

# A REPORT ON THE HYPOTHESIS OF ATTRIBUTION OF *CURIAL E GÜELFA* TO ÍÑIGO D'ÁVALOS

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On the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2016 Abel Soler defended his PhD dissertation entitled *La cort napolitana d'Alfons el Magnànim: el context de "Curial e Güelfa"* in the Department of Catalan at the Universitat de València. Soler's work was supervised by Antoni Ferrando Francés, who holds a Chair at the Universitat de València and is a member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (hereafter IEC). The journal *Tirant* included a brief summary of Soler's dissertation (no. 19, 301-302) and this was followed by a public event held in Valencia in which the results of the aforementioned PhD thesis were announced before both academic and political authorities, and the press. Soler's dissertation remains, however, unpublished, and –beyond the remarkably broad interest shown by the media– it is hoped that scholars will be able to assess its quality when Soler's research is finally brought to the press.

Soler's conclusions have nonetheless already been disseminated in his article "Enyego d'Ávalos, autor de *Curial e Güelfa*?" published in *Estudis Romànics* (hereafter *ER*), 39, 2017, 137-165. *ER* is a prestigious journal published by the IEC. Surprisingly, whereas the double blind peer review procedure to which the other texts included in *ER*, 39 were subjected required from one to six months, Soler's article was accepted rather speedily (on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2016), for it had only been received by the journal less than three weeks earlier (on the 23<sup>th</sup> of August).

Publication of Soler's article was timely scheduled to coincide with the inclusion of an anonymous note on the IEC website later reproduced, also unsigned, in the 217 issue (February 2017) of the IEC electronic Bulletin:

[http://www.iec.cat/activitats/butlleti/detall.asp?id\\_noticies=1900&numero=217](http://www.iec.cat/activitats/butlleti/detall.asp?id_noticies=1900&numero=217)

[27/3/17]. Moreover, Soler's article as published in *ER*, 39 was made available at

[http://www.iec.cat/Comunicacio\\_IEC/ER39\\_Abel\\_Soler.pdf](http://www.iec.cat/Comunicacio_IEC/ER39_Abel_Soler.pdf) [27/3/17]. On the 22<sup>th</sup> of

March the IEC announced a forthcoming lecture by Abel Soler to take place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. The broad attention attracted by Soler's piece may therefore seem to indicate that his article is regarded by the IEC as a scholarly milestone worthy of institutional support. Significantly, the title of Soler's lecture, "*Curial e Güelfa*: text català, context

italià,” echoes the description of *Curial e Güelfa* made by Antoni Rubió i Lluch in his preface to the first edition of the text published in 1901.

The present report examines the arguments employed by Abel Soler in *ER* to support his main thesis, namely the unveiling of the identity of the author of *Curial e Güelfa*. Underlying our report is an attempt to prevent Soler’s groundless hypothesis from being disseminated as certain within academic circles. We believe that such an operation may distort the manner in which an important work of medieval literature could be interpreted and understood in the future.

### **1. *Curial e Güelfa***

Written in Catalan in the mid-fifteenth century, this outstanding romance is preserved in a single manuscript held at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid, BNE, 9750). The manuscript provides no indication of authorship. *Curial e Güelfa* has been regarded as an anonymous work ever since Manuel Milà i Fontanals introduced it to academic audiences in 1876. There exists no external documentation as to who the author of the romance may be.

*Curial e Güelfa* is presented as a historical romance, vaguely set at the time of King Peter the Great (1276-1285), a prominent character in Book II. The monarch is praised for his knightly valour in exactly the same terms in which he was portrayed by the chronicler Bernat Desclot. As befitting stories of this kind, the anonymous author of *Curial e Güelfa* includes references to the thirteenth century alongside allusions to his own time, and he names several geographical locations: Aragonese and Catalans are described in a sympathetic manner, and references are made to Montserrat, Milan, Naples, Tunisia, Greece, the Holy Land, Angers, England, Catalonia, and Barcelona; even less prominent places such as La Roca del Vallès and Solsona feature in the text. The text makes no mention to any place located in Valencian territories.

Unsurprisingly, scholars have attempted to shed light (a) on the cultural backdrop against which the romance was written, and (b) on the author’s identity. Both research strands intersect at times but not always.

As for the first line of enquiry (a), scholars have repeatedly proposed the court of Alfonso IV the Magnanimous (1442-1458) in Naples as the birthplace of the romance. Proof of the author’s acquaintance with this milieu has been provided in two recent studies: the name of Melcior de Pando, one of the most important characters in the narrative, has been linked to the Neapolitan family of the Pandone, counts of

Venafro, and the supporting character Boca de Far has been connected with the Neapolitan knight Bucca di Faro (Ferrer 2011: 69-70; Badia and Torr  2011: 46, 541, 610; 566).

Three scholars must be given credit for their attempts to unmask the identity of the author of the romance (b). Although Espadaler (1984) did not explicitly name a candidate for authorship, he offered an important amount of fresh information on many aspects of *Curial e Guelfa*. For his part, Ferrando (1980, 2013) attributed the work to the secretary Joan Olzina without, however, supplying concrete evidence, and basing his conclusions on mere references to Italian culture found in the romance, and on the author's alleged preference for Valencian vocabulary. The contribution by the late Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol merits particular praise. Painstaking archival research led Ferrer to propose the Royal librarian, Llu  Sescases, as a candidate. In her work Ferrer reviewed past attributions and ruled out some of them as groundless (2011: 59-61). She cautiously acknowledged the difficulties in identifying a suitable candidate for *Curial e Guelfa*: "No hi ha proves concretes que Llu  Sescases fos l'autor de *Curial* ni segurament no n'hi haur  mai per a cap altre hipot tic autor" (2011: 111).

