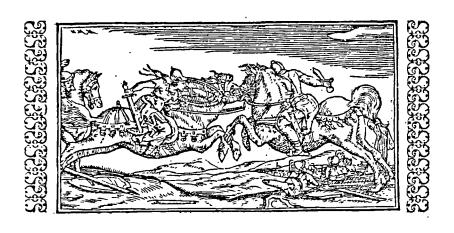
THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE AMADIS CYCLE

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The illustration on the title page is reproduced from Book XIV of Amadis de Gaule, trans. Antoine Tyron (Antwerp: Jean Waesberghe, 1574)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the representation of women and the conception of gender in the narratives of Books I-XIV of the Amadis of Gaul cycle of romances, Books I-V being studied in Spanish and the remainder in French. The thesis argues that in its extreme variety and avoidance of doctrinal closure, the Amadis cycle presents a view of women and gender freer in many ways than that to be found in more unified and didactic rewritings of romance.

The Introduction explains the choice of material for study and the empirical nature of the method required when approaching a huge, multi-authored body of narrative material that has not previously been examined from the point of view of women and gender and that does not appear to be governed by any single intellectual or moral scheme; it also considers the relations between romance and reality and between romance and doctrine in their bearing on Amadis as compared with Arcadia and The Faerie Queene.

Chapter I considers the *Amadis* cycle in the light of traditional views of women, focusing especially on the representation of women together, of passive heroines, of female beauty, and of women as spectators and as victims.

Chapter II is concerned with sex and power in Amadis and with their implications for morality: it considers some ways in which female power and weakness are depicted, and examines female morality, and especially the morality of female cleverness, in relation to such issues as marriage, chastity, secrecy, deception, and religion.

Chapter III studies some of the ways in which sexual love is represented in the Amadis cycle, and then turns to the involvement of women in their special sphere of family love. Appendix I analyses the paradoxical relation often found between language and behaviour in treatments of love.

Chapter IV examines the cycle's representation of strong women under three headings: female travellers, messengers and squires; enchantresses (with a more detailed treatment of the emergence of an enchantress into the authorial sphere in Book V); and women as warriors and rulers.

Chapter V turns to the ways in which the Amadis cycle implicitly and explicitly questions traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity. It argues that, by representing some of its heroes as 'feminine' and heroines as 'masculine', and by devices such as transvestism, the cycle is able to acknowledge that gender is a social construct and to reverse or dissolve the binary oppositions of orthodox thought.

Appendix II briefly surveys the early editions of Amadis and the relations between the French and Spanish versions. Appendix III consists of a genealogical chart of Amadis characters.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SPELLING CONVENTIONS

The following abbreviations are used in footnote citations from primary $texts^{1}$:

A simple arabic numeral (e.g. '1056') indicates a page number in the edition of the first four Spanish books of the *Amadis* cycle, *Amadis de Gaula*, ed. Edwin B. Place, 4 vols (Madrid: Consejo de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1959-69). The pages of these volumes are numbered in a single sequence.

Roman 'V' followed by a point and an Arabic numeral (e.g. 'V.411') indicates a page number in Las Sergas de Esplendian (= Book V of the Spanish Amadís de Gaula), in Libros de Caballerías, ed. Pascual de Gayangos, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles 40 (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1857).

A Roman numeral from VI to XIV followed by a point and an Arabic numeral (e.g. 'IX.47') indicates a page number in one of the volumes of the French Amadis de Gaule (Antwerp: 1561-74) listed in the Bibliography, Section A.2. In volumes where leaves are numbered on one side only, 'r' and 'v' indicate recto and verso. I quote from the copies of these volumes in the Cambridge University Library.

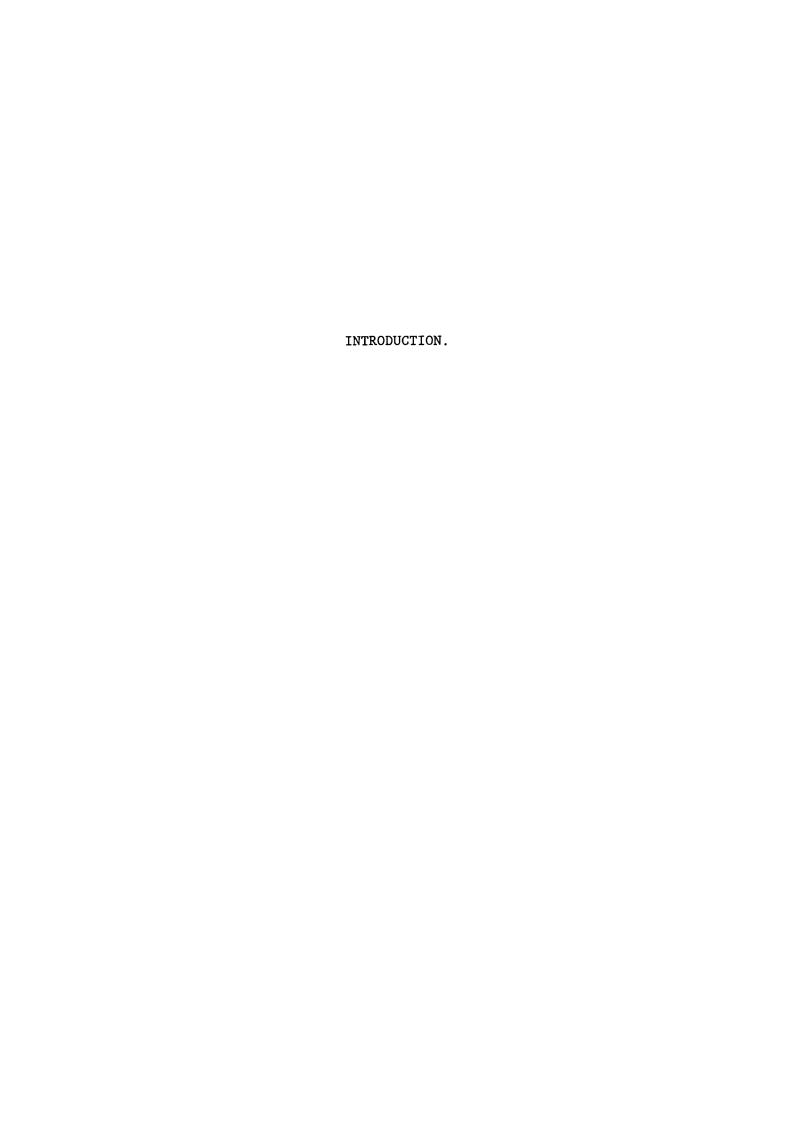
NA followed by an Arabic numeral indicates a page number from Sir Philip Sidney, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia), ed. Victor Skretkowicz (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

^{1.} For more detailed explanation of the *Amadis* texts, see Appendix II, 'Early Editions of *Amadis'*.

FQ followed by the usual representation of book, canto and stanza (e.g. 'FQ V.xi.32') indicates a reference to Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, ed. Thomas P. Roche (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

In quoting from primary texts, my aim has been to reproduce exactly their spelling and punctuation, regardless of their own consistency or 'correctness'. This means that names of persons and places will sometimes appear in quotations with more than one spelling; in particular French names may appear with or without accents. In the text of my thesis I have, where possible, chosen a single spelling for the name of each fictional character. However, a number of names of Amadisian characters are spelt differently by the Spanish and by the French authors, and in these cases I have used a Spanish form (e.g. 'Amadís', 'Lisuarte') when discussing Spanish books and a French form (e.g. 'Amadis', 'Lisuart') when discussing French books. In quotations from the Amadis cycle, I follow Place in using italics to indicate expansions of abbreviated forms.

^{2.} I have, however, substituted 's' for 'long s'.



The primary aim of this thesis is to study the ways in which women are represented in one of the most widely read long prose romances of the Renaissance, Amadis de Gaule. My original plan was to engage in a fullscale comparison of the representation of women in Amadis, in D'Urfé's L'Astrée, and in either or both of Sidney's Arcadia and Spenser's Faerie Queene; but like so many research projects this proved to be an impossible undertaking within the bounds of a doctoral thesis, and I was obliged to scale back my work accordingly. A major problem was that Amadis itself turned out to offer a huge body of relevant material that has never been fully discussed from the point of view of the treatment of women¹, and it did not seem desirable to do anything but examine this in detail before passing on to consider its reception by later writers. The result is that my thesis is largely concerned with Amadis itself. In this Introduction I take up a number of issues that relate to my reading of Amadis, beginning with a brief account of the composition of the cycle and my choice of material from it for study.

^{1.} Apart from passing references in works on other aspects of Renaissance romances, I have discovered no earlier treatment of women in the Amadis cycle.

1. The Amadis Cycle

The first four books of Amadis, the earliest version of an Amadis story that we actually have, were written by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, and printed posthumously in Saragossa in 1508. Montalvo states in his preface that earlier versions had existed; fragments of a fifteenth-century manuscript survive², but exactly what the preceding texts consisted of and when they were written is not clear.³ A version is mentioned as early as 1345-50; Edwin Place believes it to have been written in 1331. Before 1379 there was an Amadis in three books circulating in Castille; this is referred to in a poem in the Cancionero de Baena, the author of which (Pero Ferrús) is even specific about the number of books:

Amadys, el muy fermoso las lluvias e las ventyscas nunca las falló aryscas, por leal ser e famoso. Sus proesas fallaredes en tres lybros, e dyredes: que le Dyos dé santo poso.⁴

^{2.} See Antonio Rodriguez-Moñino, 'El primer manuscrito de Amadís de Gaula. Noticia bibliográfica', Boletin de la Real Academia Española, 36 (1956), 199-216.

^{3.} For a recent survey, see Martín de Riquer, Estudios sobre el Amadís de Gaula (Barcelona: Sirmio, 1987), pp 8-35.

^{4.} Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena, ed. J. M. Azáceta, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1966), II, 663 (no. 305).

It has been suggested that the three-book version was mainly, though perhaps indirectly, inspired by the *Vulgate* cycle of Arthurian prose romances; there seems also to be some indebtedness to the prose *Tristan*. These works had all been translated into Spanish and were well known in the Iberian peninsula in the fourteenth century.

Other theories abound, and with the rise of literary nationalism there have been many contradictory attempts to appropriate the origin of the famous story. A sixteenth-century French translator claimed a French Amadis as the original one, and some Portuguese scholars, with a little more evidence, claim the original as Portuguese, though modern scholarship does not support this theory. What can be said quite definitely, however, is that no version of the original story survives except Montalvo's, and the earliest authenticated printed version of this is the 1508 one, though there probably was an earlier edition, or perhaps a number of manuscripts, available between 1492 and 1508. We have the date of 1492 because Montalvo refers to the fall of Granada in his prologue.

Place has written that 'Montalvo, as a Renaissance "re-write" man, from a medieval tale evolved a masterpiece and thereby launched what was virtually a new genre.' Montalvo's prologue contains some interesting

^{5.} E. B. Place, 'Fictional Evolutions: the Old French Romances and the Primitive Amadís Reworked by Montalvo', Publications of the Modern Lan-

indications of what improvements he considered necessary in reworking the old material. In an introductory note before the first chapter it is stated that he corrected it from the ancient originals,

...que estauan corruptos y mal compuestos en antiguo estilo, por falta de los differentes y malos escriptores. Quitando muchas palabras superfluas y poniendo otras de más polido y elegante estilo.... 6

Here the word superfluas suggests that revision is not just a matter of modernising vocabulary, but of pruning words as well, and indeed narratorial comment in the text itself indicates that the writer felt that abbreviatio was more to the purpose than amplificatio. An example is the remark that 'Pero porque seyendo más prolixa más enojosa de leer sería, se dexa de recontar'. (This might be compared with Caxton's references to Malory's having 'drawn out briefly into English' and 'reduced...into English' his French sources for the Arthurian cycle; the late-medieval compilation of romance cycles went along with the abbreviation of individual sources.) But Montalvo is not merely anxious to avoid boring prolixity. He also has some sense of unity of action,

guage Assocation of America, 71 (1956), 521-29; p 528. Unattributed information in the preceding paragraphs is derived from this article.

^{6. 11.}

^{7. 1114.}

^{8.} Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, ed. Janet Cowan, 2 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), I, 5.

and wishes not to stray from his main subject matter - '...no salir del propósito començado' - and he feels that the reader's judgment will not be able to cope satisfactorily with too much diversity. He writes:

Y si la hystoria no os cuenta más por estenso las grandes cauallerías y brauos y fuertes hechos que en todas aquestas conquistas y
batallas que sobre ganar estos señoríos passaron, la causa dello es
porque esta hystoria es de Amadís, y si los sus grandes hechos no,
no es razón que los de los otros sean sino quasi en suma contados;
porque de otra manera no solamente la scritura, de larga y prolixa,
daría a los leyentes enojo y fastidio, mas el juyzio no podría
bastar a complir con ambas las partes; assí que con mayor razón se
deue complir con la causa principal, que es este esforçado y valiente cauallero Amadís...9

Montalvo also occasionally mentions a fifth book which he says is about to appear, and Book V was duly published, with the first known edition dating from 1510, after Montalvo's death. This book is properly referred to as Las Sergas de Esplendián, and contains the adventures of the son of Amadís and Oriana. Here the subject matter is somewhat different. The author expresses disapproval of old-fashioned chivalry and makes it plain that it is a knight's duty to use his strength against pagan armies and for the glory of God rather than for his own glory. Montalvo is now in charge of his own fiction rather than reworking existing material, and I shall argue that here a change comes over the work which is of great importance for my purposes. Book V introduces the first of many warrior ladies, Calafia, whose longing for fame, con-

^{9. 1321.}

quest and adventure takes her to the siege of Constantinople with her crack regiment of female soldiers. The movement towards an emphasis on powerful women is marked in a different way by an unusual intrusion of the enchantress Urganda from the narrative into the narratorial frame of this book, where she exercises her dominance over Montalvo himself.

Over the next half century or so a number of Spanish authors made extensive additions to the cycle that Montalvo had begun; notable among them was Feliciano de Silva, author of the second part of La Celestina. Moreover, between 1540 and 1574 various French writers 'translated' - or rather, rewrote with a good deal of alteration - most of the twelve books that had been composed in Spanish. These books were immensely popular all over Europe, and were in their turn translated and continued in many other languages. Their popularity was greatest in France, and when the supply of Spanish originals was exhausted, the French translators turned to Italian and German continuations, with Book XXIV finally appearing in 1615.

Strictly speaking, only the first four books can be called Amadís de Gaula, and they are the only books so named in Spanish; later continuations are called after the Amadisian descendants who are their heroes - Amadís de Grecia, Florisel de Niquea, and so on. However, when the cycle was translated into French, it was all called Amadis de Gaule, and since it was this French version that was most widely read, the cycle as a whole has come to be known by this title.

2. Choice of Material

For consideration in this thesis I have chosen the twelve books originally written in Spanish, and of these I study Books I-V in Spanish and the remainder in French. (Of the twelve Spanish books all but Books VI and VIII were translated into French, but since Books IX, X, XI and XII were each divided into two French books, the French translation consists of fourteen books altogether. 10) Choice was made necessary by the impossibility of dealing with the complete twenty-four-book cycle within the bounds of a thesis - or possibly even within the bounds of a life-This particular choice was partly motivated by the availability time. of texts; Books I-IV in Spanish are the only part of the cycle that exists in a modern scholarly edition, and no British library contains every early printed text that I would have liked to use. My selection has the advantage of including the initiatory work of Montalvo together with the cardinal moment of change in Book V, and it then goes on to give a fair selection of the range of material, authorship and approaches to be found in the remainder of the cycle. It seemed desirable to study some books in French, since this was the language in which Amadis would have been familiar to educated English readers in the sixteenth

^{10.} For a more detailed account of the relationship of the French versions to the Spanish, see Appendix II, 'Early Editions of Amadis'.

century. Except where otherwise indicated, it is to these fourteen books that I refer when I speak of Amadis or the Amadis cycle.

Within this collection of fourteen books I observe a general movement towards a stronger emphasis on the roles of women, and I sometimes find it possible to draw useful distinctions, for example between Montalvo and his successors or between Spanish authors and French translators. More commonly, however, I treat the fourteen books as a loosely circumscribed whole, forming a single fictional world about which some degree of generalisation is possible. I do this first because that is how the cycle is likely to have been received in the period of its widest readership; there are many sixteenth-century references to it, but in general they simply mention Amadis, without distinguishing one part, author, or even language from another. Secondly, for the purposes with which I am concerned, what the books have in common has turned out to be more important than the ways in which they differ, and, apart from the change that begins in Book V, it has not seemed helpful to attempt to trace out patterns of historical development within the cycle.

^{11.} A later exception occurs in the first part of *Don Quixote* (chapter VI), published in 1604; here Cervantes makes the village priest and barber distinguish very clearly between the first four books of the cycle and all the others. Only the former are saved from the bonfire in the courtyard.

3. Method of Approach

In considering the way women are represented in the Amadis cycle, I have deliberately eschewed a strongly theoretical approach. We live in an age of theory, and the representation of women is a field in which a particularly large body of theory has been developed in recent years. Quite apart from their intrinsic interest, which I would certainly not deny, the multiple (and often conflicting) theories that fall under the general headings of gender studies and feminism appear to be especially valuable for the study of literature in providing new ways of approaching texts that have already been analysed to the point of exhaustion, and in correcting the bias of existing interpretations. In the case of the Amadis cycle, what has most struck me is the existence of a huge body of material, incorporating many varied and contradictory representations of women that have hardly been studied at all; and it has seemed to me most important to try to come to terms with this material in a more exploratory way, with as few preconceptions as possible. effective initial approach, I believe, is likely to be empirical and pragmatic, entering fully into the 'disorder' of the text itself, which is utterly at variance with the Cartesian criteria of clear and distinct I do not, of course, imagine that I have been able to study the material without any preconceptions, but the greater danger has seemed to me to be that of making pre-emptive categorisations and exclusions, which might have prevented me from attending to some of the surprising

phenomena that a more naïve reading brings to light. If an anthropological analogy is appropriate, then the work I offer here consists in the main of early field studies in a culture of great richness and variety, rather than of the more refined structural analyses that such studies may eventually make possible. I attempt to read the Amadis cycle from within, though in doing so I may seem to align myself with credulous contemporary readers such as the lady mentioned in Juan Arce de Otálora's Coloquios de Palatino y Pinciano: 'Y rezaremos una Ave Maria e un Pater Noster por su alma, como dezia una señora que presumia de devota, que todos los dias rezava por el anima de Amadis e Oriana'. This means that I frequently adopt the cycle's own terminology, so that, for example, terms such as 'good' and 'bad', as in 'good women' and 'bad women', should be read as if enclosed in quotation marks.

Moreover, although interpretation and fiction do not follow the same methods, I believe strongly that they need to keep in touch with each other. It is therefore particularly important to avoid the distortion that would ensue from imposing clear-cut intellectual categories and oppositions on a text that was never conceived in such terms - a text so various that it calls in question the very concept of the literary 'work', important as this was in the Renaissance. Fascinating though its treatment of women is, Amadis does not present an argument about

^{12.} See Daniel Eisenberg, Romances of Chivalry in the Spanish Golden Age (Newark, Del.: Juan de la Cuesta, 1982), p 160.

them, but a complex and plural narrative experience, one which draws from time to time on a variety of intellectual and popular traditions but appears to be committed to none of them. Indeed, the existence within the cycle, as within so many romances from the twelfth century onwards, of significant yet indeterminate elements of self-parody means that it is often difficult to recognise serious commitment with any certainty or to be sure what was taken seriously even by perceptive contemporary readers such as Sidney and Spenser. One consequence of this general situation for my thesis is that the headings under which I consider its treatment of women are necessarily somewhat contingent, and so is the order in which they are arranged.

In a text such as the Amadis cycle, the concept of the author is even more obviously questionable than that of the work. Historically, it stands at the very beginning of the period in which, as Foucault has put it, 'literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author-function' 13. Montalvo exercises some personal control over the books for which he is responsible, but even those, as we have seen, are reconstructions of earlier writings. As the cycle was extended by a variety of successors and translators until it assumed the form in which it would have been read by Sidney or Spenser, the sense of control by

^{13.} Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp 141-60; p 149.

any individual author diminishes. There cannot even be any certainty that the writers and translators of later books were familiar with all the preceding material. There may be isolated moments of insight into some of the issues which for us are raised by the cycle (I shall suggest, for example, that this is true of the treatment of gender as a social construct in Book XII¹⁴), but there is little evidence of any systematic reflection by the later authors on the implications of the cycle as a whole. Broadly speaking, I find it easiest to see the cycle in the terms in which Barthes defines a 'text' as opposed to a 'work', as 'a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings...blend and clash'¹⁵.

This thesis contains more narrative recapitulation than is perhaps common in doctoral dissertations. I have endeavoured to keep this to the minimum, but a substantial amount of storytelling is essential for my purposes. One reason for this is simply that there can be few, if any, modern readers who have the multiplicity of stories told in the fourteen books considered here at their fingertips. A second and more fundamental reason is that Amadis essentially consists of stories, and it is,

^{14.} See Chapter V.

^{15.} Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in Image-Music-Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p 146. Other recent questionings of the concepts of 'work' and 'author', such as Barthes, 'From Work to Text' (ibid., pp 155-64), and Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', (see n 13 above) also appear applicable in a very straightforward way to pre-modern compilations such as the Amadis cycle.

above all, through the specific narrative sequences that its meanings are conveyed. My focus is on these rather than on the detailed felicities (or infelicities) of language to be found in the various versions. The polyglot cultural achievement constituted by the cycle as a whole is held together, like a television soap opera, as an infinitely extensible concatenation of stories, capable of being transplanted from one European language to another. 16

4. Romance and Reality

It is impossible to engage even in a first, exploratory study of the treatment of women in Amadis without speculating about the relation of this fictional world to the world for which the fiction was produced and in which it was read. The world of Amadis is one of chivalric prowess, in which it might be expected that women's physical weakness would automatically put them at a disadvantage. This is indeed so in the case of numerous princesses fainting in their palace gardens and solitary damsels wailing for help in the depths of dark forests; but, especially from Book V onwards, the cycle is also full of women who are physically active and psychologically strong, exercising a high degree of control

^{16.} The main reason for the length of this thesis is that it seemed desirable to quote or summarize substantial extracts from the texts themselves, given that beyond Book IV they are not available in most libraries.

over their own lives and those of others. Women appear as military leaders, rulers and lawgivers, and at various points they are shown successfully governing, fighting, acting as squires or ambassadors, and even leading sailors in bailing out the bilges of a storm-damaged ship. They ride into battle at the head of huge armies, personally control great fleets of ships and run anything from a castle to an empire. Further, the cycle's fictional world contains Amazonian societies that manage satisfactorily without men and indeed send efficient armies to the aid of allies. When it comes to making laws, female characters have a strong tendency to emphasize the protection of themselves and others of their sex from 'plusiers abus que les hommes leur machinent pour les attraire à leurs affections impudiques, 17. However, Amazonian women do not need laws to protect them; their physical strength is represented as such that it is an unwise man who allows his 'affection impudique' to get the better of him. These women are not just masculine in their strength, but stronger than most other knights. 18

In what terms should one interpret the relations between popular fiction and the real life of its age? In particular, how should one interpret the manifest gap between some of the roles and characteristics attrib-

^{17.} X.61r.

^{18.} Part of this paragraph, and a few sentences elsewhere in the Introduction, are borrowed from my article, 'Studying the Amadis Cycle', Bulletin of the Society for Renaissance Studies, VI.2 (May 1989), 1-8.

uted to fictional women in Amadis and those approved and possible for real women in sixteenth-century Europe? I aim to read Amadis historically, that is, as far as possible as a contemporary reader might have done, taking the narrative on its own terms; and this must involve some consideration of its relation to the culture of the period in which it was written. (At the same time, of course, I recognise that this culture cannot be regarded as something unitary and unchanging and that it is itself subject to interpretation). But Amadis is a huge cyclic romance, and the relations between romance and historical reality may be of many different kinds; they are probably more various, and seemingly more incompatible with one another, than the relations between the novel and historical reality. For this reason, though I shall give some attention to what can be discovered of relevant social conditions in the culture in which it was read, I do not believe that social history offers any straightforward means of decoding the text of Amadis.

One thing that is certain, however, is that the early authors and French translators were all male and were mostly themselves of knightly rank. Montalvo was corregidor of Medina del Campo, Feliciano de Silva lived among his books in his castle and Nicolas d'Herberay, Sieur des Essarts, was an artillery officer. Amadis rapidly became a fashionable work, especially at the French court¹⁹, and although it eventually percolated

^{19.} John J. O'Connor, Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press), pp 10-15.

down the social scale, its main readership, like that of other romances of chivalry, was among 'the upper or noble class, and perhaps...a few particularly well-to-do members of the bourgeoisie' O. The early editions of Amadis were expensive and heavy folios, but these were soon followed by small, easily handled editions which are likely to have been produced with a female readership in mind. That this was so in the case of the beautifully bound and printed edition of Books I-XV in the Cambridge University Library is indicated by the Dixain at the end of Book I, addressed by 'Le Petit Angevin [Jean Maugin] aus Dames Francoyses':

Or avés vous, Dames de cueur humain, Vôtre Amadis en si petit volume, Que le pourrés porter dedans la main Plus aysément beaucoup que de coutume. Recevés donq' de céte docte plume Les traits dorés & propos gracieus, Si que vos cueurs, par danger soucieus, Puissent trouver remede à leur malayse Dans ce sujet d'amour delicieus, Qui tout ennuy, dueil, & courrous apaise.²¹

In this thesis I have assumed a situation in which men were writing about women for an audience of both sexes, and I have sometimes allowed

^{20.} Eisenberg, Romances of Chivalry, p 105.

