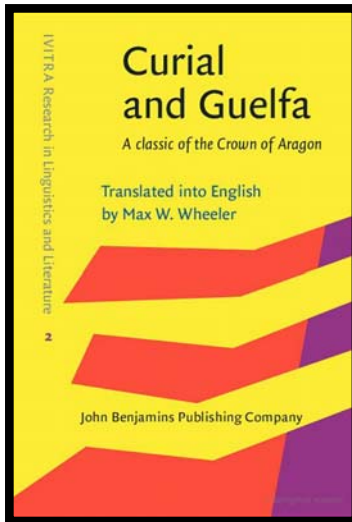


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*Curial e Güelfa* is a chivalric and love romance with Italian and French undertones; it was written in Catalan by an anonymous author ca. 1440. The novel was composed by a writer, possibly of Valencian origin, who worked in the court of King Alfonso the Magnanimous at Naples in a bilingual Catalan and Italian milieu. It is also a political novel in that it reflects –partly as a *roman à clef*– the rivalry between Peter the Great of Aragon (1276-85) and Charles d’Anjou (1254-85), possibly as a mirroring image of the contemporary opposition between Alfonso the Magnanimous and René of Anjou (who was aided by the Pope) over territorial rights in Southern Italy. The novel could also be interpreted as a propaganda piece designed to support the Aragonese party, which is represented by Curial (Alfonso the

Magnanimous), whose rights over Naples (Orange) are in the end recognized by Rome (Güelfa). *Curial e Güelfa* is also a ‘sentimental’ romance, one in which the *matière d’amour* has considerable relevance. Curial is torn between his passion for Lachesis (Joanna II of Naples?) and his more contained love for Güelfa, in addition to his unfortunate and Dido-like relationship with Camas in Tunisia which will end in suicide due to the impossibility of fulfilling Camas’ love for Curial. Critics have seen a distinction between these female lovers that is indicative of the opposition between passionate and irrational love and a more socially-construed love feeling represented by the final matrimony between Curial and Güelfa.

*Curial e Güelfa* must also be understood as belonging to two different traditions of enormous relevance in the creation of the contemporary European novel. The first is represented by the world of wandering knights-errant, that is to say of chivalry and feats of arms. (Curial will travel through France, Germany, Hungary, the Holy Land, Egypt, Greece, and Tunisia.) The second is represented by a portrayal of a rich, inner world of feeling, emotion and debates on love, initially only a minor part of the genre known as *roman courtois*. While this latter genre focused mainly on wars and battles, as the 14th century drew to a close more space in the novel was devoted to the description of that inner world of tumultuous feelings. It is a tradition that draws heavily on Ovid’s Epistles; that finds a narrative frame (during the 14th century) in

works written in Italian such as *Fiammetta* or *Filocolo*, which is influenced by the French *voir-dit* of Machaut as well as by the lyrical traditions of (and deriving from) the *dolce stil nuovo*, Catalan troubadour poetry, and the Galician-Portuguese *cantigas*; and that will *explode* in the early 15th century in the Iberian Peninsula in works written in Catalan, Castilian, and Portuguese. This second tradition will be responsible for the psychological introspection of the modern novel.

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When Antoni Rubió i Lluch first edited *Curial e Güelfa* in 1901, he termed its plot *erótico-sentimental*, along the lines of a title recently chosen by Menéndez y Pelayo when studying the genre of *sentimental romance* or *sentimental fiction* (*novela sentimental*) in Castilian letters (*Orígenes de la novela*). *Sentimental* is a very accurate term to refer to works that abound in a depiction of the main characters' inner turmoil (*pati*) as opposed to a description of the outside world of arms (*arma virumque cano*). While in Spanish philology the term *sentimental* became customary to analyze prose and *prosimetra* works of the 15th century –such as *Siervo libre de Amor* by Juan Rodríguez del Padrón or the main productions by Juan de Flores and Diego de San Pedro written later in the century–, scholars who work on literature written in Catalan utilized the term mostly when referring to two main compositions from the same century, namely *Curial e Güelfa* and *Tirant lo Blanc*. They used this label to reflect the *realistic* tendencies in both works in what pertains to the depiction of inner feelings and emotions and in the portrayal of characters' actions and events not belonging to the idealized world of the *courtoisie*, but set in the real and contemporary context of 15<sup>th</sup>-century society. Nonetheless, the subsequent fortune of this term –*sentimental*– in Catalan and Castilian critical traditions seems to have gone separate ways. While Spanish scholars have made ample use of it to describe a genre that spanned one hundred years from ca. 1440 to ca. 1550, Catalan scholars only re-utilized this label when describing *minor* productions termed *novelletes amoroses i morals* (A. Pacheco & Bover).