Rather than attempting to identify a particular author, Lola Badia and Jaume Torr  have devoted thirty years of uninterrupted research (since Badia 1987 and 1988, and Torr  1991) to better understanding both *Curial e Guelfa* and the cultural credentials of the author of the romance, which lean towards the humanistically-inclined court of the Magnanimous. Badia and Torr 's studies of the sources and the cultural backdrop to the romance culminated in their critical edition of *Curial e Guelfa* (Badia and Torr  2011). Among the many other models identified by Badia and Torr  are Boccaccio's *Filocolo* and Benvenuto da Imola's Latin commentary on Dante's *Commedia*.

## **2. Abel Soler's article in *ER***

### *2.1 Date and cultural milieu*

Soler states that:

Per norma general, la cr tica liter ria i els editors de l'obra coincideixen a datar *Curial e Guelfa* com un text immediatament posterior a l'entronitzaci  napolitana d'Alfons el Magn nim (1443) i anterior a la caiguda de Constantinoble a mans del Gran Turc (1453). (p. 139)

This is not common currency among critics but a proposal made by Badia and Torr  in their edition of *Curial e G elfa* (2011: 41-44). Alternative dates—often later than the year of the fall of Constantinople or based on further arguments—had been suggested by Mart  de Riquer and Anton Espadaler among other critics. Furthermore, scholars have long agreed on the Italian backdrop to *Curial e G elfa* as well on the inclusion in the text of elements of Iberian, Occitan, French and Burgundian origin, all worthy of note.

Soler’s proposed date is 1445-1448 (p. 139, title) or 1446-1448 (pp. 139 and 157). The aforementioned edition of *Curial e G elfa* suggests that the romance may have been written in the “segona meitat de la d cada dels anys 40 del segle XV” (Badia and Torr  2011: 43). The only new contribution to the question put forward by Soler would be the date *ante quem* (1448), a date based simply on a conjecture (see 2.4, below).

## 2.2. *Incorrect use of bibliographical sources*

According to Soler, “les atribucions hipot tiques m s fonamentades” have been those made by Ferrando, Butiny , and Ferrer (p. 138). It is, however, worth pointing out that Butiny ’s attribution was forcefully dismissed by Ferrer: “els fonaments hist rics d’aquesta hip tesi, per , no s n gens s lids” (Ferrer 2011: 60-61). By contrast, Soler fails to mention Espadaler’s volume of 1984 even if the latter had been repeatedly quoted by Ferrer (2011). A member of the IEC, Ferrer was a historian linked to the Instituci  Mil  i Fontanals within the CSIC and served as long-standing director of the prestigious *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*.

Although Soler attempts to amass evidence of the literary debts of the anonymous author, he often fails to acknowledge original bibliographical contributions and cites instead second-hand references. As an example, he states: “El record de Petrarca  s potent (*Secretum, Familiares, Canzoniere...*), per  ideol gicament domina el contemporani Leonardo Bruni” (p. 145). For Petrarch and *Curial e G elfa*, see Badia and Torr  (2011: 72-76). On the same page we can read the following statement: “[Dante]  s un referent de saviesa, explorat intensament a trav s de Da Imola i Pietro Alighieri (Mena 2012)” (p. 145). The significance of Benvenuto da Imola’s Latin commentary on Dante’s *Commedia* as a source for the romance had already been widely demonstrated by Badia and Torr  (2011: esp. 92-97), who also noted *Curial e G elfa*’s debts to Pietro Alighieri’s commentary on Dante (2011: 636).

### 2.3 Errors

Soler's article includes a variety of substantial errors. For example, he claims that, according to "els experts," *Curial e Güelfa* is set within "la cort napolitana d'Alfons V d'Aragó 'el Magnànim' (1436-1458)" (p. 138). No expert would use the expression "Neapolitan court" before the king seized Naples in 1442.

The section devoted to the literary culture of the anonymous author of *Curial e Güelfa* focuses on the writer's alleged Valencian origin as well as on the influence upon him of the Milanese intellectual world. According to Soler, "les fonts literàries ibèriques influïren ben poc," for Desclot i Muntaner's "cròniques catalanes són un record de lectura —o d'audiència— llunyà" (p. 144). It has long been known that Desclot's chronicle dedicated to King Peter the Great is crucial to a full understanding of the romance (Riquer 1964: II, 624; Badia and Torró 2011: 62-65). Instead, Soler claims that "De la cort de València, l'autor recorda les lletres de batalla de Pero Maça, Canals (traducció de Valeri Màxim), Villena (*Los treballs d'Hèrcules* i les glosses a l'*Eneida*), *Fronдино e Brisona*, el *Doctrinal* de Pacs i les *Tragèdies* de Sèneca" (p. 144). Leaving aside the fact that Villena's glossed version was sent to the Marquis of Santillana, Soler does not, for example, offer any conclusive evidence supporting the attribution to "la cort de València" of the anonymous *Fronдино e Brisona*. As for Canals's translation of Valerius Maximus, the anonymous author of *Curial e Güelfa* could have read it—if indeed he ever did—in Valencia, Barcelona, or elsewhere since the translation had been completed in 1395 and, having been commissioned by the cardinal and bishop of Valencia Jaume d'Aragó, a still extant copy of the text was dedicated and presented to the councilors of the city of Barcelona.