^{21. .}Richard Cooper's researches show that most copies of Amadis Book IX in the Bodleian actually belonged to women ('The Rise and Fall of Chivalry in Sixteenth-Century France', paper given at the Society for Renaissance Studies Colloquium, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, 5 July, 1988).

myself to speculate about the kinds of literary pleasure likely to have been involved in this situation.

The multiplicity of possible relations between a romance and the world inhabited by its readers should prevent us from making simple assumptions about its reception. It may be helpful if I set out here some of these possible relations in the case of the Amadis cycle. I suggest that the cycle, from time to time, may have offered its readers at least the following kinds of satisfaction:

(a) Romances, and especially perhaps prose romances, can share some of the functions later taken up by the novel. Rosemond Tuve has written of their

...flair for ordinary realism in its simplest sense: for situations drawn from everyday life, natural rather than contrived or stilted conversation, unadorned reportage of a matter-of-fact presentation of what we instead isolate and call 'the marvellous,' credible and unelaborated motivations....²²

These characteristics are found throughout the cycle, but, to take a single example, children, and especially small girls, are sympathetically and realistically presented in the manner Tuve indicates: I note in Chapter III how Melicia, Amadís's younger sister, is too frightened

^{22.} Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p 337.

to admit to losing her father's ring²³ and how Oriana's little sister is petted and teased when she seriously offers to be Amadís's lady.²⁴

- (b) They may represent their readers' reality in an idealised form. Tuve again puts this well when she writes: 'To be sure, romances were a genre that portrayed life idealistically, but on the assumption that it was a realistic portrayal of life'25. This is so much the commonest situation in the Amadis cycle that no specific illustration seems necessary. The idealising and aestheticising tendencies that belong to the aristocratic way of life as it really existed in the Middle Ages and Renaissance are simply adopted as the norm for chivalric fiction.
- (c) Romances can teach or encourage in their readers behaviour imitative of some of the actions they represent: they may teach them manners and other social conventions; they may, like epics, incite courageous actions. For instance, after defending a damsel's right of choice by routing six armed men, the young Amadís exclaims that: '...en parte donde las mugeres son maltratadas, que deuen andar seguras, no puede auer hombre que nada valga'. The narrator is using his hero to teach both by example and by precept. An illustration of how the Amadis cycle was

^{23. 83-84.}

^{24. 444-45.}

^{25.} Allegorical Imagery, p 342.

^{26. 51.}

received in this way, and in effect used as a courtesy book, is provided by the dedicatory epistle to the sixteenth-century English *Treasurie of Amadis of France*, which describes the book as

...stufte with pleasant orations, fine epistles, singular complaintes...with most delectable matter for all causes, as well incouraging the bashfull person and cowarde to bee valiant, as the worthie ladies and damseles in their amorous Epistles, ferevente complaintes of iniuries handled most excellently....²⁷

(d) Romances, like dreams, may offer the fulfilment of wishes, but within the security of a literary form that guarantees a happy ultimate outcome. Under this heading might be included the vicarious enjoyment of dangerous adventures and frighteningly exotic settings. From the point of view of the female readership, which must have included a number of adolescent girls, the Amadis cycle offered the attraction of enabling them to experience imaginatively a range of situations and adventures that would have been quite impossible in real life. A girl would be surely exhilarated to read of a young heroine who is the only person not to panic in a hurricane at sea, insists on riding off alone to investigate when she has managed to bring the ship in to a bay surrounded by dangerous forest, promptly rides off in hot and successful pur-

^{27.} Thomas Paynell, The Treasurie of Amadis of France (London: H. Bynneman for Thomas Hacket, c.1568), page unnumbered. On the verso of the last printed page of the Cambridge University Library copy is written, in what appears to be a contemporary hand, 'Leave to offende thy gratious god' - interesting evidence of the moral disapproval that was also part of the reception of Amadis.

suit of an enraged tigress and then advances with drawn sword straight into the mouth of a dark cavern to fight her way through unseen assailants before emerging on to a foggy plain where she kills six monsters. 28 Furthermore, in this cycle the young women are often free enough from the restrictions experienced by their female readers for them to be able to join a knight on his adventures; the stories offer a vicarious sense of comradeship, of being able to join a men's world and participate in the fellowship that comes from sharing danger and discomfort. Adolescents of both sexes can go off on amazing adventures, then return triumphantly, often married to the partner of their choice, and be reintegrated into a rejoicing and congratulatory family. Similarly, parents can lose infants, lead the lives of the young and childless for the next twenty years, then have their offspring returned to them as beautiful, successful and loving young adults, the parent-child bond even stronger than it could possibly be after years of careful parenthood.

(e) Finally, like myths, romances may offer imaginary solutions to problems that are insoluble in the social reality inhabited by their readers. Thus romances in general have a tendency to affirm both that the existing social structure is permanent and that individual virtue and initiative will gain spectacular rewards. So far as the rôles of women in the Amadis cycle are concerned, there are many cases in which a woman who leads an active and independent chivalric life is at the same time a

passive wife who defers to her husband. Thus a new possibility for female life coexists fictionally with the hierarchical order which in reality it would inevitably subvert. Again, as I note in Chapter II, women who are handed over in marriage as commodities also prove to be in love with the men whose property they become: thus subordination coexists with freedom of choice.

5. Romance and Doctrine

To define romance as a literary genre is notoriously difficult. One explanation for this difficulty may well be that proposed by Vinaver, that the characteristics of romance as it was born or reborn in twelfth-century France are precisely those by which we now define literature itself; in particular, the expectation that the narrative has a meaning that demands thoughtful interpretation.²⁹ An explanation compatible with this but more relevant to my purposes is that long cyclic chivalric romances such as Amadis are narratives of an episodic, wandering and extravagant kind, following the apparently random adventures of errant knights, and that their very errancy tends to lead them to transgress generic boundaries. Such romances pleased their readers precisely by being extensive, various, not reducible to intellectual patterns, and

^{29.} Eugène Vinaver, The Rise of Romance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p 15 and Chapter II passim.

above all by being unfinishable. There is always room for further additions and continuations and no doctrinal conclusion is ever achieved. Their structural and narrative dynamics are different from those of the literary fictions familiar to more recent readers: stories and characters proliferate, are dropped and picked up again; one new generation after another reaches maturity while their progenitors continue to dazzle with undiminished prowess and beauty. Names are often similar or identical, and plot motifs are repeated. Long experience in watching television soap operas might well prepare us better for responding to such narratives than the methods of study taught in university departments of literature and formalised in current literary theory. guises and amazing revelations abound. Not only is it a wise child that knows his own father (or brother or son or best friend), but it is a wise reader who is never confused as the Child of the Sea reappears as the Knight of the Dwarf, Beltenebrós, the Knight of the Green Sword, the Greek Knight, or Amadís, prince of the small kingdom of Gaula. He later becomes King of Great Britain, and the reader then has to be careful not to confuse King Amadís with his great-grandson, the Emperor Amadís, who rules in Constantinople. Geographical location gives little help, for a wandering damsel or a magic boat might have taken either of them anywhere in the known world, or indeed to a good many places that no-one had ever heard of and did not exist, such as the Amazon kingdom of California.

A sense of confusion, a certain dream-like loss of control, is an essential element in the experience of reading the Amadis cycle, and this cannot have made it easy for the authors to execute any large-scale didactic purpose, even if they had wished to do so, any more than it facilitates accurate, detailed analysis by the modern reader. Works of this kind seem especially unlikely to lend themselves to consistent doctrinal purposes: the events certainly have meanings, and we are intended to consider what those meanings may be, but the overall sequence of adventures, governed as it is by the principle of unexpectedness, will be unlikely to convey a systematic doctrine. There may even be an inherent antagonism between cyclic romance and doctrine; a striking negative example of this is the thirteenth-century Queste del Saint Graal, an interlaced romance composed by Cistercian monks so as to convey elevated spiritual teachings. As the ascetic doctrine begins to emerge, so the adventures of which romance is made up begin to disappear, much to the bewilderment of the earthly knights³⁰, until ultimately the *Queste* functions as a romance only insofar as it can make good its claim to put an end to the possibility of all further romances. In the sixteenth century the lack of success of the libros de caballerías a lo divino, composed specifically to compete with secular chivalric romances31, offers a further indication that romance and systematic doctrine may be inher-

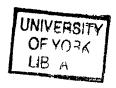
^{30.} See The Quest of the Holy Grail, trans. P. M. Matarasso (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p 162 and n 44.

^{31.} See Eisenberg, Romances of Chivalry, pp 45-46.

ently opposed. If not opposed, they are at least distinct discourses, operating in parallel within a culture that does not necessarily insist that the attempt should be made to reconcile them.

No programmatic ambition governs the Amadis cycle. This huge, multiauthored and multivocal collection makes up an inconsistent and untidy
fictional world. It is related to reality in at least as many ways as
those listed above, and in its representation of women the fantastic and
the realistic, the conventional and the unconventional, seem to lie
unquestioned side by side. These juxtapositions do not appear to be
designed either to enforce or to subvert any specific teaching about
women, nor have I gained any sense that, after Book V, the cycle is even
moving towards some new and more progressive view of sexual roles. It
is rather that each new addition simply adds to the existing variety. 32
The consequence, as will be seen, is a tendency towards the dissolution
of the very categories through which doctrine might be conveyed, including such fundamental oppositions as active/passive, rational/emotional,
and even married/unmarried.

^{32.} Again an analogy suggests itself with Caxton's view of Malory's cycle: he writes that 'herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin'. Variety is the crucial feature, and any lessons are to be drawn by the reader rather than being imposed by the author: 'Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good faith and renown' (Le Morte D'Arthur, ed. Cowan, I, 6).



A categorical dissolution that might also be regarded (whether favourably or unfavourably) as a kind of feminisation can also be found in the cycle's form as well as its content. As will be noted in Chapter I, traditional views of women saw them as unstable, inconstant, frivolous, extravagant, deceitful, irrational, imperfect. That these characteristics equally belong to romance as a genre, and especially to Amadis itself, is suggested by some of the contemporary criticisms collected by Sir Henry Thomas. Vives claims (in the voice of an English translator) that chivalric romances make their readers 'wylye & craftye' and that they stir up in them 'all beastly and filthy desire'. He further alleges that women readers are likely to 'waxe more vngratiously subtyle by redyng of such bokes'. Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés, the historian of the Indies, condemns the 'disparates delos libros mentirosos de amadis' and asserts that through them, the devil 'enbauca, e enbelesa y entretiene los neçios'. Pierre Brantôme jokingly declares, 'Je voudrais avoir autant de centaines d'escus comme il y a eu des filles, tant du monde que de relligieuses, qui se sont jeadis esmeues, pollues et dépucellées par la lecture des Amadis de Gaule.'33 One does not have to share these critics' disapproval to agree that there is something beguilingly and temptingly feminine in the very nature of the cycle, in which so much of the action is motivated by desire of or for women. Such writing can indeed be seen as an embodied denial of the

^{33.} Henry Thomas, Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), pp 161, 156, 213.

validity of the clear-cut binary opposition of male to female. Certainly, for subsequent writers it formed an incomparable and irresistible reservoir of ideas about and attitudes towards the female sex. The task of demonstrating this adequately of course still remains to be done; this thesis is but a first if indispensable step towards it.

CHAPTER I

THE FEMININE: DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE.

A. TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF WOMEN

An understanding of the representation of women in the Amadis cycle can be achieved only against the background of the traditional views of women that predominated in Western thought from classical antiquity to the Renaissance; I therefore begin with a sketch of these views. Generatione Animalium Aristotle argues that nature always wants to create perfection and therefore human copulation should ideally produce males. However, conditions are not always right for the ideal and the result is then the production of an imperfect human being - a female. Aristotle tends to think in terms of dualities, within which one unit is superior to the other. In the Metaphysics he attributes to the Pythagoreans a series of related opposites of this kind: right/left, straight/ curved, light/darkness, good/evil and, of course, male/ female. In the Middle Ages Aquinas repeats that although females are part of nature's plan, they are an incomplete version of the male, the result of less than perfect conditions - debility of the active power or an unhealthily damp south wind. Luther rejects this, but only to enhance the powers of God, not those of woman. God made her carefully, but carefully made her imperfect and inferior. There appears, in fact, to be little difference in this matter between Catholic and Reformed theologians, or indeed between the early and late Renaissance. As Ian Maclean writes in The Renaissance Notion of Woman, to which I am indebted throughout this opening section, '...sex is a polarity rather than something which

admits ranges of possibilities to both man and woman which may overlap'l. Renaissance theology sticks to firm divisions, with little ambiguity or complexity; thus hermaphrodites were often seen as monstrous and unnatural creatures rather than representing a mid-point in a continuous gradation between male and female. 2

Renaissance medicine and physiology tended to follow Galen, who broadly agreed with Aristotle: women were deprived, passive and material, with cold and moist dominant humours as opposed to the vigorous and creative humours of men, which were hot and dry. The preponderance of cold, moist humour in women was seen as having not just a physical but an equally strong psychological effect, and most doctors believed that women were incapable of much self-control. Aristotle lists a number of traits that were already currently accepted as typically female when he

^{1.} The Renaissance Notion of Woman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p 27.

^{2.} Here, though, certain kinds of mystical and Neoplatonic thought are an exception. In the Middle Ages the hermaphrodite had already been considered a symbol for the creative union of opposites, and had been an important emblem in alchemy. During the Renaissance the combination of male and female was not only admired when represented visually or in fiction; such admiration was a manifestation of what was being said and written at a more elevated level. As Stevie Davies puts it, 'Man's affinity with woman, along with a high valuation of the feminine and a wish to incorporate and emulate it, appears to be an obsession of the period.... In all the mystical philosophies which dominated the period, we find this image of androgyny not just as a minor by-product but as a major preoccupation' (The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature: The Feminine Reclaimed [Brighton: Harvester, 1986), pp 1, 5). As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the Amadis cycle reflects that preoccupation in various ways and at various levels. On Neoplatonism in the cycle, see below, pp 182ff.

wrote his Historia Animalium, a work which was widely read in the Renaissance. These same traits appear in or are ascribed to women in the Amadis cycle. They cry easily, are very jealous, complain a lot, are liable to depression, they lie and deceive, they are cowardly. Legal thought, both canon and civil, agreed with medical opinion in attributing to women weaknesses such as frivolity and inconstancy, while Renaissance legal writings often use the words fragilitas, imbecillitas, infirmitas and levitas when referring to women. A long tradition of scriptural commentary saw woman not just as sensual herself, but as the symbol of human sensuality in general. Such learned writings may serve only to give a 'scientific' backing or doctrinal formulation to time-honoured popular prejudices: women are incapable of reasoning, lustful, extravagant and vain, deceitful, unstable, inquisitive, incurably talkative, unable to keep a secret, mentally and physically weak.

The Renaissance nevertheless brought a new interest in the status of women and a determination to redefine their nature; throughout Europe they assume a more central role in literary texts and are the subject of sharply controversial writings at every level. However, in all the claims made for and against the female sex, virtually no writer asked why a woman couldn't be more like a man. Her supporters argued not that she was similar and equal, but that she was different and superior. Marc Angenot suggests that classical thought was unable to conceive

differentiation without hierarchy. Apologists and moralists alike reiterated the same passive and privative virtues as peculiarly feminine: chastity, modesty and long-suffering. Erasmus, Agrippa, Vives and others believed that woman's position in society was divinely ordained and that she should practise different virtues from man, often complementary ones: silence/eloquence, obedience/command. The one exception to these generalizations arises in the case of women rulers, whose birth and status may be seen as making them honorary men.

From this cursory summary it can be seen that sexual difference is normally regarded not just as a matter of binary opposition but as one of hierarchy. Indeed, this seems to have been a permanent feature of European thought on the subject. As Freud was to put it as late as the 1930s,

For distinguishing between male and female in mental life we make use of what is obviously an inadequate empirical and conventional equation: we call everything that is strong and active male, and everything that is weak and passive female.⁴

^{3.} Marc Angenot, Les champions des femmes. Examen du discours sur la supériorité des femmes 1400-1800 (Montréal: Presses de l'université du Québec, 1977), p 163.

^{4.} Sigmund Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, in Standard Edition, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74), XXIII, 188.

It cannot be expected that works of fiction should escape entirely from the dominant modes of thought of the culture that produced them; nevertheless, narrative fiction can be regarded as a partially autonomous discourse, offering a certain degree of liberation by contrast with the ideology of its age. In its relationship to reality fiction is less fettered to the actual, and can afford a certain degree of free play, or space for hypotheses and wish fulfilments. Amadis certainly shows an imaginative power at work, at least intermittently, which permits the deconstruction of traditional oppositions and hierarchies, making it possible to dissolve sexual difference and to attribute masculine characteristics to female persons and vice-versa. As further additions and translations are added to the basic text, a more inclusive concept of gender emerges in the cycle; some heroes and heroines could almost be called androgynous. Many of the female characters of the Amadis cycle are imagined as capable of physical strength, public eloquence and an astonishing range of positive action; furthermore, some of them, big and muscular, are indistinguishable from their heroic brothers. Male characters, on the other hand, often possess in an exaggerated form not only the sensibility of some medieval heroes of romance, but also faces so delicately beautiful that when they are dressed as ladies, men go mad for their love.

The traditional views of sexual difference imposed a closed definition of female nature. The more freely operating fictional imagination of the *Amadis* cycle tended to undo that closure. Yet within these texts

there remain, alongside this freer and more mobile view, important traces of the traditional view of the sexes and their relationship. I shall begin by examining briefly some examples of more conventional conceptions of gender in the *Amadis* cycle.

In spite of the many apparently ordinary women who, lacking the advantage of supernatural abilities enjoyed by enchantresses in the cycle, nevertheless scale cliffs, climb mountains, row boats laden with fully armed knights and their chargers⁵ and resolutely face amazing dangers, any evidence of weakness tends to be described as feminine. Men who can't bear adversity when in enemy hands show 'auto mujeril'⁶ and a little later it is emphasized that men should avoid 'tal auto mujeril' and follow the deeds of 'fuertes varones'⁷. Helisena's confidante Darioleta laments bitterly when she thinks she has caused Amadís's death by asking for his help against a giant: 'Mas ¿qué puedo dezir,' she exclaims, 'sino que mi liuiandad y arebatamiento fue de propia muger?'⁸. Montalvo comments disapprovingly on how quickly Helisena (Amadís's mother) fell in love: rich girls who, very properly, choose a retired

^{5.} VII.30. 'Autrefois avoit-elle manié l'aviron pour plaisir', we are told about Frandamelle, the damsel who rowed the boat; it contained three other persons, besides herself, the knights, and their war horses.

^{6.} V.465.

^{7.} V.506.

^{8. 1266.}

and holy life, must be sure to keep away from temptation. Seeing a handsome man for one moment may prove too much for them. A damsel and her mother change their minds about the passionate suitor who had kidnapped the girl 'como las mugeres acostumbran fazer'¹⁰; female curiosity is said to be great, even in the newly widowed¹¹, and we are told that nothing is impossible to a woman once she has undertaken it, especially something wicked¹². Vanity comes high on the list of faults ascribed to female characters: the ladies at the court of Trebisonde are all eager to look their best when the famous beauty Niquee is about to arrive¹³, and Princess Silvie, in spite of an upbringing as rustic as Perdita's, no sooner sees a notice outside the prison of an enchanted prince stating that the most beautiful lady in the world is needed to break the enchantment than she assumes 'selon le naturel des Dames' that her own beauty is meant¹⁴.

Such comments are almost always restricted to the narratorial voice; it is as though when the writers enter more fully into the fictive world they tend to abandon the conventional view. Most knights in the cycle

^{9. 19-20.}

^{10. 1302.}

^{11.} X.22r.

^{12.} VIII.87r.

^{13.} VIII.118r.

^{14.} IX.9v.

are made to give no sign of sharing the views of traditional misogynists and few display the male chauvinism which is a natural corollary of such views. Indeed, heroes are shown as giving it short shrift when it does occur; Prince Lisuart of Greece, for example, is riding along at random, beside himself with grief, when he is followed by a knight curious to see whether he is drunk or mad. Realising that Lisuart's trouble is love he scorns and insults him: '...ie n'eusse iamais pensé trouver homme si fol, pour se rendre suiet à vn sexe tant faus et malicieus comme êt celui des femmes'. Lisuart is so enraged that he instantly cuts the knight's arm off. 15

The first four books, the volumes properly called Amadis de Gaula and published at the very beginning of the sixteenth century, are more strongly marked by traditional misogyny than are the later additions. The hermit with whom the hero endures a suicidal voluntary exile on the 'Peña Pobre' puts a conventional clerical view: Oriana's cruelly worded dismissal of Amadis is just what is to be expected of a woman. 'Women's love', he says, 'is only a matter of what's before their eyes and what is being said to them. They quickly forget, and are not worth the loss of a man like you.' 16 'Women', says Amadis's squire Gandalín, 'are not at all firm, they love first one man and then another'. 17 They are

^{15.} VI.47v.

^{16. 394.}

^{17. 392.}

'feeble', says one knight 18, 'deceitful', says another 19, and in an important speech to all his knights on the Firm Island, Amadís himself pronounces that women 'were born to obey, with weak spirits, and their strongest arms [are] tears and sighs'. 20 Gandalín resents the unhappiness Oriana's jealousy has caused his lord, and a hermit would have a vested interest in chastity, but various characters throughout the first four books are given the occasional antifeminist cliché of a type still widely diffused in sixteenth-century misogynistic writings. In these earlier books great stress is laid on women's mental and physical weakness and vulnerability. Later books in the cycle contain less narratorial comment, though they still retain a number of brief, unflattering remarks from both narrator and characters. Such comments are revealed to be generally untrue when one considers the women presented in the romance, or to apply equally to both sexes.

B. WOMEN TOGETHER

So far I have been discussing what is said about women in the world they share with men. In this section I consider how they are represented in Amadis when they are among themselves, occupying the segregated space

^{18. 997.}

^{19. 1000.}

^{20. 907.}

allotted them by traditional doctrine and by the normal practice of Renaissance society. (As indicated in the Introduction, I am not, of course, claiming that in this respect the romance merely reflects social reality.)

1. Sexual Segregation

It is noticeable that there is more of this segregation in the earlier books of the cycle. As further books are added in the course of the sixteenth century, a certain blending occurs of the lives and activities of the men and women represented in these romances; taken in conjunction with the even more conspicuous integration of traditionally male and female characteristics in the same individual, the general effect is that of a gradual shift in the construction of gender. Throughout the cycle, however, the interest and variety of the 'feminine' as traditionally conceived emerge strikingly, as does the sympathy with which women among themselves are regarded.

At home in castles and palaces, women are frequently shown as segregated from men. This is particularly true in Montalvo's books; in later volumes courtly amusements bring the sexes together, but women still spend a great deal of their time in the company of their own sex. In Book I, Galaor is quietly led through what is in effect a ladies' dormitory in

the Duke of Bristoya's castle.²¹ Eating arrangements are segregated too²²; throughout the first four books King Lisuarte and his wife, who are shown as having a particularly close and loving relationship, eat he with his knights, she with her ladies, and when Queen Briseña is summoned to her husband's presence after dinner one day we are told that many of the knights were grateful for the chance to see their ladies²³. In Book V Montalvo again shows the sexes dining separately at the court of Constantinople, and we are now told about further subdivisions of rank and age: a Turkish princess, even if ancient, mad and hairy, merits the top ladies' table and after the meal the Empress takes Melia to her own room 'porque su grande edad no requeria compaña de mujeres mozas'²⁴. Indeed, since the hierarchy of rank is superimposed on that of gender, there always seems to be a distinct social order in any group of ladies (there are virtually no women in these romances who are not ladies) and this order is immediately apparent to anyone who approaches them. When

^{21. 105.}

^{22.} This segregation appears to have been still the custom in Spain at the end of the reign of Philip IV, when Charles II sent Sir Richard Fanshawe as his ambassador to the court at Madrid. At supper on the ambassador's arrival in Seville, the Duke of Albuquerque courteously insists that he and the Duchess will eat with Sir Richard and Lady Fanshawe, which Sir Richard takes as 'a great favour', suggesting 'my wife should eat with her Ladyship, retired from the men, after the Spanish fashion, it being more than sufficient, they would not think strange, we used the innocent freedom of our own when we were among ourselves'. See Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe, ed. Beatrice Marshall (London: John Lane, 1905), p 241.

^{23. 210.}

^{24.} V.519.

