica acentual nas cantigas de amigo.” In Lopes, Graça Videira, & Ferreiro, Manuel Pedro (eds.), *Do Canto à escrita: Novas cuestións em torno da Lírica Galego-Portuguesa – Nos cem anos do pergaminho Vindel*, 29-42. Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais / Centro de Estudos de Sociología e Estética Musical.
- Parkinson, Stephen (2018). “The Unwanted Dawn: A Metrical Dialogue (*lectio oxoniensis*) attrib. Morris Zabo, corrected following MS Ox 2012/8 (Philippus Hirundo).” Available at [https://www.academia.edu/37994363/The\\_Unwanted\\_Dawn\\_A\\_Metrical\\_Dialogue\\_lectio\\_oxoniensis](https://www.academia.edu/37994363/The_Unwanted_Dawn_A_Metrical_Dialogue_lectio_oxoniensis) (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Parkinson, Stephen (2020). “Responson, accentual metrics and metrical irregularity in the *cantiga de amigo*.” *Revista Galega de Filoloxía*, 21, 87-133.
- Ramos, Maria Ana (2019). “Cancioneiros e textos imprevisíveis.” In González, Déborah (ed.), *Lírica galego-portuguesa. Lingua, sociolingüística e pragmática*, 195-231. Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia.
- TMLG = Varelá Barreiro, Xavier (dir.) (2004-). *Tesouro Medieval Informatizado da Lingua Galega*. Santiago de Compostela: Instituto da Lingua Galega. Available at <http://ilg.usc.es/tmilg>. (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Trubarac, Djordjina (2010). “La novena *cantiga* de Pero Meogo y los textos europeos con el motivo de la falsa excusa del agua enturbiada por un animal: análisis comparado”, *AnMal Electrónica*, 28, 3-57. Available at <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3223618> (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Trubarac Matic, Djordjina (2018). “Meogo 9 Versus Texts with the Motif of a Transparent Excuse of Water Clouded by Stags or Horses: Outlining the Proto-Model. Revised and Expanded.” Washington DC: Virtual Center for the Study of Galician-Portuguese Lyric. Available at <https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/cantigas/files/2016/03/Trubarac-Meogo9-Expanded-article.pdf> (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).
- Vallín, Gema (1998). “Variaciones sobre el alba: a propósito de algunas cantigas gallego-portuguesas.” In *Congreso O Mar das Cantigas*. Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia.
- West, Martin Litchfield (2007). *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whigham, Peter (1975). *The Poems of Meleager*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

## Appendix 1

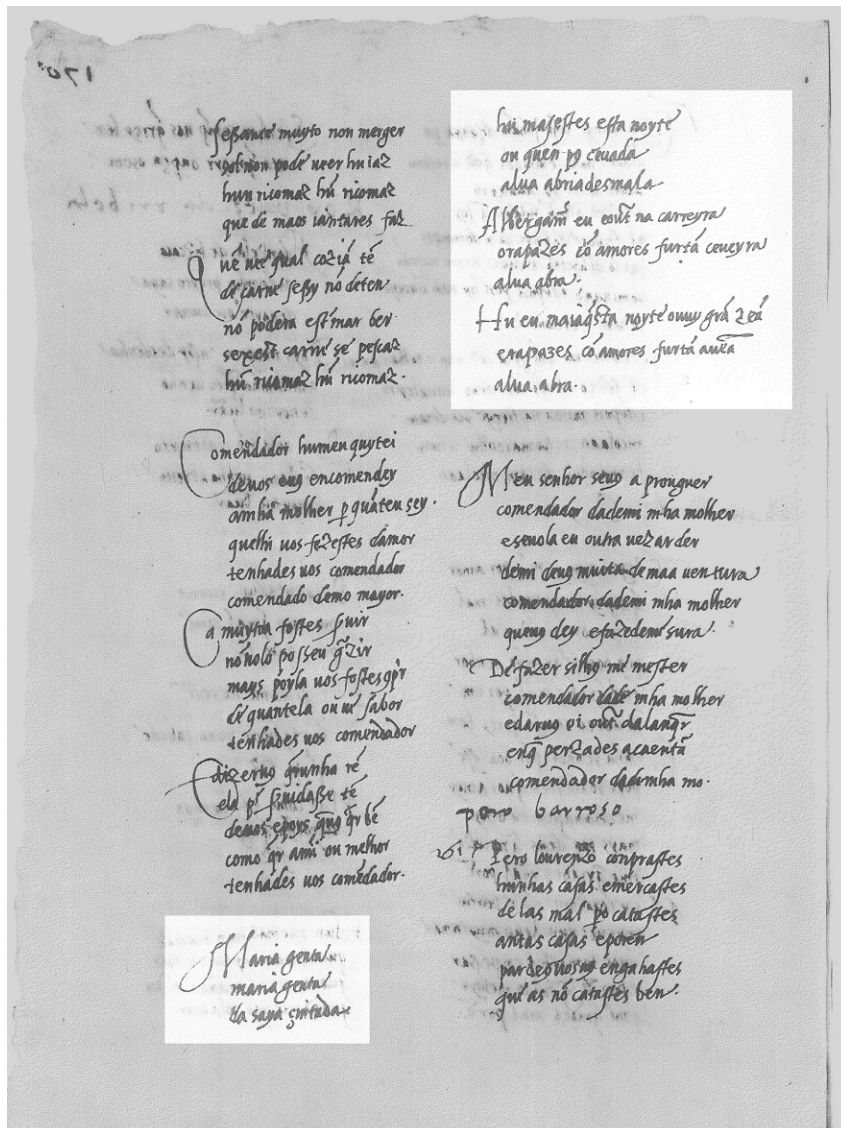
Photographs of Roi Paez de Ribela's *cantiga d'escarnho* B 1439 / V 1049, taken from Graça Videira Lopes et al. (2011–). *Cantigas Medievais Galego-Portuguesas*. Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, FCSH/NOVA <http://cantigas.fchsh.unl.pt> (accessed 27 Nov. 2020).



