

**Sonia García de Alba Lobeira, Freiburg: Performing “False Seeming”: Encoding Falsity
in the Romances of *Florence of Rome***

The narratives of *Florence of Rome* are well-attested in medieval vernacular literatures and often emerge in academic discussions in connection to scholarship on the stories of falsely accused women. The story, in most versions, follows the adventures of Emere and his brother Milis, sons to the King of Hungary, who travel to Rome and defend it from a besieging force from Constantinople set on kidnapping Florence, the king’s daughter. Emere’s prowess and courtly behaviour eventually earn him the hand of Florence of Rome while Milis, the eldest child, is side-lined due to his cowardly tendencies. Over the course of the tale, Milis, motivated by jealousy, plots to delegitimise Emere and Florence, ultimately threatening the kingdom’s stability. In his enactment of treason, Milis routinely engages in dissimulation and “False Seeming”, a medieval concept known from medieval moral and religious writings which is used to describe the concealment of true emotions through feigned emotional gestures and words.

In this paper, I undertake a comparative study of three fourteenth-century versions of the story of *Florence of Rome*: the Middle French “Le roman de Florence de Rome, the Middle English “Le Bone Florence of Rome”, and the Old Castilian “El cuento muy fermoso del emperador Otas de Roma e de la infante Florençia”. I analyse the narrative encoding of “False Seeming”, which is intrinsically connected to faking emotion, and how it develops in different European literary contexts throughout the fourteenth century. Ultimately, my aim is to comment on how the literary representation of “False Seeming” reflects broader discourses on falsifying truth in other written sources of the late medieval period.