Silves comes upon twelve damsels sitting on a crimson carpet beside a silvery stream in the forest and having a picnic, he unerringly addresses 'ces deux principalles'. 25 Women of high rank, whether they are the wives of evil enchanters or imprisoned princesses, are always suitably accompanied by ladies and damsels, forming a clear social unit and one obviously at least as important as the nuclear family. 26

In an account of the wedding of Oriana and Amadís, the women appear to form a separate group. 27 Not only marriage but also death separates the sexes. There is a harrowing deathbed scene when Florisel's first wife Helene dies of a miscarriage; the family and friends who had surrounded her separate, the men taking Florisel off to another room while the 'tendres Princesses' remain to grieve around the deathbed of one of their own sex. 28

Hunting and tournaments are usually enjoyed separately. Ladies do participate in the hunt to a limited extent, riding to the forest and then sitting together in tents or on the grass and chatting to each other until the men return. Only Amazons seem to take a more active part in the proceedings. As late as Book XII tournaments are watched from

^{25.} XIV.33r.

^{26. 173.}

^{27. 1228.}

^{28.} XIII.51.

segregated grandstands, as in many late-medieval manuscript illustrations. 29 However, such segregation is not misogynistic, as we shall now see.

2. Female Amusements

Since they spend so much of their time together, women are dependent on each other for company and entertainment. Most of this entertainment is shown as being conventional in romance terms and somewhat limited. A great deal of time is spent in gardens, where female characters sing, dance, pick flowers to make garlands, occasionally sew and read love stories and very often sit talking round a beautiful fountain. Helene of Apolonie, with a terrible prophecy hanging over her, is a prisoner in the numnery of which her aunt is abbess and she and her maidens seem to spend all their waking hours in the garden. On Diane is also a prisoner in a delightful palace and gardens, waiting until she is of an age to be used by her mother as an instrument of vengeance: she is to be the reward for any knight who murders her father. Her best friend describes the folies with which the damsels amused themselves while Diane was resting. They danced in their petticoats, bathed in the fountain, discussed which of them 'étoit la mieus garnie pour fille', and then when

^{29.} XII.27r.

^{30.} IX.63v.

Daraïde claimed that she could most easily disguise herself as a knight (and with reason as 'she' was actually Prince Agesilan of Colchos masquerading as an Amazon) they made her pretend to be a knight and court them. They acted out passion, declarations of love, 'petites coleres' and the girls pretended to be jealous of each other. Then they played 'weddings', with lute music, dancing and a feast of garden fruit and water from the fountain. Daraïde, says Lardenie, used to stop suddenly in the middle of a game to exclaim that the martyrdom of love prevented her from enjoying herself, and then her companions would fall about laughing ('ce que nous oyans nous laissions toutes tumber de rire ...'). 31 Alfresco amusement which takes place outside such a safely enclosed space is often shown as more dangerous.

Other passages throughout the cycle give a sense of shared enjoyment and child-like fun. Indeed the atmosphere is sometimes that of a twentieth-century girls' story describing a Guides' summer camp or larks in the dorm and it is pleasant to think of sixteenth-century girls enjoying it, however much their spiritual advisors disapproved of such reading. One gets a strong sense of physical closeness, with ladies embracing, holding hands, sleeping in the same bed or bedroom and girls tumbling and playing together like puppies. A large curtained bed is like a small private room, a place where confidences can be exchanged. A damsel in a castle where Amadis of Greece spends the night is longing to hear all

^{31.} XI.69v-70r.

about the handsome stranger and invites his female squire Finistee to share her bed. 32 Oriana's bedroom in her father's palace has three extra beds for her three closest friends and when the enchantress Urganda has come to visit the British court in her fiery galley she asks at bedtime whether she may share a room with the girls. Queen Briseña is afraid that 'sus locuras os enojarán', but Urganda is anxious for a quiet word with Oriana. They all chat enjoyably together until they are in bed, but when Urganda starts talking confidentially to Oriana the latter is afraid that her friends will wake and overhear. obligingly produces a little book and puts a spell on them. In order to test its efficacy Oriana tries to wake them but they are quite insensible, 'y començó a reýr, trauándola de la cabeça y de los braços, y colgándola de la cama, y otro tanto a Mabilia...'. She then settles happily in bed beside Urganda and they start their talk. 33 There is more laughter in the Palace of Trebizond in Book VI when Griliane and Bridelnie start arguing over which of them is the most beloved. Finally Bridelnie, 'gaye & deliberée plus que nulles d'elles', throws a pillow at Griliane's head, saying, 'Mon Cheualier m'ayme mieus, & ie le prouveray à coup de masse'. Griliane responds in kind and there is a fierce battle which ends with all the girls laughing and all the pillows burst. In the original Spanish the game described is even more surprisingly rough and boyish: the two girls stage a mock tournament, with Griliana

^{32.} XI.51r.

^{33. 515-16.}

challenging her friend to admit that her own knight has done better in the recent fighting. They snatch up cushions and take suitable positions, charging and knocking each other over, then, 'con mucha alegría', each takes a fresh 'lance' and they charge again. 34

In Book II an episode with Oriana and her best friend Mabilia, Amadís's cousin, similarly ends in a friendly fight. Mabilia has had an extra set of postern keys cut so that Amadís can be secretly admitted when he returns and the two girls slip out into the garden at night to try them. They have not gone far when Oriana is overcome with fear and declares that she can go no further. Her more resolute friend vows to protect her; she is cousin to the best knight in the world and if she fails in this adventure she won't carry sword or shield for the next year. Oriana says she has faith in her great prowess and the two girls laughingly hold hands and proceed to the first gate. Having explained her plan in greater detail, Mabilia then makes a joking reference to the part Oriana must play once Amadís has arrived and promptly has her hair grabbed 'y derribógelo en el suelo, y stuuieron ambas por vna pieça con gran risa y plazer...'.35

The woods and streams can also provide the setting for such female merriment, even the warrior-maiden Alastraxeree joining in. The machina-

^{34.} VI.13r (French), VII.14v (Spanish).

^{35. 43-49.}

tions of Divine Providence with a little help from enchanters have brought a number of ladies and their attendants together at 'la fontaine des amours d'Anastarax'. They gradually become happy and friendly, first eating, then dancing and singing together. At night the two of highest rank, Silvie and Alastraxeree, are lent a tent for themselves, but after they have had a walk in the cool wood discussing a possible marriage for Alastraxeree, they hear the other princesses singing in their tent and go and join them; the dancing starts again and continues far into the night. By then they are all so friendly that an extra bed is made up for Alastraxeree, who invites Silvie to share it with her, and the two girls spend most of what remains of the night talking to each other. 36

A girlish sense of fun, conforming as it sometimes does to our ancestors' more robust sense of the comic, can seem less pleasant to modern readers. In a later book Helene and Timbrie egg on an ugly dwarf and a plain shepherd who are quarrelling over which of them is most likely to earn a woman's favour. They are obviously about to attack each other physically, 'à quoi les deus Princesses prenoyent si grand plaisir que rien plus', and Helene almost dies of laughter when their feelings run so high that the dwarf draws out his little dagger and the shepherd

picks up some stones.³⁷ The narrators, however, show sympathy, and even delight, in this and other representations of such women's worlds.

3. Female Solidarity

The female characters in this cycle of romances, then, are depicted as quite capable of enjoying themselves without masculine company. There is a strong sense throughout of a second, women's world beneath the men's world of fighting and governing. Moreover, it is a striking feature of the representation of the sexes in the cycle that some of the most remarkable female characters move freely between both worlds, equally accepted in both for what they are, while the only male characters to live in the women's world do so in disguise and unrecognized. Women, it would seem, possess a flexibility denied to men; and, contrary to the 'scientific' views that see them as imperfect men, women possess a fuller access to the whole range of human experience. The world of women is depicted in these romances as more comprehensive than that of men.

Within their own world, women are shown as very supportive of each other, especially in crises. The companionship is maintained even outside the *locus amoenus*. Men make things happen and women depend on each

other for help in coming to terms with what has happened; comforting is seen as a special skill at which some are particularly good. asks Mabilia to comfort Sardamira 'como lo os sabeys fazer', and Queen Briseña is 'señalada en el mundo...para consejar las mugeres tristes' 38. Women gather around an unhappy woman 'to keep her company' and there are a great many examples of consolation being given, sometimes by close friends or relatives, sometimes by complete strangers. An example of the latter occurs when Lucelle successfully comforts Galdafée. bonds of their sisterhood transcend not just the fact that they are strangers, but also the fact that one is a beautiful princess, the other a one-eyed giantess with a scaly tail. 39 Nor is help limited to psychological support. The exercise of various kinds of ingenuity to help other women will be considered later, but straightforward practical assistance is also given on a number of occasions. When the Count of Selandia's daughter is pregnant with Amadís's half-brother Florestán, her aunt is grieved, but stands by her and brings the child up. 40 of the few lower-class women in the romance is depicted as no less compassionate; the hostess of a village inn, despite considerable personal risk she warns Silvie of ten knights who are planning to rape her, then is so moved by Silvie's tears and prayers that she helps her to esc-

^{38. 960, 896.}

^{39.} VII.29v.

^{40. 332.}

ape. 41 Alastraxeree rescues the Amazon princess Pentasilee, whom she had previously fought in a joust; now the young Amazon is exhausted after fighting in her first battle. Alastraxeree comes galloping up, shouting 'sus sus Pentasilee ma douce ennemie, tirez vous arriere V reposez à l'abry de la monioye des corps que vous avez abattus'. 42

There is a general sense of warmth and solidarity between women; Urganda may over-estimate this when she advances towards the ancient and gnarled enchantress Melia in her cave and asks, 'Infanta, ¿querrás hablar conmigo, pues que así como tú yo soy mujer?'⁴³ What Melia actually wants to do is to strangle Urganda, but there are very few examples of women being cruel to each other and many of sympathy and kindness. In the case cited above, the support given by Alastraxeree to Pentasilee is precisely what male friends might be shown as giving each other. A new element in the sympathy shown in the representation of women is that their word is as weighty, morally, as that of men.

^{41.} IX.49v.

^{42.} XIII.119.

^{43.} V.510.

4. Female Friendship

Solidarity is also shown in the special form of individual relations. Male friendship had been a well-established literary theme from ancient times onwards, whereas women were often seen as dominated by mutual jealousy; but in the Amadis cycle there are many instances of the male narrators imagining particularly close and durable female friendships. 44 On his way from Denmark to claim his British kingdom, Lisuarte leaves his beautiful little daughter in the care of the king of Scotland. is not sent for until she is grown up, so her closest companion is the Scottish princess, Mabilia, who also accompanies her to the British court. An attempt to part the girls when there has been a breach between the two families proves unsuccessful; the bond between them is stronger than the family bond and Amadís's foster-father Gandales realises this: '...Señoras', he says, 'pues tanto vos amáys y hauéys estado de consuno, desaguisado sería quien vos partiesse'45. Mabilia is presented as a particularly attractive character, unselfish, affectionate, with plenty of practical good sense and a lively sense of humour. Unusually, we are not told that her prince was dumbfounded by her beauty;

^{44.} The friendship between Britomart and Amoret is cited by Benjamin G. Lockerd, The Sacred Marriage: Psychic Integration in the Faerie Queene (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1987), p 145, together with the female friendships in Shakespeare's comedies, as the earliest examples of such relationships in literature; in fact, however, Spenser would almost certainly have been familiar with the Amadis cycle.

^{45. 667-68.}

she is beautiful, but he loves her for 'el buen donayre y gracia y gentileza...y su honestidad'⁴⁶. She certainly needs more than mere beauty to cope with the task of being Oriana's best friend and confidant. Oriana herself acknowledges that '...si por su gran discreción y consuelos no fuesse...impossible fuera sostener la vida'⁴⁷, and Mabilia's practical help, sensible advice, comfort and companionship are constantly needed. In common with other pairs of female friends, the two share a sense of complicity and a glance between them is enough to convey the pleasure or anxiety they both feel.

A close friendship of a more equal kind, as there is no element of attendance, is that between Fortunie, daughter of Lisuart of Greece, and the Amazon princess Pentasilee. They are still very young when, with other ladies, they are imprisoned on 'l'isle Auentureuse', and as they are 'conformes en coustumes, manieres, & en beauté' they spend most of their time together. Once released they share a room and share confidences, talking about their knights and composing a joint letter to them. Amusement over the unwelcome but determined wooing of a pair of Tartar princes is also shared. Hough of equivalent rank, Pentasilee is depicted as much stronger both physically and psychologically. Even off the battlefield she shows herself as much more resolute and she often

^{46. 1066.}

^{47. 981.}

^{48.} XIV.32r, 58v-59r, 74v-75r.

has to encourage her weaker friend, whether it is a matter of meeting their lovers in a garden at night or coping when she and Fortunie are snatched away by giants. Fortunie's rôle in the friendship is the more feminine one; for instance when Pentasilee has disposed of her own unwelcome suitor in a bloody fight, Fortunie removes her friend's armour and is very grieved to see her wounds. 49 In all the many examples in the cycle, there is never any suggestion that the quality of friendship between women is at all inferior to that of friendship between men.

C. PASSIVE HEROINES

Pentasilee and Fortunie are representative of two types of heroine in the cycle, the active and unconventional, and the passive, conforming to traditional thinking on the nature and rôle of women. Both traditional thinking and the social segregation of the sexes shown in these romances, with female characters living together, finding their own amusements and supporting each other in adversity, would suggest a view of women as being distinct from men and consequently like the passive Fortunie. These romance fantasies shared by authors and readers (as noted in the Introduction, both authors and translators seem usually to have

been gentlemen writing for pleasure⁵⁰) do indeed seem to present most of their imagined women as passive. I shall now give some account of such characters, those who are shown as letting things happen to them or as getting what they want through men. They are represented as conventionally feminine in that they are at the mercy of their emotions and they have less internal control over themselves as well as over the external conditions of their lives. The active, more androgynous heroines like Pentasilee, who play increasingly important rôles as the cycle continues, are more hopeful and determined, less likely to accept what fate brings them with no more than a tearful lament; their fate and their honour are carved out with their own swords. Four salient examples of passive heroines will be considered.

1. Onolorie

Onolorie, daughter of the Emperor of Trebisonde and eventually married to Lisuart of Greece, grandson of Amadis of Gaule, is frequently carried away by the strength of her feelings, without being capable of doing much about whatever unfortunate situation she finds herself in. When Lisuart is taken prisoner we are told that she dies a hundred times an

^{50.} Eisenberg notes that, although some scholars have assumed a popular readership for Spanish chivalric romances, their dedications to noble patrons, high prices, and the quality of the printing and binding, all indicate otherwise (*Romances of Chivalry*, pp 95-98).

hour and though she tries to hide her feelings, she can never stop crying. 51 Like her grandmother-in-law Oriana and granddaughter-in-law Helene, she is much afflicted by jealousy, another supposedly female weakness. She has no more real grounds for suspicion than Oriana, but like Oriana believes something that she hears and writes a cold and angry letter of banishment; she is obeyed by a heartbroken Lisuart who becomes 'Le Chevalier Solitaire' for a considerable time. 52 Such situations are self-perpetuating without the help of a third party, who is almost always a travelling damsel. 53 Alquife has to cross half Europe and use considerable interpersonal skills to reassure him. Onolorie and her sister Gricilerie are in the palace chapel with their mother when they receive a secret message. 'Certes onques timide Bergere trouvant le Serpent au buisson, n'eut le cueur plus douteus, ni tremblant.... contentement & déplaisir firent mile tours en leur entendement.' daughters of Eve find their passion unbearable and steal out quietly to see Alquife. Even this situation proves overpowering for Onolorie; Gricilerie, 'plus hardie', has to ask what the news is. When told that their princes are only two miles from the palace and awaiting instructions, Onolorie has to be supported both physically and mentally; her sister reminds her of the importance of hiding their feelings and then decides what to do while Onolorie asks God to help her conquer her-

^{51.} VI.18.

^{52.} VI.45v-46v.

^{53.} For a fuller discussion of this function see Chapter IV, Section A.

self.⁵⁴ After a formal public welcome at court, the four secret lovers manage a second, private meeting when everyone else is deeply asleep. The princesses talk through the bars of their window and after a long and passionate kiss Onolorie confesses that she doesn't know where her understanding was when she sent the letter that caused them both 'tant de peines et de passions'. One can't die of love or she would be dead, she has spent the whole year weeping. The memory induces a fresh bout of sobbing, which upsets Lisuart so much that he thinks he is going to die.⁵⁵ Emotion is kept at high pressure, helped by other nocturnal conversations and the fight against unwelcome suitors described on pages 97-98 below; finally Onolorie becomes braver and the effect of a nightingale singing among the moonlit leaves of a hazel grove is such that Lisuart's courteous request to pardon his temerity and excuse his indiscretion only produces some 'excuses mignardes'. The resulting pregnancy and his absence lead to a prolonged state of melancholy.⁵⁶

2. Lucelle

Princess Lucelle of Sicily has a great deal more reason to feel jealous and melancholy. She and Amadis of Greece, the prince conceived in the

^{54.} VI.79r.

^{55.} V.180v-181r.

^{56.} V.185r-188r.

moonlit hazel grove, fall in love with each other and at first all seems to go well. She succeeds in one of the many tests which confront lovers: it is jealousy that leads her to investigate sounds of female lamentation at night in a newly conquered castle and her subsequent triumph involves a roaring lion and her lover's 'corpse' with a sword through it; her victory seems to be principally a matter of screaming and fainting at the right moments and the narrator himself comments that he is not certain whether the withdrawal of the sword, which earns her a rich crown of gold, rubies, pearls and diamonds from a pair of magic hands, was a gesture of courage or of terror. 57 There is little more happiness for her. We are told of her 'naïue bonté' and Amadis admires her 'simplesse debonnaire'58 but this is not enough to keep his love permanently; he marries twice but never marries Lucelle. She enters a convent on hearing of her supposed lover's supposed death, 59 is even more deeply grieved when she hears that he is alive and married to Niquee, talks passionately and at considerable length about the horrors of love, then settles down sensibly to being a nun again. 60 Her suffering and endurance are not yet over, however; in Book XI Amadis, now believed by everyone including himself to be a widower, rescues her from yet more dangers and woos her passionately during the journey to her brother's

^{57.} VII.35r-36r.

^{58.} VIII.74v; VII.69r.

^{59.} VIII.105r.

^{60.} VIII.120r-122v.

court, proposes again and is again accepted. On arrival there he dreams that Niquee is still alive and sends for Lucelle, who expects the finalisation of arrangements for their wedding. Instead of this she is told that it is incumbent on great people to behave in an exemplary manner; he releases her from her promises and wants to say goodbye. Lucelle is understandably ébaïe, but (less understandably) admires him even more and says she can't thank him enough for his noble self-restraint. She is speechless and weeping when he leaves. 61

3. Helene

A third heroine whose 'strongest arms [are] tears and sighs', but one who is shown as using them to rather better effect, is Princess Helene of Apolonie. Her closest friend is her cousin Timbrie, a much sharper girl in every way; they repeat the pattern established by Oriana and Mabilia of a very noble girl whose best friend, attendant and provider of every sort of support is of slightly less noble birth. In this case the difference of character between the cousins is made very noticeable and is used to emphasize the temperament of each. Like Diane, Helene has been shut away from the world, in her case because astrologers have foretold that her love would cause more bloodshed than that of Helen of Troy. She grows up among the trees and fountains of a nunnery garden

^{61.} XI.89v-90v.

with thirty maidens as her companions, and when Prince Florisel of Niquee gets into the garden she feels like Shakespeare's Miranda that she has never seen anyone so beautiful and immediately falls in love. 62 Within a relatively short time they have eloped together, but there is much sighing, weeping, fainting and suffering on both sides before this happens. Timbrie's tasks vary from the trivial business of picking up a tear-stained letter which the two girls discover beside the sleeping Florisel (Helene comments on her cousin being more hardie: nature should have made her a knight) 63 to coping when Helene is in a state of collapse after losing her virginity 64 . Helene is represented as a spoilt and silly adolescent. She tells Florisel's attendant to be in the nunnery garden at night to hear her play her lute - obviously in full expectation of his master's accompanying him. Florisel duly hides under some trees, then when Helene walks away from Timbrie to lament her love he not unnaturally comes nearer, kneels at her feet and addresses her. She 'fût si troublée, qu'elle se leva en sursaut, & sans lui pouvoir répondre vn seul mot, fuit vers sa cousine & l'embrassa étroitement, come vne personne éprise d'vne poeur subite'. Timbrie is much braver; when Helene recovers sufficiently to say that, Alas, she fears the Knight of the Shepherdess is among those cherry trees, she will not be

^{62.} IX.60v-63r.

^{63.} IX.66r.

^{64.} IX.134r.

deterred from going to find out.65

Helene continues to demand that love letters should be read aloud to her with any upsetting bits missed out and then answered by Timbrie as she doesn't know what to say. 66 Matters finally reach crisis point when Helene's long-arranged marriage to Prince Lucidor is imminent. much-tried Timbrie now has to revive Florisel and Helene as they faint alternately. Called upon to make a decision and to stop playing fast and loose with a good man, Helene asks to be given until the next day to decide and consults her cousin about what to do. She changes her mind repeatedly, torn between reason and desire, then when a message arrives summoning her to court to meet Lucidor she starts packing. She asks Timbrie to tell Florisel of her negative decision as she is ashamed and cannot bring herself to do so, but Timbrie refuses: Helene has had the pleasure of loving him, now she can go through a little unpleasantness. In the dark garden that night Helene does tell him - and he promptly faints. Both girls take refuge in the nunnery, unwilling to deal with the consequences, but Helene creeps out again later to see if her lover is still alive; there is much suffering and weeping on both sides with emphasis on Helene's physical weakness - she can hardly lift his head Florisel revives somewhat and his arguments gradually onto her lap. persuade her that she is not bound to Lucidor, that Lucidor would not go

^{65.} IX.67v.

^{66.} IX.111v-112v.

to war and that her father would soon forgive a clandestine marriage. Finally, when Florisel has told her that marriages are made in Heaven and that she would be behaving dishonourably in not rewarding his great love, Helene becomes silent and pensive, gives a deep sigh and, taking his hand, admits that his words have won her over and she is 'contrainte me gouverner selon vôtre auis'. The reader may well feel that had the official bridegroom Prince Lucidor been lurking under the cherry trees that night he would have met the same response and a terrible war been Florisel pursues his advantage, indeed he pursues it a good averted. deal further than Helene would wish; when Timbrie notices her cousin's absence and goes to see what is happening, she finds her wounded and Timbrie immediately guesses what has happened speechless from grief. and takes control. Ineffectual suicide attempts are no way of remedying lost virginity. She gets them to marry immediately 'par paroles de present'67, and proceeds to organize a speedy flight to Constantinople. A little more weeping and fainting, a little gunpowder in the keyhole of a gate, and they are on their way. 68

^{67.} For this form of marriage, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th edn (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1970), XIV, 927, and *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), IX, 277. See also pp 134-35 below.

^{68.} IX.128r-135r.

4. Oriana

There are many other conventionally passive female characters with greater or lesser rôles in the cycle, some spirited, some witty or wise, all beautiful, but none has the elusive charm of the first and most famous of the heroines. She is by far the most important female character in the first four books, those which retain the most strongly traditional elements. It is only in Book V, when Montalvo, in the final years of the fifteenth century, is writing fiction with no medieval source, that he creates such characters as the warrior-queen Calafia and the loyal squire Carmela. Oriana is a heroine with traditional feminine faults and virtues. She gives way to uncontrolled grief and jealousy, complains frequently, is physically and emotionally weak and in need of constant support, she can be deceitful; on the other hand she is shown as kind and loving, modest, devout and usually quiet and obedient. When left to herself she remains safely enclosed within four walls, as moralists repeatedly recommended that women should do.

When she is left at the Scottish court at the age of ten, Oriana is already 'la más hermosa criatura que se nunca vio'.⁶⁹ The Queen has a twelve-year-old page, a foundling rescued from the sea by a Scottish lord, and she presents him to Oriana, saying, 'Amiga, éste es vn donzel

que os seruirá'. 70 The two children take this literally and love each other from that moment. Oriana is warm in her friendship, especially with Amadis's cousin Mabilia. She and her mother, the Queen of Great Britain, have a close and loving relationship. Nor is this warmth limited to her closest connections: she is generous in her attitude to a grief-stricken lady who had been the emissary of her hated suitor, the Emperor of Rome 71 , and when in exile on the Firm Island and temporarily without money or status we are told that she is loved, honoured and served by everyone because she is 'la más noble y más comedida para onrrar a todos'72. When she lands she is dressed 'más conveniblemente a su fortuna y honestidad...que en acrescentimiento de su fermosura', and she is embarrassed when her beauty is praised, humbly speaking of 'vna donzella pobre desheredada como yo soy'. 73 Her shyness had already been apparent when her father had knighted her half-brother Norandel who asked that she should be the one to give him his sword; she did so 'con gran vergüença, como aquella que por muy estraño lo tenía'. 74 She shows similar diffidence before her triumph in the test of the Arch of Loyal Lovers. Only those who have been faithful in love can pass under the magic arch, and although Oriana has no doubts of her own fidelity, she

^{70. 40.}

^{71. 960.}

^{72. 1216-17.}

^{73. 967.}

^{74. 694.}

is depicted as shy about this public test and turns to look back at her new husband, pausing and blushing before she advances. Flowers rain around her, music plays, and, successful in the first part of her ordeal, she now faces the test which will prove her the most beautiful woman of all and allow her to share the Forbidden Chamber with Amadís. He refers to her nervousness and she is unwilling to try as she cannot believe herself beautiful enough. To Oriana is also humble in her worldly aspirations and uninterested in the power and greatness which she is told that marriage to the Emperor of Rome will bring her. Like other ladies in the cycle, she is shown as devout; during the fighting and subsequent peace negotiations between the forces of her father and those of her lover, she prays and goes on pilgrimages, thanking God when she finally hears that all is well; and she is devout and humble when the hermit Nasciano arrives on the Firm Island, wanting to consult him about her soul and her conscience and calling herself a sinner as in the same of the soul and her conscience and calling herself a sinner.

