

## THE *CANTIGAS*, THE COURT AND BOURDIEU

### LAS *CANTIGAS*, LA CORTE Y BOURDIEU

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**Abstract:** In the speech she gave on entering the Royal Galician Academy, the poet Chus Pato defined *trobar* as an incredibly mobile phenomenon where poets would cast their gaze upon words from different directions. Inspired by this, my article seeks to explore what medieval troubadours using Galician-Portuguese hoped to achieve when they “located”, “surrounded”, “spun around”, “returned upon”, “circled behind”, “encircled” and “returned” (Pato, *At the Limit* 20) to specific words or conventions within the space of the court. In the first half of my discussion, I use Pierre Bourdieu’s theories on linguistic exchanges to elucidate how *cantigas* may have functioned within the social setting of the court and I explore some case studies from a subset of *cantigas* labelled as being of *género incerto* by one of the main online databases of medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric. In the second, I demonstrate how we can use Bourdieu’s definitions of “field”, “habitus” and “cultural capital” to uncover the ways in which troubadours proved their “profit of distinction” by giving *coita*, one of the main conventions of the *cantigas de amor*, a meaning unique to them.

**Keywords:** *cantigas*; Bourdieu; Galician-Portuguese; medieval lyric; Chus Pato; Galician Studies.

**Resumen:** En el discurso que dio al entrar en la Real Academia Galega, la poeta Chus Pato describió el acto de trovar como un fenómeno increíblemente móvil que dio a los trovadores la oportunidad de mirar palabras desde distintos ángulos. Tomando como inspiración esta definición, mi trabajo explora lo que los poetas que usaron el gallego-portugués querían conseguir a través de este proceso de “atopar, xirar, rodear, dar a volta a algo, ir derredor, rodar a palabra, darlle voltas” (Pato, *Baixo o límite* 13) a distintas palabras y convenciones dentro del propio espacio de la corte. En la primera sección del artículo, utilizo las teorías de Pierre Bourdieu sobre intercambios lingüísticos para iluminar las distintas funciones desempeñadas por las cantigas y exploro algunos poemas recogidos en la categoría *género incerto* usada por una de las bases de datos más importantes de la lírica medieval gallego-portuguesa. En la segunda, indico cómo podemos usar las definiciones que nos ofrece Bourdieu de conceptos como “campo”, “habitus” y “capital cultural” para descifrar cómo los trovadores confirmaron su “beneficio de distinción” a la hora de dar a una de las convenciones principales de las *cantigas*, la *coita*, su propio significado.

**Palabras clave:** *cantigas*; Bourdieu; gallego-portugués; lírica medieval; Chus Pato; Estudios gallegos.

On 23 September 2017 in Ourense, the contemporary Galician poet Chus Pato read two essays to mark her investiture into the Royal Galician Academy. In these “dúas alas”, which she compared to a butterfly’s body, Pato explored “algunhas cuestións que me preocupan, que me inquietan, que me chaman ao respecto do poema e da poesía” (Pato, *Baixo o límite* 9). In her discussion of the second of these, she delved into the relationship between writing and biography, into what she called the “lingua do poema” (13). To do this, she turned to medieval poetics and the “primeiros trovadores” (13), describing the act of *trobar* as follows: “Trobar, atopar, xirar, rodear, dar a volta a algo, ir derredor, rodar a palabra, darlle voltas” (13). The synonyms Pato uses here to describe what it means to *trobar* have been translated by her long-term creative partner, Erín Moure, in the following way: “To write or sing, to poeticize – *trobar* – is to locate, surround, spin round, return upon something, circle behind, encircle the word, return to it” (Pato, *At the Limit* 20). In the first instance, Pato equates the verb *trobar* to its vernacular etymon, which derives from the Old Occitan “to locate” or “to find” and

its Latin rhetorical analogue *inventio*<sup>1</sup>. The evocative imagery she subsequently uses depicts a poet turning a word around in their hands, stepping away from it, looking at it from multiple angles and then returning to it. Presenting the writing or singing process in this way, Pato depicts *trobar* in terms of place and movement, and shows us how it is the poet who finds, moves around and returns to words. In doing so, she invites us to ask the following question: if the poet is orbiting the multifaceted nature of language in this way, what universe is in operation around them?

To understand the universe of poets who composed in Galician-Portuguese between the end of the twelfth and the middle of the fourteenth century, this article focuses on the court and studies, from a social angle, why and how troubadours using Galician-Portuguese within this space “located”, “surrounded”, “spun around”, “returned upon”, “circled behind”, “encircled” and “returned” to specific words or conventions. In the first half of my discussion, I explore the “why” by applying Pierre Bourdieu’s theories on linguistic exchanges to the Iberian court communities in which these songs were composed and I present the “how” via case studies taken from a group of *cantigas* labelled as being of *género incerto* by one of the main online databases of medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric. In the second, I demonstrate how we can use Bourdieu’s definitions of “field”, “habitus” and “cultural capital” to uncover how troubadours proved their “profit of distinction” by giving one of the main conventions of the *cantigas*, *coita*, their own meaning. The way I apply Bourdieu to the *cantigas* in both sections is inspired by Mark Johnston’s essay “Cultural Studies on the *Gaya Ciencia*”. Here Johnston considered how contemporary theories on culture could be applied to fifteenth-century Castilian court lyric in ways that would draw out how lyric composition was a “signifying” practice” (239–39) and how its composition “involved competition for a status above and beyond the benefits gained from the exercise of literacy alone” (248)<sup>2</sup>. This, he argued, led to “distinctive subject positions” being forged from “contending relations” (251). In building on this work and seeing how we might use it in relation to an earlier Iberian lyric form, the following two sections of my article seek to uncover how we can trace the competitive nature of lyric composition through the *cantigas*, with a specific focus on one of their main forms, the *cantigas de amor* (male-voiced love songs).

