Reading (and) Courtly Love in *Flamenca*, *via* the *Charrette*

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Courtly love, a topic Karl Uitti wrote upon at length, has been associated with Chrétien de Troyes's *Chevalier de la Charrette* since Gaston Paris's 1883 *Romania* article.[1] Paris's terminology has been called into question as the words "courtly" and "love" never appear in the same line, let alone within the same syntactic unit, in Chrétien's romance. However, as Joan Ferrante's re-evaluation of the material evidence for courtly love has demonstrated, "'Courtly love' is not a figment of a nineteenth-century imagination, nor simply a useful term which we choose to preserve, but a perfectly valid medieval concept."[2] Ferrante finds an instance of *amor cortes* in the thirteenth-century Occitan *Romance of Flamenca* (1197), and the *amor* and *cortes* lexemes in close proximity (albeit not in the same phrase) in twelfth-century Occitan lyric (Cercamon, Bernart de Ventadorn, Marcabru, and Peire d'Alvernhe), the *Charrette* and *Yvain*, *Hueline et Aiglentine*, and some later texts (Dante, Petrarch, Cino da Pistoia, and Chiaro Davanzati). She examines how "courtly" is used in connection with "love" elsewhere in Occitan lyric materials (Bernart de Ventadorn, Raimbaut d'Aurenga, and the *vidas*), then moves on to the uses of *cortesie* in French romance (*Brut,* Chrétien's romances, Marie de France, and the *Roman de la Rose*) and Italian lyric.

In the present essay, I show how *Flamenca* uses the notion of courtly love, *amor cortesa*, in juxtaposition with another form of love, *amor coral*, "love of the heart." The examination of the evidence, its analysis, and the development of ideas about courtly love in *Flamenca* all came about through the use of electronic texts and tools devised specially for this project. As a further investigation into the existence of *amour courtois* in medieval Romance literature, this essay hopes

[1] Gaston Paris, "Études sur les romans de la Table Ronde: *Lancelot*," *Romania* 12 (1883): 459–534.

[2] Joan M. Ferrante, "*Cortes' Amor* in Medieval Texts," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 686–95, here 695.

to add a footnote to the 120-odd years' courtly love debate[3] in support of Uitti's stance on courtly love and his argument for a more subtle and sophisticated reading of Paris and of medieval Romance literature.

Amor *Coral*

Amor coral is, to the best of my knowledge, a new subject of study. The characteristics of this new form of love may be identified as follows.

Coral indicates that this love is "of the heart," and is essentially internal. A line is drawn between inside and outside: in contemporary terms, Jean de Meun's *escorce* and *moële*.[4] True inner worth is distinguished from external appearances: in Jean's terms, *la robe ne faict pas le moine*.[5]

The distinction between internal and external permits the existence of a private space, in which the external world's values (political, social, economic, and hierarchical) have no place. Although he makes no mention of *amor coral* and presents limited literary evidence for what is essentially a historical argument, it is Georges Duby who best describes the larger social phenomenon, which may be seen as the broader context for our new notion of love, and that may be aligned with what has been described elsewhere as a pre-modern individuality or subjectivity.[6] "Courtly" codes of conduct and constraints on behavior no longer necessarily come into play.

Two further characteristics are associated with those above. First, private individuals are in a private space that they create themselves, with its own rules — or, rather, their own rules — and truth at its core. *Amor coral* is an idea of human relations based not in power-hierarchies, feudality, and fealty, but in free gift and exchange, in relations of equality and mutuality.[7] From the perspective of medieval women, this is an improvement on their status as objects, chattels, voiceless and devoid of will. There remains, as we shall see, plenty of room for

[3] For recent histories of the courtly love debate and argument syntheses, see particularly R. Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); Sarah Kay, "Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81–96; and Juliet O'Brien, "*Trobar Cor(s)*: Erotics and Poetics in *Flamenca*" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2006), chap. 1.

[4] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Champion, 1965–1970), ll. 11828 and 11830.

[5] *Le Roman de la Rose*, 11028.

[6] See Georges Duby, *De l'Europe féodale à la Renaissance*, *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. 2 (Paris: Seuil, 1985).

[7] See Moshe Lazar, *Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964).

cynicism, manipulation, and abuse. Second, when courtesy is no longer necessarily a sign of virtue let alone identical with it—and, indeed, if it becomes the opposite—its discussion may become incorporated into nostalgic tropes decrying falling standards and the growth of hypocrisy.

The idea evolves over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. About a century before *Flamenca*, and around the time of Chrétien de Troyes, *amor coral* appears in the poetry of the Occitan *trobador* Bernart de Ventadorn. Bernart is synonymous with the double identity of poet and lover and is one of the earliest poets to write about *amor cortesa,* especially in relation to the imprisonment of *amor cortesa* and its self-delusional quality (*En cossirer et en esmai*). He also portrays an emphatically anti-courtly love in several poems that create links between *cor* [body/heart], love, and truth or sincerity. [8] All trappings of the outside world, of the court and feudality, are irrelevant in the inside world of these lovers. *Amor coral* is used interchangeably with *amor cortesa* and with love that is *fin'*, *bon*, *dreit,* or *vers.* [9]

Both *amor cortesa* and *amor coral* seem to be lost in northwards translation, via the Aquitainian courts of the late twelfth century, moving Occitan poets through France, England, and Germany, although *amor coral* seems to have entered the Catalan and Iberian languages and, via the post-Albigensian-crusade exile, into the poetry and languages of Italy. Its Occitan presence diminishes from the beginning of the thirteenth century onwards. Poetry shifts its attention from love to more temporal matters, as the lyric *canso* wanes and the political *sirventes* waxes, due in part to political instability in the region and to French invasion and the turmoils of the Albigensian crusade. The rare later thirteenth-century instances of *amor coral* tend to be in a satirical or *post facto* melancholy mode.