If enchanted arches and magic rooms make Oriana feel nervous, riding through a dark forest terrifies her. On this occasion she also has a test of loyal love awaiting her at the end of the journey, to be taken in front of her parents and in disguise. She has to prove the strength of her love watched by the parents from whom that love must remain sec-

^{75. 1229.}

^{76. 843-44.}

^{77. 1120-21.}

ret; as she rides through the night with Amadís 'ouo tan gran miedo, que el cuerpo le temblaua y no podía fablar'. Amadís turns the horses, but Oriana realises that she does want to go through with the ordeal and insists on continuing, asking Amadís not to consider the fear 'que yo como mujer tengo veyéndome en tan estraño lugar para mí'. Another occasion finds her in a situation that might frighten anyone: she has just been rescued from the evil enchanter Arcaláus and his knights and clutches Amadís in horror at the sight of all the corpses which surround her. 79

Nevertheless, she is depicted as capable of good sense and self-control in many of the trials of her eventful life. At an early stage in her relationship with Amadís she recommends that he should be more moderate: it is not sensible to be carried away by love, such behaviour will result in either discovery or his death, which would mean hers too. 80 After all the dangers and terrors of what was meant to be her voyage to Rome as a bride, she is rescued by her lover and his friends and taken to the Firm Island, but once there she quickly arranges for separate women's quarters and the preservation of her reputation. 81 Pregnancy and the birth of Esplendián when her marriage was still secret and

^{78. 475-76.}

^{79. 284.}

^{80. 128-29.}

^{81. 917, 969.}

Amadís absent had presented more of a problem, but after an initial burst of tears when she recognized her condition (which she touchingly did rather late 'como persona que de aquel menester poco sabía'), she managed very well. 82 Inexperience makes her actual labour harder, but she endures it silently, even when the pains become worse, because she is determined that no one should guess what has happened. 83 She shows signs of the good sense needed by a future queen, the sense which her mother has and her father unwisely tends to ignore. After Amadís has rescued her from Arcaláus he wants them to spend a few days together in the woods. She refuses, not from maiden-modesty - they have already slept together - but for political reasons. There is an attempted coup to deal with in London and any delay could be fatal. 84 Later, when the boastful Emperor of Rome asks for her hand, Oriana is in a position not unfamiliar to her mother: she gives her father sound advice and he ignores it. Almost prostrate with grief, she can still explain to King Lisuarte that in giving Patín the elder of his two daughters and keeping his own kingdom for the younger, he is granting the Romans a claim to Great Britain; they will want his lands and become his enemies. 85 When she meets Amadis's father, King Perión of Gaula, for the first time since her childhood, she is immediately impressed by him as he talks

^{82. 568-69.}

^{83. 700.}

^{84. 297.}

^{85. 895.}

calmly and sensibly about the political crisis, '...como muy entendida era, y todas las cosas mejor que otra muger conoçiesse', comments the narrator.86

The good sense and understanding which she shows in most situations is lacking in one area: her relationship with Amadís. Her cousin Mabilia explains this to Amadís himself:

...su discreción es tan crescida que, así en las cosas en que se ha criado, conformes a la qualidad y flaqueza de las mugeres, como en todas las otras que para nosotras son muy nueuas y estrañas, las conosce y siente con aquel ánimo y coraçón que a su real estado se requiere; y si no es en lo vuestro, que la haze salir de todo sentido...⁸⁷

Intensity of feeling is a feature of romances in general and Oriana's feeling for Amadís is often shown as taking her beyond 'todo sentido'. Sometimes the cause of her affliction is imposed on her: Arcaláus deceives her father by a magic trick, then demands Oriana as his promised 'boon'; like Chaucer's Arveragus, Lisuarte believes that 'Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe'88 and Oriana is carried off from the castle of Vindilisora amortescida⁸⁹. Another decision of her

^{86. 1065.}

^{87, 1004.}

^{88.} Canterbury Tales V (F) 1479, in The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd edn, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

^{89. 274.}

father's which threatens to separate her permanently from Amadís has already been mentioned. His ambition leads him to accept the Emperor of Rome as a desirable son-in-law. Summoned from her retreat at Miraflores, she is so weak with weeping that she has to travel in a litter and is finally bundled on board ship in a state of collapse. 90

One of her greatest causes of grief is partly self-inflicted. She had shown a tendency to jealousy at an early age; on hearing that an unknown damsel had brought gifts to the page Amadís and wanted to see him, she had prevented him going out to see the girl and secretly appropriated a letter enclosed in wax which was one of the 'gifts'. 91 Later Amadís has a dwarf who misunderstands his master's relationship with another woman and boasts of his marriage prospects to an important princess. Oriana instantly believes the dwarf and falls into transports of jealous rage; isolating herself from her attendants and their advice, she nurses a passionate desire for revenge and finally takes ink and parchment from her coffer to write a bitterly reproachful letter telling Amadís to go and deceive some other lady; she now hates him so much she will never see him again. 92 As time passes and news and rumours about Amadís gradually reach her, Oriana suffers increasingly from compunction at what she has done. She is told that he has passed a magic fidelity test,

^{90. 891; 911.}

^{91. 42.}

^{92. 370.}

which increases her grief as it soothes her jealousy. She faints when told of the effect of her letter on him and is still more grieved when a knight arrives with his abandoned armour. 93 Unable to face his brothers and cousin when they arrive at court, she is then temporarily cheered by them, but relapses when told that his squire is also there and disconso-She goes white, cannot stand and has to be supported to bed, weeping and moaning. 94 On a later occasion she overhears a conversation between Mabilia and the squire which retraces the near-fatal misunderstanding, and is so overpowered that she begs to be killed; another swoon follows. 95 The situation is resolved in the end, but Oriana is shown as retaining a tendency to jealousy, even fearing near the end of the fourth book that another lady might win the right to share the Forbidden Chamber with Amadís. 96 One factor which makes her more attractive than other heroines of her general type is that her jealousy is represented as connected with her modesty and humility - she has the traditional feminine virtues as well as faults, and fears that she is not capable of retaining Amadís's love in competition with other ladies. In spite of her tendency to fall into emotional agony she is shown as having a sense of humour. She talks to don Brian de Monjaste, who is more interested in fighting than in women, 'en burla con tanta gracia

^{93. 400-02, 410.}

^{94. 429-31.}

^{95. 433.}

^{96. 1231.}

que era marauilla', and often laughs, 'riendo muy hermoso'.97

The four female characters of whom I have given an account are prominent illustrations of the passivity traditionally attributed to women and generally thought desirable in them. They do not 'act' in the same way as the Amazons or other strong-minded and powerful ladies in the cycle; yet emotionally they are very active, and in that sense their rôles imply a special importance for female experience. The conventional female character is the object of a man's love; these passive women are subjectively intense, experiencing love and sex unconstrained, in feeling if not in conduct, by the halo of sexless chastity at which moralists appeared to be aiming. As stated above, such female characters are represented as being at the mercy of their own emotions; and within the discourse of traditional morality that condition will almost certainly to be condemned as sinful. The discourse of romance, however, offers other possibilities; and here, and perhaps especially in the Amadis cycle, what is traditionally called sin is recoded to suggest an intriguing and even desirable intensity of feeling and subjective life.

D. FEMALE BEAUTY

On the title page of *The Progress of Romance through times, countries* and manners⁹⁸, Clara Reeve placed a stanza from *The Faerie Queene* that epitomizes the relationship between hero and heroine of a typical romance, a work which in Miss Reeve's words, 'describes what never happened nor is likely to happen'.

It hath bene through all ages euer seene,
That with the praise of armes and cheualrie,
The prize of beautie still hath ioyned beene;
And that for reasons speciall priuitie:
For either doth on other much relie.
For he me seemes most fit the faire to serue,
That can her best defend from villenie;
And she most fit his seruice doth deserue,
That fairest is and from her faith will neuer swerue.

The heroines of the Amadis romances possess this beauty, and are often shown less as vain of it than as having a realistic sense of possessing it and a reasonable awareness of its importance, as a knight might be shown to feel confident in his prowess. In accordance with the recoding just mentioned, the beauty that moralists would have called a temptation is here seen as an opportunity. And just as the good knight maximizes his strength with the best available armour and weapons, so ladies arm themselves with rich costumes in order to conquer; like strength, beauty

^{98. (}Colchester: W. Keymer, 1785).

^{99.} FQ IV.v.1.

is less a 'prize' than a form of power, and clothes can increase this power. The emphasis on fine garments, which becomes greater as the cycle proceeds, could easily lead to criticism of females as being deeply tainted by conceit and worldly frivolity. In fact, such 'power dressing' seems to be accepted as not only reasonable, but admirable.

1. The Representation of Beauty

In common with other heroines of romances including those in this cycle, Oriana's most important characteristic is certainly her beauty. Like a princess in a fairy story, she is simply hermosa. The authors did not vary the vocabulary from one sentence to another or the characteristics from one lady to another. Where Tolstoy, writing in a very different tradition, suggests the individual attraction of a particular girl by saying that her upper lip was too short - '...her defect - the shortness of her upper lip and her half open mouth - seemed to be her own special and peculiar form of beauty...'100 - Silvia, Diana, Helena, Leonorina are all flawlessly beautiful; in the vast majority of cases we are not even given details of dark or fair, blue eyes or grey, though we are occasionally told that, as in the Song of Songs, a beautiful woman is black. Jane Austen anticipated Ingarden in inviting us to fill out

^{100.} Leo Tolstóy, War and Peace, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), Book I, chapter II.

indeterminacies. It is unnecessary to describe Eleanor Tilney's bridegroom, she writes, because 'the most charming young man in the world is instantly before the imagination of us all'101. Perhaps leaving the 'concretisation' of the appearance of heroes and heroines to the creativity of the reader is particularly effective in the fantasy world of romance; psychological needs are better met by a work which provides an exciting and exotic framework but leaves numerous such indeterminacies or vacancies for the reader to fill in to his or her own satisfaction. The cycle, especially the books written by Feliciano de Silva, also has a strong if not very fully elaborated Neoplatonic element (an element which will be more fully considered in Chapter III). António A. Cirurgião places Montemayor's Diana with works in this tradition, suggesting that

Assim se explica...que esta beleza, considerada mais sob o aspecto abstracto que concreto, mais sob o aspecto metafísico do que físico, não seja objecto de descrições pormenorizadas,...o novelista..., ao referirse à formosura da mulher, apenas em termos abstractos e gerais, está plenamente consciente de que todos os leitores conhecem, por convenção, as características do belo feminino, em que todos os pintores e escultores da época incidiam, de comum acordo. 102

^{101.} Northanger Abbey, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. II, chapter XVI (chapter 31 in modern editions).

^{102.} António A. Cirurgião, 'O papel da beleza na *Diana* de Jorge de Montemayor', *Hispania*, 51 (1968), 402-07, p 403.

Presumably an ideal beauty would be always the same, however embodied. Such beauty stands apart from the ravages of time or daily life. the realist Sancho Panza tells his master a story about a shepherdess, he says that when she set out on a journey she put a fragment of looking glass, a piece of a broken comb and a small pot of face cream in her bags. 103 The lovely Princess Lucelle needs no such beauty-aids on her travels; after long imprisonment by Cyclops she is snatched up under the arm of an enraged giantess who then runs with her into the adjacent lake. Dropped when the giantess is killed, Lucelle is completely submerged in the water and swallows a good deal of it. Far from appearing worn by imprisonment or bedraggled from total immersion, she is obviously as radiant as ever when Amadis of Greece rescues her; he immediately calls her 'la plus belle Princesse que viue aujourd'huy' 104. does age wither these heroines: they are beautiful from the moment of their birth and grow through beautiful childhood into an endlessly beautiful adulthood. The Emperor of Constantinople is struck by Olinda when he first sees her; she is referred to as 'ieune Princesse', which she cannot possibly be, as a generation of infant princes has grown up into knights since her marriage. 105 This incident, in which Olinda's only function is to stand still and be looked at, is an example of the power

^{103.} Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Justo García Soriano y Justo García Morales (Madrid: Aguilar, 1957), p 449.

^{104.} VII.28r-v.

^{105.} VI.29.

passive female characters are shown as having through their beauty. Here the only consequence of beauty is a brief moment in which the penetrative power of the male gaze is dissolved into amazement; on other occasions the authors can make far more use of it, as will be shown later.

2. Clothes

The lady's body may remain an almost abstract idealization, but we are more likely to be informed of details of her clothes than of any other physical feature in the world of these romances. Cliffs and fountains, ships and castles, dark forests and dragons' lairs appear with great verbal economy as needed; there is rarely any slowing down of the narrative. Female dress, however, can sometimes be described so precisely that the reader could almost set to work and make the garments - given a sufficient supply of gold, silk, and pearls, for the costumes described are always opulent ones. (Such detailed description of women's clothes could also be taken as further exemplification of the empathetic treatment of the woman's world in these romances.) Montalvo, more restrained in general, tends to limit himself to a few rich and evocative details; as a knight might be provided with special armour for a trial of strength, Grasinda has kept a special dress for the beauty test on the Firm Island; it is scattered with curiously worked golden roses which

are decorated and surrounded by pearls and precious stones. 106 Female characters who want to influence, impress, or win love almost always dress splendidly and carefully. In Book X Queen Sidonie wears an elaborate costume to go in procession to the temple of Venus and Cupid. Florisel and Falanges see a triumphal chariot approaching drawn by unicorns, and in it 'vne pucelle autant belle qu'on eût sceu choisir'. This is all we are told of her physical appearance, but the narrator is much more informative about her costume:

vétuë d'vn satin violet decoupé sur vn fond de drap d'or, & les taillades reprinses auec boutons d'or subtilement faits en façon de trousses de flêches, liés de gros tortis de soye bleuë: sa robe étoit fori longue & ceinte, & les manches étroites prés des épaules venoyent à s'élargir en bas: ses cheueus épars, sur lésquéls vne coronne Royalle étoit assise auec infinité de perles. 107

But such clothes are obviously not reserved for special occasions. In Book IX the younger Princesses Oriane and Onolorie choose to wear as travelling costumes robes of white satin fastened with gold, sewn all over with shining pearls, rubies, turquoises and emeralds; their mantles are of blue velvet strewn with gold stars and on their heads are priceless crowns. The twelve attendant damsels are dressed with more restraint; they are in cloth of gold with garlands on their hair. 108

^{106. 965.}

^{107.} X.60r.

^{108.} IX.54r.

3. Beauty and Admiration

The Emperor of Constantinople is not unusual in his admiration of beauty; such admiration is commonly expressed by both male and female characters. The idea generally accepted in moral discourse may have been that physical appearance should not be considered important compared with other, more valuable, qualities, but in these romances, as in others, beauty is certainly the single most important attribute for any woman, and as such it is constantly commented on by other characters, as well as by the narrators. Not only is there never any suggestion that giving it such importance is immoral, but it is also nearly always the first or only female attribute mentioned. Oriana stands apart from all other ladies 'assí en fermosura como en todas las otras bondades que buena señora deue tener', says Amadís. 109 Don Finistel of 'l'Ile Solstice' comes with his father to greet and honour the Greek royal family whose ship has just been blown to their shores by a tempest. The royal personages greet each other in the usual way, we are told, then the hosts immediately start to exclaim in wonder at the beauty of the visiting ladies. 110 And beauty deserves beauty. Having seen a picture of Amadis of Greece and Lucelle, Niquee is sure that a woman as beautiful as herself deserves a man as beautiful as he; she hesitates to act only because he has seen Lucelle first and his love might not change.

^{109. 1003.}

^{110.} XII.117r.

holds up a mirror so that she can compare her own face with that of Lucelle and decides in an objective manner that she herself is certainly lovelier. She is not troubled with moral scruples about taking him from Lucelle, nor is there any hint that such behaviour might be reprehensible, still less that either princess might have other characteristics to make her more or less lovable. We are told that Niquee is one of the two most beautiful ladies ever born: she is perfectly beautiful and her husband will be very lucky. 111 There is no suggestion that any other quality is necessary for marital happiness, nor that a wife whose beauty makes all men go mad or die of love might not make for domestic felicity.

Observing beauty and observing knightly prowess both seem to be valued as aesthetic experiences. Given that the French translators agree with misogynistic moralists in assuming jealousy of other women to be a very common female trait, it seems slightly odd to assume that a beautiful lady will be anxious to contemplate another beautiful lady, but this is often imagined to be the case. Queen Cléophile of Lemnos and Alastraxeree are particularly struck by each other's beauty and Cléophile is anxious to go to Constantinople as soon as she has rested, to see the ladies there who are so renowned for their beauty. It is significant that it is Cléophile who exclaims that she is afraid that she has met her equal; Alastraxeree is not just a queen, but also a knight, and must

^{111.} VIII.22r, 75v.

know that she has few equals on the battlefield. 112 In general, the narrators show the strongest (and therefore most 'masculine') women as least prone to jealousy. 113 Cléophile is still interested in admiring beauty in the next book; she has heard that Diane's is divine and longs to see this wonder of the world, the distances to be covered and the fatigues of the journey cannot stop her. 114 In Book XII Oriane feels intense joy at her first sight of Diane, and can't stop embracing and kissing her¹¹⁵; as her direct descendant six generations on, she might be imagined as feeling some personal pride, but she had also shown great pleasure in Lucelle's beauty in Book VII116. Admiration of female beauty is by no means limited to other females. All the faithful and happily-married princes at the court of Trebizond (and in these romances to be married is virtually always to be faithful and happy) are dazzled by Niquee's beauty when they see her for the first time. 117 On such occasions, as so often in romance, the emphasis is on an overpowering sensation of amazement. When 'Daraïde' arrives in Constantinople she is 'amazed' at the beauty of all the ladies she can see watching her from

^{112.} X.42v.

^{113.} For further discussion of jealousy, see Chapter III, 'Jealousy and Fidelity'.

^{114.} XI.42r.

^{115.} XII.131r.

^{116.} VII.56v.

^{117.} XIII.45r.

the palace windows, and those ladies and their attendant knights are simultaneously feeling amazement at the beauty of the two supposed sisters. 118 This general amazement is mentioned again a little later, still with no details of any of the beauties. 119

4. The Ranking of Beauty

Since female beauty does not manifest itself in a number of guises and in infinite variety, it follows that the beauty of one character can be precisely compared with that of another, just as Niquee compares her own image in a mirror with the painted image of Lucelle and is able to make a clear judgement. Aesthetic appreciation of women's beauty is carefully graded. If one examines the diction employed in this semantic area it is quickly apparent that apart from the word hermoso in its various forms, it is chiefly a matter of comparatives and superlatives together with various qualifying words like asaz. One unfortunate lady is damned with the faint praise of 'assés moyennement belle'. 120 Again and again a lady's beauty is established by comparison with that of

^{118.} XII.54r-55r.

^{119.} XII.117r.

^{120.} VIII.61v.

others; it would be quite possible to show on a graph the levels reached by the various women in the cycle. Helisena, Amadís's mother, is 'en grand quantidad mucho más hermosa' than her sister 121, and when Queen Sidonie arrives in Constantinople, those who have never seen her before are 'grandement esbahis de sa beauté qui egalloit celle de Niquee, & surpassoit toutes les autres fors que de Fortunie, Leonide & Diane 122. Such precision has a bad effect on Timbrie's tendency to jealous resentment. Her cousin Helene has asked some messenger damsels about the appearance of Arlande, who is holding her knight prisoner. They reply that she is less beautiful than Helene herself, but as beautiful as that lady (pointing to Timbrie). Timbrie replies angrily and the damsels, embarrassed and ashamed, hastily apologize, but only make matters worse by assuring her that they have never seen anyone as beautiful as she is except Alastraxeree, Helene and two other ladies. 123

Objective and measurable, beauty is for a lady, as I have already suggested, the equivalent of a knight's bondad. This means that female beauty can be tested by straightforward competition, and there are many such contests. The parallel with knightly prowess is underlined by the fact that beauty and prowess are often tested together in some 'Adventure' which has been magically devised for the purpose. Fighting terms

^{121. 11.}

^{122.} XIII.45r.

^{123.} IX.97r.

are used to refer to it; Grasinda's brother claims loudly that her beauty conquers that of all the ladies present, and when she wants Amadís to defend her beauty against the champion of any lady in Great Britain, as her brother had done in Romanía, she wants to 'ganar aquella gran gloria' 124. One of the most important episodes in Montalvo's romance consists of a magic beauty contest for the ladies, whereas the equivalent test for men, created by a magician-prince to select the future rulers of his Firm Island, is a test of prowess. Knights and ladies have to enter a courtyard under a magic arch which lets them through only if they have always been loyal in love. They then approach an enchanted room along a path marked by two posts, one of copper and one of stone; only those men who are very brave and women who are very beautiful can pass the first post, while to pass the second and enter the room they must excel the deviser of the test and his lady in prowess or beauty. Magic and invisible forces fight against them more and more fiercely as they progress, and when they have reached their limit they are violently thrown out. Amadís wants other ladies to try the test first so that Oriana's final victory shall be all the more glorious, and he uses the phrases of chivalry to spur them on. If they don't try 'a gran poquedad se deuría tener'; God has given them such beauty that they should use it 'en cosa tan señalada' without any fear. Each lady commends herself to God before starting, as though before a fight. Grasinda shows 'premia y gran coraçón...mucho más que de muger se esperaua'.

^{124. 829 (}underlinings mine).

Each of those who fails is thrown out and left senseless, much like the defeated knight in a tournament. 125 There are a number of other such tests in the cycle, including one said to be devised by Medea to enhance her own glory 126. The Adventure of the Mirror of Love in Book IX is like various other tests in showing clearly and permanently the precise standard everyone had reached 127; sometimes there are inscriptions, sometimes shields or statues to mark the position attained.

A female character did not always have to undergo her own test; her beauty could be tried vicariously. As in a judicial battle God would always give victory to the champion whose cause was just, so a knight defending a lady's beauty was sure of winning if she truly were more beautiful than those with whom she was being compared. Amadís is described as unhappy at being forced to champion Grasinda as the most beautiful maiden at the British court, but then remembers that Oriana is no maiden. 128 In Book VII Birmartes is a precursor of Sidney's Phalantus: he has to fight throughout the world defending the beauty of Onorie of Apolonie and must collect and display named portraits of the mistresses

^{125. 1229-31.}

^{126.} VI.72r-74r.

^{127.} IX.23v.

^{128. 830.}

of all the knights he defeats; eventually he has more than fifty of these. 129

5. Beauty and Virtue

The various ways of testing beauty, establishing as they do a ranking not unlike the Neoplatonic ladder, might suggest that physical and moral attributes were closely connected; and this is indeed the case. In rewarding the most beautiful lady, the divine powers represented as operating in these romances would certainly be rewarding not just physical radiance, but moral radiance as well. It is implied throughout that, as messer Pietro Bembo puts it in Castiglione's Cortegiano, 'la bellezza estrinseca è vero segno della bontà intrinseca'; there are no beautiful, false Duessas. Nor can women be adversely affected by their appearance as Castiglione makes signor Morello da Ortona insist that they often are:

...anzi ricordomi aver vedute molte belle donne malissime, crudeli e dispettose; e par che quasi sempre così intervenga, perchè la bellezza le fa superbe, e la superbia crudeli...¹³⁰

^{129.} VII.72r. By contrast, in the world of Sidney's Arcadia victory depends on the knight's prowess rather than the lady's beauty; see NA 93, lines 33-37, and 104, lines 15-18.

^{130.} Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, ed. Ettore Bonora (Milan: Mursia, 1972), pp 335, 334.

It is a world where supernatural forces are working their purpose out through love, storms, battles and prophecies, in a manner that precludes any real moral choice, and where Amadis of Greece, tugged now towards the beauty of Lucelle, now towards that of Niquee, is shown as no more able to help himself than a piece of iron between two powerful magnets; nor can the magnets be held responsible for their effect on the iron. Not only can it be said (as in Book XV) that 'la grande beauté [n'est] iamais eslongee de la pitié et compassion'131, but correspondingly wickedness and cruelty are closely linked with ugliness. Before fighting the evil Cavalyon, Daraïde appeals to his absent lady Diane 'comme la chose du monde par sa beauté extrême plus contraire à la deformité de ce monstre'. 132 An evil 'donzella encantadora' in Book IV is learned in black magic, but has been given very little beauty by nature. 133 Again, 'vne vieille Naine laide comme vne diablesse' acts as gaoler for a group of evil knights and pretends to be friendly towards Florisel in order to trap and imprison him in a rocky fortress. He exclaims furiously as she turns the key that her natural deformity should have warned him that her soul was equally deformed and ugly. When he refuses to become her lover she pours a pot of burning sulphur into his dungeon, saying, 'mon amoureus farouche, voici du parfun que vous apporte pour vous donner plus

^{131.} XV.3r.

^{132.} XI.87r.

