Trobar Cor(s): Erotics and Poetics in Flamenca

Juliet Lucy Anne O’Brien
Adviser: Sarah Kay

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH AND ITALIAN

June 2006
© Copyright by Juliet Lucy Anne O’Brien, 2006. All rights reserved.
Abstract

This dissertation aims to make greater sense of Flamenca through close reading, seeing Flamenca as a literary hybrid crossing French and Occitan cultures. It draws on intertextual parallels between Flamenca and a substantial corpus of 12th-13th c. literature, across both cultures: Occitan lyric poetry, debate poetry, poetics treatises, and verse narrative; and French romance.

Trobar Cor(s) reads Flamenca as a subversive courtly romance about finding true love. Trobar – “finding” - is key to Occitan poetics and erotics. Flamenca explores trobar in various searches for love, questioning sincerity and investigating true love. Trobar intertwines erotics and poetics. “Finding the true” extends trobar into epistemology and ethics. Subversion expands ideas of medieval creativity into derivative ingenuity; in a positive, critical, commentating sense, opening the text and enriching meaning in semantic destabilization. The “courtly love debate” is reopened in the context of a second, related idea and amorous ideal: amor coral, a love to do with the heart and parity.

Flamenca recounts a love-triangle, whose focalization shifts amongst three protagonists. To make sense of events, the reader must bear all three points of view in mind. The dissertation’s three central chapters present readings from the perspectives of each of the three protagonists, in multiple, “choose your own adventure” reading. Each chapter follows a protagonist in their pursuit of love, enacting a “lyric narrative,” and trying to escape lyric entrapment: amorous imprisonment, compositional problems, and intertextual reference to other protagonists and poets. This trobar clus – “closed finding” – is crossed with amor cortesa, to produce new ideas of “closed love” and “courtly poetry,” and new understanding of trobar. Multiple narrative voices parallel multiple focalizations. Both multiplicities are necessary to good reading, which must afford them equivalent status and take all of them into account (parity) and balance them (mesura, akin to Aristotelian ethical measure) to make sense of the narrative and interpret it fairly. Flamenca experiments with the entwined ideas of authorship and authority, explores the role of the reader or audience in a work, and plays with distinctions between narrative roles.
# Contents

Abstract iii

Contents iv

Acknowledgements v

Introduction: *Flamenca* 1
  The text and this dissertation’s reading 1
  History of the text: manuscript and editions 7
  Historical contexts: language, ideas, and literature 10

1. Contexts erotic and poetic: *trobar amor clusa e cortesa* 18
  1.1 Erotics: from Ovid to the courtly love debate 23
  1.2 Poetics: the *canso*, and clus/cortes as lyric imprisonment 52
  1.3 Reading *Flamenca* as a *canso* of amor cortesa 80

2. The *Canso de Guillem*: release from *trobar clus* 94
  2.1 Guillem as *aman-trobador* 96
  2.2 Escape into fantasy 100
  2.3 Breaking free into a place of one’s own 124
  2.4 The subversive *trobador* 143

3. The *Canso-tenso de Flamenca*: alternative *trobar* 158
  3.1 Flamenca comes to life and becomes a *trobairitz* 159
  3.2 Dialogue in parity: *tenso* 184
  3.3 Idealised *amor coral* 207
  3.4 The rejection of delusional fantasy 228

4. The *Roman d’Archimbaut*: *trobar* and appropriation 237
  4.1 Archimbaut perverts *trobar* 238
  4.2 Narrative voices and other “arch-players” 250
  4.3 Resignation to courtly rehabilitation and control 275

Conclusion: Beyond *Flamenca* – audience, ethics, and *trobar* 285

Bibliography 299
Acknowledgements

Thanks to my advisers: Sarah Kay, François Rigolot, and Karl D. Uitti.


Particular thanks to Chris Mole.
Dedicated to the memory of Karl D. Uitti
Introduction: Flamenca

The text and this dissertation’s reading

The subject of this dissertation is *Flamenca*, an 8095-line-long Old Occitan work in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, probably dating from the later 13th century. It apparently disappeared from the European literary scene until the early 19th century, and then became a consistent subject of literary study during the last two centuries, or this academic field’s entire history.

The feature that has most often been regarded as a sign of *Flamenca*’s literary merit is its intimate and subtle portrayal of character. The trend is already evident through the 19th century, and linked to developments in the psychological novel; Romance philologists of the time praise what they view as *Flamenca*’s realism. The 20th century propagation of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis into literary criticism has also, more recently, influenced readings of *Flamenca*.

While *Flamenca* has long been recognized as a core work in the medieval Occitan literary canon, and is known in medievalist circles, it remains largely unknown to the larger community of literary criticism. Recent work in medieval literary study has started to interact with the larger critical community and to draw its attention. The barriers between modern and pre-modern may be coming down, as has already happened with other marginal entities such as feminine, queer, and post-colonial writings. Aside from supporting this topical cultural-politics agenda, I would like, through this dissertation, to draw attention to *Flamenca* as a fine piece of work, playing a part in French literary history, and – most vitally – well worth reading. The joys of *Flamenca* may be glimpsed in one of the nicest plot summaries of *Flamenca*, provided by Jean-Charles Huchet at the start of his edition, the most recent one to date:¹

---

What remains of the story opens with the examination of the offer for Flamenca’s hand, presented by an emissary on behalf of Archimbaut, lord of Bourbon. The request is granted by Flamenca and her parents. The nuptials are celebrated with magnificence at Nemours. The festivities last eight days, then Archimbaut returns to Bourbon to oversee his young wife’s welcome. Flamenca’s arrival in the town is the occasion for sumptuous feasts, at which the king of France demonstrates excessive courtesy. This awakens Archimbaut’s jealousy: and, when at a joust, he sees the king bearing a sleeve suspected of belonging to Flamenca. The new husband sinks into a morbid jealousy that leads him to neglect himself, renounce the worldly values of courtesy, and, finally, to cloister Flamenca in a tower, the better to keep watch on her and shelter her from the attentions of imaginary galants.

The romance then lends itself to a near-clinical study of jealousy and an evocation of the recluse’s woes. Rumour of the latter reaches the ear of a young knight – Guillem de Nevers – endowed with every quality, but sheltered until then from the trials of love. Guillem decides to love Flamenca and becomes Love’s devotee. He goes incognito to Bourbon, arriving the Saturday after Easter, finds the best inn, and chooses a room from which he can perceive the tower concealing the sole object of his preoccupations henceforth.

The next day, in church, he has the chance to glimpse Flamenca’s face; although the jealous husband keeps her in a nook sheltered from all gazes and desires. Guillem works out that it is possible to slip the beauty a word, under cover of the psalter, the moment when it is given to be kissed. He takes the place of the clerk Nicolas - sent to Paris to continue his studies – and has his hosts empty the inn of other guests so that he can have an underground tunnel dug secretly, linking his room to the baths where Flamenca is sometimes allowed to go. Over the course of several weeks from May to August, uttering one word every service, Guillem reveals his love to Flamenca, who agrees to reply to him and ends up sharing the same feelings. Feigning serious illness, the recluse obtains Archimbaut’s permission to take the waters whenever she wishes, and regularly visits Guillem’s room via the underground tunnel. This clandestine love lasts until the end of November. Flamenca then pronounces a kind of oath [of fidelity]that allows the jealous husband to recover his courtesy and announce that a tournament will be held the next Easter. Flamenca persuades Guillem to return to his lands and then come back for the tournament.

Thanks to Archimbaut, who is frequenting tournaments again, news of Guillem’s exploits reaches Flamenca, as well as salutz [love-letter(s)] composed by this former clerk who has become a knight and troubadour again.

The week after Easter, jousters gather in Bourbon, where Guillem, too, arrives. Invited by Archimbaut to choose some jewels in a room, the lovers are able to resume their pleasures again at their leisure.

Guillem wins the Prize for the tournament’s first day, as well as Flamenca’s sleeve, with which he covers the inside of his shield. The story ends on the second day.

Besides being a curious read, Flamenca offers the intellectual pleasures of tackling an enigma. For the work’s most immediate attractions are its lack of author and title, as its beginning and ending are missing. This leads to a threefold problem of identity. The work may or may not be a romance. It may or may not
be appropriate to perceive it as mainly about Flamenca, rather than any other of the three principal protagonists. Meanwhile, the author is apparently unidentified.

While previous works on Flamenca have suggested answers, this dissertation aims to keep these questions open, to keep the text open, and indeed to open it up to further questions. Its critical position is indebted to semiotic and deconstructive approaches. Flamenca is a most curious work, as it may be read from the point of view of each of the three main protagonists, with moves in focalization through the narrative. This allows for the engagement of a wide range of audience sympathies; the imaginative extension of audience sympathy towards protagonists less like themselves or less immediately attractive; and tolerance and understanding, both in reading Flamenca’s internal world and in applying its lessons to the world outside.

The dissertation preserves and reflects the text’s polyphonic and polysemic character. Each of my three central chapters proposes a reading from the point of view of one of the protagonists, assisted by intertextual reading. No single

2 I use the term “protagonist” as it incorporates an aspect of agony, of an invitation to sympathy. Other terms such as “character” and “avatar” are considered in Chapter Four, in its discussion of agency and masks or personae worn by the composer, or, in anachronistic terms, “author.”


4 On intertextuality in medieval Occitan literature; and its aspects of hermeneutics, subversion, play, dynamism, and “dialectic” or dialogic inter-communication: the principal work is Jörn Gruber, Die Dialektik des Trobar. Untersuchungen zur Struktur und Entwicklung des occitanischen und französischen Minnesangs des 12. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983). In their “Introduction” to their The Troubadours: An Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay include Gruber’s work as one of two foundational ones for the last two decades’ research: “major studies of intertextuality” published in the early 1980s that drew attention to the self-reflexive hermeticism of the troubadour lyric and to the sophisticated processes of citation, imitation and transmission that characterise the tradition. Following on from this, the late 1980s and early 1990s can perhaps be characterised as a period of demystification: concentrating either on irony and play [...] or subjectivity and gender [...], and armed with the findings of structuralist and poststructuralist scholarship, critics continued to turn away from taking the ostensible subject matter (i.e. love) of the canso seriously and sought to reveal [...] the underlying aesthetic, psychic and political dynamics of the tradition. (6)

At the start of Troubadours and Irony (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), Gaunt provides a fine analysis of Gruber’s approach:

Gruber [...] radically reinterprets the patent conventionality of the troubadour and trouvere lyric which led to the ‘formalist’ approach.
view is seen as dominant, all three are interpreted as having equal standing, and these facts contribute to Flamenca’s lesson: understanding can only be attained through considering all angles of approach; not dispassionately, but with equal sympathy. I propose a “choose your own adventure” reading of Flamenca; this is the first work to do so.

The phrase is borrowed from recent imaginative fictions and computer games. The form’s characteristic second-person narration – with the reader assuming the role of the first person - recalls other literary experiments such as Italo Calvino’s Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore... (1979) and Nathalie Sarraute’s play with narrative voices. The first interactive narratives are, however, in the field of multiple-user interactive computer games, such as MIT labs’ Zork; the first such MUD (1977). Literary-gaming hybrids have also been flourishing for some time, in the form of “interactive fictions” such as Amnesia, by the Hugo- and Nebula-award-winning writer Thomas Disch (1987). Such post-

5 The first recorded use of “choose your own adventure” is as the title for a children’s series published by Bantam Books from 1979 to 1998, during the period of greatest flourishing of role-playing games based on the canonical Dungeons and Dragons (1974). That phenomenon had its roots in modern non-military wargaming, originating at the University of Minnesota in the early 1960s. The 19th century Oxford Wargaming Club is a predecessor of a slightly different form; and military wargames, such as the Prussian Kriegspiel, go back as far as do war and games themselves. Other classic examples in the field of narrative computer games would be strategy games such as Civilization (1991), adventure-games such as Resident Evil (1996), and first-person shooter games such as Doom (1993). Choose your own adventure is a major cultural and imaginative phenomenon. In February 2006, World of Warcraft, a massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), had 5.5 million regular players worldwide.
modern narratives are closer to certain medieval narrative forms than, say, the 19th century novel. Familiarity with these recent works and this recent literary and narratological history is a useful way to understand works such as Flamenca; just as is the case for recent critical and theoretical approaches.

_Trobar_ – “finding” – forms an outer frame around these central chapters. Chapter One sets up the title terms, in discussing this key term in Occitan poetry and poetics: “finding” generally, specifically poetic activity, and the erotic quest. I look at the notions of _trobar_ and _amor_ – “love” - and how they are connected, with particular reference to _trobar clus_ - “closed composition” – and _amor cortesa_ - “courtly love.” I then bring these things together and recombine them as _trobar cortes_ and _amor clusa_, producing a conjoined poetic and erotic aim of _trobar amor clusa e cortesa_: “finding a love that is courtly and closed.” This approach to _trobar_ is the dissertation’s second innovation.

The three central chapters then follow each protagonist’s adventures in questing for this thing: as they explore, engage with, and try to escape _trobar amor clusa e cortesa_. Each does so in a different way, and a different kind of escapism, exhibiting fantasy and imagination. Flamenca, for example, attempts to escape _amor cortesa_ through its alternative, _amor coral_ – a love associated with the heart. Discussion of _amor coral_ and its relationship to _amor cortesa_ constitutes this dissertation’s third novelty.

These attempts to escape from amorous imprisonment coincide with attempts to escape from lyric entrapment. Each protagonist does so, again, in a different way, here engaging in poetic experimentation, trying to subvert or transcend formal, linguistic, and material constraints into a new creativity, characterized by play, ingenuity, and imaginative refashioning. Three approaches to poetic composition, _trobar_, map onto the grammatical person associated with each mode. In Chapter Two I trace a first-person grammatical voice tied to the lyric “I” (the Occitan _canso_ form); next, the intervention of a second-person voice and movement into dialogue (the Occitan _tenso_); finally, the third person, moving into narrative modes (novas, romans). The fourth and last of these central chapters considers Archimbaut’s point of view and peculiar role, as a protagonist with strongly narratorial traits. My observations of Archimbaut’s role
and its peculiarities concur with recent narratological work by Sophie Marnette and A.C. Spearing.\(^6\) The latter suggests a need to rethink current perceptions of narrative voice in medieval literature, which are based (like most general narratological theory) on examples from modern literature, and contradicted by medieval examples.

*Flamenca* features two narratological important phenomena; the dissertation’s discussion of them and their implications hopes to be a fruitful contribution not only to medieval literary study but to broader literary criticism. The first is the presence of figures like Archimbaut, occupying a grey area between protagonist and narrative voice (though of course still fictional entities). Rather than being directly active, they are catalysts and controllers. Distinctions between active and passive are blurred, as are those between power and impotence. I name such protagonists “arch-players” in homage to Archimbaut, as one meaning of his name is “arch-trickster.”

Archimbaut and other arch-players lead to the second phenomenon, narrative voices proper. The absence of single narrative thread in this polysemic work is paralleled by the absence of a single narrative voice. This may be interpreted as the absence of narrative voice altogether, a layering of *personae*,\(^7\) or a plurality of textual subjectivities. I show how these three interpretations may be brought together, in the case of *Flamenca*. Coupled with the blurring of fictional and compositional roles and a subsequent blurring of distinctions between worlds, the double polysemy increases the role of readers and other audience in the work: to make sense of it, and indeed to make and find it: an act of *trobar*. Poetic identity, authorship and authority, and audience role are questioned and played with in *Flamenca*—to such an extent as to make the

---


\textit{Flamenca} poet unidentifiable on internal evidence alone, and for this to be one of the work’s finest aesthetic qualities.

I close the dissertation by returning to the dissertation’s departure point, \textit{trobar}. It is not only a conjunction of the erotic and the poetic, but its generalized sense of “finding” has epistemological and ethical dimensions that are apparent in audience \textit{trobar}, and are the point of literary activity.

\textbf{History of the text: manuscript and editions}

\textit{Flamenca} is a manuscript \textit{unicum}, its witness being Bibliothèque municipale de Carcassonne manuscript 34, from around the late 13\textsuperscript{th} to early 14\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{8} The text itself could have been composed at any time(s) beforehand, although it is generally supposed to date from the final quarter of the 13\textsuperscript{th} century, and therefore close to this manuscript’s making.

The manuscript contains 140 good-quality vellum folios, of which the first is badly torn, such that only the top left-hand corner and a few partial lines remain. Each folio measures 21.5 by 14.2 cm. The manuscript is probably in fifteen quires, each of around eight folios, within a leather binding dating from around 1890.\textsuperscript{9} The text is single-column, with around 29 lines per side. There are substantial lacunae – of an unknown number of folios – at the beginning and end, and four others through the text: one of three folios, between ff. 122 and 123, and three of one to two folios, after ff. 1, 31, and, 115.\textsuperscript{10} Fifteen lines are missing,\textsuperscript{8} The manuscript’s date remains an open question, in the absence of further supporting material evidence. The only other manuscript presence of \textit{Flamenca} is the appearance of ll. 2713-20 in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century Catalan Vega-Aguiló codex.

\textsuperscript{9} The exact quire structure cannot be ascertained because the book’s current binding covers about an inch of margin. For the same reason, the exact number of folios missing remains uncertain, as does the physical evidence for the circumstances of their removal. Fifteen quires is the most recent, and convincing, hypothesis: Nadia Togni, “Les Lacunes du manuscrit de \textit{Flamenca},” \textit{Revue des langues romanes} 104.2 (2000): 379-97. The other most recent and important study of the manuscript is by Rita Lejeune, “Le Manuscrit de Flamenc et ses lacunes,” in \textit{Littérature et société occitane au Moyen Âge} (Liège: Marche Romane, 1979): 331-39.

\textsuperscript{10} The lacunae have given rise to interesting hypotheses. Lejeune suggests (338) that those pages would have been highly tempting for removal had they contained lavish illumination. They may have been cut or torn out to remove contentious material, whether textual or visual, and whether by censors or in self-censorship and self-protection: René Nelli, \textit{Le Roman de Flamenc: Un Art d’aimer occitan du XIIIs s.} (Toulouse: Institut d’études occitaines, 1966). Roger Dragonetti reads the lacunae as an integral and intentional part of the text, a deliberate device in its construction,
two lines are repeated, and there are eight instances of two lines being written as a single one at the bottom of a folio-side. Otherwise, the text is in good condition, written in a very fair, Italianate hand, with next to no standard scribal abbreviations. There are no illuminations, but quite plentiful decorated capitals (221 monochrome blue or red, 25 gilded) and rich abstract marginal ornamentation, in a French style, possibly early 14th century.

The text is in Occitan.11 It is in the form of 8095 lines of (mostly) octosyllabic rhyming couplets: the standard, basic formal definition of the Old French romance (romans), and of the Occitan verse narrative (novas) and epistolary poem (salutz). It would be usual for such a text of this period to name its author and title at its start and / or end, often in a prologue or in a parallel paratextual conclusion.12 The title would often provide some indication of its author’s intention as to generic identity. Due to the absence of the opening and closing folios of the Carcassonne manuscript, which would quite probably have supplied this information, the text in its present form lacks all indication as to author, title, and genre.

*Flamenca* is subsequently almost entirely silent, apparently, for around half a millenium.13 It is known to have been in the hands of the de Murat family, in the Carcassonne area, during the 18th century. It was rescued from revolutionaries and placed in the new municipal library, where it has resided ever since.14 Gabriel Delessert, Prefect of the Département de l’Aude, rediscovered it and sent it to the poet-philologist François-Juste-Marie Raynouard.

In 1812 and 1838, Raynouard produced partial editions of the work. These were followed by Paul Meyer’s first full edition and French translation in 1865

---

11 While the text is in Occitan, and while Occitan itself is already a linguistic hybrid, the language of *Flamenca* shows several different regional forms, making it hard to fix geographically.
12 This is the case in Chrétien de Troyes' romances (late 12th century), for example.
13 One reference to it has been noted in a 14th century Catalan letter.
14 Legend has it that the book was rescued in dramatic circumstances. After ransacking the Murat property, local people were about to burn all its less useful contents, such as books. They were stopped by a revolutionary leader and future librarian, who persuaded them that these things were actually theirs, as *patrimoine national*, and therefore should instead be saved and treasured.
(including a substantial commentary). He was also responsible for the second complete edition in 1901, although only the first volume of the two projected appeared (text and glossary). It was around this time (roughly, 1890-1900) that the manuscript was rebound, due to the manhandling of increased - and in the case of Meyer, intense – scrutiny. Charles Grimm started a new edition in 1930, but did not complete it. Flamenca was first translated into English by W.A. Bradley (1922), then by Hilda F.M. Prescott (1930), and Franklin Osborn Cooke (unpublished PhD) in 1956. The 1960s saw the start of concentration attention to the work: René Lavaud and René Nelli included it, some commentary, and a translation which is a slightly amended version of Meyer (1901), in their two-volume anthology, Les Troubadours (1960-66). 1962 saw a new edition - based on a fresh reading of the manuscript – and English translation, by Merton Jerome Hubert and Marion E. Porter; not the most accurate rendering, but an aesthetically pleasing one. Alberto Limentani’s Italian version appeared in 1965, and a second Italian translation by Luciano Cocito in 1971.

John Leonard Ryan included a photocopy of the manuscript, new transcription and new English translation in his unpublished PhD dissertation (1974), but this appears to have fallen by the wayside, soon eclipsed by Ulrich Gschwind’s magisterial edition, translation, and commentary of 1976. Jean-Charles Huchet’s doctoral work resulted in the publication of a three-volume set comprising his edition and translation (1988), a reading of Flamenca, and a book on the Occitan romance. His seems to be recognized as key recent work on Flamenca, and his is the only edition of the text to have appeared in paperback. Subsequently, another English translation has appeared (E.D. Blodgett, 1995). Most recently, F.R.P. Akehurst has digitized the Gschwind (1976) edition, and included it, and associated database apparatus, in the second volume of the electronic Concordance of Medieval Occitan (2005).15

All the above editions were consulted at the research-stage of this dissertation, as well as a photocopy of the manuscript. The principal editions used were Meyer (1901) and Gschwind, particularly the latter, as Professor Akehurst kindly gave me a CD-ROM of his digitized text and a paper copy of its computer concordance in 2003. From these, as part of general groundwork, I also made several lexico-grammatical and poetic databases, as well as an experimental edition (not included in this dissertation), in conjunction with the photocopy of the manuscript (converted to PDF). This edition is experimental as it includes non-verbal features – ornamented capitals, marginal decoration, and spaces such as lacunae and foliation. All Flamenca references in the dissertation are from the Akehurst digitized Gschwind edition and all translations are from Hubert and Porter, unless noted otherwise.

Historical contexts: language, ideas, and literature

While this is primarily a literary dissertation based on close reading, it is necessarily grounded in the text’s cultural, intellectual, and otherwise historical context, so that the reading may be reasonable, appropriate, and sensible. I shall therefore end this introduction by outlining how Flamenca fits into its broader contemporary background. The account is not intended as a full history, but

limited to those factors having a direct bearing on the dissertation’s argument, and a relevance for broader literary criticism.

The language of *Flamenca*, Occitan, is a Romance vernacular closely related to Old French, Catalan, and northern variants of Italian. It has often been called “Provençal.” The first known textual use of the language is contemporaneous with that of French (late 9th century); its most famous use is in the poetry of the “Troubadours” (mainly 12th–early 13th centuries). It subsequently suffered a decline, then some revival during the 19th century (thanks in part to the efforts of Frédéric Mistral), and a considerable blossoming over the last century in the Languedoc, as a literary and a living language.

It is a *koine*, as opposed to a “language” or “dialect,” incorporating features from a group of inter-communicating *parlers*; essentially at once all of them and none, it is a mutually comprehensible hybrid. Geographically, it may be situated in southern France, possibly from as far north as Poitiers and the Loire valley, eastwards to Grenoble and Genoa, with a southern border fading into Catalan. It covered the regions of Provence; the Auvergne, Périgord, and Limousin; Languedoc and Roussillon; Aquitaine; and Gascony. Its name derives from its word for “yes,” *oc*, in a taxonomy of the Romance vernaculars possibly first coined by Dante in his *De Vulgari eloquentia*. The other two branches are *oil*—French—and *si*—Italian. The word “Occitan” itself was created by Frédéric Mistral in 1886 (in French and Occitan). It was not called Occitan by those who wrote in it in the period discussed in this dissertation, the 12th–13th centuries: usually, the language is not named, negatively identified (in the form “not Latin, French, etc.”), and called *romans*. Occitan may be seen to be characteristically different from its neighbour, French, in its lack of centralised, single, unified national identity – in terms of language and physical space.16

---

The time and place from which Flamenca springs – 13th century France – is a fascinating one for problems of interpretation; interpretation itself in the shape of commentary and debate; the relationship between Man’s free will and the divine; and engagement with kinds of thinking moving towards Renaissance notions of “humanism” and modern ones of “reason.”

The century dominated by the figure of Saint Louis is a crucial historical phase for the construction of a single, centralized, and unified French national identity, during which southern France is brought under northern control, through the Albigensian crusade. This also helps to reinforce centralized Church authority, through the birth of the Inquisition. Meanwhile, a counter-current of resistance and relativism may be discerned in certain literary works, and, above all, in the conflicts between Church and University authorities over control of the Sorbonne and what is taught there, particularly Aristotle.

While a small corpus of Aristotle’s logical works were known and studied in France throughout Late Antiquity and the earlier Middle Ages, and some of his ideas also known via commentators such as Boethius, most of the rest of his works are rediscovered, through contact with Andalusian Arab scholarship, from the late 12th century onwards. The metaphysical, physical, and biological works prove particularly problematic to Catholic doctrine, and their teaching is intermittently banned. On the French literary side, the Poetics are important to Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose, in its treatment of free interpretation and of distinguishing between the actions and views of characters acting (however appallingly) in character, and the opinions and morals of the external author. On the Occitan literary side, we see an idea of mesura as a dominant aspect in lyric poetry and in poetics treatises; an idea akin to the Ethics’ “measure” and the “golden mean.” Thus: the closely related notions of authority and authorship –

---

also philologically entwined - come to the fore in this historical period. Matters of authority and authorship bring together political and literary histories. Questions of identity and the human subject come into play, through contemporary interest in Aristotelian treatment of physics, metaphysics, politics, and ethics.

The dissertation shows how Flamenca is an integral and integrated part of this 13th century and its general concerns; whilst maintaining certain specifically Occitan features, with, perhaps, an intention of spreading them northwards – not in a cultural colonization, but in the harmonious exchange of hybridization. One such Occitan features is the idea of *amor coral*, that is, a love associated with the heart. It was one of two forms of love that appear in the lyric poetry of the 12th-13th century Languedoc Troubadours. The other, “courtly love,” is rather more (in)famous. I first encountered *amor coral* in Flamenca; it became a central thread of my research and dissertation, with illuminating implications for understanding medieval Occitan culture, through this love’s ethical, epistemological, religious, and political associations. *Amor coral* fits with generalized cultural features in a heterodox and tolerant medieval Languedoc, contrasting with neighbouring contemporary France. It is apparently lost in translation into northern, “courtly” literature and culture.

Contemplating these amorous matters in their larger context, good love and good reading resemble each other, as the exemplary case of human relations and the location for individuals’ creation of private space. *Amor coral* may thus also be connected back to principles in the *Ethics*, which by this time is common cultural baggage in northern France: not just an idea diffused amongst the upper scholarly échelons, but an influence on a range of people, from the fully literate to those who still do count as *essenhatz* - “educated” – through public, oral performances of works.

The first literary element contributing to Flamenca’s hybridity is Occitan. Lyric poetry is perhaps the most famous Occitan product: the poetry of the “Troubadours” (*trobadors*), with an extant corpus of around 2,500 poems by
around 450 named poets. The poets themselves were often noblemen. Guilhem de Peitieus (1071-1126), the first known trobador, was one of the most powerful men in Europe at the turn of the 11th-12th centuries. Some, however, were fully professional poets of commoner origins, such as Marcabru (fl. 1130-49) and Peire Vidal (fl. 1183-1204).

The Sicilian court of Frederic II (1194-1250) was an important haven to exiles from the Albigensian Crusade. Poetry continued to be composed; frequently in the shape of nostalgia and satire. The period of exile proved crucial to the preservation of Occitan literature, as our main source for all Occitan literature, including the 12th century “golden age” lyric poetry, in song-book collections (chansonniers, canzonieri) made some time after the supposed date of composition: the earliest are from the second half of the 13th century. Most are made in Italy, some in Catalonia and southern France, and a very few French chansonniers contain both Occitan and French lyric. Occitan lyric is thus a peculiarly, doubly-exiled literature, distanced in space and time from itself.

Occitan poetry will also be preserved through its massive influence on Italian poetry: on the scuola siciliana and dolce stil nuovo, and, crucially for the future of European poetry, on Dante (1265-1321) and Petrarch (1304-74). Occitan poets, poetry, and poetics appear in Dante’s Vita nuova, De Vulgari eloquentia, and Divina comedia. Dante becomes a literary constant, canonical, a classic. Through him, as intermediary, Occitan lyric is read and reread subsequently: in

18 Lyric: “Of or pertaining to the lyre; adapted to the lyre, meant to be sung; pertaining to or characteristic of song. Now used as the name for short poems (whether or not intended to be sung), usually divided into stanzas or strophes, and directly expressing the poet's own thoughts and sentiments.” (Oxford English Dictionary). As such poetry is sung and individually, internally expressive, its first-person-voice character may also be stressed. On the nature of lyric poetry, and its erotic and poetic aspects intertwined, see some of the core works on Occitan lyric: Pierre Bec, La Lyrique française au Moyen Âge (XIIe - XIXe siècles): contribution à une typologie des genres poétiques médiévaux (Paris: Picard, 1977); Gaunt and Kay 1999; Alfred Jeanroy, Histoire sommaire de la poésie occitane (Toulouse-Paris: Privat, 1945); Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au Moyen-Âge: études de littérature française et comparée (Paris, 1889); the introduction to volume 2 of Lavaud and Nelli 1960-66; Linda Paterson, The World of the Troubadours (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); the introduction to Martín de Riquer, Los Trovadores: historia literaria y textos (Barcelona: Areal, 1975); Leslie T. Topsfield, Troubadours and Love (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975).


20 The Crusade is first preached in 1208 by Innocent III, and essentially over with the Peace of Paris (1229), where Raymond VII swore allegiance to Louis IX; though resistance persisted in mountain strongholds such as Montségur (yielded 1244).
modern French, from Stendhal to Jacques Roubaud; and in English-language poetry of the last hundred years, the trobadors are a persistent presence for Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Geoffrey Hill, and Paul Muldoon.

The second literary element contributing to the hybrid Flamenca is 13th century French romance. It continues the previous century’s creative play of translatio, producing refashionings and continuations – including sequels and prequels – to the core trois matières, especially the Arthurian material. In a formal innovation, some of these are in prose, a shape of purported greater veracity (Lancelot en prose, Tristan en prose: 1220s). Formal experimentation is also evident in approaches to the lyric character of romance. Guillaume de Lorris’ Roman de la Rose (c. 1230), for instance, spins out a lyric poem over 4000-odd lines. Verse and prose may be alternated, such as the prosimetrum or chantefable Aucassin et Nicolette (c. 1200). Romances may feature formally distinct embedded lyric passages, the first being Jean Renart’s Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole (c. 1200-28). Another inventiveness results in epigonal, intertextually clever, parodic, ironic, and self-referentially critical romances: for example, Le Bel inconnu (c. 1200-1215).

A last trend, affecting writing more generally, may be related to the rediscovery and study of Aristotle’s complete works. The 13th century, particularly its second half, sees the appearance of related forms. One is the summa - “sum of knowledge” – as exemplified by the Summa theologiae (c. 1265-73) of a Sorbonne Dominican, Thomas Aquinas. Other forms include the encyclopaedia and the speculum, or “mirror” reflecting the whole world. Other sorts of encyclopaedic work may be compilations, collections, and codices. Some of these may be intended as literary summae, such as the late 13th-early 14th century chansonniers. Others show a larger encyclopaedic scope, such as Matfré

---

Ermengaut’s *Breviari d’Amors* (c. 1280s-1300), and feature figures mapping knowledge, in the style found later in the *Encyclopédie*.

Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* is a fine case of such specularity. The idea of completeness encompasses that of inclusion, of including parallel paths, alternative routes, and a potential for internal self-contradiction. Again, this is exemplified by the *Roman de la Rose*, in further reinforcement of its ties to Aristotle. Daniel Heller-Roazen’s important recent work makes more sense of the *Rose*, as incorporating the Aristotelian idea of future contingency. For Aristotle, future contingent statements are neither true nor false (*On Interpretation*, parts 9 and 13; *Prior Analytics*). The classic example is a potential sea-battle:

What is, necessarily is, when it is; and what is not, necessarily is not, when it is not. But not everything that is, necessarily is; and not everything that is not, necessarily is not. For to say that everything that is, is of necessity, when it is, is not the same as saying unconditionally that it is of necessity. Similarly with what is not. And the same account holds for contradictories: everything necessarily is or is not, and will be or will not be; but one cannot divide and say that one or the other is necessary. I mean, for example: it is necessary for there to be or not to be a sea-battle tomorrow; but it is not necessary for a sea-battle to take place tomorrow, nor for one not to take place – though it is necessary for one to take place or not to take place. So, since statements are true according to how the actual things are, it is clear that wherever these are such as to allow of contraries as chance has it, the same necessarily holds for contradictions also. This happens with things that are not always so or are not always not so. With these it is necessary for one or the other of the contradictions to be true or false – not, however, this one or that one, but as chance has it; or for one to be true rather than the other, yet not already true or false. (*On Interpretation* 9, ll. 20-35)

The text is known throughout the Middle Ages – it is part of the *logica vetus* – and a consistent subject of discussion, not least because of its negative implications for divine omnipotence. Aristotle’s contingency has wide-ranging implications. His logic is the fundamental argumentative and analytical methodology used throughout the whole of his works; a core method of reasoning for finding any and all truth, for all interpretation. Interpretation includes that of

---

reading. Contingency, together with the need to take context and appropriateness into account, produces an open and heterodox approach to reading. Semiotics and the open text are associated with contingency and interpretation in the 13th century; best known today through Umberto Eco’s theoretical writings, fluidly crossing temporal confines.25 Bearing in mind that it is a work dating from around the end of the 13th century; and considering that fact in conjunction with Aristotelian completeness, contingency, and contextual reading: the multiple focalization and narration of Flamenca are significant.

*Flamenca* – often seen as a simple parody, attacking French literature and culture – may be more productively read as a subtle literary experiment, part of a 13th century group of experimental and cross-cultural romances, including Jean Renart, *Le Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*; Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*; and *Joufroi de Poitiers*. The cross-cultural romance is an attempt to bring together old and new – like the earliest romances, later Renaissance refashioning, and Aquinas’ *Summa*. *Flamenca* out-romances romance by being an ironic, critical romance – like the *Roman de la Rose* – and a literary *summa*: textual forms also related to two others, the meta-romance and supertext.26 By transcending its material through adding *Flamenca’s* (subversive, critical) sense to it, the work becomes a romance of romance, operating a differential or derivative function on romance, related to other derivative features of the work. Finally, it metaphorizes the book itself, in an image of the book as *cor*[s/t], bringing together in itself all senses of *cor* and its (poetically derivative) correlates: “court,” “body,” “heart,” and “course.”

---


1. Contexts poetic and erotic: trobar amor clusa e cortesa

Trobar means “to find/make; finding/making.” It is used in and of poetry and poets: an Occitan poet is thus a trobador. The Old French trouvere is related and professionally equivalent. My project’s primary aim is simple: the better understanding of Flamenca, and making sense of it by means of close reading. This is a double motion: reading as deeply as possible, to find core meanings; and reading for overarching meaning, keeping the bigger picture in mind throughout. The start of the title, trobar cor(s), reflects these two approaches. Trobar cor seeks to find the core or “heart.” Trobar cors is “finding the body.” Substituting another - homographic but not homophonic - cors into the expression, trobar cors is also a search for the “course,” the flow and run, the sen or “sense” – both as “meaning” and as “direction” - coursing through this work as a whole. Finally, trobar cort is “finding the court.”

Put together, all four senses and both sounds of cor(s/t) produce a nice image with which to represent the text: a heart, surrounded by a body, a unifying and life-giving coursing within, and bound by the external world of the court. It is the senses of “heart” and “course,” however, that govern the main body of this dissertation: not least as the interplay between them echoes the interplay between erotics and poetics.

Reading and understanding this work are far from simple aims. It is complex, densely allusive, and subtle. Since its discovery nearly two centuries ago, it has been the subject of regular study, declared important by every scholarly generation, and yet remained problematic. Every generation, and every new school of reading, has found new treasures and pitfalls in Flamenca. The work’s modern critical history is that of modern critical history itself. Through this primary literary text, every trend and movement in the secondary literature

---

1 As direct object of trobar, the cor- based nouns are in the singular oblique case; this prevents an exact visual pun, which would have been permitted by cors “heart” as subject. Cor, “heart” and cors, “body” share an open [ɔ] (Occ. [o̞]; derived from Lat. short [ō]). Cors, “course” and cort, “court” share a closed [o] (Occ. [o]; from Lat. long [ō]).
may be read. It is beyond the scope of this present work to recount *Flamenca’s* critical history in the detail it deserves: this would be material for a book in its own right. *Flamenca* has long been acknowledged by medievalists to be one of these books of perhaps inexhaustable richness, an encyclopaedic *miroir* for its own time, and a mirror reflecting the history of its reading. More recently, *Flamenca* has come to be accepted as a Romance-group canonical shelf-mate for the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Divina comedia*, despite the less-known language of composition and its very different manuscript, transmission, and reception history.

The *Flamenca* manuscript lacks its opening and closing folios. If *Flamenca* had had a title, named an author, and provided indications of generic identity, these would have been here. Editors and critics have attempted to solve this conundrum; calling it, variously, a poem, a romance, or a short story (collection); in a debate through which the history of genre in modern criticism may be tracked. *Flamenca* has been drawn into mainstream medievalism’s ongoing discussions of the nature of romance (as genre, form, or mode of writing), and into literary criticism’s broader discussion of creativity, originality, and hybridity. Key contributors to this discussion must include Sarah Kay, Huchet, Simon Gaunt, and Caroline Jewers.²

Such studies exemplify recent moves towards today’s larger, interdisciplinary, critically-aware medievalism. New ideas from outside the traditional medievalist tool-box have permeated the field, most noticeably from the 1980s onwards: from critical theory, social anthropology, psychoanalysis, contemporary literature and literary theory. Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Jacques Derrida, for instance, have had such a major influence as to be at least subcutaneously infused in any recent scholarly work, including this one. Reader-response and reception theories and work on subjectivity have shown an affinity for medieval literature,

and are conceptually useful for drawing the 21st century reader into a medieval
text on a direct and immediate level, as a reader.3

The result is “New Medievalism,” an umbrella term covering various
harmonious unions of philology and good reading; approaches that are perfectly
compatible as they share core aims: making sense of things, understanding, and
finding truth.4 Exemplary semiotic and deconstructive readings, for example,
decode objects of symbolic representation, unfolding layers of meaning; in a
manner akin to the long tradition of allegorical and exegetical reading, stretching
back through Aquinas and Augustine.

Some new approaches included under “New Medievalism” have at times
been decried as anachronistic, committing the fallacy of reading this medieval
literature in the light of modern criticism. It would be an equal error to read
modern criticism as a reinvention of the wheel, dressing up old ideas in new
technical terms. I believe that both these positions are erroneous, for the modern
and the medieval share common ground: at the simplest and perhaps most
important level, that common ground is their shared subject: the human being.
The present time seems a good one for medieval studies, as an abundance of fine
work is focusing on knowledge and understanding. Such conclusions may be
premature, and this may be a passing fashion, but it is tempting to see a
“renaissance” in the old-fashioned sciences humaines.

---

3 On medieval literature and reader-response and reception theory, see Hans-Robert Jauss,
Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956-1976
(Munich: Fink, 1977); refined and summarised in “The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval
Literature,” New Literary History 10.2 (1979): 181-227; and Towards an Aesthetic of reception,
tr. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982).

On the role of the medieval reader in actively constructing meaning: Douglas Kelly, The Art of
Medieval French Romance (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1992); Marnette 1998 and 2005; Michel
Michel Zink, La Subjectivité littéraire; Spearing 2005.

4 On this “new medievalism,” see the special issue of Speculum (1990); R. Howard Bloch and
Stephen G. Nichols, Medievalism and the Modernist Temper (1996); Kevin Brownlee, Marina S.
Brownlee, and Stephen G. Nichols, eds., The New Medievalism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP,
1991); Keith Busby, Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology (Amsterdam: Rodopi,
1993); Stephen G. Nichols, “The Changing Profession: Writing the New Middle Ages,”
Publications of the Modern Language Association 120.2 (2005): 422-41; William D. Paden, The
Future of the Middle Ages: Medieval Literature in the 1990s (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1994).
This dissertation is conscious and appreciative of these influences; and also of the influence of everything else that its author has ever read – across various media and in a range of modes of writing. The very variety of these influences has, however, led me to avoid all systematic methodological reliance on any single school of thought or criticism. The dissertation’s theoretical methodology might be described as a hybrid “deconstruction with a human face”: that is, a traditional humanist stance; techniques adopted from formalism and narratology; and combined with a deconstructive approach.

Flamenca is a very open text, enriched by variety in its concurrent readings. As is the case with many great medieval works – Le Roman de la Rose, for example – any attempt to close off meaning in one single path leads to a weak reading and a failure to make sense of the work as a whole. Such monolinear reading also often closes off crucial narrative double-bluffs and other ironies. A good reading seems to me to be one that lets the text speak for itself, freely and without any constraints, even if one does not always like what it says. The more tools the reader has at her disposal, the better. Far from a resistance to theory, this is a deconstruction-infused pragmatic scepticism. Yet it is governed by a desire to make all systems compatible, to coexist in mutual tolerance and harmonious understanding, in the general interest of those higher things, understanding and literature. Reading and literary texts should, I believe, be what is at the centre of the work of literary criticism. The literary critic should not lose sight of the wood for the trees: the preservation and perpetuation of literature and its reading, as they are pleasures that make life better.

This dissertation aims to communicate the very vitality of its subject-matter, reading Flamenca as literature, as a means of accessing the medieval world, and as something illuminating understanding of the human subject then

---

5 Insofar as my reading is narrowed by prejudice and by previous reading, it is to read Flamenca as a fantasy, a – literally, “utopian” - work of imaginative writing, telling a tale set outside place and time, in the same vein as a branch of post-war imaginative fictions best exemplified by the works of Mervyn Peake, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Angela Carter. To use Payen’s term, works of irréalisme: Jean-Charles Payen, “Irréalisme et crédibilité dans le Tristan de Béroul,” in Mélanges de philologie et de littératures romanes offerts à Jeanne Wathelet-Willem, ed. Jacques Caluwé (Liège: Cahiers de l’A.R.U.Lg., 1978): 465-75.

6 “Deconstruction with a human face” coined by Sarah Kay.
and now, its self-perception and active awareness. Making sense of the world works both ways, as medievalist findings also throw light on the world, human self, writing, and critical writing of today. *Flamenca* lends itself well and fluidly to a humanist attempt to read the world, with its broad aim of understanding human beings through understanding their literature. Like any other, my reading is a *trobar cors*, finding a path in something so as to make sense of it. I also see reading as an integral part of poetics. Although poetics usually refers to writing (poetry, and other literature by extension) and its process, I use the word in an extended sense, covering all the stages of writing from the earliest stages of composition - all in the mind - through to reading, commentary and glossing, subsequent discussion and criticism, audience participation and reception, continuation, and rewritings and refashionings. Aristotle’s notion of poetics, after all, includes reading. The extended idea of poetics also coincides with rhetoric being perceived as a whole, in all its stages from *imaginatio* onwards.

This kind of poetics is appropriate to the medieval text, and peculiarly so to *Flamenca*, as a romance combining poetry, poetics (in the narrower sense), self-criticism, and audience reception. Such instances of poets acting thus at once as primary and secondary littérateurs, producers of literature and literary critics – and their own ironic critics at that - is all highly reminiscent of the same themes, and their theoretical treatment, in literature and literary criticism of recent years. My use of poetics in a wider sense is also behind the dissertation’s interweaving of poetry and poetics - drawing on the contemporary theory constituted by writings intertextually alluded to by *Flamenca* – with readings of *Flamenca*, read as example of, and critical comment on, these poetic aspects. Spearing (1993) observes the same phenomenon, and sees contemporary fiction as a useful resource for criticism. At the end of Chapter 2, “Examples of Looking,” he presents a reading of Malcolm Bradbury, *Rates of Exchange* – a novel “designed to make us think about narrative and its conventions, about the nature of fiction, and about language. In principle, therefore, it should be relevant to fictional narratives of periods other than its own.” (48) He continues:

Bradbury is not just playing a joke at our expense; he is also mocking the exchange and slippage of meaning between textuality and sexuality that plays
such a prominent part in some late twentieth-century discussions of literature. (This book, for example.) [...] Late twentieth-century novelists are notoriously self-conscious about themselves as narrators and about their audiences as readers; but some medieval poets, for whom oral delivery was still a normal situation, were perhaps even more so. [...] medieval storytellers are no less sophisticated than twentieth-century novelists in their dealings with looking and listening, secrecy and privacy. (49-50)

1.1 Erotics: from Ovid to the “courtly love” debate

“Erotics,” my title’s central term, derives from the Greek *ta erotikon*, “thing, technique, craft, art of love;” an early appearance is in Plato’s *Symposium*. One of this dissertation’s propositions is a re-examination of the idea of love in the Middle Ages, as seen through the lens of *Flamenca*. This is done from first principles: reading, in particular, two sets of texts that have been taken as read for some time, so as to become tropes in literary criticism.

First, I reread Ovid, so as to re-evaluate “Ovidian love,” known to be an important influence in medieval literature. Second, I re-examine the idea of “courtly love,” supposed to be characteristic of medieval “courtly” literature, and the subject of considerable debate; indeed, a debate supposed to be currently closed and settled. I reopen the matter by returning to the text at the origin of the debate, an article by Gaston Paris from 1883. I read this closely, and then see how the subsequent debate has at times misread and misrepresented Paris, so that it has set up (and knocked down) a literary trope of “courtly love” on shaky premises. Certain participants engaged in the debate have also picked up what I consider to be the most important ideas in Paris’ article (and often the subtlest).

Returning to Paris, I show how the seeds are already present in his work for a new angle of approach I propose, towards the better understanding of love in medieval literature: *amor coral*, “love of the heart.” Pulling together the Ovidian thread and that of the courtly love debate, I suggest that it would be productive to open and enlarge medieval ideas of love as perceived through literary texts such as *Flamenca*. *Flamenca*, essentially, recounts a love-story; but rather than representing a single kind of love to be sought, and thus defining true love, *Flamenca* presents different possible kinds, and debates love(s). This open, fluid, and discursive aspect seems to be central to what *Flamenca* tells us of love.
Ovid and love

The idea of an “art of love” typically suggests seduction, partly due to a strong association with Ovid. That is, however, a misrepresentation of Ovid’s representation of love, and of love itself.

I shall start with the idée reçue. Seduction: the hunt. Chasing down the prey, the object of desire, with an intention of having and getting said object, in an objectifying manner. The erotic art is at heart a martial one: the battle of the sexes. A man will win by attaining the Having and the Getting (and once that is done, leave and start over with another object). A woman may win by rejecting a man’s advances for as long as possible, within the rules of the game, and may often only achieve the moderate success of postponing the inevitable. Gender relations, and sexual activity, are simply an expression of power relations.

This model for interactions between men and women appears most obviously in Ovid’s Ars Amatoria, or “art of love,” in a more practical form in the Amores and Remedieæ, and played out in the Metamorphoses; then reappearing in medieval “arts of love”: Andreas Capellanus’ De Amore; Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, which refers to itself as “ou l’art d’Amors est tote enclose” (l. 38) and “le miroer as amoureus” (l. 10655); Juan Ruiz, El Libro de buen amor; Matfre Ermengaut’s Breviari d’amors; and the various Ovide moralisé. Examples abound throughout the Old Occitan and French lyric corpus, to such an extent that Ovidian seduction becomes a trope.7

This kind of love, and of gender relations (using “relations” in the broadest possible sense of interactions), has been viewed as objectionable because of its misogyny, for example in Christine de Pisan’s contributions to the Querelle de la Rose (1400-03), which has gone down in history as the first recorded French literary debate.8 Ovidian misogyny reduces heterosexual relations to a male use

---

of the female, with words of love as weapons to this end, fundamentally double-edged and double-sensed. Love, and the art that is its practice, is pure deceit and artifice. This is not an entirely abject and alienated state of affairs, as its flip side is the value ascribed to masculine friendships. Some other major recent veins in the study of medieval human relations have discussed such friendships, and any relations between members of the same sex, and the grey area between the homosocial and the homosexual. The recent wave of interest in medieval alterities - part of an old, continuous, and rich tradition of rereading the Middle Ages and reviewing our perceptions of it - has focused attention on queerness, feminity, and larger questions of gender and identity and their mutability, for example by the cross-dressing heroines of *Euphrosine* and *Silence*.

I propose a different approach to our perception of medieval human relations, bridging the divide between friendship and sexual desire, and bringing love back into the equation; emphatically maintaining a sexual aspect, as this is essential to the original Greek word. My first step is a simple one: I question the dominant current preconception of “erotics” being identical with “the Ovidian art of love” and “about seduction.” Ovid’s writings on love extend beyond those listed above. The Middle Ages knew three other relevant – amorous - works: the *Heroides* and some of the later poems of exile in the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (Black Sea Letters). These works were on the medieval educational curriculum. Through the 12th and 13th centuries, emphasis was placed on the *Remediae* and the exile-poems, to dissuade young men from the follies of women and love (albeit thus retaining a misogynist agenda).

Ovid and his erotics cannot be reduced to his earlier works, and if there is such a thing as “the Ovidian art of love,” more specifically, a modern reconstruction of a medieval perception of “the Ovidian art of love,” it must include these later poems. They show a different love: the other’s – woman’s – side of love; what happens after the Having and Getting has been gloriously

---

achieved; the agonies of separation; actual mutual and reciprocal relationship; affection and care; and treating the beloved throughout as a human person. We are a long way from seduction and its objectionable objectifications; sexual activity goes beyond simple rooting and rutting.

I should add here that the seriousness of Ovid’s earlier apparently narcissistic, chauvinist, manipulative works remains an open question. The debate is not dissimilar, with similar arguments used, to that around the solemnity or tongue-in-cheek nature of those two key French arts of love of the 12th-13th c., Andreas Capellanus’ De Amore and Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose. Both are works of two halves: Jean apparently continues Guillaume de Lorris’ poem, contradicting it (ex. rewriting Guillaume’s Jardin de Déduit in the Parc dou champ joli; respectively, ll. 1320-1677 and ll. 19935-20663), and with internal contradictions in his continuation. Andreas first instructed his apparent intended audience - a young prince - in love, through eight imaginary flirtatious dialogues between combinations of persons of varying social type, equal and unequal. The dialogues stop deliciously short before a monk can attempt to seduce a nun; and the work’s third part remonstrates entirely against dealings with women, with a complete change in tone (this may be because it is a continuation, be it at a later date or by a different hand).

Ovid, Andreas, and Jean share a further characteristic. Their works have been seen as varied - too varied. Readers may take the route of selective reading, to produce a single coherent sense: Ovid = misogynist. They may choose to read the works as incoherent, internally contradictory, and fatally flawed: C.S. Lewis dismisses Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose as an overly digressive allegorical flop. It is only quite recently that critics have read works such as the Roman de la Rose as possessing a more complex internal coherence, one which includes contradictions as an integral part of itself and a positive polysemy.9

Looking at Ovid’s works as a whole, an image emerges of love through its whole course, going far beyond mere seduction. Very roughly, we have The

---

Before, The During, and The After. In subsequent discussion in this dissertation, I use “erotics,” “the erotic art(s),” and “art(s) of love” to refer to these three stages which constitute love as a whole. Specific reference to one of the three will be in the form “first stage of love,” “first erotic stage,” “first amorous mode,” “primary amorous mode,” “primary-mode erotics,” “primary erotics,” etc.

The dissertation has been constructed with a correlation between these three stages and the three central chapters. For *Flamenca* is unusual in depicting all three stages of love, and doing so from several perspectives simultaneously. Chapter Two brings together first-person-voice love-lyric, reading the romance from the point of view of a single and solitary protagonist, and a search for love at the stage of seduction. The third chapter moves to conjunction and consolation, into stage two of the affair itself, as a couple forms. This fleeting moment of love outside time is notoriously unwritable, reflected in *Flamenca*’s experimentation with a transcendence of language, moving into other forms of communication. The fourth shows how all three main protagonists, and one in particular, look back on previous events, in the third stage of love. This is connected to protagonists’ poetic activity in their text: as receivers and readers, composers, and writers of poetry; and as catalyst-intercessionary figures, having a hand in guiding the narrative’s course.

**The courtly love debate**

The dissertation has a larger aim of improving our understanding of *trobar* and *amor* -“love” - particularly *amor cortesa*. The latter is particularly important, as its translation, “courtly love,” has been the subject of a major debate which has effectively run through the whole history of medieval philological scholarship over the last two centuries, and through which are discernible the movement and tensions in the relationship between the fields of history and literature.

The “love” part is commonly understood to refer to a heterosexual relationship, usually by a single young man for a married young woman, taking place at court. It is consuming, not necessarily consummated, and often
unrequited. The “courtly” part refers both to the court and to courtliness or courtesy; that is, a mode of behaviour and code of conduct derived from models set at court. The court may be, but is not necessarily, “the” royal court, a central, geographically fixed and permanent entity (ex. Camelot). The courts of the king and higher nobility typically moved around from one domain to another through the year. This had practical advantages for the control of territory and its network of seneschals and baillifs. The court may have been one held for a certain time by an aristocrat with sufficient resources and the necessary accommodations, say (as happens in Flamenca) around a feast, wedding, or tournament.10

The phenomenon is supposed to be visible in Occitan and French lyric poetry, and in French romance, particularly in the 12th century. It is generally accepted to have first flourished in the courts of the Anjou, Poitou, and Aquitaine. It originated perhaps around Guilhem IX (9th Duke of Aquitaine and 7th Count of Poitiers, 1080s-1126), the first known and recorded trobador. Moving further back in time, Roger Boase summarizes the various origins proposed for courtly love as Hispano-Arabic, Chivalric-Matriarchal, Crypto-Cathar, Neoplatonic, Bernardine-Marianist, Spring Folk Ritual, and Feudal-Sociological.11 Courtly love is a predominant idea in the lyric poetry produced by trobadors at the Aquitanain courts through the 12th century, its golden age. It then spread around Europe, via the mobility of courts and court poets. Above all, it spread through the Aquitanain courts and their networks of influence. The Angevins/Plantagenets had acceded to the English throne. Eleanor of Aquitaine - grand-daughter of Guilhem IX - married first the French king, Louis VII, and then the English king, Henry II Plantagenet. The poetry and its poets were disseminated further afield through Eleanor’s children’s and grandchildren’s marriages: through France, Germany, and Spain.

10 Reto R. Bezzola shifts the courtliness of courtly literature away from the royal courts and towards the feudal ones, particularly those of the Aquitaine, Poitou, and Anjou. Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident (500-1200) (Paris: Champion, 1944-63).
The term first appears in modern literary criticism, as the French form *amour courtois*, in the second part of a study by Gaston Paris on Chrétien de Troyes’ *Chevalier de la Charrette / Lancelot* (respectively, 1883 and late 12th century). While it is obviously dated, much in the article is still relevant and valuable today: romance as conflation and fusion, for example, has been a constant basic principle to theoretical work on genre. This first modern formulation of the idea, and this article, have been central to over a century of debate around courtly love; a debate which has often misread Paris, or only read part of the article, or a second-hand version filtered through another scholar’s version of events. In order to put the subsequent debate in proper perspective, I turn now to the original article in some detail.

The bulk of the article is on variants of the Lancelot story and its sources, in a standard 19th-century quest for the Ur-Text. It opens (459-85) with a reading of *Lancelot*, centred on attention to the Lancelot-Guenièvre amorous idyll (478-79), and the love-affair as Chrétien’s original addition to the earlier, Guenièvre-free versions of the story. This is followed by two comparative sections, on two other versions of *Lancelot* and their possible anteriority to and thus influence on Chrétien’s work. The first is the prose *Lancelot* (485-98); the second (498-516), to earlier Welsh materials - “divers textes gallois... ayant appartenu à d’anciens récits celtiques” – used by Malory as source-material for the *Morte d’Arthur* (1469-70). In a final section (516-34), Paris suggests that Chrétien’s *Lancelot* paraît [...] avoir, dans l’histoire de la littérature française au moyen âge [...] une importance plus grande que celle qu’on lui a d’ordinaire attribuée. L’originalité de ce poème, une fois la question du fond et du sens primitif mise à part, consiste dans la façon dont il présente ses personnages, dans les mobiles qu’il donne à leurs actions, et notamment dans la conception qu’il nous offre de l’amour (516)

It is this idea of love that Paris proposes to be Chrétien’s major contribution to developments in literature. It is clear from what follows that Paris is not suggesting (as later detractors have alleged) that the term *amour courtois* is used by Chrétien in *Lancelot*. His point is the introduction of an idea – “la

---

conception qu’il nous offre” – underlying, and indeed underpinning, character’s actions. He starts out with some descriptions of this idea of love:

Cet amour est une sorte de fascination et en même temps d’idolâtrie qui ne laisse maître, en dehors de ce sentiment, d’aucune partie de son être [...]. L’amour règne dans son âme avec une tyrannie sans nul contre-poids; il y est le prince des actions les plus hardies et les plus nobles, comme il le fait passer par-dessus toutes les considérations, même de gloire et de conscience. C’est le type absolu de l’amoureux tel qu’il a longtemps été conçu dans la poésie, et rêvé, sinon réalisé, dans la vie. (517)

Les principaux caractères de l’amour ainsi entendu sont les suivants :

1º Il est illégitime, furtif. On ne conçoit pas de rapports pareils entre mari et femme ; la crainte perpétuelle de l’amant de perdre sa maîtresse, de ne plus être digne d’elle, de lui déplaire en quoi que ce soit, ne peut se concilier avec la possession calme et publique ; c’est au don sans cesse révocable d’elle-même, au sacrifice énorme qu’elle a fait, au risque qu’elle court constamment, que la femme doit la supériorité que l’amant lui reconnaît.

2º À cause de cela, l’amant est toujours devant la femme dans une position inférieure, dans une timidité que rien ne rassure, dans un perpétuel tremblement, bien qu’il soit d’ailleurs en toutes rencontres le plus hardi des guerriers. Elle au contraire, tout en l’aimant sincèrement, se montre avec lui capricieuse, souvent injuste, hautaine, dédaigneuse ; elle lui fait sentir à chaque moment qu’il peut la perdre et qu’à la moindre faute contre le code de l’amour il la perdra.

3º Pour être digne de la tendresse qu’il souhaite ou qu’il a déjà obtenue, il accomplit toutes les prouesses imaginables, et elle de son côté songe toujours à le rendre meilleur, à le faire plus « valoir » ; ses caprices apparents, ses rigueurs passagères, ont même d’ordinaire ce but, et ne sont que des moyens ou de raffiner son amour ou d’exalter son courage.

4º Enfin, et c’est ce que résume tout le reste, l’amour est un art, une science, une vertu, qui a ses règles tout comme la chevalerie ou la courtoisie, règles qu’on possède et qu’on applique mieux à mesure qu’on a fait plus de progrès, et auxquelles on ne doit pas manquer sous peine d’être jugé indignes.

Dans aucun ouvrage français, autant qu’il me semble, cet amour courtois n’apparaît avant le Chevalier de la Charrette. L’amour de Tristan et d’Iseut est autre chose : c’est une passion simple, ardente, naturelle, qui ne connaît pas les subtilités et les raffinements de celui de Lancelot et de Guenièvre. Dans les poèmes de Benoît de Sainte-More, nous trouvons la galanterie, mais non cet amour exalté et presque mystique, sans cesser pourtant d’être sensuel. (518-19)

Amour courtois first appears in passing, a throw-away remark in the midst of a synopsis of the Conte de la Charete prose version and discussion of whether the prose Charete preceded the verse (Chrétien’s) Charrette or vice versa. Paris is discussing two mistakes in an edition of the verse Charrette that have led to subsequent critics’ errors (“un passage qui jusqu’à présent a été mal compris”):

[…] l’omission de deux vers après le v. 360 dans le ms. suivi par M. Jonckbloet et la fausse ponctuation des v. 4484-7 dans son édition ont altéré le sens de ce
passage. La reine reproche à Lancelot non pas d’être monté dans la charrette, mais d’avoir hésité un seul instant à y monter, ce qui est absolument conforme au code de l’amour courtois. (488)

There are two things to note here. The first is that, here as elsewhere, Paris habitually punctuates argument with interpretative comment. The second is that he returns immediately to his argument with Jonckbloet’s edition and its consequences. It is therefore stylistically unclear whether or not Paris considers himself to be coining a neologism when he uses *amour courtois*.

The term’s second appearance (final paragraph of 518-19 quoted above) has *courtois* italicized, but this only signals its distinction from other sorts of love. This “courtly love” is then connected through conjunction to “chivalric love,” as one and the same single kind of love: “l’amour chevaleresque et courtois” (520). A translated extract from Geoffrey of Monmouth cements the relationship by a syntactic device, articulated around a central “et,” making “men’s worth” and “knighthly worth” synonymous: “Ainsi la valeur des hommes était un encouragement pour la chasteté des femmes, et l’amour des femmes était un aiguillon pour la valeur des chevaliers” (521). Paris moves into further elaboration of courtly love as an ethical – moral and social – value, and its links to the Aquitanain courts (and to their *trobadors*), describing the court of Henry I as forming: “le vrai point de départ et le foyer de la société courtoise, amoureuse et raffinée.” (521) This seems sensible enough: chivalry derives from the court. One only has to look to Arthurian literature to see a wealth of supplementary examples, in the original court and its first formulation of the entwined ideas of an order of knighthood and a behavioural code. The general sense of this section is, then, that the court is the root cause for courtesy – as the fundamental ethical and social value - in northern France.

The feminine value equivalent to masculine virtue is chastity: “Ainsi la valeur des hommes était un encouragement pour la chasteté des femmes, et l’amour des femmes était un aiguillon pour la valeur des chevaliers” (521). Such comments suggest love was chaste; that is, the medieval sense of chastity: not abstinence but continence, limiting sexual relations to spouses. Yet Paris also suggests that erotic pleasure might be less restrained:
La réunion des deux sexes dans les fêtes, qui commençait alors à être habituelle, donnait naturellement l'idée de régler leurs rapports, et dans ces règles on ne s'arrêta pas aux relations extérieures, on voulut déterminer même ce qui était de bon ton, de convenance ou de rigueur dans les liaisons les plus intimes. Ces relations mondaines des deux sexes ...(520)

Paris is perhaps at his most ambiguous when discussing matters erotic; as love is at the centre of his dissertation, his ambiguity has major repercussions. Paris’ erotic ambiguity cannot be dismissed as the coy expression of 19th century sensibilities, or lip-service to them. In the Chevalier de la Charrette plot summary and brief commentary at the beginning of his article, here is what Paris does with the notorious “night of love” scene, the first carnal encounter of Lancelot and Guinièvre. He is especially careful to include Chrétien’s original text, not least as this first part is important supporting evidence for his later argument:

Il [Lancelot] gagne le lit de la reine, et passe avec elle une douce nuit,

Il y a là un passage qui, sous la forme délicate, laisse deviner une pensée fort lascive. Il est utile de le citer, pour apprécier le caractère de la poésie que nous étudions: Tant li est ses jeux doux et buens Et del baiser et del sentir Que il lor avint, sàns mentir, Une joie et une merveille Tel qu’onques encor sa pareille Ne fu oie ne seue; Mès toz jorç iert par moi teue, Qu’el conte ne doit estre dite: Des joies fu la plus eslite Et la plus delitable cele Que li contes nos tet et cele (v. 4674-83). (478)

While Paris’ use of “les liaisons les plus intimes” and “relations mondaines” is suggestive of goings-on below the belt, he emphasises that this is no mere rutting - what medieval French calls ameurs as opposed to amours. He also clearly includes the carnal and states that this is not “platonic” love.

cet amour exalté et presque mystique, sans cesser pourtant d’être sensuel (519)

[...] un amour idéal et raffiné, nullement platonique toutefois, et fondé sur la pleine possession, mais ne laissant aux sens qu’une part secondaire, étroitement lié à la pratique et à l’accroissement des vertus sociales, et donnant à la femme, à cause du risque qu’elle courrait en s’y livrant, une supériorité constante qu’elle justifiait par l’influence ennoblissante qu’elle devait exercer sur son amant. (529)

I read these ambiguities first and foremost as ambiguities: to keep options open, and as something can be more than one thing at the same time. That, in turn, allows the maintenance of an active, discursive relation between the ambiguity’s poles, and has the effect of leaving a discursive space open in the text.
Whether or not that was Paris’ conscious intention, the result has been that these narrative gaps have led his future readers into questioning and further debate.

Ovid’s Ars amatoria and Andreas Capellanus’ De Amore are used to bring together two other key features of courtly love: “illégitime et en dehors du mariage” (520). Tying in with being an ethical value, love is codified:

Le moyen âge, avec sa tendance logicienne et généralisatrice, devait transformer en rigides maximes les frivoles préceptes de cette théorie mondaine. Convaincu comme il l’était avant tout que toute œuvre d’art est avant tout destinée à l’instruction, il devait prendre au sérieux ce traité [d’Ovide], classique au même titre que tout ce qui venait de l’antiquité, et chercher à le rendre plus systématique et plus pratique. Cette disposition coïncidait d’ailleurs avec le fait capital du XIIe siècle, la création de la société courtoise par l’établissement dans l’aristocratie, à laquelle se rattachait le monde des clercs, des règles d’une éthique subtile et souvent bizarre dont l’observation rigoureuse était une science, dont la négligence disqualifiait un homme et en faisait un « vilain ». La réunion des deux sexes dans les fêtes, qui commençait alors à être habituelle, donnait naturellement l’idée de régler leurs rapports, et dans ces règles on ne s’arrêtait pas aux relations extérieures, on voulut déterminer même ce qui était de bon ton, de convenance ou de rigueur dans les liaisons les plus intimes. (520)

L’amour était un art, une science, et [...] pour avoir le droit de s’en mêler il fallait en posséder les règles. [...] Dans le nord comme dans le midi, les princes, les hauts barons, les grandes dames se mettaient à trouver, et là aussi l’amour faisait le fond de cette poésie de société, et c’était l’amour tel que l’avaient présenté les troubadours, l’amour qui faisait le charme et le danger des réunions mondaines, l’amour illégitime et caché, et en même temps l’amour considéré comme un art et comme une vertu. (522)

The next section (522-) deals with Chrétien’s patron, Marie, Countess of Champagne, and her link to the medieval codification of love to which Paris refers, Andreas Capellanus’ De Amore, which Paris takes to have been written at, and on, the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Marie’s mother: “ce manuel du droit amoureux” (526).

In its preface, De Amore sets itself up as an amorous advice given to a young man, Walter. The first book in this work is a theoretical treatise on love, with a middle section illustrating these principles, pitting men and women of various social classes against each other in dialogue of (male-instigated)

---

13 The date, circumstances, and reading of De Amore are still disputed. Modern interpretations tend towards seeing it as a playful work, perhaps indeed a satire or burlesque, rather than a serious codification of the laws of love. It is also more often interpreted as a fantastic fiction whose characters happen to coincide with historical persons such as Eleanor, rather than a historical account.
seduction; emphasis is placed on the proper choice of one’s amorous target. 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 such as Eleanor, Marie, her cousin Isabelle of Flanders, and Ermengarde of Narbonne. A final embedded Arthurian narrative culminates in the King of Love’s 31 rules of love. These rules are seen by Paris as the theoretical twin to Chrétien’s practical exposition of the rules of love. The third and 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 second part in a two-part work, 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 (ex. Aquinas). It may be a later continuation, perhaps in an attempt to save the work from condemnation.

Paris argues that courtly love had a limited place in the real world at courts centred around ladies such as Marie, sitting in judgement on amorous questions. Apparently putting aside the second part of De Amore, except a clever use of the Arthurian tale to cement the Andreas-Chrétien connection, the courtly love he portrays remains lady-centred. He draws an analogy with the salons of the précieuses:

Nul doute qu’un des amusements favoris des réunions que présidaient ces belles et peu sévères princesses n’ait été la résolution de questions galantes et l’établissement d’un code et d’une jurisprudence d’amour. Que ce ne fussent pas des « cours d’amour » au sens où les modernes ont lourdement pris ce mot, il est, je pense, inutile de le démontrer aujourd’hui. La nature même de l’amour qui faisait l’objet des débats et des sentences exigeait le plus grand secret, au XIIe siècle au moins autant qu’aujourd’hui et dans tous les temps, et il est dit expressément à plusieurs reprises que, lorsqu’une affaire est soumise au jugement des dames, on doit toujours taire les noms des parties contendantes: il suit de là que ces jugements ne pouvaient avoir aucune application et n’étaient que de purs jeux d’esprit, au moins en ce qui concerne les cas particuliers. Mais la tendance générale qu’ils expriment dépassait quelque peu cette définition: il faut y reconnaître, chez les grandes dames de ce temps où apparaît ce qu’on appelle “le monde”, un effort pour créer et faire accepter aux hommes un amour idéal et raffiné, nullement platonique toutefois, et fondé sur la pleine possession, mais ne laissant aux sens qu’une part secondaire, étroitement lié à la pratique et à l’accroissement des vertus sociales, et donnant à la femme, à cause du risque
qu’elle courrait en s’y livrant, une supériorité constante qu’elle justifiait par l’influence ennoblissante qu’elle devait exercer sur son amant. C’est quelque chose de fort analogue, avec bien des nuances amenées pas la différence des temps, à ce qu’essaya plus tard l’hôtel de Rambouillet; et Chrétien de Troyes, dans le Conte de la Charette, a été le poète épique de ces précieuses du XIIe siècle. [...]C’est à lui sans doute [...] qu’est due l’intime fusion de cet idéal amoureux et courtois avec la « matière de Bretagne ». Cette fusion réussit si bien qu’elle fut consacrée pour toujours, et nous avons, entre autres, un preuve curieuse dans l’avant-dernier chapitre d’André le Chapelain, dans cette histoire de la découverte des Regulae amoris, qui est visiblement l’imitation des romans bretons et particulièrement ceux de Chrétien. (529-30)

Summing up:

Marie, avec sa mère Alienor, avec ses contemporaines Aeliz de France et Ermenjart de Narbonne, a été l’une des principales instigatrices d’un mouvement mondain qui se produisit dans la seconde moitié du XIIe siècle et qui a pour principaux caractères le rapprochement de la poésie du Nord et de celle du Midi et la conception d’un amour raffiné, savant, intimement lié à la courtoisie et à la prouesse, et donnant à la femme, en tant que maîtresse, une importance qu’elle n’avait pas eue jusque-là. Cet amour est précisément l’inspiration du poème de Chrétien, qui l’a peint, tel que l’avait conçu la théorie de ces cercles élégants, dans la liaison de Lancelot et de Guenièvre. – C’est par la peinture de cet amour que le poème de Chrétien a eu surtout de l’influence: il a fait de l’amour courtois un élément presque inséparable des romans de la Table Ronde, et il a servi de modèle, en cela et dans plusieurs autres données, aux grands romans en prose de l’âge suivant, et notamment au Lancelot. (534)

This is only part of an escalation leading up to Paris’ conclusion, which returns to sources and the relative anteriority of different versions. The article’s main focus remains on the genealogy of the Lancelot textual family, praising the merits of Chrétien’s version at a stage when the later prose Lancelot was seen as the superior version, Chrétien’s often lumped together with the “barbarisms” of earlier medieval writing. However, the article remains interesting as a very early case of favouring one version over another on poetic grounds, rather than because it was older (the governing principle behind medievalists’ editorial decisions until recently).

I find some elements in Paris’ exposition of amour courtois extremely useful for making sense of love in Flamenca, and I find them to be supported by my own readings of the texts he uses as evidence. Those elements are:
- connections between love, worth/virtue, and the acquisition of knowledge -linking goods erotic, ethical, and epistemological;
- games: codified through ritualization, fictionalised, and in an ironic mode;
- debate: including ludic role-play, interpretations or judgements, and a mood of fluidity about an idea that is up in the air and open to discussion;
- ambiguity: openness or multiplicity of senses; such as the nature of love.

Besides often being the unquestioned source for material evidence for medieval love (literary and, until a certain point, real-historical), Paris’ text forms the theoretical basis to all subsequent discussion of courtly love, whether in direct discussion, or indirectly as a critical influence. The course of the courtly love debate, with its various twists and turns, has led to theorizations on the nature of love in medieval literature; as a debate, this picks up the very aspect of questioning, discussion, and debate already present in Paris’ original article. I would not go so far as to laud Paris as a postmodern before his time; but this is a nice example of how late 20th-21st century theory can help in the understanding of earlier texts – medieval and 19th century – and notably contemporary, critically-aware medievalist philology.

The premise to the next half-century or so of courtly love discussion (until the 1960s), accepting Paris as authoritative, is that courtly love does exist in some literary texts, in a body of “courtly literature.” A first conflict is perceived between two sides of the love portrayed: sexual and adulterous, yet spiritual. A second conflict is between amorous relations in the real world and their literary representation. Does courtly love only exist in literature, as pure fiction or fantasy? Does its depiction bear any relation to historical reality? Did it in fact also exist in the real world? If so, how did it relate to other known social and moral precepts about acceptable behaviour?

A purist, Christian school, featuring C.S. Lewis, proposes that courtly love was misread as *eros* - carnal and temporal - whereas it is actually Pauline *agape* - a spiritual and abstracted love. The approach coincides with work on the 12th century Neoplatonic renaissance, and the contemporaneous new romance form as its literary expression – whether this Neoplatonist influence is seen as
compatible or conflicting with Christian doctrine. Others have read this literature as a coded allegory for a purely spiritual illumination and translation to the Light: not a Catholic one, but either Hispano-Arabic, or else Cathar, working with evidence for the Cathar perfeits (“perfect ones”) being chaste and associating with those of their own gender only, as part of their repudiation of the world (Darkness) and the worldly. This could parallel a similar reading of other ambiguously spiritual and carnal medieval lyric poetry, towards an ambiguous fusion of lady and Lady, the desired union being symbolic.

In an intermediate school of thought, this “love” may have involved a sexual aspect, as a necessary step towards spiritual love and divine love: and thus towards truly knowing God’s love for the individual man, and being able to love Him back, in true knowledge. Of particular use as supporting evidence is the work of Bernard of Clairvaux, especially his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, and its influence via Chartrean scholasticism on 12th century Platonism. Ecstatic religious writings of the larger period seem to combine the carnal and the spiritual in an ambiguous way: from earlier martyrs such as Perpetua; via mystical marriages to Christ such as those of Alexis and Foi; through to Margery Kempe; Marguerite Porete, and Flemish, French, and German Béguines; John of the Cross; and Henry Suso.

The latter position is closer to Gaston Paris’ ambiguity on the nature of love. Both positions fall prey to the belief that love must either be sexual or not. Both also assume that a literary text necessarily reflects the real world and its practices, eliminating Paris’ suggestions on games and fictionalization, and the possibility that a literary text might represent an imagined ideal.

In the postwar period, a general shift may be discerned away from a religious focus and towards secularization; and away from a history centred on

---


noble, epic, great men and dates, towards social and popular histories, and the sciences humaines. Good examples of this distancing, with reference to courtly and “romantic” love, may be seen in the works of Erich Köhler, Jacques Le Goff, Georges Duby, and R. Howard Bloch; and in their being influenced by anthropology, ethnography, and social and critical theory.¹⁷

Two aspects of courtly love are brought to the fore, as attributes more clearly reflected in historical fact. The first aspect is stereotypical misogyny – and the severe punishments for adultery (especially feminine) in the real world. Indeed, much of Gaston Paris’ original argument may serve a perceived need to have other elements temper the sensual, if this love is being actively associated with women. Women would naturally need an excuse or an exchange for carnal relations, which are after all possession by a man and not naturally welcome, enjoyable, or desirable. The second is a feudal parallel, as power-based relations between subservient postulant-lover and dominant prospective lady parallel those of feudal allegiance between that same lover and his over-lord. As the lyric lover often coincides with the poet, the relationship is also with his patron.