Flamenca provides one of the greatest concentrations of "courtly love" and its correlates in medieval Romance literature, such as the phrase that is often cited as evidence for the medieval existence of courtly love: *fenera d'amor cortes* (1197). [10] Yet *Flamenca* is also the richest source for instances of *amor coral*, and presents a very different idea of the relationship between *amor cortesa* and *amor coral* from that of the twelfth-century *trobadors.* Indeed, *fenera d'amor cortes* also provides a good example of *Flamenca*'s critical approach to the subject: and it is to this

[8] Bernart de Ventadorn, *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn: Complete Texts, Translations, Notes, and Glossary*, ed. and trans. Stephen G. Nichols Jr., John A. Galm, A. Bartlett Giamatti, et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1962). *Can la verz folha s'espan*: 151–52; *Estas ai com om esperdutz*: 91–93; *Gent estera que chantes*: 94–95; *Lancan vei la folha*: 112–13; *Lonc tems a qu'eu no chantei mai*: 119–20; *Can lo boschatges es floritz*: 157–59.

[9] For a list of some other examples of *amor coral* in medieval literature, see O'Brien, "Erotics and Poetics."

[10] As observed by Ferrante, "*Cortes' amor*," and echoed by Kay, "Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love." All further commentary is mine.

phrase that I shall return, after a brief introduction to the work as a whole, as it is not well-known outside medieval Occitanist circles.

Flamenca: an introduction

Flamenca's date of composition remains an uncertain factor. The manuscript is late thirteenth to early fourteenth century; *Flamenca* is the only text in it; and it is anonymous and lacunary, lacking amongst other things a beginning and end.[11] If *Flamenca* is at least contemporaneous with the *vidas* and *razos,* then it must date from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries. Like its contemporaries the (mainly expatriate) *chansonniers,* Matfré Ermengaud's *Breviari d'Amors,* and Occitan and Catalan poetics treatises, *Flamenca* presents an attempt to catalogue a whole literary corpus, a body of knowledge, and even to preserve the ruins of a culture. It is, in addition, a work of debate and criticism, thanks in part to the choice of mode of writing. It combines Occitan and French elements and is written in Occitan, "the" language of lyric poetry, but as a romance, the French form *par excellence*. Cultural juxtaposition and fusion are treated with sophisticated ambiguity, leaving interpretation open — ranging potentially from a wistful wish for harmonious hybridity to an ironic form of *translatio*, subversive reappropriation and theft by an underdog. This openness parallels other dialogic elements in the work: three different character-based focalizations, several distinct narrative voices (ranging from a distant and clinical observer to an untrustworthy manipulator who toys overtly with the audience), and the romance's middle-portion construction around a dialogue between a pair of prospective lovers.

A synopsis of *Flamenca*'s main plot lines is appropriate at this juncture. Archimbaut of Bourbon marries Flamenca of Nemours, but is stage-managed into brooding jealousy by the queen, and this jealousy drives him mad. He cuts himself off from the outside world, and locks up his wife in a tower, along with her maids. Flamenca is allowed out only to go to church and to the local baths. Archimbaut will spy on the three ladies throughout the course of their imprisonment; and they are aware of his observation.

This section of the narrative starts out in a courtly setting, with events reported at a distance through third-person commentary, until the point when

[11] Bibliothèque municipale de Carcassonne, manuscript 34; the only other manuscript presence of *Flamenca* is the appearance of ll. 2713–2720 in the 14th-century Catalan Vega-Aguiló codex. For descriptions, see Rita Lejeune, "Le Manuscrit de *Flamenca* et ses lacunes," in *Littérature et société occitane au Moyen Âge* (Liège: Marche Romane, 1979), 331–39; Nadia Togni, "Les Lacunes du manuscrit de *Flamenca*," *Revue des langues romanes* 104 (2000): 379–97.

Archimbaut starts to progress into madness, when focalization shifts to him.[12] This shift also signals a movement into the mode and pace of the main body of our romance: concentration on matters of internal psychology; distance from external events, featuring little action but much thought and discussion; and protagonist-centred focalization.

News of Flamenca's imprisonment having reached him, Guillem de Nevers, a nice young man, sallies forth to rescue the damsel in distress. The rescue involves the incidental imprisonment of the prospective liberator, as he spends most of his time in his room, gazing out the window at the tower and tying himself up in knots in lengthy rumination. This section of the narrative is from Guillem's point of view.

Flamenca and Guillem will become lovers, in several subversions of the outside world and its norms. Guillem assumes clerical disguise, enabling the pair to meet at Mass—right under Archimbaut's nose. The briefest of opportunities is afforded at the moment when Guillem gives Flamenca the peace. As she kisses the psalter and their heads are close together, there is enough time for one of them to speak very quietly, during the time of that kiss. The time of a kiss is also the time of a single breath, and for one person to utter two syllables, sufficiently under the breath to pass as "amen." A succession of such meetings at Mass constitutes the first phase of relations, during which focalization will alternate between

[12] I use the term "focalization" in the twentieth-century narratological sense: narration of events from the point of view of a particular protagonist, "focused" on him and his perception of them and of the world, and with the option of seeing into his internal musings. The classic discussion of *focalisation* is Gérard Genette, *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1983).

The term is particularly appropriate for *Flamenca*. The idea of *focus* on a character may be observed throughout the romance. *Flamenca* also deploys focalization in the strong or specialised sense: that is, not just point of view and view through one set of eyes, but angle of approach and its motion, the photographic or cinematographic "focus"—with a zooming-in to a narrower field of vision—to which Genette's idea is indebted. Each of the three principal protagonists demonstrates a restriction of vision (and movement in and out of this limitation): Guillem first sees Flamenca through a spy-hole, and glimpses only small portions of her (e.g., hands); Archimbaut spies on Flamenca through another peep-hole; Flamenca's first sightings of Guillem are impeded by her downcast head. Focus and focalization in *Flamenca* are described in full detail in O'Brien, "Erotics and Poetics," chaps. 2–4.

See also Sophie Marnette, *Narrateur et points de vue dans la littérature française médiévale: une approche linguistique* (Bern: P. Lang, 1998); eadem, *Speech and Thought Perception in French: Concepts and Strategies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 212–13; A.C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 48–50, 87–89; idem, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the lovers. The first encounter is recounted from Guillem's point of view: deciding what he will say, saying it, observing Flamenca's reaction, and then wondering how she has taken it and how she will respond. We then move to Flamenca and her maids, and their reactions and formulation of a response; and so on, through the course of these encounters, as each "reads" the other's last response and "composes" a reply, in a double focalization.

