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Lyric Ruptures: Góngora's *Soledad primera*, lines 222-232

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Elias Rivers's arrival at Johns Hopkins's Department of Romance Languages coincided with the dramatic shift in literary studies toward a deconstructive approach, which exposed internal contradictions, uncertainties, and ruptures. This approach represented a challenge to early modern Hispanic studies, a field that had previously sought to find coherence, both formal and ideological, and continuity with tradition. Among the areas most receptive to this transformation was the study of the notoriously difficult works of Luis de Góngora y Argote, in particular his unclassifiable long poems *Soledad primera* and *Soledad segunda*. Although Rivers earned his recognition as a major early modernist for his essays and critical edition of the complete works of Garcilaso de la Vega, he had studied at Yale with the great *gongorista* Dámaso Alonso, and he had produced important studies on the baroque poetry of Góngora as well as of Quevedo and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Those of us who were studying with him at Hopkins in 1973 shared Rivers's excitement at the opportunity of publishing John Beverley's groundbreaking article on *Soledad primera*, lines 1-61, in *MLN*. This essay is offered as a tribute to Rivers's fine-tuned ear for literary resonances across the centuries and his lifelong interest in intersections of orality and textuality.

If the tapestries woven of ivy and threads spun from the golden sands of the Tajo by Filódoce, Dinámene, Clímene, and Nise in Garcilaso's *Égloga III* exemplify the "paradox of natural art" outlined in Rivers's 1962 article, *Soledad primera* offers a tapestry woven of strands from a dazzling array of classical and renaissance poems. In

addition to its intertextual richness, the angle and breadth of vision shift abruptly throughout the poem. The visual imagery of this poetic tapestry ranges from the initial celestial reference to the constellation of Taurus and the panoramic view of landscape in lines 182-221 to the minute examination of ruby-red beaks and crimson-shod feet of game birds being conveyed to the wedding feast (ll. 315-20), widening the field again to encompass a global vision of Spanish exploration and conquest *in the político serrano's diatribe* (ll. 366-502).¹

The *peregrino's* trajectory from the beach to the goatherds' *choza* and from the *choza* to the path along the stream as he accompanies the wedding procession seems secondary to the passages describing the *soledad confusa* through which he moves. Beverley has outlined the ways in which the *silva* maps its "territory of language" in "periods of a day" (37-52). *In counterpoint to the strophic rhythms and divisions of the poem, however,* there are two significant pauses in the pilgrim's tour of the island, ruptures in the third-person discourse that call attention to the *peregrino's* silence in the presence of other figures and to the narrative aspect of the poem, while at the same time privileging lyric descriptiveness. *The second of these pauses is the occasion for the político serrano's lengthy critique of Iberian exploration and conquest in lines 366-502.* The *first pause begins with the teichoscopic passage, lines 182-221, in which the peregrino stops at a scenic overlook with his companion, a cabrero who reminisces upon the scene of a ruined castle and a broad expanse of landscape. The break in this retrospective scene, in lines 222-32, however,* is of a different order. It has the impact of a dramatic rupture early in the poem, a rending of the finely-wrought tapestry of courtly and bucolic visual figures and mythological allusion.

Con gusto el joven y atención lo oía,
cuando torrente de armas y de perros,
(que si precipitados no los cerros,
las personas tras de un lobo traía
tierno discurso y dulce compañía
dejar hizo al serrano,
que, del sublime espacioso llano
al huésped al camino reduciendo,
al venatorio estruendo
(pasos dando veloces)
número crece y multiplica voces. (ll. 222-32)

The *peregrino*'s companion first appears as the most abstract of grammatical functions: the abstract "quien" who supplies a subject for the sentence but nothing more (l. 184). When they stop at a precarious "balcón," where "imperioso mira la campaña / un escollo apacible" (ll. 186-87), he reveals expanses of space and time. His reminiscence about the feudal past, "cuando el que ves sayal fue limpio acero" (l. 217), is inspired by the sight of the ruined castle. Unlike the lengthy diatribe of the *político serrano* in lines 366-502, his discourse has only begun when it is silenced, and the broad view of the "sublime espacioso llano" (l. 228) abruptly contracts to the "poco mapa" of the ground occupied by the *peregrino*. The instability of the vantage point is intensified by the negated implication, typical in gongorine description, that not only the hunters but the hills themselves are tumbling downwards: "si precipitados no los cerros / las personas" (ll. 225-26).