1 For the etymology of *trobar* and its connections to “finding”, see Paden (“Troubadour”; “The Etymology of Old Occitan *Trobar* and *Trobador*”). See also Corominas where *trovar* is defined as “hallar” (*Breve diccionario* 587).

2 Johnston’s exploration of the competitiveness of this lyric builds on a significant corpus of work, some examples of which include Weiss in relation to the *cantigas* (Weiss, “Literary Theory and Polemic in Castile” 496), Sarah Kay in relation to the ‘competitive masculine economy’ (Kay 84) that defined troubadour production in the south of France and Simon Gaunt who argued that the *canço* was “a vehicle for masculine competition within a feudal hierarchy” where men could “negotiate their status in relation to each other” (Gaunt 144).

### “Uncertain Genres” and Uncertain Social Places

Originally published in French, Bourdieu’s “The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges” explores how linguistic exchanges are “relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized” (*Language and Symbolic Power* 37). My hypothesis throughout what follows is that if we understand the *cantiga* as a form of linguistic exchange, we can begin to unpick its various functions within the court. Nuancing the dynamics of “power relations”, Bourdieu draws out how “linguistic circulation” depends upon the “distinctive value which results from the relationship that the speakers establish, consciously or unconsciously, between the linguistic product offered by a socially characterized speaker and the other products offered simultaneously in a determinate social space” (*Language and Symbolic Power* 38). Applying this to the *cantigas*, we can infer that once a poet has decided to compose a song and that song has entered circulation, it is then accorded a “distinctive value”, but this is only acquired when those operating in the same space decide there is something “distinctive” about it in comparison to other *cantigas*. The social distinction that derives from the *cantiga*’s stylistic and semantic distinctiveness, therefore, depends on the context in which it is received, on those who perform it, those who listen to it and those who participate in the same court community.

As Bourdieu presents another means for understanding the signifying potential of linguistic exchanges, he turns to style and explores how “distinctive properties” are attained:

The question of style: this “individual deviation from the linguistic norm”, this particular elaboration which tends to give discourse its distinctive properties, is a being-perceived which exists only in relation to perceiving subjects, endowed with the diacritical dispositions which enable them to make *distinctions* between different *ways of saying*, distinctive manners of speaking. It follows that style [...] exists only in relation to agents endowed with schemes of perception and appreciation that enable them to constitute it as a set of systematic differences, apprehended syncretically. (*Language and Symbolic Power* 38)

Following this framework, for a *cantiga* to be recognized as being “distinctive”, it has to exist within the court space. The “perceiving subjects”, i.e. the other members of the same court community who might be looking at the same *cantiga* but from different angles, must have the set of “diacritical dispositions” that mean they can understand how a poet is engaging with “style”. That is to say that the “perceiving subjects” and the “speaker” must share an understanding of what “style” is, that they must know and be able to use the same conventions. It is the repeated verse forms and motifs we associ-

ate with the *cantigas* that demarcate what we can describe as the “common language” shared by medieval troubadours who composed in Galician-Portuguese. Within this language, however, as Bourdieu explains, there is space for speakers to “fashion an idiolect”:

What circulates on the linguistic market is not “language”, as such, but rather discourses that are stylistically marked both in their production, in so far as each speaker fashions an idiolect from the common language, and in their reception, in so far as each recipient helps to produce the message which he perceives and appreciates by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience. (*Language and Symbolic Power* 39)

The idea that an “idiolect” can emerge from a “common language” is particularly useful for us when we look at the *cantigas* since it gives us a means by which to unlock how this lyric, as Mariña Arbor Aldea has described, “articula unha voz única, pero sobre esa voz destacan maneiras, formas, voces” (“Voz e voces”, 558)<sup>3</sup>. By using Bourdieu to reflect on the shared but distinct voices of the *cantigas*, we can start to explore how troubadours composing in Galician-Portuguese relied on using a common linguistic code in personal ways in order to carve out “distinctive” positions and “idiolects”.