^{133. 1288.}

grand plaisir à dormir'. 134 Female 'goodness' is given much less emphasis than beauty, but, as with beauty, the narrators are not specific about the form it takes. These romances could not possibly provide women with any guidance for holy living or holy dying. The very attribute that had traditionally been considered a threat to virtue becomes identified with it as the cycle proceeds and Neoplatonic attitudes grow stronger than scholastic ones. That vertu which consists of prowess in a knight is identified with beauty in a lady.

6. Beauty and Rank

There is a third attribute which is identified with beauty: Neoplatonism implies that higher nature is revealed in rank as well as in looks. This idea is questioned in some ways by other sixteenth-century writers such as Shakespeare and Spenser, but the authors of this cycle certainly subscribe to it. The lady of highest rank in a group is frequently referred to as the loveliest. When Prince Lucencio is riding through a dark forest one night he suddenly sees a bright patch of firelight and seven damsels wearing coronets of sweet-smelling flowers. The most beautiful is washing her hands in the water which springs from a hollow rock and he unerringly addresses her as the most important of the

^{134.} XI.34v-35r.

group. 135 The childhood of a lost princess may have been spent keeping her sheep in all weathers on the green and flowery banks of the Nile, but by the time she is twelve or thirteen she is ravishingly beautiful 136 . Like Perdita,

...nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place. 137

7. Beauty as Power

The ways in which female characters can be powerful will be considered more fully in Chapter II, but beauty is obviously one of the most important. This power is shown operating on a small, temporary and private scale, as when don Brianges hears bitter weeping and on going to investigate finds a distraught damsel and 'eut grande pitié de sa douleur: car elle luy sembloit fort belle & de bonne grace'. 138 The reader gets

^{135.} VII.15v.

^{136.} IX.1v-2r.

^{137.} The Winter's Tale IV 4, in The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). Prince Florisel exchanges gold, jewels and luxury for a sheephook and dry brown bread, obscuring his high self with a swain's wearing because of his love for this princess, but is still incomparably better-looking than her devoted swain, the real shepherd, Darinel (IX.4v, 6v).

^{138.} XII.139r.

the impression that a squinting, hunch-backed girl might well have been left to weep indefinitely. Beauty is indeed Nature's coin - to be spent not only as Comus insinuates to Milton's Lady, but to buy the physical power which most women lack or to buy influence. When Abra asks Birmartes to stop fighting her brother he replies that 'le merite de vôtre beauté me peut commander en tout & par-tout'139, strengthening with his words the Neoplatonic identification of virtue and beauty. This identification may partially explain why beauty is always presented as sufficient reason for love, and love as sufficient reason for almost any behaviour or action. It can often arouse a destructive force quite beyond the control of the lady. Manasses, son of the Duke of Buillon, is so jealous of Acaye as they ride towards a tournament with Esclariane that he kills him. The attendant of each knight is also killed in the scuffle, and the Emperor of Rome then has Manasses hanged, which brings a horrible vengeance from the Duke of Buillon, who murders the Emperor and his courtiers. 140 Esclariane has done nothing to cause all this violence except allow herself to be seen. The enchantress Zirfee tries to prevent such trouble when her magic powers tell her that the beauty of her niece Niquee, Princess of Thebes, is going to be overpoweringly great. She warns the Sultan that he must lock his daughter away until he has married her off, as any man catching sight of her would infall-

^{139.} VIII.10r.

^{140. 62}r-63v.

ibly go mad or die from love. 141 Helene, whose appearance had made two powerful men fall in love with her and caused a war on a far grander scale than that caused by her famous predecessor, regrets the beauty which has led to so much death and suffering and wishes that she had been ugly or a simple shepherdess. 142

Further evidence that beauty is perceived as an abstract quality, an idea which is quite separate from the personality of its possessor, is that a picture can and often does have just the same effect as the sitter would have had. Like paper money, beauty can circulate even if the golden princess is safely locked into her tower. Niquee and Amadis of Greece fall in love with each other's portraits, Amadis being so overpowered that his squire has to stop him falling and supposes he has had an attack of apoplexy. A portrait can cause as much death and destruction as the presence of the real lady. Many knights fall in love with Diane without having seen her; they carry her picture on their shields and go around killing each other, 'tellement que la beauté diuine de cête dame se pouoit bien dire vne pestilence generale courant parmi les cheualiers de son tems' 144. A logical extension of this is the idea that such a portrait can become almost as dangerous as Medusa's

^{141.} VIII.21v.

^{142.} X.52r.

^{143.} VIII.22r, 44v-45r.

^{144.} XI.6v.

head. A knight gives the Prince of Thrace a shield with Niquee's picture on it and the Prince not only falls passionately in love, but promptly murders the giver, assuming that the gift must have been maliciously intended to have that result. 145 This is taken a step further by the caddish Roy Mouton who consciously uses portraits as a weapon; he attaches pictures of the four most beautiful ladies to his shield and uses it as a sort of magic ray gun, standing all day in front of the pavilion of the test of the 'gloire de Niquee'. Any knights coming to try their strength are so ravished that they 'perdent leurs forces naturelles, le sens & l'entendement'. At night it is enough for him to attach the shield to the steps while he goes inside to enjoy the enchantment. 146

E. THE FEMALE CHARACTER AS SPECTATOR

If conventional ladies are shown as following traditional beliefs and teaching in their comparative passivity, one would expect them to be frequently represented in the rôle of spectator, while men provide the action they are watching. This is basically true in the cycle, but the topic of this section is nevertheless somewhat complex, involving the rôle of women as the spectators of actions performed by men, the effect

^{145.} VIII.85r.

^{146.} VIII.51v.

on men of the women's watching presence, and the effect of the whole fictional situation of male actors and female watchers on readers of the narrative. These elements are so closely bound together that it will not always be possible to separate them in discussion.

The passive woman, watching action in which she cannot participate or intervene, is playing a traditional rôle, and as the cycle proceeds more female characters are shown taking an active, even a violent part. 147 It is clear from Montalvo's Prologue that historia is about men: knights fighting and the king and his 'altos hombres' deciding policy. Women are frequently shown as observers of the violent action, watching from a tower, through a window, under a tree, sometimes passionately and personally concerned about the outcome of a battle, sometimes more in the spirit of watching a tennis or football match. 148 They may comment to each other or shout encouragement - 'The one in the golden helmet has killed that great devil!', 'Don't run away, they're only men!' 149 - or be so deeply concerned that they have to stop watching. Oriana's youn-

^{147.} Pentasilee is actually shown passing from one rôle to another: with armour under her gown, she watches from the stands with the other ladies while her fiancé fights; when it is obvious that his evil opponents are ignoring all rules and are about to kill him, she slips away to appear in the lists as an unknown knight and save his life (XIV.68v).

^{148.} Robert W. Hanning, The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p 55, points out that this motif appears to originate in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae ix.14.

^{149. 728-31.}

ger sister Leonoreta and her ladies kneel, pray, scream, and tear their hair while Amadis is fighting the giant who is carrying them away in a cart as human sacrifices to his pagan idol. 150 The beautiful Briolanja watches the man she loves (hopelessly, as the reader knows and she does not) fighting for her kingdom. 151 The degree of personal involvement can vary between the objective comment of an experienced spectator and the desperate response of a girl who vows not to outlive him who loved her more than himself, then throws herself down from her palfrey, seizes a piece of broken lance and dies by thrusting it into her breast 152 . A sudden strange noise is shown to separate the sexes immediately: all the ladies hurry to the top of a high seaside tower and are rewarded by the sight of a dwarf blowing a trumpet on a boat in the form of a sea-serpent; the knights, meanwhile, have gone down to the beach, prepared for action. 153 In another episode, two resolute but careful damsels have come to see the fight against the giant Albadán. They almost run away when they realise the challenger is only the young man who has been travelling with them, but decide that they must see what happens whatever the danger and place themselves on the edge of a wood in a strategic position for hasty retreat. 'Por Dios, Señor, él fizo en vos buena criança...', they say admiringly afterwards when the victorious Galaor

^{150. 462.}

^{151. 340.}

^{152.} VI.62v.

^{153. 1219.}

sends the giant's head to his foster-father. 154 Nor are ladies represented as generally squeamish, considering the quantity of blood and the number of severed limbs: '...y fueron muertos por sus manos, con mucho plazer de la muy fermosa Madasima...y mas de Oriana y Mabilia...' 155. Another lady considerately offers to carry a severed head as a present from Amadís to his cousin, but the ever-courteous Amadís says, 'no la levéys...que vos será enojo'. 156

1. Ladies and their Knights

As we shall see, the sight of his lady may affect a knight's performance for better or worse, but the ladies in the first four books are presented as passive and helpless during the fighting and the same is true of many ladies in subsequent books. Sardinie in Book XIV is a typical example: watching helplessly while don Silves and Prince Lucendus fight, she weeps bitterly when she thinks them dead, then when they revive and continue their struggle she is horrified by the cruelty and desperate to stop them but realises that she can do nothing. Ladies who are watching jousting are imagined as having a much pleasanter time. On the

^{154. 100.}

^{155. 584.}

^{156. 61.}

^{157.} XIV.35v.

second day of a tournament they are shown to the stands and chat together about the previous day's competition 'according to their feelings for the victors and the vanquished'. 158 A lady's presence at a fight may be felt necessary for an almost forensic reason: cruelly widowed. Arsile accompanies Florisel on his mission of vengeance 'afin que sa presence iustifiêt d'autant plus son champion' 159 ; but a more common reason for wishing to have them there is that expressed by King Gramoflanz in Wolfram's Parzifal: 'Since our fame will be increased if we invite noble ladies to look at the battle, I shall bring fifteen hundred with me', he remarks to Gawan. 160 Also in the tradition of romance, though they are occasionally and dangerously almost overpowered, knights usually gain strength from the sight of their mistress. Even the thought of her can be enough and some of them are made to go so far as to pray to her. This is what Lisuart of Greece does during his impressive and supernaturally stage-managed knighting ceremony. The ladies are watching from the city walls and he has to take his sword from the mouth of a raging lion; he prays to Onolorie and immediately his strength and courage increase 161

^{158.} VI.67v.

^{159.} X.22r.

^{160.} Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzifal*, trans. H. M. Mustard and C. E. Passage (New York: Vintage, 1961), Book XII, p 610.

^{161.} VI.23v-24r.

2. Ladies and Christian Soldiers

There are battles in the first four books of the Amadis cycle and tournaments and individual fights in subsequent books, but the emphasis changes, and with it the rôle of passive female characters during the fighting, for they are shown as even more conventionally feminine. In Book V, where he is creating an original story, Montalvo makes a distinction between old-fashioned chivalry and the new and to him much more important 'guerra guerreada'. As a devout Christian and a loyal servant to Ferdinand and Isabella during the final stages of the 'Re-conquest' of Spain from the Moors, he feels that young men should be putting all their energy and aspirations into holy war against infidels. 162 From now on, fighting is frequently between pagans and Christians and though women may watch from the towers, they are often only participating through their own feelings, weeping and praying indoors rather than being in a situation in which their presence would have a strong effect on the knights. During particularly dangerous fighting in defence of Constantinople, the reader is told that the ladies spend the whole day on their knees in the palace chapel, praying with tears for God's mercy. They are waiting to disarm the Emperor and his knights on their return. All the women, even the Empress, eagerly perform this duty, and the reader is reminded of Montalvo's first-hand experience of such fighting

^{162.} IV.956, V.482. Montalvo also makes this point in his Prologue to Book IV.

when told that they had to soak their men's swollen hands from their sword hilts because of the coagulated blood. When the ladies remove the knights' helmets, their faces are bruised and swollen, but the ladies think this beautiful, as it shows the men's strength and valour and the danger they have endured. 163 Juan Diaz and Feliciano de Silva also describe great confrontations between Christian and pagan armies, the fate of Christendom and Constantinople tends to hang in the balance towards the end of each book, and through it all the women are shown as worrying and suffering, sometimes with the enemy at the palace gates before reinforcements arrive in the nick of time. In Book X two great armies assemble and the sea is covered with ships, 'Or étoyent dé ja toutes les Dames de Constantinople, montees au plus haut des clochers & des tours de la ville, voyans assés aysément les armées épanduës...'. Then follows a description of men, ships and feverish activity everywhere, general tumult 'dont les pauvres femmelettes effrayees commencerent à pleurer, et crier par toute la ville'. The battle is organized and the details announced 'au grand regret des Dames, que ne firent que pleurer toute la nuit, prians Dieu pour leur marys et amys', but Helene is particularly distraught as it was her elopement with Florisel when she was the betrothed wife of another prince that had caused all the trouble. Like her namesake she watches from a tower and in the middle of the evocation of a particularly bloody battle we are briefly told that she 'ne s'y épargnoit en pleurs et lamentations, sur le haut des tours de

Constantinople'. 164 Townswomen are depicted as somewhat more robust; at an earlier siege of that much besieged city, far from remaining as passive watchers, they carry oil, boiling water, stones, tiles, logs, sulphur and similar things 'pour endommager l'ennemy' at the point where they are trying to breach the walls 165. On Amadís's Firm Island they hurl missiles from the windows when el Rey Arávigo and Arcaláus have managed to get in to the town of Lubayna 166; on another occasion their only rôle is to be turned out of a besieged city at night as 'bouches inutiles'. 167

3. Ladies and Moral Dilemma

A lady watching a fight is sometimes shown as even more involved, experiencing a Corneillian emotional and moral conflict. Oriana is urged to climb a tower and see the forces of her lover waiting to fight those of her father. '...; cuytada de mí! ¿qué haré?' she exclaims, 'Que qualquiera déstos que se pierda, siempre seré la más triste y desuenturada, todos los días de mi vida, que nunca muger lo fue'. 168 In a later vol-

^{164.} X.30r-v, 32r, 33v.

^{165.} VI.25r.

^{166. 1155.}

^{167.} XI.105r.

^{168. 1064.}

ume Abra has become Queen of Babylon on the death of her twin brother but she is in love with Lisuart of Greece who killed that brother. Revenge is now both her wish and her duty and she has a promise from Amadis of Greece of the head of any knight she chooses. The emotions of the reader are further intensified and complicated by the knowledge that Amadis is Lisuart's son, but none of the three characters involved is aware of this aspect of the situation. Whatever the outcome of the long and cruel fight that Abra watches, the result must bring her more suffering. When Urgande finally stops the fight she is so desperate that she is ready to throw herself into the sea. 169

4. The Lady and the Reader

The sympathetic treatment of female characters in the cycle is evident in the fact that the presence of ladies is apparently designed to have at least as much effect on the reader as on the fictional combatants. The narrative perspective is often the female perspective. Whether it is single combat like that between Amadis and Lisuart of Greece or whole armies locked in conflict, we withdraw from our 'normal' position virtually in the middle of the battleground and see it in a new perspective from the grandstand, the city walls, a castle window, a high tower - or have our attention drawn to the total effect as Amadis of Gaul and his

knights ride away fresh and richly armed in the bright sunshine. narrators make good use of this, manipulating our point of view at key moments in the fighting, switching not just our physical vantage point but our feelings from participant to spectator and from a male to a female subject position. The princesses of Trebizond, Onolorie and Gricilerie, watch their knights fighting le Roy de la Sauvagine and his brother who are both huge, black and hairy and who are demanding them as brides. The reader shares the girls' feelings when they have seen the challengers and are weeping in their room before the fight. Throughout the ensuing combat the reader is told of the princesses' reactions at key moments. They sit on a scaffold with their father the Emperor and when Lisuart of Greece runs a lance through his opponent and nearly kills him '...qui eut adonc prins garde on eût peu voir à la contenance d'Onolorie, combien ce beau coup lui étoit agreable'. When the combatants start to fight on foot and the princesses see the grass red with blood they tremble like leaves on the tree in a west wind, making vows and praying. Perion's exhaustion disappears and his strength doubles when he exchanges glances with Gricilerie; and we remain optimistic as Onolorie is thrilled when it looks as though Lisuart is going to cut Sulpicie in half. Feelings soon change when the Prince's hand slips, his sword falls and it is promptly seized by his enemy. The repellent Sulpicie turns the tables and Onolorie is now 'plus morte que viue'; as he threatens her lover with death she has to be prevented by her sister from falling off the scaffold. Gricilerie points out the disastrous effect her state could have on Lisuart, and Onolorie 'la pauvrette', who

had been at the point of death, soon has 'son cueur bouillant de céte nouvelle victoire' when he wins. Perion quickly triumphs as well, grabbing his opponent's neck and cutting his throat 'au grand contentement de Gricilerie'. 170 In a description of a fight between the sons of Lisuart and Onolorie and those of Perion and Gricilerie (who are unrecognized as such by each other and everyone else) the reader moves between descriptions of the combat and the perceptions of Lucencio (Perion's son) and those of Axiane. When the latter rides up to find a battle raging between the man she secretly loves and a powerful stranger she is much less upset by the loss of her castle and prisoners than by Lucencio's predicament. She can't hide her feelings from him, though she thinks of her reputation and retains a measure of self-control. '... toute émeuë, & presque hors de soi, cuida tomber évanouïe, toute-fois honte l'en garda', and she dismounts because her knight is fighting on foot. She politely refuses Lisuart's offer of a chair - sitting down would not make her less uncomfortable while the fighting knights were in such danger. Lisuart continues to talk to her, but she cannot concentrate on conversation. A description of the fighting follows, then we glimpse Axiane briefly from Lucencio's point of view. He sees her so 'troublee', 'blême' and 'sans couleur' from her great anxiety that he attacks his opponent again with greater vigour. We then see more of the fight from a neutral point of view. The knights are wounded and exhausted, there is blood everywhere, Axiane can bear it no longer and shows

^{170.} VI.84r-85r.

her feelings openly for the first time, wringing her hands and crossing her arms 'comme femme transpercer de douleur'. This again gives Lucencio greater courage, but his strength does not last and the male narrator sympathises with the female character, addressing Axiane directly: 'Ah! ah pauvre Axiane! ne seroit il meilleur que vousisiés trouver moyen de les separer! Helàs que tardés vous!' She is speechless from anguish and only stops the fight when Lisuart suggests this to her; she begs them to make peace, her face covered in tears. 171

5. Lamentation and Suffering

The rôle of women in relation to the action of romance is frequently not only to watch but to lament, sometimes in the form of an exclamatory and carefully artificial oration or *llanto*. Romances characteristically incite intense grief or joy, with amazement and wonder, both in the dramatis personae and in the readers; and a combination of such emotions with doubt about how to respond also seems quite a common feeling for the latter, especially when a heroine is bewailing her lot. With a genre marked by unexpected twists and turns of fortune, and loved ones who were missing, presumed dead, reappearing anything from a few hours to half a lifetime later, the reader is never sure how far to grieve with a grieving heroine. If one adds to this a fair amount of magic,

^{171.} VII.41v-42r.

with enchanted statues that seem like people and enchanted people who seem like statues, and enough reminders that one is being told a story to make one aware that storytelling as much as magic is a form of artifice, it is not surprising that the enjoyment of the more sophisticated reader includes a mixture of involvement and detachment in relation to the dilemmas and responses of female characters. Pleasure comes from a sense of psychological derangement and uncertainty about what we are supposed to be seeing and feeling, enhanced by the intensity of the characters' reactions. When Imogen, mourning over the body of the supposed Posthumus, finally exclaims, 'O Posthumus, alas, / Where is thy head?'172, it is not uncommon for an audience to laugh - and to feel that perhaps it should not be doing so. Book XII of the Amadis cycle contains an even more melodramatic scene where the female characters mourn deeply but under false assumptions. It may be remembered that Queen Sidonie of the island of Guindaye was keeping her beautiful daughter Diane locked up as a reward for the knight who would bring her the head of Prince Florisel, the girl's father. Sidonie wants this vengeance because Florisel had married, then abandoned her, leaving her to discover that the marriage was bigamous. However, she still loves him and so does their daughter. The exquisite Diane has now grown up and fallen in love with Prince Agesilan who had infiltrated her enchanted tower disguised as an Amazon maiden called Daraïde. have nearly succeeded in taking mother, daughter and island kingdom by

^{172.} Cymbeline IV 2.

force. Agesilan and Diane's half brother Rogel have been fighting the enemy forces before the city walls and pursue the two leaders through magic subterranean chambers right up into Diane's tower. Once there, Agesilan fights a magic statue which exactly resembles Florisel (the bigamous father who is being pursued), while the women watch in agony. He eventually decapitates it and the head lands in the lap of Sidonie, who promptly faints into the lap of her daughter Diane. We are now invited to sympathize with Diane who is supporting her apparently dead mother who is supporting the head of her apparently dead father while watching the man she loves fighting to the death with an unknown enemy and all this in her usual sitting room. The reader feels that the narrator is asking a fair question when he wonders who could express the pain and suffering which the grief-stricken Diane endured. Diane keeps fainting and her two best friends are too far gone themselves to help or comfort her. And this continues for more than two hours.... combatants then fall, both supposedly dead, whereupon Diane faints yet again into another girl's lap. 173 Throughout this tragicomic episode, though the male characters are depicted as physically active, it is on the emotionally active female characters that the reader's attention is focused.

F. THE FEMALE VICTIM

A rôle for which the weakness and vulnerability attributed to women made them particularly suited was that of suffering victim. Women had already been associated with the bearing of mental sorrow and physical pain for a long time, indeed Eve had condemned all women to suffering in childbirth. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, people must have been very familiar with images of suffering women: painting and sculpture showed the Virgin at the foot of the cross or transfixed with the swords of sorrow, while the stories about women which were most widely available must have been lives of female saints, usually describing victimisation, pain and death, often with refinements of torture and mutilation. Description of female suffering was already a feature of Greek romance: Achilles Tatius, for example, describes a picture of Andromeda where 'la beauté s'unissait à la terreur', and the apparent disembowelling of his heroine is described shortly afterwards. 174

The female characters in the *Amadis* cycle are shown to suffer psychologically; perhaps they do so no more than the male characters, but there is less they can be allowed to do about it and the evocation of their suffering is usually more emphatic and detailed, often involving des-

^{174.} Romans grecs et latins, ed. and trans. Pierre Grimal (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), pp 923, 929. In the latter example, Leucippe's entrails appear to be cut up on the altar, cooked, and eaten, by brigands more successful than Spenser's cannibals.

cription of physical symptoms and a passionate lament in the first person. Imprisonment is also something that happens to characters of both sexes, though perhaps more often to females. They are certainly represented as being enclosed or tied down in a number of different ways - brute force, enchantments or parental anxiety. One of the commonest tasks for a knight is the freeing of a female character, and the cumulative effect of reading even one of these books would be the association of women with captivity and confinement. But one aspect of suffering is clearly associated not just with female characters but with the more distinctly feminine ones, and that is the endurance of pain.

The representation of female physical suffering appears to be most often stylised and turned into a spectacle, usually as part of some adventure or love test. This allows the suffering to be fixed at its most intense and contemplated by any onlookers; occasionally the narrator's contemplation is so detailed that a certain sadistic relish permeates the writing. A straightforward example of female suffering as spectacle in the Amadis cycle occurs when one of a group of three fountains is described: at the highest point of the fountain there is a statue of Dido transfixed by a sword; blood from the wound flows first into a small basin, then through twelve pipes into the bigger basin below, from where it flows into a stream and down to the sea. 175 A description of a far more elaborate spectacle occurs as part of the striking episode proposed by

^{175.} XIV.52v.

O'Connor as the main source for the Mask of Cupid in Spenser's Faerie Queene. 176 Amadis of Greece and his companion first hear the cries and groans of damsels as they follow to its source a stream of blood in which quantities of long female hair are floating; they finally come upon a large pool which is also red with blood and in the centre of which is a block of white marble. On the marble there sits a beautiful girl of about fifteen; she is dressed in green and gold, with her hair loose, and she is bending over in agony. A crown lies at her feet as though it has fallen there, and her cheeks are bathed in tears. A sword has been plunged into her breast up to the hilt and she is enduring a death agony which is endlessly protracted; weeping and lamenting, she occasionally tries to pull the sword out, but this only increases her anguish and as she gasps and writhes the blood surges out of her wound and down into the pool. Round the pool there are twenty grief-stricken damsels 'se tourmentans & desolans' and it is the hair they tear out in their grief which is being washed down the crimson stream. This central figure is not a statue, but the Princess Mirabela, whose suicide attempt has been magically arrested just before the moment of death. 177

^{176.} Amadis de Gaule and its Influence, pp 176-81.

^{177.} VIII.112r. It is interesting to note the growth in popularity of the cult of the Virgin of the Sorrows during the period in which these books were published. Her feast was inserted in the Roman Missal in 1482, and her image, that of a beautiful young woman in agony and pierced with swords or daggers - highly similar to the figure described here and to some of the other magic figures described in the Amadis cycle - would have been seen in many churches. (See New Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, 443.)

There are certainly no equivalent presentations of male suffering; while foregrounding the general importance of women, such passages contribute more specifically to the reader's sense of female fragility and defence-lessness. What I hope has emerged from this chapter is an understanding of the centrality and valorization of female experience in the Amadis cycle even in the areas and respects in which women are conceived largely in the terms laid down by longstanding tradition. Romances can accept these terms while at the same time silently dissolving and reshaping the assumptions from which they originated. I shall now examine how far and in what ways the multitude of female characters in these romances can in fact be perceived as fragile and defenceless.

CHAPTER II

SEX AND POWER.