According to Soler, proof of the author's indebtedness to Milanese culture is awarded by

els diccionaris de l'escriptor («Priscian, Uguici, Pàpias, Catholicon, Ysidoro, Alexandre», *CeG* III.79) [which] són els corrents en biblioteques milaneses («*Doctrinale* di Alexandre..., *Ethimologiae* di Isidoro..., *Catholicon* di Giovanni Balbi..., *Lexicum* di Papia..., *Derivationes* di Ugucione»; Pedralli, 2002: 171) i en la ducal del castell de Pavia. (p. 144)

These are usual dictionaries simply because they were employed as standard schoolbooks elsewhere in Europe at the time (see, for example, Black 2001: 263). Soler also refers to "la faula grecollatina de les abelles i la mel" applied to literary *imitatio* (p. 143): it is a well-known passage from Seneca's Letter 84 to Lucilius.

According to Soler (p. 153), *Alva* (the city of Alba in the Piedmont) is a “topònim escrit a la castellana...” by the author (because—as claimed by Soler—our man was born in Toledo). As noted by Ferrer (and known to anyone slightly familiar with manuscripts), “la diferència de *v* a *b* no és important” (2011: 72).

The levity with which Soler handles any kind of information can best be illustrated by the following example concerning one of the characters in the romance:

Contrasta això amb l'honradesa de «Jacme Perpunter», de Solsona, però amb casa a Barcelona. Els perpunters fabricaven els perpunts *de junyir*. Deu tractar-se, doncs, d'un homenatge a Joan de Junyent menor (†1444), mercader de Solsona amb casa mercantil a Barcelona i interessos —amb els Llobera— a Eivissa, Gènova, Nàpols, Tunis, etc. (p. 152)

Even though Perpunter's name was Jaume, Soler imagines him as an *alter ego* of Joan Junyent.

#### 2.4. *Interpretations through allegory*

The question raised in the title (“Enyego d'Àvalos, autor de *Curial e Güelfa*?”) taints all documentary and linguistic contributions made in the article, since all of those are deployed in support of an aprioristic thesis. Following a suggestion by Antoni Comas, as well as additional considerations signed by Antoni Ferrando (p. 139), the article's cumulative argumentation takes for granted that the romance needs to be read in a political and allegorical key. The author makes no solid case for such an interpretation, which is not the only one possible nor does it become obvious in view of any extra-textual evidence. By means of the same conjecture, the romance is dated by Soler:

No són pocs els indicis interns i externs que reforcen aquesta impressió de Comas, i que porten a situar la redacció definitiva de *Curial e Güelfa* pels anys 1446-1448, quan la Corona d'Aragó (= Curial?) aspirava a esdevenir «la senyora de Milà» amb el suport de l'Església (= la Güelfa?). (p. 139)

Below, however, the romance could also be an

instrument de commemoració epitalàmica (¿les noces de Ferran d'Aragó amb una descendent dels prínceps «d'Orenge», 1445, com a excusa dedicatòria?) (p. 144)

#### 2.5. *Lack of documentation*

Doubtless as a result of the swiftness with which Soler's piece was completed, the entire article is marred by lack of documentation, something which should have been noticed by the anonymous reviewers. For examples of such malpractice, see the following section.

### **3. Alleged evidence does not sustain Soler's hypothesis on the authorship of the romance**

#### *3.1. Íñigo d'Ávalos's marriage to Antonella d'Aquino and the coat of arms of the Del Borgo family displaying a lion rampant*

In his article (pp. 151-152) Soler states the following:

El Magnànim trobà una altra pubilla per al camarlenc (1443) que li aportà grans dominis i el títol de comte de Monteodorisio (la senyoria d'«Andrea» Acciaiuoli, viuda d'Arto — «l'Arta»? — i amiga de Boccaccio). El comte s'obligà per pacte dotal a dur armes Del Borgo («un leó... rampant qui travessava abdues les colors», CeG I.17) per la dama. És el lleó que figura en els sepulcres dels descendents: els D'Àvalos-Aquino, marquesos de Pescara (il·lustració núm. 4).

In these lines Soler refers to Íñigo d'Ávalos (described as “camarlenc,” ‘chamberlain’). He believes that the Del Borgo's coat of arms arguably adopted by the d'Ávalos family in 1443 provides conclusive evidence of the attribution of the romance's authorship to Íñigo d'Ávalos, for Curial also exhibits a lion rampant on his shield. Even more forceful than the article published in *ER*, the aforementioned note included in the electronic Bulletin of the IEC goes as far as to claim that:

Les armes heràldiques que fa Curial en honor de la seva estimada Güelfa («un lleó rampant que travessa les dues colors d'un escut migpartit») coincideixen amb les adoptades per Enyego d'Ávalos el 1443, quan va signar les esposalles amb la noble napolitana Antonella d'Aquino. Fer-ho, en aquella época era una manera de signar l'autoria de la novel·la.

This proof, however, is wrong on two counts. (a) The date of 1443 is clearly a mistake: the betrothal and the wedding of Íñigo d'Ávalos and Antonella d'Aquino took place, respectively, on 8 and 11 November 1450, and in November 1452 (see Colapietra 1988: 145 and Balzano 1942: 114); we should recall that, according to Soler, *Curial e Güelfa* was written between 1446 and 1448 (following the allegorical interpretation discussed in 2.4 above).