My point of entry into applying Bourdieu’s theories to the *cantigas* is a corpus of 29 songs that the database of medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric set up by the Instituto de Estudos Medievais at the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa (hereafter referred to as the Lisbon database) have not placed into any of their thirteen other categories: *amigo*, *amor*, *escárnio e maldizer*, *gesta de maldizer*, *tenção*, *tenção de amor*, *cantiga de loor*, *pranto*, *pranto de escárnio*, *lai*, *sirventês moral*, *pastorela* and *espúria* (*Cantigas medievais galego-portuguesas*). Instead, these “uncategorizable” songs have been collected together under the label *género incerto* and in many cases, the database explains in the synopsis below the poem why this decision has been made. “A por que perço o dormir” [63, 15], for example, is described as a *cantiga* that belongs to the “zona de limite entre os géneros” where it is not a *cantiga de amor* (which would be its first vocation) but also not a satirical song<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, “A ren que mi a mí máis valer” [12, 2] is deemed to be

3 Arbor Aldea’s 1995 article on the voices of medieval Galician-Portuguese lyric builds on a strand of scholarship in *cantiga* studies that started to take centre stage in 1985 when Weiss, Thomas Hart and Vicens Beltran began to move away from the idea that the *cantigas de amor* represented a homogeneous, uniform form that adhered to conventions with no room for individuality. Instead, they explored how “convention and originality need not be enemies” (Hart 51), that these poems present “líñas de innovación” and “trazos personais” (Beltran 12) and that the men who composed them were not “constrained by the moulds in which they cast themselves” but engaged with conventionality “as a very creative practice” (Weiss, “On the Conventionality of the *Cantigas d’amor*” 240).

4 Each *cantiga* I cite in this article is identified by an index code in square brackets and/or its incipit. The index code corresponds to the system set up by Giuseppe Tavani in his *Repertorio metrico della lirica galego-portoghese* (1967) whereby each troubadour was assigned a number between 1 and 156 according to alphabetical order and then each of his *cantigas* ordered alphabetically according to the incipit and assigned its own number.

a “curiosa cantiga” that appears to be a *cantiga de amor* but actually operates “numa zona um pouco alheia às regras habituais do género”. “Ai Deus, que grave coita de sofrer” [125, 1] is also said to “parece[r] em tudo uma cantiga de amor”, but because it has a “problemático refrão”, it is not labelled as such. What these *cantigas* seem to share is that they generate a certain level of anxiety for the modern reader who seeks to present the *cantigas* in groups whose composition rests on what we can glean from the *Arte de Trovar* and a small number of *cantigas* that do reference the “cantigas d’amigo” [64, 5] or a “cantiga d’amor” [85, 9]. We must be aware of this medieval interest in the boundaries of convention and these categories can and should orient our readings. However, it is important that we also find ways to ensure we are attuned to movement across formal and thematic boundaries, movement that may sometimes be obscured by modern practices of generic labelling. This movement, I put forward, is best perceived when we examine poems that are apparently hard to place within inherited categories, such as the group of poems that appear under the heading *género incerto* on the Lisbon database.

The fact that modern scholars looking back at these 29 *cantigas* have deemed these poems not “conventional” enough to fit into any of the other thirteen categories is important for researchers looking for songs where poets are perhaps at their most creative in terms of how they combine conventions in idiolectic ways in order to set themselves apart from (and over) others. It is not to claim that these *cantigas* would have been seen as “uncertain” in the medieval period. It is, instead, to reflect upon how a modern aesthetic appreciation of genre has generated a group of songs that can fall out of our line of vision of what a *cantiga de amor*, *cantiga de amigo*, etc., is precisely because of how they are presented to us. Indeed, the very existence of this negative category (where songs that do not fit neatly into other categories have been placed) risks having unintended consequences on our understanding of the “linguistic exchanges” crafted by troubadours composing in Galician-Portuguese. This becomes particularly apparent if we choose the option “filtrar por género” and select “Amor” since this does not present us with any of the *género incerto* songs that are described as being “almost but not quite” *cantigas de amor*. Yet, if we restore those *incerto* songs that are “almost

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Songs can be searched with this index number on the MedDB database by converting it into a six-digit code e.g. [22,17] becomes 022017. They should be entered in the search function on the Universo Cantigas website without a space after the comma. If readers are using the Lisbon database, they should search for *cantigas* according to the incipit or by identifying where a specific poem appears in one of the manuscripts on either MedDB or Universo Cantigas, and then searching according to that number by clicking on “Manuscritos”, then “Lista de folios e cantigas” in the relevant songbook. This article cites the editions of *cantigas* published on the Universo Cantigas website because of the wealth of information made available on this database, including a paleographic edition of each poem, a full history of editorial interventions and manuscript variants, Galician paraphrases of most *cantigas* and explanatory notes on metre, lexis and meaning.

but not quite” *cantigas de amor* to our readings of male-voiced Galician-Portuguese love lyric, we are able to see how what is perceived as “uncategorizable” or “uncertain” by modern readers may give us a key into unlocking how and why the medieval poets who composed these songs developed idiolects. By reading these songs closely, we are also able to shine a clearer light on the poetic processes that enabled troubadours to circle around a core set of ideas and values, turning them around in their hands to produce something distinctive from an apparently common and anonymous set of shared conventions.