This whole central section of *Flamenca* is constructed as a dialogue-poem with attached commentary by Guillem and Flamenca, the protagonist-poets: a cross between a *tenso* and a *razo*, as an expanded *vida*. There is a complete absence of commentary by any outside observer's narrative voice. At about 2500 lines long, the section constitutes about a third of the work and is its longest section. The lovers' idyll as a whole — including Guillem's section and the next (Flamenca's) one — occupies around 5500 lines, over half the romance's total length (in its present lacunary state).

The alternation of declaration and question allows Guillem and Flamenca to move rapidly beyond flirtatious uncertainties and comic misunderstandings and come to an "understanding" (*entendemen*), setting up the second, proper, hands-on stage of the affair. Full contact happens in the underground baths and then in Guillem's chambers, via a secret tunnel he has had dug from the baths: he creates the lovers' own, private, idyllic space in an ingenious subterfuge that is, quite literally, a subversion of the outside world.

Towards the end of this central section, focalization moves subtly to Flamenca: subtle as it is enabled by a move from the alternating double focalization to couple-centred focalization with the lovers presented as a single unit (with use of plural verbs and pronouns), and events represented from a joint point of view. Flamenca begins to see a little more clearly, with her reason less clouded by love. She puts an end to the affair, sends Guillem away on the tourneying circuit, and is at least superficially reconciled with Archimbaut, newly cured of his madness. This section is quite short, and much interrupted by lacunae at significant junctures, such as where the reader would expect to find some explanation for and elaboration on Archimbaut's cure.

After the most sizeable lacuna in the romance, Archimbaut holds a court, to which Guillem is invited. The lovers enter into a new phase of their affair that is public, *within* the court, and accepted — indeed, actively aided and abetted — by Archimbaut. Three days into the jousting, our narrative ends, left suspended by another lacuna. This final section moves out from protagonist-centred focalization and back to a distanced observation and reporting of events, which have now moved back to a courtly setting.

Representing these moves in focalization diagrammatically:

Lines	Focalization		
1–152	*Court*		
153–1562		Archimbaut	
1563–3949			Guillem
3949–6659			Guillem+Flamenca (in alternation)
6660–7181			Flamenca
7182–8095	*Court*		

Putting together the first and last sections, the romance can be seen to have an outer courtly frame. The outer frame picks up the middle part's themes of poetic composition, reading, misreading, and interpretation. The main shift between middle and outer sections is one from internal to external. The same happens in a shift from a discussion of poetry associated with protagonist-poets to its being associated with more external poets: a first-person commentating voice, generalized reference to poets and poetry in this courtly world, and reference to poets and poetry in the real external world (Ovid, Horace, and Marcabru are named). Indeed, these movements in an outwards direction continue, as *Flamenca* weaves together complex layers of literary reference, of many kinds and degrees, from charged vocabulary (e.g., *trobar*) to entire narratives (e.g., *Tristan*).[13] It assimilates a substantial corpus of earlier (mainly twelfth-century) Occitan lyric and (twelfth–thirteenth centuries) French romance, bound together through the use of techniques that draw on the French romance with lyric inserts (early thirteenth century, e.g., Jean Renart's *Roman de la Rose*) and the later Occitan *vida* and *razo* traditions (in *chansonniers* from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries). The fact that *Flamenca* is a genuinely polyphonic narrative is crucial to its success as an extreme form of *compilatio,* a highly allusive literary *summa*.

[13] O'Brien, "Erotics and Poetics," chap. 1. On *compilatio*, see Elizabeth Wilson Poe, Compilatio: *Lyric Texts and Prose Commentaries in Troubadour Manuscript H (Vat. Lat. 3207)* (Lexington: French Forum, 2000). *Flamenca* may be read as a literary *summa,* "meta-romance," and "supertext." On meta-romance, see Clare Kinney, "The Best Book of Romance: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 59 (1990): 457–73; eadem, "Chivalry Unmasked: Courtly Spectacle and the Abuse of Romance in Sidney's *New Arcadia,*" *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995): 35–52. On the supertext, see John V. Fleming, "Carthaginian Love: Text and Supertext in the *Romance of the Rose*," in *Assays: Critical Approaches to Medieval and Renaissance Texts*, ed. Peggy A. Knapp and Michael A. Sturgin (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 51–72.

Methods

The above schema and the analysis that follows in the section after this were developed first through reading and research, then through computer-assisted analysis. Having obtained a digitized copy of the text and a printout of its concordance,[14] I applied to this new version of *Flamenca*—essentially the same data as contained in a print edition, but in a different format, and rearranged in the case of the concordance—some of the techniques of reading and analysis peculiar to the *Charrette Project*. These techniques may be summarized in simple and pragmatic terms:

> Pattern recognition: an expectation—informed by past experience—leads to a certain repetition being observed, and noted as significant—statistically and semantically—is then tested against evidence provided (or not) by computational "search and find" operations on a digitized text;
>
> Data collection and the systematic logging of repetitions: proceeding in the opposite manner, the observation of phenomena leads to the production of hypotheses.

The course of action was as follows. I made several copies of the text, marked them up, and tabulated the resulting data, each one focusing on a different feature. The features were selected based on lexical and thematic associations—for example, true love and truth and their synonyms: true, clear, good, right, fine, sensitive, understanding, comprehension, and also expressions of light, fire, blinding, illumination, and seeing. Some features were lexical; some grammatical (e.g., personal pronouns; and the use of impersonal, negative, and hypothetical constructions); some syntactic (e.g., direct and indirect speech, and first-person voice); and others narrative (protagonists' appearances).

Each copy of the text had its key feature marked up in a visually distinct way: highlighted in a different colour, for example. This facilitated the reading of *Flamenca*'s multiple layers, one at a time. The marked-up copies could also be "overlaid" in any combination, enabling the tracking of connected layers and of relationships between layers. Eventually this led to the production of a database. One feature often led to another, often through unexpected new patterns found in the marked-up text.