It is equally wrong (b) to claim that Íñigo d'Ávalos was forced by virtue of a dowry deal to adopt the coat of arms displaying a lion (a claim, moreover, which is not supported by any document, but only through a reference to the grave of Íñigo d'Ávalos's descendants). The adoption took place, in fact, when Countess Antonella became the heiress of the d'Aquino family in 1472 after the death of her brother, who passed away without an heir: this is the reason why the children and grandchildren of Íñigo d'Ávalos and Antonella d'Aquino –who later inherited the Marquisate of Pescara, as described by the sixteenth-century poet and historian Angelo Di Costanzo (1582: XVIII, p. 405)– were obliged to adopt the coat of arms (see also Balzano 1942: 114). To sum up: even if Soler's article includes a picture of a later grave, Curial's lion rampant bears no relation to Íñigo d'Ávalos, nor does it shed any light on the identity of the author of the romance.

The main source on which Soler draws for all this question is Colapietra (1988), the bibliographical reference found in the Wikipedia entry on the d'Ávalos family (s.v. Íñigo Dávalos [Sp.], Enyego d'Ávalos [Cat.], Innico I d'Avalos [It.]). According to Balzano (1942: 114), Antonella d'Aquino, when she was “tutt'ora minorene,” received as dowry from her maternal grandmother Giovanna del Borgo, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1450, “affinché potesse contrarre un matrimonio vantaggioso, la contea di Monteodorisio.” This means that Antonella married young, upon receiving the dowry from her grandmother in 1450: in 1443 she must have been still an infant. Information on the Neapolitan branch of the d'Ávalos family is available in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (I: 612-637): by virtue of his marriage to Antonella d'Aquino Íñigo d'Ávalos became Count of Monteodorisio in 1452; his son only became the heir of the Aquino family upon the death of Francesco Antonio d'Aquino, brother of Antonella, who died without children. Documentation of the adoption of the Del Borgo's coat of arms dates from the sixteenth century.

The coat of arms displaying a lion rampant may have other historical or literary origins. See, for example, Badia and Torró's comments on Curial's shield as described in Book I (2011: 548):

Curial no practica encara l'incògnit cavalleresc com al llibre II; mostrant la seva condició de campió d'una vídua podria ser identificat per un herald o rei d'armes. Al *Filocolo* Florio, durant el combat per alliberar Biancifiore de la foguera, duu un elm «sopra'l quale un'aquila con l'ali



aperte di fino oro risplendeva» i el seu contrincant, Massamutino, porta a l'escut «un leone rampante d'oro in azzurro campo» (*Filoc* II.45.3 i II.65.8).

### 3.2. *Pisanello's medal*

In his article (p. 153 and p. 164) Soler states the following:

Poc després, D'Àvalos es reincorporà al campament reial per a participar en la campanya de Piombino (la Toscana, 1448), que fou un fracàs. Se'n tornà a Nàpols amb el rei, i acceptà el càrrec de gran camarlenc (1449). El Pisanello havia dissenyat per a ell una medalla amb divisa humanística (l'escut d'Aquil·les simplificat, amb el doble cim del Parnàs, la Tebes emmurallada per Cadme, el temple d'Apol·lo, llorers de sapiència i vinyes de Bacus; *vid. CeG* III.24) i un *motto* enigmàtic («per vvi se fa») adreçat a les Roses de Pièria, les Muses «colents Elicona» (*CeG* III.0). [...] En l'anvers de la medalla del 1449, el camarlenc apareix retratat de perfil i cobert amb un *chaperon* a la borgonyona (il·lustració núm. 3).

Annex, núm. 3.- Íñigo de Dávalos / Enyego d'Àvalos. Medalla del Pisanello (1449). La divisa del revers representa un escut d'Aquil·les simplificat (segons testimonis de l'època) i la Tebaida amb el Parnàs: «aquella ciutat que primerament murà Cadmo [...]; aquells monts apellats Nissa e Cirra [...]; los llorers [...] e les vinyes [...], aquell temple d'Apol·lo» (*CeG* III.24).

Soler is right in saying that Íñigo d'Àvalos is portrayed on the obverse of the medal. Though failing to provide any bibliographical authority for his claim, he also affirms that the reverse of the medal displays the shield of Achilles and a series of iconographical motifs (the two hills of Parnassus, the city of Thebes, Apollo's temple with the laurel trees dedicated to the god as well as Bacchus' vineyards) included in *Curial e Güelfa* (which leads him to relate the “*motto* enigmàtic” to the Muses). All this is presented by Soler as proof of d'Àvalos's authorship.

According to an old tradition, the reverse of the medal does indeed feature Achilles' shield, though not the iconography Soler imagines. The medal's middle section portrays a landscape displaying two cities inhabited by men—and not Thebes and the temple of Apollo—located at the feet of two mountains which have absolutely nothing to do with the two hills of Parnassus; at the bottom of the medal one can see the ocean, whereas the top section of the medal features the sky and the stars (see Waddington 2000: 30-31).