The following three *incerto cantigas* have been identified as forming part of lyric sequences: “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar” [118, 6], “Con vossa graça, mia senhor” [46, 1] and “Non sei dona que podesse” [46, 5]. The first of these, “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar”, throws up especially interesting questions around the function a song that does not quite fit into any of the “três géneros canónicos da lírica galego-portuguesa” can play in the middle of a narrative arc (*Cantigas medievais galego-portuguesas*). Drawing on Weiss’s awareness of the importance of narrative theory to lyric sequencing in the *cantigas de amigo* (1988: 20), here I examine how the up-and-down nature of such an arc can represent a journey through conventionality. “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar” is attributed to Pedro, the Count of Barcelos, a bastard son of Dom Dinis whose life at court spanned from the end of the thirteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth century and who is credited with bequeathing the famous *Livro das Cantigas* to King Alfonso XI in 1350. Both Manuel Simões (who authored a solo edition of the poet’s complete corpus) and the curators behind the Lisbon database recognize that the Count’s male-voiced love songs present a form of sequence. Simões has defined this as “una sequenza elaborata da arte” (*Il canzoniere di D. Pedro, conte di Barcelos* 27), “un racconto compiuto e strutturato con una lógica interna perfetta” (29), while the Lisbon database has presented it as a “sequência cronológica”. The sequence is largely thought to comprise four songs. The first of these, “Que muito ben me fez Nostro Senhor”, shifts from describing how it was God who instigated the subject’s falling-in-love with such a beautiful and eloquent lady to revealing that it was God who took her away and killed her, condemning the lover to a hopeless life of intense pain where all he can do is think about her and long to die. The second, “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar”, described by the Lisbon database as being about “o desalento e mesmo a descrença numa justiça divina”, sees the lyric subject declare he is no longer going to pray to God for life or death because neither has any point. The subject continues to lament here how much he is made to suffer by God, how he is unable to find the reason for this suffering and how he cannot expect to receive “ben nen mal” or “pesar

nen prazer” in the future. The third song in the sequence, “Tal sazón foi en que eu ja perdi”, demonstrates the cyclical essence of the narrative arc set up by the Count: not only do we find out that the lyric subject has fallen in love again, but we find that God has been restored to a central position since he has given the subject a new woman to love. These songs are followed in the manuscript tradition by “Non me poss’ eu de morte defender” [118, 5]<sup>5</sup>. Here the lyric subject declares he is no longer able to defend himself against Love. Given the hopelessness of his situation, he resolves that if Love is going to kill him anyway, he might as well love the best of all ladies.

What interests me most about the sequence is that the Count appears to take a conscious decision to cast his lyric subject outside or even above the common language in the first two songs (“Que muito ben me fez Nostro Senhor” and “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar”) before reclaiming a central position in the latter two (“Tal sazón foi en que eu ja perdi” and “Non me poss’eu de morte defender”) as he re-formulates some of the motifs introduced in the earlier poems. This process of denying, re-affirming and re-formulating the common language brings the sequence’s narrative arc to life and demonstrates Pedro’s skill in using thematic conventions to carve out an idiolect. “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar” sits at a pivotal point in this arc since the perceived “uncertainty” of the emotional experience it depicts (i.e. whether we should read this poem as a *cantiga de amor* or not) sees the Count move his poetic production momentarily outside the common language in order to present a very specific means of using convention that is unique to him and this cycle of poems. The sequence begins by apparently denying a convention; God has not given the poet the best lady, he takes her away instead. The lyric subject in “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar” is then left in a state of limbo where he is unable to feel and where he is left waiting for something or someone to revive him. The third song sees him move back onto conventional ground as he is able to love and suffer again. By the end of the fourth song, he has demonstrated that he exerts complete control over the way he intends to experience love going forward: it is not that God will put him in front of a lady and set him upon a path towards death (as he did in the first song), but that the lyric subject himself will choose who to love and thus put himself on that path. This ideological sequence of denial, re-entry and reclaiming thus demonstrates the extent to which the Count understands the shared language and how he can use it to best effect by moving in and out of conventions, by turning them around in his hands, and thus finding and enacting his agency.

While “Non quer’a Deus por mia morte rogar” is not categorized by the database

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<sup>5</sup> This poem is explicitly included in the sequence by Simões (*Il canzoniere di D. Pedro, conte di Barcelos* 219).



because of the perception that it disrupts a narrative arc, Afonso Sanchez's "Mia senhor, quen me vos guarda" reaches the same fate because its composer disrupts semantic stability at least three or four times per stanza. This poem is an incredibly vivid example of what happens when we find a troubadour "locating", "surrounding", "spinning round", "returning upon", "circling behind", "encircling" and "returning" to a word (Pato, *At the Limit* 20). My analysis argues that it is Sanchez's use of repetition that functions as the "stylistic marker" he uses to portray himself as having true linguistic mastery, as being "the man who stands out as exercising greatest control over language" (Gaunt, *Gender and Genre* 151).

Mia senhor, quen me vós guarda  
 guarda min, e faz pecado,  
 d'aver ben e nen aguarda  
 como faz desaguisado;  
 mais o que vos dá por guarda  
 en tan bon día foi nado  
 se dos seus olhos ben guarda  
 o vosso cos ben-talhado.

Se foss'eu o que vos leva,  
 levar-m'ia en bon día,  
 ca non faria mal leva  
 d'outra, e máis vos diria:  
 porque vós levades leva  
 das outras en melhora,  
 por én son eu o que leva  
 por vós coitas noit'e día.