The materialist slant of these approaches risks returning literature to its 19th century position, as secondary to history, and source-material for that dominant form of knowledge. Love and courtesy are simply part of a behavioural code governed by power relations. The court remains an object of attention, as a historical and social entity. The court and its artefacts become disputed territory between historians and literary critics, affording little middle ground in which to have a foot in both camps. An interesting very recent case would be Fredric L. Cheyette’s book on the late 12th century court of Ermengard of Narbonne (2001): a work by a historian well-versed in Occitan literature, containing a short chapter on lyric poetry, interpreted with a materialist slant as a reflection of external

---

social and political circumstances. The book has proven controversial, particulary this explosive chapter on literature, and instigated an intense and passionate correspondence in medievalist journals. Cheyette was the centrepiece in a roundtable discussion at the 2004 International Congress on Medieval Studies, pitting historians against literary critics. To the surprise of many in the audience, discussion was calm, and moved in the direction of harmonious interdisciplinarity as the way forward.  

While literary courtly love became increasingly divorced from historical reality, in the 1960s its very bases were questioned. Seminal essays against the very notion of courtly love appeared: by E. Talbot Donaldson (1965) and D.W. Robertson, Jr. (1962). The debate culminated in a conference at SUNY in 1967, papers from which were collected together and edited by F.X. Newman in 1968, including a revised version of Robertson’s 1962 essay. Courtly love was denied, accused of being an invention by Gaston Paris, of being impossible in medieval society and of never actually having been used in medieval literature: a 19th century literary-critical fiction.

Robertson is absolutely right to point out that “courtly love” does not appear in Chrétien de Troyes’ Lancelot: the phrase is indeed never used, although “courtly” and “love/lover” do occasionally appear quite close together. “Courtly love” and correlates do, however, appear in medieval literature, and especially in Occitan. The other problem with attacks on courtly love is tied to the broader postwar critical shift and its attitude towards literature. While literary texts may provide historical evidence, they do not necessarily do so, as they are not necessarily intended as faithful representations of historical reality.

---


It looked as though the debate and courtly love came to an end in 1968. Debate about medieval love moved away from Gaston Paris’ article (apparently a lost cause) and back to the first principles of medieval texts. “Courtly love” disappeared from scholarly usage, replaced by fin’ amor – “fine love” – agreeable to all as it occurs frequently in medieval texts. Yet courtly love had been and was defended, principally in France. These defences are included in Boase’s survey of courtly love scholarship up to 1977. Jean Frappier (1973) re-examined the disputed evidence in Chrétien de Troyes and re-defined the idea, though more as idea and less as a specific term. A further question arose, as to whether fin’ amor is synonymous with, or contrary to, courtly love. The shift towards using fin’ amor certainly seems connected to a scholarly inward shift. Charles Camproux (1965), Moshé Lazar (1964), and René Nelli (1963) produced earthy defences of a sexualized courtly love. Infused with Freud and Jung, this was a hermeneutics of fused poetics and erotics, whose final step, the joi d’amor achieving the desire in question, was transcendental orgasm. Fin’ amor was perceived as a religion centred around woman and her pleasure, or around the shared transcendental moment, thus rejoining Bernardine thinking linking sex and access to the Divine. Nelli’s work on literature ran parallel to his historical researches on the medieval Languedoc and the Cathar heresy.

The literature of courtly love, and particularly Occitan lyric poetry, has been read (by the aforementioned scholars, for instance) as a coded guide to achieving the Cathar illumination. Two 13th century events pit the Church against Occitania; events affecting both religion and literature, and used as evidence for a connection between these two things. Occitan amorous literature came to a first end in the early 13th century, with the Albigensian crusade, French invasion and

---

(re)conquest of the Languedoc, and Occitan cultural obliteration and exile. It died a second, more indirect, death with the Condemnations of 1277. This event may be read as the culmination of a century of wrangling for intellectual control over the Sorbonne – pitting Church against University authorities, and in which the teaching of the “new Aristotle” played a pivotal role. A body of university masters was growing whose primary allegiance was to broader learning rather than solely to religion. The Church had combatted this through support for the new Dominican order, moving its members into key chairs at the Sorbonne, leading to conflicts with secular masters. The Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, first declared thirteen Averroesian and Aristotelian propositions as heretical (1270). He then (1277) issued 219 articles of condemnation against statements in Aristotelian natural science. Of the ideas denounced which might not be taught at the University, some may be connected to courtly love. One book was named and shamed, Andreas Capellanus’ De Amore, from which the 219 Articles acquire a particular resonance among medieval literary scholars as a major act of literary censorship, and a condemnation of “the doctrine of courtly love.” This, and the consequent repression, is seen as one reason much lyric poetry and romance between that date and the mid-14th century moves away from adulterous love, and towards more purely spiritual devotions to Mary.

---

23 Should the complete works be taught, so as to understand them properly, in relation to each other, and as parts of a self-declared overarching whole? Yet certain parts ran counter to Church doctrine: notably the books on the natural sciences, cosmology, and metaphysics. The debate reached high points in the 1220s, 1250s, and 1270s. These troubles feature prominently in Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose (c. 1250s-70s), and culminate in successful Papal condemnations of teachings at the University through the 1270s. On the events of 1277, see: Étienne Tempier, bishop of Paris; ed. Claude Lafleur and David Piché, La Condamnation parisienne de 1277: nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaires (Paris: Vrin, 1999).

24 The Dominican order, founded in 1216, may be characterized as one of debate, concerned with out-competing the competition on their own terms, and as a new intellectual wing of the Church. It was initially founded to combat the Cathar heresy through superior austerity and proper, theological and public, debate; and would be instrumental in the Inquisition. As urban, mendicant preachers, Dominicans were also set up to beat the rival Franciscan movement on its own ground. The Dominican parallel educational system gave the necessary academic background to move into the Sorbonne; the more chairs occupied, the more sway they had over key votes in University governance.

The turn of critical attention away from a universally orthodox Catholic medieval France and Europe, towards Cathar Occitania, is endemic of the aforementioned general postwar shift. It is also part of a second postwar broad intellectual trend, away from the catholic and universal (including other grand all-encompassing theories). A move away from orthodoxy and homogeneity, and towards heterogeneity, difference/différance, marginality, fragmentation, and polysemies variously feminist, postcolonial, queer, and deconstructionist.

Courtly love has persisted in another thread of discussion (again, mainly in France). The key works have been mainly on Occitan lyric poetry, although not necessarily by Occitanists or even medievalists: Jacques Lacan (1959-60), Julia Kristeva (1983), Jean-Charles Huchet (1990-90), Reuben Cholakian (1990), and Slavoj Žižek (1994). Still essentially part of postwar secularization and sexualization, but this time purely via psychoanalysis, this has been a move away from “love” and towards “desire,” away from the external courtly and towards the internal, from history and into imagination and fantasy.

These recent moves – tied to différance, polysemy, and the imaginative realm – parallel those aspects of Gaston Paris’ ideas on love that had disappeared from discussions of medieval literature and love until recently: that is, ambiguity, openness and fluidity; and games, fictionalization, and imagination.

Beyond the postwar, into the postmodern, and back in the Anglo-American world, recent work on medieval literary subjectivity has paid particularly close attention to irony, subversion, and critiques of courtly values. With reference to Occitan, it would be important to cite the work of Linda Paterson (on rhetoric), Caroline Jewers (Bakhtinian parody), and Simon Gaunt

---

(irony); more broadly (irony in medieval romance), Peter Haidu and Dennis Green.27 This critical strand has been a consistent one, over nearly four decades, and sees courtly literature as at once literature, literary criticism, and its own literary criticism. It includes a set of important works on *Flamenca* as a critical parody of courtly love: a first wave, of seminal articles from the 1960s such as Hermann J. Weigand’s (1964) and Gordon M. Shedd’s (1967); and a second wave of works: Rolande Jeanne Graves (1983), Kathryn Annette Murphy-Judy (1986), Marie-Dominique Luce-Dedemaine (1988), Sarah Kay, Caroline Jewers, Constance L. Dickey (1995), and Karen Grossweiner (2001).28

A recent contribution by Sarah Kay to the courtly love discussion (2000) should be brought in at this point.29 She proposes that it not be thought of as a fixed idea and doctrine, but as a fluid “agenda,” a group of ideas.

The resulting drawback of these discussions [on what courtly love might be], in my view, has been their assumption that such love was susceptible of codification as a system of rules or doctrines. This essay will seek to locate “courtly love” more broadly as a series of questions which are debated across large numbers of texts, and which can be traced back to the tensions within medieval court life. (81)

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. (92)

Kay’s agenda echoes Gaston Paris’ formula, *la conception de l’amour courtois*, returning the debate perhaps to its departure-point. Later in his text, the phrase appears in this form (532), emphasizing the distinction I drew earlier between a


specific thing (and its possible appearance in texts) and a larger idea (of the thing). How far this was intended by Paris must remain uncertain, as he does also use the phrase *amour courtois*, but always in the sense of an idea. Courtly love is firmly connected to debate: this is the main plot line in Andreas Capellanus’ treatise, read as an amorous manual. The whole modern discussion of courtly love is an example of this exploration of ideas, in a seamless continuation of the medieval exploration. Like the medieval one, the modern debate reveals truths about contemporary ideas of love and other human relations, whose development may be traced through it.

Courtly literature, then, according to Kay’s view, would not be a doctrinal statement with characters and their tales as *exempla*, but an explorative, questioning, and (inter)active debate. She uses examples of particularly questioning – and playfully so – 13th c. romances, such as *Flamenca* and the *Roman de la Rose* (90-93), contrasted with two 12th c. points of reference, the romance polarizations of illicit and licit, marriage-centred love in *Tristan* and *Eneas*. She sees the idea of courtly love as something more fluid; and courtly romance as an attempt to bring things together, a poetics of conflation: Christian/pagan; Celtic/Classical; courtly-chivalric/clerically. Tensions exist between desire and obligation, between the internal and the external, and, in the courts themselves, between religious and secular. Romances of exploratory conflation bring together audiences that are otherwise thus divided by these tensions. It is currently reckoned that – whatever else might also have been happening with private reading – such works would have been performed to (a) group(s) at court, and discussed afterwards. This discursive, debating, engaged setting is exactly the kind of backdrop suggested by Kay’s idea.

[...] the way Gottfried represents love as in conflict with the demands of the outside world, but in accord with the dictates of a higher, more mysterious power, may be a means whereby the courtier poet defends a private space of inner sensitivity for himself against the constant public requirements of courtly life. [...] But it also offers, I think, a way of combining the discourse of the lay and clerical constituents of the court in a way that is more risky, more uneasy, and perhaps for medieval audiences more exciting, than the manner pioneered by the *Eneas*. [...] Thus whilst (in Jaeger’s terms) adultery may be a defense erected by the individual against the group, it may also be an attempt to address the group by negotiating the differences between its members.
Crucial to the framing of the agenda of courtly love, and probably responsible for composing the romances considered here, are the courtier-clerks [...] The very fact of having more than one allegiance would enable them to distance themselves ironically from any debate. Thus they have composed a literature that contributes to the elegance of court society, through its polish, rhetorical proficiency, and refinement; that hints at unspoken and unspeakable depths, even though these may be a delusion created by the glitter of the surface; and that promotes a sense of consensus and cohesion whilst simultaneously retreating from it. Courtly love fictions encode the divisions and contradictions of court life, and the problematic status of the clerks who made their careers there. As a result, they are both resistant to definition and also powerful transmitters of their struggle with social tension. (93-94)

*Flamenca* already attempts to attract a varied and numerous audience, using multiple focalization and the active participation of wise, knowing, instrumental minor characters – ladies-in-waiting, one of whom is particularly well-educated; squires; a priest and his assistant; an innkeeper and his wife. Further, and in strong support of Kay’s hypotheses, our romance combines play with its audience and a questioning of courtly love. This present dissertation explores *Flamenca* and its representations of love as questioning a set of interlinked ideas, rather than setting out a doctrine; leaving resolution to the reader, thus maintaining an open fluidity; being simultaneously poetry and poetics, exposition and critical analysis; and combining within itself all stages of literature – composing, writing, reading, glossing, continuing, and so on.

It may be observed that most of the last century’s discussion has been about an *idea* and *theme* of courtly love. Paris’ original paper is already along these lines. Most of the works cited above treat of courtliness, courtesy, and correlated concepts to do with the court, including investigating the actual appearance of these words in medieval texts; others do likewise for *fin’amor*. The material evidence for courtly love has been re-evaluated by Joan Ferrante (1980). She finds an instance of *amor cortes* in *Flamenca* (line 1197), and the *amor* and *cortes* lexemes in close proximity (albeit not in the phrase) in 12th century Occitan lyric (by Cercamond, Bernart de Ventadorn, Marcabru, and Peire d’Alvernhe), Chrétien de Troyes’ *Chevalier de la Charrette* and *Yvain, Hueline et Aiglentine*, and some later texts (by Dante, Petrarch, Cino da Pistoia, and Chiaro
She then examines how “courtly” is used in connection with “love” elsewhere in Occitan lyric materials (Bernard de Ventadorn, Raimbaut d'Aurenga, and the *vidas*), before moving 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. Ferrante concludes that in all the passages I have cited here, from several centuries of medieval poetry, the connection between love and courtliness is essential not accidental. It is not simply that courtliness is one facet of love, but that love is courtly. The two words “love” and “courtly” (or the corresponding noun, “courtliness,” “courtesy”) are combined so frequently and so emphatically that we are certainly justified in using the phrase “courtly love” to characterize the romantic love described in medieval lyrics and romances. Gaston Paris seems to have made a wise choice after all. “Courtly love” is not a figment of a nineteenth-century imagination, not simply a useful term which we choose to preserve, but a perfectly valid medieval concept. (695)

In the course of the courtly love debate, a second critical narrative may be traced: approaches to the relationship between medieval literature and the medieval world, with various degrees of sophistication. *Flamenca* is a literary work: *not* a faithful historical description. Studies of personal names in the work, for instance, have succeeded in mapping certain named persons onto real historical persons, but who could not all have coexisted at the same time. *Flamenca* should be contrasted with historiographical accounts from the period.

---


31 The question of possible dates for *Flamenca’s* events (1193, 1223, 1234), then used to suggest end-dates for its composition, has generated a whole sub-field of scholarship. Events in *Flamenca* are strictly governed by the liturgical calendar, in cycles from one Easter to the next, and, especially, controlling the lovers’ meetings at Mass, in that first phase of their affair. The text clearly identifies the feast-days on which the lovers may meet, and equally clearly tells us how much time elapses between these days. Given the existence of church calendars, for instance in almanacs, one may work out the years in which the story could have taken place. Three principal contributions to the date-debate are: Charles Grimm, *Étude sur le roman de Flamenca: Poème provençal du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Droz, 1930); Rita Lejeune, “Le Calendrier du Roman de Flamenca: contribution à l’étude de mentalités médiévales occitanes,” in *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire, de linguistique et de philologie romanes offerts à Charles Rostaing*, ed. Jacques Caluwé et al (Liège: Marche Romane, 1974); “Le Tournoi de Bourbon-L’Archambaud dans le Roman de Flamenca: Essai de datation de l’œuvre,” in *Mélanges de philologie romane offerts à Charles Camproux* (Montpellier: Centre d'études occitanes, 1978): 129-47. These have focused on the relationship between internal and external realities. Another approach is to move the emphasis from dates to the relationship between them, and the varying lengths of period elapsed. The timing of events – irrespective of whether or not it is meant to relate to an externally-real year – may be productively read as a narrative device, and a fine way of controlling pace and plot tension. Kay offers a literary interpretation of the calendar in “The Contrasting Uses of Time in the Romances of *Jaufre* and *Flamenca,*” *Medioevo Romanzo* VI.1 (1979): 37-62.
and with works featuring a fluid inclusion of both senses of “histoire,” and indeed an intermediate mythical zone of “fabula” – from hagiographies set in an indeterminate past, and the *romans antiques*, to Chrétien de Troyes’ romances. We are far from the “realism” lauded by *Flamenca’s* early readers, and moving towards Jean-Charles Payen’s “irrealism.”

While, as in any work through to the remotest futures of contemporary science fiction, there will always be some connection to the real world of a real external author; this is a work of imagination. As such, rather than offering verisimilitudinous representation, it may be exploring possible alternatives, ideal worlds, and questioning the necessity for things to be the way they are in the world, as they could quite reasonably be otherwise.

Thus, an engagement in debate may be seen as something that is central to *Flamenca*. The way in which *Flamenca* debates supports Sarah Kay’s thesis on the nature of medieval debate, with its implications for understanding courtly love (and the courtly love debate). This debating-mode also has to do with the courtly love debate as *Flamenca* deals with the nature and purpose of love, and its relationship to courtesy and the courtly world. *Flamenca* also happens to feature a lovers’ mock-court scene, like those portrayed by Andreas Capellanus, and like them concerned with debate, and the injection of a fictional and imaginative element: play. I read this as *Flamenca’s* most important episode and *point culminant*, where the three protagonists’ narrative threads lead and converge, and where the external audience, too, is required to sit in judgement on the amorous case before them. “Courtly love” is one of the keys to understanding *Flamenca*.

Amor cortesa *and* amor coral

My dissertation affirms that courtly love exists in *Flamenca*. Indeed, this text has one of the greatest concentrations of “courtly love” and correlates in

---

[^32]: Payen 1978. One may distinguish degrees of irrealism: Béroul’s *Tristan* comixes Celtic elements; Marie de France’s *Lais* often do not name protagonists and set events in a vague past; a full irrealism would need complete spatial and temporal dislocation, or the dislocation resulting from mixing incongruous temporal and spatial elements. We cannot tell any more about the degree of *Flamenca’s* irrealism, as we are missing the beginning of *Flamenca*, in which we might have had a preface in which more details might have been given on temporal and spatial setting.
medieval literature. Courtly love is, however, critiqued throughout *Flamenca*, and appears alongside other forms of love, principally *amor coral* (“love of the heart”). *Amor coral* in *Flamenca* echoes Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s idea of the “noble heart” (*cor noble*) as one of three core virtues from which all other virtue derives, and without which true worth cannot be achieved – regardless of the (accidental) trappings of birth, fortune, and proper upbringing including education in courtesy.Courtesy is one of the secondary ethical virtues deriving from the noble heart, on which it depends, and without which it counts for nothing.33 *Flamenca* distinguishes between true inner worth, and external appearances; courtesy is not necessarily always a sign of virtue in this story. Other works of the period decry falling standards and the growth of hypocrisy, in a trope related to the long and noble tradition of nostalgia. Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*, for instance, draws clear and frequent distinctions between inner, hidden truth and value, and the falseness of appearances.

*Flamenca*’s representations of love are contradictory, but occur in a pattern allowing the division of the text into distinct sections treating the idea differently, correlating to the protagonists’ divergent points of view. Rather than simply setting up courtly love and then knocking it down, *Flamenca*’s critique is more subtle: a three-pronged attack; one of which is a tongue-in-cheek representation from the point of view of the courtly lover; and all three of which show a protagonist’s relationship with courtly love and a contrary to it - the means of escape they try to “find” from courtly love. Courtly love is thus effectively debated by each of the three protagonists: reinforcing the point that *Flamenca* is not only a critical romance, but one in the debating and critical mode set up by Sarah Kay.

Both *amor cortesa* and *amor coral* seem to have been lost in northwards translation, via the Aquitanain courts of the late 12th century, moving Occitan

---

33 Wilson Poe has worked recently on the *cor noble* and *entendemen* in the poetry of Raimon Vidal de Besalú: for example, “The Meaning of *Saber* in Raimon Vidal’s *Abril issia,*” in *Studia occitanica in memoriam Paul Rémy* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publ., Western Michigan U, 1986). Vol. II: 169–78. Kay has work in progress on the use of citation and the treatment of themes of poetic knowledge in Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s work.
poets through France, England, and Germany. *Amor coral* seems to have permeated to Catalan and Iberian courts and into their languages; and via the post-Albigensian-crusade exile, into Italy, its poetry, and the language. *Amor coral* is, as far as I know, a new subject of study. Its existence may be indirectly suggested in four previous works.

Henri Irénée Marrou (1947) and Peter Dronke (1965-66) argue for a separation of love from courtliness, showing that the same kind of love referred to as “courtly love” exists in non- or pre-courtly literature, European and beyond. Marrou describes “un secteur du cœur, un de ses aspects éternels de l’homme” (89). In 1965, Arthur T. Hatto edits a collection of dawn-songs from ancient Egypt to modern China, via Occitan and Old French lyric, with accompanying essays and commentary stressing the same brand of amorous universalism.34

Gaston Paris provides the earliest hints at *amor coral*. Ambiguity about the erotic has fuelled the courtly love debate, and what is most crucially ambiguous in Gaston Paris’ love is what actually happens between lovers. Beyond ambiguity and, indeed, 19th century reserve, an early trace of Southern *amor coral* and the *cor noble* may be detected, set up by Paris as he moves from the Northern court as foundation for courtesy, through a discussion of love in *trobador* lyric. The whole passage is really an excursus – as he interrupts himself-mid-flow:

> L’idée que l’amour est une vertu et qu’il excite à toutes les autres, surtout aux vertus sociales, était devenue un principe fondamental. Ce n’est pas ici le lieu de rechercher les origines de cette conception qui, de plus en plus systématisée, devait aboutir au mysticisme amoureux d’un Guido Guinicelli ou d’un Dante. Il suffit, pour voir à quel point elle était établie comme convention poétique chez les troubadours, de parcourir les témoignages que Diez en a réunis. (522)

The point of the apparent excursus is to introduce two ideas: an association between love and poetry, and the idea of poetry as a courtly activity, a *game* played by ladies. This is to reinforce Paris’ connection between love and the court. From the poetic game, Paris can then move on, via Marie de Champagne’s

---

role as poetic patron, to Andreas Capellanus and the *De Amore* as source for courtly love theory, whose discussion is the main part, and point, of the article. Paris does, however, produce the following highly suggestive passage. It acquires quite a different flavour when read in the light of *amor coral* as an alternative to *amor cortesa*, and the *cor noble* as core quality. It is an early example of the argument that feudalism was very much a Northern phenomenon, and the chivalric-courtly code of limited relevance:

A ce courant venu d'Angleterre répondait un autre courant venu du Midi. Là, de bonne heure et indépendamment, s'était aussi formée une société polie et galante, qui, n'étant pas attachée comme en Angleterre à un centre fixe, était épars dans maintes petites cours hospitalières. Dans cette société assez oisive et de mœurs peu sévères s'était produite une poésie qui, de bonne heure, avait été surtout une poésie d'amour, et d'amour raffiné et savant, d'amour de tête, comme on l'a fort bien dit, et non d'amour de cœur. Là le côté guerrier, que développaient ailleurs les tournois, avait été laissé à peu près à l'écart ; mais en revanche, l'idée que l'amour est une vertu et qu'il excite à toutes les autres, surtout aux vertus sociales, était devenue un principe fondamental. (521-22)

Paris relies, however, on Dietz, rather than being sceptical of secondary sources and reading the *trobador* corpus for himself. Elsewhere in the article, he does do such research, and it is all impeccably footnoted. Had he done so here, he would not have fallen into errors then perpetuated by many of his successors.35

The love described looks very like *amor coral* dissertation:

L’amour était un art, une science, et [...] pour avoir le droit de s’en mêler il fallait en posséder les règles. [...] Or, précisément à l’époque où fut composé le *Conte de la Charrette*, la lyrique des troubadours [...] pénétrait dans la France du Nord. [...] Dans le nord comme dans le midi, les princes, les hauts barons, les grandes dames se mettaient à *trouver*, et là aussi l’amour faisait le fond de cette poésie de société, et c’était l’amour tel que l’avaient présenté les troubadours, l’amour qui faisait le charme et le danger des réunions mondaines, l’amour illégitime et caché, et en même temps l’amour considéré comme un art et comme une vertu. Chrétien de Troyes est un des premiers, le premier peut-être, qui ait imité en langue d’oïl la poésie lyrique de la langue d’oc. [...] Dans l’une [des trois chansons qu’on a de lui], il exprime ses idées sur l’amour d’une façon qui correspond exactement à la doctrine des troubadours: « On ne peut faire aucun progrès dans la science de l’amour, dit-il, si on n’est à la fois *courtos* et intelligent. »

Nuls, s’il n’est cortois et sages,
Ne puët riens d’amors aprendre. (522)

35 His successors aggravate matters by depending on his article without checking primary literature; and, in some cases, depend on someone else’s reading of Paris. This may be seen in a chain of misquotation of the article’s date of publication and the issue number of *Romania* in which it appears.
Yet Paris errs on two crucial points. Firstly, on the textual evidence elsewhere, it is an “amour de cœur.” “Amour de cœur” is not incompatible with “amour de tête,” as they may be synonymously interchangeable with some kind of internally-based love, and defined in contrast with an external love. Amongst the texts in which amor coral appears and is associated with the heart, some would have been available to Paris, and had been the subject of critical study during the period of his activity: the works of Bernart de Ventadorn, Raimon Vidal de Besalú, and Flamenca.36

Secondly, on the evidence provided by these three sources, the noble heart is the core factor, from which other things such as courtesy derive, and to which they are secondary. Courtesy is not the core virtue from which others derive (as italicized by Paris), nor on an equal plane (connected by “et”). The importance of the heart, and its close link to courtesy and knowledge, is already present in the Chrétien de Troyes poem from which Paris cites an excerpt. The lines quoted are from the beginning of the second stanza of Amors tençon et bataille. The poem consists of six stanzas and a short final stanza. The six stanzas form three pairs, each pair unified by a shared rhyme scheme. This second stanza is paired with the third, which opens with an echo of the lines quoted above, using not only the same rhyme scheme but an identical rhyme on apprendre and a discreet variation on the same syntactical structure. This reinforces the parallel to be drawn between the previous stanza’s “courtly and knowledgeable person” and the heart:

Fols cuers legiers ne volages
Ne puet rien d’Amors apprendre.
(II. 25-26)37

A foolish heart, light and flighty,
Can learn nothing of Love.

---

36 Gaston Paris could have consulted the following: Bernart de Ventadorn, via F. Gennrich, Bernart de Ventadorn (1778); Hans Bischoff, Biographie des Troubadours Berhard von Ventadorn (Berlin, 1873); Giosuè Carducci, Un poeta d’amore nel secolo XII, Nuova antologia (Bologna: 1881). Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s Abril 1121 and may intrava is in Karl Bartsch’s edition, Denkmäler der provenzalischen Literatur (Stuttgart, 1856), and extracts in François-Juste-Marie Raynouard, Choix des poésies originales des troubadours (Paris, 1821) and K. Mahn, Werke der Troubadours in provenzalischer Sprache (Berlin, 1846); En aquel temps c’om era jays is in A. Mahn, Gedichte der Troubadours in provenzalischer Sprache (Berlin, 1856-73). Flamenca was notably edited and worked on by Paul Meyer, Paris’ friend, colleague, and co-founder of Romania (his first edition appeared in 1865).

Paris is still right, nevertheless, to see the importance of “amour de tête” (one translation of Dante’s *intelletto d’amore* in *Vita nuova*). He is one of many to see the link between activities amorous and mental – the “science” that is reasoning, intellectual, understanding, moral, and ethical - a link to which we will return in the dissertation’s conclusion, and the intersection between arts of love and of poetry, and art of life.

**1.2 Poetics: the canso, and clus/cortes as lyric imprisonment**

*Flamenca* brings together two crucial ideas in *trobador* lyric poetry: the erotic goal of *amor*, “love,” and the poetic ideal of *trobar*, “finding.” The words are broad-ranging and enigmatic. Even in English, “love is a many-splendoured thing,” possessing meanings besides or beyond the erotic. *Trobar* encompasses many kinds of “finding.” These two words are used in many ways, played with by poets in polysemic games. Their senses are crossed over and conflated, most strikingly the erotic and poetic ones. They are left undefined to a point suggesting deliberate avoidance by the 12th-14th century French, Occitan, and Catalan writers of poetic treatises.

I start with a description of the *canso* – first-person voice lyric poem, from *cantar*, “to sing.” I investigate the Occitan use of *trobar* in lyric poetry,

---

38 Lyric: “Of or pertaining to the lyre; adapted to the lyre, meant to be sung; pertaining to or characteristic of song. Now used as the name for short poems (whether or not intended to be sung), usually divided into stanzas or strophes, and directly expressing the poet’s own thoughts and sentiments.” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). As such poetry is sung and individually, internally expressive, its first-person-voice character may also be stressed. On the nature of lyric poetry, and its erotic and poetic aspects intertwined, see some of the core works on Occitan lyric: Bec 1977; Gaunt and Kay 1999; Alfred Jeanroy, *Histoire sommaire de la poésie occitane* (Toulouse-Paris: Privat, 1945); *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au Moyen-Âge: études de littérature française et comparée* (Paris, 1889); the introduction to volume 2 of Lavaud and Nelli 1960-66; Paterson 1993; the introduction to Riquer 1975; Topsfield 1975.


biographical sketches of poets and commentary on their poetry (vidas and razos), and poetics treatises. I look at three main senses of trobar. It is the “finding” of composing or making poetry. Also, it is that of finding love. I examine one of two major poetic uses of trobar, trobar clus, literally, “closed finding,” with extended senses of “obscure” and “enigmatic.” Combining and crossing our terms, what we see at the heart of Occitan lyric, with its entwined erotics and poetics, is trobar amor – “finding love” – and amor trobar - “a love of finding.”

Canso

Occitan lyric refers to itself most frequently as vers, simply and straightforwardly “verse.” Eventually, the canso, or “song,” becomes the dominant form. It shares many quintessential features with other lyric poetry, such as the expression of the twin themes of love and writing, brought together by and in the central first-person-voice self, for which these themes are at once material or subject-matter, process, and end result. So we see three central elements: the first-person self, the poetic, and the erotic.

Occitan lyric tends to have a circular form, reflecting its content, which is usually love. It is usual that love is painful, unhappy, unrequited, impossible, generally unresolved and unsolvable: in short, amor clusa.42 Formal circularity is evident in a poem’s metric structure, with, for example, an abcba rhyme-scheme in a stanza. Poems tend to be divided into stanzas – coblas - offering further opportunities for circularity.43 This is not a perfect circularity: it is not perfectly

41 My description is based primarily on my own reading of the corpus, using: Martín de Riquer’s 3 volume edition of part of the corpus, Los Trovadores: Historia literaria y textos (Barcelona: Ariel, 1975); Rialto online edition produced by the Università di Napoli-Federico II, at <http://www.rialto.unina.it>; and editions of individual poets’ works and of poetic types, working from findings from searches of the Concordance of Medieval Occitan. Its secondary basis is a synthesis of definitions offered by earlier scholars working on generic questions: Jeanroy 1934; Bec 1977.


43 Other formal considerations may be varied and produce highly complex patterns – at all levels from sound-patterns, rhymes and internal rhymes, through to the form of the poem as a whole. Arnaut Daniel’s sestina, for example.
repetitively cyclical. Visually, the form of the poem is more like a spiral, with spiralling offshoots, rather like a Mandelbrot-set fractal. This shape reflects the spiralling internal state of a poem’s first-person voice, locked in the downward spiral of despair, and with emotions spiralling out of control.

While a lyric work usually depicts some form of internal enclosure, it does attempt to escape, find resolution, and to move out of the awful pit that is unsatisfied love: it tries to move outwards. This may be a movement from one part of the poem to another, such as the representation of physical movement, a change in place or time, often from the present to contemplation of the past, with the critical distance consequent to retrospective introspection. The first-person voice may become fragmented and argue with itself, especially if part of the love-sickness is a conflict between different possible courses of action, each associated with a different part of the self, such as courage or fear. Internal debate may be represented as psychomachia, in which the self’s parts acquire autonomy as personifications. An effect of tension and strife is produced, showing the anguish of the tormented lover and the martyrdom of amorous passion.

The lover is caught in lyric circularity, in this perpetual spiral, turning on the spot in his attempts to turn so as to get out of amor clusa. This contrary motion running through – and indeed structuring - a lyric poem, of enclosure and the attempt to break out of it, has been well remarked by Giorgio Agamben, as a conflict between a desire to end – a love-affair and the poem itself – and the contrary desire to prolong it indefinitely – a masochistic enjoyment and a desire to put off the moment of climax, and/or the petite mort’s larger version, death.

Besides this beautifully balanced tension between ending and not ending, Occitan lyric is characterised by another, literal, “turning-point”: the tornada. The ancestor of the French envoy, a final cobla closes the poem, usually differentiated formally from the rest of the poem, for instance in being shorter,

---

and having a different rhyme-scheme or picking up the rhyme-scheme of the end of the main body *coblas*. If the main body of a poem concentrates on the internal – musing, talking to oneself, arguing with the divided self – the ending attempts to move out of this close circle of despair. Movement may be a change from a first-person voice representing the poet-lover, to a voice which represents the poem itself. It may be a change in address, to the poem itself or its transmitter (*messatges* being either or both of these); or to the patron; or to another higher divine figure; or to the lady, or other intended recipient. She may have been referred to previously, but always in an indirect way. The *tornada* will address her directly, though often using a disguise-name, a *senhal*. *Senhal* is also, more generally, “sign”: thus, the lady becomes transformed herself, transfigured into a cipher, in the same way as the *tornada* transforms the poem.

The *tornada* produces effects of imprisonment and unsuccessful attempts to escape (the poem, the unsuccessful love-affair, the troubled self). Entrapment, imprisonment, and enclosure, both within the self and inside the court, is the feature which brings back together the erotic and poetic aspects of lyric, and brings together my hypothetical *amor clusa / trobar cortes* pair with the original *trobador* terms, *amor cortesa / trobar clus*. Lyric itself has both erotic and poetic aspects, firmly meshed together: as a true hybrid, it is a new thing in itself, but can also be read in the sense of either of its constituent terms, which are equally balanced, present with equal status in the whole thing.

Lyric is at once *amor* and *trobar*, and can be read from the point of view of either, in which case the term chosen also works as a metaphor or analogy for the other. A poem can be read as being about love, and simultaneously an analogy for the poem being about writing. The same poem can be read as being about writing, and analogically about love. The associated terms – *clus* and *cortes* – can also be interchanged, producing a whole work in which *amor* and *trobar* are analogies of each other, and *clus* and *cortes* are too.46 When this chapter’s four

46 The four possible hybrids produced by artificially crossing these two terms do occur in nature. In the whole Occitan lyric corpus, there are twenty occurrences of *trobar* and *cort-* in close proximity (within the same clause). *Trobor* and *clus* or *clau*- are discussed in the final part of this chapter. There are fifteen cases of *am-* and words related to *clus* or *clau*. Finally, *am-* and *cort-
poetico-erotic keywords *amor, clus, cort(es)*, and *trobar* are brought close together and crossed, two new hybrid terms are produced: *amor clusa* – “closed love” - and *trobar cortes* – “courtly finding.” A man suffers the torments of love, an enclosure of self-imprisonment (within and by the self) that may be called *amor clusa*. *Trobar cortes* is another solution to the problem of finding one’s place of belonging: becoming *cortes*, “courtly” and “part of the court.”

**Trobar**

*Trobar* is central to Occitan poetry and is a foundation for reading *Flamenca* as a strongly lyric poem. The principal lexicons tell us that *trobar* means, primarily, “to find”; and all the various additional senses can be condensed into the metaphorical extension of this primary meaning. The word is used in many different ways, often concurrently. Within a language that is already densely allusive, *trobar* is one of the most poetically loaded terms.

The lexicons present several problems. Going through the lyric corpus, it rapidly becomes clear that all uses of *trobar* involve at least two concurrent senses, and that reducing a corpus to exempla (of equal status in a lexicon) hinders the grasp of actual frequency of usage. Texts have been discovered, edited, and become part of the Occitan literary corpus which were either unknown to Raynouard and Lévy, or not considered sufficiently “poetic” to count. Finally, no current reference works take account of the most significant recent development in the field of Occitan literary study: the production (in progress) of the electronic *Concordance of Medieval Occitan*, which will eventually include the entire (currently known) literature in that language.

---


48 Ricketts et al: 2001-. Two more projected volumes will cover prose texts and the chansonniers. Once finished, the concordance and its inter-connected databases might form the basis for a new,
The lexicons are, however, an invaluable starting-point as our best linguistic reference for Occitan and in their methodology. The approach of Raynouard and Lévy was to look to contemporary sources and usage, from which they formulated a list of coherently grouped usages, and added approximate translations. Following this model, I went back to square one, used their own method, and looked to today’s - expanded - version of what Raynouard and Lévy themselves used in their quest for the meaning of a word: Occitan poetic works. Three sets of intertextual resources anterior to or contemporary with our romance are useful for determining what is meant by *trobar* at the time of *Flamenca*’s composition: the poets themselves, biographical sketches and poetic commentaries, and poetico-linguistic treatises.

The poets themselves offer us a first set of examples, in their usage of *trobar* and its variants. I studied the 970 occurrences of *trob-* in the Occitan lyric corpus, using the *Concordance*. Nearly all may be associated with a composer’s poetic activity, albeit most often indirectly and allusively. I counted 225 uses of the active form of the verb (*trobar*) in the first person. Direct self-identification as a *trobador* (in only fifty-six occurrences of that word) does not occur. Of the six *trobair* and two *trobayre* (equivalent to *trobador*), three are self-referential identifications. The most common way that a poet declares himself as such is indirectly, subtly, and discreetly. He includes himself amongst poets, often in implied comparative reference to “other finders”; in passive constructions; and as object of another’s “finding,” grammatical and otherwise. The greater use of a verbal form would indicate that being a poet is regarded as an activity, rather than an attribute. The indirect self-identification shows a certain reticence, restraint, and general “courtesy” and “gentility.” Being an object or in passive form, often associated with the past participle (ninety-two instances), suggest a correspondence between grammatical form and semantic function, in a state of “having-been-found” and occasionally of “having found.” This is the end result of electronic lexicon. Using an electronic form is ideal for assimilating new information - future discoveries of new texts and re-editions of old ones - both for concordance and lexical purposes.
a process, of a striving towards this state of being, leaving the actual process of *trobar* somewhat enigmatic – as might be expected in lyric poetry.

What is being sought in *trobar*? Most frequently, its objects are of an erotic and/or poetic nature, and words attached to *trobar* offer a good example of the inter-referential and allusive working of Occitan, as the specifically erotic and poetic vocabularies are swapped around when one would expect - in a given context - a term from the other lexis, or else the vocabularies will both occur in a poem: the sexual connotations of *merce* (“mercy”), *talan* (“desire,” “will”), *alberc* and *aizi* (“haven”, “asylum”); literary terms, such as *vers* (“verse”) and *mot* (“word,” also more usually “meaning”); the more abstract *mezura* (“measure”, “balance”, “harmony”) and *razon* (“reason,” more usually “explanation”); and terms crossing both erotic and poetic registers, such as *solatz* (“solace”) and *enseign* (“sign”).

In the *vidas* (pseudo-biographical sketches) in late 13th-early 14th century *chansonniers*, which are our main source for Occitan lyric poetry, the poets are called *trobaires, trobadors*, and cognates. Their poetic art is referred to as *trobar*. The poets are recognisable as such, defined grammatically as active subjects of the verbal form, being the nominal form, or possessing the adjectival form as an attribute. The Boutière-Schutz edition contains 101 pieces, and includes both *vidas* proper and those *razos* which name poets.49 Seventy use the word *trobar* or a derivative, including *trobaire* or *trobador*, at least once. The thirty-one exceptions are of great assistance in their further elaboration on the contemporary perception and usage of *trobar*. Instead, this group uses *enamorar se* – “to fall in love with” - and *far* – “to make” – in formulae along the lines of *fez mantas bonas cansos* (Jordan Bonel, who “made many good songs”).50

---

49 Jean Boutière, A.-H. Schutz, and I.-M. Cluzel, eds., *Biographies des troubadours. Textes provençaux des XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris: Nizet, 1964). *Razos* are commentaries, whose main purpose is to explain the *raison d’être* or intention of a given poem, and may or may not include any information pertaining to specifically poetic activity.

50 Here as elsewhere in citation from the *vidas* and *razos*, translations are my own; I omit translations in the event of repetition of identical or near-identical terms. Boutière-Schutz includes French translations, and Margarida Egan provides French and English translations in her two editions of selected *vidas*, respectively, *Les Vies des troubadours* (Paris: U.G.E., 1985); and *The Vidas of the Troubadours* (New York: Garland, 1984). William E. Burgwinkle has worked
de Saint Leidier, for example, falls for someone and *si fasia.s ses cansos d’ella* - “made [himself] his songs of/out of/from her.” While “of” is the simplest translation, the sense of *de* in this construction must be kept open, so as to maintain the idea of using the object of desire as material, and taking something from her (or him): a *prendre* which may or may not correspond to the beloved’s *don* or *prezen*, gift, and often the source of word-play around the *prendre-prezen* closeness. Gauceran de Saint Leidier is described as his father’s son, and his erotic-poetic activity as *enamoret se* of a lady.51 Amongst the thirty-one

---

51 Of the thirty-one exceptions, twenty-nine *vidas* feature *far* rather than *trobar*. Of these, nine relate *far* causally to love – inspiration, muse – like Guilm and Gauceran de Saint Leidier. Jaufré Rudel de Blaia *fetz de lieis mains bons vers*: “made of her many good poems.” The same style is used of women poets and their (probably) male inspiration. Maria de Ventadorn fell in love and *si fetz una cobla*: “made herself a stanza [of him].” Na Castolloza, inspired by love, *fez de lui sas cansos*: “made her songs of him.” Similarly, the Comtessa de Día *enamoret se de Raimbaut d’Aurenga, e fez de lui mantas bonas cansos*: “she enamoured herself of Raimbaut d’Aurenga, and made many good songs of him.” Uc de Saint Circ *cansos fetz de fort bonas... mas non fez gaires de las cansos, quar anc non fo fort enamoratz de neguna; mas ben se saup feingner enamoratz de ellas ab son bel parlar... mas pois qu’el ac moiller non fetz cansos*: “he made very good songs; but he did not make any songs at all, because he was not in love with anyone; but he know well how to feign being in love with them, with his fine speech... but then once he had a wife, he no longer made songs.” Occitan expresses “to fall in love/be in love with” through a pronominal verb, ambiguously reflexive. Peirol composed – *fasia* - songs about his beloved, the sister of the Dauphin of Auvergne. This “making” continues in a virtuous circle, as the Dauphin acts as go-between as *s’alegrava molt de las cansos... e molt las fazia plazer a la seror*: “he was made very happy by the songs... and they gave great pleasure to his sister.” It remains ambiguous whether *las* is the songs, or the brother’s involvement. Most famously, perhaps, the unfortunate Guilm de Cabestaing *si amava la domna per amor e cantava de leis e fasia sas chansos d’ella*: “he loved the lady out of love, and sang of her and made his songs of her.”


Seven of these *vidas* featuring a “purely poetic” *far* are of composers of *sirventes*, poems of political, social, and religious critique. Given historical circumstances, there is a coincidence between the troubles with northern France of the first quarter of the 13th c.; a growth in such poetry as a proportion of the corpus during and after this time; and an increasing brevity of *vidas*, shorter on detail, referring to a very small body of work. The Monge de Montaudon *fasia coblas estan en la morgia e sirventes de las rasons que corion en aquella contrada*: “made coblas that remained in the cloister, and *sirventes* about current affairs in the surrounding area.” Albertet Cailla *fez una bona canson e fez sirventes*. Guillem Magret *fez bonas cansos e bons sirventes e bonas coblas*. Bertran del Pojet *fez bonas cansos e bons sirventes*. Bertran d’Alamano *fez bonas coblas de solatz e sirventes*. Albert Marques *saub ben far coblas e sirventes e chansos*. The *razo* to Bertran de Born lo fils’ *Cant vei lo temps renovelar ends si fetz aquest sirventes*.

A final sub-group of seven *vidas* and named *razos* refer to *sirventes* alone. Raimon de Turfort e Turc Malec *feiren los sirventes*. Folquet de Romans *fez sirventes*. In some cases, this
exceptions, two razos (a mode of writing, it should be noted, under no obligation to discuss poetic and compositional matters) feature neither trobar nor far directly. The first explains the tenso between Almuc de Castelnou and Iseut de Capio. *N’Iseuz de Capieu si preget ma dompna Almue[i]s de Castelnou* precedes her cobla; *ma dompna N’Almue[i]s... respondet a ma dompna N’Iseutz si com diç aqesta cobla.* (“Iseut de Capio prayed/asked my lady Almuc de Castelnou to...[...] my lady Almuc... replied to my lady Iseut, as this stanza says...”). We do have oral “makings” equivalent to far - pregar, respondet – and the passive compositional “making” of copying, es escrit. The second, again a razo, is attached to Peire de Barjac’s sole known work, *Tot francamen, domna, venh denan vos*. This razo can be grouped with those of amorous cause: *e si s’enamoret d’una dompna... et ella de lui; et ac de lei tot so qe’il plac... et s’en parti d’ella com gran plazer que la domna li fetz. Et aqui e[s] escrit lo comjat qu’el pres de lei.* (“And he was enamoured of a lady... and she of him; and he had of her all that pleased him... and he parted from her with great pleasure, that the lady had given him. And here is written the leave that he took of her, i.e. the departure and the parting-poem.”) The conjunction of erotic and poetic objects of desire is noteworthy, particularly in the punning use of prendre.

As the vidas featuring trobar often also mention similar “good making,” and as trobar and far share a sense of “making,” this set of superficially trobar-less vidas are synonymously trobar-ly. Indeed, returning to the seventy vidas that feature trobar, most of them (forty-four) include both trobar and far, and use the terms in a reduplicative structure within the same sentence or section of text, using this repetition for emphatic purposes.\footnote{Trobar and far appear in the following vidas: Marcabru, Bernart de Ventadorn, Arnaut de Mareuil, Guiraut de Borneil, Sail d’Escola, Bertran de Born, Bertran de Born lo fils, Richard de Berbezill, Raimon Jordan, Aimeric de Sarlat, Gui d’Ussel, Guiraut de Calanso, Rainaut and Jaufre de Pon, Gausbert de Poicibot, Daude de Prada, Guillem de Berguedan, lo Coms de Rodes, Elias Cairel (in the first of the two vidas; the other is quite contrary), Gausbert Amiel, Peire d’Alvergne, Peire...}

...
trobar-far synonymy would be Bertran de Born: molt fo bon[s] trobare de sirventes et anc no fes chansos fors doas. (“He was a very good finder of sirventes and never made any songs except two.”) Placing the terms closer still, Daude de Pradas fez cansos per sen de trobar (“made songs by/from his sense of finding”). The vida of Guiraudo lo Ros intertwines erotic and poetic completely: enamoret se de la comtessa, filla de son seingnor; e l’amors qu’el ac en leis l’enseingnet a trobar. E fetz mantas cansos.53 (“He became enamoured of the countess, daughter of his lord; and the love that he had in her taught him how to

53 Some of the more significant vidas of synonymous far-trobar are as follows. Peire d’Alvergne fo lo premiers bons trobare que fon outra mon et aquel que fez los meillors sons de vers que anc fosson faichs: “was the first good trobador in the world, ever, and the one who made the best sounds of/in verse which had ever been made.” Using another method for bringing the terms together, Blançasset entendia se de trobar, et fon bon trobador e fez mantas bonas cansos: “understood [himself through] trobar; and was a good trobador and made many good songs.” Like enamorar se, the pronominal entender se invites self-referential pronominal play. Besides a narcissistic aspect, or - from a more positive angle - self-discovery, these verbs bring together love, understanding, and finding inside the poet himself. Entendre se incorporates elements of “to understand,” “to understand oneself,” “to have an understanding with” (often in a love-affair), “to be cognizant of,” with an underlying sense of “to be conscious/aware of.”

In contrast with the other women poets in the footnote above, in addition to enamoret se, Azalais de Porcaragues si sabia trobar, e fez de lui mantas bonas cansos: she “knew how to find, and made many good songs of/out of him.” Another trobairitz, Lombarda, sabia bien trobar e fazia bellas coblas et amorosas: she similarly “knew well how to find [or, knew how to find well] and made good and amorous poems of/out of” her beloved. Peire Cardenal molt trobet de bellas razos e de bels chantz; e fetz cansos, mas paucas; e fes mans sirventes, e trobet los molt bels e bona. Gausbert de Poicibot trobet e fetz bonas cansos and Guiraut de Calanso subtils fo de trobar; e fez cansos maestradas; these may be examples of another sense of far as performance, and here contrasted, rather than synonymous, with trobar. Perhaps similarly, Peire Raimon de Tolosa era savis hom e suptils, e saub ben trobar e cantar; e fetz bonas cansos: he “was a wise/knowing man and a subtle one, and knew well how to find and sing; and he made good songs.”

Like Guiraudo lo Ros, Aimeric de Peguillan fell in love; et aquella amors li mostret trobar. E fetz de leis mantas bonas cansos: “and this love showed him how to find/finding…” Here, however, it is not clear whether leis refers to the lady in question, or to the immediate preceding object, aquella amors; and, moving further back, whether aquella amors is that lady, or the abstracted love, and thus desire itself. Lanfranc Cigala, writing after 1277’s condemnations of “courtly” love, extends love to the divine: era grans amadors; et entendia se en trobar e fo bon trobador e fes mantas bonas chansos, e trobava volontiers de Dieu. “He was a great lover; and he understood trobar and was a good trobador and made many god songs, and “found willingly in/of/out of God.”

---

Rogier, Peire de Maensac, Pons de Capdoill, Peire Cardenal, Azalais de Porcaragues, Garin d’Aphier, Guiraudo lo Ros, Peire Raimon de Toloza, Raimon de Miraval, Lombarda, Aimeric de Peguillan, Rainbaut d’Aurenga, Rainbaut de Vaqueiras, Folquet de Marseilla, Pistoleta, Guillem Rainol d’At, Albertet de Sisteron, Ricau de Tarascon, Blacasset, Guillem de Montaignagol, Uc de Mataplan, Sordel, Lanfranc Cigala, and Ferrari de Ferrara.

---

61
find. And he made many songs.” Even the four *vidas* concerning poor-quality poets describe them in terms of *trobar* and *far.*

*Trobar* is, I conclude from this evidence, equivalent to *far* – finding and making poems, i.e. the lyric *canso* and other forms such as the *sirventes* – and, thus, it is poetic art; and any discussion of *trobar* is the discussion of *trobador* poetics. Furthermore, the alternative use of *enamorar se* suggests that it and *trobar* are also interchangeable synonyms, further supporting readings of the *vidas*, like the lyric poems to which they are attached, as erotico-poetically fluid entities.

Another secondary, critical source presents us with a third approach to the identity of *trobar*: Occitan poetics treatises. Most of these are from the late 13th – early 14th c., and thus considerably later than most of the corpus of Occitan lyric poetry. While the Occitan lyric “golden age” may stretch into the early 1200s, the Albigensian Crusade impacts poetic production from the second decade of the 13th c. onwards, and may have had an effect on manuscript production, preservation, and transmission. Through the 13th c., those poems that do remain move away from the *canso*; more of them are in a variety of other lyric forms, especially in satirical and polemical forms such as the political *sirventes*.

Most of the treatises we have, from around the end of the century, are thus at least two generations distant from the “golden age,” and with the extra distance of exile. This helps to explain a focus on instructing the reader in the Occitan language, particularly grammar. The language is falling out of use, falling into misuse, is in danger of dying, and meanwhile prospective poets and

---

54 Peire de Valeira *fetz vers... de paubra valor... sei cantor non ageun gran valor, ni el:* “he made verse...of poor value...his songs did not have great value, and nor did he.” Gaucelm Faidit *cantava peitz d’ome... fetz molt bos motz:* “sang the worst of all men [but] made many good words.” Elias Fonsalada *no bons trobaire mas noellaire fo:* “he was not a good *trobador* but he was a good short-story-teller.” Elias Cairel *mal cantava e mal trobava.*

55 Peirol’s *vida* – cited above – is a fine example of the triangular connection between *amar*, *far*, and *trobar*, resulting in a curious erotico-poetic triangle of poet, patron, and lady-muse (and patron’s sister): *e tant que la domna li volia ben e ill fazi per plazer d’amor a saubuda del Dalfin:* “the lady wished him well and ‘made’ him the pleasures of love, in the Dauphin’s knowledge.” The use of *saber* is significant: it, too, is linked to *trobar* in *vidas* – *saup*, *entendre*, etc. – and has both erotic and poetic senses, often simultaneously. The “knowledgeable” and “knowing” Guillem de Peitieus and Bernart de Ventadorn *saup ben... trobar;* Arnaut de Mareuil *sabia ben trobar e s’entendia be...* and, later, would have difficulties *de trobar* “of” his beloved.
appreciators of poetry wish to learn it the better to understand, work with, and continue the composition of Occitan lyric poetry. Yet these features of linguistic and cultural preservation are already present in the earliest extant treatise, that of Raimon Vidal de Besalú, dated between 1190 and 1213. If that date is pushed towards 1213, we can see how the earliest French southwards incursions are already having a dramatic cultural effect, and appreciate the treatise’s prescient awareness of the Crusade’s full destructive potential.

The treatises use examples drawn from real (poetic) usage – thus already functioning as a didactic sort of anthology. They may be punctuated with longer extracts, or whole poems, or followed by a collection of poems: thus functioning as a guided reader – raisonné, poems surrounded by their razos – or indeed a full anthology. These treatises, laudably didactic as they may be, are also literary works as they participate in a general movement of formal experimentation which may be seen to characterise the 13th century, including the chansonnier-anthologies; romances including embedded lyric pieces (such as Jean Renart’s works); and Flamenca, which, as I shall show through the course of this dissertation, is a romance which merges the allusive anthology with the strongly lyrical romance.

The later of these treatises would have been intended for foreign audiences and for others less linguistically cognizant of the generations after the Albigensian crusade and dispersal (particularly of the more literate population and their patrons). An example of this potential audience is offered in the shape of the last vida in Boutière-Schutz: that of Ferrari de Ferrara, a Lombard – foreign – master of the language who made a “book” (now lost) containing “extracts” and “sentences.” The way to learn this language is through its poetry: both through reading the extant poetry, and writing poetry oneself. And the language is inextricable from the poetry. This is the first of a series of indications I have found in the treatises to show a contemporary perception of Occitan as a fundamentally poetic language, and one in which trobar is a key term.

56 “Occitan” is a modern neologism, referring to the linguistic group from the geographical Languedoc, that includes but is not limited to Provençal. “Old Provençal” was the older, 19th through earlier 20th century, term for the same language; but that could appear not to include
Master Ferari was from Ferrara. And he was a joglar and understood Provençal trobar and the Provençal tongue better than anyone else in Lombardy ever. And he knew his letters well, and wrote better than anyone in the world, and made many good and beautiful books. And when joglars came there who understood the Provençal language, they all went to be with him and called him their master; if some came there who understood better than the others and who asked questions about his trobar or that of others, Master Ferari would always reply to them. And he made a collection of the songs of the good trobadors in the world; and he excerpted one or two or three stanzas from them, which bore the main message of the songs, and where all the words are carefully selected. And this collection is written down here; and he did not want to put any of his own stanzas in this collection; but he whose book this is has some written [down here anyway], that there might be a record/memory of him.

Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s Razos de trobar (c. 1190-1213; manuscript B version) opens:

Per so qar ieu Raimonz Vidalz ai vist et conegut qe pauc d’omes sabon ni an saubuda la dreicha maniera de trobar, voill eu far aqest libre per far conoisser et saber qals dels trobadors an mielz trobat et mielz ensenhat, ad aqelz qe.l volran aprenre, con devon segre la dreicha maniera de trobar. [...] Tota genz cristianas, iusieuas et sarazinas, emperador, princeps, rei, duc, conte vesconte, contor, valvasor, clergue, borgues, vilans, paucs et grantz, meton totz iorns lor entendiment en trobar et en

Gascon, Limousin, Auvergnat, Quercinois/Carcinòl, and the Alpine variant. Trobadors and other contemporary writers often leave the language’s identity ambiguous. In the event of clearer identification, what the language is called varies, as does the perception of what kind of linguistic things it is. Here in this (late 13th-early 14th century) vida, the language is called la lenga proensal. In Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s treatise (about a century earlier), it is la parladura de Lemosin, in which he includes proensa as well as Auvergnat and Carcinòl, and it is mutually inter-comprehensible with French. Jofre de Foixà (late 13th-early 14th century again) will refer to the whole linguistic group as romanç. This in turn recalls a very early naming of the language as romans (and contrasted, like in Jofre’s treatise, with Latin – lati) by the first known trobador, Guilhem de Petitieus, in Pos de chanter m’es pres talenz (late 11th-early 12th century). This matter of linguistic identification is continued in my discussion on p.15 of the relationship between Latin and Occitan, in linguistic politics.

57 Boutière-Schutz 581.
chantar, [...] Et tuit le mal e.l ben del mont son mes en remembransa per trobadors. Et ia non trobares mot [ben] ni mal dig, po[s] trobaires l’a mes en rima, ge tot iorns [non sia] en remembranza, [...]. En aquest saber de trobar son enganat li trobador [...] Ni non crezas qe neguns hom n’aia istat maistres ni perfaig; car tant e cars et fins le sabers qe hanc nuls homs non se donet garda del tot: so conoissera totz homs prims et entendenz qe ben esgard aqest libre. Ni eu non dic ges qe sia maistres ni parfaitz; mas tan dirai segon mon sen en aqest libre, qe totz homs qe l’entendra ni aia bon cor de trobar poira far sos chantars ses tota vergoigna.58

Because I, Raimon Vidal, have seen and known that few men know nor have known the right way to find, I want to make this book so as to make known which trobadors composed and taught the best, and from whom those who wish to learn may follow the right way to find. [...] All people – Christian, Jewish and Saracen, emperor, prince, king, duke, viscount, count, vavasour, cleric, burgher, peasant, small and mighty – constantly dedicate themselves to composing and singing [...] And all the bad and the good in the world are placed in remembrance by trobadors. And you will find never find an idea, whether it be well or badly expressed, that will not be remembered for ever once a trobador has set it to rhyme [...] And the trobadors are skilled in this science of composition. [...] Do not believe of anyone that he has been a past master of it, for this science is so rare and so refined that no one had command of the whole of it: anyone who is subtle and judicious will recognise this when they read this book. Nor do I say anything that is masterly or perfect; but I shall speak in this book according to my understanding so that everyone who heeds it or has the heart inclined to become a trobador will be able to compose songs without incurring shame.

We have here a clear definition of the trobador’s activity: an “art of finding.” Much of what follows runs in circles: so as to “find” properly, one must entendre - “hear” and/or “understand.” Infuriatingly, entendre is also what precedes trobar - “intention.” So it is also what precedes finding itself, in a continuous closed loop. Only the true adept can break through. Trobar could, by definition, be a trobar clus.

The cognitive leap into full knowledge, and its hermeneutic, hermetically sealed nature also has a spiritual aspect. It belongs to the same group of active and engaged reading processes as does exegesis; and it recalls a similar apparent lexical doubling, again with looping and hermeneutic aspects: quia videntes non

---

58 Marshall 1970: 2-4. I see Raimon Vidal’s aia bon cor de trobar as an expression of the internal and intuitive aspect of poetry, akin to the cor noble elsewhere in his works, and discuss this further in Chapter Three in relation to trobar / amor corals. All translations from Marshall’s edition are my own. I must thank Sarah Kay for her help in correcting my errors, particularly in this passage.
vident, et audientes non audiunt neque intelligunt (Matt. 13.13). Later, there is a curious and circuitous discussion of taste. The bulk of the treatise concerns grammar, as one must be able to use the language properly in order to compose well; a recurrent theme, picked up by Guillem, and also present in the vidas and razos: finding the right word. Choosing the right words, from the greatest possible knowledge of words available, is at the heart of the “art of finding.” This coincides with the imaginatio part of the rhetorical art. One must also know the right language for poetic composition – certain languages are appropriate for certain genres – and the words should be appropriate and proper.

Totz hom qe vol trobar ni entendre deu primierament saber qe neguna parladura non es naturals ni drecha del nostre lingage, mais acella de Franza e de Proensa e d’Alvergna e de Caersin. Per qe ieu vos dic qe, qant ieu parlarai de “Lemosy”, qe totas estas terras entendas et totas lor vezinas et totas celles qe son entre ellas. Et tot l’ome qe en aquellas terras son nat ni norit an la parladura natural et drecha. Mas cant uns d’els [es] eiciz de la parladura per una rima qe i aura mestier o per autra causa, miels o conois cels qe a la parladura reconeguda; et non cuian tan mal far con fan cant la iettan de sa natura, anz se cuian qe lors la[n]gages sia. Per q’ieu vuell far aqest libre per far conoisser la parladura a cels qe la sabon drecha et per ensennar a cels qe no la sabon.

La parladura francesca val mais et [es] plus avinenz a far romanz et pasturellas, mas cella de Lemosin val mais per far vers et cansons et serventes. Et per totas las terras de nostre lengage son de maior autoritat li cantar de la lenga lemosina qe de neguna autra parladura; per q’ieu vos en parlerai primeramen.

[...] Per q’ieu vos dic qe totz hom qe vuella trobar ni entendre deu aver fort privada la parladura de Lemosin. Et apres deu saber alqes de la natura de la grammatica, si fort primamenz vol trobar ni ente[n]dre car tota la parladura de Lemosyn se parla naturalmenz et per cas et per nombres et per] generes et per temps et per personas et per motz, aisi com poretz auzir si ben o escoutas.

All men who want to “find” and understand must first know that no speech is are natural or right in our language, except those of France, Provence, the Auvergne, and the Quercy. I tell you this because, when I shall speak of “Limousin,” you should understand all these lands, and all their neighbours, and

---

59 I use the Vulgate to draw attention to the use of intellego, which is close to entendre in its inclusion of conscious activity, thinking, and internality. These two words are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four. King James translation: “[Therefore speak I to them in parables:] because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”

60 This appropriateness, its aesthetic quality, and “reasoned” or “reasonable” usage will be discussed further in the next chapter, as an example of mezura, and as linked to saber, a key word repeated throughout and structuring the Razos (themselves, literally, “reasons”).

61 Marshall 4-6. I translate lingage as “language” as the other ms (Marshall’s edition reproduces both, on facing pages) has lengatge which is clearly “language” rather than “lineage.”
all those that are between them. And any man born and bred in these lands has
the natural and right speech. And some still make mistakes... And so I want to
make this book so as to make this language known to those who know it rightly,
and to teach it to those who do not know it.

The French language is well worthy and is the most suited to making
romances and pastorals, but that of the Limousin is the best for making moral
poems, love songs, and satirical songs. And for all the lands of our language, the
Limousin-speaking singers have greater authority than those of any other
language; and so I shall speak to you of them first.

[...] And so I tell you that any man who wants to “find” and understand
must be very intimate with the Limousin tongue. And next, you must know
something of the nature of grammar, if you really want to “find” and understand,
because all the Limousin tongue is spoken naturally, and by case, [number,]
gender, tense, person/voice, and by words: as you can hear well if you listen.

This passage presages Dante’s comments in De Vulgari eloquentia on the
three Romance vernaculars - oil, oc, and si – constituting his ydioma triphario:
Pro se vero argumentatur alia, scilicet oc, quod vulgares eloquentes in ea
primitus poetati sunt tanquam in perfectiori dulciorique loquela, ut puta Petrus
de Alvernia et alii antiquiores doctores. (“The second part, the language of oc,
argues in its own favour that eloquent writers in the vernacular first composed
poems in this sweeter and more perfect language: they include Peire d’Alvernhe
and other ancient masters.”)

The other three treatises are later – late 13th - early 14th c. - and may be
contemporaneous with Flamenca, partly as most of their poetic citations are from
the same late 12th-early 13th c. corpus that Flamenca draws on, from a “golden
age” of Occitan lyric. This poetic corpus serves as a “classical” and nostalgic
model for a poetic “renaissance” after a cultural decline and fall (the Albigensian
crusade and subsequent exile). These texts, like what Ferari de Ferrara’s vida
suggests of his book, show a didactic intent of returning to the language at its

62 Or: “native and proper.”
63 Dante, De Vulgari eloquentia, ed. and trans. Stephen Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge UP,
1996), book I, sections viii-x, particularly I.x paragraph 2: 22-23. I have used Botterill’s
translations throughout. My idea is hinted at very briefly by Marshall in The Cambridge History
of Literary Criticism. Volume 2: The Middle Ages, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson
(Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005): 485: “A distinct foreshadowing of Dante’s vulgare illustre is
perceptible here”, though he does not read the two texts together closely. Instead, he continues
his single-sentence comment along a different line: “in that it is the existence of an esteemed
literary tradition which confers on certain forms of the vernacular an ‘authority’ analogous to that
conferred on Latin by the classical auctores.” This statement fits Occitan poetics neatly within the
larger Western literary criticism that is the general subject of the surrounding book and the whole
Cambridge History of Literary Criticism series.
highest point, mention commemoration, use some deliberately antiquated forms, attempt to formally fix the language, and to renew it and its usage. These linguistic objectives resemble Dante's ones for Italian in the (roughly contemporaneous) *De Vulgari eloquentia*.

Occitan poetry continues through the 14th century in Italy, and also has a strong influence on Italian lyric from the first half of the 13th century onwards. But these treatises, and their efforts for an Occitan cultural renaissance in exile, seem not to have had the grand results intended. Occitan, as a *lingua franca* or *koine*, would have been a political irrelevance in a time of growing nationalism. Dante's contributions to the development of Florentine as the main literary vernacular in Italy were a major spanner in the works. On the first and third parts of the *ydioma triphario*, he declares:

Allegat ergo pro se lingua oïl quod propter sui faciliorem ac delectabiliorem vulgaritatem quicquid redactum est sive inventum ad vulgare prosaycum, suum est: videlicet Biblia cum Trojanorum Romanurumque gestibus compilata et Arturi regis ambages pulcerrime et quamplures alie ystorie ac doctrine. [...] Tertia quoque, *<que>* Latinorum est, se duobus privilegiis actestatur preesse: primo quidem quod qui dulcius subtillisque poetati vulgariter sunt, hii familiares et domestici sunt [...]; secundo quia magis videntur initi gramatice que comunis est, quod rationabiliter inspicientibus gravissimum argumentum.

Thus the language of oïl adduces on its own behalf the fact that, because of the greater facility and pleasing quality of its vernacular style, everything that is recounted or invented in vernacular prose belongs to it: such as compilations from the Bible and the histories of Troy and Rome, and the beautiful tales of King Arthur, and many other works of history and doctrine. [...] Finally, the third part, which belongs to the Italians, declares itself to be superior because it enjoys a twofold privilege: first, because those who have written vernacular poetry more sweetly and subtly [...]; and second, because they seem to be in the closest contact with the *gramatica* which is shared by all – and this, to those who consider the matter rationally, will appear a very weighty argument.

Italian has taken over poetry from Occitan. Furthermore, in the paragraph immediately before this one, Dante hesitates to order the three languages hierarchically, though reckoning that the Italian use of *si* shows its closer affinity to *sic*, and thus its pre-eminence via grammarians' *auitoritas*. Indeed, he uses that very word (in the *auitoritatem* form) for this linguistic superiority.

This period between the end of the 12th and the start of the 14th centuries seems to have featured a version of political events in the outside world, in a
battle for linguistic dominance in the Romance vernaculars, through literature. The territory is carved out cleanly between French (prose) and Italian (verse); despite the Occitan treatises’ best efforts, Occitan is no longer relevant in the arena of language politics. Our treatises, and indeed the Romance of Flamenca itself, are judged by history as the last gasps of a dying civilization; more positively, perhaps, as a rare glimmer of hope. Part of my argument for the inclusion of Flamenca in a late Occitan literary corpus – not just a freak – is its place in a group of summa works, which includes these treatises. Some of these works – Flamenca and the treatises – suffer more from the vagaries of history than others: namely, the chansonniers. Perhaps the latter’s survival and popularity may be attributed to their use as material for Italian lyric. This cultural imperialism – literally, as a fusion of translatio imperium and translatio studii – is a curious twist, as the chansonniers are usually perceived as a repository to preserve trobador lyric, and related to the treatises’ didactic intent for second language acquisition.

Terramagnino da Pisa’s Doctrina d’Acort is supposed to date from the late 13th century. Poetic and erotic arts are firmly intertwined in its intent and intended readership, as outlined in the preface (proemi): fauc mon Acort per.ls amadors / ques amon saber ab drechura (Marshall 29, lines 4-5: “I made my Accord for lovers / who love knowledge and right”). This is expanded as ... que vuoil sapchatz, amador / qui desiratz haver valor,/ [...] totas paraulas bonas (Marshall 30, ll. 55-57: “those who would know, lovers who desire to have value, [in] good words”). The Limousin is identified as the ideal language (Marshall 30, lines 31-34: parladura lemoyzina / es mays avinenz e fina / quar il quays se razona / con la grammatica bona). The treatise is, essentially, a grammar in verse, but with some poetic merit, such as a delightful erotic allusion in the section on the gender of nouns, which all should know – ben devetz tuyt saber ara – just as they should be capable of such fine discernment and understanding, not just grammatically: celui qu’entendimen fin / ha de masculin e de feminin (Marshall 33, lines 161-64). Trobar proper appears later, in a section associating

64 Dante, I.x.2 again..
“finding” with “understanding,” entendre, which I shall discuss further in Chapter Four in relation to the extension of trobar to include rewriting, reading, and rereading as parts of a seamless literary whole object.

The Doctrina de compondre dictats\textsuperscript{65} consists for the most part of a (rather vague) definition of poetic forms. Its opening and closing paragraphs, however, concern the art of trobar. Raimon Vidal uses entendre in the senses of “to hear,” “to listen,” and “to understand,” thus representing two or three stages in the cognitive process. This polysemy is picked up later in his text in the superficially redundant connoisser/saber, trobar/entendre, and auzir/escotar. It is echoed here in - again – saber/conexer, and in sgardar/vezer.

Aço es manera de doctrina, per la qual poras saber e conexer que es canço, vers, [...]list of other verse forms...]; per la qual raho, per les rasons desus dites quez eu t’ay mostrades, poras venir a perfeccio de fer aquestes sens errad, ses reprehensions, com fer ne volrras. E aixi son complides les dites regles ordenades per doctrina en trobar, per la qual doctrina cascus qui be les sgart e les veia, si es subtills d’entencio, pora leugerament venir a perfeccio de la art de trobar.

Thanks to this teaching, you will be able to know what poems, songs, [... and list of other verse forms...] are; for which reason, for the reasons below that which I have shown you, you may come to make these perfectly without error or reproach, as you want to make them. And here are the complete rules ordered by the “doctrine of finding,” by which each one who looks at and sees them well, if he is subtle in understanding, may lightly/easily come to perfection in the art of finding.

The first of the two anonymous treatises in manuscript Ripoll 129 (last decade of 13\textsuperscript{th} c.-first half of the 14\textsuperscript{th}) ends in similar vein: ... qui [...] se enten en la art de trobar ço es gint parlar e cortesia (Marshall 103: “who understand/are adepts in the art of finding, that is, gentle speech and courtesy”). The second treatise, on acceptable rhymes, indicates most usefully the contemporary perception of the older Occitan poets, and illustrates their “classical” nature with respect to a present “renaissance”: los entichs trobadors (Marshall 105: “the antique trobadors”).

Jofre de Foixà’s Regles de trobar (1286-91) proposes itself as a more user-friendly rewriting of Raimon Vidal’s treatise:

\textsuperscript{65} Marshall 96-97. He considers this as being by Jofre, and the concluding part to his Regles de trobar.
Raimon Vidal’s own terms are thrown back at him, but with the religious variation included in “all people” - cristianas, iusieuas et sarazinas – omitted, and replaced by alters homes laichs at the end of the list: a reflection on changes in attitude over the century that lies between the two works. Also, by this stage, the idea of this language has become fixed, perhaps as it is dying in exile; there is no long excursus on the nature of Limousin, and its constituent sub-parts, and the language is called romanç. He calls it “Provençal” (proençal) in a later passage stipulating the requirement to stay within the same language when composing poetry, without mixing in any others.  

---

66 Marshall 56.
67 I use “understand” throughout, although the word includes a sense of hermeneutic knowledge, “cognizance of this special subject.”
68 Marshall 64. Not that Occitan linguistics and poetics thus do not reject the possibility of a word being in one language and in another, and thus of having a double identity; and the acceptance of using the language creatively...
Gramatica is usually used with reference to Latin – for instance, in the De Vulgari eloquentia⁶⁹ - as I think it is here, linked here to its contrary, when someone is untaught or unschooled, such as laymen who do not know it, presumably through their lack of clerical training. Gramatica is pulled very close to trobar as both are described as arts: art de trobar, art de gramatica. Both are associated with saber (“knowledge”) and entendemen (“understanding”), and the whole introductory passage is framed by the opening and closing focus on trobar: en art de trobar savis e entendens, no...entendre ses saber la art de gramatica, no sabon gramatica, no.s entenden en gramatica, conexas... lo saber de trobar. Doctrina and ensenyamen are usually linked to Latin-based formal, clerical schooling (doctus being a level attainable at the Sorbonne, for instance), and are thus part of the same linguistic mode as gramatica. Doctrina en romanç, however, pulls romanç – Occitan – into this Latin-centred sphere, marking romanç as the inheritor of Latin, Dante’s “first” or “mother” tongue. Doctrina and trobar are also brought together, thus placing poetics on an equal footing with other higher knowledge: en art de trobar savis e entendens, no sabien doctrina e ensenyamen, pusquen mils conexas e apendas lo saber de trobar.⁷⁰

The Occitan language is thus brought on a par with Latin, not only “classical” – as seen previously - but of the same, formally fixed (“grammar-possessing”) status as Latin: whether that is interpreted as death or immortality. And Occitan is the true inheritor – as opposed, again, to Florentine Italian - of Latin. The fact that Jofre’s commission for his treatise is from his patron, James II of Sicily, is not irrelevant. Occitan is not only pitted against Florentine, but between two forms of Italian (and two emerging poetic schools). Jofre’s discussion of language is in some communication with Dante’s and both (or the one following the other) continue Raimon Vidal’s points about the poetic nature of Occitan.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Book I section i.
⁷⁰ This poetic use of doctrina recurs in the titles of Terramagnino da Pisa’s Doctrina d'acort and the Doctrina de compondre dictates. Like the regles of his title (recalling Raimon Vidal's dreacha maniera de trobar) and like ensenyamen, it may have a parodic aspect.
⁷¹ I shall not hazard a guess as to which preceded the other. The fact that there is intertextual communication, a communication of debate, seems to me to be the important issue for present purposes.
In a later passage of the *Regles*, however, Jofre extends the appropriate
languages for poetry to include French, Sicilian, and Galician, and some “others.”

Lengatge fay a gardar, car si tu vols far un cantar en frances, no.s tayn
que.y mescles proençal ne cicilia ne gallego ne altre lengatge que sia
strayn a aquell; ne ayten be, si.l fac proençal, no.s tayn que.y mescles
frances ne altre lengatge sino d'aquell.72

You should keep the same language, because if you want to compose a song in
French, it is not fitting that you mix in Provençal or Sicilian or Galician or an
other language that be foreign to that one [being used]; just as, if you compose in
Provençal, it is not fitting that you mix in French or any other language except
that one.

Not only are languages other than Occitan also appropriate for poetry;
initially, they seem to be placed here on an equal footing. Two languages are used
in the explanation, French and Occitan: they thus acquire greater rhetorical
weight. Occitan maintains its superior status, however: it concludes the sentence
and its thought, and is then discussed further in the rest of this section (and is,
indeed, the subject of the whole treatise). In the next part of the passage, Jofre
gives a nice description of linguistic inter-comprehensibility, extended to include
words shared with neighbouring languages:

Empero, si tu trobes en cantar proençals alcun mot qui sia frances o
catalanesch, pus hom aquell mot diga en Proença o en una de aquelles
terres qui han lengatge covinent, les quals lor sont pres, aquells motz potz
pausar o metre en ton trobar o en ton cantar; e si ayso fas, no potz dir per
axo que sia fals.E dels damunt ditz motz potz prendre exampli per aquestz:
/ païs, va, sus, e d’altres motz qui son frances e lemozi; axi com *dona o
 castell, saber, haver*, e motz qui son catalans e proençals; mes en los
cantars son mes proençals que altres.

If you find in a Provençal song any word that be French or Catalan; and if people
say that word in Provence or in one of those lands that have neighbouring
languages and are close to them; then you may use that word in your composition
or your song. And if you do so, it cannot be said that it is an error. The following
may be used as examples of the abovementioned kinds of words: *païs*
[“country”], *va* [“go”], *sus* [“under”], and other words that are French and
Limousin; and also like *dona* [“lady”] or *castell* [“castle”], *saber* [“to know”],
*haver* [“to have”], and [other] words that are Catalan and Provençal. But there
are more Provençal words in singing than [words from] other [languages].