The “venatorio estruendo” follows one of the most heavily commented passages of the poem. In particular, the phrase “si mucho poco mapa le despliega” (l. 194), reflects upon the relationship between subject and object of perception, and the effect of hyperbaton in creating the illusion of space unfolding. Pedro de Valencia’s early objections resulted in a reduction of the verses from thirteen to seven, omitting an image of islands as parentheses in the (dis)course of the river, while the seventeenth-century commentator José Pellicer responded to the earlier version with enthusiasm and reproduced it in his *Lecciones solemnes* (Jammes 242). Ricardo Padrón and Humberto Huergo expose the poem’s implicit critique of the disembodied perspective of empire in this passage and in the much longer diatribe of the *político serrano*, and Crystal Chemris observes that lines 182-221 belong to the Virgilian tradition of *teichoskopia* (78), and addresses this passage in her chapter on the crisis of perception in the *Soledades*. In contrast, lines 222-32, which abruptly terminate this episode, have received comparatively little scholarly attention, with brief exceptions in Beverley, McCaw, and Chemris. Beverley reads lines 194-211 as an ecphrasis, and lines 212-21 an “elegy on the ruins”; he analyzes this strophe of the *silva* as “a series of independently rhymed quartets” with “asymmetry between strophe and syntax. . . . After the couplet of the elegy, the rhyme scheme spirals away in the manner of the *Dedicatoria*, mimicking the sudden motion and noise of the hunting party—“*torrente de armas y de perros*”—which interrupts the melancholy meditations” (38-39, emphasis in original). Lines 222-32, however, should also be recognized as a violent interjection, in the midst of early modern practices of imitation in textual culture, of a raucous, older, tradition of the wild hunt, the *estantigua*.

The **hunters and their dogs are** on the same visual scale as the *peregrino* and his interlocutor, but **they are** not part of the “scripturalized” landscape analyzed by *gongoristas* through the centuries (Beverley 76). This passage introduces the cacophony of a folkloric tradition distinct from the other discourses and harmonies invoked in the poem. Colloquial language and descriptions **of** rustic life are certainly not alien to Góngora’s stylistic innovation. Jammes notes that among early critics of the *Soledades*, only Juan de Jáuregui noted the use of terms he regarded as “domésticas,” “raterísimas,” and “muy viles,” the humble vocabulary of everyday life (108 n105). None of the early **commentators** referred to the *estantigua*, perhaps because it was alien to their classical and renaissance learning. **Indeed, the historian Carlo Ginzburg, in *The Night Battles*, his study of the “wild hunt” in the context of Inquisitorial documents in the late sixteenth century, insists that “[w]hat really characterized this kernel of traditions and myths is the fact that it had absolutely no connection with the educated world,” and was “a popular belief which, in contrast to doctrines concerned with witchcraft, lacked points of reference in the world of the educated classes” (45, 47).**

While the description of the obstreperous wolf-hunters **might seem to belong** within the bucolic setting, it can also be read in the context of the “rhetoric of absence” that Rivers finds in the poem (“*Silva*” 108), or the erasure of the subject that Chemris **points out** as characteristic of the poem’s modernity (49-50, 66). **She** posits that the poem’s enactment of this erasure “traces out the failure of modern subjectivity at the very moment of its inception” (50), using, paradoxically, the methods of the past. **The interruption by the hunters is an episode that displays “aesthetic detachment from psychic pain,” one of the “[m]oments in which the pilgrim is about to voice a sense of recognition**

or communion with others,” but is “thwarted at the last opportunity” (62). I would suggest, in addition, that the sudden appearance of the hunters and the abruptness with which the *cabrero* breaks off his reminiscences to become absorbed into the multitude and the noise, obliterates his nostalgic speech in an aura of the uncanny. Marsha Collins points out that pastoral “claims closer proximity to the threshold of dreams and occupies a privileged position in accessing the imaginary” (56). But this is not a pastoral dream, nor does it belong to epic. Although the description of the noisy crowd might seem continuous with the bucolic setting on one hand, or with the epic context of the once-aristocratic *cabrero*’s “limpio acero,” their sudden appearance and the *cabrero*’s equally abrupt disappearance is incongruous.