Mia sen[h]or (que m'oje manda),  
 a vós manda fiz sen falha  
 porque vós por mia demanda  
 nunca destes ãa palha;  
 mais aquele que vos manda  
 sei tanto, se Deus me valha,  
 que pero convosco manda  
 por vós pouc'ou nimigalha.

(Universo Cantigas)

Throughout the poem, Sanchez endows words with different meanings according to their position in the song. This kind of technique, labelled *dobre equívoco* by Arbor Aldea (“Voz e voces” 196), sees the same word used multiple times in the same stanza but not always to produce the same meaning. Combining *dobre* with *equivocatio*, Sanchez exploits that potentially uncertain gap between the signifier and the signified to create a song that challenges its audience and captures the ambiguities of language. This is particularly important in terms of how the poem operates as a linguistic exchange that enables Sanchez to play with the “schemes of perception and appreciation” held by his “perceiving subjects”. Sanchez is aware that by speaking in this way, he can do something distinct with his poem and thereby ensure that his voice is not lost in the common language.

The linguistic shifting in his *cantiga* hinges upon three words and their multifaceted nature: “guarda”, “leva” and “manda”. The formulaic and symmetrical structure of the song, whereby each stanza follows an ABABABAB rhyme scheme (*cobras singulares*), showcases the polysemy of language and draws our attention to these repetitions. When each shift in meaning occurs, we can imagine Sanchez looking at the word in a different way. What is crucial is that he invites us to do the same and in doing so, encourages us to think about the shifting nature of language. What comes across as uncategorizable or “uncertain” seems to be a product of Sanchez’s creation of a voice that stands out as different, one that draws on conventions but in ways that challenge our approach to language and make us think about the possible meanings held by one word. This is particularly interesting when we apply Bourdieu’s notion of an idiolect being fashioned from a common language to it since what Sanchez does here is enact how difference can be created from sameness: he might be using the same word in each stanza, but the semantic effects he generates show that sameness is very often only a surface-level appearance.

While Sanchez was looking at “guarda”, “leva” and “manda” from multiple angles in this way, he, like the Count of Barcelos, would have been very aware that other members of the court were looking at him as he did so. Just as they turned words around in their hands, these poets knew others were turning their gaze towards them as they composed. Though the “genero incerto” songs on the Lisbon database present some of the most radical examples of poets seeking to compose in an “idiolectic” way in front of their peers, we are able to find subtler instances of the same desire to be distinctive in other songs too. In the next section, I turn to *coita*, specifically how it is presented in the *cantigas de amor*, in order to establish how subtle shifts in its depiction reveal further examples of poets seeking new ways to situate themselves in relation to shared conventions that could define and legitimise their membership of the courtly group.

### **My *Coita* Means More Than Yours: Joan Baveca vs. Pero Garcia d'Ambroa**

Across the entire spectrum of medieval Galician-Portuguese secular lyric, *coita* is presented as a multifaceted phenomenon. Though it can be found in a significant number of *cantigas de amigo* and *cantigas de escarnio e maldizer*, it is a defining feature of the *cantigas de amor* where we learn that *coita* can be rooted in the heart, the mind and the eyes, that it can inspire the act of composition and that it can be felt particularly acutely by men wishing to depict their experience as the very worst imaginable. We also learn that *coita* is a form of intense pain that can lead to death, that it can make the lover feel like he is losing his mind and that it has often been bestowed upon him by his beloved, God or a personified figure named “Amor”. Unfortunately for the lover, however, the beloved is rarely bothered by his *coita*, though she can be more amenable to his plight in the *cantigas de amigo*. There are just a few exceptions to the woeful *coita*-driven laments we find in the *cantigas de amor* and these occur in songs where poets adopt a slightly more positive outlook towards the experience and seek to re-claim their sense of self.

Continuing my application of Bourdieu to the *cantigas*, here I use his concept of the field to elucidate how distinct subject positions were developed in the medieval court on the basis of the shared convention of *coita*<sup>6</sup>. For Bourdieu, the field is not a semantic field as it was for Giuseppe Tavani (“La poesia lirica galego-portoghese” 64) but a competitive social space where positions are negotiated in relation to each other: it is “an area, a playing field, a field of objective relations among individuals or institutions competing for the same stakes” (*Sociology in Question* 133). Within the field, each individual has the inclination and capacity to be there, and this “system of dispositions” is what Bourdieu terms a “habitus”:

Investment is the disposition to act that is generated in the relationship between a space defined by a game offering certain prizes or stakes (what I call a field) and a system of dispositions attuned to that game (what I call a habitus) – the “feel” for the games and the stakes, which implies both the inclination and the capacity to play the game, to take an interest in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game. (*Sociology in Question* 18)

As Toril Moi pointed out in her essay on Bourdieu and gender theory (first published 1991), what is important about a habitus is that it is “acquired through practical experi-