72 Marshall 64. “Provençal” is not “the language of Provence.” It is defined in Jofre’s next sentence
as meaning “the languages of Provence, Vienne, Auvergne, and the Limousin, and other lands that
are close to them ...” (E sapies que en trobar proensales se enten lengatges de Proença, de Vianes,
d’Alvernya, e de Lemosi, e d’altres terres qui llur son de pres).
Usually, one should not mix languages in poetry. The only foreign borrowings permitted in composition are those words which are the same in both languages, and which the composer has already found in another, pre-existing, Occitan poem. So the one kind of linguistic mixing that is permitted is a poetic one, and it is one that allows the foreign language to acquire a poetic character. While linguistic inter-communication is recognized as a characteristic Occitan shares with other languages, this does not give them an equal status: there is more Occitan in song than any other language.

Whether the Occitan language is dead or alive at the time the treatises are written, and especially later ones such as Jofre’s, one thing is clear: Occitan is the language of trobar, and trobar must be in this language. Poetic art and knowledge of this language – the twin subjects of entendemen - are one and the same thing: poetic language.\(^\text{73}\)

### Trobar clus

*Trobar clus* is notoriously problematic. The general sense of *clus* is “closed.” *Trobar clus* is contrasted with *trobar leu*, or plan – roughly, “clear, light, plain, simple” – and the nearest we have to a full exposition and exploration of what these two kinds of poetry are is in poetic exchanges, about poetry, between Guiraut de Borneil and Raimbaut d’Aurenga. *Trobar clus* is a specific poetic term, used of a specific poetic style, where the “closure” is that of high formal inventiveness and “finding” is the game of compacting *raffiné* meaning in a *recherché* word. This parallels Roman Jakobson’s poetic function in language, in being compactly associative and richly allusive. *Trobar clus* leads to interpretative problems, as it may be only accessible to a few adepts who know the secret code needed to break open meaning. Such poetry is notoriously difficult and elusive, and making sense of it is still a matter of debate.\(^\text{74}\)

---

\(^\text{73}\) This section - on Occitan as a poetic language, the nature of *gramatica*, and the relationship between Dante’s *De Vulgari eloquentia* – may contribute to current debates about medieval linguistic and literary theory.

\(^\text{74}\) Modern readings of the *trobar clus* and the *clus/leu* debate stem from Ulrich Mölk’s book on the subject, *Trobar Clus/Trobar Leu: Studien zur Dichtungstheorie der Trobadors* (Munich: Fink, 1968); and Aurelio Roncaglia’s article, “*Trobar clus*: discussione aperta,” *Cultura neolatina*
That is the conventional, specific use of *trobar clus* as a technical term in *trobador* poetics. *Trobar clus* may also be used in its extended and metaphorical sense: simply “closed finding.” Ideas of “being closed” and “enclosure” appear throughout Occitan lyric, and the word *clus* appears in poems not usually associated with the *clus* style. I use the term in the broad sense, and as an idea and poetic theme, though a specifically formal aspect remains, reflected in the “enclosure” of lyric imprisonment.

*Clus* indicates that interpretation is key to making sense of the poem, as such deeper meaning provides the “key” to “unlocking” a poem; such poems are games, like later French *grand rhétoriqueur* acrostics. Until that key is found, a poem remains enigmatic and incomprehensible, its meaning closed. Once unlocked, a poem opens up and makes sense. The reader must thus engage in intense *trobar* activity to “find” the key. As with lock and key combinations in the real world, there may be only one key that fits and works; or there may be more than one; but there are keys that fit and keys that do not. This kind of poetry contrasts with poems of multiple possible interpretations, of truly open meaning.

*Trobar clus* clearly has a simultaneous erotic parallel: play, its object playing hard to get, then opening up and revealing all its secrets for the *trobador’s* enjoyment. That moment of *jouissance* in grasping the poem and possessing the object of desire is intense, but unrepeatable. The flirtation and seduction may be deliciously protracted, but may only end in a one-night-stand. If the *clus* has one single means of entry, more open alternatives may, in contrast, offer more numerous other entrances, and other, perhaps non-penetrative, means of enjoyment.

---

This idea is explored in a second debating poetic correspondence, the corn exchange of Truc Malec, Raimon de Durfort, and Arnaut Daniel; around the relative merits of the vaginal and rectal openings, and the obligation of a courtly gentleman and true lover to satisfy a lady’s right to anulingus, for which Arnaut coins the neologism cornar. Arnaut’s refusal leads to his lambasting as, effectively, a misogynist and sodomite (all, for the most part, within light, witty, fairly friendly if vicious repartee). Although this debate-exchange may be viewed as direly pornographic, or lightly ludic, when viewed in the context of the trobar clus vs. leu exchange, it becomes a piece of sheer brilliance. While remaining a joke and burlesque (closely parodying the other), and maintaining its simply plain amusing side, the corn exchange spells out the trobar exchange’s allusive sexual metaphor, and, the other way around, is itself a metaphor of the clus – leu dispute between . Read as a pair, the two exchanges illuminate each another and their intertwined erotic and poetic senses.

Some examples of usage might help. Guiraut de Borneil uses vers clus – “lines of poetry” or “poem” – in, for example, his poem Las flors del verjan. Trobar clus appears in his A penas sai comensar (l. 15), in Raimon de Miraval’s Anc trobar clus ni braus (l. 1), and in Aiso.m platz, Giraut de Borneil by Raimbaut d’Aurenga in poetic debate with Guiraut de Borneil (l. 3). Peire d’Alvernhe uses motz clus in Be m’en plazen (l. 5, serratz e clus), as does Sifre in Mir Bernart, mas vos y ay trobar (l. 16). Motz here may simply mean “words.” It may mean “words” as contrasted with sons - “sounds” – and indicate “meaning, idea behind word”: separating phonetic from the semantic, sign from signified. In another kind of distinction from sounds, motz may also distinguish the written word, the shape of words on the page, words as a visual thing with consequent extra meanings through purely visual word-play and linguistic games.

---

75 Corn is itself ambiguously “vagina” or “anus”; thus, cornar could also refer to cunnilingus – hence its refusal would suggest a distaste for women, and a misogyny which might be due to homosexuality. The exchange appears in a fine suggestively-named anthology: Pierre Bec’s Burlesque et obscénité chez les troubadours: le contre-texte au Moyen Âge (Paris: Stock, 1984). This poetic exchange features in Giorgio Agamben, “Corn: From Anatomy to Poetics,” in The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999): 23-42.
Peire d'Alvernhe’s use of clus in conjunction with serratz – “sealed, locked” – leads us to a set of poetically associated words, and the lock and key metaphor, indicating the coded nature of trobar clus and its accessibility by a single, or limited, means. Serratz suggests the tantalizing prospect of a tight fit inside the closed object of sexual desire. In Ieu chan, que.l reys m’en a preguat, Bertran de Born puts together a key – .l clau - and a lock – e.l enserra (l. 9), as does Guilhem de Berguedan, similarly, with clau and serra (l. 31) in Trop ai estat sitz coa de mouton. The lock-and-key motif is clear in Una ren os dirai, En Serra (Marcoat, l. 18): de cinc claus la ferratz – “closed it with five keys [locks].” In Bertolome Zorzi’s En tal dezir mon cors intra, “mercy” – acquiescence to sexual gratification – should be locked, clau, out of a lady’s chamber (l. 33).

Enclaure, “to enclose,” is used similarly. A lady may have closed herself off (from joys et pretz – “joy and merit” - in Gausbert de Puicibot, Per amor del belh temps suau, l. 25,); or she may hold the key (Sordel, Qan q’ieu chantes d’amor ni d’alegrier, l. 6). This may be the key to the lover’s heart, locked up as it is held prisoner by a personification such as Love, for instance in Peire Vidal, Ges pel temps fer e brau, l. 11: Amors e jois m’enclau – “Love and joy lock me up.” In Peire Bremon Ricas Novas, Si.m ten Amors ab douz plazer jauzen, this motif is indicated in the first line and specified in ll. 13 and 24; meanwhile, the poet carries the clau to fin joy - “fine joy / enjoyment” - in his heart (l. 2). In this poem, the final cobla moves from references to Amor in the third person, to the second-person pleading addressing of a lady, who might or might not be identical with Amor (feminine in Occitan): car vos tenetz la clau (l. 46), “as you hold the key.” The lady acts is guard-keeper and intercessionary in Bertran de Born’s Ges de disnar non for’ oimas maitis, where we have retinc mon cor dinz sa clau (l. 38: “retains my heart in her lock,” with obvious double-entendre); sai hieu ben que midons ten las claus (l. 5: “I know well that my lady holds the keys”) in Berenguer de Palazo, Tant m’abelis joys e amors et chans; and Arnaut de Mareuil’s La cortiez’ e.l guayez’ e.l solatz refers to ma dona ... / qu’a d’entier pretz e de fin joy las claus – “my lady... who has the keys to entire merit and fine enjoyment” (ll. 56-57).
Arnaut de Mareuil also provides a beautiful example of the heart locked up by Love, and featuring a chiasmic near-equivocal “imprisonment-rhyme” built around claus itself, in salutz V, “Totas bonas donas valens.”

C’Amors m’a ins el cor enclaus
Vostra valor e.I vostra laus,
(ll. 139-40)

E pus de vos no.m puesc partir,
Si autre be no.m deu venir,
Per Dieu e per merce vos clam
Qe no.us sia greu car vos am,
Qe no me.n puesc partir ni aus,
C’Amors a pre de mi las claus;
(ll. 161-66)

For Love has enclosed your worth and praise in my heart.
And because I cannot leave you, if no other good comes to me, in the name of God and Mercy I ask you not to be agrieved that I love you, as I cannot leave you and dare not do so, because Love has taken the keys from me.76

Amors and the enclaus-claus pair enclose a passage centred on the desired merce, which is immediately surrounded by a repetition of the unfortunate fact of being unable to leave (no.m puesc partir – no me.n puesc partir). The clam-am and aus-claus pairings form a phonetic chiasmus around, enclosing, and thus “imprisoning” me. The clam-am rhyme, with its loss of the cl-, reinforce the second term – “love” – as the resulting release through the first – “prayer.” This structure is repeated in the next couplet, but the other way around, as the desired release of aus is quashed by the returning cl- of claus.

Clus and claus may be positioned in conjunction with derivatives of cobrir, “to hide” or “cover”: cobert (Bertran de Born, Ieu chan, que.I reys m’en a preguat, ll. 9-10), cobre (Elias Cairiel, Lo rossinhols canta tan doussamen, l. 27). A feminine-genital-castle-image perhaps more famously recalled in the Roman de la Rose already appears in walls and enclosure – twin contrary imprisonments, the current one resisted, and the desired one – such as, respectively, no.m tenra murs ni clausura – “neither walls not enclosure will

hold me” (Raimbaut d’Aurenga, _Ar m’er tal un vers a faire_, l. 48) and _fan muraillz e clausura_ (Domina plaz vos el vers auzir, by Azar and also attributed to Albertet, l. 27). The terms used for imprisonment may also be pertinent to the closed object of sexual desire, and the paradoxical attractions of a tight fit.

_Claus_ is not infrequently used in rhyme schemes. Besides its use in aabb... and abab... patterns, in which it is simply one of several rhymes, -aus (including at least one claus) is used to strong effect in several poems. In Sordel, _Qau q’ieu chantes d’amor ni d’alegrier_, the aab scheme has –au as the b-rhyme, in which nearly every other one is a form of clau: clau, mon esclau, clau, [Crau], enclau. In some rather more metrically-complex poems, the first line of a _cobla_ (stanza) rhymes with the first line of the second one, and the others; second lines of _coblas_ rhyme; and so on. –Aus or –ausa is used as such a first rhyme in Arnaut de Mareuil, _Us jois d’amor s’es e mon cor enclaus_; Torcafol, _Cominal, en rima clausa_; Berenguier de Palazos, _Tant m’abelis joys e amors e claus_ (where it also appears as the first rhyme in the second half – pes – of a _cobla_); Arnaut Daniel, _En breu brisara.l temps braus_. The latter is also interesting in providing us with the typical rhymes for claus: _braus_ (“cruel”) – _laus_ (“praise”) – _suaus_ (“soft”) – _aus_ (“dare”) – _repaus_ (“repose”).

Other schemes place _claus_ towards the end of a _cobla_. -Au may be the rhyme for the penultimate line of every _cobla_ (Cercamon, _Ges per lo freg temps no m’irais_). In Giraut de Borneil, _S’es chantars ben entendutz_ , -aus is used as the last rhyme in every _cobla_, and attention is drawn to juxtaposition between the penultimate _cobla_’s _claus_ (l. 49) and the final non _aus_ (l. 53), emphasizing their connection through the topic of inescapable imprisonment. Cerveri da Girona picks this up in _Entre.ls reys e.ls baros_. In an abbacdc metrical scheme, the c-rhyme of –au(s) serves to divide off a _cobla_’s pes from its _frons_. Moving through the poem, the first _cobla_’s c-rhymes are _suzau_ (“sovereign”) and _clau_; in the second, _claus_ and _suzau_; producing a chiasmus and an effect of enclosure using _clau/claus_. This device is repeated in the next stanzaic pairs, with _n’aus / s’esjaus_ and _t’esjaus / au_; and _laus / pau_ and _repaus / lau_. The _tornada_ picks up two of the rhymes: _clau_ and _au_. Once again, _clau_ physically encloses – here, the phoneme _au_. A related effect is produced in another of his poems, _Obra sobtil_
prim'e trasforia, a sestina in which –au is the fifth-line rhyme. Starting with the first, every other –au is a derivative of clau: clau – esclau – desclau. Unlike the derivative device in the last poem, this one expands clau, including a final negation and unlocking; thus producing a final escape through subversive play.

There is further hope for escape, in a rare word, contraclau – “counter-key.” At the end of Guilhem de Peitieus, Farai un vers de dreit nien, this is something to be sent by return of post, by the poem’s recipient to its composer (l. 48). Contraclau appears in Pus del maiors prínceps auzem conten by Guilhem Fabre, where it rhymes with the preceding line’s clau (ll. 13-14): a highly appropriate derivative rhyme. It occurs in Belha m’es la flors d’aguilen (Peire d’Alvernehe, also attributed to Bernart Marti; l. 12). It is strategically positioned: the coblas follow an AB rhyme scheme alternating –en / -or, with a final line in –au. Returning to Peire Bremon Ricas Novas, Si.m ten Amors ab douz plazer jauzen, contra-clau makes an appearance (l. 35) as something that might be made – pot far contra-clau – and so may be a second, supplementary key of some sort. This is emphasized by the poem’s use of –au as the B-rhyme in an ABBA structure in the first part (frons) of every cobla, with clau at the rhyme in the second line of every cobla except the second-last one, which has contra-clau.

The exact reference here to contra-clau is in the negative form, as the lady’s “value” is so secure that no laire – “thief” - can make such a counter-key. Putting contra-clau together with laire in this way emphasizes subversive activity. When this is added to another form of poetic subversion encountered in several abovementioned poems - derivative rhyme – a case may be made for the hypothesis that there are ways of subverting single-path clus and its claus, in order to escape the imprisonment of trobar clus.

1.3 Reading Flamenca as a canso of amor cortesa

This chapter’s next section is of a more practical bent, showing what Flamenca does with amor cortesa / clusa and trobar clus / cortes. I focus on the first-person voice in the Romance of Flamenca and explore this romance’s lyric aspect, and how it comments on the lyric aspect of romance in general.
Amor appears in Flamenca in three main forms. Amor plain and simple will be discussed in Chapter Four. Amor coral, “hearty love,” appears in Chapter Three. Amor cortesa, “courtly love,” is the subject of this chapter and the next. It maps onto the so-called “Ovidian art of love,” seduction, the first erotic stage. The courtly aspect lies in deceit, disguise, and false appearances, leading to problems of how to read courtly words and behaviour, as socially-acceptable superficial code covering – perhaps – a different, sincere, and true meaning.

I read Flamenca as a romance of lyrico-narrative fusion in three senses. First, Flamenca may be read as a narrative recounting amor clusa and trobar cortes; or, of trobar amor clusa e cortesa: “finding a love that is closed and courtly.” Second, it narrates and narrativizes lyric. Pulling these two senses together, Flamenca can be read – and that is how I read it in this dissertation - as a linear narrative, following the amorous adventures of a central protagonist, which coincide with a compositional adventure: a conjoined erotic and poetic adventure. Third, Flamenca is a metaphorical criticism of trobador lyric poetry, and so provides an equally metaphorical explanation for this poetry’s evolutionary failure, and, by extension, for the demise of Occitan culture. Flamenca critiques trobar, amor, clus, cortes and their combinations in the negative sense of sending them up, for example thorough caricature; but also in the positive sense of suggesting ways of escaping lyric entrapment and subverting courtliness.

First, then, I read the Romance of Flamenca as a long lyric poem, an extended canso. Lyric is expanded, slowed-down, and seen close-up. The reader can see in full detail the lyric workings only glimpsed subtly in a lyric poem of the more usual, shorter length. During these first readings of the poem, I try to “find”

77 or “allegorical,” in the most basic sense of exegetical reading as an exercise in the interpretation of a text possessing more than one layer of meaning. In this case, it may be a limited allegory, extending only to a text talking about textuality. The allegorical end of finding salvation may, here, be one of understanding this text, and through it understanding literature more generally. The kind of interpretation which Flamenca appears to encourage could extend its allegorical sense to the full one. A “good” reading may be one that is aware of its wider meaning: compassion for characters, human sympathy, understanding, and the importance of choice and of seeing the full picture to achieving fuller understanding of the text. This wider meaning may, in turn, lead to the higher allegorical levels: here, Occitan history, human history, and the path to religious salvation.
and follow a single “course,” a single voice and person, from whose point of view
events are recounted. The first person I approach is the most obvious candidate:
Guillem, a young male hero, masculine lyric lover, a producer of lyric poetry in a
love-story, and so an intertwined erotic and poetic central protagonist. Narrative
and commentating voices report and study the action through the eyes of that
protagonist, and often provide their intentions, ruminations, and interpretation
of events. In a further degree of narrativization of lyric action, we see a fusion of
lyric and its accompanying *vidas* and *razos*, as can also be observed in the main
repository for Occitan lyric, the *chansonniers*.

My preliminary readings worked to some extent: insofar as they enabled
me to track the erotic and poetic process in slow motion, see how the two fitted
together, and produce a broad sketch of how *Flamenca* was structured by a
second conjunction, that of its lyric and narrative aspects. The readings were not
completely successful, however, and produced many marginal textual glosses to
that effect. These guided my next readings of *Flamenca*, and this dissertation’s
resulting Chapters Two, Three, and Four. The main lesson learned from the first
readings, however, was that what I was doing was *trobar*, albeit failed *trobar* at
that stage. A second path of *sen* and *cor* enters into play,
in the perspective (*sen*)
on the chase (*sen cor*) to the heart (*cor*), effectively what is happening in each
character’s pursuit and self-conscious reading of their own love-story, and what
the reader herself is doing. Such threads are *sen* – “path,” “direction,” “meaning”
– and one sense of *cor* – “course,” “current,” “path”: we thus have a pursuit of
*trobar cor*, in which lyric’s poetic component, *trobar*, extends into reading. The
theme of failed *trobar*, of not seeing true because of skewed perspective, is
exploited by the poem’s play with the reader’s attempt to follow the narrative
from the point of view of any single character, as at points along the way
ambiguities will be strewn which must disrupt even the most clear-cut sympathy
with any single protagonist to the exclusion of the others. I therefore attempted
to find a way around that by reading *Flamenca* from every possible point of view.

Each protagonist’s narrative includes a counter-current of readings, that
is, misreadings and misunderstandings, of which that person may (ironically) or
may not be aware. The *trobar* examined in the next chapters, as is often the case
in Occitan lyric, goes beyond erotic and poetic “finding,” into an epistemological and metaphysical theme, of finding truth and knowledge and achieving a higher state of understanding. *Flamenca* can be read as a metaphorical extension of erotic and poetic “finding” and “understanding,” for instance in running puns around *entendemen* and *entendre* which may structure and bind together a work, playing on all its senses: hearing, listening, understanding, and the mutually satisfactory understanding or arrangement reached by lovers. The aural sense of *trobar* has thus often been emphasized.

*Trobar* also has to do with sight, through the moment of illumination accompanying understanding. It can thus be connected to vision and illumination, illusion and delusion; in all cases, highlighting the problem of sight’s single direction and untrustworthiness. The visual has a privalged status in the period as the highest sense. The visual is the firmest kind of legal evidence – for example, in cases of adultery. Yet this is also the sense furthest removed from its object. A.C. Spearing remarks: “The ‘subtlety’ of sight has to do with its unique status among the senses as the only one that involves no material contact with its object [...] and this means that it gives least satisfaction to bodily desire [...] material possession of its object.”

Although Spearing’s intention here is to connect medieval theories of vision and of sex, as groundwork for a medieval theory of voyeurism, his comments on the lack of contact with the object are more widely applicable. They sit very well with the mix of erotics, poetics, and knowledge shared by the idea of *trobar* and by *Flamenca*.

As is clear throughout *Flamenca*, the gaze of the other is invariably what brings the self into being; it is also a gaze that does not see true and so brings into a false or incomplete being, at the very least of skewed perspective. This visual approach to *trobar* results in an escape inwards, at the same time an imprisonment within the self, into realistic dreams and fantasies with a blurring of the boundaries between realities. It produces an entrapment in the world of appearances, most importantly the narrative and structural entrapment in the

---

court. This multiply-unsuccessful visual *trobar*, then, is the second of our hybrid terms, *trobar cortes*.

Lyric’s use of *tornadas* at the end of the poem produce effects of imprisonment. It is vital to *Flamenca’s* criticism of *trobador* lyric that our romance tells a story, or rather, three intertwined stories, of imprisonment. In a sense, it is a giant sophisticated pun around *tor* – the “tower” in which Flamenca is imprisoned – and *tornada*. While the two are not etymologically related, *Flamenca* brings them together in a device made to look like a grammatical rhyme built around *tornar*, “to turn.” *Tornar* recalls the Lat. *vertō*, *vertere* - “to turn” and “to plough,” related to *versus* - “a turning,” “the turn at the end of a furrow,” and the image-related “a line of poetry.” From *versus*, in turn, we have obtained the Occitan and modern French *vers*.

It is a fundamentally lyric romance, a romance narrating the lyric, through its intertwined central themes of *amor*, *trobar*, and the *clus* of imprisonment and a *prendre/pres* based kind of love, which is *cortes*.

The most strikingly courtly aspect of *Flamenca* is that what traps protagonists the most firmly is the court itself, in the shape of a structural frame around the romance’s main lyric action, a frame set at court. The apparent ending - that is, the last episode in *Flamenca’s* manuscript before it stops – is set at the court which Archimbaut holds, after his reconciliation with Flamenca, his liberation of her, and the end of his jealousy and madness. This court-episode works well as a large-scale *tornada*. An attempt is made to turn outwards, and all

---

When Archimbaut is maddened by jealousy, he moves around his tower a lot (ll. 1248, 1313, 1358 – *le gelos vai soen e ve*, “the jealous man would come and go”), and the tower is mentioned as that which holds Flamenca and her ladies captive (ll. 1304, 1365). He is himself a paradoxical prisoner, as he wanders around, holding the keys (ll. 1358-62): *Ges gaire non estet em pla, / anz vai entorn sa tor garan / et apinzant e remiran*. (ll. 1360-62: “restless, fitful and ill at ease, / he roamed about the tower, trying / all he could find, peering and spying”). The earlier *vai* is echoed, in this perpetual motion; and l. 1361’s central *vai entorn sa tor* pulls *tor* and *entorn* together.

A similar motif reappears when Guillem, recently installed at the inn, turns repeatedly to gaze on the tower in which Flamenca is imprisoned. This longish episode is punctuated by *tor* and *tornar*, leading up to the punch-line of Guillem’s love-lyric uttered at the window and addressed to *na Tor*, “lady tower.” The passage runs from his *torment* (l. 1832), through *tor* (ll. 1943, 1950, 1966, 2126, 2148) and *tornar* (ll. 1854, 2105, 2142). The densest juxtaposition of *tor* and *tornar* is, again, towards the end of the passage and a high point to do with both terms: following the address to the tower, Guillem swoons, and while his squires return his unconscious form to his room, he apparently enjoys Flamenca in a rapturous dream-vision (*la tenia... en visio*, ll. 2155-56), “in the spirit/mind” (the *esperit*, ll. 2147 and 2170, framing the fainting-episode).
three principal protagonists are seen in a larger context, interacting with each other and with other people at court. Another tornada-like feature is the main action recounted in these last few pages of our narrative, a potentially endless repetition of day-long tournaments, to which are attached a string of named persons, who may occupy the role of patron in this work. Their names have been a source of endless fascination and speculation to more literally, historically-bent scholars – very like a parallel fascination, by the same school of thought, with the senhals used in tornadas. But it is the tournaments themselves which offer the most emphatic allusion to the tornada, and to its connection to imprisonment. A tournament involves turning around at the end of a gallop, between rounds. If its whole course were sketched on a page, it would have the same form as a poem: lines; turns – tornar, and the fundamental versus of poetry – between lines, which at once separate and connect them; subdivisions in the action, between rounds, like stanzas. Flamenca’s tournament continues for (at least) three days, providing a further movement of repeated turnings-around from one day to the next. Due to the ending being missing, there is no indication as to when, if ever, the tournament will end. Our protagonists are trapped in a nightmarish perpetual court, in a curiously ambivalent ending.

We have seen how Flamenca is structured “lyrically” at the level of the whole poem, which may be read as a narrative of lyric from a protagonist’s point of view. Flamenca is also divided into episodes distinguished from one another by differences in focalization and perspective on the action, a lyric feature in its focus on a single protagonist, his internal workings, and external expression in words (and deeds). Such an episode ends in a tornada writ large, with aspects of

---

80 This part of the text is densely ornamented in the manuscript, with decoration which focuses on these jousting aristocrats’ names. The intent may be straight or parodic. It could work as a protective device for the work, assuming that censors focus on the beginning and ending, skim through the middle, with their attention being particularly attracted by the more ornamented sections of the text, such as, here, the ending’s seemingly innocuous jousting. Interestingly, the more erotically-charged parts of the romance and those of a religiously more scandalous nature (for instance, Guillem’s blasphemous underminings, including his scriptural reinterpretations in church) are not ornamented. A simpler explanation is also possible, linking decoration to action that lends itself to depiction, and a lack of decoration to a lack of action in passages of inward-looking contemplation and commentary.
movement: physical movement and change in voice. Here, this may be a transition-passage, in which the scene changes, with a change of time and place. There may be reference to writing or the sending of communications (messsatges being ambiguously either “message” or “messenger” or both). An episode may end in a full change of voice, with some direct speech.

*Flamenca* divides into episodes that form a nearly symmetrical, closed-circle structure, in which episodes are “framed” by other episodes outside them, in a near-chiasmic *mise en abyme*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Focalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-152</td>
<td>Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1562</td>
<td>Court/Archimbaute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1563-3949</td>
<td>Guillem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3949-6659</td>
<td>Guillem+Flamenca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6660-7181</td>
<td>Flamenca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7182-8095</td>
<td>Court/Archimbaute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7949-8095</td>
<td>Court</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The episodic construction is imperfectly circular, as the first and last episodes shift subtly between a diffused focalization representing the court’s point of view, and Archimbaute’s perspective. The very beginning and end – ll. 1-152 and 7949-8095 - seem to be from a purely courtly point of view, so it would be tempting to add an outermost frame, around the Archimbaute/Court one. It must, however, be borne in mind that we are missing some folios at the beginning and end of the manuscript, and that the quire structure is quite disrupted at the beginning and from around l. 7100. The outermost frame must, for the time being, remain uncertain. This is one reason that the main body of this present work reads the narrative up to that point. I do deal with one episode near the beginning of this final part, in which, under curious circumstances, Archimbaute delivers a salutz – an amorous epistle in verse – written by Guillem to Flamenca (ll. 7042-99). The episode functions as *Flamenca*’s nodal point, bringing together all three of the

---

81 My division of the text by lyric episodes is supported by the manuscript’s own division, in which larger, decorated capitals and marginal decoration are used to separate parts of the text the same way. Scribes and copyists may thus play a role in the text, as fused writers/readers, guiding others’ reading and making their own mark on the text, which becomes an integral part of it.
principal protagonists, weaving together their narrative threads, and representing the culmination of each of their erotic and poetic adventures.

In reading Flamenca, I was faced with an immediate problem: who is the central protagonist? The first character to show any signs of internal life, whose reactions and thoughts appear and who could be deemed “central” to the narrative, is Archimbaut, the jealous husband. Some 1200 lines after his first appearance, attention moves to Guillem, the prospective lover. Another 2000 or so lines later, narrative focus then shifts between Guillem and Flamenca, the object of both men’s desires, for the middle third of the romance. Meanwhile, Archimbaut has never been completely out of the picture. After reconciliation with her husband and breaking up with her lover, Flamenca becomes the focal point. Later, focalization shifts from one, to another, to the third. I concluded that any and all of the three can be a central protagonist: it is up to the reader to choose to follow one of them, or to attempt, as I do through this dissertation as a whole, to follow all three. This is already an important step in the reading, interpretation, and understanding of the Romance of Flamenca. Nearly all readings of Flamenca have focused on Guillem as the principal protagonist, and the few which even consider Archimbaut and Flamenca do so very much in the shadow of the young male lover as natural main focus. This present dissertation will be the first time, to my knowledge, that any attempt has been made to read Flamenca from the point of view of each of the three protagonists, and to make something of the fact that it can be read in this way.

I follow each of the three central protagonists – Guillem, Flamenca, and Archimbaut - in their adventures. In each case, the adventure is erotic - the pursuit of love – and poetic – a narrative of finding, of searching for sense and for

---


the self, and which involves writing. Through its double erotic and poetic sense, each protagonist’s narrative is a lyric one: a love story, and love-lyric writ large. The first-person voice being the fundamental lyric feature, I pay particular attention to protagonists’ direct speech and the reporting of their thoughts. I investigate, in each of the three narratives, approaches to *amor, clus, cortes*, and *trobardor*. Summing them up grossly, all three narratives attempt to find love, to achieve some form of desire, which coincides with what I term a “primary lyric mode” typical of first-person voice lyric poetry and its matching desire for an amorous object, the stuff of stereotypical *trobador* lyric, a self-centred desire which has something to do with *amor cortesa*. This love has something to do with taking - *prendre* and pres/pris – which is linked to imprisonment, and to the court and its values. Narratives thus entwine *amor cortesa* with *trobardor cortes*.

These amorous attempts also have something to do with self-examination and finding the truth and/or the true – for example, the true lover – and with escaping from the closed circle of despair in which protagonists find themselves, locked up inside themselves in unrequited love, in not knowing how they and their love are perceived, in the incapacity to express it, and in not seeing clearly, yet desiring and bring attracted by clarity. Indeed, Flamenca herself becomes the symbol of clarity, a beacon of all that is not *clus*. Themes of imprisonment and escape are clearest in the tale of Flamenca herself, as damsel in distress, locked in isolation in a high tower. This may be connected to Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*. The circularity in evidence is lyric, in the sense of Paul Zumthor’s “circularité du chant,” and is a form of imprisonment, as a protagonist is trapped within himself, and expresses himself, in his direct speech, in circular and “imprisoning” constructions characteristic of lyric, involving devices such as the *tornada*, chiasmus, and the “trope of suspended gnosis.” I see this as an *amor clusa*. Appropriate to episodes dealing with a love fundamentally of frustration, attempts end in failure; and indeed all three narratives – like much Occitan lyric
poetry\textsuperscript{83} – fail to end, or end in failure. I interpret this as \textit{Flamenca}'s most biting critique of \textit{amor cortesa} and its link to \textit{trobar clus}.

\textit{Flamenca} may thus be read as a protracted \textit{canso}, from the point of view of each of the three principal protagonists, recounted as a \textit{razo} to their lyric narrative, in which they try to find some escape from \textit{trobar clus / cortes}. The next chapter is devoted to the \textit{canso} of Guillem. His character and story fit exactly to those of the typical lyric poet-lover. Young, male, enacting the first stage of love (The Before), he maps this primary erotics exactly onto the primary poetics of the Occitan \textit{canso}. Flamenca, on the other hand, is female, and enacts secondary-mode erotics (The During) and poetics (the \textit{tenso}), in a fundamentally dialogic way. She is considered in Chapter Three. The narrative of Archimbaut is that of an old(er) man, associates tertiary-mode erotics (The After) and poetics (\textit{salutz, novas, romans}), and appears in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Reading \textit{Flamenca} as a lyric poem writ large, its conclusion is a double \textit{tornada} writ large. Both \textit{tornadas} move away from a single first-person voice and point of view, and move towards the court. The first \textit{tornada} is a scene that brings all three protagonists together, and their three narrative strands, at a lovers’ mock court. Like a lyric \textit{tornada}, this scene is dense with literary imagery, including an embedded literary object; like the \textit{tornada}'s play with itself as the double \textit{messatge} – “messenger” and “message.” The second \textit{tornada} is the romance's final part, when the affair resumes at court; it is an anticlimactic echoing ending, with the first \textit{tornada} as the narrative’s culmination. The next three chapters culminate in readings of this first \textit{tornada} from each protagonist's point of view. Some time after Flamenca ends the affair and sends him away, Guillem transmits a message to her, via the intermediary of Archimbaut: \textsuperscript{84}

\begin{quote}
“Segner”, fai s’il [Alis], “es amoros cel cavalliers qu’es aitam pros?
Car hom dis qu’aital cavallier non sabon esser plazentier,
Sir, this knight who so nobly strove,
How is he in the field of love?
’Tis said that warriors of his sort Do not know how to woo or court.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{83} See Agamben 1999.
\textsuperscript{84} The following reading, and other readings of the scene elsewhere in the dissertation, are parts or elaborations of an article, “Making Sense of a Lacuna in the Romance of Flamenca,” forthcoming in \textit{Tenso} (Spring 2006).
quar per lur forsa tan si preson
que donnei e solas mespreson."
–S'es amoros? O[c] el, per Dieu!
bell'amigueta, plus ques ieu.
E ben-s deu per rica tener
tota domna qu’el deïn voler.
E per so que mielz m’en cresas,
un breu qu’en esta borssa-m jas,
de-que-I preguei que-I m; escriusses
per tal que de s’amor saupes,
vos mostrarai ara dese;
e si m’[en] logasses fort be
............................
E ja non dires, quant aures
las salutz que i son apresas,
ques hanc n’ausisses plus cortesas.”
Flamenca dis: “E dis! bel[s] seiner;
sembla que-us vuillas d’Alis feïner
quar l’aportas cartas e brieus.
Mais sest fe[i]ners non m’es ges grieus,
ans vos dic que m’es bons e bels,
quar hanc pessest que ver[s] novelz,
cobla ni rima ni chanson
non aportasses tal sazon?
E prec que vezen mi, si-us plas,
estas salutz vos eis digas,
car vos la[s] sabres mielz legir
e faire los motz avenir,
qu’austra ves las aves legidas;
E s’ellas son assi polidas
con vos dises, quant las sabrem
volontieras vos logarem.”
En Archimbautz fo mout joios
e dis: “Dona, fe que dei vos,
cel que las salutz mi donet
mais de .III. ves mi preguet
non venguesson entr’avols mans,
ni ja non las ausis vilans,
car de la bella de Belmont,
qu’es li plus bella res del mont,
de vos en lai, car o auses ...
(ll. 7055-99)

This is a *judici d’amors* or lovers’ mock-court, in which Flamenca, accompanied by her ladies Alis and Margarida, presides over the case of her postulant husband,
Archimbaut, who wishes to prove himself to her as a good lover, a fin’amans, both as a viable erotic possibility and in his poetic good taste.85

The judici d’amors scene could have concluded Flamenca. It brings together all the principal protagonists, albeit one of them by parchment proxy, present in the spirit but not in the flesh, or indeed in word but not flesh. What seemed clear-cut roles in a love-triangle are confused, as the husband and lover are now firm friends, and the husband presents himself to his lady as a prospective lover. All three have some hand in the salutz – from composition through reception and into later continuations coming out of it – and it may be argued that it belongs to any one of them. The end of the scene, immediately before the lacuna, leaves the reader in suspense: will Archimbaut win the challenge and so win Flamenca? The shift in focalisation occurring in the judici d’amors scene emphasizes such uncertainties. It is part of a longer episode in which events are viewed from Flamenca’s point of view.86 The judici d’amors scene, however, moves outwards into a more distant and neutral observation of events; away from indirect speech and its reporting of protagonists’ thoughts, and towards direct speech; and towards narration from the point of view of the court.

For Flamenca to end in a salutz, with preceding judici d’amors, would be doubly acceptable in terms of composition and content. The salutz, (a) love-letter(s) in verse, is often a farewell at the end of the affair. It may be a greeting, in the continuation or - in the case of women letter-writers - an attempt to renew, revitalise, and rekindle the affair.87 It may suggest coming from beyond the hope

---

85 Judici d’amors intertextually related to Flamenca would include Andreas Capellanus, De Amore libri tres; Raimon Vidal de Besalú, Castia gilos; and Peire Guillem, La Cort d’Amor. Floire et Blanchefleur, Auxassin et Nicolette, and La Châtelaine de Vergy – again, works alluded to by Flamenca - also end in this way. It is of course not uncommon for court scenes to close 12th-13th century romances.

86 This episode runs from the lovers’ exchange of hearts and the (approximately) end of the affair (l. 6897), through to the end of Flamenca’s lyric composition (ll. 7171) and its aftermath, when the salutz afford consolation to alleviate the ladies’ sufferings in the absence of their lovers (ll. 7181).

87 Peter Dronke, Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (203) to Marguerite Porete (1310) (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984). Good examples of this feminine poetics/erotics, and its different libidinal economy, would be Ovid’s Heroides, the Abelard and Heloise correspondence, and certain trobairitz poems: Comtessa de Dia, “A chantar m’er de so q’ieu no volria” [PC 46,2] and “Estai ai en greu cossier” [PC 46,4]; Castellosa, “Amics, s’ieu.us trobes avinen” [PC 109,1] and “Mout avet z faich lonc estatge” [no PC number]; and of course the salutz of Azalais d’Altier, “Tanz salutz e tantas am” [PC 42a]. See further in the three current editions of the trobairitz corpus: Bec, Chansons d’amour des femmes-troubadours
of reply, or from beyond the (oft metaphorical) grave. As Jean-Charles Huchet writes, a possible model, Arnaut de Mareuil’s epistolary romance, includes salutz ranging between about one and two hundred lines. Another model for the salutz is the shorter, stanza-long letters effectively contained in dialogue- and debate-poems. The salutz is “made” — trobat - in some sense by each of the characters involved in the central love-affair and poem, to which we can assume (from Flamenca’s reaction) it alludes, at the very least. All of them have a hand in its making: more obviously, the lovers - Guillem and Flamenca. Flamenca was the muse and inspiration for the salutz. Guillem was the writer. The salutz might include some reference to their affair, and indeed some of their tenso’s words, rendering Flamenca and Guillem co-authors.

The transmission of the salutz to Flamenca and the text of the salutz itself are unreadable as they also happen to be physically absent from the text, due to a lacuna. The text’s continuation after the lacuna starts out with an ecphrastic description at the top of folio 123, of what Flamenca sees before her on the salutz:

Doas ymages ben formadas
i ac faias tan sotilmen
vivas semblavan veramen.
Sil davan de ginoiz estet
e dreg vaus l’autra susplejet.
Una flors l’issi per la boca
que totz los caps dels verses tocha;
et a la fin autra n’avía
que-l[s] pren atresí totz e-ls lia
e-ls men’enssem totz a l’aureilla
de l’autre’mage, on consella
en forma d’angel fin’ Amors,
qu’entenda so que.l mostra.l flors.
(Il. 7100-12)

Two images of graceful shape,
Drawn with skill so superlative
That truthfully they seemed to live,
One figure ‘fore the other kneeling,
An air of suppliance revealing,
Forth from its mouth, to where each line
Began, there was a flower design;
And, where the lines ended, another
Appeared to tie them all together,
And lead them all into the ear
Of the second. There doth Love appear
In angel guise, as counselling
Heed to the words the flowers bring.


Epistolary and consolatory forms converge, for instance in the clever juxtaposition of high sincerity with artificial first-person voices, in the Heroïdes and in Amores II.

We move abruptly from direct speech and the external world of the romance, into the deeply internal space of private reading. The narrative zooms in on the letter in extreme close-up. Due to this close-up, the letter becomes part of the narrative and, as a sub-text, a fold, of different reality within that of the romance. The letter is another dimension inside the surrounding text, as this romance is with respect to its readers. The description acts as a transition-passage, but here the transition is in the movement of reading, via physical reading-material itself, and fully exploits the *message* ambiguity, as the *salutz* are at once message and messenger, and the scene before us is a *mise en abyme* replica of the external reader relating to this present text of *Flamenca*. 


2. The *Canso de Guillem*: *trobar clus*

Guillem enacts a narrative of primary lyric *canso* writ large, in an adventure of *trobar*, with the aim of becoming a good *aman* and *trobador*: lover and poet. I look at how *trobar* and *amor* are used around and by him, looking particularly for his own self-identification. Besides elements in the narrative, the imprisonment of *amor clusa* may be detected in Guillem’s direct speech, in poetic figures of circularity, turning-around, and entrapment. His quest is twofold: to escape this lyric entrapment, and to achieve a new identity as a lover-poet, in self-re-fashioning. These may be united in a poetic and erotic space outside the romance’s internal real (courtly) world, including escape into fantasy. *Trobar clus* provides a second solution to the *amor clusa* problem, when Guillem becomes part of the court.

The *canso* of Guillem, summarised briefly, is an expansion of the events of *trobador* love poetry: lyric writ large.¹ Our romance falls into three main parts, mapping onto the three stages of love: the before, the during, and the after.

In the first part (lines 1-3949), a young man, perfect in every way but one, falls in love with a woman who is unavailable and unattainable, in this case because she is married and imprisoned in a tower, guarded by her jealous husband. Our hero’s only imperfection is a lack due to youthfulness. Although academically well-educated at the Sorbonne, a fully-fledged knight, and a fine courtly gentleman, he is in need of the “finishing school” of a practical *éducation sentimentale*. Assisted and advised by Love (*Amor*, who/which is feminine in Occitan), he falls in love with the appropriate target sight unseen, at a distance, and by habit and repute. When he does eventually see her, he is struck blind by love. When he finally speaks to her, at the end of this first part, he is struck dumb, as all his previous book-learning and Amorous inspiration fail him; he can only produce a spontaneous exclamation, *hai las* - “alas.”

¹ Topsfield, for example, traces Guillem’s narrative as an Ovidian *éducation sentimentale*, culminating in his mastery of the arts of love, such as disguise, deception, and deceit: “Intentionality and Ideas in *Flamenca*,” *Medium Aevum* XXXVI (1967): 19-33.
Most of his narrative is spent wallowing in despair. He details his sufferings from love-sickness such as constant stabbing pains in the heart, problems with sleep, looking off-colour, and feeling hot and cold; punctuated by occasional faints and dream-visions. Our lover’s complaints demonstrate a second imprisonment, that within, and possibly by, the self. He pleads with Amor – the goddess and/or personification of Love – to heal and free him, and he also tries to heal himself and escape through indulging in some distractions and through his musings, which constitute an earlier sort of talking-cure.

This is the part of Guillem’s narrative – and of Flamenca – which has been most studied. It is the longest part of Flamenca devoted to Guillem, and, after a preamble providing portents of the hero’s advent, the narrative focus (ll. 1563-3949) is firmly on him. When compared to other focalizations in Flamenca, this is the clearest and most straight-forward. It is the most cleanly linear part of Flamenca, as concerns narrative, commentating voices, and glossingly parallels the accepted standard of amorous narrative, Ovid’s Ars amatoria.

A second part of the narrative (ll. 3949-6896) begins, as contact is made with the object of desire, some flirting ensues, and an affair begins. The lovers enjoy a brief idyll, suspended outside time and space. The affair comes to an end, due to the interference of the outside world. They exchange their hearts as tokens of their unfailing and utter love. This central part stands out from the rest of the romance, stylistically, lexically, and in its contents. It does not mention amor cortesa. Guillem and his paramour are outside the world of the court, partaking in Archimbaut’s exile and imprisonment, and in their own private world. Unsurprisingly, the court only appears once, and in a playful reference - by Flamenca and her ladies to their reaching a judgement together (l. 5119). This central part of the narrative uses cortes and cortesia in reference to courteous behaviour and as a personal quality, emphasizing the fact that cortes and cortesia are in the same relationship to cort as “politeness” is to the polis.² Cortes and

² Ll. 4134, 4230, 4538, 5010, 5281, 5581, 5847, 5865, 6173, 6432, 6453, 6483, 6778, 6837; though courtliness can be excessive, in line 6248.
cognates are often playful, deceitful, or a feminine parody. The contrast becomes increasingly clear between the cort lexeme and cor(s) – densely concentrated here – and between the absent amor cortesa and the very present amor coral. This second part of the narrative is only treated briefly here below. It is discussed further in the next chapter, as an independent lyrical narrative embedded within Flamenca.

In a third part of the tale (ll. 6897-end), the affair is somehow resumed and continued, in uneasy coexistence with the outside world. The matter is discussed in my conclusion.

2.1 Guillem as aman-trobador

Given the preponderance of the fine young man as hero in romance, and indeed this being the archetypal hero of most of Western European literature up to that point, the catalogue of works to which Guillem’s character is indebted would be very long indeed, and this hero-type has been well discussed. Ovid’s Ars amatoria, Amores, and Remediae are the most obvious source, and certainly the most studied as intertextual allusions in our romance of Guillem. The Metamorphoses also provide material in tales of love-triangles (though usually focusing on the illicit couple): Jupiter’s seductions; Helen, Paris, and Menelaus; and Venus, Mars, and Vulcan. Medieval refashionings of Ovid’s love-sickness and wounding when shot with arrows by the God of Love, and its allusive

---

3 Ll. 4336, 5158, 5344, 6027, 6508, 6853, 6888. The feminine joking use of cortes is detailed further in Chapter Three; most of the tongue-in-cheek courtly references are by Flamenca.
4 This is perhaps the most difficult section to understand, as the narrative takes a different direction in what I see as a continuation; a disjuncture detectable, for instance, in a change in the treatment of trobar and of amor cortesa, as compared with their appearances in the main body of the narrative.
6 Topsfield 1967, for example, traces Guillem’s narrative as an Ovidian éducation sentimentale, culminating in his mastery of the arts of love, such as disguise, deception, and deceit.
7 Most of these focus on the illicit couple rather than the triangle; the last example (Book IV ll. 173-95) is remarkable for involving all three (and a fourth observer) and for its focus on the cuckolded husband.
inclusion in other stories, also incorporate Christian aspects of the Passion and its echoes in martyrdom, pilgrimage, and crusade. This is more usually through parallels between the Ovidian wounds of love and those of Christian martyrdom, going back to the original stigmata.

Resemblances between Guillem and various central protagonists of, specifically, French romance have been remarked by many readers, and have formed the substance of much critical work on Flamenca, including work on the ironic, caricaturing side. The most obvious passage for this kind of exercise is that in which he is introduced properly for the first time, in which we see a lengthy description of him as the perfect young man: externally beautiful, internally accomplished, the product of the very best education, both chevalier – noble knight, accomplished jouster and sportsman – and clerc – well-read at Paris. This clerkish side might – as critics have argued in this and in other romance heroes’ cases – indicate an external clerkly composer inserting part of himself into his character, as a sort of subtle signature. Other clerks appear in Flamenca: Bernardet (I. 1732) and the young clerk Nicolaus (first mentioned in I. 2505).

Limiting oneself to earlier (12th c.) medieval French romance, this ideal young man is the central protagonist in Wace’s Brut, Le Roman d’Alexandre, Le Roman d’Énéas, and a warrior-poet-lover and master of disguise – including, like Guillem, clerical disguise – the young Tristan.

These earlier Classical and Celtic/Arthurian materials, and their reworking in 12th c. “classical” romance, will then be reworked in late 12th through 13th c. narratives. Several perfect specimens of the lover, so pretty and blond as to be at times jokily indistinguishable near-twins of their superficially more feminine beloveds, may be found in Marie de France’s Lais, Aucassin et Nicolette, Floire et Blancheflor, and the Occitan Frayre de Joy e Sor d’Amor. The éducation

---

sentimentale trope may be seen in narratives of male deflowering, such as in Guillaum de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*. The main addition I would make to the well-established list would be to emphasize the importance of Renaud de Beaujeu’s *Roman du Bel Inconnu*. Its hero is still tied to the Arthurian materials as he proves to be Guinglain, the son of Gawain, and as his tale – particularly the non-naming and mysterious origins – recalls that of Perceval. This romance, like *Flamenca*, also engages in sophisticated play with generic convention and issues of writing.

All of these are cited directly by *Flamenca* in the list of works performed at the wedding of Flamenca and Archimbaut (listed in ll. 599-601, and 621-705). With a very few exceptions, the works are listed in three formats. They may emphasize the young male hero: Tristan (several times), Yvain, Ulysses, Apollonius of Tyre, Alexander, Cadmus, Jason, Alcides, David, Judas Maccabeus, Julius Caesar, Gawain, Perceval, Ugonet, the *Bel Desconogut*, Guiflet, Calobrenan, Divet, the Assassins, Charlemagne, Clovis, Pepin, the Valet of Nanteuil, Oliver of Verdun. The (usually adulterous) couple, including some exemplary close male friends: the *Fins Amanz*, Helen and Paris, Hector and Achilles, Aeneas and Dido, Aeneas and Lavinia, Tideus and Etiocles, Phyllis and Demophon, Pluto and Eurydice, Yvain and Lunete, a damsel-jailer and Lancelot, Erec and Enide. Some are missing their respective significant others - Piramus, Narcissus, Merlin; and some fallen men appear, as a warning – Samson, Mordred, Lucifer, Icarus.

The central characters in these literary works are used as types and poetic building-blocks, and are part of the common cultural baggage, alluded to in a larger-scale, more common usage sense. Reference to “Tristan” is to the whole body of Tristanian literature thus far, and to the Tristan-figure resulting from that, and indeed the oral versions current; rather than to a specific Tristan text. Much as Classical persons, historical, fictitious, and mythological, would be used, then as now. Given the extent of Occitan literary baggage, the cross-references between characters would also be implied, the intertextual allusions to related persons, thus a reference to Tristan is also an allusion to the whole family of related trickster-poet figures: Odysseus, Lancelot, Reynard, Faus Samblant,
Aeneas, Paris, and so on. Just as the marriage-catalogue scene juxtaposed and fused traditions in a rich cultural stew, Guillem is a fusion of his compositional source-material, to such as extent as to incarnate the archetypal young lover.

More discreet allusion is also dispersed through the narrative, particularly with regard to material provided by Occitan lyric antecedents and their surrounding paratexts, the late 13th-early 14th century *vidas* and *razos*. The *razo* and the lyric poem it accompanies together form a lyric narrativization generically related to the *novas* – short verse narrative. This process might be called “*razofication*.” An excellent example would be the variants on the tale of Guilhem de Cabestanh and the *cœur mangé* trope, through to its reworking as a full romance by Jakemes, *Le Chastelain de Coucy et la Dame de Fayel*, and its refashioning later in the 14th century by Boccaccio (*Decameron* 4.9 – “Messer Guglielmo Rossiglione dà al mangiare alla moglie sua il cuore di messer Guiglielmo Guardastagno ...”; and there is a story-familial resemblance to 4.1).

*Flamenca* narrativizes not only lyric poetry proper, but also its paratextual apparatus. Not only does our poem narrativise lyric; it also incorporates accompanying *razos* in this process. *Flamenca* enacts a further narrativization, doing what an Occitan *razo* does to a poem with which it is associated. This is a second-order *razofication*. *Flamenca* thus incorporates a historical-biographical person (insofar as that is known and information reliable); a poet as literary construct through reading works purported to be by the same physical composer; the sum of parapoetic material – *vidas*, *razos*, any other commentary and mythification; and the poetry itself.

*Flamenca*’s *razofication* is complicated by Guillem’s incorporating several poets; and further complicated as the pattern will be repeated for other protagonists, and as their poetic allusions may be inter-connected. Specific details in *Flamenca*’s Guillem are imported from *vidas* and *razos* as follows. First and foremost, we have Jaufré Rudel’s *amor de lonh* – “love at/from a distance / long-distance love.” *Flamenca* also alludes to Giraut de Borneil and a story of a

---

9 Poe 2000; Burgwinkle 1990 and 1997; also his “From Commentary to Tale: Biography, Boccaccio and Beyond,” in *Literary History, Narrative and Culture*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake and Steven Bradbury (Honolulu: U of Hawaiï P, 1989). Huchet sees the *novas* as the dominant Occitan literary form, including *Flamenca* as one.
gift of a glove (*razo* B), and of his dealings with a smart, *trobairitz* maid called Alamanda, reminiscent of Margarida; Gaucelm Faidit, and a perverted religious pilgrimage; Arnaut de Mareuil’s alleged composition of an epistolary romance (reconstructed out of his *salut* through organization and arrangement by their later manuscript tradition); and the *éducation sentimentale* aspect of the whole *ensenhamen* – didactic manual - genre, often aimed at impressionable young ladies, with a few notable exceptions like Andreas Capellanus’ *De Amore*. Several other Guillems bear some resemblance to our one, feeding into this culminating and cumulative super-Guillem. Guillem de Cabestanh and the eating of hearts are related to heart-exchange between Flamenca and Guillem. A tale associated with Guillem de Saint Leidier involves name-swapping, complex cuckolding, and a lover transmitting a message (or *messatge*, letter) to his lady-love via her husband. Guillem de Balaun’s *razo* tells of a letter-exchange involving the gift of a fingernail, not unrelated to Guillem de Nevers’ sacrificial haircut.

Last but not least, we have Guilhem de Peitieus, purportedly the greatest of Occitan lovers, not least in treading the fine mythopoetic line between fact and fiction. He also features, somewhat transfigured, in the French *Jouffroi* romance. Such a connection between a William and a Geoffrey is replicated in *Flamenca’s* merging of Guilhem de Peitieus and Jaufré Rudel, whom I see as the two most important poetic figures contributing intertextually to Guillem de Nevers, in a relationship of mutual *razofication*. By “poetic figures,” I mean an incorporation of what is known of these poets as real-historical persons; intersecting to near-complete overlap with their mythopoetification through their *vidas* and *razos*; and, of course, allusion to their poetic works.

### 2.2 Escape into fantasy

In the first phase of Guillem’s lyric narrative, we discover what he desires, and what he finds. In *Flamenca*, Guillem is the person to whom *trobar* is attached most frequently: seventy-five times. This is a very high proportion, compared to that (as a proportion of a work’s total length) in lyric poetry, and
even looking at its incidence over the total corpus of a poet who uses *trobar* a lot, like Guiraut de Borneil.

The main source for what Guillem is searching for and what he desires – what he perceives, in other words, as *trobar* and *amor* – might be expected to be what he himself says, and what is revealed by the narrative voice in the episode recounted from his point of view. The narrative voice, after all, would also be expected to be reporting some of his speech – as indirect speech – and also doing so for his thoughts. Yet the two most important descriptions of Guillem as a lover-poet are uttered by the least likely person: Archimbaut, while he is mad, and in the form of predictions. In a tirade on Flamenca, he refers to *donnejador* – “ladies’ men” with, also, some effeminate qualities (l. 1149) – who, he swears, *non sai trobaran huis ubert* (l. 1151) – “will not find open house here.” Later, alone, he will ponder the possibility that this might, indeed, happen:

\[
\text{E que faria s’us truanz,} \\
\text{que-s fenera d’amor cortes} \\
\text{e non sabra d’amor ques es,} \\
\text{l’avia messa en follia?} \\
\text{(ll. 1196-99)\textsuperscript{10}}
\]

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

*Flamenca* also plays with the reader’s expectations by tainting the psychological insights reported by a far from neutral narrator. Most often these have more to do with Amor and her point of view than with Guillem, though events are being recounted from his point of view. Reported speech and thoughts are thus, for the most part, unreliable sources of information on Guillem’s internal life. The few that are trustworthy report a simple external event, some of which are significant, because the event is one of writing.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} References to the *Flamenca* text are from Ricketts et al 2005; their base text is Gschwind 1976. The translation is Hubert and Porter 1962, which I have sometimes altered when their translation significantly alters the sense of the original. I indicate such changes throughout the dissertation. Here, for example, *que-s fenera d’amor cortes* was misleadingly translated as “aping the wiles of courtly love-” (l. 1197). This line is vital to the argument that *Flamenca* distinguishes between “love” and “courtesy/courtliness.”

\textsuperscript{11} As the lovers compose their responses, Guillem spends less time ruminating and fainting, and more time sitting down in active *trobar*. This is particularly evident towards the end of the purely poetic part of the affair, as his compositional activity is all that is reported. We can see that the inspiration is flowing, he is sitting down and writing, straight out. Something else happens here, however. There is a change of pace, half-way through the poem, as the couple stop flirting and interact with the same objective in mind. Accompanying this move is a speeding-up, with less time spent on each response and its compositional wings, and less time between responses.
As the reader becomes increasingly distrustful of the narrative voice, she pays closer attention to direct speech, as the only reliable part of our romance. This is problematic for much of Guillem’s speech, which is banal, superficial, meant for public consumption. This runs counter – perhaps critically so - to the 13th century move towards prose, and reported speech, backed up by its reporter, truth reposed in their identity, as source of truth. Here, we have verse direct speech, where the authority is simply that of the speaker. What is most trustworthy is his private speech, his soliloquies. I shall therefore consider what Guillem himself says about *amor* and *trobar*, and his perception of himself as an *aman cortes*.

We already have some indication of the quest intended for Guillem towards the end of the lengthy description of him. His perfection is marred only by youthful inexperience, as he has not yet translated theory into practice:

As the reader becomes increasingly distrustful of the narrative voice, she pays closer attention to direct speech, as the only reliable part of our romance. This is problematic for much of Guillem’s speech, which is banal, superficial, meant for public consumption. This runs counter – perhaps critically so - to the 13th century move towards prose, and reported speech, backed up by its reporter, truth reposed in their identity, as source of truth. Here, we have verse direct speech, where the authority is simply that of the speaker. What is most trustworthy is his private speech, his soliloquies. I shall therefore consider what Guillem himself says about *amor* and *trobar*, and his perception of himself as an *aman cortes*.

We already have some indication of the quest intended for Guillem towards the end of the lengthy description of him. His perfection is marred only by youthful inexperience, as he has not yet translated theory into practice:

As the reader becomes increasingly distrustful of the narrative voice, she pays closer attention to direct speech, as the only reliable part of our romance. This is problematic for much of Guillem’s speech, which is banal, superficial, meant for public consumption. This runs counter – perhaps critically so - to the 13th century move towards prose, and reported speech, backed up by its reporter, truth reposed in their identity, as source of truth. Here, we have verse direct speech, where the authority is simply that of the speaker. What is most trustworthy is his private speech, his soliloquies. I shall therefore consider what Guillem himself says about *amor* and *trobar*, and his perception of himself as an *aman cortes*.
Amor makes her first appearance a few lines later, announcing to Guillem what his quest will be:

\begin{align*}
\text{ancar non saps lo ric deport} & \quad \text{But you know not what ecstasies} \\
\text{qu’eu t’ai en una tor servat;} & \quad \text{I hold for you, to be your own,} \\
\text{a ton obs lo ten hom serrat.} & \quad \text{Locked in a tower, for you alone.} \\
\text{Us fols gelos clau e rescon} & \quad \text{A jealous fool has locked away} \\
\text{la plus bella dona del mon} & \quad \text{The loveliest lady of our day} \\
\text{e la meillor ad obs d’amar;} & \quad \text{And the most apt for love. “Twill please} \\
\text{e tu sols deus la desliurar,} & \quad \text{You to accomplish her release.} \\
\text{car tu es cavalliers e clercs,} & \quad \text{You are both knight and learned man,} \\
\text{per zo’ a obs ades encercs...} & \quad \text{Therefore you must do all you can...} \\
\end{align*}

(ll. 1792-1800, lacunary ending)

But you know not what ecstasies
I hold for you, to be your own,
Locked in a tower, for you alone.
A jealous fool has locked away
The loveliest lady of our day
And the most apt for love. “Twill please
You to accomplish her release.
You are both knight and learned man,
Therefore you must do all you can...

Guillem does as he is bid, despite full awareness of the strangeness of falling in love with a woman he has never seen:

\begin{align*}
\text{Proverbis es: Qui trop s’azaisa} & \quad \text{The proverb says: “Idler, beware,} \\
\text{Greu er si per amor no-s laiza.} & \quad \text{Lest you be tangled in Love’s snare.”} \\
\text{Mout es Guillems en greu torment,} & \quad \text{Now William is in sore distress;} \\
\text{Amors lo pais de bel nient,} & \quad \text{Love feeds him on fair nothingness.} \\
\text{plaser li fai so qu’anc non vi.} & \quad \text{An unseen girl has charmed hi heart.} \\
\end{align*}

(ll. 1830-34)

The proverb says: “Idler, beware,
Lest you be tangled in Love’s snare.”
Now William is in sore distress;
Love feeds him on fair nothingness.
An unseen girl has charmed hi heart.

Guillem falls in love, from a distance, with an unattainable object of desire, whom he has never even met, and whose attraction lies in her very unattainability. His love will make him ill – the traditional Ovidian love-sickness.

This all recalls the amor de lonh – “love of/at/from a distance” – associated with Jaufré Rudel (late 12\textsuperscript{th}-early 13\textsuperscript{th} c.). Little is known about him. The late 13\textsuperscript{th} c. vida often attached to his poetry is clearly relevant for Guillem:

\begin{quote}
Jaufre Rudels de Blaia si fo molt gentils hom, princes de Blaia. Et enamoret se de la comtessa de Tripol, ses vezer, per lo gran ben e per la gran cortesia qu’el auzi dir de lieis als pelegrins que vengron d’Antiochia. E fetz de lieis mains bons vers et ab bons sons, ab paubres motz. E per voluntat de lieis vezer, el se crozet e mes se en mar, per anar lieis vezer. Et adones en la nau lo pres mout grans malautia, si que cill qui eron ab lui cuideron qe el fos mortz en la nau. Mas tant feiron que ill lo conduisseron a Tripol, en un alberc, cum per mort. E fo faich a saber a la comtessa e venc ad el, al sieu lieich e pres lo entre sos bratz. Et el saup qu’ella era la comtessa, si recobret lo vezer e.l flazar, e lauzet Dieu e.l grazi, qe.ill avia la vida sostenguda tro qu’el l’ages vista; et enaissa el moric entre.ls braz de la comtessa. Et ella lo fetz honradamenz sepeillir en la maison del Temple de Tripol; e pois, en aqel meteus dia, ela se rendet monga, per la dolor que ella ac de lui e de la soa mort.
\end{quote}

Jaufre Rudel, Prince of Blaye, was a very noble man. And he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, without having seen her, because of the great goodness and
courtliness which he heard tell of her from the pilgrims who came from Antioch. And he wrote many good songs about her, with good melodies and poor words. And because of his desire, he took the cross and set sail to go see her. But in the ship he fell ill, to the point where those who were with him thought he was dead. However, they got him – a dead man, as they thought – to Tripoli, to an inn. And it was made known to the Countess, and she came to his bedside, and took him in her arms. And he knew she was the Countess, and recovered sight and smell, and praised God because He had kept him alive until he had seen her. And so he died in the arms of the lady. And she had him buried with honor in the Temple at Tripoli. Then, the same day, she became a nun because of the grief which she felt for him and for his death.  

The first sense of *amor de lonh* is physical distance, such as that between Blaye, France and Tripoli, Palestine. For both Jaufré and Guillem, this distance is compounded by social factors such that the love is by definition unrequited and for an impossible object, attainable through rescue and rapture, and the theft of cuckolding. Jaufré’s is of course a more moderate example; and his sea-sickness might have as much to do with realising quite what a ridiculous journey this was. After all, while rumour had it that the Countess was the finest and most courteous of women, nothing had been said about her relations with the Count, which might be perfectly harmonious. By combining Jaufré’s *amor de lonh* with the imprisonment motif, Guillem’s narrative can then bring in the Paris-Helen-Menelaus thread, with its triumphant symbolic castration of the *jaloux*.

Guillem not only acts out Jaufré Rudel’s *vida*, and mentions the *amor de lonh* famously associated with that poet (this is frequently mentioned by Flamenca scholars), but also spins out Jaufré’s lyric poetry. Flamenca thus works as a longer, more elaborate fused *vida* and *razo*.

*Lonh* (*loing, l onc, lu enh*) appears in most of Jaufré’s six known poems. In perhaps the most famous one, *Lanqan li jorn son lonc en mai, de loing* – “from afar” – ends the second and fourth lines of every *cobl a*, and the phrase *amor de loing* punctuates the poem as a whole most insistently: fourth line of first *cobl a*; second of second, fourth, and fifth; and the second and fourth lines of *coblas* six and seven. The *tornada* bewails the fact that what the poet wants is kept from him. A general shift moves towards *lonh* as spatial distance, even with the first

---

one mentioned – hearing birdsong from afar (l. 2). Yet the distance may be one of time: the first mention of *amor de loing* is in the context of remembering it, and other uses of *lonh* are at least partly temporal references.

In *Pro ai del chan essenhadors*, we see some substantiating evidence for reading *Lanqan li jorn son lone en mai’s tornada* as suggesting the distance keeping our first-person voice from attaining its desire has something to do with a husband. Here, *cobla* 3 starts out *Luenh es lo castelhs e la tors / ont elha jay e sos maritz* (ll. 17-18: “far are the castle and tower / where she and her husband lie”). A similar tower will feature prominently in Guillem’s *canso*. Distance being a physical one is recalled in *Qan lo rius de la fontana*, whose second *cobla* starts out *amors de terra loindana* (l. 8: “distant land”). *Lonh* as temporal distance, here that of protracted time, appears in *Belhs m’es l’estius e.l temps floritz: Lonc temps ai estat en dolor* – “I have long been in distress” – begins *cobla* 3 (l. 15). *Flamenca* uses *lonc* most frequently with reference to Guillem and his amorous sufferings; this is the predominant use of the word (for example, ll. 1945, 4422, 4441, 5946, and 5971).

Our neophyte’s first attempts at grappling with love are, unsurprisingly, clumsy and heavy-handed. His soliloquies are characterized by poetic devices of imprisonment: circularity, chiasmus, rhymes resembling prison-bars, and turning around words in anagrammatical equivocalism, whilst clearly attempting to turn that into the kind of derivative rhyme that would enable escape – such as moving from *claus* to *desclaus*. He turns around in circles inside himself in lyric entrapment, worsened by his inability to express himself, and thus, through this early talking-cure, to perceive what it is that he desires. Using a medical analogy, he tries to move from the brute suffering of generalized pain – that of Ovidian love-sickness - to the discernment and analysis of symptoms, whence the next stage will be looking at causes and cures. The principal interest and theme of his lyric output is Narcissistic: himself, and his being-in-love.

Guillem turns around, enclosed within himself, most evidently in his first lengthy piece of direct speech, or, the first lyric he produces (ll. 2035-2133). He tells of his pain, and attempts a linguistically-based definition of *amans* which
crumbles into confusion, associated with tornar (ll. 2104-05). He ends this piece with the “trope of suspended gnosis”: that is, the expression of not knowing something, featuring emphatic use of negative constructions. The trope comes in several shapes. It may be an unknowing symptomatic of amorous torment. One may be aware of not knowing, and of that being a stage in the process of attaining knowledge. It may be the un-knowing of what knowledge one might have had before. One may be unknowing in a knowing, deliberate and dramatically playful way. The trope is represented by a set of no sai poems: Guillem de Peitieus, Farai un vers e dreit nien; Jaufre Rudel, No sap chantar qui so non di; Peire Rogier, No sai don chan’ e cham plagram fort, and to some extent Ges non puesc en bon vers fallir, oft cited in connection with Flamenca; Raimbaut d’Aurenga, Escotatz, mas no say que s’es; Arnaut de Mareuil, Domna, genser que no sai dir. In Flamenca, it is expressed as

\[
\begin{align*}
e \text{d’amor un mot non entendon;} & \quad \text{They know nought, and they’ll never learn.} \\
re \text{non sabon ni non aprendon.} & \quad \text{I’ll make no more comparison.} \\
\text{Non dirai plus, quar non son digne} & \quad \text{One might as well compare a swan} \\
\text{de comparar plus qu’ad u signe,} & \quad \text{With some black crow or bird of night.} \\
\text{una chavesc’ o un nazol –} & \\
\text{(ll. 2110-14)} &
\end{align*}
\]

Guillem then arises, walks to the window, and looks out on the tower outside. It inspires him to produce a tornada to the poem, addressed to na Tor: that is, the physical tower and, figuratively, the imprisoned lady. It is in this poem that she is conflated with Amor for the first time; we also see a nice connection between tor, “tower,” and torn, “turn.” The sexual metaphor of closure hiding a desirable clarity is clear: bell’est defor / ben cug dedins est pur e clara (ll. 2129-30) – “outside she is beautiful, and well do I know that inside she is pure and clear.” Other figurative senses are also possible, such as an address to himself, as the process of his internal fragmentation has started, and Amor is such a fragmented figment. This piece, like most others, is addressed to her. Later, his own eyes, hands, and mouth will be involved in psychomachia-composition. In line with the masturbatory side of lyric self-refence, na Tor could also be a

---

13 The term was coined by the philosopher Christopher Mole.
“morning glory” address to his own penis. This lyric piece, like others, occurs in the twilight before morning.

Guillem’s lyric poem is structured by the syllable *am*, the key feature holding his words together so that they may form a coherent whole, given that he is prone to rambling and his speech does not often make full sense. The whole is, however, only formally coherent, not functionally and semantically so. And I use the word *key* advisedly: *am* is the key (as *clau*, and as in the Arnaut de Mareuil *salutz* mentioned earlier, with its imprisonment-chiasmus) to finding some sense in Guillem’s poetic output, for the reader’s *trobar cor*. What Guillem is doing with words, and his production of an enigmatic poem decodable only by using this key. Guillem is producing *trobar clus*; and, because our romance represents his *trobar* comically, it is also commenting, on a larger-scale, on *trobar clus*. Love is the key to making sense of Guillem’s poetry, and through it, of him; and it is also that of which his poetry, and he himself, attempt to make sense. It is both key and lock; *am* is both *clau* and *contraclau*.

The syllable *am* is disseminated through Guillem’s lyric work, mostly present embedded in other words, but he is noticeably unable to say anything about *love* itself, except for uttering the name of the goddess Love. I was struck by this stylistic feature when searching for indications of what Guillem himself has to say about love, and what his idea of it might be. Guillem does not examine the nature of his desire, simply taking it as read, coming out with, at best, the interchangeable *am e voil* (l. 2873); he shows a lack of awareness, self-awareness, critical awareness; indeed and verily, a lack of consciousness and subjectivity. But this judgement should be tempered by the very fact that *am* is scattered through Guillem’s speech. At some level of consciousness, he is aware that he is circling around the problem of what love, or his love, is. This is most evident in the *amans / adimans* motif of his first speech (“lover / diamond”), one showing full cognisance of the problem. Guillem is so caught up in his verbal virtuosity that he

---

14 The syllable *am-* appears in ll. 2035, 2040, 2064, 2065, 2067 (twice), 2069, 2076, 2083, 2087, 2089, 2094, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2125, 2131, and 2132. The reverse of *am-*, *ma-*, provides reinforcement, appearing frequently in *mais* (“but”), *mal-* compounds (“bad”), and *adimans/azimans* (“diamond”): ll. 2040, 2041, 2047, 2048, 2050 (twice), 2051, 2052 (twice), 2053, 2056, 2061, 2068, 2098, 2100, 2104 (twice), 2107, and 2119.
loses sight of his objective: his considerations on love. Elsewhere, the repeated syllable acts as a clue, tantalizing and always just out of sight. Its very repetition encloses him, as the other sounds he utters are enclosed by the pattern of *ams*. I would also suggest that, within the *Romance of Flamenca*’s various interlinked adventures, Guillem is searching for love in and through his poetry in a completely literal way: he is engaged in the quest to *trobar amor*. He searches and yearns for the word, but never quite attains it. Rather than the word teasing him, just out of sight, Guillem could be using the syllable deliberately to try to reach the word, using paranomasia as his main arm in this linguistic quest. *Amor* foils his attempts to broach it, remaining *clusa*. The reader may conclude that what Guillem desires, his intended *trobar amor*, is this very *amor clusa*.

Guillem desires Love itself, in specular entrapment. His most profound relationship is with Amors. It is with her that he has the longest conversations, as, trapped within himself in his room, he looks out at the tower imprisoning Flamenca. When eventually he becomes a lover, it is with Amors via pseudo-Flamenca. In becoming a true lover, he becomes a lover of Love, interchangeable with being a lover of *Trobar*: an abstracted *poeta-philosophus*. For this is also a figurative search for broader *trobar*: for knowledge and truth, *philosophia* or *philologia*. Both of these may be present as feminine personifications, for example in two formative and mush-refashioned (very) early medieval works, Boethius’ *De Consolatione* and Martianus Capella’s *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. What is desired is a polymorphous entity, “a many-splendoured thing.” This Love is also multiple as it fragments itself: in the dissemination of the syllable *am*, and in Love’s dissemination into several persons, such as Flamenca.

Guillem is not, however, altogether sure what he desires. He fails to see clearly – as regards understanding and physiological vision – in part as he is blinded by love. Some of the illusion happening here is delusion, of his own making: a perverse and parodic *trobar*, perhaps emphasizing an underlying onanism that might be perceived in much male-authored love-lyric. The blinded

---

15 With one very important exception – *destreitz sui d’amor coral* (l. 2822) – which will be discussed in the next chapter. This self-identification as a “coral” lover is a major step in Guillem’s amorous adventures, not least as it prompts Amor’s first reply to him.
love is also an extension of Jaufré’s love “without seeing.” This was expressed in
the *vida* as *ses vezer*; in *Langan li jorn son lone en mai as non sai coras la veirai*
- “I do not know when I shall ever see her,” thereby neatly combining the trope of
suspended gnosis. In Jaufré’s contribution to the trope, *No sap chantar qui so non dí,* the second *cobla* returns to the same idea: *ieu am so que ja no.m veira* –
“I love what will never see me” (l. 8): at once the erotic and poetic objects of
desire. Guillem decides to fall in love with an absent abstract idea, the amorous
ideal by habit and repute so the clearest choice for the systematic completion of
his education. He would have heard of Flamenca - *per moutas gens au et enten*
(l. 1774), *et au dir per vera novella* (l. 1777) – the latter probably referring to

| Ja sabon tut per lo païs          | All through the country people know              |
| Qu’En Archimbaunt es gelos fins; | How jealous is Lord Archambaud.                  |
| Per tot’Alverb[n]’en fan cansos   | All through Auvergne barbed songs are sung        |
| E sirventes, coblas e sos,        | And mocking tunes from every tongue              |
| O estribot o retroencha           | Tell, in ballad and estribot                      |
| D’En Archimbaunt con ten Flamencha;| Of Flamenca and Lord Archambaud.                  |
| Et on plus hom a lui o chanta      | Hearing them, he had small delight               |
| Nous cujes sos mals cors s’eschanta.| As they enhanced his bitter spite.                |

(ll. 1171-78)

Not falling in love as a completely free choice, Guillem first passively
absorbs hearsay (ll. 1773-79), then *en cor li venc que l’amaria* (l. 1780: “so he
made up his heart to love her”). No arrows strike him, but coincidentally Amor
makes her first appearance then and there: *Mentre qu’estai en cest pensar / Amors ben pres de lui s’acointa* (ll. 1782-3: “While thus his mind / Was occupied,
Love drew close by”). It is clear from her words (ll. 1791-1800) that he has been
set up by higher forces, and is in love with an image, which he cannot even see as
he is so blinded by it, her, or love. This has to do with his general failure to look at
things directly, only vaguely impressionistically, squinting so as to see what he
wants to. He may actually have become myopic as a consequence of engaging in
bookish activities.

Even once he recalls himself from his tangents and returns to the matter at
hand, the getting of the girl, Guillem cannot remove himself from his learning,
metaphorically remove his nose from the book, and look up to see the larger
picture in perspective, with some sense of basic practicality. He fails to see true.
Even once he and Flamenca are in conversation, it is clear from his pedantic and ponderous commentary in his reading of her and her reception of his words that he is incapable of looking up and seeing what is staring him in the face, as he remains comically book-bound. The meandering and inconclusive nature of his commentary shows that he suffers imprisonment within himself, in classic lyric circularity. He also remains imprisoned within his own ivory tower of learning through being teacher-bound.