The headlong descent of the “venatorio estruendo” in lines 222-32 is a riotous version of the aristocratic bear-hunting party that the *Dedicatoria* urges the Duque de Béjar to abandon. The irruption of the wolf hunters is a rending of the page, allowing the earlier, framing text to show through. As Beverley points out, “Góngora punches holes in the visual surface of reality and its perspectival context in order to supercharge the signifying elements, to give them a conceptual density which they lack as objects of immediate perception” (76). Lines 222-32 resemble a momentary dislocation of the painted scenery that reveals another play in progress. The blood of the “oso que aun besaba, atravesado, / la asta de tu luciente jabalina” (Jammes 187), bleeds through the fabric of the language, a remnant of violence ostensibly left behind. Death cannot be exorcised from Arcadia. The dead predator of the *Dedicatoria* haunts the body of *Soledad primera*. John McCaw associates the “torrente de armas y de perros” with “chaos and separation,” and with the storm and shipwreck that brought the *peregrino* to the

island (38). The suppressed chaos of the hunt, the reference to the rape of Europa in the opening lines, as well as the shipwreck, overwhelm the language of the poem.

Significantly, the initial figure of “torrente de armas y perros” transforms human beings and dogs into a turbulent cascade of water.

The tenuous flow of narrative in the *Soledades*²—that is, the *peregrino*’s solitary progress and his encounters with inhabitants of the island whom he watches or listens to as they address him—is interwoven with recurring glimpses of a stream that flows, often in harmony with the songs of the wedding guests but also, at times exhibiting all the ferocity of an elemental force of nature at its most dangerous and destructive: “el ya sañudo arroyo, ahora manso . . . en cuanto a su furor perdonó el viento” (ll. 343-49). The stream serves as a descriptive motif, but it also provides a natural soundscape that has received less attention than the visual elements of perspective, color, and chiaroscuro, quintessentially baroque aspects of the poem. Marsha Collins points to the musicality of the *Soledades* as an “underappreciated aspect of the work,” and compares the poem to a madrigal (100-01). Expanding upon R. O. Jones’s view of the importance of Nature’s harmony in the poem, Collins suggests that the musical aspects of the poem might be a means to “unveil the secret, fundamental truth of Nature’s (and the universe’s) musical essence” (105). In his study *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali figures the conflict between violence, dissonance, and clamor on one hand, and on the other, harmony and melody, as the battle between Carnival and Lent, both necessary to the community. Harmony is necessary, but noise is “the source of purpose and power, of the dream—a refuge for residual irrationality” (6). Thus, this early disruption is as

essential to the poem as the description of the “canoro instrumento” in line 239, played beside the quiet stream, “mudo sus ondas, cuando no enfrenado” (line 242).

While she addresses the rich intertextualities of painting practices, courtly harmonies, and ritual games in the *Soledades*, Collins focuses in detail on the “mimetic purpose” of phonetic, syntactic, and metrical onomatopoeia (99-102). In the *Dedicatoria*, Collins observes the *peregrino*’s shifts in perspective from actor to witness (59), and throughout the poem, the counterpoint of the “consonant-dissonant flux between the eye and voice(s) in the text, focalizer and vocalizer(s)” (103). With regard to the visual dimension of the poem, Collins examines numerous examples of the poet’s “fascination with recessional space and the problem of creating the illusion of depth” (98). One of Góngora’s techniques, she points out, is “dynamism painted as sudden, distant movement that frequently cuts across the field of vision on the diagonal, instantly catching the mind’s eye: the flight of birds, the sparkle of fireworks, the downhill rush of a stream, or the hurried descent of a mounted hunting party” (98-99). Her example appears in *Soledad segunda*, but the “torrente de armas y de perros” in *Soledad primera* creates a similar effect.