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6 As previously discussed, Johnston’s work has inspired my use of Bourdieu (“Cultural Studies on the *Gaya Ciencia*”). It is also supported by Weiss’s work on literary theory and polemic (‘Literary Theory and Polemic in Castile, c. 1200–c. 1500’) and Ian MacPherson’s description of courtly love in terms of Johan Huizinga’s theory of play, three characteristics of which focus on courtly love as a game with rules (“The Game of Courtly Love” 98). Also see Laurie Finke’s application of Bourdieu to the *trobairitz* (*Feminist Theory, Women’s Writing* 45–48).

ence in the field” (*What is a Woman? And Other Essays* 271) and that it can be shared but not identical (272). In the context of the *cantigas*, I understand the habitus as that shared but not fixed set of conventions that defined the parameters of the court, or field, where agents, operating from distinct positions, fought over the same stakes. While all troubadours composing in Galician-Portuguese will likely have known and had access to the same set of conventions, their dispositions, their “feel” for using them, will not necessarily have been the same.

The *cantigas de amor* carry voices trying to place themselves in a space that sits between the shared and the individual, and here is where Bourdieu’s concept of capital becomes important. For Bourdieu, “capital” “can present itself in three fundamental guises” (“The Forms of Capital” 243). These are economic capital (“immediately and directly convertible into money”), cultural capital (“convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital” and sometimes “institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications”) and social capital (“convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital” and sometimes “institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility”) (“The Forms of Capital” 243). Though both social and economic capital could be applied to the *cantigas*, particularly the idea that membership of a group affords “collectivity-owned capital” (“The Forms of Capital” 249), my focus here is on how cultural capital in its “embodied state” (243) can enhance our readings of *coita*. Some of the most salient features of this form of cultural capital are that it takes time to acquire, that it cannot be acquired second-hand, that it cannot be exchanged with another, that it can be acquired “in the absence of any deliberate inculcation” and that it “declines and dies with its bearer (with his biological capacity, his memory, etc.)” (243–48). Also significant is that it is “predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition” (245). However, perhaps most importantly, cultural capital in its embodied state is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon, particularly when individuals are looking to adopt a distinctive identity. It can be held by agents in different amounts and deployed from different subject positions, with this range of possibilities generating “profits of distinction”:

Furthermore, the specifically symbolic logic of distinction additionally secures material and symbolic profits for the possessors of a large cultural capital: any given cultural competence (e.g., being able to read in a world of illiterates) derives a scarcity value from its position in the distribution of cultural capital and yields profits of distinction for its owner (“The Forms of Capital” 245)

The ideas of distribution and distinction that Bourdieu puts forward here are particularly helpful in that they help us to understand how troubadours used *coita* as a means of

demonstrating cultural capital, of accruing symbolic capital and of earning a profit of distinction. By demonstrating that they had a deep understanding of the convention of *coita* and that they could give it a meaning no others did, poets were able to prove that they held this coveted profit of distinction.

In what follows, I take the work of Joan Baveca and Pero Garcia d'Ambroa to explore how we can apply these ideas to the representation of *coita* in the *cantigas*. Although there is very little information outside the *cantigas* that has survived about the first of these two men, we can tell both from his poems and from poems about him that he was working in the same circles as Airas Perez Vuitoron, Gonçal'Eanes do Vinhal, Pedr'Amigo de Sevilha, María Balteira, perhaps Bernal de Bonaval and definitely Pero Garcia d'Ambroa<sup>7</sup>. His *cantigas* present a varied corpus comprising *cantigas de amigo*, *cantigas de amor*, *cantigas de escarnio* and two *tensóns*, one with Pedr'Amigo de Sevilha and the other with Ambroa. According to António Resende de Oliveira's work, his poems formed part of the "cancioneiro de jograis" that once circulated (358). However, Joan's status as a "xograr" was not without controversy and we see this most clearly in his debate poem with Pedr'Amigo de Sevilha, "–Pedr'Amigo, quer'ora ã a ren" [64, 22]. The second of his *tensóns* and the one I discuss below sees him launch into a debate with Pero Garcia d'Ambroa around similar issues.

Ambroa, like Baveca, has also inspired much scholarship over the years. Recent work has shown the names "Pero d'Anbroa" and "Pero Garcia d'Anbroa", both found in the manuscripts, likely refer to two different individuals rather than the same person. The *cantiga de amor* "Grave dia naceu, senhor" [126, 4] is attributed to "Pero Garcia d'Anbroa" in the *Cancioneiro da Biblioteca Nacional* while one *cantiga de amigo*, a *tensón* and eleven *cantigas de escarnio e maldizer* are attributed to "Pero d'Anbroa". The traditional theory, used for example by Vasconcelos (*Cancioneiro da Ajuda* 531–44, also cited in Souto Cabo "Pero Garcia de Ambroa e Pedro de Ambroa" 225), was that these two names represented the same person. However, recently, scholars like Yara Fratieschi Vieira (*En cas dona Maior*), José António Souto Cabo ("Pero Garcia de Ambroa e Pedro de Ambroa") and Joaquim Ventura Ruiz ("A trindade de Pedro Garcia de Ambroa") have shown they likely refer to two<sup>8</sup>. Pero Garcia d'Ambroa or "Pero d'Anbroa" (as he appears in the manuscripts), whose lyric production Souto Cabo situates between 1235 and 1255 ("Pero Garcia de Ambroa e Pedro de Ambroa" 236) and who is not thought to have composed

7 For information about Joan Baveca's life, see Lorenzo ("Johan Baveca" 343–44) and "La personalità storica e artistica" in Zilli's critical edition (*Poesie. Johan Baveca* 29–38).