This representation of the earth, the sea, and the heavens refers to a well-known passage in the *Iliad* (18, 478-608) in which the shield fashioned by Hephaestus for

Achilles is described. It was widely known that Achilles's shield featured an image of the world—for example, through Ovid, a source for Corella: “ne la tua mà esquerra, hàbil sol en furtar, porà sostenir lo pesat escut, en lo qual la imatge del món està figurada” (*Raonament de Telamó i Ulisses*, Roís de Corella 2001: 129, 77-79). Art historians have dated Pisanello's medal to 1449, at a time when Lorenzo Valla was working on his Latin translation of the *Iliad* (Psalidi 2008; Badia and Torró 2015), a version which may have contributed to a wider knowledge of the Homeric passage in humanistic circles. Let us examine the motifs displayed on the medal in the light of the passage from the *Iliad*:

The initial lines include an overall description of the shield before accounting for all the motifs with which it is decorated. Homer begins by describing the centre of the shield, the section devoted to the stars and the constellations, and he proceeds until he reaches the edge (*Iliad*, 18, ll. 607-608), where the river Oceanus surrounding the world is depicted. Pisanello's medal portrays, albeit not following a concentric order, the ocean in the lower half, and in the upper half, the earth, the heavens, and the stars. Literally: “Therein [Hephaestus] wrought the earth, therein the heavens, therein the sea, and the unwearied sun, and the moon at the full, and therein all the constellations wherewith heaven is crowned—the Pleiades, and the Hyades and the mighty Orion, and the Bear, that men call also the Wain, that circleth ever in her place, and watcheth Orion, and alone hath no part in the baths of Ocean” (*Iliad*, 18, ll. 483-489). Between the heavens with their constellations and the sea stands the earth with two cities on Pisanello's medal: “Therein fashioned he also two cities of mortal men exceeding fair. In the one there were marriages and feasting, and by the light of the blazing torches they were leading the brides from their bowers through the city, and loud rose the bridal song. And young men were whirling in the dance [...]” (*Iliad*, 18, ll. 490-494ff). One of the cities is peaceful whereas the other is engaged in warfare. The size of the medal makes it impossible to portray the wedding ceremony, the flight from the other city of the besieged, the ensuing battle (ll. 490-540), or the following scenes to the uttermost rim of the shield (*Iliad*, 18, ll. 541-608). Anyone familiar with Homer can easily confirm that Pisanello's medal does not include any portrayal of the two hills of Parnassus “ni la Tebes emmurallada per Cadme, el temple d'Apol·lo, llorers de sapiència i vinyes de Bacus”.

Rather, the passage in *Curial e Güelfa* quoted by Soler (“aquella ciutat que primerament murà Cadmo [...]; aquells monts apellats Nissa e Cirra [...]; los llores [...] e les vinyes [...], aquell temple d’Apol·lo”, III.10.1; ed. Badia and Torró 2011: 426-427) is drawn from Dante and from the various commentaries on the *Commedia*: Dante alludes to the two hills of Parnassus at the beginning of *Paradiso* (I, 13ff.), and the author of *Curial e Güelfa* is also inspired by Benvenuto da Imola’s commentary on Dante’s passage (Badia and Torró 2011: 654-657). To conclude: the iconographical interpretation proposed by Soler is imaginary and does not support his hypothesis on the authorship of *Curial e Güelfa*.

### 3.3. *The manuscript*

To Soler’s mind, the preserved manuscript of *Curial e Güelfa* (BNE 9750) must be “l’esborrany preliminar, previ a la plasmació definitiva de l’obra literària” (p. 137). Since its binding (dating to the late-fifteenth century) is thought to have originated from Toledo, Soler believes that the manuscript, which would have belonged to the author of the romance, reached Toledo via Íñigo d’Ávalos’s brother. Soler’s argument thus confirms a suggestion made by his PhD supervisor: “en atenció a aquest indicador [l’enquadernació], Antoni Ferrando (2012c: 81) deduí que l’anònim podia tenir «vincles culturals o familiars amb Toledo»” (p. 141).

It should however be pointed out that the manuscript is not an original, but a copy. At the beginning of the romance the manuscript

deixa en blanc el nom de la contrada on va néixer Curial i el del seu pare. El copista no degué entendre el topònim ni el nom del pare i deixà sengles espais per a escriure’ls quan pogués fer-ho. Una mà posterior va afegir «en Catalunya» al primer espai buit” (Badia and Torró 2011: 536, i cf. 9-10).

How could the author not know the birthplace of the main character (or, perhaps, the place where the narrator read his story), or the name of the protagonist’s father?

Manuscripts often contain blank spaces, which are left in places where proper nouns or technical terms in the antigraph are unknown to the scribe (in order for those to be filled in later on or by a different person). That is the case of several copies of Alfonso de la Torre’s *Visión deleytable* (Torre 1991: I, 13-28). Since the manuscript of

*Curial e Güelfa* is doubtless a copy, it is futile even to consider whether the trip to Toledo may help attribute the authorship of the text to Íñigo d'Ávalos.