Guillem fails to see true as he tries to see Flamenca but cannot grasp her as a whole, only by parts. His view of her in the church is blocked by Archimbaut, who alternates with her in the text, showing nicely how she is imprisoned by him. The parts chosen, the mouth and the hand, are significant as they are associated with poetic composition. There would be very practical reasons for seeing these parts of Flamenca first, as the rest of her would be shrouded in clothes and veils, and the poor boy has already been blinded by the only other uncovered part of actual Flamenca underneath, the rays emanating from the parting of her hair, visible where her head-covering sits back to the crown of the head. The focus on mouth and hand herald the lovers’ first contact, of mouth and hand via the intermediary of the book. Through the *tenso*-section, Guillem will look at her mouth as she speaks. When relations eventually become directly physical, hands and mouths will come into direct play. In this earlier phase of relations, though, erotic activity is of an indirect kind: sexual frustration, an obsessive fascination with those rare body parts that may be seen, and their fetishization. These indirect erotic actions do not result (at this stage in the narrative) in copulation, and so are sterile; masturbation is of course the most obvious indirect and sterile erotic activity, significantly involving the hand.

A symbolic association may be drawn between Guillem’s poetic and erotic activities, and their sterile, indeed onanistic, nature. The poetry Guillem produces uses lyric tropes and reuses lyric excerpts in a way that – when combined with the comic context – teeters on the brink of pastiche. When lyric’s refashioning is coupled with sterility and short-sighted scholarliness, this draws attention to lyric’s own inherent possibilities for onanistic interpretation. Guillem continues the pastiche of onanistic lyric and desire in his lengthy ruminations,
etymologically and philosophically playing with himself in sterile scholastic soliloquies. A fine example would be his musings (ll. 4597-4730), one of the punningly richest sections of the text, which evolve out of his solitary self-consolation, in rereading his own last replique, mur mi (“I die”). The following – especially the descriptive set-up and use of tener (underlined) – as a strong masturbatory aspect, the whole directly related to derivation and derivative activities (highlighted in bold).

Meanwhile, Sir William thinks and broods
While fears, hopes and siquietudes,
Words, memories and emotions
Besiege him; company he shuns.
Alone, he finds himself less lonely,
And his company the only
Company he desires, and thus
He is least infelicitous.

“Undoubtedly I die,” he said,
“Who loves alone, alone is dead.
Lone love, lone death, are much the same.

Derivation, like onanism, is usually a false and perverse mockery of creativity and “proper” reproduction, a sterile scattering of seed on stony ground. This idea features in more detail in the Roman de la Rose, in the first part of Genius’ sermon (ll. 19547-903), with its strong agricultural motif (ll. 19547-739), a mixing of metaphors, condensing tools literary, agricultural, and sexual (ll. 19547-564 and 19633-704), and conclusive metez toz vos outils en oevre: / assez s’eschauffe qui bien oevre (ll. 19902-03). See particularly:

Mar leur ait nature donné...
Et sos a pointes bien aguës
A l’usage de ses charrues,
Et jaschieres, non pas perreuses,
Mais plenteïves et herbeuses
Qui d’arer et de cerfoïr
Ont mestier, qui en veult joïr,
Quant il n’en veulent laborer
Pour li servir et honnorer
(ll. 19547, 19551-58)

Cil que si leur pechiez enfume,
Par leur orgeuill qui les desroie,
Qu’il despisent la droite roie
Dou champ bel et plenteüreus,
Et von comme maleüreus

Guillems non [a] pausa ni fina,
tot jorn recorda e declina
e despon sos motz e deriva;
al plus que pot solas esquiva,
car sols si ten per solassatz,
et ab solatz per asolatz,
e per meins sols adonde si te
on mais ha de solatz ab se.
“Mur mi,” fai s’el, “hoc veramen;
car soletz am mur solamen,
totz soletz mur car soletz am.
(ll. 4589-99)
A motif of dissemination appears later in Flamenca’s mur mi passage, referring to Guillem’s poetic production and the passing of time. He complains to Love that he has sown little (twice, i.e. spoken twice to Flamenca – hai las and mur mi), and seen little growth – response from Flamenca – for his sowings:

Amors! Amors! trop m’o alongas,
que la[s] setmanas son trop longas
e-l mot trop breu e-l mal cochos;
adès seran autras meissos
et eu ai tan pauc semenat!
Cujas aver tant enansat
quar sol as .II. mugz semenatz?
(ll. 4669-75)

Love! Love! My misery you prolong
Too much. The weeks are far too long,
The words too short, the pain too sure.
Soon other harvest will mature,
And oh, how little I have sown!
Think you that my prospects have grown
By sowing two measures of seed?

Et om dis que vens ni gelada
non tol frucha endestinada!
Non sai per que tal aissa-m mene,
car, segon so ques eu semene,
là merce Dieu! naiuso mieu broil.
Anc mais set jornz non fon e moil
Ai las, et a l’uchen b[r]uillet;
e poïnie [i] pois autres[s] set
e sol mur mi a semenar,
et el deu ben aïtan poinar
avan que bruïlle ni pairesca,
don Deus per sa merce l’acresca
e-l fassa naiisser al mieu gaug!
(ll. 4679-91)

…There’s no cold so acute
That it will kill predestined fruit,
Men say. Why do these worries goad
Me thus? For, just as I have sowed,
So, thank God, it will harvest yield.
‘Alas!’ sowed seven days in the field
Never showed sprout on the eighth day.
And I had to labor and delay
Seven more ere I could plant ‘I die.’
And that too in the soil must lie
Before it sprout to life and show
Aboveground. May God grant it grow
And flourish fair for my delight!

This passage continues the indulgence in derivative play, but to a lesser extent. Dissemination shifts into seeding, with the hope of planting, germination, and fruition. The desired result is that something show itself openly above the surface – bruïlle ne pairesca. Flamenca plays the part of the earth in this metaphor, but an element of sterile, stony ground still lurks, as Guillem experiences a moment of doubt as to whether the ground might be frozen. Although some movement may be detected towards another person, grammatical focus is still on the first
person – Guillem – and verbs treat of his actions and thoughts. Nevertheless, the reflexive *si tener* of the start moves into *tener* someone else:

> ara vejas doncs que faria
> s'entre mos brasses *la tenia*

(l. 4707-08)

> mais trop ai dig senes comjat
> quar de *son tener* ai parlat,
> quar non s'atain aisi *la tenga*.

(l. 4711-13)

> mais per *Amor* o ai vesat
> que-m fai *tener mi don* soven
> tot a ma guisa en dormen.

(l. 4718-20)

Think what I'll do if in my arms
I could hold tightly clasped her charms.

But I have said too much. What right
Have I to speak of clasping tight?
It is not meet I thus caress
Her...

Yet by Love’s power and Love’s consent
Often, the while I slept, it seemed
I clasped my lady as I dreamed.

Soon after, Flamenca will respond to *mur mi* with *de que?* (“of what?” l. 4761), to which Guillem will reply: *d’amor* (“of love,” l. 4878). This is the closest that Guillem will come to saying “I love you” to Flamenca. As their words stand up to that point, he has declared that he is dying from / of / for love, or Love. In his compositional preamble to his declaration (ll. 4839-72), Guillem’s main focus is on Love rather than Flamenca (ll. 4846-64), with a succession of ambiguous third-person feminine pronouns through which it is uncertain whether Guillem is hoping to please Amor or Flamenca through his fine words. When Flamenca asks him for whom he is dying – *per cui* (l. 4940) – Guillem will reply that it is for her, *per vos* (l. 4968). By this stage, Guillem, sure of Flamenca’s interest, no longer needs to hesitate and ponder the right approach: now, he is in a position to play the game formulaically, by the rule-book. He believes that she, too, is playing by the same rules, and humouring him into spinning himself out properly, poetically, as is clear from his musings before uttering *per vos* (ll. 4944-58).

The love for Love shows affinities, again, with Jaufré Rudel’s *amor de lonh*, and with two further senses of *lonh*. A second sense refers to the position taken by the lover in relation to the object of desire. Guillem concentrates on himself and his *trobar*, focussing on relations with Love, rather than on relationship with Flamenca, and *amor*. That can be seen as a *trobar amor* with a twist, as the lyric trope of Narcissistic love, or the traditional one of being in love with being in love, self-obsessed and obsessed with enjoying one’s own suffering,
in classic Ovidian *inamoramento*. The use of psychomachia in lyric poetry may serve to show this self-entrapment: for instance, here in *Flamenca*, ll. 4369-4462.

*Amor de lonh* may be distanced in a third sense, in that the object of desire is also itself distant and unattainable.\(^{16}\) We see here the unfortunately frequent inability of some men - particularly those of a certain socio-economic and educational background - to interact with women. That is, to treat the female of their own species as a fellow member of said same species, perceiving her not as “same” but as “other.” This is as true of modern males educated in single-sex private establishments as it is of the medieval *clerc*: an inability to deal with real women in the real world. An inability to deal with real women in the real world leads us to the third sense of *lonh*: outside this world, in an imaginary one of phantasms, fantasy, dream-vision, and oneric-onanistic nocturnal emissions.

Jaufré’s *amor de lonh* provides an internally-directed escape from *trobar clus* and the throes of unfortunate love – an external, unattainable *amor de lonh* – in the shape of fantasy and dream. *Pro ai del chan essenhadors* treats the topic:

Lai es mos cors, si totz c’aillors
non a ni sima ni raitz,
et en dormen sotz cobertos
es lai ab lieis mos esperitz;
(l. 33-36)

Ma voluntat[z] s’en vay lo cors
la nueit e.l día esclarzitz
laintz per talant de socors,
mas tart mi ve e tart mi ditz ...
(l. 41-44)

My heart is so much there with her
That its summit and root are nowhere else,
And while I sleep under covers
My spirit is there with her;

My will goes quickly
At night and in daylight
Into that place, for desire of relief,
But she comes to me late...

The feminine third person is – in a delightful paradoxical imprisonment – grammatically identical with *l’amor qu’ins el cor m’enclau* (l. 30: “the love which I hold in my heart”), and so more “Love” than “a real lady.” The sense of *lai* may, here, be the pronouns “her” or “there,” an ambiguity enabling person and place to be brought together into a single entity. Similarly, elsewhere in *Qan lo rius de la fontana*, the two may be brought together into *amors de terra loindana* (l. 8: “love from a distant land,” though *de* may be better translated here as “of”). In

\(^{16}\) The abstraction “love”/personnification “Love” lends itself particularly well to Lacanian readings as *objet petit a* leading to *objet grand A*. 

114
Quan lo rossinhols el follos, grammatical slippage points, again, to the beloved being identical with Love:

D’aquest’ amor suy cossiros
vellan e pueys sompnhan dormen,
per qu’ieu la jau joyos, jauzen
(l. 15-18)

I am preoccupied with this love
Awake and then asleep in dreams,
Because I enjoy her and am joyously happy;

The poetic voice moves here and in other works, however, to a distrust and dissatisfaction with this fantastic state of affairs. No sap chantar qui so non di summarizes this nicely, in cobla 4. The whole poem is built with negative constructions, except for the final cobla and tornada, in which the poet succeeds in finding and making his poem, with a turning-point moving the poem from the negative into the positive of no.i failli – “I have not failed in it” (l. 31). The cobla about the poverty of fantasy is one of negatively-structured ones:

Anc tan suau no m’adormi,
mos esperitz tost no fos la,
i tan d’ira non ac de sa,
mos cors ades no fos aqui;
mais quan mi resveill al mati,
totz mos bos sabers mi desva.
(l. 19-24)

I have never fallen asleep so soundly
That my spirit was not soon there,
Nor have I felt so much grief here
That I was not there right away;
But when I awake in the morning
All my pleasure escapes me.

In Belhs m’es l’estius e.l temps floritz, a note of fear creeps in. The escape inwards into fantasy is perceived as quite its contrary, and escape from it desired:

Lonc temps ai estat en dolor,
e de tot mon afar marritz,
que no.m risides de paor;
mas aras vey e pes e sen
que passat ai aquelh turmen,
e non hi vuelh tornar ja mays.
(l. 15-21, cobla 3)

I have long been in distress,
And troubled about my situation
For never was I so soundly asleep
That I could not awake from fright;
But now I see, think, and feel
That I have come through this ordeal,
And I never want to return to it.

qu’anc no fuy tan lunhatz d’amor
qu’er no.n sia sals e gueritz
(l. 31-32)

For I never was so alienated from love
That now with it I am not healthy and healed;

Mielhs mi for a jazer vestitz
que despollatz sotz cobertor,
e puec vos en traire auctor
la nueyt quant ieu fuy assalhitz;
(l. 36-39)

I should have gone to bed clothed
Rather than been naked under the covers,
And I can call for you as testimony
The night I was attacked;
Such nocturnal raptures are also reported by Arnaut de Mareuil’s first-person voice in *Salutz I – Dona, genser qe no sai dir*:

I have said enough, and can say no more;  
My eyes closing, I sigh,  
And sighing, I go like one who is asleep;  
Then my spirit goes  
Directly, Lady, to you  
Whose sight it covets.  
Just as I desire it myself,  
Night and day, whenever I think of it,  
My spirit has its way with you...  
Embracing and kissing and caressing you.  
So that this state/sense may last;  
I would not wish to be lord of Rheims.  
But I would sleep in joy  
Rather than languish in waking and desiring

(ll. 139-52)

Similar dreams, with a similar state of somnolent lethargy, also occur in several of Arnaut’s *cansos* (IX.29 and 35; X. 18 and XI.53); and in Amanieu de Sescars’ *salutz, A vos, que ieu am deszamatz* (ll. 36-41). The trope is Ovidian, though now somewhat altered by Occitan *trobador* elaboration, particularly the addition of *lonh*. When placed within a *salutz* – a longer form than the *canso* - oneric passages acquire an embedded character, as episodes within the lyric narrative, and with an embedding of this other world within the outer one. The *salutz* of Arnaut de Mareuil are, furthermore, of strong intertextual significance to *Flamenca*.

The second and third senses of *amor de lonh* are interwoven intricately in *Flamenca* as a love for Love, for Amor. Guillem produces his lyric pieces in the gloaming, often at the window, at the symbolic thresh-hold between worlds. His moments of solitary enjoyment are invariably linked to the liminal zone between sleeping and waking, or to dreaming, or to some form of hallucinatory transport. His erotic and poetic activities are intertwined in the oneric fantasy-world. Guillem enjoys Flamenca in a dream (ll. 2143-91); but is actually “Had” by Amor (effectively *en forma de Flamenca Fin’Amors*, with apologies to l. 7111):

---

Anc non vist home tan cochat
en tan pauc d’ora per amor
(ll. 2143-44)

Never was a man so vanquished
In such short time by Love’s might.

Fin’Amors l’esperit l’en mena
(l. 2147)

By Love his spirit had been rapt

Quant Amors ac fag son plazer
de l’esperit, [b] lui s’en torna
dreg a Guillem, e-l cors n’ajorna
(ll. 2169-71)

So now that Love had done [her]\(^18\) will
With William’s mind, it made its way
Back to him, dawning like the day.

Guillem acquires the habit of dropping off and being ravished by Amor while under a tree, when assailed by bird-song, hearing the *kalenda maia* (Maying song), and whenever assailed by any other signs of spring, or, amorous avatars. It is an attractive imprisonment, this escape from the real world, going deeper and deeper into what is, paradoxically, one’s own imprisonment. Guillem thus spends a considerable quantity of time asleep or in a somnolent state, of waking near-dream. Verbs of sleep – *dormir*, *adormir* and *s’adormir*, *somnar* – are used almost exclusively with reference to Guillem.\(^19\)

Guillem’s second lyric piece is strewn through a whole love-scene between Guillem and pseudo-Flamenca/Amor (ll. 2687-3055), in which pseudo-Flamenca/Amor (or that part of Guillem represented by her) first replies to him (ll. 2839-44), as an ideal lover. Her responses are those of a hypothetical ideal woman (ll. 2852-70, 2889-2956), but also suggesting that what seemed to be her first reply earlier was not her at all, and that she is aware of this and mocks him. When she suggests the stratagem to Guillem whereby he may meet with Flamenca in the baths, she mentions that she goes there occasionally: *on mi bain alcuna sazo* (l. 2936). This recalls what we know already (ll. 1495-96), that Flamenca does too, as one of her two releases from imprisonment.

---
\(^{18}\) Hubert and Porter have “his” here. This is grammatically wrong. It also misses the whole point of a feminine person “taking” a masculine one in a manner that would usually be called “rapture” or “rape,” were the genders to be reversed.

\(^{19}\) *Adormir*, for example: one exception – l. 4879 – has Archimbaut not fall asleep; in another, and angry Guillem accuses Amor of being asleep, lost, or mute (l. 3849); otherwise, references are in ll. 2800, 2970, 2972, 3433, 3438, 3443, 3451, 4369, and 4372. Of the 27 instances of *dormir*, there are two pertaining to Archimbaut (ll. 252 and 900), one to Samson (l. 653), three to Flamenca (ll. 5757, 6078, and 6080). All seven uses of *somnar* relate to Guillem.
Pseudo-Flamenca/Amor indulges him in some embraces and gives him all possible “joy,” stirring his senses to discover these pastures new, and “awakening” him de joi – “with,” or “through,” and also “into” enjoyment:

Thereon she kissed him and embraced, And every joy she made him taste
Of word, of gesture, and of seeming. As William thus observed while dreaming
All that his lady for his sake
Would do, Love came with joy to wake
Him,…

Through the double meaning of reveilla – “reveal” and “awaken” - ll. 2961-62 have the double sense of Amor revealing joy to Guillem – incidentally showing her true colours under the dream-Flamenca guise - and awakening him from his reverie. Amor is simultaneously two persons at once, and both inside and outside the dream. Guillem complains, wishing to return to his slumbers and the embraces of the dream-Flamenca/Amor. 20 In the rest of this scene, Guillem becomes more ill with love, through his nightly sufferings. As these are causally linked to Amor, the pseudo-Flamenca -fantasm is more clearly a vision sent by Amor, a representation of herself sent to torment him, like a vampiric succubus.

Guillem’s first lyric utterance in this scene has him show more awareness of love, as he is now able to describe his symptoms, subsequent to the usual shooting by love’s dart: he has now ascertained the source of his affliction. He is controlled and trapped in his heart, seen in the repetitions of cor and its correlates (ll. 2688-93). The main desire expressed is that for escape. Alongside is a statement of awareness of his imprisoned condition. He recognises, above all, that the only escape will be through complete sincerity, and through full amorous

20 When the modern punctuation is removed from ll. 2967-73, it is clear that Guillem is playing with the double sense of reveillar and of Amor’s double action; although modern punctuation has the unfortunate effect of restricting meaning to “awakening him from dreams, which were bad.” Here is the passage, unpunctuated and repunctuation and italicized to produce a different sense:

Amors, fait aves gran peccat.
Car m’aves si tost reveillat
la gran merce qu’avias faita
quan m’adormist m’aves estraita
quar aisi tost mi reveilles
Amors. Per Dieu! ar m’adornes
ancaras, si-us plas, un peti
expression: the same verb, *desliure*, is used both for “liberating from bonds” and “free-tongued,” for instance in *e per so-us dic tut a desliure* (l. 2694), and a desire to be *desliurat* by Amor (ll. 2779). He asks the traditional *merce* of pseudo-Flamenca/Amor (ll. 2805), and wishes to be hers (ll. 2815). He claims he wants nothing more from her than to speak to her and to see her, as he will hold himself *pagatz assatz* (ll. 2824-2828: “sufficiently paid/rewarded”). He calls himself her man and her servant, claiming *merce* on his knees, but with the usual subtle emotional blackmail of claiming he will die if he does not have some “consolation” of her, *si no-m conseillatz* (ll. 2851). Pseudo-Flamenca/Amor provides some consolation and counsel, in the form of the two stratagems that will enable Guillem first to approach Flamencas, disguised as a sacristan, then to meet with her, in the bath-house.

Guillem’s third major lyric piece (ll. 3321-3445) starts out in despair and doubt in Love. He plays with *Amor* with repetitions, *adnominatio*-play, and its reversal into the syllable *ma* (ll. 3325-58), before “finding himself,” declaring that *si eu meseis no-m cosseil / non trobarai qui-m don cosseil* (ll. 3369-70: “I must myself contrive some plan / Nor count on help from any man”). His own counsel is of course that provided in the dream, but translated into practical terms as a plan of action. This includes plans for giving fine presents to those who will be of assistance to him. After a brief intercalation with Amor, he drifts off into sleep, asking her to give him the “solace” of enjoying pseudo-Flamenca in his sleep, which she grants once again. His last words, as he falls asleep, are of very simple desire of sheer want; part incantation or prayer; drifting off into sleep with somnolent repetitions around *vos* and *veillar*; and in a fine chiasmus of *veillar* around *s’adormir*:

*Per so dirai ades: vos, vos, vos, dona, domna, vos dirai ades, aitan quan veillarai. Si miei [oil] s’adorno defors, eu voil ab vos veille mos cors oc, ab vos, domna, oc, ab vo...* (ll. 3440-45)

... And so I say: you, you,
You, lady, you it is who take
My being while I am awake,
And, if my eyes should fall asleep,
With you I still a tryst will keep
With you, lady, yes, with you.”

When read from Guillem’s point of view, the middle section – the romantic idyll – is an ideal escape inwards. The physical space becomes more and
more closed, and more interior: into churches, bedrooms, and eventually underground baths cut out of the earth. The elemental symbolism of the latter has often been remarked: going deep into a cavern inside the earth, whether back to the womb or to more adult comforts; bathing in the healing waters that cure Ovidian love-sickness; being cleansed by the fresh waters of springs, bringing a baptism into new life, whilst recalling the four Edenic rivers, the Dantean Lethe and Eunoë; all the while with the ironic touch of these being sulphurous springs and the “new being” one of lust and adultery.

Flamenca becomes Amor, a process that starts with Guillem’s first interaction with her, and continues through the second phase of Guillem’s narrative, the central composition-affair. Guillem interacts less with Amor, refers to her less, especially in his lyric pieces. A nice solution is produced to the problem of loving a real woman, or loving an abstract, idealised one – the “courtly/lyric lady”: resolved here as the two become one and the same.

The second phase of Guillem’s narrative consists of interaction with Flamenca in a romantic idyll. Guillem interacts less with Amor: that is, with her directly, indirectly through address to the ambiguous lady love, and indirectly in the shape of psychomachia (which also goes the other way around, as his interactions with Amor are also indirect psychomachia). Guillem’s first three lyric pieces after uttering hai las are at once commentary on the last words spoken, and prediction or composition of the next ones. They are longer, between 90 and 130 lines long (ll. 3988-4111, on his hai las; ll. 4372-4462, on Flamenca’s que plans?; ll. 4589-4730, on his own mur mi). Uncertainty is expressed in evolving psychomachia. Guillem debates with Amor in the first of these three pieces. In the second, Love is not addressed, but instead fragmented body parts are pitted against each other, within which discussion is embedded a conversation between hypothetical ideal lovers, wandering in circles before wondering whether she loves him or not. The third piece sees a reappearance of Amor as Love-the-abstraction, and one single address to Amor: Amors! Amors! trop m’o alongas (l. 4669: “Love! Love! My misery you prolong”). Amor does not respond; she and her dream-raptures have disappeared entirely from narrative events with Guillem’s utterance of hai las. Amor only reappears briefly in the salutz scene,
and thereafter, in very distinct commentating passages by a clearly separated external narrator, towards the very end.

As Guillem’s composition and affair progress, the compositional and critical paratext for and aft become less, while Amor’s presence diminishes and Flamenca’s increases. Guillem’s next few contemplatory lyric passages are very short – only ten to thirty lines long (ll. 4841-72, 4942-58, 5043-82, 5179-5204) – in part as narrative focus has shifted to Flamenca, and her production of ever-lengthening lyric passages. Flamenca gives Guillem *gran delieg* – “great delight” - when she gives him the silent replique of a *cortes don* (ll. 5291-96: “courteous gift”). After this point, rumination ceases, as an understanding has clearly been reached. Once the lovers are finally able to meet in the flesh, their verbal interactions are stilted, formulaic, banal, and anticlimactic. The spice is of course in non-verbal interaction: an escape from *trobar clus* by going beyond words, into a *trobar leu* whose words are of the most extreme “lightness” possible, having attained complete weightlessness and invisibility.

One interpretation of this distance from Amor would be that Guillem is less confused, more sure of himself, and has reconciled his various parts previously in conflict with one another. A second would be that Guillem has replaced one object of desire with another, and is a sort of serial monogamist. A third, that his *éducation sentimentale* is complete. If Amor were an internal construct, a psychologically necessary figment of his imagination, this need has disappeared. In the romance’s own terms, this translates as his education being complete, and thus the final step is severance from his Mistress in Doctrine. At the end of the amorous idyll, separation occurs, but it is Flamenca rather than Amor who sends Guillem away to do knightly things on the jousting-circuit. That leads me to my fourth and final reading of Amor’s apparent disappearance: Amor *is* Flamenca. More exactly, Amor has become incarnate in Flamenca. As Amor’s presence in the narrative wanes, Flamenca’s waxes.

When one looks for the first definite interaction between Guillem and Flamenca, one finds several possibilities, working backwards from the first meeting in the flesh. His first sight of her “fully,” when she looks him directly in
the eyes, and gazes are exchanged (pren li). The first touch, when Flamenca’s hand brushes his. The first verbal contact, either when Flamenca replies “que plans?” to Guillem’s hai las – this is when it is clear to him that they are interacting; for her, it would be the next response, his “mor mi.” Guillem’s first words to Flamenca. His first sight of her. Before this, we have his nights of bliss with the dream-pseudo-Flamenca, who, we are told, was really Amor in disguise, and Amor was enjoying Guillem “in the spirit” – perhaps, therefore, less awful and upsetting than a real woman having her way with him in the flesh.

Later, once his discussions with Amor and with parts of his fragmented self have diminished, Guillem converses with a hypothetical Flamenca. All the conversations between Flamenca and her maids, all their conjectures and commentaries, could also be hypotheses: figments of Guillem’s imagination as he gazes out the window in his room, and an entirely dreamed love-affair. Our hero has been suffering the usual sleep deprivation of love-sickness; he can only get to sleep by thinking about, and praying to/summoning Love; and, when he does get some sleep, it is only to be ravished by Love and left unrested the next morning. In such a state of mind, it is not uncommon for an individual to hallucinate, lose any sense of the borders between realities, in highly realistic if sublime visions. Guillem dreaming a fantasy-Flamenca, as evidenced by some appearances of a clearly imagined Flamenca, and some possible slippage later. Could explain some Ovidian misogynist comment in the mouth of a woman. Guillem’s Flamenca is an idealised woman uttering eloquent speeches on matters such as woman’s obligation to return an admirer’s attentions within a certain time, something which is clearly a problem for many trobadors, and a reiteration of Ovid’s pronouncements on the subject.

Reading the narrative as Guillem’s dream-vision works well when the romance is seen as firmly related to the Roman de la Rose. The two poems share narrative techniques for the subtle shifts between conditions (sleeping / waking; and between one scene, episode, and world; and between one world and another, in an entirely different dimension). These transitions parallel those here: the

---

21 (Bernart de Ventadorn, for instance, in Estat ai com om esperutz)
transition-passage of movement; between waking and sleeping, and their respective worlds; and disjunctions such as some of the lacunae.

The escapist side of *amor de lonh* may be pleasant and attractive, but the dream-state has problems and discontents of the dream-state. The state of somnolence, or waking dream, is a zombie-like imprisonment and possession, used and abused by Love. Guillem is often in a state of *somnar*, and the most common use of *clus* and *claus* in our narrative is in describing his eyes and eyelids as being closed. Jaufré Rudel expresses fear of this condition, then rejects it as fundamentally unsatisfactory. He does so by waking up poetically into the illumination that is *trobar leu*. At the end of *No sap chantar qui so non di*, he breaks free of the conjoined trope of suspended gnosis and amorous fantasy, and produces a “good song” – *bos es lo vers* (ll. 31 and 37). *Qan lo rius de la fontana* is a little more specific about this merit: ... *lo vers que chantam / plan...* (ll. 30-31: “the song which we sing / plainly”). In *Quan lo rossinhols el follos*, illusion is rejected in favour of higher enlightenment:

| Amors, alegres part de vos,            | Love, I leave you cheerfully,                          |
| per so quar vau mo mielhs queren;     | For I seek what is best for me;                        |
| e suy en tant aventuros               | And I am fortunate in this                             |
| qu’enqueras n’ay mon cor jauzen,      | That I am still rejoicing,                             |
| la merce de mon Bon Guiren            | Thanks to my Good Protector                           |
| que.m vol e m’apell’e.m denha,        | Who wants, calls, and approves me,                     |
| e m’a tornat en bon esper.             | And has made me very hopeful.                         |
| E qui sai rema deleytos               | And whoever stays here enjoying himself,              |
| e Dieu non siec en Bethlehem,         | And does not follow God to Bethlehem, I do            |
| no sai cum ja mais sia pros,          | not know how he will ever be worthy,                  |
| ni cum ja venh’a guerimen;            | Or how he will ever reach salvation;                  |
| qu’ieu sai e cre, mon escien,         | For I know and indeed believe                          |
| que selh qui Jhesus ensenha           | That whoever teaches of Jesus                         |
| segura escola pot tener               | Holds a good school.                                  |
| (ll. 29-42, coblas 5-6)               |                                                        |

In *Flamenca*, we may see a desire to escape this *amors clusa* through awakening and revelation: *reveillar*. Yet moments of revelation such as seeing Flamencas are very much of blinding by light – rather as, in similar over-luminous circumstances, Dante cannot see Beatrice properly at first. Clarity and truth, paradoxically, blind the viewer; a problem if this vision is the very escape from
illusion. Guillem is unable to distinguish between fact and fantasy, in dreams, and in interaction with Amor. When Guillem first sees Flamenca, he shows no actual awareness of her. His awareness of Flamenca is limited because he is dazzled, fails to see her properly, and only as a discontinuity of fetishized body parts: not unlike our text’s temptingly penetrable lacunae. Guillem never escapes, not in the way that the first-person voice in Jaufré poems does, through the exercise of will. Rather, it is Flamenca-Amor who sends him away, back to his own (and the real) world, northern France and its jousting circuit; with the hope of future reunion when the external-courtly and the internal-fantastic worlds will be brought together, at Archimbaut’s court:

“E per son, amics, non vueill plus que vos estes sans reclus; anas vos en, ques eu o vueil, car ges aissi con far o sueill sais a vos venir nom poiiria. Per so vueil tengas vostra via et en vostra terra tornes et al tornei sa tornares.
(ll. 6779-86)

“Therefore, I do not wish, my dear, That you remain imprisoned here. And so it is my will that you Depart. I can’t, as hitherto, Come here to see you day by day, So I must bid you go your way To your own country, with intent To come back for the tournament.

On a purely superficial level, Guillem has accomplished his quest: his éducation sentimentale at Amor’s finishing school is complete, and he has been made a man. But this was by being “had” by a feminine entity. Amors has possessed him, including taking him sexually, passively, in a way more usually seen as stereotypically feminine; she has turned the gender tables, acting in a way more usually associated with masculine behaviour, whilst feminizing Guillem. This all emphasizes his failure to find and do anything himself, actively. He returns whence he came, back on his old path, after his failure to trobar.

2.2 Breaking free into a place of one’s own

Subtle indications point to a further object of Guillem’s desire, one that is not so lofty as might be thought just from his very first, longer lyric production. These indications are provided in other direct speech, which are shorter and may be less obviously lyric in character. Yet, as the Romance of Flamenca is like shorter lyric poetry in the spareness of its composition, little content can be
dismissed as “noise.” For example, analysing Guillem’s direct speech, I find several sorts, and a pattern. We have longer pieces which function virtually as lyric inserts - in the sense used in Jean Renart’s and Guillaume de Machaut’s work. As such, one could see the rest of the romance as being built around these; not so much lyric encased in romance, but romance built around it, as an extended form of the *vida* and *razo* built around the collected works of our principal protagonist-poet, Guillem de Nevers. The other types of discourse are all short, everyday, exchanges with everyday people: his host/innkeeper, Peire Gui, and his wife Bellapila; his squires Otto and Claris; the local clerics, Justin and Nicolaus; Flamenca; and Archimbaut.

*Flamenca* plays with readerly expectation by revealing much of Guillem’s true, deeper desire in superficially trivial utterances – such as those about *alberc* and *ostes*, “abode, residence, hostelry.”

22 *Trobar* seems, on first reading, to be used most often, in reference to Guillem, in a banal or burlesque way: most frequently in conjunction with food, drink, and *alberc*; but also with *engien* – “ingenuity,” related to subversion and other derivative ways around things. Alberc as “hostel, hostelry” is related to *aizi* – “asylum” – which is used in Guilhem de Peitieus’ works in simultaneous erotic and poetic senses (amongst others), and with striking consequences for the other side of poetic desire, the desire to escape (from *trobar clus*). This desire for escape is also suggested by his poem *Faray un vers de dreit nien*, where the trope of suspended gnosis is combined with a *contraclau*, which, as shown above, will enable a subversive escape from being clus by a clau. The escape is to a place that is a safe haven, or

---

22 This can be brought together with double-entendres and other puns to support very illuminating psychoanalytic readings, drawing on Freud’s “psychopathology of everyday life.” This method is used most obviously Huchet, and filters into Lazar 1964 and Nelli 1963 on sexuality in Occitan literature, which in turn has been an immense influence on the last two generations of Occitan literary study, including this present one. Psychoanalytic thinking has become an integral part not only of the academic world today but also of the *everyday* world; it would be well-nigh impossible to deny its influence.

23 *Alberc/g* and *albergar* and conjugated forms appear as follows: pertaining to Guillem, ll. 1853, 1891, 1899, 1904, 1939, 2260-61, 5580, 5583, 5638, 7204, 7263, 7271, and 7281. Lodging for people in general, at Archimbaut’s first court: ll. 204, 420, 441, 444-45, and 447. At his second court, Guillem is included in the lodging (though not specified in the generalized reference in l. 7204): the cuckoo is fully assimilated, perhaps also suggested by a reference to husbands “accepting,” *albergoil* (l. 7244). In ll. 5579-83 and 5638, Flamenca refers to herself as a place of *alberc*. 
“asylum,” made by the lyric “I” and uniquely theirs: an escape into a place of one’s own.

In *Flamenca*, *clau(s)* and *(en)clausa(s)* appear in ways recalling their usage in Occitan lyric as outlined earlier. Here, they are connected to Amor (and amorous avatars – *dolors*, *Flamenca*) locking up hearts (of Archimbaut and Guillem; and Alis warns Flamenca against locking her own, l. 4925); and to doors being locked, most frequently Archimbaut locking up Flamenca. The word *contraclau* is never used: it would be a heavy-handed superfluity, as both Guillem and Archimbaut spy on Flamenca through holes in walls (pre-existing for the former, made specifically for the latter), and as Guillem literally gets around Archimbaut’s locks by “stealing” Flamenca and making his own counter-key (an anti-key, effectively cancelling out Archimbaut’s *clau*) by having a physical tunnel dug between his chambers and the locked baths, where he and Flamenca may meet in secret, in a new private space created by them: achieving love and escaping *trobar clus* in another *aizi*. *Flamenca* is punctuated with *pertuis* - holes in walls, tunnels, textual lacunae, and of course the sexual space desired by Guillem, which may perhaps be the undermining *contraclau* of the *corn*.

The main protagonist in *Flamenca* is called *Guillem*, and comes from Nevers. If by this is meant the real “Nevers,” that is a place which, in the 12th-13th centuries, was on the language line between French and Occitan. It is also noted that he speaks several languages. He shares these features with “Guilhem de Peitieus,” the first known *trobador*, usually agreed to be the real-historical Guilhem, 9th Duke of Aquitaine and 7th Count of Poitiers (usually abbreviated to Guilhem IX), who became the stuff of legend very rapidly, mythologized soon after his death as a great poet, lover, and trickster. Amongst known named poets in the *vidas* and *razos*, Guillem is one of the two equal commonest names.25

24 The relevant textual references are as follows: ll. 162, 448, 902, 1359, 1390, 1481, 1508, 1795, 1828, 1938, 1946, 2354, 3007, 3308, 3388, 3876, 3875, 4091, 4925, 5703-04, 5792, 6150, 7141, The other, much rarer, things that may be closed (and opened) are eyes, books, and night.  
25 *Vidas* and *razos* in the Boutière-Schutz edition. There are twelve Guillems; to which one could add those names based on the *gui*-syllable: two Guis, one Guiraudo, three Guiraunts. The other name is Peire (to which could be added Peirol). *Flamenca*’s inkeeper is called “Peire Gui.”
Other significant literary Williams include the Occitan romance *Guilhem de la Barre*, the Old French Guillaume d’Orange cycle, and the unnamed central figure in Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose*.

Guillems are literally, etymologically “wily,” “guile” incarnate. Guile is associated with deceit and disguise: by friars (real and false) in the fabliaux, the *Roman de Renart*, Rutebeuf’s poetry; the fraternal and more general embodiment by Faus Samblant in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*; and the older figure of Tristan. *Flamenca*’s Guillem is described when in clerical guise in Reynardian terms, strengthening the guile-feature, through reference to Isengrim (the wolf) and Belin (a sheep), as a wolf in sheep’s clothing:

> Aissi presica ‘n Aengris,  
> mais, si-l capellas fos devis,  
> ben pogra dir si con Rainartz:  
> Gart si Belis daus totas partz!  
> (ll. 3687-90)

Thus Isengrim preaches; but indeed Had the priest magic gifts to read,  
He might have said, as did Renard,  
Let Belin on all sides keep guard.

If *vidas* and *razos* often describe a poet as a good *trobar*, a good lover, and *cortes*, the three becoming synonymous; and if *trobar* is the fundamental feature of poetic identity; then Guilhem verily incarnates the golden standard of *trobar*. As the *vida* tells us, Guilhem de Peitieus is the Wily William *par excellence*:  

> si fo uns dels majors cortes del mon e dels majors trichadors de dompnes, e bons cavalliers d’armas e larcs de dompnejar; e saup ben trobar e cantar. Et anet lontemps per lo mon per enganar las domnans.  

(“He was one of the courtliest gentlemen in the world, and one of the biggest deceivers of women, and a good knight, and generous in his giving; and he knew how to find and sing well. And he wandered the world for a long time deceiving women.”) Various subsequent extensions and embroiderings culminate in the French *Roman de Jouffroi*.

Guilhem de Peitieus’ use of *aizi* and his creation of his own new poetic space may be observed in *Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz*, which includes the line *loing e pres et en mon aizi* (“far and near and in my domain”), strategically placed as the last line of the last or second-last *cobla*, depending on the manuscript. This *aizi* may be read as a utopian space made by the poet, and it is

---

26 See, specifically, Dragonetti 1982 on the name Guilhem.  
27 Boutière-Schutz 7.
that which makes him into a poet. Its closer examination serves as a gloss to the object of Guillem’s desire in *Flamenca*. My reading is based on Gerald A. Bond’s edition of the poem, which runs as follows:

1. **Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz,**
   - Since I have been seized by a desire to sing,
2. **Farai un vers don sui dolenz,**
   - I shall do a song about what grieves me:
3. **Non serai mais obedïenz,**
   - No longer shall I be obeisant
4. **En Peitieau ni en Lemozi,**
   - In Poitou or in Limousin.
5. **Qu’era m’en irai en eisil,**
   - For now I shall go off into exile;
6. **En guerra laisserai mon fil,**
   - I shall be leaving my son in the midst of war,
7. **En gran paor, en gran peril,**
   - In great fear and great peril;
8. **E faran li mal siei vesi,**
   - And his neighbors will harm him.
9. **Lo departirs m’es aitan grieus,**
   - Departing from the lordship of Poitiers
10. **Del seignorage de Peitieus,**
    - Is so difficult for me;
11. **En garda lais Folcon d’Angieus,**
    - I leave in the custody of Fulk of Angers
12. **Tota la terra e son cozi,**
    - All the land and his cousin.
13. **Si Folcon d’Angieus no-l socor,**
    - If Fulk of Angers does not help him
14. **E l reis de cui ieu tenc m’onor,**
    - Nor the king from whom I hold my fief,
15. **Guerreiar l’an tut li plusor,**
    - Everyone will war with him,
16. **Felon Gason et Angevi,**
    - Treacherous Gascons and Angevins.
17. **Si ben non es savis ni pros,**
    - If he is not very wise and strong
18. **Cant ieu serai partiz de vos,**
    - When I am gone from you,
19. **Vias l’auran tornat en ios,**
    - They will quickly depose him
20. **Car lo veiran jove mesqui,**
    - Because they will see him as a young weakling.
21. **Merce clam a mon compagnion,**
    - I beg my companion for clemency:
22. **S’anc li fi tort, qu’il m’o perdon,**
    - If I ever wronged him, let him pardon me for it;
23. **Et il pree en Jezu del Tron,**
    - And may he pray Christ Enthroned
24. **En romans et en son lati,**
    - Both in Romance and in his own Latin.
25. **De proeza e de joi fui,**
    - I was (a man) of prowess and joy,
26. **Mais ara partem ambedui,**
    - But now we are parting from each other;
27. **Et ieu irai m’en a scellui,**
    - And I shall go off to Him
28. **On tut peccador troban fi,**
    - Where all sinners find peace.

---

28 A more elaborate version of this reading is forthcoming as an article, entitled “Escapist Endings in Guilhem de Peitieus’ *Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz,*” in *Hortulus*.

29 Gerald A. Bond, ed. and trans., *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine* (New York: Garland, 1982): 40-43. The poem exists in seven manuscripts, with five different endings, only two of which (present in four manuscripts) finish with this edition’s *cobla* 11, and only one of which (in three manuscripts) follows this edition’s stanzaic order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>folio</th>
<th><em>cobla</em> order</th>
<th>authorial attribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D Modena, N 45</td>
<td>190v</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
<td><em>lo coms de peitieus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Paris, B.N. fr. 854</td>
<td>142v</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
<td><em>lo coms de peitieus + vida</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Paris, B.N. fr. 12473</td>
<td>128r</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
<td><em>vida</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N¹ Cheltenham, Philipps 8335</td>
<td>230r</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
<td>[none]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N² Cheltenham, Philipps 8335</td>
<td>234v</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
<td>[none]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Modena, B. Estense N 8</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>1,3,4,2,5,7,9,6,10,8</td>
<td><em>lo cos de peiteus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Paris, B.N. fr. 856</td>
<td>230r</td>
<td>1,3,4,2,5,7,9,6,10,11</td>
<td><em>cos de peyteus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Paris, B.N. fr. 22543</td>
<td>8r</td>
<td>1,9,3,4,2,6,10,7</td>
<td><em>coms de peiteus</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

128
Mout ai estat cuendes e gais
Mas Nostre Seigner no-l vol mais;
Ar non puesc plus soffrir lo fai
Tant soi aprochatz de la fi.
Tot ai guerput cant amar sueill:
Cavalaria et orgoill;
E pos Dieu platz, tot o acueill,
E prec li que m reteng’am si.
Toz mos amics prec a la mort
Que il vengan tut e m’onren fort,
Qu’eu ai avut joi e deport
Loing e pres et en mon aizi.
Aissi guerpisc joi e deport
E vair e gris e sembeli.

I was very charming and gay,
But Our Lord wants no more of that;
Now I can no longer tolerate the burden
So close am I to the end.

Everything I used to love I have thrown away:
Knighthood and worldly pride;
And since it pleases God, I accept it all,
And pray Him to retain me with Him.

I pray all my friends to come
And honor me greatly at my death;
For I have had joy and pleasure
Far and near and in my domain.

Thus I throw away joy and pleasure
And squirrel, vair, and sable.

Pos de chantar is a canso of ten coblas, each of four octosyllabic lines, and
a two-line tornada. In the tornada, two lines echo the rhyme scheme (-ort, -i),
the content (...joi e deport), and the structure (and A and B and C) of the last two
lines of previous cobla: cobla 10 - ... joi e deport / loing e pres et en mon aizi; 11 -
... joi e deport / e vair e gris e sembeli.

The poem as a whole has two rhyme schemes. A fluid a-rhyme (coblas
singualrs) unifies and distinguishes each cobla, using the same rhyme scheme for
the first three lines of the cobla but a different rhyme for each cobla (-enz for 1, -il
for 2, -ieus for 3, etc.). Every fourth line uses a fixed b-rhyme (unisonans, in -i),
regular throughout the poem. The b-rhyme ends a stanza and separates it from
the next, acting as a tornada-within-the-cobla, or an end-within-the-whole. At
the same time, it is a feature of continuity, linking stanzas together into a whole
poem. The b-rhyme lines provide a thematic structure to the poem, through
references which associate finding, and place and belonging.

Coblas 7 and 8 end with the trobar of, respectively, troban fi and
aprochatz de la fi. Cobla 5’s use of jove reinforces that stanza’s search for a sort
of immortality; that is, for “it” (= the poem) to have the eternal life of being savis
and pros rather than tornat en ios and jove mesqui, when the poet sarai partiz -
when he will have finished and left “it” (that is, the poem amongst other things).

Simpler examples of place and belonging end coblas 2 (... siei vezi) and 9
(reteng’ am si). The last line of a cobla is in an “A and B” binary structure and
refers to real, named, single, external places to which language and persons
belong. They could also appear to draw the borders of the realm in the real world of the historical Guilhem, 7th Count of Poitiers and 9th Duke of Aquitaine (if he and our poet are identical): coblas 1 (en Peitau ni en Lemozi), 3 (tota la terra e son cozi), 4 (felon Gascon et Angevi), and cobla 6 makes direct linguistic reference to en romans et en son lati.

A second important grammatical structure occurs in two final b-lines, in an A and B and C form: cobla 10, loing e pres et en mon aizi; 11, e vair e gris e sembeli. The “A and B and C” lines are not about external, real space. They refer, I think, to Guilhem’s poetic space, his own (internal) language “hollowed out” within main, externally-imposed language: his aizi. The enigmatic loing e pres et en mon aizi shows ways of resisting, undermining, and escaping pre-existing notions of language and identity; notions rooted in a binary structure which opposes same and different, external and internal, real and not-real, set up through the rest of the poem. This line is already forcefully positioned within the poem: it is the final line of cobla 10, and so at once a b-rhyme line at the end of a cobla and the last line of the main body of the poem, before the tornada.

Nicolò Pasero and Roger Dragonetti analyse the use of aizi in Guilhem’s work. On its use in Farai un vers pos mi sonelh (l. 21: mout me semblatz de bel aizi), Pasero draws attention to Pfister’s definition of “le domaine dont le château est le centre.” Pasero links this, in its use here, to birthplace: “l’espressione de bel aizi indicherà ‘di buona nascita’ o simili.” He continues: “Dragonetti propone alquanto macchinosamente (ma la proposta è nel contesto di un’ interpretazione...

30 Gilles Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, trans. Daniel W. Smiths and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997), trans. of Critique et clinique (Paris: Minuit, 1993). “Creuser” is nicely used in the original to bring together trobar-like senses of “hollowed out” (chapter 1 “Literature and Life”, 5); “carves out” (chapter 3, “He Stuttered”, 110); and Beckett’s “‘drilling holes’ in language … to see or hear ‘what was lurking behind’ ” (preface, lv): the “making” of a derivative creative act.
31 This is the case in four of the manuscripts. In two, it is the last line of the last cobla of the poem. In the other two, it is the last line of the second-last cobla (with no tornada).
del tema dell’aizi): ‘votre extérieur donne à croire que le lieu qui vous convient dans le domaine d’Amour est bien situé’”(143-44).33


Writing on the close relationship between aizi and aise (“ease”) in the 12th century, Dragonetti concludes around translation’s problems of restricting meaning, as opposed to “le poème [qui] ouvre au mot l’espace de ses significations multiples en les rendant au sens plus essentiel de leur rapport harmonique” (153). On such open meaning, “ces deux modes différents de comprendre ces mots, loin de s’exclure, se rejoignent au contraire, se complètent et communiquent entre eux,” albeit with the caveat of reading these words on their own terms, in their own (poetic) language - “mais seulement au niveau d’une entente d’un sens plus fondamental qui est en œuvre à l’intérieur des coordonnées propres aux poèmes des plus anciens troubadours” (153). Aizi’s meaning was extended earlier to include

lieu du bien-être, le chez soi [...]. Le poète [=Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, qui utilise aizi dans un sens et dans une structure fort semblables] oppose deux façons de demeurer: celle où l’on est chez soi, (dins son aizi), à l’autre, où l’on se sent dans une demeure qui ne convient pas en raison de son étrangeté (salvatge). Ainsi, autour de l’idée de demeure, au sens propre ou figuré, l’auteur fait ressortir en parallèle, un contraste dans le monde, marqué par les deux adjectifs son et salvatge. (133)

33 “the expression de bel aizi would indicate ‘of good birth’ or similar [...] Dragonetti proposes somewhat mechanically (though his suggestion is in the context of an interpretation of the theme of aizi)...” Convient includes the sense of convenientia, “suitable,” and there is a broader sense of “fitting” too. Pasero quotes from: M. Pfister, *Lexikalische Untersuchungen zu Girart de Roussillon* (Tübingen: Beiheft CXXII der Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, 1970) 238; Dragonetti 137.

34 “Dragonetti (Aizi 140) explains that the plural is used because of the different situations/places of Love’s subjects: ... Taken as a whole, lines 27-30 indicate a constellation (estranh-vezis-aizis) which is found again – under another sign – in 40 (loing-pres-e[n] mon aizi). See also the pertinent footnote.” The note itself (295) is not particularly informative.
Dragonetti takes the course of identifying the mysterious and magical place as that of love, as he continues with a discussion of aizi as key translation problem - “demeure” and/or “bon plaisir” - in Pos de chantar (141). He, too, concludes that aizi is poetic space - though by a different (albeit very attractive) route. On mon aizi, “le possessif semble d’ailleurs indiquer que parmi tous les aizis dont il est question [...] il possède aussi le sien, celui qui appartient au poète” (142). Later, “l’idée d’harmonie est donc portée par le sens locatif de aizi” (143). On loing e pres, he points out the inescapable, that they are intrinsically linked to “la Joie,” a link strengthened by their frequent appearance as a linked amorous couple, as he puts it, “accouplés.” He proposes therefore to translate the tricky line as: “j’ai vécu la Joie dans la contradiction et l’harmonie” (143). This will later be expanded to “j’ai connu Joie et liesse, loin et près et dans la demeure qui me convient dans le domaine de la Joie (c’est-à-dire dans la contradiction et dans l’harmonie)” (145). He concludes most elegantly:


We see a distinction taking shape between two systems of significance: the real, external, single one; and the poetic and multiple. Two key words in Dragonetti’s unfolding of the amorous side of aizi are jouissance and convenance. Taking his erotic interpretation a little further – or perhaps just spelling out his discreet allusion – aizi is also the sexual lieu (de liesse) qui vous convient dans le domaine d’Amour, like the image of the “castle” under siege in the Roman de la Rose. A nice fit once he has eased himself in, it is a place of leisurely belonging for the lover-poet. It is private and secret, and his.

Aizi is very rare in Flamenca, and always used with erotic overtones. The first time she answers his prayers, Amor tests Guillem and his love, to see whether he replies well enough to merit her help. In a modesty trope, she claims incapacity to help, and that love between them is impossible: vos nous poires de mi aizir / ni eu de vos nulz tems gauzir (l. 2855-56) - “you cannot enjoy me, nor
can I have pleasure of you.” In the second lovers’ meeting in the baths, Guillem and Flamenca cavort alongside two other – new – couples, as Flamenca’s maids have been paired off with Guillem’s squires. The scene is described as the right “time and place” for love, aizina ne luec (l. 6478). Near the very end, Guillem and Flamenca enjoy a blissful evening – their last, as the text stands – including “drawing very close to each other,” l’us de l’autre mout prop s’aizina (l. 8052). This is an aizi of the personal, private, and definitely erotic.

Guilhem de Peitieus’ erotic aizi is also the aizi of a poetic space; and both are made by the poet, refashioned out of pre-existing materials in the real world, and uniquely his by creative input. The real, external, single terms here – Peiteu etc. – are nouns of place, nouns of place which are coterminous with adjectives (in the case of the named languages), or adjectives derived from nouns of place. Place-names are one kind of proper noun. One quality that makes a proper noun “proper” is an aspect of “property,” or belonging. Other things can belong to proper nouns, giving rise to adjectives related to proper noun: ex. “France” and “French.” Any other noun that adopts that adjective as an attribute or property - something belonging to it – paradoxically makes that noun “belong” to the first, proper one, as the second noun is defined by the first, derived from it, identified with it in using it to identify itself, to have identity. An example would be a person who is from Limoux and is therefore Limousin. A usual conception of human identity is through such an association with place, and usually with place of birth. Identity is imposed from the outside, by the double accident of birth (birth-parents and birthplace).

But in Guilhem de Peitieus’ poem, identity is undermined as the poet makes or finds (trobar) his own identity in his own poem, in derivatively “hollowing” new meaning out of Lemozi to make his aizi. This recalls an ambiguity around a second quality of the “proper”: “appropriateness.” On the one hand, the appropriate is fitting, so well suited as to be a central part of one’s identity. On the other hand, something may be appropriated: something that did not belong to one previously may be made one’s own, often by subterfuge.
Aizi is a noun of place, but usually a common rather than a proper noun. The different kinds of place point to a contrast between this poetic world and the other, real, external one, and the different kinds of place in each. This may have a proleptic function with respect to Guilhem’s poetic language which he is in the middle of creating. The place is not named more specifically – by a proper noun - as the language in which to name it does not yet exist, as the poet is in the middle of inventing or finding it (trobar), in an impossible moment like that of writing the unwritable present. Once that language does exist, aizi will be transformed in it from common to proper noun. This change in the nature of aizi would be an indication of the poet creating his own world.

Furthermore, Aizi is qualified as mon aizi. This emphasizes the aspect of belonging, own-ness (appropriate). Unlike other proper nouns of place, to which languages and persons belong, this has been turned upside down as it is a place which belongs to the poet. It belongs as it has been appropriated by him, as made by him out of what existed previously. And it is appropriate to him, belonging and exactly fitting.

The line’s whole structure is, we recall, tripartite. Instead of referring to a second thing which is clearly demarcated as different from the first, it refers to two things differing from aizi, and which are already opposite to each other. Loing and pres are adjectives with respect to the preceding context, in a syntactically subservient role to joie e desport (attached to it, descriptive, and subservient to its syntactically central subjectivity). They are prepositions with respect to the following context of et en mon aizi, in which en is another locative preposition (“in/inside”), attached to aizi. The sequence sets up a strange and impossible relationship between the three simultaneous terms. Loing and pres

---

35 Other oppositions between these two kinds of place can be seen in Pos de chantar, particularly so in the cobla arrangement in two manuscripts (a, C). Here, the alternative arrangement - 1, 3, 4, 2, 5 - connects coblas in terms of subject-matter in the real – external, geographical, historical, political, feudal - world, often contrasted with a non-real or double real/non-real centre in a chiasmus. Coblas 1 and 3 are linked through obedienz en Peitau: seignorage de Peitieus in a chiasmus around departirs; similarly, 3 and 4: Folcos d’Angieu, twice, around la terra (unspecified – though that could be because its identity is taken as read); 4 and 2: guerreiar : guerra around felon Gascon et Angevi (foreigners, strangers, xenoi, others, which fits in with a non-real aspect) and eisit; 4, 2 and 5 link together a short central section about fears for the son ... be they for real, biological son, creative, written work, both...
are contraries, and in a different world from the utopian aizi. Yet all three are linked by the conjunction et, “and.” In a final grammatical destabilization, the adjectives turned prepositions loing and pres, under association with en mon aizi, acquire a nominal sense. Most importantly for the purposes of Guilhem’s creation of his own poetic space, all three words have to do with location, but are not located in the real world.

In Guilhem’s poetic language, syntax is not simply and brutally done away with in a revolution against external language and the creation of the poet’s own one, and so of poetry; although this may be proleptically announced by the poem playing with reader’s syntactic expectations, such as the structural expectation of paired binaries and one straight line of reading in a single direction, and the semantic one of named place. The reader is instead made to look back in the poem to try to find exactly where the “proper” language ended and the poetic one began. She looks first for complete disjunctions and then for the embryonic stages of a process of transformation, such as multiple alternative possible senses. In this way, the proper language is questioned, as just by casting fixed and single aspects into doubt, poetic language is able to infect proper language with a first non-fixed and multiple aspect of poetic language. The proper language is itself changed by the fact of questioning it in this second reading at the stage when it is still proper language, in a first reading, and within the direction of the poem from start to finish. What was fixed (“was”) becomes changed, fluid (“becomes-”).

Reading the poem presents other fluid and multiple aspects. A second reading multiplies and opens out meanings, with respect to a first reading. In a similar way, a second reading opens up the possibility of further readings, with further multiplications. The reading is metaleptic, so repeated readings give the chance for the reader to play with meaning poetically just as the poet did proleptically (though that will have analeptic aspects too if composition is done from the centre unfolding outwards or from the end backwards).

---

36 Deleuze 1997; this is the main theme of his first chapter, “Literature and life”.
Poetic language subverts proper language, moving from the inside out, enabled by the very polysemy and fluidity of the poetic. Changes to proper language effect changes on how its world is perceived. Creation and the natural order of things and time may be played with by planting the seeds of poetic language in proper language, watching them grow, and reaping the harvest.

The poet is entirely safe inside the aizi of poetic language: he cannot be touched by the outside, but he has free rein in his play with the outside from within his safe haven ("asylum"). And this is also a safe haven as it is at once inside language, "hollowed out" from it and mis en abyme in a poem, and outside it; as whatever is not inside, included in, and identified with the same must by the very definition of the same and the inside be different, excluded, and outside. It is also outside as this poetic language's multiplicity includes within itself the singly-characterised proper language.

Most crucially, poetic language has also transcended the very concept of spatial inside versus outside thanks to the presence of those two other terms in the equation, which are even less nameable than aizi: the terms loing and pres. They are non-places, non-nouns, and to crown it all they have so many multiple meanings in so many contexts as to confer a transcendental value on these two words. These meanings include “place,” but the multiplicity of places enables the transcendence of mere attachment to singular place. Loing e pres are at once physical/real (his home, and/or his kingdom, and an amorous companion), metaphysical (pilgrimage, true home, salvation), and imaginary/poetic (his own language). And this poetic place is outside of physical space, as at once “far, near, and here,” an impossible location in real space.

Aizi may be productively re-juxtaposed with other places. Firstly, three manuscripts (a, C, R) include the 6, 10 cobla sequence. That gives another, simultaneous sense to cobla 10’s ieu ai agut joi e deport / loing e pres et en mon aizi, when read as a boast (or perhaps just a statement of fact) of wide-ranging prowess, and then juxtaposed with its twin cobla, 6: en romans et en son lati, which would now hint at the geographical range of the field of this triumphant activity and at the virtuosity involved, like double-entendres still running today around multilingualism. Language and writing conflate with the amorous, the
poetic with the erotic. Secondly, all the manuscripts start with cobla 1, and all have cobla 10 as their last or second-last one. The first cobla’s Lemozi may be more than a straightforward geographical reference. The name “Limousin” also represents a “Guilhem” who comes from there; or a “Guilhem IX” identified as his realm through royal abstraction / personification. But our first-person voice starts out his poem in rejection of his realm and/or self: non serai mai obedienz / en Peitiau ni en Lemozi. In such distancing, in deliberate making his non-belonging, the poet has carved himself a mask, literally carved out a poetic persona, created a new identity which has no place in the outside world but fits perfectly - verily, centrally - in his poetic space.\footnote{Disguise, guile, the mask, and the “hollowing-out” of identity call to mind Zumthor’s second field of work, in particular his ground-breaking Le Masque et la lumière: la poétique des Grands Rhétoriqueurs (Paris: Le Seuil, 1978). Questions about the differing intentions behind these two kinds of poetic mask make it difficult to affirm any further connection between the two.}

Aizi, strictly speaking, derives from ad iacens and so means “near, adjacent, close to.” In addition, it means “home, territory, place of belonging, proper place.” This recalls the “belonging to” and “proper to” earlier linking place and language, mentioned previously as the “property” related to “proper” and “appropriate.” A “proper place” is also a safe place as “convenable” in turn is related to “convenient, comfortable, rest” (Dragonetti 131). Safe place recalls the safe haven or asylum; and asylum is etymologically related to eisil. An initial connection between eisil and aizi can be seen in their placing within the poem as a whole. Eisil in the first line of the second cobla structurally mirrors aizi in the last line of the second-last cobla (10): eisil → aizi = exile → home. This emphasizes the movement between the two words, and suggests the movement of pilgrimage. It also draws attention to the words themselves, leading to further connection between them.

The pilgrimage-exile en (“in, into, inside of”) language is set up by double meanings in the first two coblas. Cobla 1 makes ambivalent use of talenz. A similar use can be found in another of Guilhem’s poems, Ab la dolchor del temps novel (l. 6) at the b-rhyme, rhyming talan with chan. This echoes our poem’s use of both terms in l. 1. This line leads straight into the duplicitous second one, farai un vers don sui dolenz: this could be writing about grief, or writing something for

\[37\]
which the poet grieves, or writing something which the poet is ashamed of ... or all at once. It is a dolenz for which the poet will make (trobara) his penance through this poem itself. Furthermore, Non serai obedienz en Peitau ni en Lemozi could also be linguistic disobedience, refusal. As the poet carves out his own language, he exiles himself - a deliberate, self-imposed exile - from his own language and from his home. And, as he carves out his own language, he also digs his own grave: m’en irai en eisil.

Aizi and eisil can be seen to be present not just as a movement from one place to another, but as a fused idea, as one and the same place. This fused idea connects to “proper language,” that is, the very externally-imposed language which the poet is trying to escape by creating his own language - and which has been diverted, perverted into his new place of belonging. In its use here and particularly, through the aizi-aise connection above, in its sense of comfort and rest, aizi also includes an idea of a last home, in the final resting-place and the tomb. The poet writes his own epitaph. Once again, we have the double impossibility of writing the unwritable and doing so in the moment, representing the present. The different and simultaneous aspects present in the poem, perceived through reading may be connected here to a similar different and simultaneous aspect most evident in the epitaph. In a proleptic movement, the poet quests for immortality (search for identity) in writing. This immortality is also an analeptic movement, as poetic identity (stylistic identity, canonical stability) can only be attained posthumously and through others’ reading or hearing. Furthermore, epitaph and tomb would allude to Christ’s entombment and resurrection, and to the parallel generalised human entombment and resurrection on the day of judgement: a rebirth (identity found, trobat) into immortality through the last judgement (reading by another).

The last home is spatially a peculiar one, simultaneously near and far, as seen in the line loing e pres et en mon aizi, and also inside itself: a home precisely in exile. Eisil and aizi become one and the same: they are conflated. In this conflation of a fundamentally transformative/moving thing with a fundamentally stationary/fixed thing, the aforementioned spatial peculiarity is heightened as Dragonetti’s contradiction and at the same time diminished as harmony. As a
home created by oneself, inside oneself, we see further evidence for *aizi* being poetic space itself.

The poem could well have ended with *cobla* 10 as an echoing *tornada* after the closed frame of *coblas* 1 and 9 – indeed, as one manuscript variant (N) does. This could have been an ending in death and a fading-away into nothingness, or one in the hint at the new life to come, which is of course also a non-ending in its failure or refusal to represent this future. It is most clearly an ending on *aizi*, the word which starts poetic space and language (or new/renewed language), and so the end of the language and the world of the real, physically and materially representable in writing and the start of that which is beyond it and so invisible. And as this is the first word in the new language, but present in the old, it is at once an end (of old language) and a non-end (the beginning of the new): it is itself “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.”

This is not quite the end. In the context of the *cobla* sequence around *cobla* 10 (9-10 or 6-10, depending on the manuscript),\(^\text{38}\) this reader is led to ponder how far the first line of *cobla* 10 should be read “straight,” with its most obvious morbid allusion, *a la mort*. *Mort* may be closely associated with *aizi* via *eisil*. Comparing Guilhem’s use of the word with that of other contemporary poets, Pasero (283-84) reads *eisil* as “‘esilio dal mondo terreno’ = ‘morte’ … il senso proprio,” before extending its meaning into the “contesto amoroso-cortese” with specific regard to *obedienz* and to *mon compaignon*.\(^\text{39}\) The poet commits a sinful act of linguistic desecration or blasphemy when he writes. He then undergoes, or goes through, repentance, pilgrimage, and exile.

\(^{38}\) Manuscripts D, I, K, and N order the *coblas* around 10 as 9-10; a, C, and R order them 6-10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th><em>cobla</em> order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D Modena, N 45</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Paris, B.N. fr. 854</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Paris, B.N. fr. 12473</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N¹ Cheltenham, Philipps 8335</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N² Cheltenham, Philipps 8335</td>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a Modena, B. Estense N 8</td>
<td>1,3,4,2,5,7,9,6,10,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Paris, B.N. fr. 856</td>
<td>1,3,4,2,5,7,9,6,10,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Paris, B.N. fr. 22543</td>
<td>1,9,3,4,2,6,10,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{39}\) “‘exile from the earthly world’ = ‘death’ […] the literal sense”… “the amorous-courtly context.”
The usual (roughly historical-biographical) interpretations of Guilhem de Peitieus' *Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz* have it deal with pilgrimage as twin real and spiritual exiles, with consequences of change and revelation, and connections to questing and finding (*trobar*). It is usually accepted that Guilhem our poet was indeed the historical Guilhem IX. The *vida* associated with him which is at the basis of this identification (and physically associated with his work), other contemporary biographical materials, and their references to the relationship between Guilhem’s real and poetic lives are incontrovertible material documents. The poem is supposed to have been written either during or after the historical Guilhem IX’s pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, late in his life, a Road to Damascus-style spiritual transformation after which he ceased his previous philandering ways, including the writing of poetry. The principal internal, poetic evidence for this reading is the presence of repentance and lament, and the prayer at the end of *cobla* 9.\(^{40}\) According to this, usual, interpretation, the poem is about ending: the swan-song of a truly contrite, repentant, and humble man; older, wiser, and contemplating ever-closer death; and resigned from poetry, pleasure, and the world.

I disagree: the poem it is far more subtle. It would be difficult, perverse and probably ridiculous to deny the presence in the poem of the theme of pilgrimage, though the word itself is not used.\(^{41}\) The closest term that could be found here is *eisil* - in its solitary occurrence in all the works attributed to Guilhem. Pilgrimage is here on many levels: physical / historical / real, aesthetic, in search of a self, spiritual, in writing, in life, sensual, in the quest for poetry. All are journeys of discovering meaning. Pilgrimage is an absolutely cardinal theme, and (re)unites *sen* as “means, way, path” and *sen* as “meaning.” The first line of *coblas* 6 and 10, and the fourth in 9, feature a prayer (6 *prec mon conpaignon*: 9 *prec li que.m reteng’am si*: 10 *toz mos amics prec a la mort*). Another line in each of these *coblas* features debt owed, fealty, and allegiance (6 *merce clam*; 10 *zine d’espans meigs i meig o mes amics prec a la mort*).

\(^{40}\) Pasero 272, footnotes 5 through 7, provides an extensive bibliography on this point.

\(^{41}\) *Peleri* is used elsewhere, in *Farai un vers pos me sonelh* (l. 20). It is used here to rhyme with *aizi* (“O, Deus vos salf, don peleri! / Mout mi senblatz de bel aizi, / mon escient ...”). It is used by a woman, flattering, flirtatious and slightly mocking. It plays with simultaneous religious, chivalric, and amorous meanings. The rhyme also emphasizes simultaneous external appearance and internal qualities.
tort, perdon: 9 cavalaria et orgoill; platz, acueill; reteng’am si: 10 vengan tut, m’onren fort). The feudal and the religious are conflated – as, indeed, Pasero himself hints (283-84). This juxtaposition of coblas is finely tongue-in-cheek, as the political-ethical (which ties in with historical-biographical readings), the sexual, and the spiritual overlap with one another. More tongue-in-cheek still, the pure and worthy intention of prayers and of pleas to honour become self-centred and sarcastic, and are undermined, made double, and of open meaning. The poet laughs in the face of death, and perhaps with due reason, if he has found a wily way out in his eisil/aizi.

At the end of cobla 9, the poet requests a position - reteng’am si – at the great court above. It is worth noting that all (extant) versions of the poem include coblas 2, 6, 9, and 10 which refer to the worldly things associated with fin’amors which the poet will sacrifice; things which omit, however, the artistic aspect of fin’amors, including poetic creativity. This does not necessarily come to an end. Quite the opposite may be true: the position at the great court above could be that of the highest form of court poet, and this higher spiritual place may be a final coincidence with poetic space. Such an extreme form of exile and pilgrimage enables a move away from existing forms of poetry and physical media for them (oral, written, and sexual), rooted as they are in the real world, towards the higher and spiritual.

The final tornada opens everything out again, outside death, outside the disrupted usual order of things. This opening-out could be back into life; the same after the death-in-life of exile; into a changed life; or into an other life in an other order outside the usual (disrupted or ended) one. The poet might even escape from the Last Judgement and its literary twin, the final reading and final analysis, just as Pos de chantar continues to be perceived as obscure and enigmatic.

The poet is not only in process of going beyond language and into his own poetic language. He is also going beyond writing, and into a higher poetic realm.
to which he can only ascend through throwing away this very poem.\footnote{Throwing away, casting off the things of the earth and of the flesh is a common feature in mortification, cleansing and other passages towards purification and new beginning. It is also necessary that the gift be a free one, especially the spiritual free gift of prayer.} He becomes the sole being to control his work, in his own self-created world \textit{en mon aizi}. He would be creator, but also destroyer of his work; and creator and destroyer of himself. In once again going beyond the usual, God-given order of things, our poet is outside that order’s ending, outside of ending itself as conceptually part of that order. In an alternative genesis, the poet is his own creator, maker, and \textit{trobar}; his own fabricator (\textit{faber}) who has fashioned himself (\textit{factus est}): all terms intimately connected both with poetry and with larger-scale creation. At the same time, he is his own destroyer and destruction. He is his own \textit{fi}, both in the sense of \textit{fides} – faith, belief in himself, truth here to himself – and \textit{finis} – end. This provides a blasphemous slant, in circular self-reference, to \textit{cobla 7’s et ieu irai m’en a Cellui / on tot peccador troban fi}. If this is the Guilhem IX who frequently sailed very close to the wind on the excommunication front, the entire poem becomes a tongue-in-cheek pilgrimage and repentance. Above all, it is a clever nose-thumbing gesture through which he can escape all possibility of excommunication. A voluntary self-imposed exile beyond the control of the usual order of things, he is outside it altogether. The usual order of things is hoist by its own petard, as this escape is the result of the poet using that order against itself, perverting it, placing himself outside it precisely in and through writing his own, peculiar, pilgrimage.

The poet’s voluntary self-imposed exile places him outside the order of things and its control, and allows him to escape that order’s ending of death itself through writing his own pilgrimage. That other world, and its space and language, also has the attributes of fixity and stability. The poetic world being the contrary, poetic identity cannot be fixed and stable. This calls into question traditional modern conceptions (or preconceptions) of what a poet is, and what the relation is between poetic and real-world, biographical identities. In escaping the real world, Guilhem de Peitieus escapes its “authority,” a part of \textit{auctoritas}. Another part of \textit{auctoritas} leads to the modern idea of the “author.” I leave open
the question of whether, by attaining the *aizi* of poetic space, identity as a poet may only be achieved at the expense of not becoming an author.

In Guihlem de Peitieus’ poem, *aizi* goes beyond poetry, into silence, transcending language as it transcends this place. Language is also transcended in *Flamenca*, when protagonists experience a loss of language. Echolalia occurs when Guillem first speaks to Flamenca and is at a loss for words, resulting in *hai las*; and when the two finally meet in the flesh. Their verbal dealings until the Having and Getting are characteristically stilted, their sparse exchanges at Mass comically so. Their conversation in encounters at all points through their relations is stiff, formalized; until conversation ends and they pass on to other, extra-verbal, forms of communication. The silence after the end of the affair is broken when Flamenca receives the *salutz* written by Guillem, and comprising words and an image depicting two lovers and a third figure. Flamenca takes the *salutz* to bed with her every night, kisses it, and rubs it into herself. Through his words and his representation in the image, Guillem is absorbed into Flamenca; meanwhile, the main body of the *salutz* text is missing from the manuscript of *Flamenca* as it stands. Like the first-person voice in *Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz*, Guillem has succeeded in transcending the material reality of physical writing materials – *vair e gris e sembeli*.

2.4 The subversive *trobador*

Like the first-person voice of *Pos de chantar m’es pres talenz*, the Guillem of our romance finds the desired *alberg-aizi*, and finds a new identity for himself outside and beyond poetry. Guillem searches, going around in circles. He realises that he does not know. He breaks with his previous life and self, in desire for rebirth – rebirth as new self-re-fashioned *own* person.

*Guillem* has the surname *de Nevers*. It is left ambiguous in the text whether this is his given name, signifying his relation to the territory of Nevers.

---

43 Flamenca’s reception and enjoyment of the *salutz*: ll. 7113-39.
44 The central figure in Gerbert de Montreuil’s *Roman de la Violette* is a Gerard de Nevers.
By the same token, “Guillem” becomes uncertain. The text tells us that *Vilhelm si fes appellar* (l. 1704) - “he made himself be called” (actively, reflexively, names or nicknames himself). *De Nevers* is his *sobrenom* (l. 1705), which could be his surname or a nickname. It also refers to his inability to speak, to *trobar*; to his poetic incapacity; and to being a young fledgling who has not yet found himself and become a man.

Guillem realises that he is in the trope of suspended gnosis after meandering around formal poetry. In the earlier character-sketch, his poetic background is described (ll. 1706-10). He *sabia* – “knew” – poetry, but this is in the form of knowing a substantial corpus of pre-existing poems (composed by others, though Guillem’s performance could potentially make a creative contributing to the poems). He proves unable to produce good poetry until near the middle of the romance. One reason for his poetic inability is that he is not yet fully formed. Whilst his theoretical education is complete, he needs “finishing off” on the practical front. Learning the art of finding through love is emphasized in the *vidas*; one is not a poet until one experiences love; and finding poetry is intimately bound up with finding love, in inextricable *trobar*. This is also a practical application of learned theory: like in poetics, the move into writing and a poem’s existence; in rhetoric, into the real existence through utterance and performance; in ethics, beyond words and into actions.

From the examples in Guilhem de Peitieus’ poetry, it would be clear that the first step towards *trobar* is its contrary: losing oneself, stripping oneself down, and breaking with the outside world, indeed, with the temporal; unnaming before one can name again, anew, and true. When he sets off on his voyage of discovery, *Flamenca*’s Guillem does exactly that, when he *s’apataris*¹⁴⁵ – “he became / made himself into” either a pilgrim or a Cathar *perfeit*: casting off the worldly, in saintly imitation. French romance provides parallels of pilgrimage’s association with losing something worldly – especially with reference to language and identity – and then finding onself. Tristan and Chrétien de Troyes’ *Yvain* endure episodes of madness, no longer know what they are called, live out in the

¹⁴⁵ l. 3817. Though Guillem does keep some worldliness by for making the right impression, dazzling a girl, and giving suitable tips and bribes.
wild woods, and resemble hermits. Chrétien’s *Perceval* (and, differently, his *Lancelot*) and Renaut de Beaujeu’s *Bel Inconnu* start out unnamed, and find their names and themselves through the course of their narratives.

In the passage naming Guillem (ll. 1699-1711), he is said to be better than an otherwise unspecified “Daniel.” The likeliest “Daniel” in this context is the *trobador* Arnaut Daniel. Arnaut Daniel’s *vida* tells us that: *Et abandonet las letras, et fetz se joglars, e pres una manera de trobar en caras rimas, per que soas cansons no son leus ad entendre ni ad aprendre.* (“And he abandoned letters, and became / made himself into a joglar, and took up a way of finding in precious, rare rhymes, because of which his songs are not easy to listen to / understand nor to learn.”) The abandoning and transformation/disguise, moving downwards in social and economic status, recalls Guillem *qui s’apataris*. The state of pilgrimage and repentance is prior to starting anew, with regard not only to religion and a woman, but to poetry itself. If *Flamenca* may be read as providing some *razo*-style supplementary sense to the Arnaut Daniel *vida*, *Flamenca* expands the abandoning of “letters” in Guillem’s move away from book-learning, as *caras rimas* certainly reminds us of his paranomasia-play, and his move from erotic and poetic theory to practice.