8 For a full discussion of this, see Souto Cabo ("Pero Garcia de Ambroa e Pedro de Ambroa", 226) and Ventura Ruiz ("A trindade de Pedro Garcia de Ambroa" 182, 195, 199).

“Grave día naçeu, senhor” [126, 4], was the subject of multiple satirical attacks from his peers on the basis of an alleged pilgrimage. In response to this mocking, particularly to Pedr’Amigo de Sevilha, Ambroa composed a response, “Querri’agora fazer un cantar” [126, 13] in which he claimed he did in fact go on a pilgrimage to “Ultramar”<sup>9</sup>. The attacks on Ambroa did not stop here, however, and extended to his poetic skills too. In “Pero d’Ambroa, averedes pesar” [131, 6], for example, we find Pero Mafaldo explaining to Ambroa why he is about to feel “pesar” as “os trobadores” eject “xogars” like him from their group because they cannot compose well enough<sup>10</sup>. The only ones allowed to be called “trobadors” are those who “souber trobar” and this does not apply to Ambroa who is presented by Pero Mafaldo as a “vilão” and told not to expect financial compensation for what he does because it is stipulated as such by the King’s decree (MedDB).

Both Baveca and Ambroa seem to have taken very different approaches to the field. The former seems to have viewed *coita* as a competition for poetic and social supremacy, while Ambroa gave it little import in his lyric. In the one poem where he did mention *coita*, “Se eu no mundo fiz algun cantar” [126, 15], Ambroa framed it in an entirely satirical way, as something that would make him feel sick and would differentiate him from the “escolar” who still succumbed to it. Yet, despite this, underlying both approaches is a shared awareness of what it means to express *coita* in a field of multiple and distinct subject positions that find value in relation to each other only if a profit of distinction is attained via the shared habitus. As we will see, Baveca and Ambroa explicitly compete against each other for this in the *tensón* “–Joan Baveca, fe que vós devedes” (Pero Garcia d’Ambroa [126, 5], also Joan Baveca [64, 13])<sup>11</sup>. When we read this *tensón*, it is important to bear in mind not only Ambroa’s apparent disregard for *coita*, but also Baveca’s evident attachment to it. Unlike Ambroa, Baveca dedicated a significant number of *cantigas de amor* to *coita* and very specifically to presenting his lyric subjects as suffering from the very worst form of it. By depicting his subjects’ *coita* as being unique, he generates an experience that only becomes meaningful when placed in dialogue with other poetic manifestations of *coita*. In other words, the experience exists only when its “perceiving subject” has the “diacritical dispositions” (*Sociology in Question* 38) required for them to be able to distinguish between what Baveca’s lyric subjects feel and how others react to

9 For historical contextualization around Pero Garcia d’Ambroa and pilgrimage, see Souto Cabo (“Pero Garcia de Ambroa e Pedro de Ambroa” 233–35). Also see Alvar (“Las poesías de Pero Garcia d’Ambroa”) for the edition of his poems and Minervini (“Pero Garcia d’Ambroa”) for a short summary of his life.

10 For a more in-depth analysis of this poem, see Ventura Ruiz (“A trindade de Pedro Garcia de Ambroa” 199–201).

11 On the *tensón*, how it is defined in the *Arte de Trovar* and where these poems are found in the manuscripts, see González Martínez (“*Outras cantigas fazem os trovadores*”). That these two poets composed a full *tensón* is surprising if read in line with Pedr’Amigo de Sevilha’s *cantiga de escarnio* “Joan Baveca e Pero d’Ambrõa” [116, 11] where he mocks the pair for never having been able to finish a *tensón*.

the same experience. The identity Baveca seeks to carve out for himself via his lyric subjects is one of superiority and sincerity<sup>12</sup>. He sets out to master the field by destabilizing as many subject positions as possible in a game of re-positioning and re-shaping that has one goal, to attain that profit of distinction so many troubadours were fighting over. When these songs are performed, Baveca throws into question the severity of the *coita* others claim to feel. He is, of course, by no means the only poet to do this and the fact that so many engage in the paradoxical game of “Whose *coita* is worst and thus best?” emphasizes that the field is a fluctuating space where subject positions are not static but open to negotiation, change, and perhaps most importantly in Baveca and Ambroa’s case, critique from other “perceiving subjects” who understand that profits of distinction can be claimed and resisted<sup>13</sup>.

The following *tensón* between Baveca and Ambroa explores the competitive link between *coita* and composition:

— Joham Baveca, fe que vós devedes  
que me digades ora huna rem  
que eu non sei, e ssegundo meu ssém,  
tenh” eu de pram de vós que o ssabedes;  
e por aquesto vos vin preguntar:  
cantar d’ amor de quen non sab’ amar  
que me digades porqué lho dizedes.