It should be stressed that the method is a mixture of the two basic techniques outlined above, in several stages. While intuition remains the main factor determining the *choice* of feature to track and reading path to follow, it is an intuition informed by the first, precomputational stages of research: the orthodox

[14] With thanks to F.R.P. Akehurst for kindly providing both.

background legwork.[15] This adds to a mental stockpile, the *imaginatio* of criticism as a compositional process like any other.

Pattern recognition is an important factor in such research, as it enables the reading of a text in layers, the reading of the interrelationship between layers, and detection of more subtle shifts between layers: folds and gaps, but also flow and seepages.[16] This proved, for example, to be important to a close reading of those passages in *Flamenca* where focalization did not move suddenly and in a clear-cut manner, but rather in more sophisticated transitions. It was very important indeed to attempting to make sense of transitions abbreviated by lacunae; and to finding distinct compositional layers in the text and transitions between them. The same stylistic features were examined as had been done in studying compositional layers in the *Charrette,* allowing distinctions to be made between the hands of Chrétien de Troyes, Godefroy de Legny, and Guiot. This is a reading of layers and movement between them, with emphasis on the movement of accrual but also on the contrary motion of crumbling, seepage, and decay. As such, this kind of reading recalls the "taphonomy" of forensics and archaeology, suggesting a methodological neologism: "fluid taphonomics."

Layers, their relationships to each other, and networks of relations, may just about be visualised and navigated by the mind's eye: but this can be greatly assisted by the use of technology offering the illusion of four dimensions: for instance, the interplay of layers in a text as reproduced in a simple PowerPoint slide show.[17] Computers are an integral part of a research that is essentially still *reading*, helping the researcher to spend time more effectively: less time on the spade-work of data collection; more on its analysis; and an end product that is verily a "reading," an interpretation and commentary.

Amor cortesa and *amor coral* in *Flamenca*

One of the first patterns I found regarded "courtly love," investigated in response to Karl Uitti's mention of one instance of *amor cortes* (the famous l. 1197).

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[15] The method thus lays no claim to being *scientifique* in the traditional philological sense, though it aims to be "scientific" in the modern Popperian sense, for example in testability and openness to refutation.

[16] On folds and gaps, see Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli: Leibnitz et le baroque* (Paris: Minuit, 1988); specifically in *Flamenca*, see Roger Dragonetti, *Le Gai savoir dans la rhétorique courtoise: Flamenca et Joufroi de Poitiers* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1982); Francesca Nicholson, "Reading the Unreadable in *Flamenca,*" paper at the British Branch of the International Courtly Love Society Conference, April 2003; J. O'Brien, "Making Sense of a Lacuna in the *Romance of Flamenca,*" *TENSO: Bulletin of the Société Guilhem IX* 20 (2005): 1–25.

[17] See Alvarado, in this volume, for further discussion of electronic representation and visualization of textual poetics.

The phrase *fenera d'amor cortes* is spoken by Flamenca's jealous husband Archimbaud, tortured by his fear of possible cuckolding to the point of madness. He refers to *donnejador*— "ladies' men" with, also, some effeminate qualities (1149) —who, he swears, *non sai trobaran huis ubert* (1151) [will not find open house here]. Later, alone, he will ponder the possibility that this might indeed happen:

E que faria s'us truanz,
que-s **fenera d'amor cortes**
e non sabra d'amor ques es,
l'avia messa en follia?
(1196–1199) [18]

[But what if some vile adversary,
A courteous faker of love—
A thing that he knows nothing of —
Should make her virtue go astray?]

The line looks, at first glance, as though it links *amor* to *cortes*: "a faker of courtly-love." But *cortes* is actually an attribute of the *fenera,* as both are masculine singular, whereas *amor* is—as always in Occitan—feminine. So rather than the *fenera* being the negative thing that sullies the positive *amor cortes(a),* we have instead the doubly-repugnant *fenera cortes* playing with *amor*: so the whole line translates not as a "faker of courtly love," but rather as a "courtly faker of love." So courtliness or courtesy is not necessarily a positive attribute.

Shortly before, in a comment on Archimbaud's unfortunate condition, we have met the term *gelos fins*, a parodic contrary of *fin' amans* [fine, true lover].[19] Read in the context of *gelos fins*, *fenera d'amor cortes* heralds *Flamenca*'s sardonic critique of love: crucially, it is a critique not only of *courtly* love, but of *all* love.

I searched a digital copy of the *Flamenca* text for further instances of the *am-* and *cort-* lexemes and of their conjunction, producing a marked-up copy and table of occurrences. In reading *Flamenca* for *amor cortesa,* I also found *am-* being

[18] Text: Peter T. Ricketts, Alan Reed, F.R.P. Akehurst, John Hathaway, and Cornelius Van Der Horst, eds., C*oncordance of Medieval Occitan Literature, CD 1: Lyric Texts, CD 2: Verse Narrative Text*s, 2 vols. to date (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); based on *Le Roman de Flam*enca*: nouvelle occitane du XIIIe siècle,* ed. Ulrich Gschwind (Berne: Francke, 1976); graciously provided (*Flamenca* text alone, excerpted from the whole CD-ROM) by F.R.P. Akehurst. The translation is Hubert and Porter, which I have sometimes modified when their translation significantly changes the sense of the original: *The Romance of Flamenca*, ed. Marion E. Porter, trans. Merton Jerome Hubert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). Here, for example, *que-s fenera d'amor cortes* (1197) was misleadingly translated as "aping the wiles of courtly love." This line is vital to the argument that Flamenca distinguishes between "love" and "courtesy/courtliness."