B fol. 299r



B fol. 299v



V fol. 170v

## Appendix 2. Refrain and colon in the *cantigas d'amigo*

In twelve *cantigas d'amigo* where the verses of the distich are divided into two cola the refrain is equal in scansion to one of the cola (or to both), an example of internal resposion. Here only the first strophe of each text is given.<sup>25</sup>

NUNO FERNANDEZ TORNEOL – 8

aaB (x3): 12' [6'+5'] || 7'

ia || ei *cobras unissonans*

– Dizede m' ora, filha, | por Santa Maria,  
qual ést' o voss' amigo | que mi vos pedia?

– Madr', eu amostrar volo\_ei.

JOHAN SOAREZ COELHO – 12

aaB (x4): 9' [3'+5'] || 5'

elos e-as eles isse || ana

Fui eu, madre, | lavar meus cabelos  
a la fonte | <e> paguei m' eu delos  
e de mi louçana.

JOHAN SOAREZ COELHO – 14

aaB (x1): 16 [7'+8'] || 7'

ei || igo

Fremosas, a Deus louvado, | con tan muito ben como\_oj' ei,  
e do que sño mais leda: | ca todo quant' eu desejei  
vi quando vi meu amigo.

ESTEVAN COELHO – 1

aaB (x4+*finda*): 12' [6'+5'] (I.1., II.1) 11' [5'+5'] || 5' || 11' [5'+5']

endo ando edes ades || igo || ades

Sedia la fremosa | seu sirgo torcendo,  
sa voz manselinha | fremoso dizendo  
cantigas d' amigo.

<sup>25</sup> The texts and metrical analysis are taken from Cohen (forthcoming).

JOHAN SERVANDO – 5

aaB (x4): 15'/15 [7'+7'/7] || 7'

ia ida ar ada || igo

Ora van a San Servando | donas fazer romaria  
e non me leixan con elas | ir, ca log' alá iria,  
**por que ven i meu amigo.**

JOHAN SERVANDO – 8

aaB (x4): 11' [5'+5'] || 5'

edes ades ia igo || ores

Mha madre velida, | e non me guardedes  
d' ir a San Servando, | ca, se o fazedes,  
**morrerei d' amores.**

JUIÃO BOLSEIRO – 4

aaB (x3): 13 [6'+6] || 6'

i en ar || igo

Nas barcas novas foi s' o | meu amigo daqui,  
e vej' eu viir barcas | e tenho que ven i,  
**mha madre,\_o meu amigo.**

PERO MEOGO – 4

aaB (x2): 11 [5'+5] || 5'

ar er || ida

Ai cervas do monte, | vin vos preguntar:  
foi s' o meu amig', e, | se alá tardar,  
**que farei velida?**

PERO MEOGO – 9

aaB (x6) 10' [4'+5'] || 5

i-a // a-a (I-IV); i-o // a-o (V-VI) || ei *cobras alternantes I-IV*

i- Digades, filha, | mha filha velida,  
por que tardastes | na fontana fria?  
(– **Os amores ei**).

FERNAN DO LAGO – 1

aaB (I-II) > aaB (III-IV): 13 [6'+6] || 6'

or en (ia) on (i-a) i || igo

D' ir a Santa Maria | do Lag' ei gran sabor  
e pero non irei\_alá, | se ant<e> i non for,  
**irmana,\_o meu amigo.**

DINIS – 15

aaB (x6): 13' [6'+6'] || 6'

i-o // a-o || ero *cobras alternantes*

– De que morredes, filha, | a do corpo velido?  
– Madre, moiro d' amores | que mi deu meu amigo;  
("Alva é, vai liero.")

DINIS – 16

aaB (x8): 10' [5'+4'] (I-IV) 11'[5'+5'] (V-VIII) || 5

i-o // a-o || é *cobras alternantes*

– Ai flores, ai flores | do verde pino,  
se sabedes novas | do meu amigo?  
**ai Deus, e u é?**