— Pero d’ Anbroa, vós non m’ oïredes  
dizer cantar, esto creede ben,  
se non ben feit’ e igual; e poren  
non digu’ estes bõos, que vós fazedes;  
ante digo dos que faz trobador  
que troba bem et á coita d’amor;  
e vós por esto non me vos queixedes.

— Joham Baveca, se vós non queredes  
os meus cantares dizer ant’ alguen,  
darei vos ora como vos aven:  
nunca porén contra mim perdizedes  
mais lo que sabe molher ben querer,

12 On the significance of sincerity in the *cantigas*, see Lopes, “*E dizem eles que é com amor*”.

13 For examples of *cantigas* where the lyric subject believes his *coita* is far greater than anyone else’s, see “Ai Deus, que grave coita de sofrer” (Pero Garcia Burgales [125, 1]), “Ai eu coitad”, en que coita mortal” (Joan Soarez Somesso [78, 2]), “As graves coitas, a quen as Deus dar” (Joan Soarez Coelho [79, 8]) and “En gran coita vivo, senhor” (Joan de Gaia [66, 2], also [109, 2]).

bem quanto sab” o asno de leer,  
por namorado porque o metedes.

— Pero d’ Ambroa, vós mais non podeades  
saber de min do que vos já dix’ ém:  
os cantares que eu digo fez quem  
á grand” amor; mais, pois sanha prendedes  
aqui ante todos leix’ eu a tençon  
ca sse quisessedes saber rrazon,  
digu’ eu verdad’ en esto, non duvidedes. (MedDB)

In this debate poem, both Baveca, who wrote songs about *coita*, and Ambroa, who largely did not, are seeking to defend their lyric. Since Baveca’s poetic and social rank was that of a *xograr*, he would have been expected to perform songs by troubadours. Yet, here, the implicit undercurrent is that by writing songs, Baveca has caused confusion and turmoil in the court. Given Baveca was a *xograr*, he would not have had the “capital” needed to be able to compose legitimately and yet, as we saw above, he produced *cantigas de amor* in significant quantities. In these poems, we find that for Baveca the same commonplace Dom Dinis explored in “Proençaes soen mui ben trobar” [25, 86] seems to have been true: to be a good troubadour in Galician-Portuguese (“trobar bem”) was to have *coita*. In choosing not to perform Ambroa’s lyric and likely performing his own instead, Baveca, from his marginal position as a *xograr*, symbolically ejects a fellow *xograr* from the field and the capital he had accrued diminishes because of this. He thus ensures that the field he cultivates is only occupied by those who share his understanding of lyric and the importance of including *coita* in it. By doing this, he limits the range of subject positions available in order to diminish the potential for dissent and legitimize his own outlook on love.

Paradoxically, however, the *tensón* does give Ambroa a voice. Given the space to be heard, he criticises Baveca and his understanding of what makes good lyric. His criticism poses a threat to the field of competent and *coita*-feeling poets that Baveca seeks to establish and the tension generated as a result injects instability into this curated space – is Baveca or Ambroa right? In the end, it seems to be Baveca who has the last laugh. The final three verses of the *tensón* re-stabilize the field he has created, giving him the opportunity to reiterate his sincerity, state that Ambroa is mad and proclaim that he is the one who has reason. If we understand this *tensón* as a microcosmic representation of the wider courtly world, we can appreciate the extent to which the quest for a profit of distinction gave rise to the competitiveness that underpins the *cantigas de amor*. Here, the habitus of *coita* represents cultural capital and the status of being



a good troubadour stands as a form of symbolic capital<sup>14</sup>. The field on which Baveca and Ambroa operate, both in this song and more widely, provides a space in which this capital can shift and move from one agent to another in such a way that raises questions about which agent has greater claim to this capital and, therefore, to their status in the court.

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In the introduction to this article, I suggested that Pato's definition of *trobar* invites us to reflect not only on how poets using Galician-Portuguese interacted with the words they used, but also with the worlds in which they were composing. Joan Baveca, Pero Garcia d'Ambroa, Afonso Sanchez and Pedro, Conde de Barcelos have all left us with poems that open themselves up to the application of Bourdieu's theories precisely because they inspire us to ask what their distinctive nature may have meant within the court structures of medieval Iberia. Through their work, we have seen how poets could circle around specific words and conventions in such a way that made their lyric distinct from that of other poets. While we are able to reflect on how this distinction is perceived in modern times by looking into the ways generic classification has placed these songs, we can only imagine how it would have been perceived in the medieval period. Using Bourdieu's theories offers us one way to piece together the universe that surrounded poets composing in Galician-Portuguese in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and reflect on modes of perception that may have been in action. This is precisely because they give us a framework with which we can reflect on the social meaning of language and the ways the voices of the men who wrote these poems over eight hundred years ago "spun around" one another<sup>15</sup>.

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14 Something similar happens in Joan Airas's "Con coitas d'amor, se Deus mi perdon" [63, 17]; the lyric subject declares he composes with "coitas d'amor", but the "field" says his lyric is worth nothing because there is so much of it.

15 This article forms part of a longer study that can be found in my PhD thesis, *Creative Conventions: The Poetic Legacies of the Cantigas de Amor*.

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