Convinced from the outset that the manuscript was the author's, Soler finds further proof (which he deems irrefutable) of this in the paper watermarks employed in the manufacturing process of the manuscript:

Les marques d'aigua del ms. 9750 són nord-italianes i de la mateixa època. Destaca la filigrana 13630 del catàleg Briquet, amb la *Biscia Viscontea*, emblema de Milà per antonomàsia (il·lustració núm. 2), per ser la marca del paper emprat el 1447 en l'administració ducal. En aquell any, les senyeres del rei d'Aragó onejaren sobre les torres del castell de Porta Giove. (p. 139)

The data provided by Soler are partial and inaccurate. The snake watermark, indeed Milanese, is found in one quire only (ff. 181-192). The quire, however, contains not one type of snake watermark but two, each with a different dating, as Gemma Avenzoa has noted in an essay Soler does not cite (2012: 4 and 10-14). None of the two watermarks corresponds to Briquet 13630. Soler only cites Briquet 13630 because it is fitting with his chronological hypothesis. The four remaining watermarks in the codex can be documented in different locations: Languedoc, Provence, Auvergne, Flanders, Tuscany, etc. (see BITECA manid 1125, and Avenzoa 2012: 4). Even if all these locations were in northern Italy, they could not be used to establish where the manuscript was produced, for paper did not always stay where it was produced, but was rather exported. They would not be an indicator of date either, for paper was kept for a period of time (and scholars are usually able to determine the date of a manuscript to within 30 years or so). Italian paper was of good quality and was often exported; unsurprisingly, it is found in manuscripts copied in the Iberian territories of the Crown of Aragon and elsewhere in Europe (see Avenzoa 2012: 10-11, esp. n. 16).

#### **4. The language of *Curial e Güelfa***

Abel Soler's case for his attribution of *Curial e Güelfa* to Íñigo d'Ávalos is made through a series of remarks on the language employed by the anonymous author. These considerations, however, are not substantiated by any serious linguistic analysis nor confirmed in turn by relevant documentation. Keen to demonstrate a Valencian authorship of the romance, Soler invokes the testimony of his mentor Ferrando, states that Joan Veny has already considered a Valencian candidate, and reminds his readers

that Germà Colón “manté dubtes raonables” (p. 140) about the question. The note introductory to the article in the IEC Bulletin, nonetheless, presents Soler’s linguistic remarks as proof of his hypothesis.

#### 4.1. *From hypothesis to certainty without any justification*

The note which appeared in the aforementioned Bulletin of the IEC bears the title “El nom de l’autor del *Curial e Güelfa*, desvelat,” thus turning the hypothesis advanced in the article –entitled “Enyego d’Àvalos, autor de *Curial e Güelfa*?,” with a question mark– into an unjustified certainty. The levity with which this note has been written is confirmed by the following assertion:

Si bé no hi ha cap document que certifiqui qui és el autor [*sic*] de *Curial e Güelfa*, tal com passa amb quasi totes les obres medievals i la majoria de les modernes —no hi ha, per exemple, cap document que certifiqui que Ausiàs March és l’autor de les seves poesies o que Cervantes sigui l’autor d’*El Quijote*—, segons Soler “hi ha poques obres que traspuïn tantes dades sobre el seu autor com el *Curial*.”

As for Ausiàs March, over twenty manuscripts and early editions confirm that he is the author of most of his literary output; by contrast, a single anonymous manuscript of *Curial e Güelfa* survives. These are obviously very different cases. Soler is right in claiming that the romance provides a wealth of information about its author. But while it does not betray his name, it certainly reveals a lot about his culture and the milieu in which he lived—as scholars have been studying for decades.

The following statement is equally surprising:

[*Curial e Güelfa*] s’ha acostumat a presentar com una obra escrita per algú de Catalunya, si bé molts filòlegs l’han certificada de [*sic*] valenciana. Ara, la tesi de l’historiador i doctor en Filologia Catalana per la Universitat de València, Abel Soler, no només en confirma la valencianitat, sinó que revela el nom de l’autor: Enyego d’Àvalos.

The proposal for a new author of *Curial e Güelfa* would thus seem to be an addendum. According to the note, the aim of the research line pursued by Soler was to confirm the romance’s “valencianitat,” a fact that would have been established already. Yet, the origin of the work must not have been so certain if Ferrer had proposed Lluís Sescases, born in Cervera, Catalonia, as the author, which –as Ferrer lamented– ruled out a Valencian authorship (2011: 142). Soler’s line of research is defined shortly later:

La troballa corona una línia d'investigació d'Antoni Ferrando, membre de la Secció Filològica i director de la tesi doctoral de Soler. Ferrando s'havia proposat identificar l'autoria de *Curial e Güelfa* a partir del perfil d'un lletraferit que recorre a molts termes característicament valencians (*febra, bambollat, acurtat, mentira, rabosa, la fel, almànguena* [sic], etc.) i a molts calcs lingüístics i fonts literàries italianes per redactar una novel·la la gestació de la qual només s'entén en el context de la cort valenciana i napolitana del Magnànim.

We have already seen that connections between *Curial e Güelfa* and the Neapolitan court had already been suggested by previous scholars. This is not Ferrando and Soler's exclusive research line, unlike the Valencian origin of the author proposed by Ferrando (2013), who had "identified" the Valencian secretary Joan Olzina as the author of the romance before he retracted. The new candidate's profile – a native of Toledo, yet an adopted Valencian who also spent years at the Milanese court– requires the presence of words of Lombardian origin in the text:

Entre Nàpols i Milà, pels vols de 1445-1448, deuria redactar la novel·la, en què demostra els seus coneixements d'italià literari i col·loquial (amb llombardismes inclosos), i la seva familiaritat amb la geografia llombarda.

A glimpse of the *Diccionari català-valencià-balear (DCVB)* by Alcover and Moll is enough to note that the terms mentioned in the electronic note do not prove the Valencian origin of the language employed in *Curial e Güelfa* (*bambolla* is a word documented in Llull, and the terms *acurtar* and *almànguena* are used by Girona-born Francesc Eiximenis, etc.). This is not, however, the question, as argued by Badia and Torró in a lengthy article published in *Cultura Neolatina* (2014) in which previous bibliography on the matter is reviewed and the literary language of the romance is examined. Needless to say, Badia and Torró's article is not refuted by Soler, simply because he does not even quote it.

#### 4.2. *Lombardisms*

The supposed Lombardian words listed by Soler are tantamount to lack of philological rigour. From the point of view of Romance linguistics, they are groundless, and the anonymous reviewers should have noted so. The alleged Lombardian words adduced by Soler are simply non-existent, but were they to exist, none of these terms would prove

Íñigo d'Ávalos's involvement in the romance. *Curial e Güelfa* is a work written in an elaborate literary register, formal and international, devoid of any local colour (Badia and Torró 2014). Given that the Lombardian theory as applied to *Curial e Güelfa* constitutes an absolute novelty, it is crucial to rule out the misleading arguments employed by Soler on pp. 141-142 of his article. As a preliminary remark, one should point out that present-day Lombardy is a region in Italy located between the Piedmont and the Veneto, in which several dialects are still spoken. For the study of such dialects we have dictionaries and descriptions at our disposal (Cherubini 1843; Gambini 1850). In the fifteenth century the term Lombardians (*llombards*) was reserved for the inhabitants of northern Italy, namely the most southern part of the Holy Roman Empire: the French king, for example, believes Curial to be Lombardian simply because the latter is a native of Montferrat, nowadays in the Piedmont.

4.2.1 SYNTAGMATIC VERBS. Relevant bibliography offers the following examples: *dà föra* 'spendere,' *dà giò* 'tramontare,' *levá sü* 'alzarsi' (Rohlf's 1969: III, § 918). Only in one case does Abel Soler cite his source in order to identify the Lombardian syntagmatic verb ("sarà sü"), which the author of *Curial e Güelfa* would have employed. We will now comment the examples Soler proposed on p. 141.

(i) "vage fora [= 'isca'] dels cels" (CeG III.18), from *andà föra*

As with the quoted passage, in current-day Catalan the emphatic use of "anar(-se'n) a fora" for "sortir" is documented: "Tu vés a fora i espera't."

(ii) "haüt un forts e molt bell cavall, muntà sus per anar a la plaça" (CeG I.17), from *montà sü*, 'pujar a cavall'

Similar usages are documented in medieval Catalan (see *DCVB*, s.v. *sus*):

"Esperan quant uendrien e quant metrien nostra senyera sus, Jaume I, Cròn. 443.  
E'ls nostres pujaren sus, Pere IV, Cròn. 201."

(iii) "encontrà lo comte de Poytieus... e no s'arrestà sobre ['s'entretingué amb'] aquell, ans ne fèr un altre" (CeG II.38), from *restà sü*

"Arrestar-se" ('to stop') has clearly a different meaning from "restar." "Restà sü" in Lombardian means to 'stand up,' 'hold up,' 'stay up (at night)' (Cherubini

1843 i Gambini 1850 s.v. *stà*). It is not easy to see how such an expression would give rise to a similar form with, however, a totally different meaning.

(iv) “Ramon Folch, que·l viu, volgué saltar avall” (CeG III.68), from *saltà giò*

“Saltar avall” is a common expression in present-day Catalan.

(v) “la viu venir revoltant-se la finestra avall” (CeGIII.67), from *buttas de la finestra in giò*

“Llançar-se avall per la finestra,” a translation from the above Lombardian sentence, would be common in present-day Catalan, but does not match the words in *Curial e Güelfa*, which in modern Catalan would be “la vaig veure venir fent voltes finestra avall.” The only difference between the modern and the old construction is the inclusion of the article (“la finestra avall”) in the latter.

(vi) “e tant cercà amunt e avall que ell trobà Boca de Far” (CeG I.31), from *cercà in sù e giò*

In modern Catalan “amunt i avall” is a common expression implying insistence, and is frequently used next to a variety of verbs, including “buscar.”

(vii) “tirades les portes, *damunt* los *tancà*” (CeG II.109) [for “tirades les portes *damunt*, los *tancà*”], a copy of *sarà sù*, ‘tancar la porta’ (Vidari, 1972: 336, s. v. *sarà*)

The quoted text is not properly punctuated: “*damunt*” refers to “tirades les portes.” Though the expression has no correspondence in current Catalan, its meaning is clear: “passades les portes *damunt* d’ells,” in which “*damunt*” refers to something which remains “a dintre,” changing the sense from the vertical to the horizontal—just as “*damunt del pit*,” which means ‘outside the chest.’ This usage is also documented in Latin: “*ingressusque, clausit ostium super se et super puerum, et oravit ad Dominum*” (*Vulgata*: Reis II, 4, 33). Moreover, it should be noted that, within a syntagmatic combination with a verb, the adverb is usually placed after the verb or other complements, and that the adverb translating the Lombardian “*sù*” should be “*amunt*” or “*sus*”, and not “*damunt*”.

#### 4.2.2 ALLEGED “LEXICAL LOMBARDISMS”



Abel Soler does not provide the Lombardian form of any of the following alleged Lombardisms words (pp. 141-142):

(viii) *restell*. The Catalan evolution of this term is clear, both with regard to the form and the meaning of the word: see the entries *rastell* in *DCVB* and *rastre* in *DECat*. Both dictionaries quote *Curial e Güelfa*.