My theme in this chapter is the weakness of women in comparison with men as represented in the *Amadis* cycle, the ways in which women are allowed to compensate for their weakness, and the ethical implications of these questions. The chapter falls into two sections, the first concerned with weakness and power in the relations between the sexes and the second with female honour and cleverness and the moral issues they raise. As elsewhere in the thesis, my aim will be not to reveal a single system of ideas underlying the cycle's complicated surface (for in my view no such system exists), but to disentangle some of the consequences of the coexistence of several differing sets of assumptions and wishes.

A. FEMALE WEAKNESS AND POWER

The physical and psychological fragility that had traditionally been associated with women is, as one might expect, greatly in evidence in a cycle where much of the excitement and narrative interest centres in the strength and courage of knights who are often chivalric supermen, dealing single-handed with hordes of pagans or with creatures that would compare unfavourably with Tyrannosaurus Rex. Female characters tend to panic or faint when any danger threatens; during a celebration dinner at the court of Trebizond, for example, a smoky, hissing dragon suddenly appears, and the ladies' immediate reaction is either to grab the near-

est man and cling on to him or to try to jump out of a window. 1 Other crises produce not quick thought and practical action, but stunned and passive terror. The appearance of three fierce lions just after Lucelle and her companions have weathered a storm at sea is too much for them, and 'les pauvres femmelettes étoyent toutes transies de peur' 2 . When the entire court of Trebizond is ambushed by a false hunting party, the Empress and her ladies make their own capture as easy as possible by falling down on the grass more dead than alive, and are easily picked up and carried off to the waiting ships. 3 Without help, a woman is represented as having no hope of defending herself against a would-be rapist: Diane struggles when attacked by the magician-prince of Miloc, 'Mais qu'eût peu faire à la longue céte foyble Princesse contre les efforts d'vn preus Cheualier, tant enflamé de son amour...'4. In an emergency, a woman's difficulties are compounded by the limitations imposed by her clothes; Garaye, actually a man and therefore used to greater freedom of movement, complains that her long garments prevented her from running to help Daraïde; a few lines later a damsel is trying to run after a mocking knight who is riding off with her palfrey and 'la pauuretté troussant sa robe, le suiuoit à grand trauail'⁵. Nor does there have to be

^{1.} VIII.3v.

^{2.} X.70.

^{3.} VIII.33r.

^{4.} XII.155r.

^{5.} XI.23r.

danger for a lady to be reduced to a state of mental and physical debility. Leonorina, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, approaches Esplendián for the first time, shaking like a leaf in the wind and with 'pasos desmayados, como lo estaba el corazon'6. Arlande, Lucelle and Oriane have more reason to be upset; the men they love have all been fighting each other and their friends by mistake and are now supine and badly wounded. The three ladies all faint and have to be revived with cold water and friction at a moment when those still sound in wind and limb have better things to do. They are no sooner conscious again than they start to lament so bitterly that all present burst into tears. 7

1. Riding and Passivity

Women's lack of power is reflected at a simple physical level in the ways in which they ride. A horse is the mark of knighthood, as the word for 'knight' in Romance languages indicates; the caballero rides a caballo and a person on a horse obviously has greatly increased power and freedom. For a long time Spanish and French did not even have a feminine equivalent of 'horseman', like the English 'horsewoman'; the female rider was one of a distinct race, an 'Amazon', like some of the most redoubtable ladies of this romance cycle. Thus the very concept of

^{6.} V.494.

^{7.} X.80v.

chivalry, at its most basic level, implies the relative weakness of nor-In Amadis, ladies who are not also knights or squires ride 'palfreys' or 'hackneys', rather than the swifter and more powerful animals ridden by knights. 8 Stronger women may gallop around alone, ventre à terre; weaker ones are lifted on to their mounts and gently led by a The leading rein may be handed from one man to another and the lady with it. On arrival at her destination she is lifted down again, her arm is taken (or even both arms), and she is conducted indoors, back to a sheltering (or constricting) environment. When the female knight Alastraxeree has charmed her way into a giant's castle with her armour hidden beneath woman's clothing, the fact that she dismounts quickly (soudain) from her palfrey surprises the giant and makes him uneasy. 9 Doubtless in real life the old type of side-saddle made ambitious horsemanship difficult, if not impossible. When Grasinda's boat arrives at the Firm Island she is courteously unloaded and loaded on to her palfrey like an honourable package.

Entonces tomó Amadís a Grasinda por el braço y sacóla del batel fasta la poner en tierra, donde con mucho acatamiento y cortesía

^{8.} Chrétien de Troyes's Enide is given a palfrey by her female cousin and the reader can imagine what its performance was like as the giver assures Enide that it is just right for a lady ('Teus est come a pucele estuet') - riding it is like sitting in a boat! (Erec et Enide, ed. Wendelin Foerster, 3rd edn [Halle: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1934], lines 1395-1402).

^{9.} X.87r.

de todos aquellos señores fue recebida, y $\underline{\text{dióla}}$ Agrajes y a Florestán, que en el palafrén $\underline{\text{la pusieron}}$. $\underline{\text{10}}$

Such examples recur throughout the cycle.

However, a surprising number of women, and not only the stalwart female knights, are shown as riding around the countryside. Specialised examples of this phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter IV in the section on 'Travellers, Messengers and Squires', but there are also a number of references to ordinary upper-class girls who appear to be out and about on horseback, either alone or with a few female companions. Florisel meets a weeping damsel on a bay hackney who explains that as it was such a lovely morning, she and her two sisters had gone out hawking. Some wicked knights had seized her sisters, but her little horse was very fast and she had managed to get away. 11 In another episode a whole group of damsels are represented not only as skilful riders, but also as

^{10. 906 (}underlinings mine).

^{11.} IX.30r. The Amadis romances were at the height of their popularity in Spain at the time when Prince Philip came over to England to marry Queen Mary Tudor, and the Spaniards in his train were eager to identify features of 'the Amadis country'. An unidentified correspondent, writing from Richmond to a gentleman in Salamanca on 17 August, 1554, observes that the Prince rides by Queen Mary's side 'y la cabalga', always helping her on and off her hackney. However, a little later, in a passage about Amadis and other chivalric romances, he says that they must have been written by someone who knew England, 'Porque ¿quién nunca jamas vió en otro reino andar las mugeres cabalgando y solas en sus caballos y palafrenes, y áun á las veces correrlos diestramente y tan seguras como un hombre muy exercitado en ello?' (Andrés Muñoz, Viaje de Felipe II a Inglaterra, ed. Pascual de Gayangos [Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1877], pp 106, 113).

bold and assertive; they do not need men to right their wrongs, even though they are not Amazons. Galtazire is travelling to visit Diane accompanied only by her women; they are all well-mounted and have planned carefully how to be revenged on a particular man. When the victim meets a group of unrecognizable ladies, he begs Galtazire to remove her veil and she entraps him by asking him to remove the veil himself. As he rides close and starts to do so, she slips his horse's bridle off. The man is forced to dismount from the bucking, uncontrollable animal, and it is at this vulnerable moment that the damsels produce the stones they have ready in their saddle bags. He tries unavailingly to retaliate with his sword, moving heavily in his armour while they manoeuvre swiftly and skilfully on horseback, hurling stones at him until he is exhausted. They then ride round him in procession, singing a mocking song. Their victim, terribly bruised, is finally rescued by Amadis himself. 12

2. Masculine Protection

The normal physical weakness of women needs masculine protection. When asked a boon, Amadis of Greece agrees, as long as the request is a reasonable one, and goes on to express the attitude to women that had been

^{12.} XII.122v-123v.

part of the chivalric code since the twelfth century 13: all we who bear arms and the name of knights

...sommes specialement tenus de garder le droit, & faire pour les dames nôtre possible: autrement la force que les dieus nous ont donnee, ne meriteroit non plus de louange que céte fragilité & impuissance, que êt en vous si peculiere que ne poués (sans nous) resister aus méchans 14.

Montalvo's Florestán had made clear that this code comprehended <u>all</u> females: Amadís would help, he said, not just such a high-born lady as Oriana, 'mas por la más pobre mujer de todo el mundo lo faría'. There are numerous examples of ladies and damsels saved from death and worse fates by the intervention of a knight, and perhaps even more examples of a strong man being necessary to safeguard or win back a woman's property or kingdom.

Men are represented as both aggressors and protectors. Heiresses seem to be particularly vulnerable to the power of male relatives, who may well both take the inheritance by force and claim the authority of laws and customs; or powerful and unpleasant male neighbours first propose marriage, then, when the offer is turned down, make brisk preparations for seizing both property and lady. In such cases the male creators of

^{13.} See, for example, the instructions given by Gornemanz de Goorz to the young Perceval in Chrétien's Conte du graal, ed. Félix Lecoy, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1959), I, lines 1654-60.

^{14.} VII.20r.

this fictional world, a world where women are so much more in evidence and have so much more power of various kinds than can have been the norm in the real one, are unequivocally on the side of women; yet at the same time their assumption is that female rights of inheritance can be made good only with the backing of male strength. No narrator and no 'good' character ever questions a woman's right to inherit and rule her castle or her kingdom, and a great many of the female characters do just this; even the Salic Law in areas where it was traditionally valid is assumed to be iniquitous and is overruled. Myraminie, supposedly the greatgranddaughter of Pharamond, loses her kingdom to a male relative who cites her forebear's law - 'par laquelle le traïtre maintient le Royaume de France ne deuoir jamais tomber en quenoille', she exclaims indignantly. Amadis of Greece puts matters right. 15 The only daughter of the King of Medie also needs help to regain her kingdom, but her father had foreseen this and made arrangements for the selection of a suitable champion, using his knowledge of magic to create a fountain which would test knightly prowess. No sooner do his eyes close for the last time than a male cousin tries to murder his daughter and she has to flee to the forest for safety. 16 The wrong done to Oriana in trying to disinherit her is repeatedly emphasized. 17 Amadís's ambassador solemnly points out to Lisuarte how wrong his actions have been - they were more

^{15.} VII.20v.

^{16.} XIII.47r.

^{17.} E.g. 989.

'por seguir voluntad que razón y justicia', ignoring advice, tears and his duty to God. He was wrong both in disinheriting his daughter and in wishing to marry her against her will and against that of the British public, 'dándola por muger al emperador de Roma contra todo derecho y fuera de la voluntad' 18.

3. Weakness as Strength

In terms of physical power, then, the legal rights possessed by both sexes are usually sustained by men only. But how is male power shown as being brought into effect in particular cases? Not only by men's spontaneous perception of right. Women's only weapon may be tears and weeping, as the text states more than once, but this weapon is actually a very powerful one. Female sobbing, imperfectly heard across the water by night, is enough to send Amadis of Greece off from his ship in a little boat to investigate. In a later book the men are hunting while the ladies remain with the tents in a pleasant, grassy place by the seashore. Two giants hear the hackneys whinnying and kidnap Arlande, Lucelle and the Duchess Armide; it was pitiful to see them, we are told, wringing their hands and lifting tear-filled eyes to heaven as they prayed to God for help. But their cries alert a knight in another ship,

^{18. 1014.}

^{19.} VII.49.

who stops to rescue them.²⁰ One gets a general impression from these romances of the forests and seas of the known world resounding to cries of female distress, while knights gallop and sail off in all directions to put matters right.

In accordance with the conventions of literary chivalry, any lady has power over any knight and virtually complete control over the knight who has particularly vowed to serve her. Amadis refuses to stay at the court of Great Britain at the King's request, but has to do so when the Queen asks him (and he is there in the first place at Oriana's command); 21 his cousin Agrajes similarly tells his mistress Olinda that 'yo no vengo a esta tierra sino por hazer vuestro mandado'22. The power of ladies to raise the quality of a court is commented on: it is clear that they improve the military force at a ruler's disposition by attracting and retaining good knights. Her father gives this as a reason for not allowing Fortunie to enter a convent when she wants to do so.23 So all ladies have power, though at second hand; they can use the physical strength of men to do their fighting for them. Knights must be prepared to undertake any task, from regaining a kingdom to proving that a particular lady is the fairest of them all. Generally this system is repre-

^{20.} X.76v-77v.

^{21. 134-35.}

^{22. 208.}

^{23.} XI.92r.

sented as leading knights to earn ever more honour and glory, but it can prove bad for their reputations if a lady enforces a period of inaction. Like Chrétien's Lancelot or his Erec, both Guilán el Cuydador and Amadís himself suffer from this at different times. The fiercest giants are unable to bring shame on Amadís, but Oriana's command can lead to accusations of 'couardia y poquedad de coraçon'. Before Oriana finally releases him from a life of inaction, matters have become so serious that dissatisfied ladies, their wrongs unrighted, go passionately up and down the streets proclaiming his dishonour. At the great parliament summoned by Lisuarte of Great Britain, his queen Briseña formally obtains the promise of all the knights present always to put a lady's request first, 'como parte más flaca y que más remedio ha menester'²⁴, and this is the general attitude in all the books. Thus paradoxically the weakness that demands chivalric protection actually gives a woman more power than a man. When a lady travelling with a beautiful little girl and the statue of a wounded king refuses to give Amadís any explanation, his faithful dwarf mutters, 'Si ella fuera cauallero armado... aýna os lo dixera'. 25 The aunt is trying to gain the fighting power of three good knights by cunning so that her niece's kingdom can be regained - and she is successful.

^{24. 261.}

^{25. 192.}

Sometimes female control over knights is presented not only in the action, but also through visual metaphors or emblems reminiscent of masques and other court entertainments. On one of his many voyages, Amadis of Greece sees another boat in which a handsome young knight is lying on a rich bed. He is (rather improbably) singing a motet to himself with harp accompaniment; his enslavement is symbolized by the fact that at the head of his bed is the statue of a beautiful lady who holds a golden chain the other end of which is round his neck. 26 In the Adventure of the Enchanted Dragon two knights rush out of the monster's mouth to fight their challengers, but when they have fought for long enough, in proportion to the strength of the challengers, their two ladies appear from the cavity, take hold of their helmet straps and pull them back inside. 27

4. The Boon

A striking formalisation of the conversion of female weakness into its opposite is to be found in the convention of the boon or unspecified promise. This is shown as an effective way for a lady to ensure that a knight would comply with her request, particularly if he might not want to do so. As he was bound both to help ladies and to keep his pledged

^{26.} VII.69v.

^{27.} XIV.63r-66r.

word, she could then be sure of achieving her goal - as long as she had chosen a strong enough knight in the first place. This proves to be one important way in which women gain some control over the world and their own lives. The proud and ugly king Alizar l'Outrageus is determined to marry the orphaned Duchess of Liban, and wages war until he has her in his power, but she eventually wins the trial of male and female strength. She persuades him to promise her a boon and asks him to guard the place of Anastarax's enchantment (one of the many magic tests of knightly prowess) for one full year against any passing knight. ing that other knights will be sure to go there, she hopes that one of them may kill him - and she proves to be right. 28 This may be a less direct method of killing an enemy than running a sword through him, but is equally effective. The wife of the wicked enchanter Arcalaus actually proves to have more power through a boon than her husband has through his great physical strength, his magic and the support of the entire Arab army. She tricks Amadís into promising to release her husband from the cage where he has finally been imprisoned. Nor are women reluctant to assert their rights: a young knight with the portrait of Silvie on his shield challenges Florisel and they are fighting when a damsel comes galloping up, shouting to the strange knight to stop. He had made her a promise so he must keep it first. He stops immediately and though both he and Florisel beg her to allow them to finish their

^{28.} VIII.123v-124r.

fight, she is adamant and he has to ride off after her. 29

5. Sexual Favours

In the moral and religious teaching best known to the cycle's readers, and especially to its female readers in Catholic countries, the highest value was set upon chastity. Catholic girls would have been encouraged to read the lives of many females who had earned sanctity by an attitude towards sex very different from those adopted, without serious disapproval, by some female characters within the cycle. Thus a woman could be represented as putting masculine strength at the disposal of her own weakness by more directly sexual means than the request of a boon. Dinarda, niece of the evil enchanter Arcalaus, does this in a way that would have confirmed misogynistic views about female duplicity and sexual looseness, were it the case that these views were relevant within the discourse of romance. She hates Amadís because he has killed her father, and she has just been responsible for getting Amadís and his father and one brother shut up in her uncle's dungeons. Now she and her attendant damsel find themselves trapped in remote countryside by Amadis's other brother Galaor and his friend, who do not yet know her She is in great danger as there seems to be no chivalrous objection to killing bad women, though it is obviously the sort of dis-

^{29.} IX.47r.

tasteful task that might be left to a squire (Amadís does just that on one occasion). Dinarda, much wooed but still unwon, decides the time has come to make use of a key asset. She looks at the susceptible Galaor 'con ojos amorosos' and when he takes her for a walk in the forest she throws her arms around his neck 'mostrándole mucho amor, ahunque le desamaua, como algunas lo suelen fazer, o por miedo o por codicia de interesse mas que por contentamiento'. The attendant, a particularly shadowy and obedient damsel, refuses to sleep with Galaor's friend 'si mi señora Dinarda no lo manda', but when Dinarda points out to her that 'en tales tiempos es menester la discreción para negar nuestras voluntades' she meekly complies. (Later, when Dinarda's quick wits have got them safely shut in a friendly castle, the damsel's admirer wants to persuade her to join him and shouts up, asking what she wants to do; 'la voluntad de mi señora' is the reply. 30) The mistress of Dardán the Proud uses sex in a similarly direct way to Dinarda in an almost successful attempt to gain her stepmother's property; demonstrating female covetousness as well, she refuses to sleep with Dardán until he has won the property for her in combat. 31

^{30. 746-50.}

^{31. 111.}

6. Female Power for Evil Ends

A woman's ability to obtain a boon merely by virtue of her gender, or help by uttering cries of distress, can of course be used for evil ends, and this happens not infrequently. For good or ill, knights are shown as having a tendency to believe afflicted ladies and also to disbelieve what is said by any men who may be maltreating them. Such episodes are quite often examples of men exploiting the power that women have over other men; typically, an afflicted damsel will be strategically placed in apparent need of succour, claiming hysterically that her sister is about to be raped, for example. In such cases she is merely the cheese in the mousetrap: evil men are hidden among the trees and quickly appear to kidnap the noble rescuers, or the rescuer is then trapped in a tent. 32 The Emperor of Trebizond, Perion de Gaule, Lisuart of Greece and Olorius are all entrapped by damsels pretending to be in distress, asking boons, or both. Friends of the pagan king Armato spring out of their ambush, load them with chains and take them away in boats.³³ However, a few women are represented as perfectly capable of using their power for evil purposes on their own account. A niece of Arcalaus tricks Galaor doubly. 34 First she gets him to promise a boon in return

^{32. 1324-25.}

^{33.} VI.86v-87v.

^{34.} This is presumably not the Dinarda who has already been mentioned, as she is still alive and being troublesome much later.

for being taken to the knight he is seeking; when Galaor kills the knight, the girl is determined to have his life in revenge and accompanies him, reviling him continuously and waiting to use her boon. Her chance comes when they meet Amadis, whom she also wants dead as he is her uncle's greatest enemy. The helmeted brothers do not recognize each other and the girl asks Galaor to cut off the head of Amadis's attendant dwarf for her, knowing that Amadis will defend Ardián and hoping that the two knights will kill each other. She nearly achieves her aim, as a long and cruel fight ensues between the powerful warriors. She is watching with 'gran gloria y plazer' when a third knight arrives, demands an explanation from her, and on hearing it, promptly cuts off her head.

7. Woman as Property and Prize

There are means within the fiction, then, by which women may remedy their weakness, and they are often such as would have aroused the keen disapproval of moralists and theologians; but many of the cycle's female characters are placed by chance or choice in circumstances where they are as passive and often as obedient as the most conservative man could have wished. They may well be no more than the virtually inanimate possessions of men, argued over and referred to as such. Amadís is accompanying two damsels he has met on the way to the king of Great Britain's castle at Vindilisora when a pair of bad knights stop them and the following interchange immediately takes place:

- ¿Quál destas donzellas queréys vos, y tomaré yo la otra?
- Yo quiero esta donzella dixo el cauallero.
- Pues yo esta otra.
- Y tomó cada vno la suya. 35

It is not only bad knights who speak in such terms. The cry of 'Who has taken my damsel?' rings out at intervals. Ladies can be regarded as mere objects, and even used as trophies, as the following example demonstrates particularly clearly. Alumas, cousin of Dardán the Proud, is sure that he is the best knight in the world, so thinks it only reasonable that the lady he loves should be happy to marry him. A fine instance of the insensitive warrior with exaggerated masculine characteristics, he assumes that worth equals physical strength and thinks along the same lines as children fighting with conkers. If he cuts off the head of Amadís, who has conquered so many, 'toda su fama en mi será convertida'. He forcibly snatches the lady he loves, grabs a couple more damsels to go with her and sits them all down by the Fountain of the Three Elms with a dwarf strategically posted at the top of an elm to keep watch. He and two other knights each gallop up to defend their damsel when called. Florestán attempts to rescue one of them, and a knight rides out asking why his damsel is being touched. She is not yours, replies Florestán, she wants to come. She may want to, says the knight, but I won't let her. When Florestán wins the ensuing combat, the knight curses the unfortunate damsel, while Florestán says to her, 'Vos soys

mía'. 'Bien me ganastes,' she replies, 'y podéys fazer de mí lo que os pluguiere'. Florestán then attempts to take the second damsel away too, and a second knight appears and bargains with him. If the knight wins, he gets the first damsel back as well; if Florestán wins, he gets to keep the pair of them. 'Contento soy de esse partido,' says Florestán. When Florestán has finally won all three damsels they acknowledge that they are his, but when he understands that the third one and his overnight host are in love, he gallantly hands her over: '...yo vos hago libre,' he says generously to her. There is then a slight problem with the division of the other two. Florestán keeps one and gives the other to his companion, his brother Galaor. Galaor's damsel is at first insulted to be given to a knight she has seen do nothing but hang around, but when she realizes how handsome he is and is told of his prowess she is quite happy. Throughout this episode the language used implies the ownership of goods. 36 Of course, captured infidel women are considered as property rather than people; Leonorina is thrilled when Esplendián sends her one thousand five hundred damsels and some girls of lower rank as a present. 37

^{36. 347-51.}

^{37.} V.506.

8. Marriage and Giving in Marriage

It is not only women of lower rank who are handed over as possessions; ladies of the highest rank are given away as brides by male relatives or protectors. On one occasion ladies of equivalent quality are even officially pronounced interchangeable. Amadis of Gaule and the Council at Constantinople agree that Prince Lucidor ought to be satisfied with another princess instead of Helene; Florisel writes to him, '...mais pour la reparation enuers vous mes Signeurs & parens ont conclu vous donner autre Dame, de grandeur, beauté et richesse, telle qu'aurés raison de vous en contenter'38. In Montalvo's fourth book there is a handout of ladies. Amadis, Agrajes and Galvanes have already agreed to ask Lisuarte that 'assi Madasima como toda su tierra le [i.e. to Galvanes] fuesse entregada'39 and, after all the fighting on the Firm Island, in Book IV comes the general prize-giving, with the disposal of young female relatives and other eligible ladies. Perión first makes them all over to the victorious Amadís; the following day Amadís carefully distributes them among his friends and supporters. The ladies' property obviously becomes that of their husbands; don Florestán will have the queen he asked for and, as well as her possessions, he will be given Calabria. For his brother Galaor, Amadís says, 'tengo yo guardado a la hermosa reyna Briolanja'. Don Bruneo tells his future brother-in-law

^{38.} X.13r.

^{39. 545.}

about 'aquella muy fermosa reyna Briolanja que vuestro hermano Amadís vos tiene'40.

However, such episodes do not lend themselves to analysis merely in terms of power and submission, for, in spite of the language used in this distribution, almost all the couples are represented as being already in love. (Only Oriana's younger sister Leonoreta is high-handedly disposed of, and there is no evidence that she is unwilling, nor has she ever been much more than an occasional name to the reader.) Here we see an illustration of what is now a familiar truth about the cycle, that it is governed not by a single value system but by several coexisting systems. It encourages the reader to believe simultaneously that women are commodities at the disposal of men and also that women as much as men are autonomous selves defined by passionate choices. As I noted in the Introduction in connection with romance, one of the functions of fiction for advanced societies, as of myth for those we think of as primitive, is to reconcile in imagination what cannot be reconciled in daily life.

In the sixteenth century it appears to have been normal practice for parents and guardians to select a girl's husband, and many moralists argued that love of the romantic type considered the natural foundation for marriage in twentieth-century Europe was the worst possible begin-

^{40. 1190-94.}

ning to a couple's life together. Love should be something more solid, temperate and amical, and should develop after marriage. Romantic or so-called courtly love also had the disadvantage of inverting the natural order and placing the woman in a dominant position. Romances which described nights of love in flowery gardens would in themselves have been thought of as unsuitable reading for the young, but there are many other ways in which these stories could have had an undesirable influence on an adolescent girl; the idea that one fell in love with a hand-some and usually unidentifiable young stranger, probably at first sight, enjoyed a long and secret relationship during which he was at one's beck and call, and finally married him whatever other plans one's parents might have had, must have seemed almost as unsuitable as ideas about pre-marital sex.