Guillem gradually works out what he is searching for. While further exploration of the role and interpretation of prayer is a whole field of study into itself, tangential here, and could well result in reinventing the wheel or regurgitating banalities and self-evident platitudes, it is important to note that prayer, as an essential part of the religious side of everyday life, would have been well-known to any composer, audience and reader contemporary to *Flamenca*, and their intertextual citation and play in the work have been commented on.\(^\text{46}\)

Prayer is an expression of desire: of not having something, and wanting it. This comes in stages: a realization of lack – realising what is lacked – knowing and understanding that by being able to put it into words – and its communication.

Prayer is prominent in Guillem’s struggles with doubt in the section immediately preceding his first words to Flamenca, *hai las*; that is, the section

---

\(^{46}\) Huchet for example.
focalized on him. I shall return to the unfolding of the lyric episode built around, by, and through the intercession of Amor. This episode’s frame of Amor’s first (ll. 1791-1800) and last (ll. 7100-12) interventions coincides with Guillem’s and Flamenca’s first lyric pieces (respectively, ll. 1851-53, being his first words; and ll. 7148-71). Amor’s first words to Guillem echo Scriptural divine injunction preceding human response, a parallel to Genesis:

```
saps pron d’agur e pron de sort:  “Omens you know and prophecies,
anecar non saps lo ric deport  But you know not what ecstasies
qu’eu t’ai en una tor servat;  I hold you for you, to be your own,
a ton obs lo ten hom serrat.  Locked in a tower, for you alone.
Us fols gelos clau e rescon  A jealous fool has locked away
la plus bella dona del mon  The loveliest lady of our day
e la meilleur ad ops d’amar;  And the most apt for love. ‘Twill please
e tu sols deus la desliurar,  You to accomplish her release.
car tu es cavalliers e clercs,  You are both knight and learned man,
per zo t’a obs ades encercs  Therefore you just do all you can.
(ll. 1791-1800)
```

Amor’s first instructions to Guillem are the cause of Guillem’s adventures in search of love, completion of his education, and eventual full self-realisation, through twinned self-awareness and awareness of other in and through relationship. Amor’s is a paradoxical gift, leading to liberation from immediate control and her fading into a relationship of influence, a different form of auctoritas, one of déjà-dit and derivation. With hindsight, the reader sees in Amor’s instructions a premonition of its repetition when Flamenca sends Guillem away to Do Deeds (l. 6896), thus linking Amor and Flamenca as Guillem’s “significant others” in the two lyric modes, and as guides to his development and the adventure in/of himself.

Guillem’s prayers build towards the full entry into tenso which will start with hai las. A first set of prayers and prayer-related dialogue runs from ll. 1851 to 2023. Although Guillem had first appeared in l. 1561, two hundred lines pass before his first words; and these are in prayer:

```
Bels sener [Deus], vollas mom pro;  Grant me good fortune, dear good Lord,
garas mi de mal e d’enug,  Guard me from evil and from spite,
e das mi bon alber[g] anug.  Give me fair lodging for the night.”
(ll. 1851-53)
```
In the first of a series of dialogues with the hostes, Peire Guizo, invoking sener, voil...and the like, prayer is parodied, and Guillem gives instructions, structurally aping Amor’s instructions to him. The vocative Senher of Guillem’s prayer (ll. 1851-53) and its repeat with twist in the more mundane conversation with his landlord (ll. 1860-64) are moves towards contact with a specified other, attempting to attract the attention of a particular addressee singled out as appropriate, individual in the crowd of potential interlocutors:

“Hostes”, fai s’el, “nom vol disnar, car trop poiria demorar, mas aquist donzel son toset e devon manjar matinet, que non ese vergoina ni onta.”
(ll. 1860-64)

“Sener”, fai s’el, “albergar voil ab vos, sius plas ni vos es bel, quar hom m’a dig qu’en cest castel non a nul home tan valen, cavalier, borzes ni serven.”
(ll. 1891-95)

“Host,” said he, “food I will not touch: It would delay me overmuch. But these lads, who are young, have need Each morning of a hearty feed. This is not reason to think worse Of them.”...

William said: “Sir, I fain would dwell, So be it please you, in your inn. There is no worthier man within These walls than you, bourgeois or knight Or servant, if men tell me right.”

The hostes is finally allowed to reply: Sener, hom vos dis som voler, / Mais aitan vos fas ieu saber ... (ll. 1896-1903: “Men say whate’er they will, my lord / But of one thing be well assured...”) ... and so on, eventually in more practical and less flowery terms. The dialogues themselves return, again parodied, in the landlord’s conversations with his wife, and its ben segrai vostra voluntat (l. 1933: “I shall be glad to carry on...” within ll. 1915-35), after which Guillem and his landlord converse further (ll. 1961-62, 1968-93, and 2022-23).

Prayer proper and standard everyday dialogue – here, guest and landlord transacting for lodging – are brought together, each influencing the other, whether deliberately or as everyday unintentional echoes. The ambiguity as to which is one of the sources for these dialogues’ wit, when read together. Such parodic slippage cannot be dismissed as mere mocking and destructive, as both sides of the equation are affected: through showing up what it shares with what is usually perceived as more elevated speech, everyday discourse is also elevated,
and, as in the tenso in general, it is the joy of language that wins the day. This pattern continues through Guillem’s pre-hai las section, with similar incursions of more everyday direct speech punctuating and commenting on apparently loftier passages. It is a déjà-dit precursor to the central tenso’s alternation of performed speech and commentary/composition. As happens with the central tenso’s jumps from one kind of speech to another, especially the running joke around stereotypically feminine chat and the verbiage of the equally stereotypical enthusiastic but slightly dippy young man who takes himself a little too seriously, the comic value of this pattern of juxtaposition lies in the jarring elements.

A fine example would be the more mundane commentary on accomplished action by donzelletz after Guillem has fainted and been (invisibly) raptured by Amor (ll. 2133-70):

```
e dis li: “Sener, ben gran son aves aüit, et eu gran dol.”
Sos ueils ensug’ab un lensol,
e Guillem dis: “Amix, so auh, tu as agut dol del mieu gauh.”
(ll. 2185-89)
```

He said; “You, sir, have sweetly slept
While I have wept in pained surprise.”
And thereupon he dried his eyes.
Said William: “Good friend, your distress,
Was brought on by my happiness.”

Not only had he been had by Amor, disguised as the imaginary Flamenca-double he was enjoying, Guillem is rescued from his languor by a youth, in a reversal of knightly derring-do and of the pastourelle, in further reversal of which Guillem flirts with him a little. The donzelletz’s very down-to-earth tone adds insult to injury, explaining his external symptoms to him but showing no awareness of the true malady within.

If the examples above show the presence of vocative address near the beginning of a poem, the other end of vocative address is the salutation, such as in the tornada and the possible inclusion of a senhal. Indeed, even in poems including vocative address but without tornada or senhal, the poem’s turning towards a second person usually occurs in its second half. The senhal, secret sign comprehensible only to sender and recipient, for the beloved’s eyes only,

---

47 Something not much pointed out in readings of Guillem’s play with the religious, such as Huchet, “De Dilexi quoniam a Ailas! Que plans?: de la citation à l’intertexte dans Flamenca,” in Contactes de langues, de civilisations et intertextualité. IIIe Congrès international de l’Association internationale d’études occitanes (Montpellier 1990), ed. Gérard Gouiran (Montpellier: Centre d’études occitanes, 1992) : 957-66.
implying a pre-existing relationship for there to be any point in including such a private in-joke, trace of lovers’ private language. With a similar buildup to the joke to that around senher, two directly named recipients are followed by a senhal. Guillem addresses Amor in the liminal zone before full waking (ll. 2035-2117) then prays, after arising (adonc si leva e saina si, l. 2118) to the courtly-knight saints:

Adonc si leva e seina si;
San Blaze preg’u e sant Marti
e san Jorgi e san Geneis,
e d’autres sains ben .v. o .vi.
que foron cavalier cortés,
ques ab Dieu, l’acapton merces;
(ll. 2118-2123)

He rises, crosses himself, prays
Both to Saint Martin and Saint Blaise,
Saint George, Saint Geneis, and then
To five or six more holy men
Who once were courtly knights, to plead
That they with God may intercede
For him...

He then turns and prays to “Na Tor”:

Mais, abans que vestitiz si fos,
Ubri-ls fenestral ambedos
e vi la tor on cil estet
per ques el plais e sospiret,
e sospleguet li de bon cor:
“Na Tor”, fai s’el, “bell’est defor,
ben cug dedins est pur’e clara;
plaguess’ a Dieu qu’ieu la-m fos ara
si qu’ens Archimbautz no la-m vis,
i Margarida ni Alis!”
(ll. 2124-33)

... Before he dressed, he went
And flung wide open each casement
To view the tower wherein was kept
She for whose sake he sighed and wept.
He spoke to it, sincere and true:
“Dame Tower, outside you are good to view.
Inside, you are most pure and fair.
Ah, would to God I could be there
Unseen by Archambaud, nor meet
With Alice or with Marguerite!”

The rather piquant senhal is an address to the tower as lady, keeper of fine treasure just as she is herself with hidden sexual joyaux: bell’est defor / ben cug dedins est pur’e clara (ll. 2129-30). In another running joke about the delights of deep private space which has been building for some time, Na Tor connects back to Guillem’s prayer (l. 1853): dan mi bon alber[g] anug. Indeed, I would argue that the whole section (ll. 1851 to 2133) reads as a lyric poem with narrative inserts, as opposed to narrative with lyric inserts, so positing this romance’s construction as a contrary sort of “lyric-narrative.” Alberg the desired internal, private space, refuge, carries the same sexual connotations as aizi / aisimen. It is

---

48 The move from unnamed second person to a named individual has consequences for the place of the reader within the poem, who, unless they happen to correspond to the senhal, moves from possible second person to probable third.
played with in Guilhem de Peitieus’ *Farai un vers pos mi sonelh*\(^{49}\) as Agnes says to Ermessen, *sor, per amor Deu, l'alberguem* (l. 33: “sister, for the love of God, let us harbour him”). *Na Tor* is a related sexual image: Guillem could have *alberg* within the *tor*.

*Na Tor* is also a precursor to Guillem’s later *salutz* and its *senhal* (l. 7097) to the *Bella de Belmont* (“Beauty from/of the Beautiful Mound”), with in turn its double-entendre in similar sexual vein to *Na Tor*. Guillem’s first address to *Na Tor* connects doubly to his *salutz*. *Salutz, saludar* and derivatives appear in all three sections of *Flamenca*. What is effectively a compositional section builds up to the *salutz* themselves, just as happens in *pretenson* moves towards *tensofication*, and as will happen in the creation of each replique in the lovers’ *tenso*. When Archimbaut first meets Flamenca, presenting himself incidentally as a potential *aman cortes*, he *saludet la cortezamen* (l. 827: “salutes/greets her courteously”). In the next instance of salutation, Guillem *son hoste saluda* (l. 1865: “greets his host”; similarly in ll. 2621 and 3106). Soon after (l. 1890), the term acquires more loading: *lo saluda e l'acoil* (“greets and welcomes him”) is like the standardly-erotic phrase *baisar et acolar* (“kiss and embrace”), used in similarly homosocial fashion by Archimbaut: *car l'un baisa e l'autr'embrassa/ l'un saluda e l'autre acueil* (ll. 7278-9: “one knight he kissed, one he embraced”), repeated soon after with Guillem and his squires. *Na Tor* is a step towards the *salutz*, and the direction of the reader’s gaze towards salutation reinforces Archimbaut’s role in the production of *salutz*, and his narrative fold’s relationship not only with Flamenca but, here, with Guillem, in the third couple within *Flamenca*.

*Na Tor* fits into the onanistic-oneric lyric mode of Guillem’s “morning glory” poetic-erotic output. For instance, in the *Na Tor* episode, Guillem “prays” to Amor before he has risen, so in that squinting state between sleeping and waking, but also before crossing himself and praying to the proper knightly saints. It is only after both these sets of prayers and that to *Na Tor* that Guillem will dress, once he has crossed all these liminal zones and become fully engaged.

---

\(^{49}\) Payen 92-4
with the new day. His “turning” to the “tower,” closing phase of the prayer-poem, is in the fullest and most punning rich sense a tornada. Tor has been the keystone in derivative rhyme schemes, which, after the reader reaches Na Tor, become predictor signals. Besides incarcerating Flamenca in a tower and thus being hoist by his own petard (or however else that is to be read) by making her even more desirable, Archimbaut builds the whole idea of the tower when, distressed, pacing up and down and turning around, unable to make sense of things, to see and to walk with sans, his every internal and external move is circular and self-enclosing: per que s’en torna mout dolentz (l. 995: “he suffers with a burning pain”), quan tornatz fon a sa maiso (l. 1001: “when he was home”). The next mentions of tor and relatives are strictly to do with the tower, rising into prominence and increasing in visibility with more frequent mention (ll. 1248, 1281, 1304, 1313, 1361, and 1365), rhymed interestingly: respectively with cor, amors, (enjambment rather than rhyme) aturs, murador, (mid-line link through the cesura) entorn, and [re]freitor.

The senhal Na Tor would appear to be related to senhals in the poetry of Peire Rogier, which forms a useful first incursion into their relationship with Flamenca, most obvious in the links between the lovers’ tenso and one of its two principal lyric intertexts, Peire Rogier’s Ges non puesc en bon vers fallir.\textsuperscript{50} One of Peire Rogier’s most frequent senhals is to Tort-n’avetz: “you are in the wrong about this.” It occurs in much of his poetry including all his tensos, including Ges non puesc en bon vers fallir, well known to be intertextually related to Flamenca’s central tenso.\textsuperscript{51} In Per far esbaudir mos vezis, we have e chant mais per mon Tort-n’avetz (line 6: “for my You-are-wrong”), recalled in cobla VII / the tornada: e porta.m lay / mon sonet a mon Tort-n’avetz (ll. 62-63: “and take there / my sonnet to my Tort-n’avetz”). The senhal reappears in: No sai don chant e chantars plagra’m fort; Tant ai mon cor en joy assis, in a second-last cobla or first tornada furthermore identifying the poem as a salutz; and Entr’ir’e


\textsuperscript{51} Nicholson: 59-123; translations are my own.
joy m’an si devis has a possible similar senhal reference, closer in form to Na Tor: ... n’a tort. – / Tort n’a? ... (cobla II, ll. 10-11). I would propose that a further link is also being suggested between Guillem’s Na Tor and Peire Rogier’s Tort-n’avetz: a portent of Flamenca’s misreadings and miscommunication.

A senhal is produced in the salutz: la Bella de Belmon. While it is uncertain whether or not this is by Guillem – this part, at least, may be by Archimbaut – compared to Na Tor ... The mons mentioned in Guillem also recurrs in other poetry, such as the vida explaining Cercamon’s name – he cerquet tot lo mon lai on el poc anar, e per so fez se dire Cercamons (“he wandered/searched the whole world wherever he could, and because of this he had himself called “World-searcher”). Other poets use senhals associated with mon (Bernart de Ventadorn and Guiraut de Borneil, for instance).

Running through this comic sketch of a solemn short-sighted schoolboy that is the Canso de Guillem, an impractical and idealistic “romantic” in the modern sense, are further pokes at the stereotypical lyric lover. The reader is aware that Guillem is engaged in a mock romance quest, out for love only for the Having and Getting. Self-seeking, deceptive, and pragmatic to the point of cynicism, Guillem happily trots off after Flamenca has sent him away, content in the Having Had. His mind is clearly on material things:

Son affar plega et estrein
Guillems, e tan garit si sen
que pres a combat bon e breu
d’aicels que dec, e vai s’en leu,
quar deniers ni draps ni vaisselz
laissa tant de bons e de bels
que tos temps mai s’en gauzira
sos hostes ab lo capellan.
(ll. 6921-28)

William has his things packed secure.
So excellent has been his cure
That he can take gay leave from those
Who were his friends, and off he goes.
He leaves with them largesse so great
In coin, in cloth and in rich plate
That both the priest and landlord viewed
Him ever more with gratitude.

In another undermining of the lyric lover, the purity, idealism, and celebration of youth are revealed in their true colours. Jovens is further demythified as each lyric episode – the tenso, the physical idyll - may start with hope and renewal, but does not last, with the inevitable onset of sophisticated ennui. This is as true of Flamenca as of Guillem, the pair acting like the 13th c. version of television soap’s bored teenagers with a short attention span.
Guillem is purely superficial and false: what he actually succeeds in saying to Flamenca consists of banal set pieces. He is playing a game with her: a cortes gein, which will be picked up in the full joc cortes for which they are practising. The aim of the game is not to enjoy an idyllic episode as lovers, out of the world: it is a practice-run for full “courtly romance,” once the court has reconvened. But this is a game of repetitions and rehearsals, in which it is uncertain when one has actually gone into the real thing. All is performance, and practice for performance, and the increasingly polished nature of that performance – becoming ever more polished, and tending towards perfection: but, as in a graph of such a function, it tends towards perfection but never attains it.

Flamenca is peppered with parodic repetitions. Flamenca “gives” herself to Guillem with un cortes gein - her unspoken replique, accompanied by a direct and frank gaze. Once the couple meet in person, they kiss. And kiss again. And kisses multiply, and so on. Flamenca gives herself to Guillem again – bodily. Then she takes his heart, and gives him her own in its place. This is framed by courtly gifts fore and aft: Guillem’s generosity earlier, particularly to Peire Guy and Belapila; Archimbaut’s later, to Guillem and his men.

The heart-exchange suggests that, far from its superficial reading as a touching scene of lovers’ full union, Guillem might have tricked Flamenca into falling into the trap of confusing cor (“heart”) with cors (“body”) – so she thinks she has his heart, while he believes he has had her body. Or vice versa? Who is the joke on, or are they aware of the cor(por)al ambiguity and play it together? Such ambiguities continue to run through Gullem’s interaction with Flamenca in his absence after she has sent him away, and once they are reunited. Guillem certainly sees the humour in being responsible for getting Archimbaut and Flamenca together (ll. 7027-32) “through him” and his salutz, which shows a certain ironic self-awareness. A problem remains as to whether he uses Archimbaut or Archimbaut has used him, and how far he recognises this. Combined with the parallel problem of Archimbaut’s awareness and manipulation of what is going on around him, it is uncertain which of the two has won the great game. The salutz – love-letter(s), epistolary poem(s) - is probably inscribed with something to do with the Guillem-Flamenca affair.
Once the lovers have found a way - *trobat cor* – to continue or revive their relations within the (renewed) court, the potential continuation of the affair in perpetuity is overcast by the potential final imprisonment of Guillem at court, under the eye and control of Archimbaut. However, the last note must be optimistic, in the happy ending of Guillem as winer of the *amor cortesa* contest.

The third and final night, *cel cui A/amors pausar non laissa / al palais vai si dons vezèr*, with the usual consequences (ll. 8046-47: “he whom Love allows no rest / Straight to the palace goes, to see / His lady”). As “the one” is he who was given the sleeve, *la marga polprina* (l. 8051), this would be Guillem, winner of that day’s tournaments and so also of the lady:

> mais sobre totz porta lo flor  
> cel c’ui matin o comeset  
> a cui mi dons sa marga det.  
> (ll. 8042-44)

And that the laurels go, by rights,  
> To him to whom my lady gave  
> Her sleeve...

This in turn refers back to Flamenco returning Guillem’s first Lancelot-style captive conquered knight, the *comte de la Marca*, to him bearing her physical message, the sleeve:

> Mais aitan, si-us plas, mi fares  
> que cesta marga portares,  
> per seignal de bonaventura,  
> a cel cui fis jois assegura;  
> (ll. 7755-58)

To him, for my sake,  
> This sleeve, as emblem of success,  
> And good fortune and happiness.

To which the knight had replied:

> Domna, si-us plas, vostre message  
> formirai eu de bon coraje ...  
> (ll. 7769-70)

> “Lady, a faithful emissary  
> I’ll be; your message I shall carry."

> per so qu’ar tramesses vos fui!"  
> (l. 7776)

> Since it has brought me to your feet.”

The formulae used - *seignal*, *message* and *tramesses* – are identical to those of a typical *trobador senhal* and *tornada*. The *tornada* often moves from a first-person voice representing the poet-lover, to a voice representing the poem itself or its transmitter (*messatge* as “message” and “messenger”). It moves in time, referring back to the rest of the poem as something that has been written, with respect to a new present in which the poem is about to be, or is being,
transmitted. In this episode in *Flamenca*, we have two *messatges*: the knight (messenger) and the sleeve (message; it might also contain another message). The sleeve is a physical metaphor for the transmission of lyric poems or letters, and suggests a successful continuation carried over into real life, so a successful erotic and poetic resolution. This final episode acts as a second *tornada*.

The *tornada* turns away from the rest of the poem, and its world, and towards the outside world to which it is being transmitted. It acts as a liminal zone between worlds, enabled by the double sense of *messatge*, which exists in both realities. The *tornada* also transforms the poem from one state of being and kind of object to another: from the moment of writing, into a physical piece of writing; and opening out from the inner reality of the poem into external reality. The *salutz* and the sleeve in *Flamenca* act as such bridges between realities. *Flamenca* takes the transformative aspect of the *tornada* further: Guillem’s poem becomes part of *Flamenca* by being rubbed away into her, and *Flamenca*’s sleeve is affixed to Guillem’s shield, becoming part of him as it is rubbed by his shield-arm. The *salutz* and the sleeve are also bookish symbols; and the book is, like the *tornada*, a liminal zone, the medium of translation for a reader’s access to the imaginary world it encloses. The final lyric enclosure of *Flamenca* is of worlds within worlds, as this book contains a narrative that then encloses further literary objects in a *mise en abyme* of imagination and escapism.

*Flamenca* may thus be read from Guillem’s point of view as a lyrical narrative. Reading *Flamenca* as a protracted *canso*, the poem’s main body starts with the preliminary compositional workings, proceeds from his first poetic utterance of *hai las* through the rest of his words to Flamenca, and ends in a double *tornada*.

The first *tornada* punningly links the *salutz’s senhal* – *Bella de Belmont* – and the earlier one, *Na Tor*. Guillem possesses Flamenca, both erotically – through their affair – and poetically – through his naming her, by himself, with a name he invented. This coincides with his having “taken” the tower – *Na Tor* – in a manner which may be usefully compared with the final Having and Getting in the *Roman de la Rose*. There, the taking was one of penetration, and breaching
the defences, breaking down the castle-tower’s walls; there was a poetic aspect in the weapons and implements used having just been commingled nicely with agricultural implements (ploughing, furrows, poetic links), sexual equipment, and writing tools; in very neat erotic-poetic conflation.

Here in Flamenca, the taking is one of linguistic transformation. “Flamenca” the flaming beacon – attracting our man like a fated moth – becomes “Na Tor,” displaced symbol of our protagonist’s lyric and internal imprisonment, flipped inside out: externalized, with another inside it, who is then objectivized and abstracted. “Na Tor” is not penetrated nor are its walls breached: instead, the image is changed, from an enclosing and vertical tower to a “beautiful mound,” it is made horizontal, spread and opened out. It is poetically subverted.

The transformation is that of removing Flamenca’s externally-given name (and what attaches her to Archimbaut) and turning her into a cipher. This is part of her becoming identical with Amor, the true object of Guillem’s desire. The transformation of unnam Ing and renaming, with a name “found” and given by the poet-protagonist, is also the other side to the trope of suspended gnosis, and parallels the stages of the journey towards becoming a poet. The stages in this Poet’s Progress would be unnam Ing oneself; finding one’s place of poetic belonging; and constructing one’s own poetic identity - identity as a poet - inside poetry. We saw in the chapter’s earlier section on trobar that erotic and poetic inspiration and finding are closely connected, so as to be synonymous. Flamenca shows this idea beautifully: Guillem becomes a trobador and has trobat successfully at once in the erotic and poetic domains, both of which are, like in Guilhem de Peitieus’ lyric, now his domains, his aizi.

The tornada is as always a turning-point, and a turning-around. It is through turning around whilst still inside the poem that one can subversively dig oneself out of it, escape it, and finish. This may be imagined as turning around in the furrows already laid down by the rest of the poem, and breaking the rules by turning out of them – say, by standing up and walking off. Guillem’s final possession via Archimbaut is such a turn.

It also gives him, his salutz, and our whole romance a peculiar status in relation to various worlds or realities. Throughout Flamenca’s narrative, life
imitated art, with the courtly game with its set moves, and the borrowings from the Occitan lyric corpus. Now, life becomes art. Even if lovers are young, naïve to the point of foolishness, and at least a little silly: Occitan remains the lyric language, through the virtuous cycle of its being so lyrically infused as to mean that its usage is always essentially lyrical, and leads to the lyrical life, a life of not just enacting but veritably living the erotic and poetic arts.

Within the internal reality of the romance, the action of a dialogue has been formalized as direct speech, then been translated to parchment, and – at some point in the process - become a poem. Through the salutz and the sleeve, it becomes a physical part of the lovers. This picks up the lovers’ earlier exchange of hearts, and cements allusion to the motif of the heart inscribed with the beloved’s image, as used for example by Arnaut de Mareuil (salutz VIII). Art becomes life. In other circumstances of awful absence, a lover might pine away and thus die. Here, though, the cycle continues: life goes on, as does Occitan poetry.
3. The *Tenso de Flamenca*: alternative trobar

This chapter traces *Flamenca’s* narrative from a second point of view, that of Flamenca, on the seduction’s receiving end, then her movement into subsumption into an erotically (inter-*)active couple, and thus, into the second amorous stage: the During. Like Guillem, Flamenca is on a quest for *trobar*, and of escape from *trobar clus* and *amor clusa*.

In a first stage, Flamenca escapes her lyric entrapment by coming into being, and developing a specifically feminine poetic and erotic identity. First, Flamenca comes alive: fully, into *trobar*. I bring in allusion to poetry purportedly written by Occitan women – or, at least, in a feminine voice – and some specifically feminine problems which must be resolved – or at least side-stepped ingeniously – in order to be a woman-poet: in the term coined by *Flamenca*, a *trobairitz*. This constitutes a feminine inflection of the *trobar* of masculine-voice lyric considered in the previous chapter.

The second section of the chapter is on another form of Occitan lyric, the *tenso* or dialogue-poem, in relation to *Flamenca’s* central section, in which Flamenca and Guillem build a poem and love-affair together. The *tenso*, like any other form of direct-speech dialogue, opens to interlocutors the possibility of participation on a level playing-field, and on equal terms. It also offers a way of escaping from the circular imprisonment of first-person voice lyric. On a purely formal level, our romance’s choice of rhyming couplets becomes particularly apt, as copulatively entwined as other, physical forms of coupling.

The idea of relations between two persons being based in parity moves into the chapter’s third part, and a return to the question of what Flamenca searches for in her quest for *trobar*. I suggest that she yearns after an alternative to *amor cortesa: amor coral*, “love associated with the heart.” Flamenca succeeds to some extent in escaping *trobar clus* and all it stands for. Yet her experimental attempts to find – or make – a *coral* lover fails, in the end, and the reader is forced to review Flamenca’s adventures as – like Guillem’s – fantasy-engagement with an imaginary lover.
3.1 Flamenca comes to life and becomes a trobairitz

Guillem’s first words to Flamenca, *hai las* (“alas,” l. 3949), constitute a verily formative moment for her. When Guillem addresses her directly, his words act as a magical speech-act, and bring her into being. It is at that moment that he sees her properly, distinctly, for the first time; and it is soon after that she comes properly to life. A dramatic moment of terrifying potential for Guillem: will this be Galatea or a monstrous New Eve? The wishful prospective lover’s ultimate dream or nightmare: a real woman, interacting with him. Tilde Sankovitch puts it nicely, in her choice of prefatory citation to an article on Occitan feminine-voice lyric: “Mais si l’objet se mettait à parler?” (Luce Irigaray). ¹

Reading Flamenca as a principal protagonist is problematic. It is easiest to read her as the “creature” of Archimbaut and Guillem. Kay and Grossweiner have pointed out how close the fantasy/dream and real Flamencas are, how she is effectively the creation/creature of Guillem, and not unlike the eponymous heroines of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose* and Gerbert de Montreuil’s *Roman de la Violette*. Within the parameters of love as modelled on male homosocial friendship, there is no place for the feminine, and a female can only be the subject of full relations with a male (as opposed to being used and abused as an object of primary lyric desire) if somehow in the position of a third/intermediate gender, which can be realised through the transformation into dream-form. This might explain placing of misogynist words in the mouth of a woman (ll. 5569, 6275): Flamenca as Amor’s high priestess and oracle performs an odd kind of fellatio. Any ideal women acts “unnaturally”; just as Marie de France’s *merveilleux* men are feminised fantasy men.

I take the argument further.² Flamenca breaks out from her allotted role in *trobar* – that of the object of desire – and becomes a *trobairitz*. This is the

---

term most often used today to indicate a medieval Occitan woman poet, derived from its use here in *Flamenca* which is the only known occurrence in Occitan literature. There is no equivalent in medieval French literature. It is a secondary term, derived from the primary one of *trobar*: but then, so is its masculine equivalent, *trobador*. The term reverses *trobar*'s usual grammatical objectification of the feminine. In our romance's case, it permits Flamenca to move from object-status into subjectivity. Flamenca moves from being what is found by Guillem, to being the finder. Like him, she finds an escape into imagination, and its failure.

Flamenca had been vaguely present in the text earlier, but only in a puppet-like, automatic way. Her words thus far have consisted of two polite replies to Archimbaut, one in response to a crazed outburst. A few hints are disseminated that there will be more to come, that some potential lurks under the surface: see her mother’s response to the idea of Flamenca’s marrying Archimbaut (ll. 54-58, cut short by the first lacuna) and in Flamenca’s first reply to Archimbaut, consenting to marry him (scene, ll. 251-87; Flamenca’s acceptance, ll. 277-80). At this stage, they are just hints; but hints these are, that a woman’s consent might be a matter for consideration. That they are there at all is interesting. They contribute to a subtle undercurrent of feminine unwillingness and passive resistance or “heavy silence” – such as around Flamenca’s *consen*, and, most significantly, her wedding-night:

... el eis la pres,  
car la nueue jac ala puncela  
e si la fes domna noella,  
car d’aquo era ben maestre;  
nulla dona de si mal estre  
non fo que, si el la pregues,  
endesen non l’endomengues.  
Leu pot doncas adomesgar  
Flamenca que no-s saup tornar  
ni per forsa ni per engien.  
Suau le baiza e’l’estrein  
e gardet si al plus que poc  
no-il fassa mal on que la toc;  
consi que fos, aquella ves  
an[c] non s’en plais ni clam non fes.  
(ll. 324-38)

... He took it, to be sure,  
For that night with the maid he lay  
And made her woman ere ‘twas day,  
For he was well and truly skilled.  
No lady, howsoe’er ill-willed  
She might have been, or how untried,  
But would have willingly complied.  
And so he made Flamenca tame:  
Not strength nor guile withstood his flame  
Or made resistance to his charms.  
He kissed and held her in his arms  
Firmly, but with such tenderness  
As caused the maiden no distress;  
In any case, she made no plaint,  
Yielding with grace to his constraint.
On the one hand, we have maestre, presgues, adomesgar, and no-il fassa mal on que la toc. On the other hand, and from another point of view, that may also be viewed as – turning around the double loading of adomesgar – no-us saup tornar / ni per forsə ni per engien and non s’en plais ni clam non fes for the receiving woman. Events are viewed from both perspectives. Twisting words like adomesgar recur, acting as semantic pivots. Dona de si mal estre, a pithy epithet, emphasizes the tongue-in-cheek potential of the ben maestre before. Negative constructions attached to the unknown other side of affairs, when applied to Archimbaut in no-il fassa mal, make one wonder about al plus que poc, and, working backwards, what this has to say about ben maestre. We also meet a possible escape-route for Flamenca: engien, “ingenuity.”

In the main, though, Flamenca starts out the demure well-brought up young lady, too refined to be seen and heard bar a few stock demure acquiescences to authoritative commands (ll. 276-80, and her bel semblan, ll. 291-2) moved back and forth by father, brother, and court, and speaking only when spoken to by Archimbaut in mid-rage (l. 1145). In Archimbaut’s section, we see – or rather, do not see – an ambiguous Flamenca who may or may not have flirted with the King, or rather, been flirted with by him; she has been Had in a socially overt, courtly manner, in a parody of courtly love. There was never any actual love on the king’s side (l. 983, mas el non l’ama per amor) and, as is usual in this male-dominated part of the narrative, there is no mention of Flamenca’s side. The silence on that point may, alternatively, be pulled into the growing pattern of subversive silences, such as around the marriage’s consumation.

From the lack of descriptions of her gaze, it could be surmised, in accordance with her general demeanour, that she has her eyes very properly downcast throughout. Her eyes are never described (unless in the missing opening pages), where, in such a vision of loveliness and wonder, the reader might expect a stock description of Beatricean brilliance, stellar sparkle, and the like. All we have is a tantalizing snapshot of her entrancing gaze, which might explain why her eyes spend so much time downcast: siei esgart douz e plen

---

3 (impressionistically sketched through other ladies’ general sight of her in ll. 525-71, as she outshines them all and they all want to be like her; and missing opening pages notwithstanding)
d'amors (l. 542: “her glance, soft yet alive with [love]”). Flamenca is brought into a first stage of proto-existence through others’ gaze, here that of the court, more specifically that of other ladies (ll. 524-71).

Narrative focus moves on to the observation of Flamenca and her ladies, locked in the tower, from the point of view of Archimbaut. Flamenca becomes more prominent, brought to a next stage of burgeoning life by Archimbaut’s new awareness of her and jealous gardar: play is made of the garder/regarder double sense. It is his watching – a viewer’s gaze, again - that brings Flamenca into the picture and starts the process of breathing life into her. She does not speak, yet, and is still in belle dormante mode, even described as such: mais lonc tes plais es tenc per morta (l. 1415: “but long she wailed her life thus lost”).

Flamenca is finally brought into full life – evidence of life being the basic and practical one of speech - through Guillem. He is the catalyst for Flamenca’s progression, existentially speaking, to the condition of absent beloved lady and unconscious muse. Viewed through Guillem’s eyes, Flamenca started to become visually distinct when she moved away from her husband, acquiring existence as an independent individual:

Josta lui fo, e sa compaina,  ... Beside him one could view
  tal con fo, li bella Flamenca;  Lovely Flamenca where she stood.
  et al meinz que pot s’aprobenca  She kept as distant as she could
  de so marit, que dol li fa.  From her husband, who has grieved her sore.
  Sus el portal un pauc rema  She paused a moment at the door
  e sospleguet mout humilmen;  Humbly to genuflect and pray.
  Adonc la vi prumieramen  William of Nevers in this way
  Guillems de Nivers si com poc;  Caught the first glimpse of her he loved.
  los cielz ni-ils oils de leis non moc,
  mais langui, plais, fo-l desplazer  Steady he stared, and never moved
  car del tot non la poc vezer.  His eyes. Yet he could not but grieve

(ll. 2447-57)

Guillem brings her into being by addressing hai las to her, breathing life into her à la Pygmalion and Galatea (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X; Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, ll. 20821-21215). Flamenca’s few early descriptions are, indeed, statuesque: a still, smooth-browed, rather flat feminine perfection; the superficiality of ideal bel samblan. Once more, however, there are precursor signs of life to come; that somewhere, deep down, blood is secretly starting to course under the skin. Returning to the courtly ladies looking at her in envy (ll. 524-71),
we notice that Flamenca started to acquire some aspects of life. What they saw moved from the neutral beutat and resplandor (l. 539: “beauty,” “respendence”); through the ambivalent colors which was animatedly fresca (l. 541: “fresh”); then on to the description of her gaze. After the gazing, Flamenca’s colour had become positively viva (l. 552: “vivid,” “lively”); that, and her luminosity, grew before our very eyes: li viva colors de sa fassa / c’ades enlumena e creis (ll. 552-53).

Flamenca’s smoothness recalls a mirror, the image used by Sankovitch (1989):

Traditionally relegated to the role of confirming man’s male identity, of being his mirror, “fidèle, poli et vacant de réflexions altérantes” (168), women can, however, use the speculum – no longer a passively reflecting mirror, but an active instrument of female self-discovery – to assert their Otherness against “a world structured by man-centered concepts [in which they] had no way of knowing or representing themselves” (Jones 364).

While the pattern will continue, and Flamenca come gradually into being through other’s gazes, the reader is led to wonder about the contrary effect, of Flamenca on them. Is this purely a mirror for an other’s self-reflection, eyes in which an other will see whatever they want to, through whatever they project onto her esgart? Flamenca is dangerous: not only will she come to life through another’s gaze, but her own gaze might bring others – perhaps, specifically, other women - into life and action through her enchanting gaze plen d’amors. This phrase also suggests the source of her power; in absorption of, or fusion with, Amor. Flamenca, entering into full existence, does so in a mirror-image-reversal (and extension) of Guillem’s éducation sentimentale and his coming into being as a trobar through lyric composition and the help of Amor.

From the hai las scene onwards, narrative focus splits between Guillem and Flamenca. The previous focus on Guillem and his poetic and erotic maladies continues in his attempts at reading Flamenca. The length and ponderousness of these attempts become characteristic, to the point of the ridiculous. His previous great moment of finding hai las was a short-lived triumph. After hai las has been

---

4 Sankovitch 183.
5 Referring to Luce Irigaray, Spéculum de l’autre femme (Paris: Minuit, 1974).
said, focus immediately shifts to Flamenca (l. 4112) and her ruminations on leaving the church. Once Archimbaut has dined and left we are finally alone with the ladies, who all talk in lively, naturalistic conversation, including Flamenca doing so for the first time (ll. 4131-74). Flamenca analyses hai las with Margarida and Alis at length, and together – from each other’s dropped words, gathered up together and rewoven – the reply is spun, with full malice aforethought: que plans (to ll. 4355/58). Focus shifts back to Guillem’s reception, comment and elaboration (ll. 4359-62), then back to Flamenca’s reading of his reading (ll. 4463-96, featuring comic and parodic re-enactment with lo romanz de Blancaflor substituted for the psalter), and so on through the composition and reception-reading of the exchange-tenso subsequently produced. The split focus is not even, as it shifts progressively more on Flamenca. We see more of her at her compositional work, and her presence increases as Guillem’s diminishes. Eventually, towards the end of their meetings in the chapel, focus has shifted completely to her; once the lovers meet in person, events are narrated from Flamenca’s point of view.

The double focalization, and the move of the narrative gaze onto Flamenca, mean that we see the woman’s – and other - side in an amorous narrative. One of the earliest literary examples of a female perspective is Ovid’s Heroides, verse epistles written from the point of view of various illustrious women, often in a first-person feminine voice. The genre is descended from Greek catalogues of women (ex. Hesiod), and will feed, later, into Boccaccio’s De Claris mulieribus, provide substantial material for the Decameron, and appear in Christine de Pizan’s Cité des dames and Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptaméron. Many are paragons of – if not virtue, as that is a technical impossibility – merit, because of their devotion to a beloved man. We see loves such as Dido’s from her angle; many of the letters are in the form of a suicide-note, as an opportunity to recount the past in order to explain the act of killing oneself; or, in erotic-poetic terms, to provide a razo for the living poem that is this ultimate act of love.

Flamenca’s first replique, que plans?, is chausi – “chosen” - by Alis (ll. 4309-13). The next, de que?, is found by Margarida, praised as tro ben t’es pres / e ja iest bona trobairis (ll. 4573-77: “that is perfect ... / and you are very bright
and clever”). Tro ben is phonetically echoed in bona trobairis – “good finder-ess.” Trobairis is a neologism coined in Flamenca, and the two lines are a most excellent pun: an ingenious act of derivative creativity. She is, we recall, Flamenca de Nemurs. One of this place’s two possible locations in the real world, the city of Namur in southern Belgium, claims to derive its name from Lat. nomen, “name.” A link between her name and naming itself gives Flamenca a strongly trobador identity: in a parallel to Guillem’s self-naming, and the exploration of identity in Guilhem de Peitieus’ Pos de chatter m’es pres talenz. Flamenca encounters a problem, though. All that she can do is respond to Guillem, with questions whose purpose is to lead him into further elaboration of what he just said. Her poetic creativity is purely derivative: and appropriately so.

Picking up the Ovidian (Metamorphoses III) and Roman de la Rose intertwined allusive thread, Flamenca is Echo to Guillem’s Narcissus. This thread is linked to Pygmalion and Galatea, as Jean de Meun embeds them as a new and more appropriate exemplum within his rewriting of Guillaume de Lorris’ jardin de deduit as the parc du champ joli. Guillaume had concentrated entirely on Narcissus, to the exclusion of Echo, whose place is now occupied by the mireor perilleus (ll. 1432-1611). In his revision, Jean allows the muse made flesh to speak: in reply to her creator’s expression of astonishment, she replies in a derivative manner, picking up his words:

“Dont vient donques ceste merveille?
Est ce fantosme ou anemis
Qui s’est en mon ymage mis?”
(Ci respon l’ymage)
Lors li respondi la pucele
Qui tant ert avenant et bele
Et tant avoit blonde la come:
“Ce n’est anemis ne fantome,
Douz amis, ainz sui vostre amie,
Preste de vostre compaingnie
Recevoir, et m’amour vous offre,
S’il vous plaist recevoir tel offre.”
(ll. 21152-62)

Such creation in one’s image, derivative creativity, is a metaphorical re-enactment of Genesis 2-3. The first words uttered are “let there be light” (1.3). The first words spoken to Adam – and thus the first that he hears – are the
instruction not to eat from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” the first question ever to be asked is by the serpent; and this leads to knowledge or understanding. Adam names the beasts of the field and birds of the air, but does so in indirect speech, and we are not provided with a list. His first direct speech, and first naming-act, is in naming Eve. While Adam was the product of creation proprement dit, Eve is made out of Adam’s rib: the first act of artistry, derivative creativity, and ingenious engineering. Her name is appropriately derived from his – or at least, “Woman” in the King James and virago in the Vulgate, with respect to “Man” and viro.

The first words and their reception resemble the Occitan entendre: “hearing” that leads to “understanding.” In Flamenca, we also have an asking of questions in the middle section of the lovers’ exchanges in church, and an attempt to reach an understanding – especially the specific amorous sense of entendemen. In Flamenca as elsewhere in Occitan, enginnos and cognates denote a set of inter-related concepts of genesis, generation, genius, and engineering; and, later, ingenuity. There is also a sense of “imagination” through the verb engienar, and its sense of “to produce images,” related to Lat. imaginatio. It is a man-powered and derivative version of creativity, making something new out of something old – as creation proper is the sole realm of the divine. Thus, the relationship between masculine and feminine creativity may echo that between divine creation and human creativity.7

Flamenca’s echoing poetics parallels a lazy eroticism: passive, of minimal effort, in which both sides simply play it out just enough for the game to continue, in a necessary sequence of next steps weaving a flirtatious dance. While both Guillem and Flamenca partake of the above patterns in their va-et-vient, they employ slightly different methods and styles. Guillem makes statements of first-person existential state while Flamenca asks questions. But in addition she twists in as much new content as can safely be manoeuvred, produces leading

---
7 Further argument could be made here on the creation of a feminine derivative space out of the masculine – linguistic, social, erotic and poetic. I am uncertain, however, how to approach this topic, so as to avoid the pifall of playing into gender stereotypes rather than playing with them.
questions, and goes beyond an echo of his statements. Flamenca tries to push the questioning form to its limit, through a derivative creativity of ingenuity.

**Occitan trobairitz – feminine-voice - poetry**

Occitan possesses a significant corpus of lyric poetry variously written by women, featuring feminine first-person voices, and points between. These poems have been dated from around 1180-1230, a period which has been viewed as a high point in women’s social and cultural status in Occitania, to such an extent as to suggest, to some critics, a “feminine renaissance.”

Twenty women are named in manuscripts. Five have *vidas*: Azalais de Porcairagues; Castelloza; Beatriz, Comtessa de Día; Lombarda; and Tibors. *Razos* to certain *tensos* provide us with some further names and narratives of feminine participants: Alamanda; Clara d’Anduza; Garsenda, Countess of Provence; Gaudairenca; Guillelma de Rosers; Iseut de Capio; and Maria de Ventadorn.

Modern work on the *trobador* corpus has counted various numbers of women poets, and how they have counted them has varied too. The central problem is how to attribute anonymous poems, and poems whose protagonists might or might not correspond to real-historical persons, as their existence is only documented in that poem. Some editions and anthologies err on the side of caution and historical verifiability, placing more poems in Pillet-Carsten’s “anonymous” category.

---

8 See for example: Joan Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women have a Renaissance?” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977): 137-64; David Herlihy, “Did Women have a Renaissance? A Reconsideration.” *Medievalia et Humanistica: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* 13 (1985): 1-22. The debate is summarized and discussed further in Paden 1989: 1-27. He provides some information that could help to date Flamenca: “One may, however, generalize that the trobairitz seem to have been active from around 1170 to around 1260. We have no evidence of trobairitz during what may be called the first and second generations of the troubadour period (from 1100 on), or during the last generation (to 1300)”

This is particularly the case for dialogue-poems, which are also the poems in which a feminine voice features most often. How does one distinguish between a first-person voice, in direct speech, that belongs to a real woman; and the speech of a fictional character? What counts as a woman poet? Dialogue-poems featuring a male voice and a female one are usually attributed to the male voice by the earlier editors. The point is well stated by Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White, in the introduction to their *trobairitz* edition:

The smallness of the corpus is, however, no great advantage for overcoming a number of uncertainties that make its delineation as problematic as counting the number of identifiable trobairitz. Recent editions have varied from twenty-three poems (Bogin) to forty-six (Rieger). Paden’s checklist of poems by named and anonymous trobairitz, whether believed to be historical or fictional women, tallies forty-nine poems (*Voice* 227-37). The thirty-six selected for this edition include two [...] of the three listed by Paden but not published by Rieger, whose “maximal corpus” does not include popularizing songs in which the woman’s voice is not, in her view, an independent one. The difference in numbers and much of the scholarly discussion about what must be included in the trobairitz corpus involves recognizing that, within the troubadour corpus as a whole, we need to distinguish between real women composing songs and women’s voices singing in lyric, whether invented by male or femal poets (Bruckner, “Fictions”). The distinction is easy enough to grasp, but we cannot always be sure where and exactly how it applies in particular cases, especially (but not only) when a song appears anonymously in the *chansonniers*.  

In a further subtlety, how may a first-person voice belonging to a real woman be differentiated from one – such as used by Ovid – that is actually a man’s? Pierre Bec expresses this distinction elegantly: *féminité génétique* and *féminité textuelle*.  

Bruckner et al continue:

This question of gender and authorship involves a number of issues, first among them the role and character of women’s song and its links with troubadour lyric. The existence of the trobairitz suggests a tradition of woman’s song in the south of France, even if it was not often set down in manuscript (Bec, “ ‘Trobairitz’ ” 254). As Pierre Bec has indicated, the lady who decides to compose in the aristocratic style of the troubadour has at her disposal a range of female voices from the popularizing genres: *chansons d’ami, albas, chansons de mal mariées*, and *chansons de toile* (252-59). [...] 

Men and women were borrowing each others’ voices as formalized by different poetic traditions, each combining characteristics of the aristocratic...
troubadour style with the popularizing woman’s song – characteristics that may contrast or overlap in particular instances [...]. Bec distinguishes between féminité génétique, where the poet is a woman, and textualité féminine, where the voice is female and the poet is not necessarily (‘Trobaritz’ 258). This is a useful and necessary distinction for working with this corpus, but it does not guarantee that a given poem whose attribution is in dispute can be pronounced with certainty the work of a trobairitz or a troubadour. The personae created by identifiable male poets through the autobiographical claims of the first person are constructed as a game that revels in fictional role-playing, however tantalizingly the fictions cross over and play with a reality that can sometimes be historically documented.¹²

The feminist angle has the effect of increasing the feminine poetic corpus. In their editions, for example, Bec, Rieger, and Bruckner et al attribute some anonymous poems (especially dialogue-poems) to women (at least as co-authors). This may be a just reappropriation; or it may be doing to male poets exactly what has been done to women poets in the past, and not erasing an injustice but doubling it instead. Questioning attribution does make me wonder why the anonymous Flamenca has always been supposed to be by a male poet.

More recently, trobador gender-ambiguity has started to be read as play with gender as fluid, literary construct.¹³ This is surely a more productive approach: it allows both men and women free rein in inventive poetic and erotic play in their text. In opening the possibility for men to play at being women, women to play at being men, double-agency, triple-, and so on – we see a possibility for transcending biological sex and cultural gender: another instance of the liberating potential of the aizi of poetic space. Medieval poetic space and its

¹² Bruckner et al xxxix-xl.
aiizi resembles Cixous’ space of écriture féminine, as her place of the imagination, l’imaginaire, is the place of jouissance (itself also an aspect of aizi).  

Our medieval open poetic space is also markedly similar to a recent phenomenon: virtual reality or cyberspace, the latter as coined by William Gibson in Neuromancer, 1994. Aside from its gender-neutrality (completely stepping outside the physical body) and democratic – “open society” - nature, some recent readers and reviewers of cyberpunk literature have discerned a feminine aspect to this fantasy world, for instance in Gibson’s version of it, and have done so with recent thinking on gender-play in mind. Right now, we are seeing an increase in the number of female writers – historically a tiny minority in science-fiction - active in this specific sub-genre and perceived as being important (Octavia Butler, Pat Cadigan, and Melissa Scott). Meanwhile, some of the most positive central female characters have been created by male writers (William Gibson, Jeff Noons, and Neal Stephenson). It is not unexpected that the most imaginative and radical explorations of gender matters are in the field of science-fiction writing. Its consistent, central, and defining subject questions what it means to be human.

Whether purportedly trobairitz poetry is seen as a genuine identification of a genuinely distinct feminine subjectivity; the exemplification and enactment of male fictions and fantasies; or sophisticated gender-games: self-consciousness comes into play. Castelloza is very good at this. In Mout avetz faich lonts estatge:

Mout aurai mes mal usatge
a las autres amairitz,
c’om sol trametre messatge
e motz triatz e chausitz,
et eu tenc me per garida,
amics, a la mia fe,
qan vos prec, c’aiissi.m cove
(cobla III; ll. 21-27)

In Amics, s’ie.us trobes avinen:

Eu sai ben c’a mi esta gen,
si be.is dizon tuich que mout descove
que dompna prei a cavallier de se
ni que.I teigna totz temps tan lont presseic,

14 Cixous, La Jeune née (1975); “Le Rire de la Méduse,” (1975). Cixous’ links between writing and feminine sexual pleasure recall Flamencas’s intense interactions with her text, as does the imagery used – particularly when contrasted with Derridean images of books and writing-materials as feminine, penetrable, etc.
mas cel q’o ditz non sap ges ben gauzir
q’ieu vouill proar enans qe.m lais morir
qe.l preiar ai un gran revenimen
qan prec cellui don ai greu pessamen.
(cobra III; ll. 17-24)

he who says this has no knowledge of true joy.
I’d like to prove, before I let death come,
that in pleading I find great renewal
when I court one who gives me heavy pain.  

Gender roles might not have been so firmly entrenched, in medieval
culture, that even thinking outside one’s allotted box was unimaginable. There
seems to have been sufficient masculine interest in femininity to imitate it: and
imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The mere fact that interest is expressed
shows an attempt – however bitter and sardonic – to understand. In the case of
literary transvestism, it is the ultimate exercise in sympathy: putting oneself in
the other’s shoes and, indeed, skin. Masculine faking of the feminine that is so
good as to be barely detectable - if at all - suggests fine observation and true
understanding. Imaginative sympathy that transcends gender difference echoes
the idea of “choose your own adventure reading.” The idea of androgynous
writing and reading is well put by Virginia Woolf: “it is fatal to be a man or a
woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly.”

Critical attention has thus far mostly focused on male poets assuming a
feminine voice and persona. The rare exception is work on a few longer narratives
featuring female transvesticism in the principal protagonist, in Old French
literature: Euphrosine, Heldris de Cornuaille’s Roman de Silence, and those parts
of the Merlin cycle dealing with Vivian. This may slip into the substantial body of
feminist writings on Occitan and Old French narratives featuring women, mainly
hagiographies, that has dealt with women who deny their femininity altogether.
That may be viewed in a positive light as actually a denial of femaleness rather
than femininity, and thus the transcendence of sex rather than gender difference.
It may also be read in quite the opposite way – in the case of like-minded
religion women coming together into single-sex communities, in the sheltered
seclusion of a feminine alternative world.

In Bertran de Marseille’s Vie de Sainte Enimie, the heroine escapes the
usual feminine fate of arranged marriage by conveniently developing leprosy,

---

15 Bruckner et al 22-23, and 18-19.
which may only be cured by taking the waters, daily, from sulphurous springs, which she lives near in hermetic solitude. This is echoed in Flamenca: our heroine visits Peire Guy’s baths as regularly as possible, to be cured of her ills, and otherwise is imprisoned in a tower. I would suggest, further, that Flamenca also rewrites this vida, in which the heroine is re-sexualised (or at least de-sterilized), and its whole set-up and, indeed, the hagiographical trope (already rather tongue-in-cheek in Enimie) are burlesqued.17

The eponymous heroine of Heldris de Cornuaille’s Silence was raised as a boy, as otherwise she would not be able to inherit Cornwall. When adolescence stuck, she was besieged by Nature and Nurture, but saved by Reason, who told her to continue living as a man. She did, ran away, became a minstrel and knight, went to court, and then the Queen fell for her. Silence rejected her advances; the Queen faked a gory and comical rape attempt. Silence was sent off on mission impossible: to capture Merlin, who could only be taken by a woman’s trick. Silence succeeds, and is unmasked, as are the Queen and the Queen’s latest lover, a man disguised as a nun. Good triumphs, and Silence marries the King. Silence has a bearing on a critical topic important to any discussion of literature involving women (as characters, composers, and audience). The eponymous heroine’s transvestism is also expressed in fake male speech – with many double-entendres left hanging for the delighted reader. It is a positive, creative subversion of gender, which has become fluid and is deliberately played with. Silence itself has often been associated with women: as the suppression of women’s voice and writing; as the only space in language left to women within the linguistic part of masculine total hegemony; in loaded silences, as a feminine answer to normative language; and in generalized linguistic subversion.18

17 Bertran de Marseille, La Vie de sainte Énimie. Poème provençal du XIIIe siècle, ed. Clovis Brunel (Paris: Champion, 1970). The manuscript is physically very like that of Flamenca: an unicum, in a single hand, from the start of the 14th century, single-column, 22 lines per page, without illuminations (but with space left for decorated initials, not filled in). The poem itself is supposed to date from no earlier than the beginning of the 13th c. (Brunel ix).
These two approaches to femininity in some medieval narrative – seclusion and transvestism – map nicely onto two trends in 1970s second-wave-feminist science-fiction writing. The seclusionist wing is exemplified by Joanna Russ’ *The Female Man*. An involuntary transvesticism is apparent in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*, in which gender-change is a natural part of the Winter life-cycle. A whole sub-genre exists – from the sublime to the ridiculous, and not necessarily of a philogynist bent – imagining multiple genders, cross-species intercourse, etc. It is a man, however, who is responsible for some of the finest very recent works involving voluntary shifting between genders: Iain M. Banks, and his *Culture* series (1988-).

Looking to the *vidas*, we see that the few attached to feminine poets refer to their love for a man in the same terms as used for male poets: with a similarly conjoined erotic and poetic “finding.”

Tibors’ combines *vida*, *razo*, and *canso*; her only known poem is transmitted embedded within its prose frame.

Na Tibors si era una dompna de Proensa, d’un castel d’En Blancatz qe a nom Sarenom. Cortesa fo et enseignada, avinens e fort maïstra; e saup trobar. E fo enamorada e fort amada per amor, e per totz los bons homes d’aqela encontrada fort honrada, e per totas la s valens dompnas mout tensuda e mout obedida.

E fetz aqestas coblas e mandet las al seu amador:

Bels dous amics, ben vos puosc en ver dir
Qe anc no fo q’eu estes ses desir,
Pos vos conuc [ni].us [pris] per fin aman;
Ni anc no fo q’eu non agues talan,
Bels douz amics, q’eu soven no.us veses,
Ni anc no fo sasons qe m’en pentis;
Ni anc no fo, si vos n’anes iratz,
Q’eu agues joi, tro qe fosetz tornatz;
Ni anc ...

Lady Tibors was a lady of Provence, of a castle of Lord Blancatz, which was called Sarenom. She was courteous and educated, pleasant and very wise [“masterful”]; and she knew how to “find.” She was enamoured and strongly loved by/through love, and much honoured by all the good men of that country, and much redoubted and obeyed by all the valorous ladies.

And she made these stanzas and sent them to her lover:

Fair, sweet friend, I can truly tell you
I have never been without desire
since I met you and took you as true lover,

---

19 Bec notes this too, working from the same first principles, in “‘Trobaritz’: 238-39.
nor has it happened that I lacked the wish,
my fair, sweet friend, to see you often,
nor has the season come when I repented,
nor has it happened, if you went off angry,
that I knew joy until you had returned,
nor...\textsuperscript{20}

This poem is about the second stage of love: the During. It is a love-affair of some
duration, as it features a succession of ups and downs: no one-night stand of the
Having and Getting. The content is directly to do with the affair: frank and
concrete. In a twist on the trope of suspended gnosis, negative constructions are
used to express the double negative of negative things that never happened, and
with the counterfactual element of never having happened in the past. While it is
addressed to a male friend, there is nothing in the first person voice’s
grammatical attributes to indicate gender.

Tibors’ coblas exemplify what critics have discerned, thus far, as some
characteristics of feminine-voice lyric. Bruckner et al note that

E. Jane Burns describes the troubadour’s domna as a combination of “two
unequal fictions: 1) an ideal desexualized lady, embodying virtues hes admirer
would like to attain, finds her opposite in 2) the erotic yet aloof woman who
remains unattainable” (268). Many a troubadour would like to penetrate her
chamber, watch her undress or place his hands under her robe, but the lady
herself – as she is typically (but not universally) represented by the troubadours
– does not share the lover’s dream or desire. By contrast, the trobairitz’ frank
expression of desire has led many critics to admire or chastise their spontaneity
and authenticity, while comparing them to the legendary Sappho. [...] 

Despite their apparent forthrightness, the trobairitz’ expressions of desire
remain couched in what Robbins has called “self-protective ambiguity even more
multifaceted than men’s – it is always impossible to tell whether ‘she does or
doesn’t’ from their hypothetical situations, their daydreams and invitations, even
their vows of (always future) surrender” (“Love’s Martyrdoms”; cf. Paden,
“Utrum” 81).\textsuperscript{21}

The last point is considered in detail in another essay in the same volume, Kay’s
“Derivation, Derived Rhyme, and the Trobairitz.”\textsuperscript{22} Trobairitz play with
grammatical gender, in paranomasia, has been remarked as an appropriation and
manipulation of language; in which language is a masculine construct imposed by

\textsuperscript{20} About the \emph{vida}, see Bruckner et al 191; Boutière-Schutz 498. Translation: Bruckner et al 139.
\textsuperscript{21} Bruckner, Shepard, and White xxiv-xxv. See also Ferrante, “Notes Toward the Study of a
Female Rhetoric in the Trobairitz,” in Paden 1989: 71 for a good summary of \textit{trobairitz} poetic
characteristics.
\textsuperscript{22} Paden 1989: 157–82.
the outside world. Gender-play may be combined with the avoidance of gender-revelation to produce a feminine poetic language, and aizi. Derivative ingenuity is an alternative form of creativity, and attached to women – cunning and resourceful – as a way around masculine trobar from which a woman is naturally and by definition excluded. Negative and subjunctive constructions also constitute a way of working within trobar to subvert it from inside. Trobairitz poetics is an ingenious manipulation of trobar clus, “finding” ways around it with the tornar of grammatical, derivative rhymes, and in the positive clus of hiding: pushing language so as to make a space for onself within it.

**Flamenca as a trobairitz**

In Flamenca, trobar – feminine or not – is associated with derivation and the creativity of ingenuity. In the conssi? composition section, the poetic and the erotic are brought together through engien and trobar:

Flamenca pensa e consira et en son cor dis et arbira: "Consi puesc far eu garimen al[s] mals d'amors c'ús autre sen? Non sai consi-m n'antremeses, et on plus i consir ne i pes meins i trop de leuc e d'aisina consi pogues faire meicina als mals que cel suffre per me, aissi con dis, e ben o cre.

(II. 5097-5106)

consillon que-l deman consi? Quar ja ren non sabrion menar que poguesson engien trobar consi pogues far garison d'amor a cel que la'n somon, e dizon: “Mais ait an fag n'a, aucun bon engien trobara”

(II. 5120-26)

to[s]t aura bon engien apres conssi ab vos posca[-s] trobar si vos o voles autrejar.”

(II. 5146-48)

Flamenca mused and meditated,
Reflected and deliberated:
“What magical power dispels
Love’s pain that’s borne by someone else?
How does one go about such task?
The more I think of it and ask
Myself, the more confused I am
How I can give him remedy.
He aches for me. I can relieve him.
He says so, and I do believe him.

... but ‘twas their opinion now
That she’d do well to ask him:”How?”
They could not think of a device
Whereby, through wile or artifice,
She might give solace to the one
Who craved love’s consolation.
“Since he has gone this far,” they say,
“Surely he’ll find some clever way
He’ll find some shrewd and excellent
And deft maneuver for fulfilling
His wish, provided you are willing.”

In this passage dense with derivative devices, Flamenca is torn between compassion for Guilhem – putting herself in his shoes – and expressing her side
of things. *Meins i trop de leuc e d'aisina* is reminiscent of Guilem de Peitieus’ *e loing e pres et en mon aizi*. Flamenca shows increasing signs that she has caught Guillem’s sickness from him. She makes increasing use of negative constructions and unnamings, and contributed to the trope of suspended gnosis. In *conssi?*, we saw *non sai conssi n’antremes* (l. 5101), *non cug ques a mi s’en plaisses* (l. 5114). *Pren li* produced further doubt or loss of self, with *non sai si m’i ai deisonor* (l. 5254); *E qual?, et am dig hui qu’engien a pres, / mais ancara non sai quals es* (ll. 5377-78). Flamenca’s amorous *trobar* is a derivative of Guillem’s and repeats it in the same terms (see ll. 1801-41, 2134-89).

The third response, *per cui?*, is the first one to be produced entirely by Flamenca (ll. 4913-18; partly at Alis’ goading). The fourth is also hers: *qu’en puesc?* (ll. 5027-31). In both cases, Flamenca proudly presents her composition to the ladies as very *cubert* (“covered,” “secret”) and the like, although the ladies’ repliques were technically more so, offering nothing of the speaker, and attempting to make Guillem elaborate further on himself. Flamenca’s contributions are more revealing, moving away from him and directly to herself, showing vanity and a desire to be told she is desired, rather than a desire to engage in conversation with him. The commentary attached to each word composed lengthens. Next, *conssi?* (l. 5120), is found by the ladies together, *pessson eissamen ... conseillon* (ll. 5115-20). This response was crude and a tactical error. How far the ladies, given their clearly greater expertise in amorous composition, have let Flamenca lead herself astray is another matter. They may be bored and playing their own games; unsatisfied with a voyeuristic and catalyst role in the action. Fortunately, they will soon be paired off with Guillem’s squires, once events move into real action.

It is the ladies who advise, apparently separately, the application of *pren li*: one wonders whether they have been plotting behind the mistress’ back, as this replique is embedded in fine-tuned argument, quite a different presentation from their earlier spontaneity in the finding of the first two repliques. Alis and then Margarida each provides a sound reason for saying *pren li*; Margarida by appeal to Classical analogy and to the *auctoritas* of what *fis amans* – “true lovers” – would do (l. 5234). Decidedly an appeal to Flamenca’s “romantic” nature,
inclinations, or pretensions, the ladies play with her delusions of grandeur, and self-delusion. With *pren li*, Flamenca’s gaze is met for the first time (ll. 5277-86), when directed at Guillem, eye to eye and equal to equal, moment of truth and openness. Any lingering doubt of Flamenca’s full, aware, and sentient being disappears. The openness is frank and frankly appreciative; as the objectified turns the tables, and the hidden and demure turns exhibitionist:

Flamenca Guillem assegura
de s’amor quan li descobri
en l’aora qu’el meseis causi;
e fes li un cortes presen
plen d’amor e de chausimen,
quar mostret li plus que non sol
los neiz, la boca e-l morsol,
e plus longamen l’esgardet
dreitz oiz, entro que s’en ostet,
quar el leis dreitz oiz non esgarda;
(ll. 5278-87)

Flamenca chose to manifest
Her love to William, and assure
Him she’d receive his overture.
Also she gave him, as largesse,
A gift of charming courtliness,
Showing him eyes, lips, chin, far more
Than she had ever done before.
She looked directly in his eyes
With lingering glance, in such a wise
As she’d not ventured ere that day.

The next ladies’ meeting moves into lengthy speeches, well away from the punchier exchanges of earlier, as the is game now in earnest. Alis proposes *e qual?* (l. 5403). The poetry-competition becomes more serious, as Margarida’s competitiveness is remarked (ll. 5441-6). It is not said who thinks up *es on?* (l. 5465), nor *cora?* (l. 5487), perhaps as the pace has picked up and we have moved into practical arrangements. In preparation for her last words in the *tenso* sequence, Flamenca produces her longest yet speech (ll. 5548-5648), featuring perambulating personifications and Ovidiana, ending in a tempestuous invocation of Amor and the production of *plas mi*, being what she will reply to any further demands (l. 5647). This outburst is interrupted by the entrance of Archimbaut, who wonders what is wrong. The couple talk together for the first time, Archimbaut starting to recover as he sees her becoming less well. This is also the perfect opportunity to set up a visit to the baths; leading to further meetings, movement to Guillem’s chamber, and enjoyment of a summer of love.

*Flamenca’s trobar and her fantasy-lover*

After she sends Guillem away and ends the affair, Flamenca’s narrative turns to a mirror version of his escape into a fantastic *aizi*. In the next stage of
erotic and poetic development, Flamenca uses the *salutz* to continue into a post-affair poetic composition and her first piece of first-person lyric. Flamenca’s lyric composition (ll. 7140-71), like the *salutz* itself, is a poetic derivation created out of a predecessor, and in an attempt to twist new meaning out of it. This first composition resembles much *trobairitz* lyric, and the *Heroides*, as produced after the end of a liaison in a plea for renewal or continuation.

We have seen, throughout her interactions with Guillem, that she reads him about as well as he does her; and is equally subject to illusion and delusion. She, too, may be living an imaginary life. We may trace the evolution of Flamenca’s love-affair with an imaginary lover back to *car ren no i te mas sol enug* (l. 1348): having no solace. The rest of the passage leading up to Guillem’s first appearance describes the solaces she does, in fact, enjoy; all of which, when brought together in the right inventive combination, will permit her escape. In the description of her everyday life, we meet first consolatory elements: her maids (ll. 1351-57) and a hint of literary knowledge – as they are *essenhadas* (l. 1354), “educated” and “knowledgeable.” Her second source of solace is the church; specifically, another indirect literary allusion, the Gospel: *quant hom dizia l’avangeli* (l. 1432). Her third, the Bourbon baths, also provide a literary solace: the bather may find – *pogras trobar* (l. 1466) - a written sign in each of the baths, indicating what it cured; a double finding, of literature and of cure. In the ladies’ private re-enactment of Flamenca’s performance of *que plans?*, the psalter is replaced by the romance of *Floire et Blancheflor*, and there is a suggestion that the two are also linked through “giving the peace,” consolation:

```
“pren lo romanz de Blancaflor.”
“Fetch the romance of Blancheflor.”
Alis si leva tost, e cor
Alice arose and crossed the floor
vas una taula on estava
To a little table, whence she took
cel romans ab qu’ella mandava
This romance to replace the book
qu’il dones pas, e pois s’en ven
Used for the Peace. She came back then
a si dons, c’a penas si ten
To her lady, who could scarce refrain
de rire quan vi ques Alis
From laughing, for she saw and knew
a contrafar ap pauc non ris.
That Alice was near to laughter too.
Lo romanz ausa davaus destre
Toward the right Flamenca lifted
e fa-l biaissar a senestre,
The book, which on the left she shifted
e quan fes parer que-l baises
Downward. She made pretense to kiss
il dis: “Que plans?” et en apres
It, said: “Why grieve?” and after this
a demandat: “Et ausist o?”
She queried: “Well, and did you hear?”
(ll. 4477-89)
```
In spite of Flamenca’s sadness at separation from her beloved (ll. 6906-16), she cheer up considerably once she has the salutz (ll. 7131-77):

Ara no-us cal dire, so sai,
de ’n Archimbaut que sia mai
de sa moiller gillos ni garda!
Flamenca las salutz esgarda
e conoc Guillem aitan ben
con si-l vis ades davan se
e la fais[s]o de si meseissa
aitan ben con si fos ill eissa.

(ll. 7113-20)

No doubt I do not need to tell
If Archimbaut’s still ’neath the spell
That made him prey to jealousy.
Flamenca read the poetry;
She saw William, as if he were
In person standing close to her,
Nor could she fail to recognize
Her own likeness before her eyes.

Flamenca las salutz esgarda (l. 7116) does not necessarily mean that Flamenca reads, just that she looks - say at the image and not the words. While this whole scene seems to be about reading and writing, these should be taken in their broader sense, as the “composition” here is not necessarily “lettered.” Flamenca’s ladies are described as educated, and at least one book – *li romanz de Blancaflor* – is in their apartments. But there is no evidence in the text that Flamenca herself, on her own, can read or write. This does not detract from the fact that – whether or not writing is involved – she and her ladies are engaged in activites of poetic composition, that is, of *trobar*.

Totals tres las salutz ne porton;
pron an ara ab que-s deporton.
Ben las aprendon e decoron
e gardan ben non las aforon,
ni volon qu’auteur las aprenda
ni un mot per ellas n’entenda.
Soven las plegon e desplegon,
e garon ben tan non las bregon
ques en letras ni em penchura
nom paresca effassadura.

(II. 7121-30)

This love-token the three dames carry
Away with them. It makes them merry
And gay. They’ll learn it word for word
And not allow it to be heard
By anybody else, or shown
To others. It is theirs alone.
Folding and unfolding, they are
Most careful not to blur or mar
The words or picture, or to make
The parchment give way, crack or break.23

The three ladies play with the page, handling it with loving care, both as physical text and as sublimated amorous object, mollycoddled, caressed, to be known completely by them but secretly, with heavy emphasis on the private. The love-letter is played with, folded and unfolded, with care taken not to over-use or abuse it. The image works three ways: the physical letter; the representation of

---

23 The last line’s translation is misleading. *Paresca effassadura* is not so much “be cracked or broken” as “appear rubbed away or effaced.” Besides, new parchment would not crack as it is soft and supple.
their amalgamated boy-toys, the male figure’s effective symbolic reduction to a single most vital part being *plegon e desplegon*; and the words in the letter, fully known (*ben las aprendon e decoron*), played with, folded and unfolded and refolded, in the manner of any word-play. Words are centrally positioned in the *salutz*, and the poem itself is both in a mediating position between the lovers and separating them. They are linked to it by the flowers, and it is the only thing that can bring them together. The text can be changed – a matter of letters or whole words folded away out of sight, changing the text but not destructively, as the original word is easily reconstituted, and when the text is reconstituted, the original word has gained in meaning from its transformation and resurrection. Folding becomes related to a set of *adnominatio*, derivative, or grammatical rhyme devices. The text itself provides an example, in its use of *plegon/desplegon*; and later, *pleguet/plegave/plegar*. Flamenca and her ladies thus play with it in a derivative and ingenious way.

When the images on this page are folded, unfolded, and refolded, the first result is a new image of a male supplicant kissing the lady’s hands; and the couple being blessed by the third figure. Folding closer to the man – or making a second fold – brings his face to her groin area. Unfolding and folding in succession, and folding horizontally, the man appears to stand up and kiss the lady. He can simply be made to repeat this, being granted *merce* - “mercy” spiritual, emotional, and/or sexual - by the lady. More folds can be added to enable a closer embrace. The page can be rotated 90°, held either way up, and so on. The erotic variety of further play is limited only by the folder’s ingenuity. The last three lines of this passage repeat the care taken not to wreck this precious page or, by metaphoric allusion, its contents. In a warning that extends outside the text to readers, such precious toys can be worn out by over-indulgence in heavy-duty manipulation.

The letter is then taken to bed by Flamenca. She kisses the image of Guillem, who is now fully identified with the image, giving the kisses some gusto. He has become the image, and they are one, just as both have joined together with Flamenca’s two mental images – memory past and fantasy future – into a three-in-one imaginary lover (nicely, also bringing together his past, present, and
future selves). The erotic relationship has passed into one based more in the mind, a move into the imaginary. Its continuation is thus ensured, no matter what happens in Flamenca’s external reality, and indeed it is the salutz that enable the three ladies to survive their lovers’ absence without pining away.

As the image is contemplated, it becomes more real, and the contemplator moves into the image’s reality. A sense of transport and rapture recall mystical contemplation, prayer, and other solitary communion with the Word, to whatever degree spiritual or erotic, or somewhere between and combining the two. Kissing the image is close to worshipping graven images, and like the swearing of fealty, or fidelity, by kissing the Bible or relics. This recalls earlier blasphemous play with the Bible at Mass, and Flamenca’s substitution of the Bible for Floire et Blanchefleur. No mention is made of where the kisses are placed on the image, making the whole night more titillating; except we know that the thousand kisses and a thousand more are “like” those produced by the ladies in their folding-games earlier. The kissing and the image all prove highly inspiring to our heroine, who produces her first canso-style piece of solo first-person lyric:

Flamenca’s lyric composition marks her final stage in full sentient being, a finding of the self closely tied to poetic trobar. Previous stages in the process of coming to life were, like this one, through the subversion of the surrounding masculine social and proprietorial order. Her playful use of trobairitz and her derivative poetic activity – another form of coming into being, and further play,
here with linguistic and poetic rules - depend on a masculine model - Guillem’s words - and his lead in this verbal dance.

She then uses the salutz and its ymages, and that first poem of her own, as materia to continue into a post-affair poetic composition, which becomes Flamenca’s morning-constitutional prayer to Amor:

Cascun mati, quan si levet,
l’emage de Guillem miret
et ab Amor parlet suau
e dis: “Amors, sistot m’estau
de mon amic ara trop luein,
ges mon cor de lui non desluin,
qu’el lo ten, si com dis, en gaje.
E no-us penses ques ie-i l desgaje,
mai si-l pogueis mai engajar
per null plazer qu’ei-il saupes far
qu’ieu autre ves fag non agues,
ni el ensegnar lo-m pogueis,
an cara l’engajera plus.
Mais anc non fo plazers negus
que donna puesca far ni dir
a son amic per mielz gausir
de qu’ieu hanc li disses de no.
E vos meseissa sabes o,
et el meseisses si so sap.
e i a plus mai que daus cap
comens’ab lui, cora que-l veja.
E car li mostretz la correja
aissi asautet a plegar
qu’el fes a mon sengnor cujar
que cela de Belmon ames,
don no-l venc em pens qu’en pesses,
a vos, dou’Amors, o grasis.”
(ll. 7145-71)

Each morning, when from sleep she woke,
At William’s image she would look
And speak softly to Love. She’d say:
“Love, though I now am far away
In body from my best beloved,
My heart has never been removed:
He holds my heart in pledge, I deem,
And think not that I shall redeem
It. Could I make the pledge more tight
By granting to him more delight –
Which he might teach me, and which I’ve
Not granted to him – I’d contrive
To fortify my pledge thereby.
Indeed I never would deny
Him anything that I could say
Or do that could in any way
Enhance the measure of his bliss.
You, Love, are well aware of this,
And he’s aware of it. Therefore
We can continue, as before.
For showing him how to befool
My lord, and deftly pull the wool
Over his eyes, how to hoodwink
Him, and to give him cause to think
You loved the Dame of Beaumont, thus
Keeping him unsuspicious,
For this, sweet love, my thanks to you.”

Flamenca’s composition is a marvellous parody of Guillem’s earlier clumsy first attempts at an address and prayer to love, in which his scholarly and rhetorically flowery but sterile and hollow gushings came to nothing. Somewhat later, the closest he came to a true and sincere expression of desire was, curiously, admission of defeat and silence – the stereotypically traditional feminine mode of expression. The vocabulary used now by Flamenca is lustily and punningly exuberant. Guillem’s earlier senhals, Na Tor and Bella de Belmont, are returned as Amix, “friend.” This is typical of much dialogue poetry, and of earlier exchanges between Flamenca and Guillem, in which the man will
tend towards Domna ("lady"), a senhal, or, for the really lucky object of desire, the ubiquitous and so expressive bella douça res, “beautiful sweet thing,” while the woman will use amics or drutz (“partner” or “companion,” also used in masculine homosocial, friendly, non-sexual contexts). Flamenca’s lyric composition, like the salutz itself, is a poetic derivation created out of a predecessor, and in an attempt to twist new meaning out of it; as seen earlier, there are strong trobairitz links.