The incongruous appearance of the “wild hunt” brings to the sonorous landscape of the *Soledad primera* the haunting, pagan resonance of the *mesnie hellequin*, known in Castilian as the *estantigua*, *hueste antigua*, or, most appropriate to the passage in *Soledad primera*, the *cacería salvaje*. The *mesnie hellequin* has a long and varied tradition throughout Europe, particularly in Germanic and Scandinavian folklore. It has been associated with Odin, King Arthur, and numerous other mythical, legendary, and historical figures. Augustin Redondo’s essay “Las tradiciones hispánicas de la

estantigua,” in *Otra manera de leer el Quijote*, exemplifies his investigative scope and intricate interpretive technique, and reveals a folkloric element interwoven with the classical and renaissance intertexts of the *Quijote*.

Ramón Menéndez Pidal published an article on the etymology of the term in *Revue Hispanique* in 1900, and Redondo cites Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcelos’s **scholarly response**, and **a recent philological study** by Manuel Alvar (106nn21-22). The earliest report cited by Redondo was written by a priest in 1092, telling of a horrifying troop of gravediggers carrying coffins, led by a giant and followed by ghosts who confessed terrible sins and begged the priest to pray for them (102-03). He traces the tradition to the Germanic invaders of the Iberian Peninsula, the Suevi and Vandals **and the** various forms of the name “Hellequín” **to their** Germanic root, *Helle*, the realm of the dead. Christian cultures gradually transformed the thunderbolt-wielding leader of the pack, Wotan, into the arch-enemy, the Devil. In Castilian, the term evolved from the less pagan term “hueste antiguo”—the “host” in this case being the furious horde of demons or damned souls—to *estantigua*, whose meaning by the fifteenth century was reduced to “‘fantasma,’ ‘aparecido venido del Más Allá al anochecher’” (115). **As an example of this “degradación,”** Redondo cites a dialogue in *La Celestina*:

AREÚSA.--¿Quién anda ahí? ¿Quién sube a tal hora en mi cámara?

CEL.—Quien no te quiere mal, por cierto, quien tiene más memoria de ti, que de sí misma; una enamorada tuya, aunque vieja.

AREÚ.—(¡Válala el diablo a esta vieja, con qué viene homo huestantigua a tal hora!) Tía, señora, ¿qué buena venida es éta tan tarde? (Rojas 126)

Redondo finds references to the “uest antigua” in Gonzalo de Berceo’s *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* and Íñigo de Mendoza’s *Coplas de Vita Christi*. In the *Poema de Fernán González*, weary troops compare their seemingly endless warfare to the “galopar diabólico y sin fin” of the “uest antigua” (Redondo 107-08, citing estrofas 334-35):

Folgar non les dejaba nin estar asegurados:

Dicíen: non es esta vida sinon para los pecados

Que andan de noche e de día, e nunca son cansados;

Asemeja él a Satanás, e nos a los sus criados.

Porque lidiar queremos e tanto lo amamos

Nunca folgura tenemos sinon cuando almas sacamos;

A los de la estantigua aquellos semejamos,

Ca todas cosas cansan e nos nunca cansamos.

In Huéscar, near Granada, in 1973, the legend survived in nocturnal sightings of Bernardo del Carpio, galloping in pursuit of “un moro o un oso, con ruidos de armas, gritos o relinchos de caballo” (108, citing Alvar 384).

Calling on European mythography to link episodes of *Don Quijote* and their signification to the novel's broader concerns, he explains the phantasmatic armies evoked in the *cuerpo muerto* episode in I.19 and the demonic element in the *auto de la muerte* (II.11) as versions of the “wild hunt” tradition. Although he traces the Germanic etymologies of terms referring to the *estantigua* and related cultural traditions, citing numerous French studies published from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century (102-05), Redondo does not cite Carlo Ginzburg’s controversial study of the “wild hunt” in *The Night Battles*, originally published in Italian in 1966.³ Ginzburg argued for a link

between agricultural fertility rites that may have included enactments of a battle, and the *bienandanti*, self-appointed opponents of witchcraft, paradoxically accused of witchcraft by the Inquisition in the northern Italian region of the Friuli beginning in 1575 (6-7, 58).