[19] 1172: *es ar sabon per lo pais / qu'en Archimbautz es gilos fins*—"and it was known throughout the land / that Sir Archimbaut was a true and perfect jealous anti-lover."

tied to *coral*, and *cortes* portrayed as negative: *Amor* is associated with the *cortes,* and seen as an enemy of true love.[20]

Ben pensson conssi mais no-s dol[l]on
per negun plazer que oblidon;
soven envidon e revidon,
lo jors, la mostra e la presa.
Et **Amors fai coma cortesa**
quar non consent que i aia triga,
quar **tant era corals amiga**
Flamenca que non sap jugar
ab son amic mais a **joc par**,
e per aisso tot o gasaina.
Pero, abanz que-l juecs remaina,
cascus o a tot gazainat,
et anc non n'escaperon dat,
car negus non s'irais ni jura
Fin'Amors tan los assegura
qu'ades **lur** dis que ben soven
poiran jugar e longamen;
(6504–6520)

[Thinking that any bliss denied
Might cause them later to regret,
They lay their stakes, wager and bet,
Maneuvering with art and skill.
Love, generous and gracious, will
Not brook any impediment.
Flamenca is so excellent
A mistress that she'll play the game
Only on terms that are the same
For each of them. Therefore she won.
And yet, before the game was done,
They both have won, neither has lost:
Each one successfully has tossed
The dice, and no complaint is heard.
For Love has given them his word
That many times again will they
Be able to repeat their play.]

Flamenca's three intertwined narratives present, from the protagonists' various points of view, each one's relationship with courtly love and the contrary proposition he or she explores in an attempt to escape from its dominion. In this debating mode, the protagonists grapple with their preconceptions of courtly love and how to be courtly lovers, and, eventually, with how to escape the constraints of this love, through which the audience sees that courtly love is a constraint, and is not identical with true love. *Flamenca* presents a critique of courtly love — and a critical exploration of notions of love more generally — through the multipronged attack emanating from the different perspectives of those involved: husband, lover, wife, and court.

Yet love in *Flamenca* is not a simple opposition between *amor coral* and *amor cortesa,* with a straightforward battle of good and evil that culminates in the former supplanting the latter. Rather, *Flamenca* seems to include two different steps in the amorous process, neither of which is "true, fine, sincere, perfect" love, or "love-as-a-whole." In a preliminary stage, we see a game of flirtation played by rules, in courtesy. In a next stage, lovers admit they are both interested and move from play to new relations: this is the *coral* stage of love. Once this stage has been entered into, we see that comparison can be made with the previous one, as the

[20] The other instances of *amor coral* are in 2368, 2822, 4272, 5397–5398, 6011, 6208, 6286–6287, 6500, 6510, 6569, and 7641. Not that *a/Amors* presents a very strong ambiguity between abstract noun and personification, as Occitan uses the same gender for both.

two are different. It is at this point that we perceive that *amor cortesa* is false and concerned with appearances, and the contrasting *amor coral* is true and sincere. When these two stages of love are put together, we see how a love that comprises both is closer to being "perfect" — in its literal sense — than is the first — "courtly" — stage alone.

While *Flamenca* represents *amor cortesa* as a tainted love, this is not to say that the *coral* is all positive, nor that there is not a place for the *cortes* in the amorous and psychological quest of a romance such as *Flamenca*.[21] *Amor coral* may appear to have supplanted *amor cortesa* as the new *amor* under discussion in this romance; but it does not procure happiness ever after, and is rejected in favour of playing the courtly game. This is where the really stimulating problems arise. The constituent parts of pairs are necessary to one another's existence — inside/outside, truth/appearance, truth/falseness — so the courtly game and true love are symbiotically entwined: there can be no privacy and no intimate secrets without a public stage; and these secrets are, paradoxically, at once lies to the public and inner truth. Is *amor coral* the subversion of a courtly game, out-courtlying the courtly? How can that be compatible with the rejection of *cortes*?

Flamenca: *amor coral* and beyond

Shortly after entering into the idyll of *amor coral, Flamenca*'s lovers separate. They come back together later at the husband's court, in a renewal of relations as an apparent combination of true *coral* under a superficial layer of *cortes*, under the noses of husband and court, and with their approval. What we see in this final part of the romance is not *amor coral* plain and simple, but rather its combination with *amor cortesa* into something new.

The previous (central) part's split focalization on the lovers — alternating between them, and showing their inner musings — moves now to a distanced third-person focalization, with a complete closing-down of all insight on the lovers' internal workings. The reader now sees from the external point of view, that of the court; the rare remarks interpreting behaviour are based on observation and supposition. In tune with the courtly setting, we have a dizzying increase of uncertainties, double-readings, and indeed a multiplication of untrustworthy narrative voices. The reader knows, from the previous parts of the romance, what has

[21] More recent work on medieval *amor* has moved towards its perception as a large and fluid idea: for example, in more sophisticated treatment of the "did they do it?" question, this new amorous idea must be treated with particular attention to being wary of reducing potential complexities into simple dichotomies and simplistic paradigm shifts. The hypothesis about a new kind of medieval *amor* presented here carries the further *caveat* that it is based on the study of a single work, from a disrupted and fragmented literature.

happened and is — surmising, based on past experience — going on between the lovers; she interprets some of their comments as she believes herself to be in on the joke, that is, references to past, private events, producing public speech with a double meaning through the secret code. The reader will also realize that she is now occupying the same voyeuristic position with regard to the narrative and its persons, as did Archimbaut with regard to the lovers; and that she is just as prone to misprision and misinterpretation, and to both of these being manipulated by characters who are conscious of the limitations of the viewer's direction and angle of vision. Archimbaut has a small cell built with a specially-constructed small peephole (*pertuis*, 1315), from which to look into the imprisoned ladies' chambers.

Once the affair is over, with Archimbaut the jealous husband returned to sanity and rehabilitated, the narrative enters its final section and closing frame, in which the three central protagonists are reintegrated at and into the court. At this point, the affair is renewed — but now at court, watched and enjoyed by its spectators. The lovers' idyll occupying the middle and main part of our text has been only a preliminary to the public staging of a courtly entertainment. The court itself becomes a protagonist, a single being with a single voice and gaze:

L'endeman de [la] Pantecosta	[The day that followed Whitsunday,
dreg a Nemurs **li cortz s'ajosta**	The court at Namur made display
bela e rica e pleniera.	Of splendor gorgeous, rich and rare.]
(187–189)	

One of the distinctions I drew earlier between the middle part of *Flamenca* and its outer frame is a shift towards a different kind of focalization. In the outer frame, we do not follow the point of view of any single character, but look on at a distance, apparently impartially and objectively, and accompanying only as far as an outside observer could do — as, say, would do a lurker in corridors and participant in feasts and jousts. In so doing, the reader is actually seeing from the point of view of the court. Initial readings suggest a contrast between outer frame and middle sections based on a shift from observation, reporting, and commentary to protagonistcentred focalization. But, further, the court actually acts as a protagonist in the narrative, and narration from its point of view can be read as a protagonist-based focalization, just like those in the middle part.

