



18th Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society
Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier III
Dates: July 20–24, 2026

Following a reflexion on “*Redefining Courtliness*” in 2023, the 18th Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society (to be held in Montpellier from July 20 to 24, 2026) offers to question the notion of “**Courtly Knowledge.**”

Although the concept of *amour courtois*, coined by Gaston Paris in 1883 but absent from medieval texts that instead speak of *fin’amor*, remains controversial, the adjective *courtois* and its derivatives (*courtoisie*, *courtoisement*) frequently appear in medieval literature and convey a sense of mastery, skill, or knowledge. But what sort of knowledge is implied by the concept of *courtoisie*? What must one know or master to be considered *courtois*? What is the relationship between courtliness and knowledge?

Courtoisie clearly signals a form of social belonging, which may depend on a certain knowledge of codes, values and virtues. It is defined by a set of criteria, whether in Bertrand de Born’s *Sirventès des vieux et des jeunes* or in the garden of Deduit in Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose*. Allegorical figures of courtesy or discourtesy show how characters may move between categories through the acquisition—or lack—of courtly virtues. *Courtoisie* is tied to birth, but also to education. How does one become *courtois*? Knowledge itself may mark the stages of this process: Guigemar’s initial ignorance of love prevents him from being truly *courtois*, but his discovery of it leads to a new status. The virtuous conduct of Liénor in *Guillaume de Dole*, or of Frêne in the lai of the same name, elevates these characters to the highest levels of *courtoisie*, despite their initial status. Conversely, Archambault’s jealousy in *Flamenca*, or that of the husband in *Laüstic*, strips them of the *courtoisie* conferred by their noble origin. Courtly knowledge, which implies a process of “*melhurar*” is therefore closely linked to questions of identity.

Courtoisie is not limited to love. As its etymology suggests, it more broadly concerns the behavior of courtiers, whose conformity to social codes varies in courtly literature: Keu’s wet-nursing prevents him from being *courtois*, while Gauvain’s perfection makes him paradoxically ambiguous, and arguably less *courtois* than Lancelot. Many romances can be read as courtly initiations that are not solely concerned with love: the progression of Erec, Yvain, Perceval—above all—but also of Eliduc or Conrad in *Guillaume de Dole*, show love functioning more as a means than an end of courtly fulfillment. The notion of *courtly knowledge* can thus be approached broadly, encompassing all forms of learning and cultural competence, including social, linguistic, or chivalric skills, and applying across multiple literary genres.

Beyond romance, treatises, bestiaries, and *dits* written in the first person draw on a wide range of forms of knowledge—moral, musical, literary, intertextual. Like bestiaries, the late medieval *dits* often make use of scholarly, mythological, or allegorical references to construct a “courtly knowledge” that involves the author, the narrator, and the reader alike. Intertextual and scholarly references thus become central to the construction of such knowledge. On another level, lyric poetry may be examined both as a site where courtly knowledge is crystallized and invented, and as a practice closely tied to intertextual dialogue with other poetic, musical, or

scholarly works. Courtly knowledge involves, in this respect, the question of literary competence: one may write, read, make music or even sing *courtoisement*. What is the link between these skills and the ideal of courtliness? Does courtliness imply, in return, the defense of aesthetic and literary knowledge?

Possible topics include:

- The plurality of courtly knowledge
- Courtliness and education
- The embodiment of knowledge
- Literary models of *courtoisie*
- *Courtoisie* and didactic genres
- *Intertextuality*
- Sources of scholarly, literary or scientific knowledge used in constructing *courtoisie*
- The relationship between *courtoisie* and the art of writing (poetic forms, lyric modes, metapoetic discourse)

Proposals of no more than 200 words, for 20-minute papers in English or French, should be sent by **October 30th, 2025**, to: silc_montpellier_2026@univ-montp3.fr

We also accept proposals for thematic panels of three or four speakers.

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