Nevertheless, the connection between the Catalan and Castilian chivalric and sentimental literary worlds has not been entirely lost to scholars. Cortijo recently showed that the strategies of notarial prose (*Fronchino e Brisona*) and the nationalization of love (Macías [*Siervo libre de Amor*] vs. Oliver [*Glòria d'Amor*]), among others, were elements present in both traditions, suggesting possible contacts between works *de amore* written in both languages. Furthermore, only recently –and due to the work of scholars such as Riquer and Gerli– a work such as *Triste deleytación*, considered a *novela sentimental* and written both in Spanish and Catalan, has deserved critical attention by scholars working on Spanish sentimental fiction, thus obliging us to *reconsider* our explanation of the borrowings and connections between those two literary traditions. Much the same could be said of the *sentimental* world of romance in Portuguese. Apart from early analyses of *Menina e Moça* (a work dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> c.) as belonging to the *sentimental* tradition, only recently have

scholars focused on other sentimental pieces from the 15th century written in Portuguese, such as *Naceo e Amperidônia* or *Confissão do Amante*, again obliging us to revisit as a whole the literary genre *de amore* written in the Iberian Peninsula and its multiple interconnections among Castilian, Catalan, and Portuguese. Finally, among the literary productions known as *sentimental*, we should count those written by the Condestável of Portugal (who would temporarily become ‘King of the Catalans’) such as *Sátira de felice e infelice vida*, once again blending the three literary languages of the Iberian Peninsula and showing their mutual borrowings and interconnections.

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This excellent translation into English by Max W. Wheeler is based on the 2008 edition by Antoni Ferrando (*Curial e Gëulfa. Introducció i edició filològica*, Toulouse, Anacharsis). The book begins with an introduction by Antoni Ferrando (1-29) in which he compares the anonymous Catalan novel to the *Livre des faits du bon messier Jehan le Maigre, dit Bouciquaut*, the *Livre des faits de Jacques de Lalaign*, the *Petit Jehan de Saintré*, and *Tirant lo Blach*. In addition, Ferrando delves into the intricacies of the manuscript transmission of *Curial*; its Latin, Italian, French, Occitan, Catalan, Aragonese, and Castilian sources; and its literary distinctiveness and linguistic originality. After explaining the convoluted historical context surrounding the plot, Ferrando concludes that *Curial* is a work of entertainment with an overt political message:

Even though today some elements justifying the possible political intention of the anonymous author may escape us, I believe the ones we see are obvious and numerous enough that we should consider it seriously. [...] There are reasons to believe that the author of *Curial* used the work to promote in his readers an attitude favourable to the Aragonese cause, parallel to the attempt in Neapolitan dynastic historiography to justify the claim of Alfonso the magnanimous to southern Italy, against the pretensions of René of Anjou, initially supported by the papacy. (23)

Max Wheeler has undertaken a monumental task, the translation of a long and difficult work into English. And he does so with great accuracy and in an elegant English prose that captures the flavor of the original. In addition, his translation includes numerous useful explanatory footnotes, many of them based upon Barberà’s annotation to the 2007 French translation of *Curial (Curial e Guelfe*, Toulouse, Anacharsis). Let us finish by providing the reader with a sample of his superb work:

[III.103 THE WEDDING OF CURIAL AND GUELFA: MELCHIOR'S MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED]

The King, who did not sleep all night long, had a great feast prepared and invited an enormous number of people to Curial's wedding, honouring him on a single day as bridegroom and as prince. Great were the banquets and feasts, the dancing and jousting, and in short the king left undone nothing that pertains to such a celebration.

[...]

The celebrations came to an end, as do all things. Everyone finally tires of long and heavy expenditure, and so everyone in due course went their way. Thus the prince and the princess, the marquis and his wife did likewise, and, taking their leave of the king and queen and receiving precious gifts from them, returned happy and rejoicing to their own lands. And weary old Melchior, when he saw the prince, embraced him with tears of joy saying: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.' (350-51)