This is an area in which the behaviour represented as the fictional norm is almost the opposite of what would have met with official approval in real life; yet, with the cycle's usual inconsistency, alongside this norm can be found a few examples of girls humbly accepting husbands from parents or guardians. When Amadis of Greece had reconquered Lucida's kingdom of Trapobane for her from her tyrannous usurping uncle, before he went she '...le vint suplier humblement la pourvoir de mari, pour deffendre la terre qu'il lui auoit conquise'. Amadis promptly presented her with his friend and companion Gradamarte and they were married the

following day. 41 More often it is a matter of following the formalities, of the official recognition of an existing situation, not unlike the modern Spanish 'petición de mano', which in spite of its name is simply a party at which the couple's engagement is officially celebrated by family and friends. The fictional situation is obviously not dissimilar when Esclariane asks Amadis of Gaule for permission to marry the man of her choice. The younger Florestan has saved her from a fate worse than death at the hands of pirates and she begs Amadis to find it good that she has chosen him as her lord and husband. 42

Much direct female power is more apparent than real, and most women within the fiction have a limited freedom to choose but power to resist the choice of others. It appears to be quite in order for a rich and powerful lady to take the initiative, select her own husband and even to propose to him herself, but in practice the male narrators do not allow such initiatives to prosper. A few young women fall in love with unattainable heroes, recognize the hopelessness of their passion and with great self-control turn themselves into friends and squires; I shall have more to say about such characters in Chapter IV. But most marriageable females fall conveniently in love with the men who have chosen them, agree to accept them as suitors, and, though they may appear to be the victims of circumstances or parental oppression for a great many

^{41.} VIII.80.

^{42.} VIII.65v.

chapters, they finally marry them. This cannot be regarded as a mere mystification of patriarchal power, for, whoever may be in control of matrimonial plans, ultimately it is certainly not fathers. Girls may not be able to choose as freely as men, but they are never shown as marrying against their wills and they almost always get their own way in the end, even if horrifying wars are necessary. However, as with the distribution of brides on the Firm Island, the language used often suggests the strictest subjugation. Helene of Apolonie is shut up in l'Abbaye des Rois 'iusques à ce qu'en la tirant de leans on la mette entre les mains de son mari', a husband she has never seen, but to whom she has been officially betrothed for a long time. 43 Later, strong emphasis is placed on the sufferings of Diane and she laments her fate in the most pathetic terms. She has been shut up in a prison-palace since early childhood, and is suffering from love for Agesilan but can do nothing to alter any aspect of her life. Her only consolation is the company of Lardenie; but Lardenie's main promise of better things is only the passive suggestion that time will solve all problems, and Fortune is changeable, so things are likely to get better. 44 In spite of all this, Helene and Diane are represented as being in charge of their own fates to the extent that they are finally happily married to the men they love.

^{43.} IX.62r-v.

^{44.} XII.15r-v.

In some cases the language of conventional subjugation is used by a girl simply because it suits her purpose at that moment. When Oriane receives a declaration of love and proposal of marriage from Anaxartes, she modestly tells his messenger that she is entirely in her parents' power: '...ie ne puis vouloir ni doy faire autre chose que leur bon plaisir et volonté'. Fortunately for Anaxartes, who seems to faint easily, the female messenger is 'sage & discrette' and judges correctly that Oriane's words simply mean that she feels she owes it to herself and her position not to appear too available. 45 The first Oriana's trials are at least equally severe, but the outcome is the same. When the Emperor of Rome first asks for her hand in marriage, her father, King Lisuarte of Great Britain, tells him that he and the Queen have promised their daughter that she will never be married against her wishes, so he cannot answer without talking to her first. This is an excuse, for at this stage Lisuarte does not want his heir to marry abroad, but, overcome by pride and ambition, he soon changes his mind. He would prefer 'que por voluntad tomasse aquel camino que a él tanto le agradaua' and is annoyed by her tears and his failure to get her to accept what he sees as inevitable; finally Oriana is carried aboard ship unconscious from grief and an equally unwilling Olinda packed off too, because the Emperor's ambassador wants to marry her. Roman knights lock Oriana with Mabilia in her cabin, and the ambassador, Salustanquidio, has Olinda

carried to his ship 'con otra pieça de donzellas'; all are weeping. 46 None of these women is represented as thinking of running away, of taking risks on her own; men have put them in this position and now men must rescue them from it, which of course they soon do.

B. FEMALE MORALITY: HONOUR AND CLEVERNESS

In the period of its widest readership the *Amadis* cycle was frequently condemned for its alleged immorality - '0 morum infamiam! O bibliothecarum ulcera!', as Thomas Lansius apostrophised it in 1620^{47} - and its apparent assumptions about female conduct might well be seen as immoral, or at best merely opportunistic, even by twentieth-century readers. In my view, however, a fair understanding of the cycle's treatment of women's conduct needs to keep in mind several interacting factors that may not seem obviously connected. One of these is the relative power-lessness of normal women, as set out in the preceding pages. A second is the fact, emphasized in my Introduction, that a vast fictional work set in an imagined past, with a number of different authors and trans-

^{46. 910-11.}

^{47.} Lansius continues, 'For these are the books which corrupt chastity, destroy temperance, train both the mind and the tongue to looseness, teach the countless cunning tricks of adultery and unbridled lust, and the debasement of marriage by stealthy and frequent embraces in advance, so to speak...' (cited by Thomas, Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry, p 229).

lators, produced over a period of half a century, can scarcely be expected to constitute a systematic treatise on morality; much will be implicit, and coexisting traces may be found of several different systems of thought. A third factor, to which I now turn, is the shifting and ambiguous nature of the institution of marriage even in the legal and ecclesiastical doctrines of the period when Amadis was being written. Not only was there historically some fluidity about what constituted a proper wedding, but the storytellers exploited this situation in order to extract maximum value from each of the fictional couples whose relationships we follow. They could both titillate and shock the reader with delightful evocations of illicit sex, only to assume later that a couple were properly married all along and are perfectly virtuous, the happy parents of legitimate offspring. Clandestine marriage and secret love had the further advantage, from the storytellers' point of view (and this is of course equally true of many other romances), of ensuring that very few of their characters knew who was in love with or married to whom; this meant that those who were actually tied down could be fallen in love with or demanded in marriage again and again, with all the resulting danger, complication and heartbreak which belong to romance as a genre. Ultimately, the consequence is a breakdown of what might seem to be the fundamental opposition between married and unmarried; and since it is women rather than men who are traditionally defined in terms of their marital status, this dissolution has a special importance for the freeing of women's roles within the cycle.

1. Legal Marriage

I begin with a reminder of accepted teaching on what constituted mar-In Christian countries it had become customary in the Middle Ages for couples to meet outside the church door so that their parish priest could bless the union. This custom became established as a religious duty; the Fourth Lateran Council pronounced on the matter in 1215 and neglect of the duty brought censure and punishment from the Church. However, marriage remained essentially a private transaction. couple informally expressed their intentions to be man and wife from then on (sponsalia per verba de praesenti) and then consummated the union, the marriage became both a religious sacrament and legally indis-This was the position until the Council of Trent issued the Decretum Tametsi in 1563; from then on, Christians under the jurisdiction of the Pope had to be married in front of a priest and at least two This did not apply in Protestant countries; pre-Tridentine canon law allowed de praesenti or common law marriage in England until 1753. So before the Council of Trent,

Secret or clandestine marriages were severely and repeatedly prohibited in the West by conciliar law and pontifical decrees. Nevertheless, there was no law requiring the presence of a priest for a valid marriage 48 .

^{48.} New Catholic Encyclopedia, IX, pp 271-78.

All the Spanish books of Amadís were written before 1563 and only two of their French translations are later. If one adds to this the further legal and doctrinal confusion of the work's being in a sense an 'historical novel', set in the earliest years of the Christian era, and partly in England, one can see that a certain lack of clarity about just which of the dramatis personae was secretly married and which was not was perfectly valid. Perhaps the most typical mating pattern in the cycle is of love more or less at first sight, prolonged wooing, exchange of promises, more prolonged wooing and denying with female talk of honour, final succumbing (often with a little force, usually in a garden by night), generally followed by many more years of problems and suspense before public marriage and celebration. The entire relationship is an intermittent one, with the couple frequently separated by adventures.

2. The Nature of 'Honour'

A crucial value within the world of Amadis is honour. This is different for men and for women, and the historical lack of clarity about precisely what constituted marriage makes female honour especially difficult to identify: are Niquee, Onolorie, Gricilerie, Helene, virtuous matrons or fallen women? Furthermore, as in many other Renaissance writings, the reader is aware of two moral codes at work: the pagan (and traditionally epic) concern with name and reputation and the Christian concern with conscience and inner virtue. Oriana may be morally pure

according to the hermit Nasciano, who has heard her confession, but her reputation in the eyes of the world is at least as important as her moral purity. In what anthropologists have taught us to call a 'shame culture' it may be acceptable for her to sleep with Amadis, conceal her pregnancy and then leave the baby on a convent doorstep, as long as all these things are concealed from the world, and she has later to be seen leading a nun-like life when Amadis takes her to his Firm Island. Her honour even requires an elaborate charade of harmless deceptions before she can speak to Amadis at all.⁴⁹ Because of the physical weakness attributed to women, female honour, unlike its male equivalent, cannot be made good by martial prowess upon the body of a challenger; and thus female 'cleverness', the quality of women most often mentioned after their beauty, is in practice closely linked with female honour, to such an extent that the word vertu can be used to mean the ability to hide

^{49. 917; 995-96.} This dual value system is already seen in twelfth-century fiction:

Por honte oster et mal covrir Doit on un poi par bel mentir

⁽Beroul, The Romance of Tristran, ed. A. Ewart, 2 vols [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939], lines 2353-4). This is cited by Georges Duby in Revelations of the Medieval World, ed. Georges Duby (vol. II of A History of Private Life, 5 vols, ed. Georges Duby and Philippe Ariès) (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1988), with the comment: 'When Tristan and Isolde regain their reason and ask the hermit Ogrin how to find their way back into society, he advises them first to purify themselves through contrition, inner remorse and personal resolve to resist temptation forever after, and, second, once they are back at court, simply to dissimulate' (pp 520-21).

its absence.⁵⁰ However, it is clear that the words 'honour' and 'honesty' as associated with women are usually employed in these works to mean a reputation for chastity.⁵¹ There is some evidence of internalized guilt, but very little. Strong women in the cycle, usually queens or knights, are also concerned with their honour in a wider and more masculine sense of the word, but such women fall into a separate class and will be considered later.

Where a lady's honour is concerned, it is usually clear that it is the appearance of chastity that is most important. Unmarried girls must seem as pure and innocent as possible: when Lisuart of Greece and the younger Perion of Gaule are finally officially married to the Princesses Onolorie and Gricilerie of Trebizond, after many years of clandestine marriage and several clandestine children, we are told that they went to bed together and '...vindrent au poinct tant deffendu aus filles d'honneur, non de nommer seulement, ains de donner la moindre aparence du

^{50.} It may be of interest to remark that I began studying this aspect of the *Amadis* romances by considering honour, cleverness and morality as separate categories, but soon had to merge them as they proved to be in practice quite inseparable.

^{51.} Don Quixote, whose advice is not always meant to seem absurd, recommends a bridegroom to consider her reputation rather than her wealth when choosing a wife, 'porque la buena mujer no alcanza la buena fama solamente con ser buena, sino con parecerlo; que mucho más dañan a las honras de las mujeres las desenvolturas y libertades públicas que las maldades secretas' (Don Quijote de La Mancha, ed. Soriano and Morales, p 1218).

monde d'y penser'52. It is not just sexual relations or the knowledge of them that must be concealed, but any sign of love. Esplendián's female squire Carmela, of whom more will be said later, takes her lord an angry letter from his beloved Leonorina and Esplendián is devastated. But Carmela explains to him in a revealing passage that while men show their love, women have to hide theirs; this is not done to deceive, but, she says, because social custom creates a great difference between the honour of men and that of women. Public knowledge of the fact that a high-born person is in love reflects glory on a man, dishonour and escuridad on a woman. 53 In Book VIII, Niquee recognizes the same thing and worries about her honour when she falls in love with Amadis of Greece. She feels it is at risk even when she lets her faithful dwarf Buzando know her secret: 'In giving someone the secret of your love, you're giving him something dearer than your passion to guard - your honour', she tells him. She is also very anxious about writing to propose marriage to Amadis, and although she does do this, she tells Buzando that her love is so great that, 'postposant toutes perfections requises entre les Dames d'honneur', she is obliged to confess her feelings to the man she loves. 54 Nor is it only the words or behaviour of the lady herself that can damage her reputation: the Queen of Sheba has her honour impugned by malicious slanderers; a victorious champion is needed to clear

^{52.} VIII.55.

^{53.} V.486.

^{54.} VIII.23r.

her good name, and then she has to kneel at her husband's feet to beg to be accepted back into favour. She had faced the death penalty.⁵⁵

3. Virginity

If honour is extremely important and female honour depends on society perceiving a female to be chaste, virginity in unmarried girls might be expected to be precious. There are indeed a number of instances of evident concern with the subject, and passing remarks, as when the old Spartan laws of Dardanie 'tant vtiles & loüables' are praised; there a girl has no dowry but her virtue, which has to be carefully preserved. Set in general there is surprisingly little emphasis on virginity as such. An occasional lady is represented as preferring death to dishonour, but these are always very minor characters and fail to make more than a brief impact. There is certainly no attempt to present

The sublime notion, and high mystery That must be uttered to unfold the sage And serious doctrine of virginity. 57

^{55.} VII.59v-61r.

^{56.} XI.14v-15r.

^{57.} Comus, lines 784-86, ed. John Carey, John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems (London: Longman, 1971).

An exceptional case is is Brisenne, daughter of Amadis of Gaule, who shows concern about it, even in the most difficult of situations. has just seen her husband and her father-in-law treacherously murdered and weltering in blood on the palace floor, she has managed to escape with her young daughter Esclariane and, adrift in a fishing boat, they fall into the hands of pirates. Brisenne humbly begs the pirates, 'que nôtre honneur soit gardée, ainsi que nous auons confiance en vôtre bonté & gentillesse: car autre chose ne nous êt-il demeuré'. As the pirates quite lack the two qualities she attributes to them, it is fortunate that help is on the way. Further swift developments of the plot introduce a somewhat different perspective. Esclariane is left alone in a small skiff with a gentleman mad for her love; when she wakes from an exhausted sleep to hear him declaring his passion and demanding sex, she is too angry to be afraid, but the reader gets the impression that her anger is as much the result of the insult to her birth as of the threat to her virginity. He has no right to speak thus to one of her rank; she cares so much for the purity of her lineage that she would commit suicide before succumbing. Unmoved by her social status (she is heir to the Roman Empire), the gentleman-pirate attempts to ravish her, but she responds fiercely, grabbing his hair and attempting to fight him off while screaming to God for help. The pitiful sounds bring don Florestan through the fog in a little boat and Esclariane takes keen pleasure in the sight of her assailant's corpse sinking beneath the waves, but is almost immediately concerned to discover the name and hence presumably the social status of her rescuer. He quickly declares his love for her,

but she is less precipitate, hiding her reaction to his words and his beauty until she knows that he is of sufficiently good family to be an acceptable husband. The juxtaposition of concern with preserving chastity and concern with preserving social rank is compatible with a scheme of thought in which public image is all-important, but less so with any 'sublime notion' of virginity.

The former is further illustrated by the case of the Princess Sidere, who makes it plain that she thinks honour the only reason for remaining chaste, and a mistaken one at that. While travelling with the susceptible and promiscuous don Rogel of Greece, she refuses to sleep with him, although she loves him⁵⁹; once home in Persia again, she is constantly under attack from him, but, '...comme bien apprinse, rendoit douce & amiable response dissimulant toute-fois par froideur, l'ardeur dont elle n'estoit moins que lui embrasee'. Having held out for so long, she finally decides to give in - but he hears of an immense army threatening Constantinople and has to hurry away. She is then full of regrets: '...ha, faux honneur, garde de la chasteté des Dames, il ne fust oncques de plus cruel tiran que toy qui les gesnes, tourmentes & fais mourir à petit feu'60. Perhaps the narrator would not necessarily expect her, as a pagan princess, to follow the precepts of the fathers

^{58.} VII.64r-65r.

^{59.} XII.140v-141r.

^{60.} XIII.44.

of the Church, but there is little evidence of different moral codes for good pagans and good Christians of either sex.

4. Chastity and Reputation: Diane

There is one heroine who is depicted as intensely concerned about her virginity; interestingly, she is also, I believe, the only one made to show internalized guilt along with concern for her reputation. I shall therefore give a more detailed account of her case. The aptly named Diane is daughter of the first, bigamous, marriage of Florisel of Niquee and Queen Sidonie of the Island of Guindaye. The reader first sees her as an exquisitely beautiful nine-year-old, who is already auisee. 61 True to her name, she is not much older before she is declaring her intention to live chastely: 'je n'espere me rendre en ce cas comme le commun des femmes par lacheté & faute de coeur, puis qu'il êt en ma main de le faire ou non'. Her best friend, the young Duchess Lardenie, is sceptical and feels she is underestimating the power of love, as irresistible as death. 62 Imprisoned by a revengeful but loving mother in a beautiful castle 63, Diane should not have been faced with any problems

^{61.} XI.18.

^{62.} XI.99r.

^{63.} It may be remembered that Sidonie was keeping her daughter as a reward for the knight who should bring her the head of her false 'husband', Florisel.

about chastity; but like his literary successor, Sidney's Pyrocles, Agesilan of Colchos manages to penetrate forbidden territory by disguising himself as an Amazon maiden and becoming the friend and companion of his beloved. He lives for some time in conditions of intimate female friendship with Diane and her maidens. When Diane is first told the true sex and identity of 'Daraïde', she is very insistent that he must not be told of her knowledge. If 'Daraïde' were to find out that she knew the truth, Diane could not let him remain in her company one hour longer, even if it were necessary to commit suicide; her own honour must remain unstained. 64 When Daraïde-Agesilan does eventually tell Diane the truth she replies with cold anger, banishes him for ever from her presence and walks away; suffering deeply, but remaining firm, she leaves him unconscious with grief by the fountain. 65 Like one of d'Urfé's heroines in L'Astrée, Diane is more chaste and stern than reasonable; she insists that Agesilan can't love her or he would come to see her - but will not let him come because revoking his banishment would prove her dishonourably inconstant. 66 What matters is obviously not the fact of living so intimately with a man, but that anyone - even he should have his view of her modified by knowing that she is aware of the situation.

^{64.} XII.15v.

^{65.} XII.45r.

^{66.} XII.44. The d'Urfé character, Astrée's best friend, is also called Diane.

After this a great deal of space and emotional intensity continue to be given to Diane's feelings and scruples during the rest of her story, with a new emphasis on guilt as well as shame. She fears that her reputation must suffer if it becomes known that Agesilan had lived so close to her for so long but Lardenie tries to persuade her not to worry about others as she is sure of her own virtue; in matters of conscience one is the best judge of oneself, she says; in weighing honour and conscience against shame and guilt, one's own heart is the true counterpoise which inclines naturally towards truth. Diane must be imagined to have taken some of this lesson to heart, as she herself later shows guilt as well as concern for her own reputation. When the couple are betrothed they are imprisoned in a magic tower for a time; while there, Agesilan forces Diane to sleep with him. Afterwards, in spite of joking and accusations, Diane tells everyone that they were enchanted the whole time and that she is still a virgin. Once they are free again, Agesilan is most insistent that they should continue to sleep together secretly, but Diane is adamant: both God and her honour would be offended. spite of her anxiety to hide the truth when they emerged from the tower, she now tells her fiancé that even if a shameful act is not known to others, one cannot hide it from oneself, 'Et puis que lon êt beaucoup plus obligé à soy mêmes, qu'à autruy, ils deuoyent plus craindre qu'eus

mêmes eussent la honte de leur faute, que non pas se trauailler à la couvrir pour le regard des étrangers'67.

Shipwrecked, kidnapped, nearly raped, seized by pirates, Diane continues to agonize about her chastity and reputation. Her series of adventures reaches a terrifying conclusion when, Andromeda-like, she is chained to a cliff as a sacrifice to Terragant's marine monster. Agesilan emulates Perseus, slaying the monster and rescuing her; they soar away to safety on Agesilan's flying horse, the Grifaleon, and her devoted lover is so pleased to have her there in front of him, that he starts to kiss and embrace her. Far from being stupefied into passive acceptance by her ordeal, Diane is still alert enough for chastity: she reproves him for his 'lascivious touching', hoping that he hasn't rescued her from one danger to subject her to another. 68 Agesilan obviously hopes that he has done just that, but she manages to resist until the beginning of Book XIII; he suffers, faints, accuses her of 'rigeur & cruauté' and generally tries to make her feel as guilty as possible, but she tells him repressively that 'telles carresses & priuautez me sont defenduës par honneur, iusques à la celebration des nopces'69.

^{67.} XII.147v-148r.

^{68.} XII.169r.

^{69.} XIII.13r.

5. Sexual Ethics in the Cycle

As so often, it is hard to generalise about the cycle's treatment of sexual conduct; it ranges from the febrile excitement about virginity generated in the sequence just discussed to a far more relaxed attitude elsewhere. But it may be said that, in spite of the scruples of Diane and certain other female characters, the general impression of sexual ethics gained from reading the cycle is not one to reconcile even a reasonably lenient sixteenth-century moralist or confessor, though it might well have been congenial in some circles in the 1960s. some evidence of historical change. Herberay and his successors were more interested in sex and less concerned with moralizing than Montalvo had been; and since 'translation' was a rather more capacious concept in the sixteenth century than it usually is in the twentieth, these later writers were quite prepared to make additions and deletions to the texts The French translators also seem to have had a somewhat they received. lower estimate of the nature of women than the Spanish authors. very widely read French versions were therefore actually less 'moral' than the Spanish, especially Montalvo's books. 70 Montalvo's explicit comments tend to be more severe than the judgments implicit in his story; possibly this is partly attributable to the fact that he too was

^{70.} The English translation of the earlier French books which was made by Anthony Munday seems to fall somewhere between the two: it is primmer and more reticent in sexual matters than the French. The English translation is also carefully Protestant: characters no longer call on the Virgin Mary and they attend church rather than mass.

reworking older material, retelling a story of which he did not necessarily always approve. Within his part of the fiction, though, sleeping with a girl who loves or lusts after you seems perfectly acceptable, as it does throughout the cycle, though Montalvo does comment that Galaor's behaviour is not consistent with good conscience or virtue and tends to say modestly that what happened should not be written down. other hand, raping an unwilling girl or forcing her to be your wife is clearly wicked and breaks the chivalric code. Indeed, Lucelle even feels that Brisenne was justified in killing an importunate suitor and pardons her, `...considerant l'indiscretion & temerité de celuy qui a souffert, & l'équité de vous, à qui il pretendoit injustement, puis que ne l'auiés agreable'71. It is apparently acceptable in Book XI for two knights to sleep with two chance-met damsels who are quite happy about the situation; it is clearly not all right for Grandoin le fier to extort a night spent with each damsel as a sort of toll - the price of them all crossing his bridge. 72

Fornication, if known, does not improve a lady's reputation, but does not appear to be considered seriously immoral so long as she is perfectly willing. There is a general sense - and on this I would place some emphasis - that pleasure is an intrinsically desirable end, and that this is as much so for women as for men. One way of looking at

^{71.} VIII.55r.

^{72.} XI.40r.

this would be to see it as a conscious fictional reversal of the view of traditional moralists; but it might also be hypothesised that this was and always has been one basis for human life in the real world. Amadís's brother Florestan commends Sardamira to God, saying, '...y Él, que tan fermosa os fizo, vos dé mucha alegría y plazer...'73. The phrase 'con mucho plazer' occurs with almost Pepysian frequency. Montalvo explains away any moral lapse of Oriana's: she was the most beautiful, the most noble, the most virtuous lady of her time

Y si en algo de su honrra se puede trauar, según su bondad y sano pensamiento, y en la fin que dello redundó, má se deue atribuyr a permissión de Dios...que a otro yerro ni pecado... 74

Comments on or by other ladies also lead one to infer that extra-marital sex is only a sin if the resultant child turns out badly. Thus Celinda had loved Lisuarte passionately; she recognized that sleeping with him had been sinful, but the sin had brought such fine fruit (Norandel) that God would forgive it.⁷⁵

^{73. 845.}

^{74. 964.}

^{75. 695.}

6. Secret Childbirth

Female characters, whether they are clandestinely married or not, are usually made to conceal the birth of their babies. Such concealment is one of the ways in which women show their cleverness or 'discretion', and at the same time their loyalty to each other. The concealment is also an integral and traditional part of the romance plot; the loss and recovery of children, with characters finding their true identity in the course of the story, has always been an important element in such fiction, important both on the level of myth and on that of the entertainment-value of suspense and astonishment. In the first chapter of the first book of the Amadis cycle the birth and fate of the hero provide suspense. The reader is told that before the reform of King Arthur's reign it was the law in Brittany that any adulterous female should be executed, no matter what her social status. The secrecy of Helisena's 'marriage' thus puts her in mortal danger. Errant in the chivalric sense of the word, her knightly husband cannot be contacted when she discovers that she is pregnant, and she is physically and psychologically dependent on her waiting-lady, Darioleta. Fortunately for her mistress and the romance's many readers, Darioleta is a young woman of practical good sense and strong resolution; the hero and his mother are saved.