Our principal protagonists become part of the court in the closing frame. In a positive sense, this is the happy ending of reconciliation. An earlier gazing scene (from Flamenca's wedding feast) is recapitulated, but now includes the lovers Flamenca and Guillem, and shows light radiating from all faces concerned, including Flamenca's:

Ben son servit a lur talen,
Mais ben i ac plus de .V. cen
que cascuns esgarda e mira
Flamenca, e can plus cossira
sa faiso ni sa captenenza
e sa beutat c'ades agenza,
sos oilz ne pais a l'esgardar
e fai la bocca jejunar;
(524–530)

[Thus lavishly they all are served,
Yet more than five hundred observed
Flamenca, and while they gazed
Upon her loveliness, bemazed
By the sheer beauty of her face,
Her charm of manner and grace,
They fed their eyes delightfully,
But left their mouths starving and dry.]

Ben fo-l palais enluminatz,
quar **de las donas venc clardatz**
que monstreron tota lur cara;
mais la plus bella e la plus clara
fon de Flamenca que sezia
josta Guillem, e non sabia
(7555–7560)

[With shining light the palace gleamed,
As from the ladies' faces beamed
The glow of beauty radiant.
The fairest and most brilliant
Shone where Flamenca sat, right next
To William, . . .]

Courtly interactions are highly formalized, staged, and performed in the romance's outer frame.[22] Courtly performances of the romance's first section are recalled chiasmically towards the end of the romance, as Guillem and Flamenca are integrated into the courtly spectacle and spectator sport, in terms that pick up the courtly games that open the romance:

car ben conois e ve e sap
que si dons laissus estaria
per los cadafals qu'el vezia.
(7274–7276)[23]

[Knowing that for the tournament
His lady would be close at hand
To watch him from this new-built stand.]

Flamenca and Guillem lose individuality when they become part of the general *mêlée* of tourneying and feasting. The ending (as it stands) is sinister: the three days' worth of resumed joyous courtliness are repetitive, and could potentially continue in unending repetition — a courtly nightmare. Worse still, although the lovers may now be together openly, they are trapped in someone else's play, forced to perform for this society of spectacle in a Neverland of eternal play:

[22] See, for example, 722–723, 732–733, and 782–792. The first two examples show this in the form of a dance, and the third, of similar mood, is a different sort of staged spectator sport.

[23] See also 7707–7710.

Flamenca s'es dese vanada
que sa marga sera donada
a cel que prumiers jostara
e cavallier derocara.
Ges non ac ben lo mot complit
que **tut ensems levon un crit**
e dison ques ades la parca
del braz, . . .
(7715–7722)

[Immediately Flamenca vowed
That her own sleeve would be bestowed
Upon that gentleman who first
His brave antagonist unhorsed.
Scarce had she spoken when a loud
Outcry arose from all the crowd
Bidding her give the sleeve . . .]

Shortly thereafter the barons gather together and declare that the knight to whom the lady gave her sleeve has rightly earned the tourney's laurels (8038–8044).

The sleeve may be viewed as a metaphor for what is happening "inside" it in the lovers' narrative, and as a hint of their perpetual return, trapped in a never-ending Moebius strip of a story. This sleeve-scene should be contrasted with an earlier one, in the opening courtly section of the romance. During Archimbaut's nuptial festivities, the king is seen jousting and sporting a sleeve suspected to belong to Flamenca, and that she may have given him. The queen transmits this information—and her suspicion—to Archimbaut. She does so in a curiously flirtatious manner, and her manipulative intervention gives rise to Archimbaud's crazed jealousy.[24] In this symmetrical repetition, in a sense "closing" this "fold" in the tale, Flamenca gives her sleeve to Guillem, publicly, through an intermediary. This stands in contrast to the earlier sleeve transmission, which was unseen, allegedly secret, and the subject of malevolent whisperings. It is also a parody of an earlier scene's transmission of *salutz*—an amorous epistle—from Flamenca to Guillem via the intermediary of the unfortunate husband, Archimbaut, as Guillem will carry the sleeve inside his shield, close to his heart. The couple attempts to deal resourcefully with all that is *cortes* by undermining it from within, inserting the private space of *amor coral* inside the public one.

The subterfuge is not successful, as the lovers are now back under courtly control, interacting mechanically, especially in their dulled speech, which has obvious in-jokes but is otherwise rather unexciting. Tilde Sankovitch reads the characters as acting like "puppets" manipulated by the external poet, Love, and the external forces she represents.[25] Sankovitch's idea may be extended to their manipulation by the court in the outer frame. Far from being a secret token of

[24] The scene features no protagonist-based focalization, but third-person comments designed to suggest protagonist intention and deliberation. Potential misreadings are left ambiguous: it is possible that the king and queen orchestrate the whole affair, as a narrative whose opening and closing acts are staged publicly at court. Narrative voice—avatar(s) of the *Flamenca* poet—and the court thus collude in deceiving and controlling the reader.

[25] Tilde Sankovitch, "The *Romance of Flamenca*: The Puppeteer and the Play," *Neophilologus* 60 (1976): 8–19.

love shared by the lovers, the sleeve is public property and its gift sanctioned (8038–8044) and controlled (7720–7722) by the court. In a final cutting comment on love at court, and the possibilities of the private subverting the public or coexisting harmoniously with it, the court appears to win. Returning to the scene at Flamenca's nuptials, it may be reread as a portent of the court's need to use and abuse its creatures; although while it may "feed" from them in a parasitic way, the court must draw the line at draining or destroying individuals.