Guillem acts as muse, passive source of inspiration and guidance for her feminine post-affair lyric, just as she acted as Lady-muse to his masculine pre-affair lyric. Flamenca poeticises here to Amor via Guillem; similarly, while Guillem’s earlier poetic work was addressed to Amor, his intercourse with Flamenca was actually with Amor, via Flamenca as intermediary. In this earlier episode, Guillem prayed to Amor and was rewarded with a dream, in which Flamenca’s dream-double came to spend quality time with him. It later transpired – when he awoke – that it had been Amor in disguise who had “had” him: a premonition of his ymage–double’s fate at Flamenca’s hands.

Going well beyond the usual limits of Ovidian Veneral disease, Flamenca tells that e pos en mis'es Amors messa (l. 5578: “since Love has put herself in me”). She is now the very full physical incarnation of Love. This could set her up for continuation as the Lyric Lady, but the very carnal aspect seems out of keeping with the lyric Muse’s abstraction and absence. Further, she has not become a zombie-shell for Amor, but is in possession and control: as she put it herself, cil amors es mia (l. 5112: “this love is mine”) - one of only two instances in Flamenca of an adjective being used in conjunction with Amor, other than Amor’s usual attributes such as fin’. Besides leading to a new feminine lyric, this is an entirely new relationship between muse and poet-lover.

We saw earlier how Flamenca, the fantasy ideal woman, comes into being gradually, from object of amor de lonh. From Flamenca’s point of view, the twin of the damsel in distress is the knight-errant. Just as Guillem invented his fantasy-woman; so, in the parallel from the other side of the amorous equation, Flamenca invents him - her fantasy, dream-lover. When Guillem makes his first appearance, and a portion of Flamenca is narrated from his point of view, he
looks out his window at the tower, in which Flamenca is imprisoned. Flamenca, too, has a window to look out of, and it has the potential to be a means of escape – at least for the imaginative escape of gazing out and day-dreaming.

If Flamenca is reread again from the beginning from Flamenca’s point of view, we see that the section narrated from Archimbaut’s point of view often shifts to the imprisoned ladies. This could be because he is spying on them; it could also be a transition to focalization on Flamenca. When the narrative shifted to focalization on Guillem, that shift was immediately preceded by a description of Flamenca in her room. The whole section narrated from Guillem’s point of view – from his lengthy description, through to the hai las scene in church – could be Flamenca’s imaginings of an idealized dream-lover. Just as Guillem imagines her in her room through his window, Flamenca could as easily imagine him through hers; and so the whole romance may be reread as her fantasy.

Flamenca, herself now an amans – and Amor incarnate - can “win” herself, belong to herself, and thus finally be a self. Rubbing and kissing the salutz into herself is the culminative moment of Flamenca’s narrative: she “possesses” herself. Flamenca thus escapes from the textual and sexual normative order surrounding and enclosing her, acquiring identity through its subversion and perversion, making it herself and making her, her own; she is able to belong, finally, to herself. It is a feminine version of Guillem’s escape into a new self-created identity in aizi.

### 3.2 Dialogue in parity: tenso

When Guillem “finds” the right word to say to Flamenca, and she responds with a question, new possibilities open up to the lovers. This is the start of a dialogue has started: contact has been made, in a form permitting its continuation. While Flamenca is in the Echo role here, of respondent, she uses the pattern of the dialogue to her advantage. The dialogue also helps to weave together interrelated items providing alternatives to trobar clus. Dialogue demonstrates communicative intent: reaching out from lyric imprisonment to another, with the aim of communicating clearly so as to be understood and so
that a relationship may develop. Dialogue is “conversation”: literally, making poetry together. The clarity of communication links to another alternative to *trobar clus: trobar leu*, “light, open” finding. This communicative mode is based in relations of parity, and that parity extends to erotic relations. The relationship is not necessarily one of strict equality; but it is one of parity, in which the two act as a pair and as one another’s peers.

Guillem’s utterance of *hai las* changes the nature of the poetry and love involved, moving into dialogue and parity. Guillem says a last-minute prayer and complaint to Amor24 expresses the agony of uncertainty, a fear of abandonment recalling Christ’s doubts on the cross.25 He has no idea what to say to Flamenca - *que dirai eu?* (l. 3846) – in a link to the *no sai* poem-group discussed in Chapter Two. He had apparently been abandoned by his guide and teacher:

```
e dis: Amors, que faitz, on es?
Que dirai eu? car nom venes
esseinar so que deurai dire.
Ben pauc vos cal de mon consire!
Vos es sorda o adormida,
esperduta o amudida,
on tenes ar autre ni me.
(ll. 3845 – 52)
con eu ai ancui de faillir
davan cella cui tan desir
(ll. 3861-62)
```

Guillem slowly discovers some capacity to think for, and act, himself. This is the final test, after which Guillem will be a fully fledged poet: but he must stand on his own feet and make his own finding, he can no longer depend on being fed external *esseinar*. He realises this a few lines later, as he will *assajarai* – try, test out – if Amor has prepared him properly:

```
E nonperquant tot proarai
Vostre sen, et asajarai
Si m’aures ben apparellat
(ll. 3863-65)
```

24 ll. 3845-74
25 Comparable to “Father, wherefore hast thou foresaken me?” and featuring Amor returned to her own realm, closed in on herself in dream.

185
He realises that this might be a test as part of his education, a rite of passage into adulthood, and he must make his own way, thus showing that he has learned his lessons and can now apply them and live the life of love, acting in accordance with Amor’s rules. He is now ready to move beyond seduction and the primary arts of love; into love’s second stage, which is also a different kind of poetics.

In a further move towards free agency, at the end of this, his final piece of *trobar clus*, Amor and God appear in hypothetical constructions as potential circumstances - rather than motive forces – for definite action by Guillem (*fisarai, avenrai*). He threatens to abandon belief in Amor, pits Amor and God against each other, and makes it dubious as to whether he will read any sign of hope he might receive as coming from Amor or from God. Whether this, his final lyric *tornada*, is blasphemous or properly religious is hopelessly ambiguous:

> e dis: “S’Amors hui m’aduz de mon desir a quelque luz, jamais eu leis non fisarai; mas, si Dieu platz, be i avenrai.”

(l. 3939-42)

Saying: “Unless Love give me light
Today, and guide my wish aright,
In [her] I never more will trust.
But, please God, I’ll succeed. I must.”

Guillem’s very last words before approaching Flamenca are a crushing rejection of Amor, attacked for her failure, as her moving in mysterious ways is reread by Guillem as deliberate slowness maliciously thwarting him, to her own ends, and not necessarily for his benefit:

> Amors non fai ges a la cocha, mas a mi par que trop i locha pel gran desire que-l cor m’afflama.”

> Et aital es totz hom ques ama.

(l. 3943-46)

> Love fails not when the need is great,
> And yet [her] help seems slow and late
> To me whose heart is all aflame.”

> Every true lover thinks the same.

*Cocha* (l. 3943) contrast nicely, and bitterly, with Guillem’s earlier use of *cochat* (l. 3866); and *–l cor m’afflama* (l. 3945) with *lo cor encendre* (l. 3870). This repetition draws attention back to the earlier lines, when, still trapped inside the web of higher powers controlling his moves, he had realised that something else exists, some other way of existing, and is slowly struggling to move from an awareness of imprisonment to his own liberation. He was aware that what he should say ought to be as follows:

---

26 Ll. 3941 and 3942
To say the right phrase rightly turned,
For what I have to say must be
Light, swift and lucid, so that she
Who kindles my heart into fire
May grasp my thought and my desire.

These five lines show a significant move away from the *trobar* and the kind of *amor* figuring in the last chapter. We have some criteria for what the ideal *trobar* should be: all that his previous attempts to define love were not.

What he finds, *on meins atrop mot que faiza*, should be *bon mot cochat*, ...

Guillem makes a big step towards successfully finding, as he has figured out what he ought to be seeking. It should be comprehensible – *posca leu entendre*. He has successfully escaped *trobar clus*; an escape into its contrary, *trobar leu*. His very definition of the “word” he is trying to find is an escape from *clus*: its whole point is simplicity and comprehensibility – even by a lady. His subsequent speech is cleaner and clearer, after this poetic breakthrough: less word-play, simpler vocabulary, and no pointless flourishes. Unlike the solitary introspection and self-imprisonment of lyric circularity, this new *trobar* must be directed at, comprehensible to, and understood by another person, and it must do so clearly. This is, clearly, a very different kind of composition: with communicative intent.

Meanwhile, we have seen Flamenca come to life and her presence increase, especially as an active composer of poetry. A considerable part of her textual activity – from Guillem’s *hai las* onwards – is in the first part of the central section of the romance, when the lovers meet at Mass and exchange words. The lovers slowly build a poem together, the whole stitched together with a razo-narrative of contemplations of next moves and post-mortems on previous utterances. The dialogue-poem composed jointly runs as follows; Guillem starts, Flamenca usually responds with questions:
The central poem thus built is a joint composition, exactly split between the two composers, who have equal roles in its making. Due to the bounds imposed on their compositional game, the spoken word in *Flamenca*’s central portion is at its poetic limits, densely and richly loaded and reduced to its most essential form of two syllables. What is produced is extreme poetry, highest *trobar* art. The co-composers’ contributions are in exact equilibrium. Features of compositional equality and reciprocal relations are reflected in a change in narrative focalization through this section. Events are viewed in alternation between Flamenca and Guillem; it is a double focalization in that the aftermath of a response’s utterance is observed from both angles, one after the other. The whole section features scarcely any commentary by the narrative voice, producing an effect of directness near to that of pure dialogue. Elsewhere, the narrative voice is untrustworthy; here, its absence provides a note of truth to proceedings.

Each two-syllable replique is in an inter-dependent relationship with the rest. No part can stand alone from the rest of the dialogue, as it would make no sense; and, on the other hand, if a part is removed, the dialogue makes no sense. This may be read as a poetic metaphor for developing erotic relations. In *Flamenca*, relationship is being built before our very eyes: every replique is dependent on the one before, dependent on the next, and must make allowances to permit a next one to occur and the dialogue to continue. The building of relationship is evident when the lovers themselves state their purpose is to engage in relations or reach *entendemen*: that is, poetic and epistemological
“understanding,” and the “having an understanding” of having an affair. Guillem puts it nicely, as a wish to have *parlament* with Flamenca (l. 3936, “parley,” and “dealings”).

The Occitan tenso

Our lovers engage, then, in a dialogue of strict metrical equality and an exact taking of turns; reflected in the form of the poem produced, when one removes the surrounding *razo*. The poem is a *tenso*: a poem involving direct speech, between at least two persons, in discussion; not unrelated to “tension.”

The *tenso* is scarcely defined in the Occitan poetics treatises.\(^{27}\) It definitely involves debate and discussion, and more than one first-person voice. A poem can only properly be called a *tenso* once there is actual dialogue, once there has been at least one reply, the presence of more than one first-person voice, and with each first-person voice engaging with the other as second-person.

\(^{27}\) Definitions in the treatises are scant. The *Doctrina de compondre dictats* (Marshall: 95-8) mentions the *tenso* as “Aço es manera de doctrina, per la qual poras saber e conexer que es cansó, vers, lays, serventesch, retornexa, pastora, dança, plant, alba, gayta, estampida, sompni, gelozesca, discort, cobles esparses, tenso” (ll. 1-4: “And this is the way of doctrine, through which you may know and understand what are the *cansó*, vers, lays, serventes, *retronxa*, *pastorella*, *dansa*, *plaint*, *alba*, *gaita*, *estampa*, *sommni*, *gelozesca*, *descort*, *cobles esparses*, *tenso*”). The *tenso* is barely described: “deus l’apondre en algun so qui haia bella nota, e potz seguir les rimes del cantar o no. E potz fer .iiiij. o .vj. cobles o .viij., si.t vols.” (ll. 90-2: “it should have beautiful music, and you may follow the rhymes of the song or not. And you may make four or six stanzas or eight is you want”). As to its purpose, “Tenso es diat tenso per ço com se diu contrastan e disputan subtilmen lo un ab l’atre de quale rah hom vulla cantar” (ll. 135-6: “The *tenso* is called *tenso* because its speakers contrast and disput(at)e subtly, the one with the other, any topic on which one might like to sing”). The *tenso* is thus indistinguishable from the *discort*, except perhaps as a more general set of which the *discort* is a member, as the *discort* is more restricted in subject-matter (to love, pro and contra). Marshall notes (p.140, note to lines 90-1): “The theorist knew only of the *tenso* which used a borrowed tune” – thus, a derivative form, in its definition. He notes further, “It is curious that only at 135-6 does the author indicate that the *tenso* is a dialogue.” The two anonymous treatises from Ms. Ripoll 129 (Marshall: 101-3) confuse the matter further:

Tenco es semblant en nombre de cobles a la canço, e es de materia d’amor per manera de questions e de respostes de coses qui.s pertanguen [a] amor. Mas ha aquest diferentia ab canço, que tos temps son paraules de dues persone, axi que la un parla primerament en la una cobla e l’altre en l’altra (ll. 11-16).

“The *tenso* resembles the *cansó* in number of stanzas, and its subject-matter is love, in the manner of questions and answers on things which pertain to love. But it has this difference from the *cansó*, as it is always the speech of two persons, such that the one speaks first in a first stanza, and the other in the other/next.”

Marshall notes (141, note to l. 12): “In fact comparatively few *tensos* were concerned with courtly questions (cf William Powell Jones, *La Tenson provençale. Étude d’un genre poétique, suivi d’une étude critique de quatre tensons et d’une liste complète des tensons provençales* [Paris: Droz, 1934]: 48). It is probable that the theorist was thinking of the *partimen* or that he considered *tensos* and *partimens* as constituting a single genre.”
The *tenso* is still related to the *canso*: many are simply referred to as *coblas*, so producing the sense that the *tenso* is an extension of the *canso*, such as would happen if one primary lyric *cobla* were followed by at least one more by another voice. As one of the clearest indications that a poem is a *tenso* is the address to a second person at the start of a *cobla*, some single-cobla poems may be aborted *tensos* or fragments of a lost whole. One would be Tibors, *Bels dous amics, ben vos puosc en ver dir.* As the manuscript transmission was in many cases significantly subsequent to the date of composition, poems preserved in a *tenso* forms can still be read as a linked sequence of separate *coblas*. This characteristic – appearing as it does in song-books of the same period as the *Flamenca* manuscript – may be deliberately alluded to in our work, as part of a *poétique des restes*.

The shape of the *tenso* is quite different from the circularity of the *canso*. As a succession of repliques, it succeeds in breaking out of the lyric loop, without losing the benefits of *cobla* formal circularity. It is frequently in the form of a debate, in which parties’ objectives lie somewhere between persuasion and the legal-academic winning of a debate by sound proof and reasoning, and in many *tensos* this objective becomes somewhat distanced by the sheer joy of argument: dialogue for dialogue’s sake, albeit often tempered by self-expression for its own sake. The poem can thus potentially continue for ever without actually getting anywhere. In this way, a different form of non-ending is produced, and indeed it is often unclear whether the known versions of *tensos* are complete or not.

Once again, a *tenso* characteristic has foreshadowings in the *canso*. Here, the *tornada* (*envoi*), which often includes a *senhal* (address to a named or nicknamed other person, usually in the vocative) suggest another way of escaping lyric confines and the imprisonment of *trobar clus*. The poet may strive to open out into dialogue with an other, and thus into the full *tensonality* of multiple first-person-voice lyric including a reciprocating second-person voice. A different erotic yearning can be detected in the *tenso* form from that in the *canso*: for a

---

28 In the *Leys d’amor*.
29 For example, Almuc de Castelhou and Iseut de Capion, *Dompna N’Almudes, si.us plages*; Bruckner *et al* 48.
30 Bruckner *et al* 138.
different kind of love, one of communication, relationship, and what I discuss in the next section as “parity.” Communicative intent provides the potential for opening at the end of the poem, with movement outwards at the poem’s conclusion, addressing the poem itself as vers or messatge, sending (it via) a messatge, to a named or senhal-addressed recipient, often intersecting with the use of a tornada. Other elements include the address to a second-person voice, the use of the vocative, and prayers and related requests for contact or “signs of life” outside: Arnaut de Mareuil, Domna, genser que no sai dir31; Amanieu de Sescars, A vos, que ieu am desza motz32; Azalias d’Altier, Tanz salutz e tantas amors.33

The tenso takes the form of a game which can be won only by one side losing by making a bad move, so a game of postponing loss as long as possible. A game of non-committal flirtation, it leads to another form of non-ending in keeping options open, for instance in the shape of ambiguous meanings. The result, again, is the participants’ enjoyment lying in keeping the tenso going, the sheer joy of discourse. An even playing-field is maintained through both parties playing by the same compositional rules, in the shape of their repliques, using the same cobla structure. The tenso’s material can be erotic or not. Indeed, most tensos are on moral and political subjects, and so overflow into the satirical sirventes.34 Yet the overall tone of the tenso, regardless of the kind of relationship between speakers, is erotic: mud-slinging injured harangue, flirtation, silver-tongued seduction attempt, verbal pleasure. The tenso can

31 Riquer vol. II p.662.
32 Riquer vol. III p.1655.
33 Bruckner et al 124.
34 See Nelli, Écrivains anticonformistes du moyen-âge occitan. Tome 1: la Femme et l’amour (Paris: Phébus, 1977); Bec, Burlesque et obscénité chez les troubadours: pour une approche du contre-texte médiéval (Paris: Stock, 1984). Erotic subject-matter in trobador lyric is not necessarily incompatible with, or in opposition to, the moral and political. This dissertation’s Conclusion shows how the erotic and poetic are connected to ethics, as love-poetry is used as an ethical model, and poetry has an ulterior aim of becoming applied poetry.
include debates about matters amorous between parties who are not necessarily lovers. The key element is frank but ludic debate.

Some of the *trobairitz* corpus is in the form of *tensos* between men and women. Some dialogue-poems are regarded as quite certainly between real persons, who thus count as joint composers: for example, the *tensos* between Guiraut de Borneil and Raimbaut d’Aurenga and that between Maria de Ventadorn and Gui d’Ussel, *Gui d’Ussel be.m pesa*, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Other may include one or more voices whose fictional or factual status is less certain: for example, the dialogue-poem between Guiraut de Borneil and Alamanda, *S’ie.us qier conseill, bella amia Alamanda*; and the delightful *Eu veing vas vos, seigner, fauda levada*, between “Montan” and an unnamed lady.

*Flamenca*’s use of the dialogue-poem is not the first transposition of the *tenso* and related poetic modes into narrative. Some narrative works show a lyric aspect, and that lyric aspect can be the *tenso*. The Occitan *Chanson de Sainte Foi* is a good example. The middle portion of this hagiography comprises the eponymous heroine’s interrogation, as both parties try to convert each other. On the surface, this is a purely religious conversion and conversation. Yet the kind of dialogue, structures, and strategic moves are identical to those used in flirtation. Through its basis in exchange, the *tenso* is also related to the *salutz*, love-letters returned and shared; we note that *Flamenca* incorporates one. Arnaut de Mareuil’s *salutz* have been rearranged in some manuscripts (from the same period as the *Flamenca* manuscript) to form a narrative. French examples would be the letters of Abelard and Heloise, and later epistolary romances such as Guillaume de Machaut’s *Livre du Voir dit*. Romances often feature dialogues, embedded near the centre of verse romances, in direct speech between two characters and with a reduced presence of any commentating voice. Dialogue may extend into romance structure, as in the *Roman des Sept Sages, Aucassin et Nicolette*, and Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose. Aucassin et Nicolette* (a

---

35 For example, Elias d’Ussel and Aimeric, *N’Elyas, conseill vos deman* and Gui d’Ussel and Elias, *N’Elias, a son amador*.

36 Classic examples: Chrétien de Troyes’ *Lancelot* (Lancelot and Guenievre); *Cligés* (Alexandre and Soredamors); the *Roman d’Enéas* (Aeneas and Dido, and Lavinia). All of these feature a two-stage conversation. Once realization has dawned that love is beginning, each party produces separate long lyric set-pieces. Once they meet, with shared intentions, they converse.
“chantefable”) takes dialogue further in playing with a *prosimetrum*, Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*. Embedded lyric pieces appear in early 13th century experimental romance, such as Jean Renart’s *Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole* and Gerbert de Montreuil’s *Roman de la Violette*.

The *tenso* coincides with *trobar leu*, as a double alternative to *trobar clus* and the *canso*, and their lyric entrapment. I use *leu* here in the same way as I use *clus*: in a literal and broader sense; as opposed to its usual, specific, use to refer to a specific poetic style.

Perhaps the most famous occurrence of *trobar clus* in Occitan lyric is coupled with one of its poetic alternatives, *trobar leu* (“light composition”), in a debate-poem between Giraut de Borneil and Raimbaut d’Aurenga, *Era.m platz, Guiraut de Borneill*. This is one of several exchanges between them about poetry and poetics. Dating as it does from the second half of the 12th century, this is the first explicit literary debate in a Romance vernacular. It antedates, for instance, the first literary debate in French – the *Querelle de la Rose* - by some two and a half centuries.37 Here is the major part of *Era.m platz, Guiraut de Borneill*, omitting the last four stanzas, which move to friendlier conversation off topic:38

```plaintext
“Era.m platz, Guiraut de Borneill,
Que sapcha per c’anatz blasman
Trobar clus, ni per cal semblan.
Asso.m diguatz:
Si tan prezatz
So que vas totz es cominal?
Car adonx tug seraun egal.”
```

“Now I should like to know, Guiraut de Borneil, why you go around blaming the closed style of composition, and on what pretext. Tell me this: do you have such a high regard for what is available to everyone? For then everyone will be equal.”

---


“Senher Linhaure, no.m coreill
Si quex se trob’a son talan;
Mas me eis vueill iutgar d’aitan
Qu’es mais amatz
Chans e prezatz
Qui’l fai levet e venansal;
E vos no m’o tornetz a mal.”

“Guiraut, no vueill qu’en tal trepeill
Torn mos trobars, que l’amon tan
L’avol co.l bo e.l pauc co.l gran.
La per lo fatz
Non er lauzatz,
Quar no conoison, ni lur cal,
So que plus quar es ni mais val.”

“Linhaure, si per aiso veill
Ni mon seiorn torn en afan,
Sembla que.m dopte de mazan.
A que trobatz,
Si no vos platz
C’ades ho sapchon tal e cal?
Que chans no port’autre captal.”

“Guiraut, sol que.l meils apareill
E digu’ades e tragu’enan,
Me no cal, si tan no s’espan;
C’anc grans viutatz
No fo denhatz;
Per so prez’om mais aur que sal,
E de chant es tot autretal.”

“Linhaure, fort de bon conseill
Es fin amans contrarian;
E pero si.m val mais d’enfan
Mos sos levatz,
C’uns enraumatz
Lo.m deissazec e.l digua mal,
A cui non deia hom sesal.”

“My lord Linhaure [= “golden line”], I am complaining if each man composes poetry the way he likes, but, for myself, I am disposed to think that the song is better loved and esteemed when it is made easy and ordinary; and do not take me wrongly in this.”

“Guiraut, I do not wish my poetry to turn into such confusion that it may be equally to the liking of churlish and excellent people, and of minor people and great. Fools will never praise it, for they neither recognize nor care for what is most rare and precious.”

“Linhaure, if I lose sleep over this and if I make a hard task out of what gives me pleasure it seems that I am afraid of popular acclaim. Why compose poetry if you do not wish everyone to know your poem immediately? For song brings no other reward.”

“Guiraut, provided that what I create and sing and perform is always the best, I do not care if it is not known very far and wide; for common fodder was never a great delicacy. For this reason people prefer gold to salt, and it is just the same with song.”

“Linhaure, an argumentative lover is a fine source of advice; and yet I prefer to hear my melody uplifted by a child rather than broken up and spoilt by a hoarse-voiced singer who deserves no payment.”

Giraut argues for trobar leu, or plan, or apert: poetry that is plain, simple, and open, so that any reader can read the words; but it is their meanings, the subtextual senses, that provide difficulty and poetic depth; in a sense not unlike Jakobson’s “poetic language.” Raimbaut argues for trobar ric and clus: rich, rare, closed, difficult, and obscure. He is not in favour of what Giraut proposes, a “democratic” poetry, and would rather a poem be unread than open to all and sundry. I must stress the connection between trobar leu and communicative
intent, the ethical good of this communication, and this being part of what, in
turn, makes poetry good. Aesthetic and ethical values are connected.

The *vidas* and *razos* provide us with some useful information on the poets’
posterity. Raimbaut d’Aurenga, we are told in his *vida*, “was a good *trobador* of
verse and of songs; but he had a fine understanding in the making of rare and
closed rhymes” (*fo bons trobaires de vers e de chansons; mas mout s'entendeit
en far caras rimas e clusas*). Guiraut de Borneil wins the battle of poetic
posterity: “was a better *trobador* than anyone ever, before him or after; because
of this he was called the master-*trobador*, and still is, by all those who
understand subtle expression well, that is well founded in love and in sense” (*fo
meiller trobare que negus d'aquels qu'eron estat denan ni foron apres lui; per
que fo apellatz maestre dels trobadors, et es ancar per toz aquels que ben
entendon subtils ditz ni ben pauzatz d'amor ni de sen*). Peire d’Alvernhe’s *vida*
recounts that “Guiraut de Borneil made the first song that ever was made” (*qu'En
Guiraut de Borneil fetz la premeira canson que anc fos fata*).

In Guillem’s criteria for the good poetry he wants to produce, he uses the
word *leu*, tied to its communicability (l. 3867); it should be easily understood (*leu
entendre*, l. 3869). Guillem adds an erotic dimension to the poetic and ethical
value of *trobare leu*, as his communicative aim is tied to the goal of further and
more intimate contact with his prospective interlocutor:

que sapcha dir bon mot cochat
quar ben a obs que sia leu
so que dirai, e bon e breu,
e tal com posa leu entendre
cella que-m fai lo cor encendre.
(ll. 3866-70)

To say the right phrase rightly turned,
For what I have to say must be
Light, swift and lucid, so that she
Who kindles my heart into fire
May grasp my thought and my desire.

Guillem’s decision to seek *trobare leu* alludes to other references to *leu* in the
*trobador* corpus, including the *tenso* above. We see, once again, how *Flamenca*
interacts with Occitan poetry and poetics. Another instance, and related to the
*tenso* mode, is *Flamenca*’s allusion to to earlier poems. Many critics have seen a
direct link between the dialogue-poem in *Flamenca* and poems by Peire Rogier
(*Ges non puesc en bon vers fallir*) and Guiraut de Borneil (*Ailas, co muer!*),
which are not full tensos but include dialogue. The dialogue-portion of these works is in internal conversation of first-person personified parts, or debate with Amor, or with another provider of amorous advice. All three poems start out with the same sequence: “alas – what’s wrong? – I’m dying.”

The pertinent dialogue-portion in Peire Rogier’s poem is between the lover and Amor; reinforcing Flamenca’s connections between Guillem and the lyric lover, and Flamenca and Amor. The start of Peire Rogier’s dialogue (ll. 41-45) is very close to Flamenca’s lovers’ one, with the crucial difference that Peire Rogier’s Amor asks why the plaintiff cannot be healed, to which the plaintiff responds that it is because he is so angry with his beloved:

![Dialogue between lover and Amor in Peire Rogier's poem](Image)


---

39 Amongst several similarly-themed debate-poems, featuring similarly short, sharp repliques, and also about dreadful suffering, I would draw attention to a(n allegedly) trobairitz one: Felipa and Arnaud Plagues, *Ben volgrá midons saubes* (Bruckner *et al* 66-69). Peire is usually credited with starting the form, although earlier examples would include Cercamon, *Car vei fenir a tot dia* (in which one of the interlocutors is a Guihalmi), and Marcabru’s tenso-exchange with the Segnier n’Audric (*Tot a estru*; *Seigner n’Audric*), and pastourelles such as *L’autrier, a l’issida d’abriu* and *L’autrier jost’una sebissa*. Peire Rogier’s other dialogue-poems include: *No sai don chant e chantars plagam fort*; *Tant ai mon cor en joy assis*; *Entr’ir’e joy m’an si devis*; his half of a salutz-exchange with Raimbaut d’Aurenga, *Seign’en Rainbaut, per vezér*. See Nicholson 1976: 68-122.

Guiraut de Bornel’s dialogue-poems: *Sol qu’amors me plevis*; *Mas, com m’ave, Dieus m’aiut*; *Ar auziretz*; *S’era non poia mos chans*; *Can creis la fresca fuei’els rams*; *Reis glorios, verais lums e clardatz*; *L’autrier, lo primier iorn d’aoast*; *Lou doutz chanz d’un auzel*; last but not least, the most famous “full” tenso of alternating coblas between the two speakers: *S’ie.us cossei, bell’am’ Alamanda* (Sharman 57-167, 365-87).

40 Text: Nicholson 89; my translation.
sequences writ large, *Flamenca* twists its echo of *Ges non pucs en bon vers fallir* ingeniously and to deal with ingenuity. This is a higher-level repetition, verging on the metapoetic, of what happened in the question/response sequence between Guillem and Flamenca, and its similarly double twist – poetically ingenious, and about ingenuity. *Flamenca* thus engages in complex play with the *tenso*.

**Parity**

The second poem, Guiraut de Borneil, *Ailas, co muer*! is picked up by the actual story of *Flamenca*, which works nicely as a *razo*–extension around it, and the tale of a timid lover lacking the courage to approach the object of his desire:

1. Ailas, co muer! – Que as, amis?
2. Eu son traïs! –
3. Per cal razon? –
4. Car anc iorn mis m’entention
5. En leis qe.m fes lo bel parven, -
6. Et as per so ton cor dolen? –
7. Si ai.
8. As aissi doncs ton cor en lai? –
9. Oe eu, plus fort. –
10. Est donc aissi pres de la mort? –
11. Oe eu, plus fort que no.us sai dir. –
12. Per que .t laissas aissi morir? –
13. Car soi trop vergoignos e fis. –
14. Non l’as re quis? –
15. Ieu? Per Dieu, non! –
16. E per qe menas tal tenson,
17. Tro aïas sauput son talen? –
18. Segnier, fai mi tal espaven. –
19. Qe.l fai? –
20. S’amors qe me ten en esmai.
21. Be n’as gran tort.
22. Cujas te q’elas t’o aport? –
23. Ieu, no, mas no m’aus enardir. –
24. Trop poiras tu ton dan suffrir. –
25. Segnier, e cals cosseils n’er pres? –
26. Bos e cortes. –
27. Er lo.m digatz! –
28. Tu venras denant lei viatz
29. Et enqerras la de s’amor.-
30. E si s’o ten a desonor? –
31. No.t cal! –
32. E s’ela respon log ni mal? –
33. Sias suffrenz;
34. Qe totztemos bos suffrire venz. –

Because I am too timid and loyal. – Have you asked nothing at all from her? – Have I? In God’s name, no! – Then why make such a fuss about it before you have learnt how she feels? – My lord, it makes me so afraid. – What does? – The love I feel for her, that keeps me in constant terror. – You’re very wrong to be like this. Do you imagine that she will make the first move? – No, but I cannot pluck up courage. – You may suffer greatly for it.

My lord, what advice can you give me? – Good and courtly advice. – Tell it to me now then! – Go quickly to her and ask for her love. – And what if she thinks this is impudent of me? – No matter! – And what if she replies harshly and unkindly? – Be patient; for noble patience always wins the day.
E si.s n’apercep lo gelos? –
And what if her husband sees what is going
on? – Then you both have to be more
cunning. –

Adoncs n’ôbraretz plus gingnos.

Nos? – Hoc ben! – Sol q’il o volgues! -
We? – Yes, of course! – If she only wanted
it! – She will.- How? – If you’ll trust me. –
I will trust you! – Your joy will easily be
doubled, if you’re only not afraid to speak
out. – My Lord, so deadly is the pain I feel
that she and I must share it equally.

Er.- Qe? – Si.m cres. –

Crezutz siatz! –

Ben ti sera tos iois doblatz,

Sol lo digtz no.t fassa paor. –

Segnierz, tan senti la dolor

Mortal,

Per q’es ops c’o partam egal. –
(ll. 1-44)

Raisonar no.m sabrai ia ben. –
I shall never know how to plead a good

Digas, per qe? –

Per leis gardar. –

Non sabras doncs ab leis parlar?

Iest aissi del tot esperdutz? –

Oc, can li son denant vengutz...-

T’espertz? –

Oi eu, qe non son de ren certz. –

Aital fan tug

Sil qe son per amor perdug. –
(ll. 49-58)

“Segniers” in Guiraut’s poem above makes something explicit that is
absent in Amor’s parallel conversations with Guillem in Flamenca. He asks about
the other party’s intentions (ll. 14, 16-17): indeed, mocking the whole tenso in
which they are engaged as a waste of time and effort if the poet has not yet
“found” what the other desires. The two must work together: this comes, as first,
as a shock to the poet (nos?, l. 37). He is persuaded by the argument that, in this
way, his joy will be doubled. It is an interesting move. Aside from the obvious fact
that if his joy is currently sub-zero, doubling it will have no positive effect; not
only will he have the joy of Having the object of desire, but his joy will be doubled
if she wants and enjoys it too (sol q’il o volgues, l. 37). Our poet comes around to
the idea of “working in equal partnership” (ops c’o partam egal, l. 44).

Parity, dialogue, and playing games are nicely interconnected in Guilhem
de Peitieus’ Ben vueill que sapchon li pluzor, the poetic evil twin or other side to
Guilhem’s poem of suspended gnosis, Farai un vers de dreit nien. The poem

41 Sharman 62-65.
opens in an assertion of poetic mastery, which is soon seen to be intimately related to erotic virtuosity, and its need for two players.

1. Ben vueill que sapchon li pluzor
   D’un vers, si es de bona color,
   Qu’ieu ai trait de mon obrador,
   Qu’ieu port d’aiel mestier la flor –
   Ez es vertatz! –
   E puesc ne trair lo vers auctor
   Quant er lasatz.

2. Eu conosc ben sen e folor,
   E conosc anta ez honor,
   Ez ai ardimen e paor;
   E si.m partetz un joc d’amor,
   No soi tan fatz
   No sapcha triar lo meillor
   D’entre.ls malvatz.

3. Eu conosc be sel que be.m di
   E sel que.m vol mal autressi,
   E conosc be celui que.m ri;
   E s’il pros’azauton de mi,
   Conosc assatz
   QU’ATRESSI DEI VOLER LUR FI
   E LUR SOLATZ.

4. Ben aia celui que.m noiri
   Que tan bon mester m’escari
   Que anc a negun non failli:
   Qu’ieu sais joguar sobre coisi
   A totz tocatz:
   Mas ne sai de nuill mon vezi,
   Qual que.m vejatz.

5. Dieu en laus e Saint Julia:
   Tant ai apres del joc doulsa
   Que sobre totz n’ai bona ma;
   Mas ja qui conseill ma querra,
   No l’er vedatz,
   Ni nuils de mi non tornara
   Desconseillatz.

6. Qu’ieu ai nom: “maistre serta”:
   Ja m’amigu’a nueg no m’aura
   Que no.m veuill’aver l’endema;
   Qu’ieu soi be d’est mestier, so.m va,
   Tant ensehatz
   Que ben sai guazanhar mon pa
   En totz mercatz.

7. Pero no m’auzetz tan gabier
   Qu’ieu no fos raüsatz l’autrier,
   Que joguav’a un joc grossier
   I want everyone to know that a song is of good quality which I have brought forth from my workshop, for I take the prize in that profession – and that’s the truth!— and I can produce the song itself as witness of that when it’s laced up.

I know well sense and folly, and I know shame and honor, and I have both courage and fear; and if you offer me one side in a game of love, I’m not so stupid that I wouldn’t know how to select the best from among the bad.

I know well who speaks well of me and likewise who wishes me harm, and I know well who laughs at me; and if the worthy are happy with me, I know well enough that I should likewise want their peace and their solace.

May he live well who raised and educated me, for he granted me such a good profession that I have never failed anyone; For I know how to play on a cushion at any (game) touche upon; I know more about it than any of my neighbors,

No matter which one of mine you look at. I praise God and Saint Julian that I have learned so much about the sweet game that I have a hand more skilled than all the others; and if someone seeks counsel from me, it will never be refused, and no one will turn away from me disconsolate.

For I am called: “Perfect Master”: never will my woman-friend have me at night and not want to have me the next day; for I am so trained in this profession – of this I boast— that I know well how to earn my bread at every market.

But you do not hear me boasting so much as if I were not forced to retreat the other day, when I was playing a big game.
which I liked very much at first until it was set up on the board; when I looked, it no longer served me, it was so changed.

But she said to me in reproach: “My Lord, your dice are small, and I invite you again at doubled (stakes).” I answered: “Even if someone gave me Montpellier this wouldn’t be stopped!” And I raised her board a bit with both my arms.

And when I had raised her board, I hurtled the dice; and two of them were well-squared, valid, but the third was loaded.

And I made them strike hard against the board, and the game was played.  

The idea of the (generalized) couple and its cooperative inter-relationship is central. That is evident in the gaming image: there can be no game without dice and board (even though it is not awfully flattering to compare a woman to a board – flat, wooden, and possibly sharp-cornered). The turning-point of poem and amorous episode is a low point of crisis and failure, with concurrent shrinking and shrinking-away. Everything changes the moment the woman speaks. Unlike many other dialogue-poems, here it is she who speaks first, and the man who responds; then together they overcome adversity.

Couples and copulation are reflected in the rhyme-scheme, with a regular -atz b-rhyme in the fifth and and seventh lines of every cobla, and an a-rhyme which is the same for every two coblas, thus “coupling” them up (coblas 1-2: - or; 3-4: -i; 5-6: -a; 7-8 and tornadas: -ier). The tornadas are then rhymed abab ab, in exact alternation, and with an effect of fading out, thus potentially continuing (and continuing the game) forever. This returns us to the –atz rhyme ending the first stanza: lasatz (“laced up,” l. 7), which is also the metaphorical “lacing up” of rhymes pulling the poem together, and its erotic parallel. Dialogue and parity thus extend even into the poem’s most fundamental structure; and the erotic and the poetic are intimately intertwined.

---

The idea of parity may be seen quite clearly in idealised relations between men. In exemplary male companionship, relations are not necessarily between men of equal social status: but they are equals “at heart”, and their true worth – *prez, valor* – is *internal* and to do with *internal* qualities, distinct from those of the outside world. This comes up in the vocabulary used: *amics, companion, pair*. friend; companion, or “co-bread-er,” one with whom one breaks bread, particularly close for knights on campaigns; and peer.

After Guillem has said *hai las* to Flamenca (l. 3949), he experiences a moment of perfect joy, which he can only compare to the shadows of this feeling encountered previously:

*S’el agues era derochat
en un tornei .c. cavalliers
e gasainatz .v.c. destriers,
non agra joia tan perfecha,
car res el mon tan non delecha
tot fin aman con cel jois fa
que ven de lai on son cor ha.*

*(ll. 3954-60)*

If he had, in a tournament,
A hundred good knights overthrown
And five hundred good horses won,
His joy would not have reached such heights,
For nothing in the world delights
True lover like that joy whose course
In his own true love hath its source.

Ultimate *joia* is tied to mutual and reciprocal relationship – amorous and linguistic – in communication and conversation, a reaching out to connect with the other. Guillem has realised that a different, and higher, desire exists, besides the “having and getting.” The simile that first springs to his mind is revelatory. Earlier, Guillem believed himself to have enjoyed Flamenca, in a dream-vision.\(^\text{43}\) This parallel was not chosen. Whether or not Guillem had realised at the time that the standard roles had been reversed and he was the passive party being had by Amor,\(^\text{44}\) the dream was unsatisfactory and frustrating, a comment on closed-circle mode primary lyric and the love it desires. After further sufferings and some prayer, Guillem moved up a level in the great game of love, into full-blown dialogue with Amor\(^\text{45}\) who suggested a plan of action. In another escape from imprisonment in the somnolence of *amor clusa*, he woke up from the lyric

\(^{43}\) ll. 2147-68.
\(^{44}\) ll. 2169-70.
\(^{45}\) ll. 2838-2956.
dream. Escape from *trobar clus* – and towards *trobar leu*, dialogue, and parity - are connected to escape from Amor.

It is pertinent to the nature of a love in parity that the better parallel springing to Guillem’s mind when he considers *joia perfecha*, better suited to this different shape of love, is chivalric. This is not the brash triumphalism of war and its “having and getting,” by extension from the tournament as war-game, but its other extension, to games in general, characterised by fair play, government by rules, and the honourable conduct between mutually respectful peers interacting on an even playing-field. This fair play of consenting, free, equal beings is part of the same system of human relations evident in masculine friendships, sensibly enough given that the above activities would be part of the knightsly day-job. However homosocial or homoerotic these friendships might or might not be, their essential core remains *vers amisdats, drudaria, and companhia.*

Archimbaut and Guillem become buddy-mates in the field of knightly action: *En Archimbautz a pron que fassa, / car l'un baisa e l'autr'embrassa* (ll. 7277-78: “Archimbaud had no time to waste: / one knight he kissed, one he embraced”), the latter terms – *baisa, embrassa* - more frequently associated with erotic encounters. Through the building Archimbaut-Guillem friendship, further evidence points to the equivocal nature of companionship, making the reader wonder at times whether this relationship is actually what Guillem desired all along, and what will make him a real man:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gent lo saup Guillems acullir et en totas res obesir, e mout l’onret al plus que poc e dis li de tot quan volc d’oc. Ensems cavalgon ambedui; (ll. 7001-5)</th>
<th>William was courteous, intent To please, gracious and deferent, Showed him respect and courtliness And, every time he could, said: “Yes.” The two of them together rode:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Accepting Archimbaut’s invitation to the tournament:

| Guillems respon : “Ben y serai et ab vos, seiner, m’i metrai, car bon cor ai de vos servir s’ieu ren podia far ni dir | “I shall not fail,” William replied, “And I’ll place myself upon your side. I greatly wish to pleasure you: If there’s ought I can say or do |

---

46 ll. 2962-82.
47 These terms are also used for *fin’amor* and *cortesia.*
ques a vos fos ni bel ni bon,  
car sapies vos't'amix son.”  
(ll. 7027-32)

By using the tournament-image to hint at the highest joy possible between consenting partners, Guillem shows an understanding of the more “truly” amorous nature of the image; and an understanding of a different desire, for relations of communication and interaction between equals who are friends. Flamenca also offers a fine example of feminine homosocial relations, in the shape of interactions between Flamenca, Alis, and Margarida. They address one another as “friend” – one of the key terms of parity – and, in the salutz sequence, indulge in some joc and joia (jouissance) together.

Direct speech has the potential to give speakers’ words equal weight and status: balanced evenly, untainted by indirect comment. This is particularly evident in the tenso. Some tensos concern equality; revisiting that between Guiraut de Borneil and Raimbaut d’Aurenga, Guiraut’s trobar leu is also about equal access to poetry, and whether poetry should be “open” or “closed.” That tenso also brought in the question of inequality between two persons otherwise united in true friendship: an inequality of status. Equal relations are the subject of another tenso, between Maria de Ventadorn and Gui d’Ussel, debating the question of a man and a woman being equals in love. The tenso is attached to a balanced commentary, in the shape of razos for both sides. The poem is useful for connecting the tenso, the idea of parity, and our next topic, amor coral.

A vida (Boutière-Schutz 202) tells us that Gui abandoned then restarted his poetic activity, in each case but the final one because of a woman. Razo B (Boutière-Schutz 205) works as a prehistory to the tenso, setting up the problem: whether or not an amorous relationship between a man and a woman ought to be based in equality. Part of a tenso between Gui and his brother Elias is embedded, in which, following an ultimatum from his Lady (Gidas de Mondus), Gui asks advice on whether it is better to be the husband or the lover of his Lady. Elias opts for the husband, Gui for the lover, and is consequently dumped by his Lady. She becomes the source and cause of a mala chanson (“malicious/malevolent
song”), the first *cobla* of which appears at the end of this *razo*. *Razo* C (Boutière-Schutz 208) starts out recapping previous events, then we learn that Gui has consequently abandoned poetry and become unhappy (*la[s]set de chantar et estet marritz et consiros longa sason*). Others are saddened by his sorry state, but it is Maria de Ventadorn who succeeds in pulling him out of it: *si.l escomes de tenson et dis enaisi con vos azuizretz* (“she provoked him into a *tenso*-exchange with her, and said this to him in the manner you will hear”). This is followed by the first *cobla* of the *tenso*, in which she turns his original question to Elias back on him, in the form of asking his advice on how a woman should act towards her beloved as he has towards her: “equally” (l. 5, *egalmen*).

The *razo* to the *tenso* from Maria’s point of view (Boutière-Schutz 212) recalls a *vida* and recaps the background of Gui’s melancholy. His distressed and dejected state is subject to further elaboration. We are given a second reason (*razo*) behind the *tenso*, as Maria has had a disagreement with her *cavalliers* (suitor or lover), the count of the Marche, over the meaning of equality.

There is a change between being in a loyal and faithful love-affair and relations before it started – when the lover was pleading his case, on bended knee, in a supplicant position of hierarchical inferiority. The lover argues that, once accepted, a lover should have as much *seignoria e comandemen* – “sovereignty and command” – over the lady as she has on him.

Maria denies this: *l’amics no devia aver en ella ni seignoria ni comandemen*. That may be read in two ways. The lover should have no authority over her: so she should have authority over him, maintaining her pre-affair dominance. Alternatively, the lover should have no authority over her, as hierarchical considerations should not be involved at this stage: rather than two persons being equal in their dominance of one another, power-relations are irrelevant.

Maria then kills two birds with one stone by taking the matter to Gui, and engaging in a *tenso* with him as follows:

I. Gui d’Ussel be.m pesa de vos  
car vos etz laissatz de chantar,  
e car vos i volgra tornar  
per que sabetz d’aïtals razos,

Gui d’Ussel, I’m troubled about you because you’ve left off singing; so, as I wish to bring you back to it, and because you know so much
Vuoill qe.m digatz 

**si deu far egalmen dompna per drut**, qan lo qier francamen, 
cum el per lieis, tot cant taing ad amor, 
segon los dreitz que tenon l’amador.

II. Dompna Na Maria, tensssos 
e tot cant cuiava laisser, 
mas aoras non puisc estar 
q’ieu non chant als vostres somos. 
E respond eu a la dompna breumen 
**que per son drut deu far comunalmen** 
cum el per lieis ses garda de ricor, 
**q’en dos amics non deu aver maior.**

Lady Maria, I thought I was done with *tensos* and with all songs, but now it isn’t possible for me to sing at your command. So I answer the lady in few words: she should return in kind to her lover what he gives her, without regard to rank, for between friends neither should be greater.

III. Gui, tot so don es cobeitos 
deu drutz ab merce demandar, 
**e.il dompna pot o comandar,** 
...

Gui, a lover must ask for all he wants as for a favor, and the lady may command, … And the lover should fulfill pleas and commands for her who is both his friend and his lady, and the lady must honor her lover as a friend, but not as overlord.

IV. Dompna, sai dizoun demest nos 
que, **pois dompna vol amar,** 
**engalmen deu son drut onrar,** 
**pois engalmen son amoros.** 
E s’esdeven que l’am plus finamen, 
e.l faich e.l dich en deu far aparen, 
e si ell’a fals cor ni trichador, 
ab bel semblan deu cobrir sa follor.

Lady, among us they say that when a lady wants to love she should honor her lover on equal terms because they are equally in love. And if she happens to love him more perfectly she should let it show in deeds and words; and if she has a false or treacherous heart she should hide her folly with pleasant looks.

V. Gui d’Uissel, ges d’aitals razos 
non son li drut al comenssarr, 
anz dits chascus, qan vol preiar, 
mais ijointas e de genolos: 
“Dompna voillatz qe.us serva franchamen 
cum lo vost’om,” et ella enaissi.l pren. 
Eu vo.l iutge per dreich a **trahir** 
s.i.s rend pariers e.is det per servidor.

Gui d’Ussel, at the beginning, lovers say no such thing; instead, each one, when he wants to court, says, with hands joined and on his knees: “Lady, permit me to serve you honestly as your liege man” and that’s the way she takes him. I rightly consider him a traitor if, having given himself as servant, he makes himself an equal.

VI. Dompna, so **es plaitz vergoignos** 
ad ops de dompna a razonar 
**que cellui non teigna per par**

Lady, it’s a shameful claim on a lady’s part to argue that she should not consider equal the man
a cui a faich un cors de dos.
O vos diretz, e no.us estara gen,
que.l drutz la deu amar plus finamen
o vos diretz q’il son par entre lor,
que ren no.il deu drutz mas qant per amor.

with whom she’s made two hearts into one. Either you’ll say (and not to your own honor) that the lover must love her more perfectly, or you’ll say that they are equals, for he owes her nothing but what he gives for love.48

In the first two coblas, Gui and Maria agree that things should be conducted egalmen, francamen, comunalmen, ses garda de ricor, q’en dos amics non deu aver maior. In the first half of the fourth cobla, Gui continues the idea: engalmen deu son drut onrar, / pois engalmen son amoros. Opinions diverge in coblas three to five, and show both sides’ fears and insecurities in the nascent stages of love. The mix of openness and hesitancy might indicate the tentative preliminaries of a potential affair, as each party protects themselves through the distance of an abstracted and theoretical discursive game.

Maria’s problem is with a first version of equality, in which the equilibrium is between two stages in the affair: male subservience in the preliminaries, and dominance once affairs have begun in earnest. Unfortunately, she expresses it badly, accusing such a man of wishing to si.s rend pariers e.is det per servidor. Her argument would have been more successful had she used seignor instead of pariers. She had used seignors earlier, to emphasize a difference between master/servant relations and friend/friend ones.

The fifth cobla is the point where Maria may be read as wishing to maintain the (courtly) hierarchy and the lyric lady’s position, woman on top, using feudal terms – pren, lo vostr’om, per dreich, trahitor, det. The contrast between the feudal gift and si.s det – “making” himself – recalls the difference between the external, normative courtliness of trobar/amor cortesa/clusa and its opposite number, derivative play, subversion, and self-creation. This may be a noblewoman’s impassioned fury at a social inferior becoming her equal in the dual playing-fields of love and poetry, naked and independent of the social trappings of the outside world. Gui certainly reads Maria as meaning that

48 Bruckner et al 38-41.
relations must be unequal: the man, whom the lady non teigna per par, is forever doomed to deu amar plus finamen – and to perpetual and worsening servitude.

In the final (extant) cobla, Gui speaks for equality, and I think with regard to the affair once it has been entered into, at which time what happened before, and preliminary stages, are separate and irrelevant: il son par entre lor / que ren no.il deu drutz mas qant per amor. The movement from preliminaries into amor is a step of mutual, reciprocal, and simultaneous action: a cui a faich un cor a dos. Once a certain stage of love has been reached, two equalities come into play: of bodies (cors may, here, be both “heart” and “body”) and of will (talen).

We see something akin to later notions of privacy and “humanist” value, and a new subjectivity – of woman, and of the human, both male and female. The representation of idyllic equal gender relations can be viewed as a symbolic exposition of idea of equality, openness, and fairness. The ideal of parity has deeper, Classical roots. These are alluded to in Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose, amongst its many layers and parts, which are rarely compatible with each other. In the Rose, examples of lovers in equal relationships play a vital role in holding the book together and making any sense of it: Venus and Mars; False Semblance and Constrained Abstinence; Abelard and Heloise. At the heart of the Rose, there is a very curious passage about equal love. It is a waxing nostalgic for the Golden Age, in which all were equal and free (ll. 9497-531):

Riche estoient tuit egalement
Et s’entr’amoient loiallement.
Ainsi paisiblement vivotient
Car naturelment s’entr’amoient,
Les simples genz de bonne vie.
Lors ert amours sanz symonie,
(ll. 9525-30)

3.3 Idealised amor coral

Poems dealing with parity often draw a distinction between external appearances and internal truth. The former may be termed as bel semblan and such expressions of “seeming,” “seemliness”; given the link to other external qualities, prime amongst them cortesia - “courtesy,” “courtliness” – a distinction may also be drawn between the courtly, external, public, and untrue; and the
internal and presumed true, which is the contrary of the courtly. The latter is *amor coral*.

*Coral* means this is love “of the heart,” essentially interior and private. It is an escape from “courtly” constraints. *Amor coral* is an idea of human relations based not in power-hierarchies, feodality, and fealty; but in free gift and exchange, in relations of equality and mutuality. From the point of view of medieval woman, it is interesting as an improvement on their status as objects, chattels, voiceless, and devoid of will. This is evident in the association between *amor coral* and the creation of a private space in which the external world’s values (political, social, economic, and hierarchical) have no place.

In *Flamenca*, the lovers’ second meeting is described in terms of a tenso-esque game of equal exchanges played out on a game-board with dice, now rather loaded by Guilhem de Peitieus’ use of the same image. *Tenso* and parity are clearly tied to *amor corals*, as Flamenca is a *corals amiga* (l. 6510):

Daus l’autra part Guillems juguet al mielz que saup, e ben trobent, mon eissient, qui juec li tenc aissi con a lui si covenc. Jugar podon a lur talan; mas no-m qual dir, a mon semblan, los gais envitz que chascus fai, (ll. 6491-97)

Ben pensson conssi mais no-s dol[l]on per negun plazer que oblidon; soven envidon e reidon, 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 aiasso 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; (ll. 6504-20)

And meanwhile, William, for his part, Was playing too, with his best art, Playing, I think, with one who made Fit partner in the game they played. Unhindered, they can now obey Their heart’s desires. I need not say What gay stakes each one hazarded, 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.
Amor coral and correlates occur several times in Flamenca (ll. 2368, 2822, 4272, 5397-98, 6011, 6208, 6286-87, 6500, 6510, 6569, and 7641). It can immediately be seen that most of its occurrences are in the tenso section. With two exceptions, all occurrences are to do with Flamenca, or with an abstracted couple, seen as a unitary character in its own right and seen by Flamenca. We come to see that what she desires is amor coral, or rather, an amic coral.49

Amor coral appears frequently in the poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn. He is perhaps the most well-known trobador to modern audiences, and synonymous with the double identity of poet and lover. He is one of the earliest poets to have useful things to say about amor cortesa, especially in relation to the imprisonment of amor cortesa, and its self-delusional quality (En cossirer et en esmai).50 Links between cor (“body/heart”), love, and truth or sincerity may be seen in several poems. 51 In Can la verz folha s’espan: se vai mos cors alegran because the poet is one of qui bon’amor saup chauzir (ll. 4 and 8: “my heart goes rejoicing... he who knew how to choose a good love”); truth appears as ab cor franc e dihz verais – “with noble heart and true speech” (l. 20). Amar de coratge – “to love of the heart” – recurs in Estas ai com om esperdutz (l. 10; franch’ – “true, open-hearted” in l. 34) and Gent estera que chantes (l. 14). While coratge may mean either any quality associated with the heart, or the specific one of courage, given Bernart’s use of cor as “heart” elsewhere, the former meaning is

49 The two exceptions, one of which is the only instance of amor coral outside the central tenso section, are discussed in Chapter Four.
50 Other examples of amor coral in contemporary literature: In Occitan, Paulet de Marselha (1230-70s) has a pseudo-pastorela, L’autrier m’an av’ab cor pensiu, with am per fin amor coral (l. 10). Peire Ramon de Tolosa (late 12th century), humils temen vos port amor coral (l. 17) in De fin amor son tot mei pensamen. Folquet de Lunel (1284), in No pot aver sen natural: meza sa fin’amor coral (l. 19). In Catalan, see for example Anon, Paus per amors fíns pretz es mantengutz: Amors corals diversos cors ajusta Losquals tornar fay de voluntat justa Car amors es us dolç volers, ses plus, Qui rencor franc et patz met al dessus (ll. 47-50)
Compagnetto da Prato (late 13th-14th c.), L’amor fa una donna amare; anon (in a mid-14th c. ms), En nom de Deu totpodères: ay, doysa flor, rosa coral (l. 9), membre us de mi, amor coral (l. 45).
likelier. In *Lancan vei la folha*, for example, the poet sends out his heart as messenger to his beloved, sending it to her as hostage:

qui.n mou mo coratge for I have no better messenger in all the
di’alre.m met en plai, world than my heart, and I send it to her as a
car melhor messatge hostage until I return from here.
en tot lo mon no.n ai

entro qu’eu torn de sai.

Domna, mo coratge, Lady, my heart, the best friend I have, I send
.l melhor amic qu’eu ai, you as hostage until I return from here.
vos man en ostage

entro qu’eu torn de sai.

(ll. 79-88)

Picking up the same idea of the gifted heart, *Lonc tems a qu’eu no chantei mai* declares that *de cor m’a coras se volha* (l. 64: “she has all my heart whenever she wishes”). Gui d’Ussel’s ideal love, seen earlier as the union of *dos cors*, may be seen again in Bernart’s *Can lo boschatges es floritz*:

Donna, s’eu fos de vos auzitz Lady, if you were to listen to me as seriously
si charamen com volh mostrar, as I wish to speak, at the beginning of our
al prim de nostri enamaror love we would exchange souls. An agreeable
feiram chambis dels esperitz, knowledge would be mine since I would
azautz sens m’I for a cobitz, know how it is with you, and you would
c’adonc saubr’ eu lo vostr’afar know how it is with me. Everything equal, we
e vos lo meu, tot par a par, would unite two hearts.
e foram de dos cors unitz.

(ll. 57-64)

These several moves may be rolled into one in *amor coral’s* appearances in
three poems. In *Le gens tems de pascor*, the first-person voice declares that *qu’eu
l’am d’amor coral* (l. 43: “because I love her with sincere love”), linked to being a
*drut leyal* (l. 41: “true lover”). The start of this *cobla* follows up on the wish
expressed in the last two lines of the preceding one: *si c’amdui cominal / mezuressem egal* (ll. 39-40: “so that we may lie together breast to breast”).\(^52\)

*Amor coral* is tied to fidelity in *Can par la flors josta.l vert folh*. The first
*cobla* has two *cor* (ll. 4 and 6), tied to *joi* (ll. 6 and 8), the whole pulled together
by derivative devices around *canso/chantar* (ll. 3, 5, 7, and 8). It is declared that
*e mais l’am de cor e de fe* (l. 10: “and whom I most love with all my heart and
faith”), emphasized by a reprise at the end of the *cobla* of *mo cor* (l. 14: “my

---

\(^{52}\) Nichols 1962: 121-23.
heart”) and plus leyal (l. 16: “most sincere”) around amor tan fin’ e natural (l. 15: “a love so true and real”). The words pepper the poem – dispersed, yet forming a connecting thread through repetition – until the high desirable point of doutz baizar de fin’amor coral (l. 31: “a sweet kiss of true, sincere love”).

Amor coral is at the root of all good composition in Chantars no pot gaire valer, and tied to fis and entendemen:  

Chantars no pot gaire valer  
si d’ins dal cor no mou lo chans,  
ni chans no pot dal cor mover  
si no i es fin’ amors coraus.  
Per so es mos chantars cabaus  
qu’en joi d’amor ai et enten  
la boch’ e.ls olhs e.l cor e.l sen  
(ll. 1-7)  

There is no use in singing if the song does not spring from the heart; and the song cannot spring from the heart if there is no true love there. And so my singing is superior because I have joy in love and devote my lips and eyes and heart and mind to it.

The good song comes from a heart in which love resides; so fine, true love is associated with the heart - fine, true love of the heart, fin’ amors coraus. The poet specifically connects fin’ amors coraus, via fis’ amans, to the parity of equal wills:

En agradar et en voler  
es l’amors de dos fis amans.  
Nula res no i pot pro tener  
si.lh voluntatz non es egaus.  
E cel es be fols naturaus  
que, de so que vol, la repren  
e.lh lauza so que no.lh es gen.  
(ll. 29-35)  

The love of two true lovers lies in accord and assent. Nothing avails if the wills are not equal. And he is a true fool who reproaches her for her desires, and asks her for what is not fitting.  

The next citations bring together ethics, poetics, and erotics in amor coral. Applying the same word to poetry – fis – used earlier of love and lovers (fin’ amors coraus, fis’ amans), the poet now brings together poetry and love at the end of his poem. He had previously connected the cor of amors coraus to composition (ll. 5-7). He now connects the heart to goodness (bo cor), and something to be sought whatever the amorous result might be. Next, he connects a more general goodness back to the poem’s worth, via bo, bos. Finally, he brings

54 Nichols 1962: 80-82.  
55 Nichols’ translation has the feminine pronoun la as “love,” producing “… reproaches love for its desires, and asks it for what is not fitting.” I have changed this as the stanza makes more sense if la is the beloved. Moshé Lazar uses “la dame,” in his edition and translation: Bernart de Ventadour, troubadour du XIIe siècle: chansons d’amour (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966): 64-67.
together the terms *bos* and *fis*; which, as they were used of poetry, the heart, and love, reinforce their interconnection in *fin’amors coraus*:

| totz tems n’aurai bo cor sivaus,  | at least I would always have a good heart;  |
| e n’ai mot mais de jauzimen  | and I have much more joy because I have a good heart and hope [patience]. |
| car n’ai bo cor e m’i aten  |  |
| (l. 12-14) |  |

Lo vers es fis e naturaus

e bos celui qui be l’enten,

e melher es, qui.l joi n’aten.

Bernartz de Ventadorn l’enten
e.l di e.l fai e.l joi n’aten.

(l. 50-end)

The verse is perfect and well-written, and good is he who understands it well, and it is better for one who hopes for joy from it. Bernard of Ventadorn understood it, and composed and performed it, and hopes for joy from it.56

The final *cobla* echoes the end of the first, particularly *qu’en joi d’amor ai et enten* (l. 6, “I have and understand joy in love”). Full worth is tripartite: it needs *fis* – connected, as we have seen, to the heart; it also needs understanding (*enten*); and waiting, patience, or hope (*aten*). The latter two qualities have to do with respecting the parity of equal wills. The good to be sought is in poetry, love and its *joi*, and being. This poet achieves “it”: an ambiguous pronoun *l*’ in l. 53 that could refer back to *lo vers* or to *l.joi*, or to a conjoined poetic and erotic aim.

The link between *amor coral* and the *bo cor* is also present in the work of another major theorist of the heart, Raimon Vidal de Besalú. He proposes an idea of a good, noble heart, the seat of inner worth: the *cor noble*. This true worth is opposed to false ones, and internal to external. It is spelled out as merit which is utterly distinct from the “value” of the external world: the accidents of birth and wealth. Transcending difference corresponds to Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s exposition of the idea of the *cor noble*. The “noble heart” is irrespective of the accidents of birth or wealth, and the foundational virtue on which all else rests, including “courtesy.” His theory of the *corals* virtue is disseminated principally through *Abrils issia*, a longish (1767 lines) work in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, of a didactic nature, on poetic composition and proper behaviour, embedded within a narrative in which an outer narrator meets a *jongleur* one fine day.57

56 I have amended Nichols’ translation again here.
The noble heart is one of three core qualities (ll. 236-51), all of which are very much internal and would come together as “mind.” The other two are sens (“intelligence, sensitivity”; esprit) and sabers (“wisdom”). The three correspond to Bernart de Ventadorn’s fis/bos cor, enten, and aten.

From the core qualities, a second tier of qualities derive, which are more externally evident: lials (“loyal”) and vers (“true”); thence a further tier of behavioural traits, of which the “outermost” – moving outwards from the “innermost” of the heart – are large-scale actions in the outside world: serta, vassalh, lacx, cortes, drechuriers va totas res, conqueredor de regnatjes, gentilez’, fay far grans adzautimens (in ll. 244-250: “certain/assured, brave, generous, courteous, righteous in all things, conqueror of kingdoms, noble, and leading to the accomplishment of great actions”). Later, the three cardinal virtues are shown to be those necessary to the art of good composition, as the narrative shifts into a guide to joglaria (ll. 954 onwards).

After discussing saber and sens, and some exemplary cases thereof, Raimon Vidal returns to the cor noble as source of those more external virtues (ll. 494-96: also leading to joy e pretz – “joy and merit”; ll. 537-40; not having such things if one does not have a noble heart, ll. 563-67). The inner virtues are emphatically not to do with external qualities of noble birth; the noble heart is democratic, and, when paired here with saber, we see the potential to rise to the top, for anyone of intelligence (the Italian intelletto or Occitan entendemen which may also be defined as combining cor noble, sens, and sabers):

```
Paratjes, so per que tan val,
es car adutz als sieus honor
de pretz enans e temor
per qu’entre las gens fon onratz,
mas ses valor no son prezatz
ni ses saber grazitz fort be,
ni valor ses ric cor no ve,
ni sabers, si hom non l’apren.
```

Ce qui fait que la naissance a tant de valeur, c’est qu’elle apporte, à ceux qui en retirent de l’honneur, l’avantage du mérite et qu’elle suscite de la crainte, mais sans valeur ceux-ci ne sont pas prisés, ni bien accueillis sans savoir, et la valeur ne vient pas sans un cœur noble, ni le savoir sans apprentissage. Les actions méritoires et
A far faitz onrat, pretz valen,  
venon per cor e per saber,  
non per parens ni per poder;  
e per bon cor venon li loc,  
non per paratje ni per joc,  
e.l ris e.l jocx e li plazers.  

(ll. 582-95)

One of the poetic models and classics of the repertory cited near the beginning of *Abrils issia* is Arnaut de Mareuil – in the same breath as Guiraut (de Borneil; ll. 38-47, in the jongleur’s preamble). In Arnaut de Mareuil’s *salutz* – which, we have seen, bear close intertextual relation to *Flamenca* – he makes frequent reference to *amor corals*, to the trope of the heart as seat of deepest, innermost, truest feeling, and to the trope of hearts being given, taken, and exchanged as ultimate tokens of love. In *Dona, genser qe no sai dir*, he desires to be *vostre amicx bon [e] coral* (ex. l.3: “your good and corals lover”); *coral amic* occurs again in *Bona Dompna, pros ez onrada* (l. 71, in a context suggesting a close relationship other than that between lovers: the term overlaps, here, with the “companion” seen earlier in this chapter). *L’oms e l’amics vers e corals* (l. 3: “the true and corals man and lover”) turns up in *Dona, sel qe no pot aver*, while *Totas bonas donas valens* sends to the beloved *mon cor, qe sap lial e fi* (l. 40: “my heart, which you know is loyal and faithful”), declaring *amor coral* once again (l. 123). *Cel cui vos esz al cor plus pres* declares:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mas qar vos am de cor verai e plus coralmen puosc ni sai (ll. 103-04)</td>
<td>But as I love you of a true heart And more heartfelt I cannot and know not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no havesz tan coral amic (l. 109)</td>
<td>You will never have such a coral lover/friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[qui soffre] dolor tan coral (l. 116)</td>
<td>Suffering such cardial pains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hai estat vostre meillz qe mieus de bon saber e de mon sen de bon cor e de bon talan (ll. 148-50)</td>
<td>I have been more yours than mine Through good wisdom and my sense Through good heart and goodwill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last citation relates back to Raimon Vidal’s three core virtues, by returning to *Bona Dompna, pros ez onrada*, where the lady holds in her power *mon cor, mon sen e mon saber* (l. 96: “my heart, my reason, and my understanding”).

The giving, taking, and exchange of hearts is very common through lyric poetry and romance; through to some rather extreme expressions of love. Lyric lovers often complain of their hearts being held captive by ladies and Love. The *vida* of Guillem de Cabestaing recounts the famous *cœur mangé* story. A jealous husband kills his wife’s lover and has her eat his heart. In the *vida*, Guillem falls in love with Seremonda, the wife of Raimon de Castel Rossillon. She finds him agreeable, so they indulge in an affair. Her husband finds out, pounces on Guillem when he is “with few companions,” kills him, rips his heart out of his body – *trais li lo cor del cors* - and cuts off his head. One set of manuscripts has him do all this himself, the other has him arrange for it to be done, so he is not directly actively involved. Raimon has the heart prepared and roasted, with pepper, *raustir e far a pebrada*, and served to his wife. When she had finished, he asks: “*Sabetz vos so que vos avetz manjat?*” (“Do you know what you have eaten?”); she replies, “*Non, si non que mout es esta da bona vianda e saborida*” (“No, but it was very good and tasty meat”). He tells her, and brings the head, to prove it. When she sees it, she faints. She comes to, and says: “*Seigner, ben m’avetz dat si bon manjar que ja mais non manjarai d’autre*” (“Lord, you have given me such fine food that I shall never eaten anything else”). He runs at her to strike her in the head with his sword; she runs to a balcony, and lets herself fall from it to her death (*laisset se cazer jos, et enaissi moric*). Her passivity in death reflects his passivity in “having things done.”

In Thomas’ version of *Tristan*, the eponymous hero lies dying from a poisoned wound. He asks his brother-in-law, secretly, to try to get Iseult-the-lover to come and cure him, as only she can. He should hoist a white sail if he returns with her, a black one if not. Unfortunately, Iseult-the-wife overhears this, and lies to him about the colour of the sail. Tristan dies, uttering Iseult’s name.

---

58 Arnaut de Mareuil citations from Bec 1961: 71-152.
thrice. Iseult-the-lover arrives moments too late, lies down on top of him, and
drinks the poison from his lips ("de meisme le beivre avrai confort," l. 23 of the
ending in ms Sneyd 2), in a kiss of death with final coital-looking embrace. It is
an embrace of love, in equality and reciprocity:

Pur mei avez perdu la vie,
E jo frai cum veraie amie:
Pur vos voil murir ensemement.”
Embrace le, si se estent,
Baise la bouche et la face
E molt estreint a li l’embrace,
Cors a cors, buche a buche estent,
Sun esperit a itant rent,
E murt dejuste lui issi
Pur la dolur de sun ami.
(ll. 24-33) 59

The lovers’ deaths in the later (13th c.) prose Tristan are very different. Here,
Iseult-the-lover arrives just in time, as Tristan is still alive, though only just, and
by willpower alone. Picking up from the end of his speech:

... « Donc, se a Dieu plaist qu’entre les bras la roiñe Yseut fine je la vie, qui brieve
est, finerai adont plus aisé, ce m’est avis! » Yseut s’acline sur monsigneur
Tristran, quant ele entent ceste parole. Ele s’abaisse sour son pis, mesire
Tristrans le prent entre ses bras. Et quant il le tint sur son pis, il dist, si haut que
tout cil de laiens porent oïr: « Des ore ne me caut que je muire, puis que je ai
madame Yseut ore avec moi! » Lors estraint la roiñe contre son pis de tant de
force com il avoit, si qu’il li fist le cuer partir, et il meîmes morut en cel point, si
que bras a bras et bouce a bouce morurent li doi amant et demourerent en tel
maniere embracié, tant que cil de laiens quidoient qu’il fussent en pasmisons,
quant il virent apretement qu’il estoient mort andoi et que recouvrier cii estoit; et
mort sont ambedoi, et par amour, sans autre confort.60

59 There are two versions of the ending, in the two versions of Thomas’ Tristan. The first, ms
Douce, has Iseut arrive too late, look at Tristan’s corpse, turn eastwards (in prayer), and declare
that she is dying of tenderness for him. We do not know whether this is figurative or real, as the
text ends here. The parallel of ll. 1815-16 does suggest she should die:

“Amis, Tristan, quant mort vus vei,
Par raisun vivre puis ne dei.
Mort estes pur la meie amur,
E jo muer, amis, de tendur,
Quant a tens ne poi venir
(ll. 1813-end)
The second version, ms Sneyd (Oxford, Bodleian Library d 16 f 17a and b), relates less of the story,
limited to Tristan’s marriage and what appears to be a continuation of Douce’s suspended ending.
Citations from Tristan et Iseut: Les Poèmes français et la saga norroise, ed. and trans. Daniel
60 Laurence Harf-Lancner, ed., Le Roman de Tristan en Prose. Tome IX: La Fin des aventures de
The lovers are able to die together, avoiding the deepest tragedy of lovers’ deaths when their deaths miss each other through mistiming. Tristan saves Iseult from suicide, by the proper timing of their deaths. As he is on the brink of death, he extends their embrace by hugging her to death, bursting her heart. We see a fine conjunction of completely entwined lovers and something dramatic happening to their hearts. In another change to the story, the respective deceived spouses – king Marc and Iseult-the-wife – show respect for the couple’s love, in this scene and in funerary and burial arrangements.

Such unions in death offers a curious contrast, in affairs which are often adulterous, with the marital vows of “until death us do part.” There is, it must be admitted, a certain logic to true love ending in death: that way, it is “fine” and “perfect,” as it is “finished.” This comes up at the end of Le Castelain de Couci, with a pun around finishing, finishing oneself, and fin’amor: ainsi fina la Dame de Fayel pour l’amour de son amy...

In a milder version of the suicidal lovers’ pact, lovers may exchange hearts, metaphorically. This shows us two things. First, the heart is still the cardinal element. Extra-literary evidence suggests that the heart, and hearts’ exchange, gift, and eating, haveng something to do with truth. Further associations of a spiritual sort would include Christ’s bleeding, sacred heart; the wound in the side, somewhere between groin and breast; mystical blood-suckings, and more goings-on with bodily fluids in, for instance, Henry Susa and Marguerite Eber. The heart is also the seat of the mental, reasoning, and emotional faculties, and, especially, memory. The heart is the seat of truth through writing permanently on it, in self-inscription such as Origen’s, leading to 14th-15th century manuscript illuminations of Last Judgement “open books.”

Second, both the exchange of hearts and its more extreme version are attempts at, literally, becoming one flesh, having two hearts beat as one, and the physical impossibility of 1+1=1. For love, ideally, must be balanced. We have, however, the same problem here as in tragic lovers’ deaths: it is rare that the exchange, like the death, is in complete synchrony. This exchange of hearts appears as the high point of a relationship (though often occurring at its end, as a
promise to bind lovers together when apart). It seems to be valued highly, as the moment of sincerity when love becomes apparent as true.

For love to be true, the heart must be involved, as symbol of truth; and hearts should be exchanged, equally. The equality of amor coral is reflected in the equal status of the two persons’ discourses and a certain mesura. Equality and internal values continue into the lovers themselves. The lovers are not necessarily aristocratic, not based on parens ni poder, birth nor power: all indications point to “nobility of the soul.” This love is emphatically anti-courtly. All trappings of the outside world, that of the court and feodality, are irrelevant here, in the inside world of the lovers. This has been noted, very much passim, by Duby as a pre-modern aspect of individuality and private space. Amor coral is private; it is between private individuals; and in a private space which they create themselves, either outside of public, civilized space; or else within it, dug out of it.

Amor coral in Flamenca: from discourse to intercourse

In Flamenca, the creation of this private space moves in tandem with the love-affair and the lovers’ tenso-exchange. Its crucial step is Flamenca’s pren li. The li is ambiguous, as it may be any of the third-person direct objects “it,” “him,” or “her.” It may refer to several things: her gaze, her self, her heart, her body. In the coral context, it would be sensible for li to be the heart; producing the lyrically tropic gifted heart. Grammatically, however, the previous object in the conversation is gein (per gein – “by ingenuity”): thus, pren li is an agreement to be ingenuious together; and it is Flamenca’s first overtly ingenious action, in looking directly at Guillem under her jealous husband’s nose; something, we are told, she has never dared do before. What is a devious ruse is also dreitz (“direct, righteous”), and the complete openness of mostret li plus que non sol (“showing him... far more / than she had ever done before”). The lovers are now at the start of creating their own devious world, hidden within the outer one, visible to their eyes only. While the digging of tunnels and meetings in baths and bedrooms are more obvious signs, this first secret look, strictly between the lovers, is the true
start of interactive ingenuity and of relationship. The internal nature of their new-found and self-created secret space parallels the internality of corality.

Plas mi, “it pleases me,” finishes the lovers’ tenso, in a nice commentating way. Flamenca expresses agreement to the next stage, thus a transition towards it; and it is a declaration of pleasure: of what she truly feels and of this feeling being more direct, wholehearted, substantial, and overtly sexual than might be expected of the troubadour lyric Domna; a more overt, positive, and active expression of feminine sexual appetite. Plas mi represents a second kind of amorous culmination: emphasising the consensual interpretation of the earlier pren li, this shifts desire towards the woman’s pleasure as erotic goal. Plas mi then starts the third episode between the lovers: they meet in person in the baths, move to Guillem’s chamber, and enter into a physical phase of relations.

The rejection of the external world in favour of this new one created by the lovers, their aizi corals (of body and heart), continues once they are able to meet. Spatially, the couple escape inwards, into the baths underground; an artificial, man-made space (tunnel to Guillem’s room). It is distinct from the usual lovers’ private space – the classic one being Tristan and Iseult in their idyll in the wild woods. Here, it is in an urban environment, tunnelled right inside the “proper” domain. It is, quite literally, ingenious (“engineered”), derivative, and subversive.