Although he does not explicitly link the *estantigua* with agricultural fertility rites, Redondo shares with Ginzburg a recognition that the folk belief has deep roots in northern Europe, and that Christian orthodoxy transformed the traditional leaders of the eerie procession into the Devil (Redondo 104). Redondo focuses on references to Hispanic documents, which allow him to trace the apparitions from the *milites Herlewini* to their later European manifestations, the carnivalesque *charivari* and infernal hosts (the *huestes antiguas*, which evolved into the *estantigua*). On the notorious Compte Arnau in Catalonia, condemned for his rapacious cruelty and lechery to ride to hounds for eternity while his flesh is devoured by flames, Redondo's source on the Compte Arnau is Romeo Figueras; on this figure's possible connection with the well-known Conde Arnaldos of the romance he cites Leo Spitzer (111). The *Santa Compañía* is one of the most deep-rooted beliefs in rural Galicia, and in Asturias it is called *güestia*. It is known as *estantigua* in Castilian, from Latin *hostes antiquus*, or "troops" of the "ancient enemy," a euphemism for the Devil. The etymological proliferation of terms traced by Spanish anthropologists and philologists is a strong indication of the antiquity and ubiquity of this folk belief.⁴

Redondo ties together various episodes' violent moments of din and darkness to trace the parameters of the mad knight's fictional world. He associates the mythical armies of the *hueste antigua* with the ducal hunting party in *Don Quijote II*.³⁴ Thus darkened by fiendish, otherworldly tones, the enchanted world of the Duke and Duchess's chivalresque hunt prepares Don Quijote to decipher the appearance of the *liebre* in a later

episode as an ominous sign (II.73). Redondo finds a reference to the *estantigua* in the testimony of María de Zozaya, from the 1610 witch trials in Logroño. She claimed that “el Demonio la ponía en figura de liebre” to trick a local priest fond of hunting. “Y arremetiendo contra ella los galgos, corría por los campos haciéndoles muchas burlas, vueltas y revueltas hacia todas partes . . . siempre revolvía hacia donde andaban los cazadores con que con mayores voces y furias la perseguían” (110, citing Caro Baroja 75-76). If the *huestes* represent the intrusion of the diabolical in everyday life, then the appearance of a hare hounded by a host of hunters symbolizes the fate of the bewitched Dulcinea caught, like her enamored knight, in the symbolic snare of an archaic, magical universe (119).

Pertinent to lines 222--32 in *Soledad primera* is Redondo's citation from Diego Hurtado de Mendoza's *De la guerra de Granada* (1570) which includes his evocation of a battle between Caesar and the sons of Pompey in the area of Ronda. At sunrise or sunset, when there is a haze over the landscape, the inhabitants of the region are said to see “expresas señales, despojos de armas y caballos, y veen los moradores encontrarse por el aire escuadrones, óyense bozes como de personas que acometen. Estantigua llama el bulgo español a semejantes apariciones o fantasmas” (Redondo 101).⁵ Hurtado de Mendoza's sources place the apparitions at a safe distance in the clouds, but Redondo cites other descriptions, beginning in the eleventh century, that include frightening sounds: shouts, barks, bells, the crack of whips, the gallop of hooves, and the cries of “ánimas en pena” (102). Redondo summarizes the elements of the *estantigua*: “la guerra y el caballo, la caza y el perro, el estruendo y el furor, el acoso” (104, citing Hurtado de Mendoza 199). There are only sparse details of the *cabrero*'s reminiscence as he ponders

the ruins of the castle and compares his “sayal” with the “limpio acero” he once wore, but they are suggestive of past glories whose memories are as restless as the “ánimas en pena” described in accounts of the *estantigua*.

The **intrusion** beginning in line 223 disrupts the *cabrero*’s meditation on **the loss of** an aristocratic way of life. The speaker is the *peregrino*’s first guide, the one who leads him to **a** stone outcrop that provides the view famously described in the lines “si mucho poco mapa le despliega” (194). This passage requires the reader to participate in the process of unfolding the baffling syntax of the phrase to reveal its enigmatic meaning, emblematic of the vastness of the poem’s visual cosmos. Not only space, but time, unfolds, as the *cabrero* reflects upon the past of this place, which is his own past.