(ix) *armurer*. This is a term of French origin (*DCVB* s. v. *armurer* i *DECat* sv. *arma*).

(x) *parc*. This is a term of French origin (*DECat* s. v. *parra*).

(xi) *famolent*. This is a term which is broadly documented in old Catalan: “Viu per les carreres hòmens pobres, nuus, magres, famolents, Lull Felix, pt. viii, c. 22. Hom famolent no està en repòs, Ausiàs March, cxxii bis. Natura humana famolenta, Villena Vita Chr., c. 67. (Es troba la forma *famolent* com a femení en Canals Carta, pròl.)” (*DCVB* s. v. *famolent*). See also *DECat* (s. v. *fam*).

(xii) *upega*. This is a term of Catalan ascent and is documented in further old Catalan texts: “Puput. Altra terra hi ha prés Bocínia, on vé una upega en un boscatge, Lull Blanq. 88, 3.” (*DCVB* s. v. *upega*; also *DECat* s. v. *puput*, which records the form “úpega”).

(xiii) *bubó*. In *Curial e Güelfa* “bubó,” referred to the bird called “duc” (‘eagle owl’) denotes either a name directly derived from the Latin term “bubo bubonis” or an imitation of the Italian “bubone,” which is however no longer used (*TLIO* and Zingarelli 2001 s. v. *bubone*). None of the dictionaries consulted records a similar Lombardian form: Cherubini (1843) and Gambini (1850). Gambini provides, for the dialect spoken at Pavia, the onomatopoeic form *boubóú* to designate the “puput” (‘hoopoe’), a totally different kind of bird. A similar form in the Ribagorça area is documented by Coromines: in this case the term “bobó” does refer to a nocturnal predatory bird (*DECat* s. v. *duc* ì).

(xiv) Soler writes:

hàpax *creatus* com “ranapeix”, que l’autor deu haver inventat a partir del *ranabéyt* del llombard occidental (Pfister / Schweickard, 1984: VI-3, 1474, s. v. *bot(t)*). Aquesta veu apareix

en comptes de *capgròs* o *cap de bou*, i com a sinònim de «cullereta», la variant zoonímica més estesa del català occidental.

It is implausible to think that the author of *Curial e Güelfa* coined his own terms to designate ordinary animals. No correspondence between the aforementioned Lombardian form and “ranapeix” can be found.

(xv) Soler writes:

Vet també algun ofici singular, com el de “pretor” (‘jutge’), no relacionable amb la Corona d’Aragó, Nàpols o l’Hongria de la ficció, sinó amb Milà i la Llombardia (Soler, 2015: 125).

This remark shows poor training in philological skills; the word is usually employed in vernacular texts as an allusion to classical times but also within narratives not necessarily set in Antiquity: “Bé pens que et recorda d’aquella mesquina mare, per crim capital per lo pretor a mort condemnada en lo carçre” (Metge 2003: 152). The historical information provided by Soler is equally inaccurate. Soler (2015: 125) states: “Ara bé, a l’Hongria medieval no existia cap oficial anomenat *pretor*; ni a la Corona d’Aragó *sensu stricto*, ni a Castella, ni al reialme de les Dues Sicílies.” Yet:

Nelle città maggiori il Baiulo [responsabile de l’administració urbana, compresa l’administració de justícia] muta denominazione, a Palermo tra gli anni dieci e venti del Trecento prende il nome di Pretore (Titone 2003: 967, n. 13).

The *Tesoro della Lingua Italiana delle Origini* (TLIO s. v. *pretore*, 3) records the meaning “ufficiale che amministra la giustizia o svolge det[erminati] incarichi in una comunità,” which is indeed documented in Palermo (in 1341), as well as in Verona (in 1356) and Siena (documentation dating to 1309 and 1310).

## 5. Conclusion

5.1. A fair assessment of Abel Soler’s PhD dissertation will only be possible upon publication of the text. Irrespective of Soler’s hypothesis on the authorship of *Curial e Güelfa*, his study may include valuable data which –it is hoped– will be more rigorously documented than most points made in the article published in *ER*.

5.2. Abel Soler's article is far from demonstrating the hypothesis it proposes. Neither the attention it has received from the media nor the support it has garnered from some institutions make it more credible.

5.3. The birthplace of an author, be it Toledo or elsewhere, and his adopted land, be it Valencia or any other, have little intrinsic interest. An investigation with such an aim is marred by a priori considerations and methodological flaws.

5.4. Irrespective of the identity of the author of *Curial e Güelfa*, the romance is the product of an international court, that of King Alfonso the Magnanimous, in which courtiers of different origin and culture, Latin and vernacular, came together.

After all, the Catalan or Valencian origin of the anonymous author of the romance, and his birthplace, be it Toledo or any other, should be the least of the critics' concerns. What is most worrying here is the manner in which philological studies discredit themselves by becoming an instrument subservient to local interests. What simply should matter to us, readers and scholars of medieval Catalan literature, is to achieve a better understanding of *Curial e Güelfa*, a splendid and highly recommendable romance. This entertaining, innovative, and intelligent work is rooted in an international culture that kindled the author's respect for learning—what he called the “reverenda lletradura—a respect we should also uphold today.

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\*This list does not include the works cited in Abel Soler's article at *ER*, 39, 2017, 137-162.

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