Their dialogue becomes shy and stilted; but, once they touch, they rediscover a new eloquence. It is unspoken. Meanwhile, the focalization shifts from alternation between Flamenca and Guillem, to looking at the couple, as a character in its own right; here, too, we view events from her point of view. The first encounter in the flesh starts with light conversation, then Flamenca makes the first concrete move, giving herself to him (en son cor ... tot a lui s’abandona):

Quant il saup de Guillem qui fo,  
tan gran gaug en son cor s’en dona  
que del tot a lui s’abandona;  
prent s’a son coll, estreg lo baia,  
de nulla ren mais non s’esmaia  
mas que no-l puesca pron servir  
e de baiser e d’acuillir  
e de far tot so qu’Amors vol.  
(ll. 5932-39)

When she learned his identity,  
It roused in her such deep delight,  
That she bestowed herself outright  
On him. With her arms round his neck  
She kissed him. Nothing now can check  
Her will to meet his tenderness  
With kiss, with clasp and with caress,  
And in all things to do Love’s will.
The description of events moves directly into the reciprocally-interactive couple, and we are told that these are (therefore) true lovers:

Nor hands nor lips nor eyes are still;  
In ardent and impetuous fasion  
They kissed, nor strove to hide their passion.  
And they achieved such joy as they  
Could not have any other way.  
Each tried in some wise to requite  
The burning pain, the sorry plight,  
The pangs each one has had to bear  
For the other. And love bade them share  
Their joy, and not fail to capture  
The full fruition of love’s rapture.  
Each loved the other, and the fire  
Of love kindled in them desire  
So keen, and gave them joy so real,  
That they forgot the long ordeal  
That they had borne, and all their pain.  
Indeed, true lovers were these twain.61

I have emphasized expressions of reciprocity and verbs used in the third-person plural, showing the shift to new identity as a couple. The grammatical shift is thus from one person (Flamenca), to two acting reciprocally (l’us l’autre), to a plural entity (lur). This is also shown in a key repetition with discreet variation: from veramen l’us l’autre ama to eron amador fi. Mapping that onto our poetic models, we see here how reciprocity becomes simultaneous, and thus turns into full mutuality. That would tie in with the trope of the exchanged hearts: the greatest tragedy would be for such a dramatic gesture not to be reciprocated, or too late. The greatest fear, of giving without the gift being returned: as we have seen in several (purportedly) trobaritz poems earlier. But once relations are in full swing, the slowed-down parity turns into something simultaneous, reciprocal, and mutual. In Flamenca, we saw a period of slow tenso-composition, up to pren li; then a speeding-up, once agreement was reached; finally, a move beyond words, into full relations and this full mutuality. While the tenso was a move into parity, and beyond the power-games of flirtation; the tenso is itself a prelude to something else, full-blown amor coral.

61 I have changed the translation from “Love” to “love.” It seems to me that, in passages such as this one, it is ambiguously the personification (overseeing and directing events) or the abstraction, or both.
He did not ask for anything
But what his lady offered. Kind
She was, in no wise disinclined
To do his pleasure generously.
Mercy, who holds the sovereignty
Of grace, could not have been more gracious.
Love gave them pleasures so delicious
That of [his] final joy no mention
Was made. They gave their whole attention
That day to kisses and caresses,
Embraces, fondlings, tendernesses
And other bliss that love imparts
To those who know Love’s subtle arts.

We see here another sort of trope of suspended gnosis: the refusal to talk about certain things, often expressed in the drawing of a discreet veil over the high point of a love-scene. Like the lyric version of the trope, it is often playful. One of the earliest such veils is in Chrétien de Troyes’ Lancelot, and it may be viewed as a base for later refashionings:

Tant li est ses jeus dolz et buens
Et del beisier et del santir
Que il lor avint sanz mantir
Une joie et une mervoille
Tel c’onques ancor sa paroille
Ne fu oïe ne seüe,
Mes totz jorz iert par moi teüe,
Qu’an conte ne doit estre dite.
Des joies fu la plus eslite
Et la plus delitable cele
Que li conte nos teste et cele.
(ll. 4674-84)

Chrétien manipulates audience eagerness and contrasts expressions of extreme bliss – joie, mervoille (its only occurrence in the Lancelot), and the punning play around des joies ... eslite ... delitable – with silences – oïe ne seüe, teüe, ne doit estre dite, nos teste et cele. The passage moves from a neutral third-person point of view; to a first-person narrative voice – iert pas moi teüe; then back out, much further out, in a distanciation with removal of the first-person, and their control, comments, and expression of own opinions: an conte ne doit

---

62 In both cases, we have a suggestion of a prior version existing, and that this is absent as it is absent from prior versions (no i es mentagutz, Flamenca l. 5969; one reading of que li conte nos teste et cele, Lancelot l. 4684).
estre dite..., li conte ... teste et cele. These may be read as fragments of the same poet; or as distinct poetic personae; or as the text having a voice of its own. The commentary-passage’s final move is to introduce a first-person plural – nos teste et cele - pulling the external readers fully into the narrative. As it includes the first-person voice, the object nos, now in opposition to the subject li conte, strengthens the separation between composer and work.

Flamenca has a similar commentary-passage. The pseudo-prurient veil is drawn once the poet has provided his audience with rather a lot - at least enough for some derivative and voyeuristic enjoyment. Here, the veil is also played with as part of play with erotic high points: after such a veil is drawn, events’ description may continue; there may be further such scenes, producing multiple high points, in a chain of feint-endings and deliberately ludic continuations. This is also a very useful dramatic device. Here, our poet draws the veil thusly:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Aitan gran delieg si doneron} & \quad \text{So overjoyed they were, each lover} \\
\text{quan los motz qu'an ditz recorderon,} & \quad \text{Delights to say the phrases over} \\
\text{que non es homs pogues notar} & \quad \text{That they had said. No man could note,} \\
\text{ni bocca dir ni cors pensar} & \quad \text{No heart conceive, no lips could quote} \\
\text{la benanansa c'usques n'a;} & \quad \text{The ecstasy that these two shared;} \\
\text{a negus homes meils non va;} & \quad \text{No other bliss could be compared} \\
\text{e quan dic meilz--non jes tan be,} & \quad \text{To it, nor I the thousandth part} \\
\text{quen dic tan be--non lo mile!} & \quad \text{Relate of all that filled their heart.}
\end{align*}
\]

(l. 5975-82)

Both veils are there for an obvious reason: the erotic experience is, paradoxically, at once of the things in life which is most general – a universal human experience, such a regularly repeated patters as to be well beyond tropes and clichés – and most individually particular. Immediately above, we have seen references to all amador fi, lai on conois amistat fina. Earlier (ll. 3959-60) the paradox was well set up, when the comment immediately after hai las placed Guillem in the category of tot fin aman con cel jois fa / que ven de lai on son cor ha. Flamenca’s version of the erotic veil draws attention to another interpretation. It is not a question of the poet not wanting to describe what happens, but of not being able to. He is unable to for the same reason that the text (in Chrétien’s version) cannot: because these events are beyond words.
The second encounter (ll. 6372-6542) features a very short episode of erotic activity, mentioning its repetitive aspect (ll. 6395-6402). Are our couple tiring so rapidly of each other? Guillem suggests a solution: bringing along his two squires, Ot and Clari, to entertain Margarida and Alis. The junior partners “learn” from their seniors. It is a fine examples of both male and female true friendship, sharing everything with close companions. It also shows how grey the area is between kinds of companionship: the erotic and heterosexual amics/amica, and other kinds of amics/amica vers/a, bons/a, corals, etc. – that other grey area of relationships going into (at least) the homosocial. The move into three couples enjoying themselves at the same time allows the kisses and caresses to continue their multiplication at an ever-increasing rate.

Despite the move into concretely steamier activities, once again it is Flamenca’s gaze that is the high erotic point, when she looks at Guillem on parting. This leads into a lengthy commentary (ll. 6543-6624) by a third-person narrative voice on the nature of true love. We are given a basic definition fitting neatly with the doctrine of amor coral, as something mutual – to the point of symbiosis - and involving the heart: ensem fai viure dos coratges, / si que rics cors ni nuillz coratges / ... / mas cascuns a l’altra soplia (ll. 6547-50: “it can cause two hearst to live / together. True love can’t receive / unless it shares in full measure; / each ones yields to the other’s pleasure”). Within the commentary is a further excursus (ll. 6567-6624) of metaphorical explanation (ll. 6567-68: mais per ombra e per semblanza / ne dirai qualque demostranza). Loving looks bring two hearts together, essentially, as the beloved’s image is reflected reciprocally back and forth, and love darts from heart to heart, and kisses “sign” (antressegna, l. 6606). This happens so frequently, fast, and furiously, that the two end up in complete bliss – esgausir (l. 6619): tenso-like reciprocity turns to corals-simultaneity. Playing around once more with the trope of of the tactful veil, the reason given for the excursus is that true love is fundamentally indescribable, unknowable to ear or tongue: beyond language:

```
car cilz dousors tan dousa es
  c'uei non es motz que la pogues
far entendre perfiechament;
car a grans penas mais l'entent
```

Such sweetness is so passing sweet
That there is no word that is meet
To say it. It can’t be defined.
Scarce can it be grasped by the mind,
entendementz, que sol consebre
moutas res que non sap percebre
aureilla, ni lenga parlar.
E per so vueil dir e mostrar
que cil douzors ques al cor tocha
per oïlz val mais que cil de bocha;
Plus fina [es] e plus entiera;
e prec qu'entendas la cariera.
Cascuns en si meseis consire
de qual guisa o vueil eu dire,
quar, si con ieu dic, non es motz
que feses entendre a totz,
(ll. 6551-66)

The mind which readily conceives
Much that no ear ever perceives
And that the tongue essays in vain
To tell. Hence I say and maintain
That sweetness which the eyes impel
Into the heart doth much excel
That which the mouth gives. 'Tis more dear
And pure. I beg that you will hear
The how. Let each in his own way
Interpret whay I strive to say,
For, as I say, no words can tell
It to all men equally well.

The eyes and mouth function as a transition from the limits of language to the need for a different means of understanding; a transition from the purely poetic to the purely erotic. That is because eyes and mouth participate both in poetic and in erotic activities. They are also both used in reading, especially the eyes: hence their being the main subject of the explanation by ombra e semblanza (l. 6567). Reading – in the broad sense, as interpretation and understanding – is vital here. Words are but what surrounds meaning: motz “cover” sen; we saw in Chapter One how they may be contrasted as such in the vidas and some of the lyric poetry. And words are insufficient here.

The solution is to use words metaphorically. The imaginative use of language encourages the reader to free herself from literal meaning, and move into her own set of associations, her own stock-pile of imaginatio, exercising the imaginative muscle. The reader is pushed into recognizing that there are two languages: the external and normative; and the internal, unique, subjective, and individual. She is then encouraged to move from normative language to her own language: a move into readerly aizi, a poetic space of escape akin to that of Guilhem de Peitieus described in the previous chapter. And this is happening through the discussion of amor coral. We have seen how amor coral leads to aizi; now we see its other side, as aizi is the route to understanding amor coral.

In their bathing encounters, the lovers make much use of hands, eyes, and mouths, and of the metaphor of simulaneously writing and reading each other, simulaneously, thus breaking down barriers of composition and commentary, writing and reading, doer and done-to, past and future, in the present moment.
Folding and unfolding, palpitating, bodies now assimilated into the same fused image of fluttering heart and book, flowery and vaginal, *entremuscamen des mots et des cors*. For the lovers also act as living book, folding and unfolding, following paths and backtracking and side-tracking, weaving a looping dance. They also act out the book, in life imitating art imitating life, re-enacting how lyric and romance lovers are supposed to behave. Finally, even as they are forced to separate, they exchange hearts (ll. 6886-96). It is a complete union, in which two hearts become one, just as two bodies have become one flesh, and the two separate voices of the *tenso*, and their separate focalisations, have become a single couple, on which the narrative voice now looks, distanced from them precisely as they have blocked out this view on their inside, once they have become a couple and built their own private space.

The lovers’ final encounter provides the amorous idyll’s most eloquent passages, and the metaphor made flesh of writing on the body: the fullest expression of the conjunction of erotics and poetics.

Desotz lur pellissetas grisas
lasson lur mans et entrebescan,
e sai e lai taston et pescan,
baison, abrasson et acollon
e garo-s ben que non s’afollon
quar dousamen e senes gap
fai casc so que faire sap
e so que fin’Amors l’ensengna.
Quascus a presa calqu’enseingna
de l’autre, que deja portar
per s’amor e per recordar
los covinens ques an parlatz
et ab mil baisars affinatz
et escrig ab lur lagremetas
sus els detz, per mieg las ongletas;
e so ques escrivon defor
**escriu cascuns ins en son cor;**
**car ins el cor sevals roman.**
*cora que s’oste de la man;*
[et] aitals era l’escriptura
don cascus som par assegura:
"Bels amics, sovenga-us de me."
--Si fara[i], domna, per ma fe.
No m’oblides, ma doussa res."
--Amix, tenguda-us n’es ma fes."
(ll. 6798-6822)

... Beneath their cloaks of gray,
Hands reach for hands. They kiss and hold
Each other, in their arms enfold
The loved one, yet their tenderness
Is such that they do not transgress
Love’s law. With gentleness they do
Only the things that they well knew
Were right, since Love had taught them how.
Each finds some token to bestow
Upon the other, to be worn
For Love’s sake, to make the forlorn
Once well remember the accord
They’d pledged, their kisses, their sworn word.
Their solemn pledge with tears they wrote
Upon their finger-nails, and note
That what was written on each finger
Deep in their hearts will ever linger.
Tough outwardly it disappear,
Within ‘tis graven sharp and clear.
These words were written by each one
For hopeful consolation:
“Remember me, dear friend, I pray.”
“Lady, my faith shall never stray.”
“Do not forget me, oh most dear.”
“I’l not, upon my faith I swear.”
The promise in the final four lines – made by both, and framed by the simultaneous action of *escriu cascuns ins en son cor* and *aitals era l'escriptura / don cascuns som par assegura* - counterbalance Flamenca’s duplicitous promise to Archimbaut (ll. 6676-90 with lacunary ending), which had triggered the lovers’ parting. The four lines are presented in the form of citation from a written source (even ignoring the quotation marks, a modern addition); they form a nice little *tenso*; they would be a likely candidate for later inscription in the lovers’ *salutz*. The passage’s imagery of writing on the body is so clear as to need little further exposition. I would draw attention to the use of *roman*, which may be interpreted as a pun on “to remain” and “romance,” bringing the two together and emphasizing the written character of romance and its intention to be read.

Flamenca and Guillem compose poetry on each other for the purpose of later rereading. As moments later they exchange hearts, their respective (or joint) composition now resides inside each of them (l. 6814-15: *ins el cor* is *ins en son cor* – hearts within bodies). *Cascuns/cascus* (“each,” ll. 6804, 6806, 6814, 6816) chiasmically frame the exchanged inscriptions around a pun of *recordar* (l. 6808): “to record, remember, learn by heart.”

Some time later, Guillem transmits the *salutz* to Flamenca. It is written on parchment: skin, originally containing a fleshy body, then an “envelope” for the poem, perhaps folded with the poem written on the inside. The poem is itself an “envelope” of words containing meaning; and two other parchment/skin envelopes are Flamenca’s and Guillem’s bodies around their exchanged hearts. Her later, solitary enjoyment of it is a reunion of the two hearts: his inside her, and a returned corporeal-cordial object. It is transformed from words to something larger, from *motz* to *sen*, through Flamenca’s imaginative “reading.” The process is similar to the use of *ombra e semblanza* (ll. 6551-66).

The text’s continuation after the lacuna starts out with an ecphrastic description at the top of the next folio of what Flamenca sees before her:

Doas ymages ben formadas
i ac faitas tan sotilmen
vivas semblavan veramen.
Sil davan de ginoilz estet
e dreg vaus l’autra susplejet.
Una flors l’issi per la boca

Two images of graceful shape,
Drawn with skill so superlative
That truthfully they seemed to live,
One figure ‘fore the other kneeling,
An air of suppliance revealing.
Forth from its mouth, to where each line
que totz los caps dels verses tocha;  Began, there was a flower design;
et a la fin autra n’avia   And, where the lines ended,, another
que-[l[s] pren atressi totz e-ls lia  Appeared to tie them all together,
e-ls men’ensem totz a l’aureilla  And lead them all into the ear
de l’autr’emage, ...  Of the second. ...
(ll. 7100-10)

Reading picks up the idea of organic folds in the text, transition-transmission membranes, for the reader sees this invisible subtext through Flamenca’s eyes. The eyes constitute a membrane like skin (and like the manuscript’s parchment), and, as a viscous membrane, are linked to the baths, tears, kisses, and writings on one another occurring elsewhere in the romance.

Flamenca’s poem (ll. 7145-71) is direct and earthily sincere, heavy and light in its enclosure of his body, and/or heart, on or in hers, as she presses the image _sobr’en pietz_ over and into her and they become one flesh, one united being. We move beyond the lovers’ parting, in which they exchanged hearts; and Flamenca’s earlier gift of an “it” – body, heart, love - to Guillem. This is the full-blown expression of the two-hearts-become-one motif, and the single flesh of the united couple. It is beautifully ambiguous as to whether this is _on_ her or _inside_ her, in a fine example of feminine poetics and erotics. It is the other side to masculine lyric’s desire to be inside the sexual haven, Guilhem de Peitieus’ _aizi_.

The word continues to be made Flesh, as the image suffers further folding, unfolding, and refolding, made word then flesh again. As elsewhere in _Flamenca_, this love-scene uses metaphors of writing and reading the body – again, with mention of this peculiar, entrancing lovers’ gaze, of utter nudity ands truth. Word and flesh fold and unfold into one another, to such an extent as to become intermingled and communicate in communion. Two hearts become one, two bodies commingled into something new, marvellous, and of the couple’s own creation. The book itself is of course also flesh in this period – parchment and leather, and the image of folding, unfolding, and refolding is vital to a deeper reading of _Flamenca_. It is a narrative necessity that the _salutz_ and their _ymage_ not be depicted in our romance, for two reasons in its internal logic.63 Just as Flamenca did earlier from the tower imprisoning her, the _salutz_ escapes from its

---

63 and, admittedly, in a curious coincidence of internal and external realities.
enclosure, as is right and proper for the maintenance and continuation of the private space it made within the public one of our characters’ reality. The salutz have been rubbed away into the very body of Flamenca, emphasising the parchment and skin connection, or consumed by her kisses just as happened to the flowers. In her enjoyment of and through the image, Flamenca becomes the folding and unfolding flower of her own ioi or jouissance.

3.4 The rejection of delusional fantasy

We saw earlier how the salutz might be physically manipulated to interesting erotic effect. In cartoon strip manner, the flowers may be moved to come together to form a single flower, like a balloon, a speech-balloon between the lovers which communicates to both of them. As their flowers of speech and of listening become one and entwine, so the two of them become one in understanding, the entendemen synonymous with, and sound basis to, a solid relationship. A well-made (ben trobat) fold, like any other well-formed creative act – amorous and poetic – not only brings the two together completely but also erases the visible glue, as the text disappears. The flowers touch when folded further. As they embrace the text they eat it up. The flowers eventually become a single being, then consume each other and disappear entirely as the lovers kiss. A vertical fold first makes the man’s hands touch, then clasp the lady, conveniently around the upper thigh to waist area. Further folding produces the same results with the couple as it did with the flowers. The flowers can thus be read as analogous to the couple, and a warning of the dread fate that awaits any excessively close relationship.

That is the danger of amor coral; for it is a fantasy, and impractical and unpracticable in the real world. Flamenca realises that she has been superimposing fantasy on reality in her relations with Guillem; and we see Flamenca move back from viewing the couple as plural entity. This happens when, in their leave-taking scene, he faints in her arms (the exact point of this change in view is l. 6823); she is not impressed and rebukes him:

64 or the ladies kept it concealed and it is lost to this day.
His faint is preceded by events affecting the couple, and their exchange of inscriptions on each others’ hearts; using plural or reciprocal forms.

Flamenca de Nemurs and Guillem de Nevers never address each other by those externally-given names, although they know them. Flamenca usually addresses her lover as “friend,” as she does with her ladies. He never reciprocates, always calling her “lady”, “my lady”, or, when she is really lucky, “my good sweet dear thing.” When they write promises on each other, they call each other amics and domna, respectively. To him, she is the classic lyric lady; to her, he is (she hopes) a true lover. These are not necessarily equivalent. Inequality in address is a sign that all is not well in relations between Flamenca and Guillem. In a twist on the Piramus and Thisbe pattern of star-crossed lovers, cursed by tragic miscommunication, Flamenca’s lovers doom themselves. While they may have been set on their path by external forces (Amor, Archimbaut), they are entirely responsible for their own erroneous moves and failures to read each other properly, clearly, and truly. Flamenca tries to treat him as idealized equal lover, in amor corals, but this fails, so she uses and loses him.

The lovers’ tenso alternates Guillem’s statement with Flamenca’s questions, with one exception: Flamenca’s pren li (l. 5277-86), not a question, and, furthermore, a command in the imperative. After pren li, Guillem fails to pick up the hint; pres l’ai continues his declarative, dominant role in the conversation. He may be behaving exactly like the kind of lover Maria de Ventadorn complains about: making up for all the subservience and giving of before the affair, by being dominant and doing the taking once the affair has been entered into. Flamenca ends the tenso with plas mi. This may mean “please / pleasure me,” again an imperative declaration. Trying to shift out of Guillem’s usurping of a dominant role, Flamenca asserts her own dominance; this is no longer amor corals with a basis in equality, but a power-struggle.

e dis: "Amix, consi estatz que vos a mi ar nom parlatz? Es cortezia ques estetz que vos ab mi ar nom parles?" (ll. 6835-38)

She said: “Dear friend, how can it be That now you do not speak to me? To be with me and not address Me, is that gentle courtliness?”
Flamenca has been behaving in a courteous - *cortesa* - manner throughout; and that quality is seen as one of her principal features, from very early descriptions in Archimbaut’s shotgun courting of her, and in what Guillem learns of her habit and repute. While, in Raimon Vidal de Besalú, being *cortes* is a fine virtue; it is contrasted with things of the heart and may be associated with false appearances and dissimulation. When she first replies to Guillem, answering *hai las* with *que plans?* (l. 4344), Flamenca engages in a cunning manoeuver to place the psalter defensively between herself and Archimbaut, thus permitting her to say her piece whilst kissing the page. This is describes as *un cortes gein* (l. 4336: “a courtly ruse”). Flamenca also *fes li un cortes presen* (l. 5281: “she made him a courtly gift”). Keeping her options open with such dissimulation, Flamenca is being wary.

Such doubt and hesitation to trust may be seen as symptomatic of *trobairitz* lyric: tentative, undecided, evasive, guarded. This may be expressed, for instance, in passive, negative, and subjunctive constructions. It is necessary to do so not for contemporary social reasons, as it would be inappropriate for a woman to demonstrate unladylike behaviour and risk her reputation. Wariness and avoidance correspond to the basic and very real danger of pregnancy. The problem is that *amor coral’s* moment of exchange is exploited by more dilettante, cynical lovers, who win a woman’s trust so that she gives her heart, at which the false lover takes what he cans and runs. What she thought was to be one part of an exchange turned out to be a very free and rather over-generous gift, not returned, or, worse still, the whole heart-code undermined and all possibility of trust (and communication) between genders collapsed. The pivotal moment may be a first look, kiss, night of bliss, or indeed the exchange of hearts and/or other tokens.

In *Flamenca*, Archimbaut imagined, in his mounting jealous madness, how his wife might be seduced by such a *fenera d’amor cortes* (l. 1197: “a courteous feigner of love”). The prophesy is fulfilled: Guillem is described as *cortes* (ll. ), and we have just seen that he is not a good and proper *amans corals*. 

230
I found only one good example in the *trobairitz* corpus of *amor coral* and parity and equal exchange. These features have been touched on by a few recent critics.\(^{65}\) *Bona dona d’una re* is a *tenso* between a lady and Bertran del Pojet:

Amics Bertran, ben es *iocs cumunals* q’eu am celui qu’es mos *amics corals*, e l’amics voill que sia, sabez cals? Fis e ficels, vertadiens e no fals ni trop parliers ni ianglos ni gabaire mas de bon prez a son poder sivals c’aiissi cove fors e dinz son repaire.

Friend Bertran, this is game we share for I love the one who is my heartfelt lover, and do you know how I want that friend to be? Perfect and faithful, truthful and undeceiving, not too talkative, or indiscreet, or boastful, but very worthy at least as far as he can be, because it’s fitting at his home or away from it.

Donna, cel sui que non enten en als ni ves altra mos cors no pot atraire.

Lady, I am he who thinks of no one else, nor can my heart be drawn to any other.

Amics Bertran, ben deu anar cabals druz, cant es francs, fiçels e non trichaire.

Friend Bertran, a lover must act nobly if he is honest, faithful, and no deceiver.

Shared enjoyment (*iocs comunals*, l. 36) is an attribute of the lover of the heart (*amics corals*, l. 37). *Amics, en gran cosirier*, a *tenso* between an unnamed lady and Raimbaut d’Aurenga, opens with the same ideas of parity in sharing the pain encountered in Guiraut de Borneil’s *Ailas, co muer!*:

Doncs per qe.us metes amaire pos a mi laissas tot lo mal, *qar amdui no.l partem egal?* Don’, amors ha tal mestire, pos dos amics encadena

So why do you play the lover when you leave all the pain to me? Why don’t we share it equally?

Lady, this is love’s way: when it binds two friends together...

(l. 5-9)

... and ends in a double-*tornada* compact (albeit possibly none too fiable):

Amics, creirai vos per aital q’aiissi.us aia toztemps leial.

Friend, I will trust you provided that I have you this loyal always.

Domna, aissi m’aures lial qe ia mais no pensarai d’al.

Lady, you’ll have me just this loyal; I will have no other thought.

(l. 57-60)\(^{66}\)

\(^{65}\) Bruckner, for instance, in a footnote: “[Castelloza’s] *requête d’amour* thus becomes a demand that threatens the *orgueil* of her beloved’s refusal. She also sets up a middle ground of equality and reciprocity between lovers that seems to eliminate the traditional notion of hierarchy in troubadour lyric.” Bruckner, “Na Castelloza, *Trobairitz*, and Troubadour Lyric,” in *Romance Notes*: special issue on *Courtly Ideology and Woman’s Place in Medieval French Literature* XXV.3 (1985): 246-47.

\(^{66}\) Bruckner et al 50-53.
The lovers’ agreement in both poems above is not necessarily too trustworthy. The most notorious double-edged promise of fidelity in medieval literature must be that of Iseult to Mark. *Flamenca* has a similar one: Flamenca promises her husband that she has been as faithful as he has been successful in keeping her under lock and key (playing on the double sense of *gardar*). But in these lovers’ double-*tornada* agreements, and even though they are not at the start of an affair, there is still hesitancy involved on the feminine side, and set in opposition to the perfect *coral* lover. Indeed, in such descriptions of the perfect lover, it is clear that the feminine voice is dealing with the *ideal* rather than the *actual*. The *aman coral* and *amor coral* are fantasies.

In a twist on the same theme in masculine-voice lyric, *trobairitz* poetry may express a fear of failure (erotic, poetic, and in the longer-term erotics of a continued relationship). Doubtfulness and need for concrete proof come up in *Vos qe.m semblatz dels corals amadors*, by the Comtessa de Proensa (Garsenda de Forcalquier) and Gui de Cavaillon. The first line is symptomatic: “you who seem to me a true-hearted lover.” It is she who attempts to goad him out of timidity, while openly admitting to her *own*, *qe ges dompna non ausa descobrir / tot so q’il vol per paor de faillir* (ll. 8–9: “for a lady simply doesn’t dare reveal / all she wishes, for fear that she may fail.”). Gui takes the hint, declares himself ready for action, and ends his *cobla* with *q’us honratz faitz deu be valer un dir* (l. 18: “one exalted action should be worth one speech”).

Emphasis on action is important: as material evidence and as a move from words to deeds. Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* puts it well in Genius’ admonition to all men to “use their tools,” in a mixed poetic-erotic metaphor of those deeds by which men will be judged. Earlier, Faus Samblant identified himself in lacking defined identity. He then moves into his famous *faus samblant*-based distinction between external appearances and inner truth, and words and acts, in *li abiz ne fait pas le moine* (l. 11062), emphasized by the need to look not at external appearances and words but at *oeuvres*, deeds and works:

Ne ja certes pour mon habit

---

68 Bruckner *et al* 54–55.
Scrupulously fair, this is true both of those clothed in *robe religieuse* (ll. 11058-62) and in *dras du siecle* (l. 11095) or *communs* (l. 11106). A link can be made to Raison’s earlier emphasis on another arbitrary connection between external and internal, again to do with words and things. Faus Samblant continues, again focusing on the internal truth, that good heart makes a thought good, which in turn makes an act good, and that is good intention:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Bon cuer fait la pensee bonne;} \\
\text{La robe n’i tost ne ne donne;} \\
\text{Et la bonne pensee l’oevre,} \\
\text{Qui la religion descoevre.} \\
\text{Illuec gist la religion} \\
\text{Selonc la droite entencion.}
\end{align*}
\]

(ll. 11121-26)

Later, in his interpretation of the *Evangile pardurable*, he distinguishes similarly between the *escorce* and the *moelle*: *Mout est en moi muez li vers; / Trop sont li fait au diz divers.* (ll. 11225-26). His own initial identification as a liar is tempered by a warning, advocating careful reading: *Parjurs sui. Mais ce que j’afin / Set l’en anviz devant la fin.* (ll. 11175-76).

The contemporary intertextual network of warnings about appearances and deceptions must be borne in mind when Flamenca looks at Guillem and see only his fancy fripperies, on their second meeting. Both Guillem and Faus Samblant are described as wolves in sheeps’ clothing; the first in a commentating aside about Ysengrim, the second in his own honest and overt admission.

When Flamenca gives her heart to Guillem, it is not a true gift at all, but an exchange; and a cynically twisted one at that. Flamenca’s distrust and *cortesia* are evident in what is supposed to be the supreme moment of *amor corals*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Flamenca then, with courtesy} \\
\text{As ever, this Godspeed addressed} \\
\text{To the one man whom she loved the best:} \\
\text{"With this kiss my whole heart I give,} \\
\text{And I take yours, which makes me live."}
\end{align*}
\]
Guillems respon: "Domna, e[u-]l prenc per tal covinent e-l retenc ques ieu en luec del mieu lo tenga, e prec vos del mieu vos sovenga."
(ll. 6888-96)

William replied: “Lady, I take On your terms the gift you make; Your heart shall take my own heart’s place; Treat mine, I pray, with loving grace.”

This is far from the union of two hearts beating as one. The hearts have been swapped forcibly. Flamenca cunningly kisses Guillem, then tells him that while she kissed him she simultaneously gave her heart and took his. Deeds win over words, and equality is attained. All that Guillem can do is repeat her words back to her, with a little variation. When this scene is combined with his earlier faint, the final analysis has Flamenca leave the affair triumphant.

Flamenca sends Guillem away: a clever move of separating before he can tire of her, so as not to fall into the trap of women abandoned, who are then inspired to write poetry of rejected dejection. Flamenca not being that blindly in love jars with parity and companionship. *Amor coral* is now seen as an illusion, a fantasy within this fiction that is a fantasy; and this is realized most clearly by Flamenca herself.

*Flamenca’s* narration and narrativization of attempts to escape *trobar clus* and *amor cortes* is not in the form of a simplistic dialectical conflict with the poetic, erotic, and external-historical *status quo* and orthodoxy. Rather, it acts in subtle resistance, indirect passive-looking acts, and underhand ingenuity. Another tool is silence; while *Flamenca* alludes to it, like fantasy it is rejected in favour of subversion. Further subversions, in the shapes of perversion and appropriation, are the subject of the next chapter, as *Flamenca* offers another possibility for escaping erotic and poetic imprisonment.

*Flamenca* features several instances in the romance of silences, associated with women, and heavily loaded rather than silent: the finest example may be Flamenca’s wedding-night. In addition, every one of the longer lacunae (of at least one folio) cuts off feminine verbal or poetic activity and decision-making or advice. It must remain unknown whether these ruptures were caused by a

---

69 The first lacuna (after l. 58, f. 1 v°) interrupts Flamenca’s mother, in her remarks on the wedding plans proposed. The second (l. 1800, f. 31 v°) cuts off Amor’s prophetic words.
censorious reader, or were intended by a composer. In *Flamenca* as it stands right now, these lacunae are an integral part of the book and a resource like any other (words, most obviously) for finding sense in it. When it becomes readable to others, and readable as possessing positive content rather than being a void, feminine silence becomes a linguistic feature in its own right: a form of para-verbal communication, like gestures.

Similarly, in a text, things besides the written word provide sense: their arrangement on the page, illustrations, marginal ornamentation, and textual absences and holes. This has been commented on by Wolfgang Iser and others as providing a space for the reader in the text, and for interpretation to take place. It is a poetic space, of sorts, for the reader as partipant in the text. Iser and Derrida tend to produce metaphors of textual penetration and possession (being a common metaphor for understanding: *je comprends*); elegant and, in Derrida’s case, quite beautiful images, but from a decidedly masculine angle of approach. And why not: they are men, as are many readers, and many texts are by men.

In the case of *Flamenca*, Heldris de Cornuaille’s *Roman de Silence*, and other purveyors of exemplary feminine silences, however, penetration may be a limited, or even counter-productive, angle of approach. These silences have a positive content of resistance and subversion. In *Flamenca*’s case, a rejection of man-made language; a move out of attempts at linguistic and poetic parity doomed to failure.

Silence is a positive move: it is into the other language, above and beyond the verbal utterance, of a more direct communication; heart to heart, body to body, soul to soul. A language beyond external social constructs and their hold over given language; moving into it is like Guilhem de Peitieus’ move out of places and names set by the world of external, material, physical, and social reality. The look given, held, shared, and exchanged by Flamenca and Guillem

---

*Flamenca*’s ambiguous and trickster promise to Archimbut is left suspended by the third lacuna (after l. 6691, f. 115 v°). Flamenca receives the salutz (l. 7099, f.122 v°).

during her utterance of *pren li* is not just a preamble: it is a poetic and erotic event in the romance. In a further *tenso* relationship within *Flamenca*, language itself is paired with its “other,” the extra-linguistic physical communication of lovers’ discourse: sighs, gazes, and touches. Placing these different forms of human communication in a narrative succession positions the extra-linguistic as language’s necessary complement in a complete whole (poem, human being).

*Flamenca* may be contributing to the contemporary debate contrasting deeds with words, siding with deeds. Our romance may comment on the inadequacy of language to the highest human activity of love, connected to the failures of attempts at love and poetry through the *canso* and *tenso*. Moving into the language of the heart and into para- or meta-verbal bodily language (or, from *coral* to *corporal*) has wider political implications. It provides an escape from *trobar clus* and a closed outside world, through the escape from *all and any* languages and their conflicts – Occitan or French.

Poetics and erotics are re-fused; we are beyond linguistic differences, such as Occitan for lyric and French for romance. Such distinctions become trivial and irrelevant; we are back into the melting-pot of Romance poetry, as literature takes a stand against growing nation-state building. *Flamenca*’s concern with escaping a *trobar* that seeks *amor clusa e cortesa* is appropriate. By the 13th century northern French aristocratic society and its poetry are very much associated with the court and the courtly. The Occitan notion of *amor coral*, as it appears in the late 12th century poetry of Bernard de Ventadorn, appears to have been lost in translation. We see here a rare glimpse of its fading shadow, seen by Flamenca as a fantasy, evanescent and unsatisfying in the clear light of day. Flamenca settles, in the end, for an alternative to this alternative. She resumes the affair with Guillem at Archimbaut’s court, as a courtly love, under the courtly gaze; a pragmatic resignation to the courtly status quo. They maintain an increasingly weak pretence of secrecy and subversive activity, and attempt whenever possible to draw some ironic amusement in *double-entendres* relating to previous relations. The ironic yearning shows the summer of love has acquired a status as distantly nostalgic as *amor coral* itself.
4. The *Roman d’Archimbaut*: *trobar* and appropriation

This chapter starts with a reading of *Flamenca* from Archimbaut’s point of view. Like those of Guillem and Flamenca, his story is about erotic and poetic *trobar*, and about escaping *trobar/amor clus/cortes*. In his case, an additional element comes into play. He catalyses and controls events, playing a role resembling that of the external poet.

I show how he is not only one of the three main protagonists, but also belongs to a set of “arch-players” who are not directly involved in the central couple-adventure, and observe it from outside; yet who cannot be called passive as they have a hand in its progress as catalysts, controllers, and manipulators of events. These arch-players are third parties to main events (that is, the Guillem-Flamenca romance) and play a textual role reminiscent of the narrative voice. These “arch-players” transgress the traditional narrative role distinctions, as hybrid entities who overflow such bounds by possessing strong characteristics of narrators *and* external authors. Obviously, arch-players remain fictional protagonists: saying otherwise would be contrary to common sense. But their extra characteristics are useful for showing how *Flamenca* is not only a narrative of lyric *trobar* in slow-motion, but also a narrative about narrative composition.

Here, at last, we read *Flamenca* as a verse narrative, through looking at textual third parties; the presence of one of them, the narrator, is usually seen as defining narrative as such. Broadening out from the Archimboldian reading, the chapter looks at features of multiplicity in *Flamenca* beyond that of the triple focalization: arch-players, narrative voice, authorial presence, reader’s space. The very multiplication (or fragmentation) of narrative voice produces an anarchic effect, one quite contrary to single, central, and orthodox “authority.” Archimbaut plays with narrative convention in his attempt to escape lyric imprisonment: to move from the position allotted him by lyric poetry, as an impotent cuckold lurking passively in the background; to control of a narrative which he subverts through appropriation. Sadly, he follows in the footsteps of Guillem and Flamenca, as he fails and the result is instead that the court emerges triumphant.
4.1 Archimbaut perverts trobar

Archimbaut has a hand in composition: just as he has an equal hand in the salutz. “Archimbaut” may be interpreted as “arch-bauza”: the arch-trickster, who out-deceives our other two main protagonists. He is also our romance’s “architect”: its builder, “overarching” the narrative through his sections of the text which frame and control those of Guillem and Flamenca and the central tenso-part. The text acquires a further degree of tenso-nality, providing not just Flamenca’s narrative as the other side to Guillem’s, but adding in Archimbaut’s as a further other side.

Archimbaut is a jealous husband, who locks up his wife in a tower: a villain, on the face of things. On closer reading, he proves to possess greater merit and complexity, and deserves more sympathy. This character is a novel move away from the negative type of the jealous husband – that is, the stock comic figure of the cuckold, and the darker Bluebeard type. Archimbaut is a multiply hybrid character, whose hybridizations incorporate considerable generic cross-fertilization. Four aspects of his character may be distinguished: the jealous husband, the lover, the truth-teller, and the voyeur. As the character most responsible for “troping the trope,” he may be read as the arch-troper, and thus arch-trobar, of our whole romance: an amans-trobador who turns around his allotted fols gilos role (“foolish and crazed jealous husband”).

Jealous husbands and their cuckolding are a familiar literary trope, going back to Ovid’s Amores, divine cuckoldry in the Metamorphoses, and adultery’s aftermath in the Heroides. The jealous husband, or gilos, appears frequently in Occitan lyric poetry. Good examples would be Marcabru’s A l’alena del vent doussa and El son d’esbiat chantaire. He is a prerequisite for the very existence of an unattainable lyric lady, and so for unrequited or adulterous love, and thus vital to the very genre of love-lyric. Despite being the central figure without whom much trobador lyric wouldn’t exist, he often features in the background, a lurking presence casting a gloomy shadow over proceedings between illicit lovers; a

---

1 “Troping the trope” in Flamenca is well stated by Jewers 2000 (thought not in reference to Archimbaut, a much-neglected figure).
shadowy threat; cast as a clear bad guy. The *gilos* is an obstacle to the lovers’s union, but not taken very seriously, and often the object of ridicule.

The *gilos* appears in narrative poetry. How far this is intertextually interwoven with the lyric *gilos*, and how far both are variants on older versions in oral culture, must remain subject to speculation. But a broad evolution may be detected in the portrayal of the jealous husband. First, there is an often barely-discernible background figure of Kings Arthur or Mark in 12th century romance. Next, the jealous husband becomes a more active presence in 12th-13th c. French and Occitan short verse narratives. The *jalous* is the butt of social satire in the *fabliaux*. The *gilos* appears in the 13th c. Occitan *novas* tradition – short verse narrative. The jealous husband takes centre stage in Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s *Castia gilos*, a narrative told almost entirely from the husband’s point of view. It concludes with a condemnation of marital jealousy as jealousy is part of love, and appropriate between lovers but not between spouses, because a man cannot be a husband and a lover: much along the lines advocated by Andreas Capellanus, and turning up whenever the *gilos* gets more than a passing reference in Occitan lyric. A curious shift then happens, with a compassionate warning to guard against feminine wiles, advice for self-protection, and a description of jealousy in terms reminiscent of Ovidian love-sickness, and recalling similar words of wisdom running from Ovid through Marcabru to the *Roman de la Rose*.

In *Flamenca*, a substantial section of the text is narrated from the jealous husband’s point of view: roughly, the first 1560 lines. Soon after Archimbaut’s marriage and fall into jealousy and madness (ll. 900-1362), the prospective lover enters the scene, and the perspective shifts to the lovers and their secret doings. Archimbaut is present only very indirectly in this middle section, as an occasionally-glimpsed voyeur spying on his wife through the keyhole: a figure lurking in the background, much as the jealous husband is in Occitan lyric (for example, in Guiraut de Borneil’s *alba, Reis glorios verais lums e clartatz*). Much later, Flamenca swears to her husband that she is as faithful to him as he has been successful in keeping her imprisoned. Her promise recalls other double-dealing wives – Iseult, Alvira in the *Casta gilos*, *La Saineresse* in the eponymous *fabliau*. Archimbaut buys the sneaky promise, and is cured of his jealousy, a good
reformed husband. Rehabilitated, he re-enters civilized society, is reborn into this life, and holds court again, where the lovers will later resume their affair.

Narration of events entirely from Archimbaut’s point of view allows great comic play, but sympathy for his plight lurks under the surface. The switch of perspective and full entry into character is an innovation in the portrayal of the *gilos* type. Archimbaut himself is responsible for his depiction, in ironic self-reference, including the key slippage into synonymity when he refers to himself as *gilos*. He moves from seeing himself as affected by jealousy (l. 1029), to declaring himself a *gilos* (l. 1109), to a curious passage (ll. 1157-70) which could be a narrative commentating voice, or it could be Archimbaut talking to himself. The identity of this first-person voice is ambiguous, and, as is normal for its time, the manuscript includes no distinct demarcation of direct speech.

Archimbaut is represented on a par with the lover. Both desire the same unattainable lady: unattainable to both because she is a wife. Both produce lyric poetry in direct speech, and, thus, are present as composers and performers of lyric poetry within the romance.

Archimbaut falls in love with Flamenca, inflamed with passion, suffering the physical symptoms of Ovidian love-sickness (ll. 157-351, 900-6, and 958-60). This is subtly done, maintaining a fine tension between the straight and comic. In an early piece of his amorous self-analysis, he expresses fear of a potential rival (ll. 1131-36). Our comic lover is a husband clamoring to be true, who rails against a lover who is “fake” – *fenera d’amor cortes* - and calls the kind of love he and his mistress might enjoy “folly” (ll. 1196-99). This perverts every acceptable norm of *fin’amors* – in, for example, Andreas Capellanus and Raimon Vidal again.

In the previous chapter, we saw how Raimon Vidal discusses “true love” in relation to the “noble heart”. This nobility of the heart includes truth and sincerity, and is fundamental to *cortesia* – courtly behaviour, as a moral and social value-system, which is based on it. Though he must simultaneously and ambivalently be read as a joke, Archimbaut draws attention to the possible contradiction between sincerity and courtliness, in critical attacks on the falseness of courtly values.
Archimbaut attempts to gain his wife’s love by proving himself as a lover, in a multiply-reversed mock-lovers’-court scene, in which, incidentally, he transmits the lover’s salutz to Flamenca (ll. 7039-99). The scene is a “judgement of love,” itself already a parody of other more earnest genres devoted to judging, debating, and didactic matters. The salutz-scene can be read as one of a series of feint-endings playing with audience expectations in a romance, and so, playing with the romance form itself. The result, in the romance as it stands, is a continuation smacking of the epilogue, and of narrative innovation. It recounts what happens after the traditional ending: “happily ever after,” lovers’ separation, reconciliation of husband and wife. The husband’s courting of his own wife, and the theme of continuation, bring back to mind Ovid’s Heroides and the poems of exile: in the third phase of love.

Archimbaut’s character includes two other fusions, from outside the jealous husband trope, and from the domain of positive types. The first addition is the lovelorn madman: its best-known models would be Chrétien de Troyes’s Yvain, and Tristan. The second addition is the holy man, to whom – through the hermit’s green martyrdom – there is already some allusion in Yvain and Tristan. Intertextual references to martyrdom would span Christology and hagiography. One specific religious figure should be signposted at this point as strongly connected to our narrative: Joseph, the original cuckold.

Archimbaut’s fall into jealousy is also one into madness. One early sign is his split self: splitting off new third person/self-referential gilos, referring to himself in both the first- and second-persons (ll. 1269-1311). More so than in similar lyric poetry, such as multiple-voice allegorical debate-poems by Giraut de Borneil, when Archimbaut debates with Love, it is left very open whether this is to be read as inner fragmentation, or multiplication, or an exterior personnification. Dialogic forms are used through the rest of the romance, particularly in the middle section (focusing on the lovers), but in differing ways, and never with this sort of ambiguity.

Archimbaut’s madness is clearly shown by his physical appearance (ll. 1115-18, and 1325-32). He becomes unkempt, heavily bearded, and smelly:
mortifying the flesh, his mind on higher things. This parallels the difference in
dress between scruffy and unappetising husband, and a lover either in clerical
disguise, or dressed up to the nines. The lover’s use of disguise and other
ingenious deceits would make any intertextual reader wary, in the light of Renart,
*fabliaux* lovers, and Faus Samblant in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*; though
Tristan’s use of similar clerical disguise muddies the waters somewhat.

The appearances/reality theme continues as our mad hero speaks the
truth, breaking through the niceties of courtly artifice and the little deceits of
everyday social interaction, for examples, when he speaks to others (ll. 1047-74)
and to Flamenca (ll. 1145-56, 1253, and 1518-43). He sees beyond an apparent
reality, revealed as falseness, appearances and fictions. Once more, he compares
favourably to the artificial and insincere lover.

Reading backwards from the full onslaught of his madness, signs of the
adulterous affair may be detected from very early in the narrative. Archimbaut’s
madness is a moment of illumination and revelation, after which he (and the
reader) may then read past events properly, and see how they were misread at the
time, when these appearances were accepted as reality. But his truth-telling is
combined with madness: can his version of reality be accepted? Similar problems
of relative reality have blighted generations of saints, heretics, and psychopaths.

Archimbaut’s madness is pivotal to this reading of the narrative’s
progression, as it enables a completely different reading of the rest of the
romance. It may be read as a fantasie, a delusional vision, akin to a dream-
narrative, and thus reminiscent of Guillaume de Lorris’s *Roman de Rose*, and its
first-person voice *personae* – be they, depending on the critical stance taken, a
fragmented voice or multiple voices.

The first part of our romance, recounted from Archimbaut’s point of view,
ends with him watching Flamenca and her ladies, of which they are aware (ll.
1358-62 and 1386-93). He continues to do so thorough the middle section of the
romance, and his wife’s imprisonment, permitting fine puns around *gardar* - “to
watch” and “to guard” – and Boethian jokes about comparative imprisonment. As
he lurks by his specially-constructed hidey-hole, through the narrative’s middle
section, he is an impotent witness to events. His sufferings become the more poignant, a fused erotic and religious passion, if signs of future events disseminated early in the narrative are reread as his prophesies.

When Archimbaut has his bird-watching hide installed – a peephole, and a small enclosed space for solitary observation – comparison is made to a hermit’s cell. The hermit-comparison adds to Archimbaut’s self-imprisonment. A tiny barren cell is indistinguishable from a prison, and the usual small window (or other device reminding the prisoner of the life he is missing outside) replaced here by another minute aperture, the pertuis (l. 1315). Yet although their circumstances might look identical, the prisoner is there against his will and desires to escape – and one point of his imprisonment is to frustrate his desires; while the hermit’s is a voluntary confinement, to escape the world and grow closer to what he desires. This hermetic reference, to the reclus (l. 1316), affects the reading of Archimbaut’s passio in a positive direction.

Witnessing is a common way to become a saint; converted, say, by another’s martyrdom. Witnessing is linked to writing, from the Evangelists onwards. It is a handy device, for the purposes of verisimilitude, to put oneself into the text, without being directly involved, fully active, or otherwise drawing attention to oneself unbecomingly. It is a small step from witness to voyeur. The gilos of Occitan lyric is very close to the poet-observer in some of the vidas and razos, short pseudo-biographical or commentating prose pieces accompanying lyric in some of the chansonniers: for example, that of Raimbaut de Vaqueyras.

Archimbaut plays a compositional and commentating role. His place in his own text is most striking when the salutz scene is read from his point of view: Archimbaut wishes to prove himself to her as a good lover, both as a viable erotic possibility and in his poetic good taste. He is freshly returned from taking lessons in love from the great master, his wife’s lover Guillem, whom he had encountered and befriended on the jousting circuit, where the lover was effectively proving his own prowess after having been sent away by his lady. Guillem has become a teacher, master of the art of love, and veritable doctus in amorous doctrine: an instructing and guiding catalyst-character. Now back home in Bourbon, a happy
and excited Archimbaut tells the ladies of his wonderful new friend. Feigning mockery and a certain hostility to the marvels of Guillem, the ladies goad Archimbaut – here as ever the paradoxical unlikely hero, champion of straightforward sincerity, the verdatx integral to fin’amors– into greater eulogies of the lover’s virtues. Alis questions Guillem’s amorous prowess as being incompatible with knightly qualities (ll. 7056 and 7059: pros, preson), tying together the amorous with other pleasurable fields (ll. 7055, 7058-60: es amoros, sabon esser plazentier [...] donnei e solas). Flamenca joins in, providing twisted readings.

Archimbaut rises to the challenge, not only of defending Guillem’s erotic and poetic honour, but of proving his own amorous qualities through his poetic discernment and performance skills: trobar qualities to do with reading. Poetic and erotic qualities are conflated in Archimbaut’s use of cortesas (l. 7073), and in the ladies’ possible reward of logarem (l. 7089), a “reward” which this section’s final line leaves saucily ambiguous. If he wins the challenge – through the salutz being admitted as hanc n’ausisses plus cortesas, aissi polidas (ll. 7073, 7087) – it is he who wins, rather than the original composer, Guillem. Archimbaut is thus avenged, having in a sense stolen something amorous from his cuckolder. Flamenca’s ratio for the judgement reveals an emphasis on derivation and ingenuity: car vos la[s] sabres mielz legir / e faire los motz avenir, / qu’autra ves las aves legidas (l. 7084-86: “You’ll read them better, make the rhyme / And sentiment together chime, / Since you’ve read them from the beginning”).

Archimbaut’s last words before the lacuna force the reader to return and reread the episode, and indeed all his previous appearances, as they indicate that his sincerity, simplicity, and folly or foolishness cannot be taken at face value. Archimbaut is playing along with Flamenca, in a different game which - at least in this scene – uses and abuses the lover to bring another couple together, one in which spouses are also lovers. The words become Archimbaut’s, in a double contextualisation: first, as they are transformed by the peculiar circumstances of their performance; secondly, by their embedding within the frame of Archimbaut’s preamble.

Earlier, Guillem had called his tower-imprisoned beloved by the senhal Na Tor. In thus privately re-naming Flamenca and identifying her with two other
elements of another man’s private property – his tower and its phallic symbolism - Guillem started the process of “de-towering” Archimbaut, in theft, the infliction of impotence, and, even, symbolic castration. Archimbaut retakes his tower, redeems his genital integrity, and outwits the cunning outwitter in stealing back from a thief. The reappropriation culminates in renaming the object of desire Bella de Belmont (l. 7097: “Beaumont’s Fair One,” or better, “The Beauty of the Beauteous Mound”). Reading in context – particularly Archimbaut’s remark on the letter not passing through undeserving hands and ears, and Flamenca’s on the salutz becoming Archimbaut’s and the reward being his – it would make sense for the new senhal to be a further form of Archimboldian reconquest, and part of the salutz preamble, which becomes his own composition.

Archimbaut has a hand in the composition of the salutz by performing it; and, in particular, through the performance process’s cognitive gap between internal reading and external utterance. The salutz continues judici d’amors role reversal, in ways suggesting connections between judici, salutz, and subtle hints at Archimbaut’s role in the romance. He is a male lover using a poetic form often associated with women. Like earlier lacunae which interrupted a character in mid-flow, the text immediately before the lacuna was direct speech, transmitting counsel, advice, or judgement: actions associated with narrative voices. This one differs from other substantial lacunae, as here it is a man who is cut off, reinforcing the scene’s gender reversal and his emasculation, as a cuckold.

Furthermore, Guillem and Archimbaut have exchanged their previous roles in the writing and amorous triangles, an exchange which emphasizes the extent of Archimbaut’s earlier catalyst and controlling role, and his aim of becoming his wife’s lover. For his involvement in the salutz is one of a series of discreet, similarly constructive actions involving him in the lovers’ affairs. Superficially, he is a typical fol giilos, manipulated by the illicit lovers, and punished for his lack of cortesia. He is the passive butt of jokes but otherwise relegated to the background, as a plot device necessary for the affair to be piquant. Reading a little deeper, we see that he is a peculiarly important protagonist, a passive catalyst and indirect controller of events, playing a part inside the text related to that of its external composer. Throughout the central
tenso sequence, Archimbaut took a back seat, more obviously as a voyeur lurking out of sight. Less obviously, after manipulating his wife into the affair, with the intention of engineering a (re)union with her, he now controls matters discreetly from a distance, remaining only as a threatening background presence. Positions are now reversed: Archimbaut is present and active, Guillem in the background, controlling the set-up out of which he will be reunited with Flamenca.

Just before Flamenca reads the ymages, a first-person voice comment disrupts what would, in its absence, have been a smooth zooming-in to Flamenca’s reading of two of the three ymages (ll. 7110-15). Neither the description nor Flamenca provide any further interpretation of the third figure. Archimbaut’s disappearance from the scene parallels that of Fin’Amors (l. 7111, en forma d’angel fin’amors) from the image, and this in turn recalls two previous disappearances of the same persons. Amors gradually fades away from the romance’s central tenso-section, that of the lovers’ building of their love-affair and poetic composition (ll. 3949-6659, -6691, or -6896), in which focalization first alternates between the lovers, then is unified in its direction on them as a couple, effectively as a single unitary figure in itself. Archimbaut vanishes after a section recounting events from his point of view (ll. 60-1562), and the narrative moves suddenly to Guillem. These parallel disappearances strengthen a subtle connection between Archimbaut and Amors, as both are significant directors of the action who do not intervene directly.

On the surface, the narrative zooms in, reinforcing these persons’ apparent irrelevance, as we are now fully in the secret and secluded world of love and lovers. Everything outside is eclipsed or withdraws to the shadows, as are other persons such as narrative voices, alluded to in another third figure, behind the scenes, watching but actively powerless. At the same time, the audience is toyed with, and these persons external to the action remain present, controlling the action at a distance. We do also have an ambiguous narrative comment here: Ara no-us cal dire, so sai,/ de ’n Archimbaut que sia mai / de sa moiller gilos ni garda! (ll. 7113-15: “no doubt I do not need to tell / if Archambaud’s still ‘neath the spell / that made him prey to jealousy”).
The third figure counsels the other two, and joins together both sides of *trobar*, guiding the female figure’s hearing/reading and the male figure’s speaking/writing. Archimbaut is implied by the *ymages’* angelic figure. A transmitter of a message, genderless, he looks on impotently; yet he orchestrates the action, acting as the catalyst-guide for understanding by *conssella* [...] *qu’entenda so quel mostral flors* (ll. 7110-12: “counselling / heed to the words the flowers bring”; better, “to the meaning of what the flowers show”), an echo of his earlier *non venguesson entr’avols mans, / ni ja non las ausis vilans* (ll. 7095-96: “let no vulgar hands come near them / and no unworthy persons hear them”).

If the reader distances herself from Flamenca and her (mis)reading, a different interpretation of the *ymages* may be offered. Archimbaut is the kneeling man, and Guillem the third figure. The scene described resembles the *salutz* performance: Flamenca listened while Archimbaut read, his reading including the additional “understanding” of his own interpretation, both in the cognitive and performative senses. Depending on the placing of the kneeling male figure in the *salutz ymage*, it could be far towards the edge of the page. It would be in the liminal place occupied by a patron, not quite fully in the picture. It would then represent Archimbaut, the patron who commissioned the *salutz*, rather than Guillem. If the *salutz* were composed specially for Archimbaut, it would be sensible to include this ambiguous male figure, in whom any male reader who fancied himself as a fine lover would believe he recognized himself. The *judici d’amors* comic role-reversal of the love-triangle continues, with Guillem as an absent lover/writer, pulling the strings behind the scenes.

*Flamenca’s* innovations in the jealous husband-type may be put together with his role as one of several catalyst-compositional characters in the romance. These characters, put together in turn with several distinct layers of narrative voice – first and third person – produce a sense of fragmented, multiple, and playful poetic presence. This is all very cunningly interwoven, so that it is often hard work to differentiate narrative voice from character focalization. The reader is faced with a free choice in path and protagonist to follow, and the book opens
itself up to a wide range of potential readers, who may identify with a similarly wide range of potentially sympathetic textual voices.

If one can make out any sort of authorial intent here, it may be a questioning of authorship and its authority, a self-questioning set up by the romance in the same manner as Archimbaut’s own self-reference as a *gilos*. That returns us to current discussion of *Flamenca* as a parodic and ironic hybrid, “troping the trope.” Through his particular hybridization of jealous husband with other figures, Archimbaut incorporates elements of reading and of composition. Going beyond the usual contemporary ambiguity of compositional roles - writer, copyist, continuator, commentator, reader - *Flamenca* may be experimenting with the hybridization of character, writer, and reader.

To summarise, Archimbaut demonstrates characteristics usually associated with the narrative voice. Firstly, he does not participate directly in the action, but acts as a catalyst, controlling other (and his) protagonists and their actions from a distance. Secondly, he is in a position to do so as an observer, witness, and voyeur; a position akin to that of a distanced, all-seeing, and omniscient narrator. Both these features place Archimbaut in a slightly different position from the other protagonists; whilst he is like them a fiction in the same internal reality of the text, he occupies a priviledged position there. Thirdly, he is involved in metanarrative matters: he plays with tropes, here perverting the *castia gilos* by being a *fin’amans*; and this has the effect of playing with reader expectation. He enacts a narratorial role, in a metaphorical narrative *about* composition (*trobar*, both of lyric and of narrative). Finally, he exercises a second control over protagonists by appropriating their words, making them his own (the literal sense of “appropriation”) and turning them to his own ends; he does this most clearly in the salutz scene. Thus, he uses the same rhetorical tactics as narrative voices do, to act as a “super-protagonist” with narratorial affinities: what I am calling an “arch-player,” in homage to Archimbaut.

Archimbaut’s voyeurism already places him in a priviledged textual position; and this is the element which draws him closest to a narrator-like role.
The connection between voyeurs and narrators is well explained by A.C. Spearing.\(^2\) *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* opens thusly:

Love is a favourite theme of medieval narrative, yet in Western civilization love is a private experience, and one for which, in medieval texts especially, secrecy is often regarded as a prerequisite. How then can it be theme of narrative, when to narrate is to make public? This is the problem from which the present book begins; and it focuses on looking, and secondarily on listening, as the means by which private experience is brought into the public sphere. Within medieval love-narratives, secret observers, concealed from the lovers as the lovers are from society at large, are frequently represented as responsible for exposing private experience to the public gaze; as readers of or listeners to such narratives, we too can be made to feel that we are secret observers; and, in the later Middle Ages especially, the love-poet is often realized as one who looks and tells, himself a secret observer of experiences in which he does not participate. (1)

In his commentary on Walther von der Vogelweide’s *Under der Linden*, Spearing shows how its nightingale is the “poet’s surrogate within the poem” (28), and also acts to bring the audience into the text through the position of the voyeur, prior to a discussion of the poet and audience as spies:

Walther could have been conscious of the parallel between his role and the nightingale’s in this poem. Once we become hearers or readers of the poem’s words, we are put imaginatively in his and the nightingale’s position: we become secret onlookers at a sexual encounter in which we have no part: we become voyeurs. (28)

Spearing explores the question of who is watching whom, and who is manipulated by whom. Readers delight in the ingenuity with which he is manipulated, and thus we are manipulated ourselves […] The apparent naïveté and inconsistency of Béroul’s storytelling may well have the effect of supreme sophistication for readers or listeners who are conscious of their own morally questionable role. At every point a supposedly impregnable secrecy is penetrated and exposed: Mark watches the lovers; the lovers watch him watching them; we watch them watching him watching them; and Beroul, whose motives are truly secret […] watches us, exposing the disreputable motives of voyeurs who interpret what they see in accordance with their own preconceptions, while unaware until too late that our own interpretation is shaped by the poet’s cunning. (54)

He also brings in the absence of monolithic truth, and the consequences of this for textual roles, in Gottfried von Straßburg’s *Tristan*, a narrative that resembles *Flamenca* in ending in a doubly unsatisfactory manner – apparently unfinished, lovers doomed to failure:

\(^2\) Spearing 1993.
For Gottfried’s Tristan there can be no [such] conviction of a transcendent destiny, because Gottfried has seen, as Beroul did not, the metaphysical implications of the false oath that preserves love’s privacy ... [Iseult’s windblown sleeve] covers or uncovers whatever the voyeuristic reader chooses. The implication is that there is no transcendent panoptic vision to guarantee the inner world. The lovers’ bid to arrive at transcendence through role-playing is doomed to failure, and indeed the attempt carries within itself the necessity of dissolution, of the fragmentation of the role-playing self into the roles it plays. Gottfried’s great poem is unfinished ... (74)

4.2 Narrative voices and other “arch-players”

The most basic narratological distinction separates the real world outside the text from the fictional one inside it. That is reflected in a separation between persons outside the text – author – and ones inside it – character. The next move of most narrative theory distinguishes a third person: the narrator.

Gérard Genette describes a fourth person, the implied author reconstructable by the reader – “l’image de l’auteur dans le texte.” This will reappear in Dominique Mangueneau’s distinction between “écrivain” and “auteur.” Both accounts echo Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short’s earlier identification of the “implied author” as a textual position between the author and the narrator and, similarly, that of Wayne C. Booth. This fourth textual person is associated with creativity, originality, and the work’s unity. Sophie Marnette demonstrates conclusively that the implied author is not a universal phenomenon in medieval texts: in the corpus of Old French narrative works she studies, it is only in Joinville’s Vie de Saint Louis that the first-person voice coincides with narrator, author, witness, and character (1998: 216-17).

Marnette shows how patterns of direct, indirect, and free indirect speech (respectively, “discours direct, discours indirect, discours indirect libre”; from which the useful abbreviations DD, DI, DIL) correlate to different kinds of Old French narrative (historiography, hagiography, and chanson de geste; prose

---

romance; *lais* and verse romance). How characters’ speech and thoughts are represented shows us how the narrative voice is working, and how much control it is exercising over characters. Drawing on Leech and Short:

The norm for representing speech is the direct mode, while the norm for representing thought is the indirect mode, since the thoughts of others cannot be directly observed. Therefore, with regard to the respective norms, the free indirect mode implies a move in the direction of greater narrator control of the discourse in the case of speech, while in the case of thought the reverse situation occurs [...] verse romances clearly give more room to the characters’ own perspectives and more vividly so than their prose counterparts. (2005: 212-13)

The most extreme form Marnette considers is the playful and untrustworthy narrative voice, that misguides the reader and may refer self-consciously to this fact. Yet this is still a narrative voice with a role of guiding the reader, and that brings its audience into play through the use of ambiguously inclusive diectics, particularly addresses to the second person. Strong commentating voices of this ludic nature may be seen in three early 13th c. French romances to which *Flamenca* is indebted: Jean Renart’s *Roman de la Rose ou de Guillaume de Dole*, Renaud de Beaujeu’s *Roman du Bel Inconnu*, and Joufroi de Poitiers; and in Occitan verse narratives such as the romance of Jaufré, Arnaut de Carcassès’ *Las Novas del papagay*, and Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s *Castia gilos*.

Thus: in medieval narrative, there is a variation in the kinds of narrator, depending on the kind of text at hand. One narrator does not necessarily fulfil the same role as another, especially with regard to the truth and its exposition; and narrators are not necessarily omniscient and omnipotent, nor straight-forward central guides to help the reader along her way.

Marnette’s narrative voices use free indirect discourse as a means to control characters’ thoughts and opinions (1998: 119), and to influence readers:

Les lais et les romans en vers sont marqués par l’omniprésence du narrateur. Celui-ci se montre en train de narrer le récit mais aussi en train de le composer. Il se pose comme origine du récit car c’est lui qui “manipule” les sources et construit un récit qu’il s’efforce de rendre vraisemblable, c’est-à-dire conforme aux attentes littéraires et sociales de son public. Compositeur du récit, garant de sa vérité, il joue constamment sur son pouvoir d’auteur. En effet, il ne dit que ce qu’il veut bien dire mais fait aussi allusion à ce qu’il aurait pu raconter. Il donne à certaines reprises des explications sur le véritable sens de son récit, ou à tout le moins des précisions, grâce aux allégories par exemple, mais il laisse parfois aux

---

auditeurs/lecteurs le soin de décrypter ce sens par aux-mêmes. Omniprésent, il est aussi omniscient et manipule le destin de ses personnages: il mentionne ce qui auraient pu leur arriver (emplois d’irréels) ou prévoit ce qui leur arrivera. En bref, le narrateur des lais et des romans en vers est auteur non parce qu’il crée un récit entièrement nouveau mais parce qu’il apporte un sens au récit qu’il (re)construit, sens que les auditeurs/lecteurs sont priés de découvrir: leur parcours est donc en fait parallèle à celui des héros du récit. Comme ces derniers, ils sont soumis au bon vouloir du narrateur/auteur. (1998: 96)

Le narrateur des lais et des romans en vers joue de manière subtile sur le contrôle qu’il exerce sur les discours de ses personnages. Ceux-ci sont tantôt strictement inclus au sein de son propre discours (DI) ou plus librement mêlés aux mots qui sont les siens (DIL), tantôt présentés de façon spontanée, presque indépendante à l’intérieur des nombreux dialogues qui parsèment le texte. D’une part, donc, le narrateur assouplit le passage du DD à la narration et vice versa. (1998: 130)

Marnette later refines this controlling narrator, moving away from the modern omniscient and omnipotent narrator and its associated concept of monolithic truth, towards something more fluid, that is, “‘vérité du sens’ (Zink 1987: 32), ‘topical truth’ (Kelly 1992: 145), and “le vrai du vraisemblant ... lien entre la multiplicité, la vraiessemblance, et la vérité” (Marnette 2005: 181-82):

Verse romances present truth not as a reflection of historical and religious events but rather as based on the verisimilitude of the events told [...] Moreover, prologues of texts such as Chrétien’s Erec and Marie’s Lais indicate that the authors give a certain meaning to their texts, which must in turn be interpreted by their listener-readers. The path to interpretation is undoubtedly challenged by a considerable amount of intricacy between the presentation of characters’ thoughts, the narrator’s own comments and numerous allegorical passages. Indeed, there is doubt as to whether there is any one unique interpretation possible, considering the amount of irony present in verse romances. What we are presented with is several layers of reality and several levels of interpretation which all depend on the skills and the will of the first-person narrator [...] In other words we are dealing with two different realities and this opposition can lead to irony since it opposes what the character thinks and believes to what the listener-readers and/or the other characters know. (2005: 212-13)

Moving away from a basic distinction between direct and indirect discourses (DD, DI), Marnette adds in the differentiation of free indirect discourse (DIL), that is, “a narrative report of a thought act” (Leech and Short 1981: 337; and drawing on Dorrit Cohn’s “psycho-narration”) that mixes a character’s thoughts into a narrator’s discourse. Marnette expands the classification of discourses to include: direct discourse preceded by an introductory verb (DDPRO); followed by

---

an introductory verb (DDPOST); mixed DD; DD without an introductory verb; DD following immediately after indirect discourse without any explicit signposting; and free DD.

What Marnette has spotted coincides with appropriation. A more controlling narrative voice appropriates characters’ speech; most notably in citing authorities, and making others’ opinions one’s own/making one’s own stronger by association with an authority. This is an increase in “authorial presence” – of attaching authority (through citation of auctoritates) to the narrative voice.

Its contrary also happens in some medieval Occitan narrative. That is, the opposite of narrative voices using indirect discourse and forms of discourse moving towards the DIL pole. Instead, characters may use direct discourse to seem more like a narrative voice; and as part of the assumption, impersonation, usurpation, and appropriation of narratorial attributes. It is often hard to distinguish between comments by a first-person narrative voice and those by a character; we have seen how this happens to Archimbaut, for example. This may be conversation between parts of a self fragmented through psychomachia or madness; it may be conversation between textual personae, such as character and narrator or narrator and hypothetical reader. Characters also use different forms of direct discourse to highlight the extent to which they are appropriating someone else’s speech; the best examples are in Occitan verse narrative, in Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s En aquel temps c’om era jays. I observed several types of direct discourse, which use different tactics in the way the direct speech is framed fore and aft. The typology was based on Marnette’s.

En aquel temps provides thirty-nine instances of DD, as its characters cite Occitan lyric in debates about love, for which the trobador corpus is used (and occasionally abused), offering supporting evidence, exemplary case-law, and argumentative ammunition. The work offers two sets of refinements to DD types. First, the introductory verb may be stronger than a mere “he said.” It may be extended into an introductory clause that includes further information about the poet about to be cited. This may be in the form of biographical, pseudo-biographical, or other explanatory material – effectively a mini-razo. The
introduction may include a value-judgement, whether as a simple adjective or a full descriptive clause attached to the poet’s name.

Secondly, the introductory verb is not necessarily in the “quoth he” form; it is frequently “as you have heard,” “as you know.” This is a clear move from strict citation and into appropriation. There is a move from naming the poet to addressing a second-person voice. That second person now knows this poetry; it is no longer a matter of something having been said by a poet, but of what that thing contained – the ideas, the _motz_ as opposed to the _son_ – extending beyond that poet’s intellectual property. In a variant on this type, the citation may be followed by further _razo_ explanation, elaboration, criticism, and exposition of why this is a good example to follow.

Spearing goes a stage further than Marnette, in providing evidence for the existence of narrative without any narrator in the accepted modern sense: medieval texts that are indisputably narratives and yet have unorthodox narrative voice(s): plural, behaving irregularly, or even absent.\(^8\) He shows that modern narratological theory is fundamentally flawed in the assumption at its foundations that a narrative must have a narrator in order to be a narrative at all. This is in part because very little narratology (and only very recently) has looked at medieval narrative, often assuming that the narrative voice, along with subjectivity itself, is a modern invention and therefore cannot have existed earlier.\(^9\) Some recent work has pushed back the date of subjectivity’s birth (Carolyn Bynum, Michel Zink);\(^10\) some has expanded the range and purpose of

---

\(^8\) Spearing 2005.


\(^10\) On the rise of subjectivity as represented by _literary_ subjectivity: Michel Zink, _L’Invention de la subjectivité littéraire_ (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985) takes the 13th as turning point, and subjectivity as “what marks the text as the point of view of consciousness. In this sense, literary subjectivity defines literature. The latter truly exists only the moment a text ... designates
narrative voices (Monika Fludernik, Marnette); and some has moved towards narratorless narrative (Derrida, and Spearing himself).

In support for argument and his rejection of the “narrator theory of narration,” Spearing uses S.-Y. Kuroda, “Reflections on the Foundations of Narrative Theory from a Linguistic Point of View.” Kuroda concludes:

This theory of narration rejects the notion of omniscient narrator in the sense that it rejects the assumption that a narrative is necessarily a discourse by the narrator. It does not of course contradict the existence of narratives by narrators, even by those who might be qualified as omniscient. Furthermore, a narrative may be partially narrated by a narrator.\textsuperscript{11}

Spearing comments:

I accept both elements of this statement: that narrative does not require a narrator, but that it is possible for a writer of narrative to create a narrator as part of his fiction, whether one of whom we are always aware, or one who functions only intermittently (for example, at the beginning and end of a narrative, or in interludes separating its episodes). (2005: 25)

I question the doctrine of the speaker or narrator as key to the interpretation of some medieval texts, and attempt instead to develop a conception of textual subjectivity. (2005: 31)

There are, however, narrative voices in Flamenca. One is an apparently objective reporter of events; it is mainly present in the first part of the work, up to the introduction of Archimbaldian focalization, and may be untrustworthy. Another voice is a commentating one, and is mainly present in the last part of the work, when Archimbaut is rehabilitated and the lovers reunited at his court.

Flamenca also features focalized narration, in which events and internal workings are presented from the points of view of Guillem, Flamenca, and Archimbaud. Flamenca thus has multiple narrative voices of distinct types.

While narrative voice is clearly present in Flamenca, because these are plural voices, and as there is no central and single voice, there is no narrator in the usual accepted sense. On the other hand, some of Flamenca’s narrative voices play with their roles as narrators. This fact fits in with Flamenca’s general metanarrative theme and supports Spearing’s idea of the “encoding of textual subjectivity” (2005: 1), as contrasted with an external human one.

It is possible that further narrative voices might have been present in those parts of Flamenca that are missing; and, indeed, it might be an overarching, and thus principal, narrative voice that was only present in these missing parts, and that might be a reason for their removal. Such hypothesizing aside, the text as it stands remains remarkable for its lack of centralized narrative voice.

Flamenca goes further still. When a narrative voice recounts events from the point of view of one of the protagonists, it is indistinguishable (this being a medieval manuscript, without quotation marks) from a protagonist. It is open to further interpretation whether this focalized narrative voice represents a persona of that same protagonist (one self looking back on a previous, separate self from a distance and from the outside), or whether the protagonist is a persona of the narrative voice. While the multiple-masking of a single poet must be borne in mind, and while focalization moves around from one character to another, the fact remains that events have still been narrated by a third person, who must be able to see what is going on.

Spearing’s narratorless narrative is not applicable to Flamenca, which does have narrative voices. But it has no central narrative voice, and its narrative voices are multiple and without any necessary hierarchization. So Spearing’s move away from a central narrative voice is useful, and it is certainly appropriate to question the separation of narrators from characters and the affixing of a privileged status to narrators. This is the point at which I differ from Marnette:

[Le narrateur n’est] pas seulement conteur mais aussi auteur: qui décide des informations à fournir aux auditeurs/lecteurs, qui livre ou non les interprétations
nécessaires à la compréhension du récit, qui contrôle les discours des personnages en leur donnant tantôt une vivacité réaliste (dialogues) ou en les insérant au sein de sa narration (DI). Pourquoi permettre la présence d’autres perspectives au sein du récit? Accorder à ces personnages le rôle de focalisateurs et donc de créateurs d’une autre réalité? Je pense que la réponse réside dans l’expression “autre réalité” et non dans la liberté des personnages focalisateurs/créateurs. En effet, étant eux-mêmes créées par le narrateur, les personnages dépendent de lui, aussi bien sûr que leurs perspectives. Par conséquent, la réalité créée par le regard des personnages focalisateurs dépend de façon ultime du narrateur. Ce qui importe donc pour nos propos, c’est la multiplicité des réalités que le narrateur incorpore dans son récit. (1998: 180)

Narrative voices and certain protagonists, in certain circumstances, act as arch-players. In order to make sense of this work and its metanarrative exploration of themes of *trobar*, it is useful to see narrators and characters as fictional entities in this text, both of whom play roles in a fiction. In such a Bakhtinian polyphony, “protagonist” is a more useful term than “character”; “narrative voice” (i.e. one of several voices) rather than “narrator”; and *persona* and “textual avatars” emphasizes that these are all roles adopted and played out on the same shared stage, in the same space.13

*Arch-players in the Roman de la Rose: Faus Samblant and Amour*

The closest parallels I have seen to the arch-player phenomenon are in Guillaume de Lorris’ and Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*. It features a complex layering of narrative voice, most clearly distinguished at the very start of the Guillaume de Lorris poem: external poet here and now – a previous self elsewhere fifteen years ago – that self’s dreaming *persona* – the lover. The layering of *personae* could be read as a *mise en abyme* of imaginative inventions, and maintaining accepted distinctions between narrator and character. This view of events is challenged by two other things that happen in the *Rose*.