Góngora’s poetry is grounded in the senses, particularly that of visual perception but also, as Collins demonstrates, sound. His references to mythology and to courtly culture enhance the description of the rustic landscape. However, in this brief passage the fabric of the senses frays to reveal the realm of the undead: spirits who appear unbidden and are only sporadically present. The *estantigua* does not belong to the well-orchestrated court masques described by Collins, in which poetry, dance, music, and visual spectacle combined to create a complex aesthetic and intellectual experience. The *cacería salvaje* disrupts language with a terrifying whiff of the grave—these ghostly hunters are associated with stormy weather and settings outside the confines of villages and towns, where the spirits of the dead come together to disturb the routines of everyday life. The *cabrero* is an uncanny presence that fades as suddenly as he appeared. Jammes comments on this character’s enigmatic presence, suggesting a “vida bastante novelesca” as a “noble disfrazado,” taking refuge among shepherds (244). **This figure** points the way to the road

the *peregrino* will follow, while he himself disappears, perhaps to swell the ranks of the *cacería salvaje*.

The *peregrino* begins his journey with a guide who affords him access to a brief glimpse of the past. He never leaves the bucolic reality of the island: beyond the ruins the vista that opens is of a stream flowing through a fertile plain to the sea that surrounds the island, and that vista is reinscribed into the rhetorical order of language. But in a scant few lines whose significance has been overlooked, the viewer is briefly encapsulated in the mists of rustic superstition, the clamor of the *estantigua*. The commentator Salcedo Coronel had nothing to say about this aspect of the passage, but he found the former aristocrat's change of status to *cabrero* to be intolerably indecorous: "Impropiedad me parece introducir a un rústico cabrero blasonando de haber sido soldado, pues cuando desengañado se hubiese retirado de la milicia, le había de fingir nuestro poeta en más decente ocupación" (Jammes 244, citing Salcedo 56v).⁶ A noble warrior, he implies, could not have fallen so low. However, he misses a more obvious problem: the *cabrero*, whom the narrator first introduces merely as "quien," is far more unsettling than a warrior-turned-goatherd. His identity coalesces and then dissolves again, his presence as well as his voice effaced by the "torrente de armas y de perros," the ghostly "estantigua." The poet makes no reference to the traditional associations with death and the devil, referring to the noisy group as "personas tras un lobo" in line 225, but the passage resonates with the unruliness of a rustic tradition.

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¹ For a discussion of the *mappamundi* passage, see Padrón and Huergo.

² María Rosa Lida de Malkiel discovered a Byzantine source for the narrative of Góngora's shipwrecked *peregrino*: Dio Chrysostom's narrative of the shepherd of Euboea in *Discourse VII*, which had been translated by Góngora's humanist friend Pedro de Valencia. Jammes cites early seventeenth-century Portuguese novels that may also have influenced the *Soledades*.

³ Ginzburg's study was not published in Spanish translation until 2005, by the Universidad de Guadalajara.

⁴ The legend of the Wild Hunt is indexed by Stith Thomp under the topic "Phantom Hosts" in section E500. The association of ominous weather conditions with restless souls tormented by the Devil crossed the Atlantic some time before the mid-twentieth century. In 1949, Stan Jones's cowboy song "Ghost Riders in the Sky" (ASCAP Work ID: 371463337) became a crossover hit and has been recorded by singers from Burl Ives to Johnny Cash and groups from the Mexican band Los Baby's (1966) to twenty-first-century Scandinavian heavy metal bands. The red-eyed "devil's herd" with "hooves of steel," pursued eternally by desperate cowboys, is merely a twentieth-century version of the *estantigua*: "Their faces gaunt, their eyes were blurred, and shirts all soaked with sweat / They're ridin' hard to catch that herd but they ain't caught them yet / For they've got to ride forever in that range up in the sky / On horses snortin' fire, as they ride on, hear them cry." The frightful apparition has a moral: "...cowboy change your ways today or with us you will ride / A-tryin' to catch the Devil's herd across these endless skies" <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?lyrics=4918>. The song is said to have inspired Jim Morrison's "Riders on the Storm," thus enhancing its reputation in popular culture and its presence on the Internet, but I have found no scholarly sources that connect it to the *estantigua*.

⁵ Italics in original..

⁶ Salcedo suggests that a more appropriate choice of occupation can be found in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, in which "el rústico que encontró Erminia, quando le informa de su vida, dize, que siendo moço conoció la Corte, ocupándose en cultivar los jardines del Real Palacio" (56v).