Ben son servit a lur talen,
Mais ben i ac plus de .V. cen
que cascuns esgarda e mira
Flamenca, e can plus cossira
sa faiso ni sa captenenza
e sa beutat c'ades agenza,
sos oilz ne pais a l'esgardar
e fai la bocca jejunar;
(524–530)

[Thus lavishly they all are served,
Yet more than five hundred observed
Flamenca, and while they gazed
Upon her loveliness, bemazed
By the sheer beauty of her face,
Her charm of manner and grace,
They fed their eyes delightfully,
But left their mouths starving and dry.]

Love-affairs involving comic episodes at court with public cuckolding are hardly rare in medieval Romance literature; nor is the conflict between private and public. The lacunary state of *Flamenca's* unique manuscript does leave the ending deliciously open. Yet the extant end part of *Flamenca* departs from type in its depiction of relations that are both *coral* and *cortes* (or something else derived from both — a new kind of love, the ingenious creation of our lovers). The narrative avoids the more formally expected endings — tragic deaths of the lovers, death of the lover, or death of the spouse and marriage of the lovers — expected, that is, because two of *Flamenca*'s strongest intertextual relationships are with the *Tristan* textual family and with the Occitan *novas* and pseudo-biographical *vidas e razos*.[26] Instead, it offers a resolution, albeit an uncomfortable and inconclusive one. We are left with a *ménage à trois* that includes an impotent voyeur, perhaps in a practical comment on the real implications of adulterous love as life which, in *Flamenca* as in the real world, would probably just go on.

What *Flamenca* does with love that is remarkable (and worthy of twenty-first-century comment) is to discuss and debate an idea, and to do so by playing with it, and putting it into play. Sarah Kay proposes that *amour courtois* is a group of ideas in circulation at the time of Chrétien de Troyes, one played with in an imaginative and discursive mode and not to be thought of as a fixed idea and doctrine but as a fluid "agenda."[27] Her reading echoes Paris's portrayal of *amour*

[26] In the latter category, resonances should be particularly noted with the narrative poetry of the Catalan Raimon Vidal de Besalú, such as the love-triangle in his *Castía gilos* and the representation of the *cor noble* in *Abrils issi' e mays intrava*. See O'Brien, "Erotics and Poetics," chap. 3 and Conclusion.

[27] Kay, "Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love."

courtois as an idea rather than a concrete entity spelled out in black and white, and dovetails with part of Uitti's 1972 critique of F.X. Newman:

> I have argued that representations of love in courtly texts do not constitute a doctrine, but an agenda which reflects the preoccupations of medieval courts; their concern with decorum, elegance, display, and affluence, but above all with limiting the potential for schism, and trying to negotiate the lay and clerical interests of the various courtiers and their masters.[28]

A key text illustrating the phenomena of amorous ideas and of their being in circulation is Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore* (1170s-80s). This is the second of the twin pillars supporting Paris's idea of *amour courtois*, and the one providing the crux and dramatic culmination of his argument. Paris's article, when read as a whole, produces a very different view of courtly love from the standard stereotype: it is emphatically *not* a stable or static set of fixed rules, but essentially fluid, mobile, debated; and in the hypothetical mode. The idea of love as a game is vital. Paris argues that courtly love had a limited place in the real world at courts centered around ladies such as Marie, sitting in judgement on amorous questions. I tend not to view this idea of "game" as government by rules and set moves, and action in a fixed pattern and progression. Instead, I side with Kay in focusing on the play of moving around parameters ingeniously, akin to the virtuoso play of scholastic debate. This is an activity with a play-acting side (e.g., the ladies' courts of love), and a kind of play that is conscious of being a game, and of not being real. It is an imaginative exercise, both in the contemporary sense of *imaginatio* and in the modern sense of the imagination. Finally, it should be emphasized that in this sort of game there is no necessary end result, nor any necessity for there to be one.

De Amore's dialogues may be seen as deliberately and necessarily unsatisfied and open-ended, as is the work's double and apparently contradictory structure, in an attempt to engage the audience as active readers in making sense of the work. But *De Amore* can be read as containing a dialogic rather than prescriptive pedagogy; a text that leaves open the possibility for discussion continuing afterwards, in the manner of the protagonists' own conversations, rather than as a manual presenting a codification of "The Rules." Its structure bears such a strong resemblance to that of *Flamenca* and its several stages of love that it suggests a reading of the romance as a commentary on the treatise.[29]

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[28] K. Uitti, "Remarks on Old French Narrative: Courtly Love and Poetic Form (I)," *Romance Philology* 26 (1972): 77–93, here 92. Responding to F.X. Newman, ed., *The Meaning of Courtly Love: Papers of the First Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, March 17–18, 1967* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1968).

[29] In its preface, *De Amore* sets itself up as amorous advice given to a young man. The first book comprises a theoretical treatise on love, and a middle section illustrating these

Flamenca features playful dialogue in the shape of the lovers' conversations; further, debate about love is what ties the romance together: what kinds of love are represented, whether or not they are true, whether or not this is perceived by protagonists, indeed how they perceive — and comically misperceive — their own love. It is a discursive narrative at all those levels: a narrative that both depicts discussion and is about it. As a critical work about love, *Flamenca* is also narratologically discursive, deploying techniques of a discursive nature: a plurality of narrative focalizations runs parallel to a multiplicity of narrative voices offering more or less clearly dubious guidance, misreading situations, and playing with the audience.

This structure offers the audience at least three kinds of involvement with *Flamenca*'s central debates (that is, the specific case, and amorous casuistry in general): most obviously, where they would position themselves, in sympathy with which of the three principal protagonists (Archimbaut, Guillem, Flamenca). Secondly and less obviously, in choosing to follow any of the narrative comments, and in discussion after the end of the romance, not least as the work is, in our only extant manuscript, left suspended. Thirdly and more subtle still, the romance features other protagonists of varying realities, who do not coincide in real time nor in a single space (Amor, the king of France, Archimbaut of Bourbon, Guillem of Nevers, Guillem of Montpellier, etc.), providing an *effet de l'irréel* paradoxically closer to the bone than realism would have been. There is a greater concentration of these crossover persons in the romance's outer frame, such as a number of narrative voices, references to real poets (and to poetry in general), and the court.

In the opening frame, we see the most important role of the court in *Flamenca* — and in its construction and control over its events: the affair is caused by the gossip-mill, of which poets and poetry are a major part. While the queen's reporting of her suspicions to Archimbaut provokes the liaison, it would have come to nothing if news of his subsequent descent into madness had not been spread by the poets and their mocking songs heard on every tongue (1171–1178).

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principles, pitting men and women against each other in dialogues of (male-instigated) seduction. The second book considers the possible consequences of a successful seduction: the retention, continuation, and end of love. Once again, there is an embedded practical, dialogic section: here, cases of love brought before the court for arbitration, and judgements passed by the arbiters, courtly ladies. Another embedded narrative culminates in the King of Love's thirty-one rules. The final book is a cynical and misogynist rejection of love, in favour of abstention and religious devotion. It may be read — following authorial comments to this effect — as a practical and negative counterbalance to the first part's positive theory of love, as would be proper in any form of medieval intellectual disputation (e.g., Aquinas). Otherwise, the concluding book may be a later continuation, perhaps in an attempt to save the work from condemnation. See also K. Andersen-Wyman, *Andreas Capellanus On Love?* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

Meanwhile Guillem first hears of Flamenca, and her habit and repute—greatly accentuated by inaccessibility—through the combination of general news and poetic information.[30]

Per moutas gens au et enten
com tenia Flamenca presa
cel que la cuj'aver devesa,
et au dir per vera novella
que-l miellers es e li plus bella
e-l plus **cortesa** qu'el mon sia.
En cor li venc que l'amaria . . .
(1761–1780)

[Now many people had related
How he who thought to watch o'er her
Had kept Flamenca prisoner.
Truly, men said, she was the best,
The fairest and the loveliest.
In grace no woman was above her.
So he made up his heart to love her . . .]

It is poetry itself that is responsible for setting up and controlling the affair. The narrative's events take place through poets and the poetic/courtly rumour-mill; and the story ends with our three protagonists trapped forever at a perpetual court in an unended poem. Court and poets work together, in a voyeuristic hierarchy created by a chain of events: manipulative action, its observation, and then its reporting. Poetic activity is associated with that of the court, and not always in the most pleasant way. Like the court, poets may reap the benefits of a particularly piquant affair: besides providing pure entertainment, it provides valuable material for the entertainment industry of court-based poetry. Further performances then continue the spread of poetry to further audiences, who may, it is hoped, be capable of *entendemen* and thus continue the virtuous circle of applied poetry.

The audience is here, included in this gaze of apparently cold and distant observation, of a play on the stage that *is* courtly life: we are included in the work as protagonists. This is *Flamenca*'s most frightening critique of the courtly world, and indeed of courtliness itself. One by one, *Flamenca*'s protagonists attempt to escape their imprisonment, yet end up resigning themselves to courtly life, trapped in perpetual play-acting; and so might the audience.

Flamenca's metanarrative aspect spills over into reading, and poetic activity may be extended to encompass readings. If *Flamenca*'s audience is left with an open text and some potentially deeply cynical or frightening lessons, these do still generate the poetic continuation and application that is discussion. Discussion itself is the closest we may come to understanding a "true love" that, as we

[30] The *vera novella* of 1777 is both "news" and the poetic form. One of the many formal labels applied to *Flamenca* is *novas*—akin to the Italian *novella* and French *nouvelle*—by an earlier first-person voice comment: *pero a mas novas vos torn*, "but let me return you to my tale" (250). The double sense of *novella / novas* is important: this is renewal and refashioning, as poetry is kept fresh and alive, and maintains relevance and applicability. This may also be interpreted as a tardy attempt at *translatio studii*, in a peculiarly Occitan and poetic form.

have seen, includes both *amor cortesa* and *amor coral,* in a relationship that may be characterised as symbiotic and discursive.

Flamenca's discussion has had two historical continuations. The first comprises contemporary reading, performance, and critical appreciation of *Flamenca*; refashionings and *reprises* of some of its material, such as in the *Livre du voir dit*; and, most importantly, in the application of the *translatio studii* principle to ideas of love.[31] *Flamenca*'s second continuation is in its contributions to modern scholarly discussion about love in medieval literature. The *Charrette* and *De Amore* are key to making sense of the Northern move towards *amour courtois* or *courtoisie*, away from Occitan ideas of an *amor* that is interchangeably good, true, *fin'*, *cortesa*, and *coral*. *Flamenca* is, in turn, key to understanding a later refinement. Looking back on the corpus of courtly literature, it acts as a literary *summa* placing Occitan French literary traditions and their respective amorous ideas in literary discussion with one another, and engages in its own metaliterary discussion with them. This should be put in a larger context. Coming as it does from the period when works such as Jofre de Foixà's *Regles de trobar* and Dante's *De Vulgari eloquentia* provide an early instance of polemic about cardinal poetic issues, *Flamenca* constitutes a vital early step not just in the courtly love debate, but also in the history of literary criticism and theory.

[31] Little is known of *Flamenca*'s actual contemporary reception, as the *unicum* manuscript is not mentioned in contemporary sources and disappears from view until the early 19th century. It is mentioned in a 14th-century Catalan letter: see Stefano Asperti, "*Flamenca* e dintorni: Considerazioni sui rapporti fra Occitania e Catalogna nel XIV secolo," *Cultura neolatina* 45 (1985): 59–104. On *Flamenca* and performance, see Evelyn Birge Vitz, "Performance in, and of, *Flamenca*," in *De sens rassis: Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. Keith Busby, Bernard Guidot, and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 683–98. Instances of performance *in* the work—as is the case for many other details in the narrative, such as the wedding—provide us with extremely useful information on performance *around the time of writing.* Unfortunately, this does not add any material evidence to hypothetical arguments around the reading and reception of *Flamenca* at the time of its writing. Tracing *Flamenca*'s echoes in later literature is useful for piecing together some part of its reception history; albeit later, as close as is possible to the immediately contemporary.