12 “Avatar” in the sense coined by Neal Stephenson in *Snow Crash* (1989), and derived from the traditional religious and anthropological sense: Stephenson uses it for a figurative representation of oneself in the virtual reality of the “metaverse.”

Firstly, the part of the poem supposed to be Jean de Meun’s continuation of Guillaume’s one has a complex embedding of tales within tales and speeches within speeches: for example, Ami reports the Vilain Jaloux’s story. The narrative presents a single and unchanging point of view throughout, but this is disrupted by sections in direct speech which may be so lengthy (those of Raison and Nature, for example) that they constitute episodes in their own right. Within these episodes, point of view shifts to the main speaker concerned and that main speaker becomes a sub-narrator.

Secondly, two characters are linked to persons and events in the real world, one is linked to the external poet, and both of the characters are connected to each other. This network of relations links the characters Amour and Faus Samblant; the purported authors Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun; and Guillaume de Saint-Amour. Distinctions between character, narrator, external composer, and other external real-historical persons become fluid, as they all occupy the same reality inside the text. On the one hand, this is a fictionalization of externally-real persons, present in the text in avatar-form. On the other, the fictional entities – Amour, Faus Samblant – present strongly narratorial features. Finally, they both make key speeches which include passages of uncertain attribution – whether to the character or to a narrative voice.

Throughout the dissertation, I have drawn attention to Flamenca’s affinities with the Roman de la Rose; while I cannot prove a direct parental/filial relationship, the two texts are familiarly related, through common source-

---

14 Guillaume de Saint-Amour was active at the Sorbonne from the 1220s, a master of theology from c. 1238, and a leading figure in the conflicts of the 1250s, with the Church, over control of the university and its teachings, and problems arising from the increasing presence of the mendicant orders in university chairs. In 1254, he was one of the secular masters who successfully petitioned Pope Innocent IV to limit these incursions and restrict mendicant presence at the Sorbonne; Innocent died soon after, replaced by Alexander IV, who was on the other side in the debate and overturned Innocent’s restrictions. Guillaume was investigated and suspended in 1255, and the following year produced De Periculis novissimorum temporum (“On the Perils of the Final Days”), an antifraternal tirade and attack on, particularly, the Franciscan Gerard of Borgo’s Liber introductorius ad Evangelium aeternum, a commentary on Joachim of Flora’s new Gospel and pronouncements that the friars would be instrumental in bringing in the imminent Final Age. Guillaume sees the friars as instrumental – but on the side of the Antichrist. His arguments, and those of his contemporary Rutebeuf, are used in the Roman de la Rose, by Faus Semblant in his antifraternal tirade, ll. 11091-980. In 1257, De Periculis was condemned and ordered to be burned, and Guillaume was excommunicated and exiled from France. While he returned some ten years later, he does not appear ever to have returned to the Sorbonne.
materials and literary background, and a common scribal, Sorbonnian culture – later and perhaps less directly so in the case of Flamencac. We have seen above how, like the layered first-person voice in Guillaume de Lorris’ Roman de la Rose, Flamencac’s Guillem may be Archimbaut’s dream: suggesting that Archimbaut’s role parallels that of the poet in the Rose. Archimbaut, like Faus Samblant in Jean de Meun’s Rose, is a paradoxical figure who twists his own trope, injecting positive attributes, particularly that of truth-telling. In Archimbaut’s case, this is balanced by his untrustworthiness as a madman; Faus Samblant’s case is explored below. There are also links between Archimbaut and Amor, and slippages between Archimbaut’s words and those of a commentating narrative voice: reminiscent of slippage between Amour and the first-person narrative voice in Jean de Meun’s Rose. It is to Faus Samblant and Amour in the Rose that I shall now turn.

Much critical attention has been devoted to less salubrious aspects of Faus Samblant’s identity, and some recent work has looked more closely at his role in the text as a whole.\(^{15}\) An incongruous presence in Amour’s army, he is the son of Fraud and Hypocrisy, creature of disguise and deceit, associated with the Antichrist. He incarnates the liar paradox:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sanz faille traiystres sui gié} \\
\text{Et pour larron m’a dieus jugié;} \\
\text{Parjurs sui.} \\
\text{(ll. 11173-5)}
\end{align*}
\]

C’est voirs, mes je sui ypocrites.
(ll. 11236)
Mais a vous n’ose je mentir,
Mais se je peüsse sentir
Que vous ne l’aperceüssiez,
La mençonge ou poing eüssiez:
Certainement je vous lobasse,
Ja pour pechie ne le laissasse;
Si vous porrai je bien faillir
S’ous m’en deviez malbaillir.
(ll. 11972-80)

Yet Faus Samblant also produces a substantial “straight-talking” speech, at the structural centre of his episode, and framed by confessions – the interrogation by Amour, and Faus Samblant’s later confession of Malebouche. And, as agent of the Apocalypse, he acts as a force of good in uncovering falseness (ll. 11532-984).

Jean de Meun’s *Rose* is structured by a pattern in which an authoritative figure representing a form of love is quizzed by the humble seeker of amorous knowledge. Earlier cases - Raison, Ami - had the Lover/first-person figure as questioner. In this episode, however, Faus Samblant dialogues with Amour, and it is Amour who is asking the questions, albeit not in a postulant position. The amorous authority’s position in the dialogue is filled by Faus Samblant; the first-person figure replaced by Amour.

A first explanation is that the whole Faus Samblant section is dominated by a topsy-turvy world, and, in further reversal of the usual order, the episode’s action is Faus Samblant’s trial before Amour at a lovers’ mock-court, trying not just the lovers but ideas of love itself (such as in Andreas Capellanus’ *De Amore*, and Flamenca’s *salutz* scene). In this episode, Amour judges whether or not Faus Samblant should be accepted into the Army of Lovers. Right at the very end of his case, Faus Samblant is accepted because he is a good lover, when he shifts topic suddenly from his sincerity to his relations with Astinance Contrainte:

M’amis contrainte astinance
A grant mestier de porveance:
Pieça fust morte et malbaillie
S’el ne m’eüst en sa baillie
Laissiez nous, moi et li, chevir.”
“Or soit, je t’en crois sanz plevir.”
(ll. 12009-14)
This closes the episode in recollecting the first introduction of Faus Samblant. When his presence is first noticed and questioned by Amour, it is guaranteed by Astinance Contrainte in similar terms of partnership and love, and Amour accepts using the same words, *or soit*:

```
Atant saut contrainte astinence,
Si prist faus samblant par la main,
“Sire, dist elle, o moi l’amain.
Si vous pri qu’il ne vous desplaïse.
Mainte honnor m’a faite et mainte aise:
Cist me soustient, cist me conforte;
S’il ne fust de fain fussse morte,
Si m’en devriez mains blasmer.
Tout ne vueill il les genz amer,
S’ai je mestier qu’il soit amez,
Et preudon et sainz hom clamez.
Mes amis est et je s’amie,
Si vient o moi par compaignie.”
“Or soit!” dist il [...]
(ll. 10484-97)
```

A second explanation is that, like the *salut* scene in *Flamenca*, this episode set at a court of love involves play with simultaneous multiple realities and temporalities, the presence of literary objects, the creation of a space for readers/audience, and fluidity in textual roles. These things appear together in Faus Samblant’s description of his apocalyptic world. Time slips out of joint: the apocalyptic future is in the present; the Antichrist is unborn - in the womb of Astinence Contrainte, Faus Samblant’s companion; and he is fully fledged - as Faus Samblant’s master. Times and spaces have multiplied and become seamlessly simultaneous:

```
Je n’ai mais cure d’ermitages
J’ai laissiez desertz et boscages
Et quit a saint jean baptiste
Du desert et manoir et giste.
Trop par estoie loing gitez:
Es bours et es chastiaux, as citez,
Ai mes sales et mes pales
Ou l’en puet corre a plain eslaïs
E di que je sui hors dou monde;
Mais je m’i plunge et m’i affunde
E mi aese et baigne et noe
Mieus que nus poissons de sa noe.
Je suis des vallez antecrist,
Des larrons dont il est escrit
```
Faus Samblant is everywhere and nowhere, in the anti-space of the Anti-Christ – all space, no space, and the space of the Apocalypse. Earlier, Faus Samblant rejected the standard concept of identity, tied to a fixed place of belonging:

-En quel lieu mieus te troveroient
Se du trover mestier avoient
Et comment l’en te connoistra,
Car granz sens en toi connoistre a.
Di nous en quels lieus tu converses.
-Sire, j’ai mansions diverses
Que ja ne vous quier reciter,
(Amours/Faus Samblant, ll. 10951-57)

Mais toutefois, comment qu’il aille,
Covient il, dit amours, sanz faille
Que ci tes mansions nous nommes
(Amours, ll. 10991-93)

Qui Faus Samblant vorra connoistre
Si le quierre au siecle ou en cloistre
(Faus Samblant, ll. 11011-12)

Briement, je me vois osteler
La ou je me puis mieus celer.
(Faus Samblant, ll. 11015-16)

These spatial and identity factors recall Chapter Two’s exploration of Guilhem de Peitieus’ Pose de chantar m’es pres talenz, and a new space it offered for poetry. Here, too, the literary appears. The apocalyptic section of the Faus Samblant episode includes a significant collection of exegetically important books, in an embedded structure. They form a transition bridging the gap between worlds, simultaneously in several realities, forming a kind of meta-world of their own in which times and spaces are united. Books are in the core of Faus Samblant’s section, positioning reading and interpretation at its heart. All of them concern the apocalypse, something that in itself emphasizes simultaneous multiple space and time, especially in eschatological, exegetical reading. A first layer of real-historical-contemporary works produce a first reality-flipping in an
embedding of external reality within the *Rose*. Reference is made to the Sorbonne problems of the 1250s; to Guillaume de Saint Amour and his *De Periculis* (line 11492); and to *l’Evangile pardurable* (line 11806), that is, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino’s *Liber introductorius ad evangelium aeternum*. Inside this group is Faus Samblant’s own exegesis of the *Evangile pardurable*, featuring embedded scriptural citation – which are at once the physical books most grounded in external reality and the most sacred, eternal, and universal texts.16 External reality is connected to a third reality, that of eternal, universal Christian time, coupled in enjambment in a date occurring in the middle of the apocalyptic section’s bookish *mise en abyme*:

> Quant par mauvaise entencion,  
> En l’an de l’incarnacion  
> Mil et .ij. c. v. et L,  
> N’est homs vivanz qui m’en desmante,  
> (ll. 11799-802)

Thus, books present within the *Rose* are a means to bring several realities together simultaneously in a space devoted to a unified concept of apocalypse, exegesis, and reading. This has two effects on textual roles. First, these are brought together into the same sphere of existence, as external and internal realities, and different spaces and times, are brought together. Second, books and reading exist in a space shared by the reader; bringing the reader into the text.

The *Roman de la Rose* is purported to be by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Neither of them is named as an author by a first- or third-person narrative voice; the text as we know it has no framing epilogues (both parts are apparently unfinished) and, while the first (Guillaume’s) part does have a first-person framing prologue, no naming occurs there. The purported authors’ names appear in a section of the text (ll. 10499-682) spoken by a first-person voice that has often been attributed as authorial apostrophe. Yet there are no indications that this is a certain named author speaking rather than any other narrative *persona*; there are no changes in time to indicate a shift from an event-narrating

---

16 “l’escripture” (l. 11347); “saint pol” (l. 11387); “saint machi / - c’est a savoir l’evangelistre - (ll. 11606-7); “li testamenz ancien” (l. 11611); “saint jehan baptiste” (l. 11707); “li .iiij. evangelistre” (l. 11826).
voice to a commentating one (one would expect a shift from past to present); and context indicates that the passage is actually spoken by Amour.

Amour discusses the past, present, and future Rose. At the centre of this passage is a peculiarly deep and complex mise en abyme of the book in itself, self-reflexive mirror: Devroient apeler ce livre / Le miroir aus amoureus (lines 10654-5). It “flips” space and time, as happens in the Faus Samblant passage just discussed. Jean - the presumed present composer - is not yet born. A “Guillaume de Lorris” is in peril from his Jalousie. Amour comes to his assistance, as Guillaume’s successor, “Jehan Chopinel ...Meun,” is not yet born and cannot:

Vezi Guillaume de Lorris  
Cui jalousie sa contraire  
Fait tant d’angoisse et de duel traire  
Qu’il est en perill de morir,  
Se je ne pens del secorir.  
Cil m’en conseillast volentiers  
Com cil qui miens est touz entiers.  
Et droiz fust, car pour lui meïsmes  
En ceste paine nous meïsmes  
De touz nos barons assembler,  
Pour bel acueil toudre ou embler,  
(ll. 10530-40)

Ci se reposera Guillaume  
Li cui tombliaus soit plains de baumes,  
D’encens, de mirre et d’aloé,  
Tant m’a servi, tant m’a loé.  
Puis vendra jehans chopinel,  
Au cuer jolif, au cors isnel,  
Qui naistra sur laire a meun,  
(ll. 10565-71)

Car quant Guillaume cessera,  
Jehans le continuera  
Aprés sa mort, que je ne mente,  
(ll. 10591-93)

Mais par cestui ne puet ore estre,  
Ne par celui qui est a nestre,  
Car il n’est mie ci presanz  
(ll. 10611-13)

Que cil jehans qui est a nestre.  
(l. 10622)

As shown by se je ne pens del secorir (l. 10534), je and .l - Amour and Guillaume – exist and interact in the same reality. Guillaume and Jalousie have been
interacting in the same reality, and it seems that is the also the arena for the adventures of the *barons* (of Amour’s army) and the unfortunate Bel Acueil. Amour and Guillaume also coexist, as Guillaume has been an acolyte of Love: *tant m’a servi, tant m’a loé* and *cil m’en conseillast volentiers / com cil qui miens est touz entiers*.

Meanwhile, two passages (ll. 10565-71, 10591-93) suggest a second reality, usually interpreted as that of writing, and as evidence for identifying the *Rose* authors as the external persons Guillaume de Lorris (for whose existence no external evidence exists) and Jean Chopinel (identified from evidence external to the *Rose* as Jean de Meun). Guillaume and Jean occupy the same position within the reality of the text. The both are referred to in the third person; the former in the past tense, the latter in the future. Jean could be real and Guillaume his fiction; equally, Guillaume could be real and Jean his fiction. It is unknown whether either or both may be identified with persons in external reality. Both are clearly distinct from the first-person voice speaking here, Amour.

This reality is brought together with the internal one, as what Guillaume is doing - *a servi, a loé, cesser* – is both service to Love and writing. As in other erotic-poetic conflations, the two are one and the same thing. Amour plays a part in composition – *secorir, cil m’en conseillast* – albeit not the same kind of part played by Guillaume and Jean. This merging of realities has usually been read as supporting evidence for *persona* theories: the “Guillaume” and “Jean” here are not the externally-real persons, but their fictionalized versions as textual avatars. This explains how they can perform two kinds of textual action at once – writing and adventuring.

Amour will have a similar relationship with Jean, and, similarly, play a part in composition. It is also Amour who names the book *Le miroir aus amoreus* (l. 10655), names it as “this book” (l. 10654, *ce livre*) and not attached to the names of any of its composers, and indeed attributes its naming to its future readers:

    Pour ce qu’il iert tant mes amis,
    Je l’afublerai de mes eles
    Et li chanterai notes teles

Que puis qu’il sera hors d’enfance,
Endoctrinez de ma sciance,
Si fleûstera noz paroles
Par carrefors o par escoles,
Selone le langage de france,
Par tout le regne, en audience,
Que jamais cil qui les orront
De dous maus d’amér ne morront,
Pour qu’il le croient seulement.
Que tant en lira proprement
Que trestuit cil qui ont a vivre
Devroient apeler ce livre
Le miroer aus amoureus,
(ll. 10640-55)

The merging of realities also appears as the distinction between objectives of rescuing “Guillaume de Lorriz” and Bel Acueill becomes fluid, rendering the two persons in need of rescue less distinct from one another. If Guillaume is as narcissistic as the love depicted in “his” text (i.e. the first part of the Rose, purportedly by Guillaume de Lorris), it is, surely, fittingly narcissistic for him to be conflated with Bel Acueill, gender-ambiguous lover of the first-person-figure, trapped and drowning in self-love. It is also appropriate for him to be trapped inside his sterile creation, and later entombed there, as suggested by ci se reposera Guillaume.

Bel Acueill and Guillaume de Lorris are brought together in the same plane of action with a third person, Guillaume de Saint-Amour. The imprisonment of a Guillaume and its association with peril recall Guillaume de Saint-Amour, his De Periculis, and his suffering the imprisonment of exile; creator of his own prison, imprisoned by his own book. Guillaume de Saint-Amour is first referred to in the Rose when Faus Samblant is interrogated by Amour, to prove why he should be included in the Army of Lovers. Faus Samblant is willing to do Amours’ bidding, even when this hinders his case before Amours and could lead to reprisals from those who do not wish to hear the truth, and even if he must die for it (ll. 10958-60, 10997-11001, 11003-06). In martyrdom for the truth, Faus Samblant compares himself to Guillaume de Saint-Amour:

Se cil de saint amour ne ment
(ll. 11492)
S’il n’avoit en sa verité
L’acort de l’université
Et dou peuple communément
Qui ooit son preeschement.
Nus preudons de ce refuser
Vers dieu ne se puett escuser.
Qui grouchier en voudra, si grouce,
Ou courroucier, si s’en courrouce,
Car je ne m’en tairoie mie,
Se j’en devoie perdre vie
Ou estre mis contre droiture
Comme saint pol en chartre oscure
Ou est baniz dou roiaume
A tort, com fu maistre guillaume
De saint amour...
(ll. 11497-11511)

Guillaume de Saint-Amour is a “Guillaume”: guile personified, wily quest. He is “de Saint Amour”: “saintly love,” final sanctuary of spiritual love. Guillaume de Saint-Amour reflects Guillaume (de Lorris). The other parts of his name, and self, would map respectively onto Amours, and Saint map onto Jean, that is, the John of Revelations, the textual lynchpin holding the whole central Faus Samblant passage together, through apocalyptic and exegetical references. Guillaume de Saint-Amour brings together, through association, three persons associated with the composition of the text: Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, and Amour. Two of these are usually read as being authors, and the third as a protagonist like any other; but all three are presented in the same reality and sphere of action here.

Amour is more than just a protagonist. The modern narrator/protagonist distinction is far from convincing here. It is far more useful, for making sense of Amour’s role in the Rose, to flatten the distinction and see both narrators and protagonists as fictional roles, with a greater fluidity for the comparative “fictionalization” of externally-real persons and “factualization” of protagonists.

While externally-real persons have adopted a more “fictional” form here, fictional entities have also adopted a more realistic one; the two move towards a middle ground close to that one usually reserved for narrators, who are, after all, personae in a textually-internal reality of persons in a textually-external one. Narrative voice is not necessarily any less a fiction than is character, nor more to
be privileged (in terms of truth). In a text such as the *Rose*, both are protagonists. Amour is placed in the same reality as Guillaume and Jean, on an equal textual footing with them, a reality in which both of them occupy identical “fictional/fictionalised” positions.

This is a useful device for auctorial self-defence, in that a writer is present within his work as a shadow-self, fictionalised, fragmented. If, taking the orthodox line, Jean de Meun is viewed as the author of (at least part of) the *Rose*, the fact that all composers are fictionalized as avatars within their book permits Jean a degree of self-enclosure and self-defence within the book, a positive twist on Guillaume’s self-imprisonment and Amours’ distance into an ethereal realm. He can also distance himself from “his” work and disclaim responsibility – much as happens in the retraction passage, and as will be picked up in Pierre and Gontier Col’s and Jean de Montreuil’s defence in the *Querelle*, in reading characters as characters, judged not on absolute grounds but as acting in character, in their own terms and reality, appropriately.18

Guillaume de Saint-Amour is placed at once as the culmination in a linear chain of compositors, as the heart of that same sequence read as circular *mise en abyme*, and – enclosed in this peculiar central book-heavy space, which includes his book – as these fragmented parts of himself, reunited. His “parts” were dismembered and disseminated throughout this (Faus Samblant-centred) passage, though one, Amours, remains free to continue the work left off by the Guillaume-part on his imprisonment.19 I would not go further to postulate Guillaume de Saint-Amour as actual, externally-historically real composer of the whole *Rose*. I would suggest that he is the central writer-figure in the work, fragmented and “fictionalized” in the same way desire itself is in the various personifications, and as first-person *personae* are, in the first part of the *Rose*.

He, Amour, and Faus Samblant are cases of textual figures that do not map exactly on to usual textual roles; and they all have something to do with a narrative voice attached to the external composer. In the *Rose*, the external

---

18 Appropriately, that is, in the terms of Aristotle’s *Poetics* 3, 7, 9, and 11.
composer goes to considerable trouble to avoid entrapment by and in his own work, to escape future censure, and remain alive. Any writer who becomes so bound up with his book’s reputation and becomes so much part of his book as to render the two indistinct risks losing himself as he is subsumed into his book. Some celebrity - such as that of Guillaume de Saint-Amour - is perilous, as artistic fame and immortality does not result in a life in (after) death, but rather an eternal imprisonment, a living death.

An apparent auctorial retraction (ll. 15139-306; it is Pierre Col who first suggests this is an authorial apostrophe) suggests prescient awareness of dangers to come. The retraction-passage is usually attributed to a first-person voice avatar, “Amant,” a voice often seen as the most external one in the Rose, that closest to the real-historical external Jean de Meun. The passage lies within a longer transition-episode, condensing the action before the Last Battle; embedded within it is a section which is often read as an apostrophe by the external author. This has more to do with scribal rubrication than any actual textual and contextual evidence, and is a questionable identification.

Notez ce que ci vois disant:
D'amours avroiz art souffisant,
Et se vous i trouvez rien trouble
J'esclaircirai ce qui vous trouble
Quant le songe m'orrez espondre:
Bien savrez lors d'amours respondre,
S'il est qui en sache oposer,
Quant le texte m'orrez gloser.
Et savrez lors par cel escrit
Quanque j'avré devant escrit
Et quanque je be a escrire.
(ll. 15147-57)

Mais pour ce en escript le meïsmes
Que nous et vous de vous meïsmes
Puissons connoissances avoir,
Car il fait bon de tout savoir.
D'autre part, dames honorables,
S'il vous samble que je di fables,
Pour menteour ne m'en tenez,
Mais as aucteurs vous en prenez
Qui en leur livres ont escrites
Les paroles que j'en ai dites
Et ceuls avoec que j'en dirai.
Ne ja de mot n’en mentirai
Se li proueume n’en mentirent
Qui les anciens livres firent.
(ll. 15215-29)

Par coi mieus m’en devez quiter:
Je n’i fais riens fors reciter,
Se par mon geu qui poi vous couste,
Quelque parole n’i ajoute
Si com font entr’euls li poete
Quant chascuns la matiere tret,
Dont il li plaist a entremettre;
Car si com tesmoigne la lettre,
Profiz et delictation,
C’est toute leur entencion.
Et se gent contre moi groucent
Qui se tormentent et courroucent,
Qui sentent que je les remorde
Pour ce chapitre ou je recorde
Les paroles de faus samblant,
Et pour ce saillent assimblant
Que blamer ou pugner me vueillent,
Pour ce que de mon dit se dueillent,
Je faz bien protestacion
Conques ne fu m’entencion
De parler contre houme vivant
Sainte religion sivant
Ne qui sa vie use en bonne oeuvre,
Ainz pris mon arc et l’entesoie,
Quel que pechierres que je soie,
Si fis ma saieta voler
Generalment pour affoler.
(ll. 15237-64)

Ainc d’autre saing ne fis bersaut,
La vols et vueill que mi fers aut,
Si trais seur euls a la volee.
Et se pour avoir la colee
Avient que desoz la saieta
Aucuns de son bon gre se mete,
Qui par orgueill si se decoive
Que deseur soi le coup recoive,
Puis se plaint que je l’ai navre,
Courpes n’en ai ne ja n’avre
Neis si en devoit perir;
Car je ne puis nullui ferir
Qui dou coup se vueille garder
S’il set son estat regarder.
Neis cil qui navre se sent
Pour le fer que je li present,
Gart que plus ne soit ypocrates,
Si sera de la plaie quitée.
Et nepourquant, qui que s'en plaigne,
Conbiен que preudomme se faigne,
Ainc riens n'en dis, mon esciant,
Comment qu'il m'ault contrariant,
Qui ne soit en écrit trouvé
Et par expirement prouvé,
Ou par raison au mains prouvable,
A cui qu'il soit désagreable.
Et s'il y a nule parole
Qui sainte eglise tiengne a fole,
Se je puis souffire a l'amende.
(ll. 15277-306)

Pretending for a moment that we have no idea who is speaking here, purely textual indicators point towards two other figures, neither of whom is an external author. The first is Amour, the second Faus Samblant.

As we have seen, this book of an art of love - *d'amours avroiz art souffisant* (l. 15148) - was not described as belonging to a specified author; further, it is the book of all lovers. The address to an ambiguous second-person plural, and mention of this art of love, recalls Amour’s earlier speech (ll. 10640-74) to an ambiguous second-person that is the Army of Love and/or the external audience. In its narrative context, there is no sensible reason for this passage not to be spoken by Amour, rather than an authorial apostrophe interrupting Amour’s lengthy exhortation to his troops.

The first-person voice may also be associated with Faus Samblant. The defence of acting as pure, impartial agent of truth, blind justice-like, recalls Faus Samblant’s apocalyptic endeavours. The key defence of attributing potentially objectionable content to the character concerned, not holding the author responsible, connects writer and reader in impartiality. Like Faus Samblant’s section, this one makes an association between books and truth: here, to other external books and their authoritative status in conferring truth-value (Sallust, l. 15182). The matter of proof would fit with a scholastic debate, trial, or religious trial context. The start of this passage recalls Faus Samblant’s earlier antifraternal and antihypocritical polemic, shifted here to emphasise the general nature of these attacks on hypocrisy, as being generally misanthropic rather than specifically anticlerical. The liar in denial recurs: *pour menteour ne m'en tenez;*
ne ja de mot n’en mentirai. Reference to the Sorbonne problems (ll. 15304-06) recalls Faus Samblant’s and Guillaume de Saint-Amour’s strong stances for the truth, come what may, and come what may at the hands of religious authorities. Just as happened with Faus Samblant’s earlier passage, this can be read as a piece of “shepherd boy crying wolf” tragic sincerity, as lies, or as an invitation to readers to make up their own minds in the freest possible circumstances of complete balance between available options. Thus, as in Faus Samblant’s earlier use of the liar paradox, doubt is cast on the sincerity of the retraction.

The passage could also, of course, be a mockery of the whole idea of retractions, an attempt to subvert censure or censorship. It is worth noting that this passage is not, technically, a retraction, as it only expresses willingness to write a retraction in the future, if this is deemed necessary.

Debate around Faus Samblant appears to have started out in the earliest stages of copying and transmission, and shows a contemporary awareness of Faus Samblant’s problematic nature, and of these problems being to do with textual roles. The main Faus Samblant section itself has proven a highly unstable part of the Rose in manuscript transmission and one of the most prone to rewriting. Retractions are juggled around in certain manuscripts, so as to be closer to the parts they concern. The Faus Samblant passages are often cut, and may be glossed as being for wise ears only. In addition, the Rose is refashioned several times from the later 13th c. until the early 15th. When the Querelle de la

21 Intermediate refashionings, prior to the Querelle, include: Guillaume de Deguilleville, Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine; Jehan le Fevre, Lamentations de Matheolus and Livre de Leesce; and versions by Gui de Mori and Clément Marot.
Rose breaks out in 1402, these intermediate texts have become firmly associated with the Guillaume de Lorris-Jean de Meun one, and affected its reading, most clearly in its misreadings by Christine de Pisan.22

The intermediate refashionings damaged subtleties in the representation of personae and removed ambiguities in the identity of first-person voices so as to attribute their words to Jean de Meun. This changed the way different kinds of textual personae coexisted in a fluid space, and removed the possibility that space gave external composers (such as Jean de Meun) and audience (such as the present reader) to have textual avatars and play imaginative roles in the narrative’s imaginative space.

A significant topic in the Querelle de la Rose is the role of the free reader, and the open text’s autonomy from its writer. Jean de Meun’s supporters - the royal secretaries Pierre and Gontier Col, and Jean de Montreuil - defend the need to read characters such as Faus Samblant as characters, and judged not on absolute grounds, but as acting in character, in their own terms and reality, and appropriately. In one of the finest formulations since Aristotle’s Poetics, emphasis is placed on the separation between creator and creature, and between author’s and character’s opinions; and on the reader’s freedom of interpretation. The Querelle may be read as an important point in the history of literary subjectivity, and of freedom of expression and interpretation. Yet distinguishing clearly between external author and internal character also forces a clear distinction between external and internal realities, to the detriment of a fluid space in which multiple times, spaces, and textual roles could coexist; including strongly narratorial arch-players, personifications from another dimension such as Amour, personae of externally-real persons such as the poet, and avatars for audiences contemporary and future.

*Flamenca* has been called a “realist” work – in contrast with medieval narratives involving magic and the marvellous. This has led some earlier critics into the “realist fallacy” of reading *Flamenca* for real-historical features, in part providing useful historical information on 13th century life. One such feature is the proposition of possible dates for the story’s action., using the timing of events in the story in conjunction with the liturgical calendar. Another is the identification of characters in *Flamenca* with real-historical persons. A third looks for traces of an external author. I deem this approach to reading *Flamenca* fallacious as it must be remembered that this work does not present itself as being factual, the historical reporting of real events. I hesitate to label it “fictional,” as that is an anachronistic concept, and the contemporary line between “fact” and “fiction” is blurry, as is that between “history,” “myth,” and “story.” Given the importance of ingenuity to the work, it would be plausible to call this a work of imagination.

Without going so far as to attribute intentionality where none may be proven, the romance may be read as alluding to more than one date simultaneously. This would be a good tactic for setting the action in a vague past. Time is blurred, and allows allusions to other times, places, and realities to coexist – for instance, hints at Paris and Helen, Tristan and Iseut, Floire and Blanchefleur, and Eleanor of Aquitaine (and, according to his *vida* and *razos*, perhaps Bernard de Ventadorn). This effect can be connected to another multiplicatory “blurring.” Alongside other named persons of varyingly realistic nature – Flamenca, Amors – historically real persons make appearances in the text, as do some further named persons who can be made out, squinting a little, as looking rather like one or more real-historical figures. Much has been made of the historical persons, partly in attempting to fix the dates of *Flamenca’s* composition and of its events. These persons have been problematic, though, as they do not coincide in real time and space, even with a lot of squinting. Some readings have managed to squeeze a respectable number of protagonists into reality; none have managed to place them all successfully; some cheat, making unmalleable characters out to be definitely fictitious if they refuse to fit the
scheme. A sub-set of real-historical identifications, along similar lines, has led critics to find \textit{Flamenca}’s author in the text.

I would argue that these historical persons are been fed into the allusive mix in the same way as are other characters from other times and realities, and on the same level. The same thing happened to Guillaume de Saint-Amour in the \textit{Roman de la Rose}. The real is being used as imaginative material, treated like any other in the pool of rhetorical \textit{imaginatio}. By treating materials equally, any apparent distinctions in their status disappear: “more fictional” material which it is more permissible to play with; “factual” material which should be left alone respectfully. Thus, not only do the differing senses of “histoire” fuse, it is to the advantage of imaginative irreality.

Simultaneous multiple temporality is an excellent stratagem for creating a cyclical structure within the romance, of repeating events. Archimbaut’s court, at the close of the romance, may continue in interminable days of jousting, its protagonists caught in a nightmare loop. Alternatively, Guillem may supplant Archimbaut, and the story repeat itself, either with an affair between Flamenca and the King (as at the romance’s opening), or with Guillem becoming the “new” jealous Archimbaut, and Flamenca having another affair. Reading the narrative from the points of view of its principal protagonists suggested an oneric-fantastic \textit{mise en abyme} for each. It already produces a temporal multiplicity, and multiplication of realities, within the romance; we are far from the “realism” lauded in \textit{Flamenca}, and well on the side of Payen’s “irrealism.”\footnote{Payen 1978.} This effect may continue. Archimbaut’s fragmented dream-self may continue fragmenting itself through Guillem becoming the jealous, voyeuristic fantasist in his turn, resulting in a further multiplication of dates: just as, in the \textit{Roman de la Rose}, past, present, and future are brought together by Faus Samblant and Amour.

\textbf{4.3 Resignation to courtly rehabilitation and control}

We have seen how Guillem, Flamenca, and Archimbaut enact adventures of erotic and poetic \textit{trobar}, and how Archimbaut occupies a privileged narrative
position as *archi-bauzar*, architect and controller. Aside from Archimbaut the voyeur-recounter, the other persons able to observe events in the main body of the narrative (Guillem’s section, the central poem-affair one, and Flamenca’s section) are Guillem’s squires and Flamenca’s ladies. Clari and Margarida fulfill the contemporary idea of *actor* as “witness,” which is related to textual composition as many works involve a witness in their communication and transmission to an audience (Archbishop Turpin in the *Chanson de Roland*, for instance). That witness may be identified as the work’s composer, through the narrative voice adopting the first person and the role of witness to events. This may be in the form of devices to emphasize narrative veracity: claiming to have seen all these things; declaring that one is telling them truly and exactly as observed, no more and no less; and swearing not to be lying.

There are two exceptions to *amor coral* being used with reference to Flamenca or to a couple. Both are significant, as they provide a further twist on the romance’s focalizations, adding an overarching double one: of Margarida and Clari.24 The first exception is the phrase’s second use (l. 2822). Guillem complains to Amors, declaring that he lays his heart bare to her – in complete and defenceless openness - and that he suffers from *amor coral*: it is at the mention of these words that Amors appears to him and responds.

She is shocked:  
*ca hanc mais hom no mi dis tan, / ni tan re mais non ausi / qu’om mi parles d’amor aisi* (ll. 2842-44: “no man e’er spoke to me thus. / I never have heard anyone / who told of love as you have done”). The second exception (l. 7641) is a reference to Clari (one of Guillem’s squires) as Margarida’s *coral amic*.

These two references – to specific male protagonists as *aman coral* – effectively frame the central, *tenso*-section. Their pairing also brings Guillem and

---

24 Another possible couple of *essenghatz* composers would be the innkeeper and bathkeeper, Peire Guy, and his wife Bellapila. She speaks many languages, and weaves a metaphorical “text.” When Guillem acquires his tonsure-disguise, she collects his hair (l. 3585- ) to weave a loop for a mantle-sleeve; the passage mentions the possibility that Flamenca will wear it away into nothingness by a thousand of kisses. The loop thus resembles the *salutz*. It is also associated with the earlier and later appearances of a sleeve. These all become interconnected textual metaphors, and further *mises en abyme* of the text, “looping” within itself. The whole description is in hypothetical terms: maybe the hair-cloth was actually used for a copy, which is what we have now. It would be very nice if this *tissu-texte* were to have contained the *salutz*, thus preserved outside the text, whilst explaining its lacunary absence (and yet still inside it, turning realities inside out in a looping manner).
Clari into close proximity. In Guillem’s section of the narrative, his donzels are mentioned several times, often in unnamed reference to one of them (ll. 1846, 1862, 2685, 3268, 3575, 3692, 3804). He himself only ever refers to them as such (in the central section, l. 6431); this may be contrasted with Flamenca’s interactions and very different addressing of her ladies, calling them “friend” or by their names. Donzel is only used twice in the central section, both times in the plural, and by Guillem. The second time (l. 6879) is in the form of an indirect kind of indirect speech: *Guillems tos / un pauc avan que lains fos / per so que-l donzel o ausisson / a d’els acuillir si garnisson* (ll. 6877-80: “William coughed before / the two of them opened the door, / to warn the young people, and give them / time to make ready to receive them”). Donzel does not reappear; it is absent from the section after the *salutz*.

Clari is named for the first time when he is brought to meet and pair up with Margarida (l. 6418). He is named elsewhere, with two exceptions, as part of a pair, invariably in the form “Ot and Clari” (ll. 7287, 7357, 7420, 7449, 7563, and 7598); these references to the buddy-couple all occur in the final part of the narrative, after the *salutz*. Clari is named twice independently of Ot; this never happens for Ot. Both times, he is attached to Margarida (ll. 6470 and 7641). Margarida, we recall, is to some extent educated (l. 1354: esse[nha]da), and has been called a *trobairis* (l. 4577). In a parallel “finding” and in reversal of Flamenca coming to life through Guillem, and then his becoming her creature: Clari comes to life through Margarida.

Putting this together with what we already know of the narrative’s divisions by changing focalization and its representation of amors corals, Flamenca looks like a game of two halves. The first part of the romance – up to *hai las* - and the last part – from after the *salutz* to the end – may be associated with Clari. He starts out in a partial, unnamed, existence in the shadow of his master. He is passive, yet able to observe and pithily criticize him. We know that Guillem desires to be an aman coral, and saying this is what brings Amors to him; *amors coral* is otherwise not mentioned. Guillem brings Flamenca to life. In the middle part, we move to Margarida viewing her mistress’s erotic and poetic progress. Flamenca, Margarida, and Alis all discuss the coral and amor corals, as
does the commentating voice. Margarida enacts derivative creativity twice: she is named, by Flamenca, as a *trobairis* (doubly derivative); then, in inverted imitation of Guillem, Margarida brings Clari to life.

Clari picks up the narrative at some point after the *salutz* scene; certainly by the time Archimbaut’s court begins and Guillem and his *entourage* re-enter the scene (l. 7182). Subject-matter and style both change dramatically. Attention shifts to male-male pairings in friendship and in combat. The game of love is replaced by that of jousting. *Amors corals* disappears from view. Clari and Oto are named as such, rather than as *donzels*, and named as a pair of friends. Clari is also named as *Clari son coral amic* (attached to Margarida). Clari has supplanted Guillem, the would-be *amic coral*, and “won” the educational game of becoming a true lover and poet. He has bettered his better; his is the final subversion in the romance, and the triumph of *cor noble* over the superficial superiorities of birth and priviledge. He also makes sure to be knighted along the way, and by Archimbaut, thus at least partially transferring allegiance to him, and away from Guillem (ll. 7287-94).

Focalizations on Guillem and Flamenca may be reattributed to Clari and Margarida, who observe their master and mistress and comment on their actions at a distance, adopting third-person textual avatars. These resemble the narrative voice of focalization, as they report Guillem’s and Flamenca’s thoughts and motivations for their actions and words. It is possible that these thoughts are spoken, and heard by the squires and ladies. Flamenca certainly does most of her musing out loud, indeed in conversation with her maids; and it is reported as such, and as direct rather than indirect discourse. When Guillem soliloquizes, it is uncertain where his squires are; they often reappear mysteriously. It would be sensible for a squire to remain within earshot of his master, in case he was needed. Earshot would mean having an ear next to the door, if the master is in his chamber talking to himself, not necessarily very loudly, and perhaps in a worrying way. Such proximity would explain why, when Guillem passes out under a tree in amorous rapture, he is rapidly resuscitated by his squires.

Once the ladies are brought together with the squires, they converse. The ladies also talk amongst themselves. In the *salutz* scene, Flamenca notices a
friendliness between Archimbaut and Alis. We have already seen how Archimbaut set up the affair, and is in a position to view goings-on in the ladies’ chamber through an aperture. He is also in contact with the ladies, who act as intermediaries between him and Flamenca, for instance when food is brought to her and he inquires after her wellbeing. It is possible that the ladies act as intermediaries in passing on other news to him; and that Archimbaut hears of the whole affair, from both sides, via Flamenca’s ladies. This reinforces his position as arch-player.

Guillem and Flamenca sought alternatives to the imprisonment of trobar and amor cortes. Their final failure is due to the presence of courtly agents, or courtiers, thanks to which no privacy is possible. The affair remains public – and subject to public scrutiny – throughout: albeit within the minimal court constituted by Guillem, Flamenca, Archimbaut, and their squires and ladies.

In the final part of Flamenca, Archimbaut recovers from his madness and holds court. While the lovers are reunited, it is in a completely public affair, played out in full courtly gaze: this is a compromise, as privacy and true love have proven impossible. Archimbaut’s sweet revenge reunites the lovers, but not in fin’ amor or amor coral; in circumstances of falseness, performance, public play, and manipulation by their courtly audience; and in a situation which he controls, albeit at an increasing distance, as he fades out of view. Flamenca ends at it started (in its present lacunary state), at court.

The court’s main figures, the king and queen of France, play significant roles in setting up and controlling our narrative’s action. This may be a comment by the Flamenca poet on the production of courtly literature, and it may have followed a missing prologue in which poet and patron were named, as happens frequently in the Old French courtly romance to which Flamenca is related and on which it comments. In Chrétien de Troyes’ Lancelot:

Puis que ma dame de Chanpaigne
Vialt que romans a feire anpraigne,
Je l’anprendrai molt volentiers
Come cil qui est suens antiers
(ll. 1-4)
Mes tant dirai ge que mialz oevre
Ses comandemanz an ceste oevre
Que sans ne painne que g’I mete.
Del Chevalier de la charrete
Comance Crestiens son livre,
Matiere et san li done et livre
La contesse et il s’antremet
De panser, que gueres n’i met
For sa painne et s’antancïon,
(ll. 21-29)

In Lancelot and in later romances on the matière de Bretagne, a parallel may be drawn between an external compositional pairing of poet and patron, and an internal couple.

The King and Queen exercise some control over the course of the narrative. They appear in an outermost courtly frame; this may be read as one of the features which makes Flamenca a “courtly romance.” As representatives of the external, public sphere (and France), it is appropriate that the King and Queen then disappear entirely in the main body of Flamenca, devoted to rebellion against amors cortes / trobar clus, and attempts to escape it into various kinds of private aizi (and the Occitan amors corals). Early in the work, a rather Guinievrian Queen flirts with Archimbaut and sows the seeds of his jealousy and so of the whole of our narrative, in response to a perceived indiscretion by her husband the King, to whom Flamenca had apparently given her sleeve. A sleeve of hers resurfaces at the end of the romance and closure of the courtly frame.

Rather than the Queen, it may be the King who has set up frame within frame within frame, and games aplenty, in order to get Flamenca, and thus end the romance on the misogynist note of that sort of prez being what woman is after. It is thanks to him that Archimbaut is removed from his palace and the lovers are able to spend quality time together in the closing court-scenes, final phase or renewal of the affair (ll. 7309-52, 7424-5, 7454-62, 7480-88, and 7617-23). The king/Flamenca frame would also support a reading of Flamenca as further subversion of Chrétien de Troyes’ romances. Usually, King Arthur is the centre to the court – to the whole world – yet, aside from limited and distant presence at the opening and ending of a romance, he is absent through the main
body of the narrative. He may be seen to direct the action indirectly, at a distance, but not to act directly in the narrative. In *Lancelot*, he is an absent cuckold. Here in *Flamenca*, however, the King might win the day, and end the narrative in the ideal courtly love of married man and otherwise married woman.

It is the king and queen who cause Archimbaut’s jealousy. The queen observes her husband sporting what she thinks is Flamenca’s sleeve when jousting; a first-person narrative voice warns us that this is uncertain, *de non sai cui* (l. 806). The queen reports this to Archimbaut, in a curiously flirtatious conversation (ll. 812-887), ended by his saying he knows what she’s playing at (*ieu conosc ben d’aitals affars*). The king and queen set affairs in motion and control them at a distance – a metaphorically poetic role. The sleeve itself is a loaded poetic device: an extreme reformulation of an earlier textual metaphor, Marie de Champagne giving Chrétien de Troyes *matiere* in the *Lancelot* prologue.

But the king and queen’s actions are subject to others’ observation and interpretation. They are monitored and watched by a higher level of voyeurism. Their actions, and the game-affair they are setting up, are acted out for an audience. The ruling couple’s roles are secondary to that of the court; and I should stress their playing roles.

The play-acting aspect is reflected in the closed set of the lovers’ idyll. Once the affair is over, and Archimbaut returned to sanity and rehabilitated, we move into the closing frame, in which the three central protagonists are reintegrated in the court. At this point, the affair is resumed – but now at court, watched and enjoyed by its spectators. The lovers’ idyll occupying the middle part of our text – and its main part, at around 5500 lines – is only a preliminary to the public staging of a courtly entertainment. The court itself is a plural protagonist, a single being with a single voice and gaze:

```
L'endeman de [la] Pantecosta
dreg a Nemurs li cortz s'ajosta
bela e rica e pleniera.
(ll. 187-89)
```

```
Ben son servit a lur talen,
Mais ben i ac plus de .V. cen
que cascuns esguarda e mira
Flamenca, e can plus cossira
```

The day that followed Whitsunday,
The court at Namur made display
Of splendor gorgeous, rich and rare.

Thus lavishly they all are served,
Yet more than five hundred observed
Flamenca, and while they gazed
Upon her loveliness, bemazed
One of the distinctions I drew earlier between the middle part of *Flamenca* and its outer frame was 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 only following as far as an outside observer could do – some 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. The court acts as a protagonist in the narrative, and narration from its point of view is a protagonist-based focalization like any other, and with a similar effect of sympathetic identification with the protagonist concerned. The court is *Flamenca*’s final arch-player.

Our principal protagonists become part of the court in the closing frame. In a positive sense, this is the happy ending of reconciliation. The gazing scene of ll. 524-30 is recapitulated, but now including Flamenca and Guillem, and with light radiating from all faces concerned, including Flamenca’s:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ben fo-l palais enluminatz,} & \quad \text{With shining light the palace gleamed,} \\
\text{quar de las donas venc clardatz} & \quad \text{As from the ladies’ faces beamed} \\
\text{que monstreron tota lur cara;} & \quad \text{The glow of beauty radiant.} \\
\text{mais la plus bella e la plus clara} & \quad \text{The fairest and most brilliant} \\
\text{fon de Flamenca que sezia} & \quad \text{Shone where Flamenca sat, right next} \\
\text{josta Guillem, e non sabia} & \quad \text{To William, ...}
\end{align*}
\]

Courtly interactions are highly formalized, staged, and performed. The first two examples below show this in the form of a dance, and the third, of similar mood, is a different sort of staged spectator sport:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tantost si son per las mas pres} & \quad \text{So they came forward, hand in hand,} \\
\text{cavallier, domnas e piucellas, ...} & \quad \text{Maiden and dame and lord and knight, ...} \\
\text{(ll. 722-23)} & \\
\text{... Las domnas soen si remiron} & \quad \text{... The ladies eye each other oft,} \\
\text{e fan lur amorosas feinchas.} & \quad \text{And amorusely feint and beckon} \\
\text{(ll. 732-33)} & \\
\text{Ja fo en la cort le sembelz.} & \quad \text{And through the court the summons went.} \\
\text{La dansa part, mais non er vista} & \quad \text{The lovely dance came to an end} \\
\text{tam bella, e cascuns atista} & \quad \text{And every knight made haste to send}
\end{align*}
\]
son escudier que l'aport tost
sas armas, e ges a rescost
non si son las donas partidas.
Gaias e pros es eissernidas
eran totas, e van sezer
als fenestral per miels vezer
los cavalliers ques armas porton,
que per lur amor si deporton.
(ll. 782-92)

These courtly performances 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 just cited:

car ben conois e ve e sap
que si dons laissus estaria
per los cadafals qu'el vezia.
(ll. 7274-76)

En los cadafals s'en montet
le reis e-l baron plus de .VII.
e Flamenca e sas donzellas
e mout d'autras donas ab ellas.
(ll. 7707-10)

In a negative sense, 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 courtly repetition – a
courtly nightmare. Worse still, although the lovers may now be together openly,
they are trapped in someone else's play. They are trapped, along with the
repeating sleeve that first appeared at the start of Flamenca, in perpetual return;
forced to perform for this society of spectacle in a Neverland of eternal play:

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 ensembs levon un crit
e dison ques ades la parca
del braz, ...
(ll. 7715-22)

Li baron dison antre lor,
apres disnar, davan lo rei,
ques “anc mais non viron tornei

283
on estiu tan bon feridor,  
mais sobre toz porta la flor  
cel c’ui matin o comenset  
a cui mi dons sa marga det."  
(ll. 8038-44)

There never was, nor such brave knights  
And that the laurels go, by rights,  
To him to whom my lady gave  
Her sleeve, the first knight, the most brave.

In contrast with the earlier sleeve-scene, Flamenca gives it to Guillem, very publicly, through an intermediary, in parody of the *salutz* scene earlier. Like the couples’s other public displays, this is an attempt to deal resourcefully with all that is *cortes* by undermining it from within. Here, the private space of *amors corals* is inserted inside the public one, as Guillem will carry the sleeve inside his shield, close to his heart, and clipped on with rather bookish clasps. The subterfuge is not successful, as the lovers are now back under courtly control. The lovers interact mechanically, especially in their 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 this outer frame. Far from being a secret token of love shared by the lovers, the sleeve is public property and its gift sanctioned (ll. 8038-44) and controlled (ll. 7720-22) by the court. In final cutting comment on love at court, and the possibilities of the private subverting the public or coexisting harmoniously with it: the court wins.

---

Conclusion: Beyond Flamenca — audience, ethics, and trobar

_Trobar_ is not just a pretty face or a well-turned line: it has purpose, and that purpose is reason and understanding. We have seen how _trobar_ conjoins the erotic and the poetic, in its “quest” of “adventure.” It is also a search for knowledge. Poetry is seen as having a very real and practical point. Poetry remains unfulfilled, sterile, and pointless until it is transformed into “applied poetry.” At this final stage of analysis, _trobar_ conjoins the erotic, the poetic, the epistemological, and the ethical. This is the final meaning of _trobar cor_, finding that “true course” in life.

L’amour était un art, une science, et [...] pour avoir le droit de s’en mêler il fallait en posséder les règles. [...] Or, précisément à l’époque où fut composé le _Conte de la Charete_, la lyrique des troubadours [...] pénétrait dans la France du Nord. [...] Dans le nord comme dans le midi, les princes, les hauts barons, les grandes dames se mettaient à _trouver_, et là aussi l’amour faisait le fond de cette poésie de société, et c’était l’amour tel que l’avaient présenté les troubadours, l’amour qui faisait le charme et le danger des réunions mondaines, l’amour illégitime et caché, et en même temps l’amour considéré comme un art et comme une vertu. Chrétien de Troyes est un des premiers, le premier peut-être, qui ait imité en langue d’oïl la poésie lyrique de la langue d’oc. [...] Dans l’une [des trois chansons qu’on a de lui], il exprime ses idées sur l’amour d’une façon qui correspond exactement à la doctrine des troubadours: « On ne peut faire aucun progrès dans la science de l’amour, dit-il, si on n’est à la fois _courtois_ et intelligent. »

_Nuls, s’il n’est cortois et sages,_
_Ne puet riens d’amors prendre._
(Gaston Paris 1883: 522)

Although he himself does not pick up on his own hint, Gaston Paris sows the seeds for much later moves away from discussion of “arts of love” as the codification of doctrine. This intellectualization of love may be interpreted as a different sort of organization of knowledge, going in two directions: learning and understanding, and teaching and application. Knowing poetry and being a good lover are already intimately entangled; for a start, each brings the other into being – love inspires poetry, poetry inspires love, and others’ poetry is a helpful guide when faced with amorous crises. Knowing poetry makes one a better person, and one only knows it once one has appropriated it – having made it
one’s own, part of one’s life; put its lessons into practice; and passed it on to others. *Trobar* extends to include the appropriation of *entendemen* – “listening” and “understanding.” Poetry serves as a guide to good deeds, with an aim of acquiring true knowledge, and the good life is one properly guided by a *trobar* of conjoined erotics, poetics, and ethics: *trobar cor*.

The first part of the dissertation title, *trobar cor*, centres on the notion of “finding the course.” My dissertation’s basic aim was to make sense of what I was reading. In doing so, I also found myself trying to make sense of how others make sense of things and understand them – protagonists in *Flamenca*, audience, the contemporary populace at large – and to see the larger-scale implications of understanding: erotic and poetic, and also ethical and epistemological. I read *Flamenca* as a metanarrative, and an allegory about poetic composition; that may be extended to a symbolic representation of attaining understanding in other spheres such as the ethical; and that again can be extended to allegories spiritual. *Flamenca* is a discursive metanarrative, that is, a book that is, in part, a debate about itself, and with itself, and about writing.

It shows, in extreme close-up and slow motion, what happens behind the scenes of a poem’s composition. In the main body of the narrative, the lovers meet in church and each in turn says two syllables to the other, which they then both go off and analyse, then another two syllables are produced, and so on. So the first phase of the affair brings together the poetic and the erotic simultaneously. In the periods between meetings, we see the really slow motion of interpreting the last exchange and composing the next one; and this involves considerable discussion of love. Love is not represented as something set down doctrinally and then disputed *pro et contra*, but as a fluid open discussion, with a strong element of play, and incorporating a lot of material from the previous “case-law” of love: mainly through reference to Ovid, and through allusions to *trobador* lyric.

This is one way that *Flamenca* works as a literary summa, incorporating a lot of earlier literature in various and subtle ways. Attempting to be a form of *summa* is a sign of participation in the spirit of the times. *Flamenca* may be placed in a set of 13th c. works sharing an idea of presenting the sum total of
knowledge, an idea in turn inspired partly by the rediscovery of works by Aristotle, and the perception of their completeness and interconnectedness as his complete works. The two most famous examples of this phenomenon may be Aquinas’ Summa theologiae and Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose. Later in the 13th and into the early 14th c., this carries over into the phenomenon of the literary summa; that is, collected works of various sorts: the codex containing various narrative works; the chansonnier song-book anthology, such as those of Occitan poetry with razos andvidas framing and arranging the poems and giving coherence to the book as a whole; and the encyclopaedia, such as Matfré Ermengaut’s Breviari d’Amors, one of whose final sections is a poetic anthology.

Never, I should stress, does Flamenca do anything so uncouth as simply quote: references are always reworked, in the speaker’s own words, appropriated by them. It would have been bad form just to cite poetry verbatim and, even, perhaps, to attribute it: it is preferable to rework it in one’s own words. The audience’s objective is not just to read lots of poetry and be smug about that; nor to be able to quote it at other people; it is to really know it. One really truly knows this poetry when one has made it part of oneself and one’s life; digested it and learned its lessons. That is when it is really known and understood.

Poetic knowledge and understanding extend beyond Flamenca’s protagonists. We have seen how Flamenca exhibits polyphonic characteristics: multiple focalization, multiple narrative voices of various sorts, and arch-players. All these things produce the effect of a Borghesian garden of forking paths, an Eco-style open text, that is up to the reader to interpret. Arch-players are associated not only with narrative voices but also with the audience/reader’s textual role. Much of their action – like that of the main protagonists – consists of viewing events and interpreting them. Further space is offered to the audience/reader in the text, as Flamenca incorporates the audience as a textual persona. Once more, the Roman de la Rose provides a productive analogy, which helps to explain how textual avatars are made available to the audience.
We saw in the last chapter how Amour introduces the Roman de la Rose’s purported composers, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, bringing these external persons together into the same plane of action as protagonists; and thus bringing together two narrative planes – the erotic (amorous adventure) and the poetic (writing). This section of the Rose featured two mergings of multiple realities, both of which involved books and their reception: Faus Samblant, Apocalypse, De Periculis, etc.; Amour and the Miroer aus amoureus. In the latter case, we saw that the Miroer aus amoureus is given its name by future readers (ll. 10649-55). It is not the book “of Love,” or “of Guillaume de Lorris,” or “of Jean de Meun”: it is the book “of lovers.” Here is the whole of Amour’s passage on the naming of the Rose:

Pour ce qu’il iert tant mes amis,  
Je l’afublerai de mes eles  
Et li chanterai notes teles  
Que puis qu’il sera hors d’enfance,  
Endoctrinez de ma sciance,  
Si fleüstera noz paroles  
Par carrefors o par escoles,  
Selonc le langage de france,  
Par tout le regne, en audience,  
Que jamais cil qui les orront  
De dous maus d’amer ne morront,  
Pour qu’il le croyent seulement.  
Que tant en lira proprement  
Que trestuit cil qui ont a vivre  
Devroient apeler ce livre  
Le miroer aus amoureus,  
Tant i verront de biens pour eus,  
Mes que raisons n’i soit pas creüe,  
La chaítive, la recreüe.  
Por ce m’en vueill ci conseillier,  
Car tuit estes mi conseillier.  
Si vous cri merciz jointes paumes  
Que cist las dolereus Guillaumes  
Qui si bien s’est vers moi portez,  
Soit secoruz et confortez;  
Et se pour lui ne vous prioie,  
Certes prier vous en devroie  
Au mains pour jehan alegier,  
Qu’il escrive plus de legier,  
Que cest avantage li fetes
- Car il naistra, j’en sui prophetes –
  Et pour les autres qui vendront
  Qui devotement entendront
  A mes commandemenz ensivre
  Qu’il troveront escriz ou livre,
  (ll. 10640–74)

Just as the book becomes that of, and includes, future lovers; so Amour will continue his relations with Guillaume and Jean in similar relations with others. These others are addressed as an ambiguous deictic second-person plural. It includes the Army of Lovers, whom Amour is haranguing prior to engaging in combat against the castle of Jealousy that imprisons Bel Acueil and/or the Rose. The second-person plural also includes external readers/audience. Broadening the book’s external scope and audience as widely as possible, and into the future, this is the book for all lovers, anywhere, in any time. They have a hand in composing the book, as they do in making sense of it, and in participating actively, becoming part of the action through imagining themselves into inclusion in the Army of Lovers. Amour turns to prospective readers in supplication – si vous cri merciz jointes paumes (l. 10661) – that the dolereus Guillaume be secoruz et confortez (ll. 10662, 10664): an appeal to imaginative sympathy. A similar prayer is made on behalf of Jean, to help him write – prier vos en devroie /.../ qu’il l’escrire plus legier / que cest avatage li fetes (ll. 10666-69).

This kind of active engagement of readers in and by the text is discussed by reader-response and reception theorists, and a clear classic literary example is J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan. Tinkerbell explains that a fairy dies whenever a child says “I don’t believe in fairies,” and she appeals to readers to clap their hands and save the fairies. In the Rose, lovers have a hand in the text and its existence, and they are necessary to its continuation. This book may be continued indefinitely, so long as there are lovers. It is also a book whose existence continues as long as it is actively used – not just read, but used as a very real guide to being a good lover, through following the commandments of love:

  Et pour les autres qui vendront
  Qui devotement entendront
  A mes commandemenz ensivre
  Qu’il troveront escriz ou livre,
  (ll. 10671–74)
These commandments have been set up elsewhere in the Rose, and are most clearly codified in the first, Guillaume de Lorris, part (set up in ll. 2039-74; Amour’s exposition of some commandments, rapidly lapsing into general conduct in ll. 2075-762, and ending, incompletely, with “mes je te doing a ja itant,” after which Amour disappears). Poetry continues and survives when it moves from words to deeds, from theory to practice, and becomes an applied poetry that incorporates erotics, poetics, and ethics.

The alleged authorial retraction (ll. 15139-306) picks up links to the earlier Amours section and its past Guillaume and future Jean, with a question-mark over the identity of the present first-person speaker. Et savrez lors par cel escrit / quanque j’avré devant escrit / et quanque je bee a escrire (ll. 15155-57), and their reference to writings past and present, will be understood by the reader in the future. One section of the retraction underlines the judgmental quality of readers, as the first-person voice imagines readers’ responses and suggests the use of courteous caution. But he goes further, beyond self-defence: certain things must be written. Sallust is cited as an authority, on the merits of writing and the obligation to tell the truth:

“Tout ne soit il samblable gloire
De celui qui la chose fait
Et del escrivain qui le fait
Veult mettre proprement en livre,
Pour mieus la verité descrivre,
Si n’est ce pas chose legiere,
Ainz est mout fort de grant maniere
Metrre bien les faiz en escrit,
Car quiconques la chose escrit,
Se dout voir ne vous veult embler,
Le dit doit le fait ressembler;
Car les voiz as choses voisines
Doivent estre a leur faiz cousines.”
Si me couvient ainsi parler
Se par le droit m’en vueill aler.
(ll. 15185-98)

The first-person voice defends himself, and raises writerly activity to a glorious status equivalent to that of a man of action, even using the same rhyme-word to emphasize the parallel: de celui qui la chose fait / et del escrivain qui le fait. This will rejoin Raison’s earlier discussion of words and things, comments on Faus
Samblant’s distinction between words and deeds, and heralds Genius’ admonition to use one’s tools. Here, words and deeds are brought very close together, to the point of being interwoven, as le dit doit le fait ressembler; / car les voiz as choses voisines /doivent estre a leur faiz cousins. The same word is used, fait, for both deeds proper and their (re)telling, which returns as les faiz en escrit. The latter fait is then brought closer to the dit through syntactic and semantic resemblance, as both are nominalised past participles of accomplished action which are also used as a literary terms. Fait then moves back out from the written word to the word itself, moving from dit to voiz to parler, with another mention of choses, and thus back into direct actions, with a chiasmic link back to the [celui qui] la chose fait of the start of this short section.

Writing has achieved equal status with doing, within the larger sphere of being, and, more precisely, of moral being, as reinforced by densely packed verbs of will and duty/right: veult (twice), vueill, doit, doiuent, droit, and goodness: mieus, bien. In the immediate context of this passage, and the larger one of the rest of the retraction passage as a whole, the central message of truth and the role of literary activity extends to the good reader. This was shown most strikingly in the earlier d’amours avroiz art souffisant. Readers are active participants in the text. Avroiz leaves open the degree of involvement in and possession of the art. Art ... d’amours refers at once to the internal world of the book and its author’s teachings, including his glosses; and to the external world of the (general) theoretical art of love, and the reader’s own practical making of an art of love.

Raimon Vidal de Besalú, En aquel temps c’om era jays:
appropriation, understanding, and dissemination

We have seen in Chapter Three how amor coral appears in Flamenca and elsewhere in Occitan poetry: notably, in the works of Bernart de Ventadorn, Arnaut de Mareuil, and in Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s discussion of the cor noble (“noble heart”). We saw from Bernart’s use that amor coral is something positive, and that one should endeavour to achieve. And one should try to be an aman coral, because that is a good thing to be, and this has to do with inner worth, sincerity, and truth; and may be contrasted with appearances, falseness, and
external things. Being a lover is a good thing, and a good one better still; indeed, Chapter Three also showed how a “good lover” is an aman who is, interchangeably, fin, bon, vers, and who goes beyond pleasing himself. But there are more goods involved here than also pleasing one’s beloved, and thus being pleased, or pleasured, oneself. There is an idea of reciprocity, mutuality, consent, and parity in relations: a kind of “erotic contract.” I use the term advisedly, as Occitan uses entendemen to mean “understanding” in more general sense, and “reaching an understanding,” having an affair. Mental activity is involved on both sides, awareness, consciousness, cognizance. And all this without losing sight of the erotic aspect – and the human, very material side. So: the “good” has to do with a combined goal of understanding, and reaching an understanding. In a virtuous cycle, good poetry leads to good love, and so it is a model to follow.

This leads into questions of art imitating life and life imitating art, which are played with and played out, acted out, in Flamenca and in another work by Raimon Vidal de Besalú, En aquel temps c’om era jays.1 En aquel temps is a verse narrative telling of a love-affair, complicated by the lady acting the ladylike part to such an extent that her suitor sleeps with her maid, with disastrous consequences. Much of the poem comprises conversations between the man and the two women, in all three combinations, ranging from the flirtatious to the vituperative, and in which points are scored and arguments made on the basis of citations from the authoritative doctors in love-poetry: presented here very much as auctoritates, the citations formally structured that way, etc. The whole poem may be read as an anthology of trobador lyric, collected and arranged within the razo-like surrounding narrative.

Here is the first of nearly forty instances in En aquel temps of love-poetry being connected directly to actions in the real world: here as elsewhere, it is ambiguous whether the poetry is a prior cause or a poshumous explanation:

```
En aquel temps c’om era jays e per amor fis e verais,
   cuendes e d’avinen escuelh,
en Lemozi part Essiduelh,
   ac un cavaier mot cortes,
```

In the days when people were gay and when love made them perfect and sincere, amiable and of gracious conduct, in the Limousin, beyond Excideuil, there was a very courteous knight, upright and frank

---

1 Huchet 1997: 141-221; my translations.
adreg e franc e ben apres e en totz afars pros e ricx.
(ll. 1-7)

E membra.m be qu’en aquel temps que.l cavaiers fon pros aissi, ac una don’ en Lemozi, rica de cor e de linhatje, e ac marít de senhoratje e d’aver ric e podoros; mot fo.l cavaier coratjos que seley amet per amor. E la dona que de valor lo vi aital e de proeza noy esgardet anc sa riqueza, ans lo retenc lo primier jorn, qu’en Bernartz dis de Ventador: “Amor segon ricor non vay.” E no.us pessetz vos doncx de lay que cant se tenc per retengut que no fos pus apercebutz epus prod que d’abans non era?
(ll. 31-48)

I remember well that in those days when this knight showed such merit, there was a lady in the Limousin, of noble heart and lineage; she had a husband through whose fief she was rich and powerful. The knight was very courageous to love this lady truly (lovingly). And the lady, who saw such value and merit in him, without any regard for his lack of wealth, “retained” him the very first day, as Lord Bernard de Ventadour says:

“Love does not follow wealth.”

Would you not think that, when he understood what had been accorded him when he was made a retainer, he was not more perceptive and worthy than he had been before?

Poetry and the real world are brought into close proximity. On a first level, there is the poem’s internal reality; within which poetry is itself another textual internal world; one that happens to coincide with the world outside our poem, that is, the world of those troubadours whose works appear in *En aquel temps*. Some are dead, some are alive – such as Raimon Vidal, who quotes himself twice, and *En aquel temps* is the only witness of those two *coblas*. The effect is to bridge the gap between worlds and bring audience or readers into the work; the same effect described above and in Chapter Four, with respect to Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*.

A second effect is within the narrative: we see how poetry really is a guide informing characters’ every step. Life imitates art; and this is already art; producing another *mise en abyme* of realities. Poetry acts as a guide: usually in the form of debate before a step is taken, and retrospective analysis, excuse, and other finangling. Much that happens in the poem is not so much action as what lies behind it; ethical exercise in slow motion.

After several years’ comings and goings, the ladies bring their case to court – to the poet-nobleman Huc de Mataplana – to decide to whom the gentleman
belongs. More debate ensues, again supported by troubadour poetry. The
decision he pronounces also has value for his court—it, like the poetry, is a
learning-experience. He does so by reformulating the story the ladies have told
him: now, we have already read it; they told it to him the night before, when they
arrived; and now he reformulates it in his court, before other people: becoming
another in the chain of performer-composers linked to this text, and, indeed,
performing it publicly. He retells their story; and makes changes: injecting
commentaries on persons’ motivations, adding his exempla from amorous
casuistry (including a Raimon Vidal piece only present in this text, l. 1220), and
his judgement. The judgement is a harsh one: in the name of true love, the lover
is formally separated from both ladies. When dissecting the mens rea for these
crimes of passion, what Huc looks at is core intent: being of good will and good
heart. Of the three basic virtues, the cor bon/noble is the most cardinal.

At the narrative’s very end, our amorous judge finished his judgement,
which has been in the form of direct speech, first person, present tense. We then
jump to another first person, past tense, who “then leaves the scene…”:

Car sofracha sembla de sens
a dona qu’en pren autr’ amic;
absolva.l cavayer ades.
E s’el, aisi co hom engres,
s’esta de sidons a tornar,
ieu dic, per dreg, c’acomjadar
lo deu sela que l’amparet,
per so car anc bos no semblet
vas amor amic ses merce
ni vans, ni.m par bona, so cre,
a son fag sela que.l vol far
vas sidons son amic peccar,
ni, pus fait emenda, li te.”

Aisi m parti, e per ma fe,
anc no vi pus cortes joglar
ni que mielhs saupes acabar
son messatje cortezamen.
Estiers ai auzit veramen
que.l jutjamen fon atendutz
ses tot contrast, per que mans drutz
n’estan pus suffrens vas amors.
(ll. 1364-end, 1385)

As the lady who takes another’s lover
seems to lack good sense; that is why I ask
her to release the knight. If he is stubborn
and refuses to return to his lady, I declare
that, lawfully, she who took him under her
protection must release him, because a
vain lover without mercy never seemed
good for love, nor, I believe, she who
wanted to make her lover sin against her
lady and who retained him after her lady
had made amends with him. ”

So I left, and on my faith, I never saw a
more courteous joglar nor one who knew
better how to accomplish his messenger-
duty so courteously. Otherwise, I heard
tell, truly, how the judgement was passed
without contest; which is why many lovers
are more patient in love.
The good messenger-*joglar* (ll. 1379-81) is probably the same one who appeared earlier, reported the case to Huc (ll. 1097-1106), and was instructed by him to go forth and transmit his judgement to the parties concerned (ll. 1152-64). The first-person voice here is probably the same one present at court, who cuts off the *joglar*’s tale (ll. 1107-13) to tell the present audience that this is the tale he has just told us. It is possible that the *joglar* and the first-person voice are *personae* of the same person. Then the first person hears further news on the judgement’s aftermath – but indirectly. Right at its very end, the poem uses an ambiguously inclusive deictic to create bridges between worlds: the one inside the story, a frame-narrative, and the present one. Furthermore, the last two lines broaden things out even more: thanks to the judgement, “many lovers are being more patient in love” – including lovers in the here and now.

Reading good love poetry can help a prospective lover become a good lover; in the obvious ways (the citation of amorous authorities continues, of course, in seductions today), and in examining his every internal working to check that he is indeed being true and sincere. *En aquel temps* maintains a delightful balance between the slow-motion exposition of exemplary amorous methodology, and its ridicule; after all, spontaneity and naturalness are also desirable. But the main point is that there *is* such a thing as an “art of love” that has a strongly ethical dimension. Love-poetry can lead one to the Good, or at least, help one to become a better person.

**The ethics of applied poetry in Flamenca**

*Flamenca*, too, traces a narrative of the poetic cycle and its continuation, including continuation outside the text and its narrative.

When they were obliged to part at the end of their summer of love, the lovers wrote on each others’ hearts: this is represented in our romance in the form of direct discourse citation of what is written – one of the very few instances of such citation in the whole romance. They then swap hearts and go their separate ways: carrying each other’s poems inside themselves. In the *salutz* episode, Flamenca and her maids learn the poem’s words “by heart” – *decoron* –
thus internalizing it and making it their own. Not only are the words learned “by
heart,” but Flamenca habitually kissed the salutz and rubbed it on herself, in
extreme, and parodic, appropriation.

Later, Archimbaut held court; Guillem was invited; and the affair
resumed, under the husband’s nose and in full courtly gaze. In their
conversations, the lovers alluded, in a reworking, refashioning way, to what they
had said to each other previously. Adding to the piquant nature of the affair, their
conversations were peppered with intimate in-jokes. The lovers used their
previous poetic knowledge in their own erotic and poetic composition (the affair
and their words); these were written on their hearts; a letter changed hands; its
contents were made part of Flamenca; and then the lovers playfully quoted their
own words back at each other when the affair is resumed.

Poetry is reworked, absorbed, and understood. Yet the final part of the
narrative is profoundly unsatisfactory: the lovers grow tedious and insipid, their
discourse artificial and superficial, and the prospect of this court and their courtly
love continuing forever does not fill the reader’s heart with joy. Flamenca’s outer
frame picks up the middle part’s themes of poetic composition; continues its
exploration of reading and misreading; and does so in ironic comment on the
extension of trobar into appropriation and real-life application.

The main shift between middle and outer sections was one from matters
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, and reference to poets and poetry in the external world, including the
direct naming of poets. At the same time, the setting shifts to the court, and we
see a collusion between court and poets in controlling narrative events and
protagonists. We have seen, one by one, how Flamenca’s protagonists attempt to
escape courtly imprisonment, yet end up resigning themselves to courtly life. In
the opening frame, we see the most important role of the court in Flamenca: the
affair is caused by the gossip-mill, of which poets and poetry are a major part.
Thus, court poetry (trobar cortes) is at the beginning and end of Flamenca, and
provides ethical guidance that is far from clear.
The opening frame sets up another relationship between poets and courtly authority: this one is articulated through the court, and its rumour-mongering network, the lauzengiers – praisers and blamers. We have already met one cause for the affair, the queen’s reporting of her suspicions to Archimbaut. This would have come to nothing, however, if news of his subsequent descent into madness had not spread through the activities of poets:

**Ja sabon tut per lo pais**
qu’en Archimbautz es gelos fins;
**per tot Alverg[n]’en fan cansos**
e serventes, coblas e sos,
o **estrobiot o retroencha**
d’en Archimbaut con ten Flamencha;
et on plus hom a lui o chanta
no-us cujes sos mals cors s’eschant.
(ll. 1171-78)

All through the country people know
How jealous is Lord Archammbaud.
All through Auvergne barbed songs are sung
And mocking tunes from every tongue
Tell, in ballad and estribot
Of Flamenca and Lord Archammbaud.
Hearing them, he had small delight
As they enhanced his bitter spite.

Meanwhile Guillem, a nice young man, was in need of completing his otherwise exemplary education with practical training in amorous matters. He was already poetically savvy: indeed, when he is named for the first time, it is between reference to his highest chivalric virtues and mention of his poetic accomplishments:

**Chansons e lais, descortz e vers,**
**serventes et autres cantars**
sabia plus que nuls joglars,
neis Daniel que saup ganren
no-s pogr’ab lui penre per ren.
(ll. 1706-10)

... Songs he knew,
Chansons and lays, and descorts too,
And every kind of poetry
Better than any jongleur. He
Knew them so perfectly and well,
He outdid the learned Daniel.

Guillem first hears of Flamenca, and her habit and repute – greatly accentuated by inaccessibility – through the combination of general news and poetic information.² This is the prime factor setting him up for love:

**Ancar d’amor no s’entremes**
per so que lo ver en saupes;
per dir saup ben que fon amors,
cant legit ac totz los auctors
que d’amor parlon e si feinon
consi amador si capteinon.

Love was indeed to him unknown
By and testing of his own,
Though what it was, of course, he knew,
Having read all the authors who
Had writ thereof with skill and tact
To tell how ‘tis that lovers act.

² The *vera novella* of l. 1777 is both “news” and the poetic form. One of the many formal labels applied to Flamenca is *novas* – same family as the Italian *novella* and French *nouvelle* – supported by an earlier first-person voice comment: *pero a mas novas vos torn* – “but let me return you to my tale” (l. 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.
Car ben conoc que longamen nom po[c] estar segon joven ques el d’amor non s’entrameta, per so pessa que son cor meta en tal amor don bens li venga e que a mal hom non l’o tengua. En aiso ac som pessamen. He knew he could not long, in truth, Live in the way befitting Youth If he did not Love’s ways soon learn, So he made up his mind to turn His heart to some love that would bring Him honor and no sorrowing: On this he thought and meditated. On this he thought and meditated. 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 ...

Flamenca offers a final metanarrative comment. It is poetry itself that is responsible for setting up and controlling the affair. It is through poets and the poetic/courtly rumour-mill that the narrative’s events take place; 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 and sunny way. Like the court, poets may reap the benefits of an 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. Even if Flamenca’s audience is left with an open text and some deeply cynical possible lessons, these still generate the poetic continuation and application that is discussion.
Bibliography

Primary Works


*Barlaam et Josaphat*. Lavaud and Nelli vol. 1 1065-1221.


---. *Opera*. Ed. Jean Leclerq et al. Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957-.
---. *Bernart de Ventadorn*. Ed. F. Gennrich. 1778.


---. Ryan, John Leonard, ed. and trans. The Romance of Flamenca. Also includes photocopy of the manuscript. Diss. U of New Mexico, 1974.


---. Huchet, Nouvelles 37-249.
---. Lexique roman. 6 vol. Paris, 1838-44.


**Secondary Works**


Brüch, J. “Der Name des Flamingos und die altprovenzalisches Adjektive auf -*emc*.” *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* LVI (1932): 44-64.


---. “Notes Towards the Study of Female Rhetoric in the Trobairitz.” Paden, Voice. 63-72.


---. “Narrativity and Language in Some XIIth Century Romances.” *Yale French Studies* 51 (1975): 133-46,


---. “Jean de Montreuil et le débat sur le Roman de la Rose.” Romania 98 (1977): 34-64.


---. “Text(s) and Meaning(s) in the Alba of Giraut de Bornel; Essays in Memory of Dorothy Gabe Coleman.” *The Art of Reading*, edited by Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf. Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1998. 1-10.


Citations from my research:


