

METRICS AND VERSIFICATION IN THE “CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARIA”
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LINE LENGTHS AND SYLLABLE COUNTING

The “Cantigas de Santa Maria,” in common with most of the courtly Galician-Portuguese lyric, use stress-syllabic metrics. A line of verse is defined by two features - its number of syllables and the stress pattern of its ending. *Agudo* line-endings have a final stressed syllable; *grave* line-endings have stress on the penultimate syllable. (These terms are also used to categorise rhymes.) Following the standard practice for metrical studies in the Galician-Portuguese lyric, the final unstressed syllable of a *grave* line is ignored for the purposes of syllable-counting. We can illustrate this from the refrain of CSM 7, in which all syllables have been divided, and the stressed syllables have been underlined:

San-ta Ma-ri-a a-MAR	7 syllables, agudo
de-ve-mos muit' e ro-GAR	7 syllables, agudo
que a sa gra-ça PO-nna	6 syllables, grave
so-bre nos por que e-RRAR	7 syllables, agudo
non nos fa-ça nen pe-CAR	7 syllables, agudo
o de-mo sen ver-GO-nna	6 syllables, grave

The pattern of line lengths in this refrain can be represented schematically as 7 7 6' 7 7 6', with the grave lines indicated by the prime mark '. Adding the indication of rhyme pattern, A A B A A B gives the complete metrical analysis:

A7 A7 B6' A7 A7 B6' or A A B A A B
7 7 6' 7 7 6'

Castilian metrics uses a complementary principle, taking the number of syllables of the grave line to represent the canonical line-length. In a Castilian heptasyllable (7-syllable line) the sixth syllable will be stressed, and the seventh, if present, will be unstressed: if the line has an *agudo* ending, the seventh syllable will be purely theoretical. The Castilian counting system thus yields line-lengths one syllable longer than the corresponding Galician-Portuguese values. This should not disguise the fact that in Castilian and Galician-Portuguese poetry, *agudo* and *grave* lines of the same length (whichever counting system is used) are congruent, and can be combined in verses where the rhyme type is not selected in advance. In this respect, the CSM are not typical of Galician-Portuguese: there is rarely any alternation of *grave* and *agudo* endings in corresponding lines in successive stanzas of a poem (the only exception in this anthology being Prologue A); a few (not represented in this CD-ROM) conform to a different principle known as Mussafia's Law, by which the gross number of syllables, irrespective of line ending, is the basis of equivalence.

¹ A revised version of material incorporated in M. Switten (ed) Teaching the Medieval lyric

As a corollary of the precise measurement of line length in terms of number of syllables, the rhythmic patterns found inside each line-type are very varied, and are subordinated to the musical rhythms. One notable exception is cantiga 10, where the two lines of the refrain have different syllabic measures but an equal number of major stresses, reflecting the tendency of earlier verse forms (such as the cantiga de amigo) to be based on stress rather than syllable-counting:

Rósa das rósas e frór das fróres, 9'
 Dóna das dónas, sennór das sennóres. 10'

STANZA FORMS

All the CSM used a fixed stanza form, constant over the whole poem. For most CSM the form includes a refrain. The refrain begins the poem, and is repeated after each stanza; in addition, the final portion of the stanza is modelled on the refrain, signalling its imminent return. This verse form corresponds to the French *virelai*, which was to have such a wide development in the 14th century, and to the much later Spanish *villancico*; it has also been related to the Hispano-Arabic *zadjal* (Sp *zéjel*) form. We shall follow usual eclectic practice in labelling the form *zéjel/virelai*, and appropriating the terminology of the villancico to label the internal components of this form: it consists of the refrain (*estribillo*) and a stanza made up of new metrical material (*mudanzas*) and material repeated from the refrain (*vuelta*).

The refrain and first stanza of CSM 7 may again be used to exemplify these terms:

Santa Maria amar	7A	
devemos muit' e rogar	7A	
que a sa graça ponna	6'B	REFRAIN
sobre nos por que errar	7A	
non nos faça nen pecar	7A	
o demo sen vergonna	6'B	
Porende vos contarei	7c	
dun miragre que achei	7c	
que por hũa abadessa	6'd	MUDANZAS
fez a Madre do gran Rei	7c	
ca, per com' eu apres' ei,	7c	
era-xe sua essa.	6'd	
Mas o demo enartar	7a	
a foi, por que empreñar	7a	
s' ouve d'un de Bolonna,	6'b	VUELTA
ome que de recadar	7a	
avia e de guardar	7a	
seu feit' e sa besonna.	6'b	
Santa Maria amar...		REFRAIN

CSM7 has a particularly extended stanza form, compared to the “basic” zéjel-virelai which has a two-line refrain, rhyming A A, and a four-line stanza, rhyming bbaa or bbba. In the terminology of the virelai, the bbaa stanza form gives the “symmetrical” variant, and the bbba the “asymmetrical” variant. Variations on the zéjel-virelai form consist primarily of expansion of the refrain rhyme scheme:

ABAB cccb (CSM 6, 8, 42)

or of the mudanzas

AA bc bc bc a (CSM 147- asymmetrical)

AA bc bc aa (CSM 162 - symmetrical)

or of both portions

ABAB cd cd ef ef ef b (CSM 2)

ABAB ac ac ac ab (CSM 56)

AAB AAB ccd ccd aab aab (CSM 7)

AAB AAB cd cd ddb ddb (CSM 20)

As the groupings of rhymes indicate, these complex forms could be brought together as expansions of the basic AA bbba pattern. The patterning of line lengths (see below) will confirm this.

Few cantigas s have a reduced form of the virelai: CSM 103 (AA bba) has a single-line vuelta corresponding to a two-line refrain, though the rhyme-scheme disguises a metrical pattern in which the single line of the vuelta (8'+7) corresponds to the combined *lines* (8, 7) of the refrain.

The stanza forms of the CSM use a wide variety of line lengths, often in polymetric combinations. The first 100 cantigas, corresponding to a large extent to the earliest collection of CSM, show much greater variety than the second 100; the last 200 show a high degree of metrical stereotyping. Later cantigas make extensive use of fifteen-syllable lines (as found in CSM 154, 159, 161, 181, 185): these almost invariably divide into half-lines (7' + 7), which gives all these cantigas an alternative metrical analysis in which they consist of seven-syllable lines with only the even-numbered lines rhyming. CSM 185, for example, normally analysed as

15 15 | 15 15 15 15

AA | bbba

could equally well be represented as

7' 7 7' 7 | 7' 7 7' 7 7' 7 7' 7

n A n A | n b n b n b n a.

In a smaller number of cases, three short lines are combined to make one long one, as in 189, represented in long-line format as

15 15 | 23' 23' 15 15

AA | bbaa

or in short-line format as

7' 7 7' 7 | 7' 7' 7 7' 7' 7 7' 7

n A n A | n n b n n b n a n a.

RHYME

The CSM are very precise in their rhyming. A number of homographic endings are rigidly distinguished in rhyme, such as the closed -er of infinitive endings, which never rhymes with the open -er of “moller,” “quiser” (see Prologue), or the narrow diphthong -eu (of verb endings, and “sandeu”) and the open -eu of “eu,” “seu,” “greu” (16). The CSM poets took care not to use the same word twice over for a given rhyme: in a longer cantiga, the repetition of the rhyme of the refrain in one or two lines of the vuelta requires large sets of rhyming words, which can lead to imaginative use of rare words (“prumaz”, “viaz”, “anfaz” in CSM 122), derivational suffixes (-ança used to create “demorança,” “tardança,” “perdõança” in CSM 154), and placenames (CSM 7). In CSM 56, the Latin words “convertendo” and “servo” are each divided across two lines (“conver/tendo,” “ser/vo”) to fit into a rhyme in -er.

Most of the CSM use different rhymes for the mudanzas of each stanza (“coblas singulares,” in contemporary terminology), though a few use more complex patterns of reuse of rhymes: the Prologue and CSM 159 use the same two rhymes throughout; CSM. 20 uses the same rhymes in successive pairs of stanzas (“coblas doblas”); CSM. 56 has an eight-line stanza in which five of the rhymes are repeated from the refrain. Variation of rhyme is taken as seriously as repetition of rhyme: even the longest cantigas show no repetition of rhymes.

ENJAMBEMENT

The CSM make frequent use of the run-on line, within individual stanzas and between stanzas, especially when speech is being represented, as in CSM 122:

.....E enton
foy-a fillar e diss' assi: "Pois non
quis a Virgen, a que te dei en don,
que vivesses, mais quiso que na az

(R) Miragres muitos pelos reis faz...

Dos mortos fosses por pecados meus,
poren deitar-t- ei ant' os pees seus
da sa omagen da Madre de Deus."

Similar examples are found in CSM 103. The repetition of the refrain, musically and metrically necessary, obliges the listener to hold the suspended thread of narrative until the stanza returns.

ELISION

Galician-Portuguese is very rich in vowel sounds, and in vowel sequences. Orthographic vowel sequences are pronounced either as diphthongs (ai, ei, eu, ou...) or as separate syllables. Thus line 18 of no 159 is composed of grave heptasyllables:

u o seu jan-tar t̃i-i-an, / ond' e-ran co-bi-i-ço-sos.

Elision of final unstressed vowels is frequent, and is usually explicitly indicated in the manuscript by the omission of the vowel in question (modern editors add the apostrophe for clarity). Unstressed -io and -ia (especially in the pronoun sequences “mi o,” “mi a,” and the feminine possessive “mia”) are frequently reduced to a single metrical syllable. Elision is far from the rule, however, and many vocalic hiatuses are not reduced. In a few cases elisions have not been signalled, or sequences of vowels have to be contracted into single vowels to satisfy the metre (e.g. “ũu” counting one syllable, and “t̃ia” counting two). This lack of rigidity gives the poets considerable freedom in adjusting the text to meet the stringent requirements of syllable-counting.