^{-¡}Ay, santa María!- dixo Elisena-; y ¿cómo consentiré yo matar aquello que fué engendrado por la cosa del mundo que yo más amo?

⁻Dexemos agora de fablar más en ello -dixo la donzella-, que gran locura sería por saluar una cosa sin prouecho, condenássemos a vos

y a vuestro amado, que sin vos no podría viuir; y vos biuiendo y él, otros hijos hauréys que el deseo déste vos farán perder.

Not only is the 'profitless' infant Amadís efficiently sealed into a wooden box along with his father's sword and ring and a parchment giving his name, but he is then put into the strongly-flowing river with no thought of Christian baptism. 76 No devout person, judging the fiction by orthodox religious standards, could have approved either of Darioleta's sentiments or of the failure to give the infant a chance of salvation. Even some years later, when the royal couple have been openly married, Helisena is too ashamed to tell her husband what had happened. 77

The pattern established in the first chapter is repeated at intervals throughout the cycle as one generation of the family succeeds another (or rather, joins another, for the longevity of most of the main characters is astonishing). Careful plans are made to conceal Oriana's pregnancy and the birth of Esplendián, with her favourite damsel gladly sacrificing herself by pretending to her abbess-aunt that the child to be abandoned on the convent steps will be hers. As this waiting-lady, the Damsel of Denmark, is conveying the baby to the convent of Miraflores she takes a short cut through the woods, her horse panics at the sudden

^{76. 22-24.}

^{77. 36.}

appearance of a lioness and the beast carries off the baby. Similar misfortunes pursue subsequent clandestine infants. The Princesses Onolorie and Gricilerie have their baby sons taken by faithful servants to a neighbouring seaport town to be brought up secretly. Both infants are lost, and when, after a long separation, the sisters repeatedly meet their lovers in the gardens of the palace of Trebizonde at night, 'se sceurent & l'vne & l'autre trébien taire, qu'elles auoyent eu enfans, les tenans perdus'. As a result of these secret meetings, Onolorie gives birth to a daughter (Silvie), who is stolen by the couple to whom she had been entrusted. On her wedding night Onolorie, obviously feeling that to lose one child may be regarded as a misfortune but to lose both seems like carelessness, only tells Lisuard of Greece about the birth of a son, not daring to confess to a daughter as well. 79

7. Female Ingenuity and Sense

The female 'cleverness' which is employed to preserve the reputation of ladies by concealing the birth of these and many other infants is often used for maintaining secrecy, but is also valuable in more positive ways. In the cycle as a whole, intelligence as such, measurable intellectual power, is never really considered, either in connection with men

^{78.} VIII.32r.

^{79.} VIII.55v-56r.

or with women. Brains are only useful as they contribute to the smooth running of the fictional society, or of the plot: common sense, self-control, the ability to keep quiet or to think of a way out of a tight corner, are what are valued and commented on. Study and books are almost always connected with magic and enchanters. In spite of this, wit or discretion appears to be the most important female attribute after beauty and is very frequently mentioned. Wit had never been a traditional virtue. Certainly, as associated with women, the most commonly expressed view had been that of Chaucer's Host in the epilogue to the Merchant's Tale: 'Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees/ In wommen been!'80

The quick-witted cunning shown by May in that tale certainly has something in common with the use of cleverness by women in this cycle, but, like Chaucer, the narrators also show a rich and varied understanding of the possibilities of women's lives. Craftiness and cunning have been admired and recommended from Homer onwards. As Marina Warner points out, Odysseus's faithful Penelope is a special protégée of Athena's and has the goddess's kerdeia (foxiness)⁸¹: in this very early example of romance-like narrative, Penelope uses cunning and secrecy to control the circumstances of her life just as the female characters in the Amadis

^{80.} Canterbury Tales IV (E) 2421-22.

^{81.} Marina Warner, Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), p 95.

Women in these romances are frequently described as discretas, a word with a wide variety of meanings, one of which certainly refers to the ability to dissemble. Margaret J. Bates, in her study of the use of the word discreción in the works of Cervantes, 82 suggests prudence as one meaning for discreción; others are reason in practical matters and when controlling passions, moderation, accommodation to circumstances and people, sharpness and subtlety, good sense, foresight and wisdom. She also suggests that its meaning is different for different classes of people - men, women and children - as it involves behaving suitably; in women it can consist of honestidad (a word which is often indistinguishable from 'honour'). 83 The Amadis narrators use words denoting some sort of cleverness more often when talking about women than when talking about men, and use a wider variety of words than is used for beauty, the most common female attribute of all; this may imply that cleverness in women is perceived as more morally problematic than beauty. A woman may be described not only as discreta, but as cuerda, sesuda, mesurada, entendida - or sage, bien avisée, prudente. Mabilia is muy animosa84,

^{82.} Margaret J. Bates, *Discreción in the Works of Cervantes: A Semantic Study* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1945), pp 14, 12, 18, 21, 45, 55, 59, 76, 29.

^{83.} It is amusing that the knight who has lost his wits by reading chivalric romances sees a taste for such reading as proof of the discretion of Luscinda, a girl he has never met: `...con sólo haber entendido su afición, la confirmo por la más hermosa y más discreta mujer del mundo' (ed. cit., p 524).

whereas a wicked wife is aleuosa⁸⁵, suggesting again, as in some of the comments of Montalvo already cited, that the intention or outcome of behaviour decides how moral it is. Sotileza seems to indicate mental powers being carried too far and used for bad ends; it is associated with enchantresses or witches.

8. Secrecy

Female wit used in the service of secrecy cannot be considered as simply a question of how women and their morals were perceived in reality, for secrecy is a central topic in romance, and one that demands to be seen in a variety of different contexts. The ultimate revelation of what has been concealed has always been an important element in romance narratives; secrets are thus vital to the plotting and the general effect of such works. Furthermore, it is well known that within the courtly tradition there is a strong association between love and secrecy, though the reasons for this may be disputable. (Among them, quite apart from controversial questions of social practice, literary convention and courtly doctrine, is the fact that young people apparently always have found and certainly still do find such secrecy thoroughly enjoyable. It may well be that this cultivation of secrecy is a necessary part of the process of individuation by which the adolescent separates himself - and perhaps

particularly herself - from dependency on the parents.) On the other hand, the misogynistic habit of accusing women of keeping secrets from their husbands does not prevent misogynists from being equally fond of alleging that it is agony to women to keep secrets at all: garrulity has not ceased to be among the favourite accusations levelled at women by men.

At the simplest level, many of the female characters hide their love from everyone, including its object: when Norandel makes a present of a captured pagan king to Queen Menoresa, she thanks him, 'no con aquel gran amor que su corazon sentia, mas con aquella disimulacion que en semejantes cosas la lengua tener suele'86. The next stage is to share the secret with a particularly close female friend: 'Amiga, yo vos quiero dezir vn secreto que le no diría sino a mi coraçón, y guardadle como poridad...,' says Oriana to the Damsel of Denmark, before giving her a message for Amadís.⁸⁷ Young women unite in hiding the matter from others, especially parents: Leonorina has to take Carmela into the window embrasure to hear the message she has brought from Esplendián; it is quickly decided what information is suitable for Leonorina's father, the Emperor of Constantinople, and what must be edited 'so as not to worry him'88. The vocabulary discussed in the last paragraph but one is con-

^{86.} V.533.

^{87. 67.}

^{88.} V.443.

stantly used in such contexts; Elisenne falls in love with Quedragant when she sees him fight with an enchanted knight, 'Ce qu'elle sceut pourtant bien dissimuler comme sage & auisee'89. An attachment may be concealed even when there is no need. The Emperor of Trebizond goes out to kiss and welcome the two eligible princes his daughters secretly love, while the Empress waits in the doorway with her ladies to welcome and embrace them, but all four lovers are represented as being afraid of revealing the truth by their demeanour. 90 Nor is it clear why it should be so important for Melicia, sister of Amadís de Gaula, to conceal how she feels about don Bruneo de Bonamar. Her parents and brothers like and admire him; Helisena actually encourages her daughter to spend time with him and to nurse him herself when he is brought wounded into their palace. However, when Amadís praises him as a faithful lover who has passed the Enchanted Arch test, Melicia, 'que muy mesurada era', says repressively that she will nurse don Bruneo because she has heard that he is a good knight and knows that he loves her brother. 91

^{89.} VI.74r.

^{90.} VI.80r.

^{91. 686.}

9. Wit in the Service of Secrecy

Mere silence is not always enough, and soon shades off through the giving of a more positively false impression into active deception. Onolorie finds herself in a position where silent concealment is impossible when she is very publicly asked as a boon to plead with Lisuard of Greece to marry Abra - but she is secretly married to him herself. is self-controlled and quick-witted, 'sage & subtile'; hiding her feelings, she says with courteous ambiguity that she will ask him to do so if he can and as warmly as she wishes for it. 92 Most female characters are represented as skilled actresses. Queen Cleofile arranges a short dramatic scene for herself in order to safeguard her honour. Faced with the fact that her female friend and lady-in-waiting is a man in disguise, she is depicted as much less hysterical and prudish than d'Urfé's Astrée and much less extreme than Princess Diane of Guindaye in similar situations. She first contemplates the matter silently (after 'vne étrange alteration en son esperit'), then considers Dom Arlanges's beauty, valour, love and birth, and finally 'estima qu'il n'étoit pas à refuser'. She then tells him that she had cause for complaint, that her reputation could be damaged 'par les opinions & soupçons voluntiers plus enclins à la mauuaise part', but that she forgives him. Since the episode has happened, she goes on, 'reste à en sortir au plus honeste moyen qu'il sera possible'. She then suggests a practical means of doing

^{92.} VIII.12v.

this, one which involves pretence; the 'honeste moyen' is in fact what would now be called <u>dis</u>honesty. He is to declare the truth a second time, in front of her attendants, and she is to react as though she had no prior knowledge of the matter. ⁹³ Such resourcefulness might well be more desirable in a mistress than in a wife, but Dom Arlanges's attitude to the matter is never considered; as so often happens in this cycle, the narrator is sympathising with the woman's point of view and the reader is encouraged to admire and enjoy female resourcefulness.

10. Engineering Meetings

One possible explanation of the need for secrecy and subterfuge is the extremely close physical proximity in which the characters of the romance, and perhaps its readers too, appear to have lived. Female honour will often require that words should be exchanged in private, and a certain amount of cunning is needed before a particular character can be spoken to in even relative privacy. Bedrooms are shared by several people, beds often by two even if the occupants are of the highest rank, rooms always seem to be full of people, and people live their lives publicly. Even gardens often seem overcrowded; after long suffering, Anaxartes at last gets a chance in the garden of the Emperor of Constantinople to tell Oriane of his love. She is just replying when all the

^{93.} XI.66r.

Princes and Princesses come over to speak to her 'dont il fut grandement indigné'94. The fact that ladies have their own apartments quite separate from men makes it even more difficult for those of opposite sexes to talk privately together, and even once knights and ladies are together in the same room a tête-à-tête is difficult. Olinda has not seen her knight Agrajes, Prince of Scotland, for a long time and is very anxious to do so when he arrives at the British court. She first asks Agrajes's sister Mabilia whether she is not pleased that he has come, then suggests that Mabilia should ask the Queen to send for him as all her friends would be pleased at the pleasure this would give her. Agrajes does come to the Queen's apartments, Olinda carefully places herself by his sister to maximize her chances. Mabilia's perception and tact do the rest. She soon realizes that her brother is answering her at random and gazing at Olinda, so she pretends that she wants to talk privately with their uncle and goes into a window embrasure with him, leaving the lovers together. 95 This brief episode also illustrates on a small scale the way women are represented as contriving with each other to attain some end. Often they discuss and plan together, but they are also very good at quick improvisation without the necessity for any forward planning or even communication. As women, they know the way of their world and help each other manipulate it to their advantage. intuitive sensing of what is going on and then doing or saying the right

^{94.} X.59r.

^{95. 206-07.}

and mutually-supportive thing seems to be conceived as specifically feminine. Yet again, the reader is put in the position of perceiving the fiction sympathetically through female sensibilities. There are no comparable male situations; when men support each other it is with the sword, but contrivance is an area in which Amazonian women are represented as equally efficacious.

11. The Morality of Deception

None of this female secrecy and subterfuge is ever condemned in the text as long as it is shown as the behaviour of 'good' characters. I have already noted that the intention or outcome of behaviour seems to decide whether it is morally right or wrong. This is reasonable enough if female cleverness or artifice is thought of as an equivalent of the fighting man's physical strength; whether an army consists of brutish hordes or noble warriors has always been a matter of point of view, and the enemy has spies, while we have intelligence officers. A lady in this cycle is discreta or sotil according to circumstances. Lives or chastity are saved by female wit on many occasions, but there are also many examples of women making use of their brains in just the ways their critics had always denounced as characteristic of their sex. Some of these deceptions are perfectly acceptable within the romances - acceptable to the other characters, to the narrator and to sympathetic readers. Other deceptions could never seem moral or honourable. Amadís de

Gaula has just had his love accepted by Oriana when he meets his first adventure, which ironically is the end of another character's ill-fated A rich nobleman had been so infatuated that he had married love. beneath him, and, in keeping with the strong tendency for behaviour to reflect birth, had found that his wife was promiscuous, sleeping with any passing knight. He fights with and kills one of these lovers, and Amadís comes upon the corpse and the wounded husband, whose wife is tearing at his wounds in an attempt to hasten his death. The dying man begs to be taken to a hermitage and Amadis gladly complies, but they are soon pursued by the wicked woman's three brothers. She has told them that Amadis and his squire are the villains of the piece and urged that they should be killed, as she wishes her own rôle to remain secret. young hero soon defeats them and their sister's infamy becomes known. The King of Scotland 'se santiguó muchas vezes en oyr tal trayción de muger', and promptly orders that she should be burned. 96 This is actually a rare example of an unfaithful wife. 97

^{96. 46-48; 63.}

^{97.} There are a few other examples, notably Marsire with whom Silvie's son Filisel has an affair, an episode which is like a distinct novella within Book XII. Although she talks about leaving her honour untouched and her chastity undiminished, pretending to resist and be angry, Marsire is obviously eminently seducible. This story must have been particularly improper reading for any suggestible woman. It has a credible town setting rather than the usual almost fairy-tale palace or castle; even worse, Marsire is successfully and happily unfaithful to her husband. Her life is excitingly full of glimpses of Filisel through the window, love letters, tender daytime conversations and ecstatic nightsall spiced with secrecy and intrigue. His kisses leave her more blushing and beautiful than ever and she makes him radiantly happy. Furthermore, when she has had enough of the affair she finishes it on her own terms, leaving him pleading, writing letters, falling ill; she has remained in control throughout and there has been no criticism of her

12. Tricks and Traps

There are plenty of examples of female duplicity that are more characteristic of romance. Such duplicity is more extravagantly wicked than the deceits possible in everyday life. Because of the very nature of the genre it does not represent the kind of behaviour any normal woman could be charged with or tempted by; but the cycle offers female readers the opportunity to participate imaginatively in extreme wickedness as in other kinds of extreme behaviour and experience. The niece of a powerful and evil enchanter is certainly in a special category. Amadís and his father and brother come upon Dinarda, who is 'muy sotil en las maldades', watering her palfrey at a spring. She is wearing a rich crimson cloak and is attended by damsels and squires with her hawks and hounds, so they suppose her to be a rich chatelaine. She appears overjoyed to have met them, but while greeting them humbly indicates by signs that she is deaf and dumb. They confidently accept an invitation to spend the night in her castle and that evening all seems well; they are welcomed by many attendants who all defer to her as to their lady, they are

⁽XII.27rff). This is quite closely followed by another incident which also seems like an insertion belonging to a different genre: Rogel and some friends arrive at a castle where a wedding is being celebrated and the bride decides that a bridal night with the handsome stranger would be more enjoyable than one with her bridegroom. A knight and three squires are tricked into sleeping with women they did not expect to find in their beds; the whole episode is recounted with the amoral brio one associates with fabliaux and contes à rire (XII.62vff).

well entertained and shown to a room with three luxurious beds. But when they wake in the morning there is no sign of light, they can hear the life of the castle going on over their heads and soon realize that they have been betrayed. While they slept their cunningly devised room has been screwed down to a lower level and become a dungeon, the castle really belongs to the villain Arcaláus and they are about to have their heads cut off. 98

In a later book Garçarace is shown as another example of female treachery. The ruler of one of the iles Ciclades, she hates all Amadís's lineage. Using a mixture of guile and force, she traps and imprisons an even greater number of his relations; she manages to find out their identities by putting Niquee into a room with other female prisoners and then, like Sidney's Cecropia, listening at the door. 99 Other ladies trap knights in dungeons, tie them to pillars and plan to have them burned or to have the corpses of two suitors thrown out of the castle window while hastily covering the blood stains with the carpet and claiming that the two intruders killed each other. 100 This latter enterprising female, Sardenie, Lady of the Four Castles, is also one of the many represented as using a false story as a trap. Rogel was the lover who jumped out of bed to deal with the unfortunate suitors, and as was

^{98. 737-39.}

^{99.} XI.57r.

^{100.} XIV.4v; XI.80v-81r.

his nature, he soon took himself off and forgot all about Sardenie. She sends one of her damsels to Constantinople with an example of that convenient article, the magic sword which only a special knight can draw. The damsel produces not only the sword, but also a convincing tale of how she and her husband were enjoying the countryside when evil knights kidnapped him and raped her. An Arcadian magician has, she says, given her this magic sword to help her find the knight who will rescue her husband. She takes Rogel deep into a thick forest where Sardenie is waiting, richly dressed and in a splendid tent. She looks vaguely familiar to don Rogel, but there have been so many damsels! He falls into the trap, enters the tent, collapses into an enchanted swoon and is taken off to an island which Sardenie has inherited. 101

13. Morality and Religion

In spite of such cases of evil spells and blood under the bedroom carpet, the great majority of female characters in the cycle are reasonably virtuous by all but the strictest standards. What they do not seem to be is very Christian. Earlier in this chapter I mentioned that in these books, as indeed in other Renaissance works, one can see both Christian and pagan moral codes at work. There is no doubt that concern for reputation is far the most important ethical factor for most of the queens

^{101.} XIV.93r-v.

and princesses whose loves and adventures we are told about. Certainly in Christian terms most of them would be found wanting; they show little real concern for the three theological virtues, the four cardinal virtues, the ten commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. Exclamations are often of Christian origin and in times of stress they are shown turning to prayer; Lucelle even enters a convent when jilted by Amadis of Greece, though such a step is obviously second best and she is quite ready to re-emerge into the world when Amadis is thought to be a widow $er.^{102}$ Oriana goes on pilgrimages, and it is she and her mother who are anxious to consult the hermit Nasciano about their consciences. 103Later heroines show no such desire, though Helene is very pious on her death bed. 104 It is true that in her girlhood she has apparently been in the habit of visiting the hermit who lives near her convent so that she could hear the good old man talk of the Last Judgement and the joys However, what the narrator actually describes is Helene visiting him with very different joys in mind and showing no sign of Faith, Charity, Chastity or Humility. She and her cousin Timbrie have heard that Florisel is staying at the hermitage and both young women are strongly attracted by him. They go to the humble dwelling where the poor old man leads his austere life, Helene in white satin decorated with cloth of gold, a great many pearls and diamonds and wearing a huge

^{102.} XI.30r, 89.

^{103. 777, 1120, 1170.}

^{104.} XIII.51r.

pear-shaped ruby in one ear - a recent present from her aunt, the Abbess. Timbrie is also dressed up as much as possible and each has a damsel to carry her train. 105 In Book III Montalvo comments on the richness of the clothes and jewels that Grasinda had been collecting for a long time to take with her when she set out to prove her superior beauty in Great Britain and on the Firm Island. As a great lady with no family or dependants, we are told, 'y siendo abastada de gran tierra y renta, no pensaua en lo gastar saluo en esto que oýs...'; there is no indication that such expenditure might be morally wrong or connected with vanity and pride. 106

Montalvo's work is the most religious, especially the adventures of Esplendián, who is specifically a champion of Christianity rather than a mere knight errant, as the author explains to us. Montalvo was manifestly a pragmatist who felt that the end justified the means. He certainly had boundless faith in a God who was in firm and wise control. He wonders that the power of love can produce such a great battle, such a long story. Its strength is an excuse for those who 'tan desordenadamente amaron' and for those 'que como ellos aman'. He then adds that God must have arranged the whole sequence of events in order to bring about the peace which they later produce. 107 In spite of this, Montalvo

^{105.} IX.65v-66r.

^{106. 881.}

^{107. 1113.}

is sometimes critical of his protagonists. Oriana is only saved from dishonour by the Damsel of Denmark; both Amadis and Oriana have loved too passionately and allowed their love to decide the fate of kingdoms. Furthermore, the religious nature of Amadis's passion is sinful: Oriana should not be prayed to and depended on instead of God.

However, although the good are usually Christian and practise Christian observances and the bad are usually pagan (and the pagan usually bad), religious values are not the most important ones, certainly not after Pagans are shown as worshipping a curious range of heathen Book V. gods, the narrators freely mixed the Old Testament, Islam and classical antiquity, but it is this last that provides the force which seems to take over from the Christian God as the power behind many events as the cycle continues. The god of Love takes over from the love of God. course, either is a very convenient way of representing narrative contrivance in a romance. In Book VIII a Moorish stranger-knight at the court of Trebizond meets with general approval when, on hearing of Onolorie's imprisonment after her confession of clandestine marriage, he declares that anyone who truly loves must be innocent. He offers to be her champion, 'asseuré qu'elle êt sans coulpe, veu que contre le pouvoir d'Amour le plus fort resistant se trouve debile. Parquoy il êt certain que toute personne qui ayme, & faut par Amour, est pure & vraye innocente.'108 Love becomes sufficient explanation or justification for

^{108.} VIII.15r.

behaviour which might well be considered undesirable or positively In Book IX Helene and Timbrie discuss Helene's broken engagement and secret marriage with a confused notion that God must be working through Love and Destiny. Everything is in the hands of God; the marriage will bring happiness and honour to Helene and her family, she has only committed a small fault which will easily be pardoned by those who know the power of love. Helene is shown as feeling that destiny can relieve you of moral burdens; prudence and human strength cannot resist it, she writes to her grandfather, the King of Apolonie, on her elopement, 'It is the will of God and you cannot say I have offended against my honour or yours.'109 Earlier she had felt that her parents' promise to Prince Lucidor did not bind her, she had never seen him, she did not even know that he loved her and was not bound to obey her parents in such a matter. Like Chaucer's Arcite, she falls back on 'the olde clerkes sawe, / That "who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?"'110 and produces classical examples as she argues with her cousin Timbrie, 111

In this chapter we have seen how widely the physical weakness of normal women is taken for granted in the *Amadis* cycle, and to what extent the assumptions of the male value-system of chivalry, inculcated through many centuries by romance fictions and other cultural forces, are repre-

^{109.} IX.135r, 138v.

^{110.} Canterbury Tales I (A) 1163-64.

^{111.} IX.112r.

sented as enabling the conversion of that weakness into certain kinds of strength. We have also seen something of the richly complicated moral criteria that are stated or implied as appropriate in judging the behaviour of female characters, given the kinds of weakness and strength attributed to them. These criteria not only fail frequently to conform to the 'official' value-system of medieval and Renaissance Christianity, but they also contain many internal inconsistencies. What they have in common, taken as a loose whole, is a generally sympathetic attitude toward the female characters' situations, and a readiness to consider female experience as intrinsically interesting. In Chapter III I shall pass on to focus more specifically on the topic taken up in the closing paragraphs of the present chapter: love as a central part of female experience.

CHAPTER III

SEX AND LOVE.

In this chapter I turn to the central part played by love in the *Amadis* cycle and ways in which this affects the roles of women. I begin with sexual love, and then move on to consider the almost equally important theme of family love. Woman as subject or object is the focus of both. An appendix comments on recurrent discrepancies between the languages of love and the occasions on which they are used.

A. SEXUAL LOVE

Nowhere is the imbrication of different attitudes and ideologies which characterises these romances more apparent than in the area of sexual love. Since this particular area is all-important, the driving force of virtually all action whether physical or psychological, the reader, contemporary or modern, would receive a constant barrage of possible theories, formulations and ambiences. As with other elements of the cycle, there is a distinct overall movement from medieval to Renaissance, but, within the general bounds of a conception of love as passion aroused by beauty, the different approaches often alternate or merge, making any systematic analysis or exegesis virtually impossible. There is a hotch-potch of different elements: the idealising love of men for women traditionally referred to as 'courtly love' is widely diffused, but there are also distinct elements (which I shall shortly discuss) of a religion of love in which Cupid and Venus have real power, and of Neoplatonism; sometimes these are all to be found on the same page. Passages con-

Agesilan are released from an enchanted tower: spirit knights and ladies form a heavenly choir, while winged maidens descend with crowns, in a spectacle which might be imagined as a blend of Victorian valentine card and Hollywood spectacular, but which contemporary aristocratic readers would probably have been able to visualise in terms of court masques and entertainments. At another extreme there are passages that depict love as it might have been represented by a contemporary of Mrs Radcliffe: Florisel, unable to confide his grief to anyone, goes out alone into the moonlit night to a place where the sea beats against the castle wall; there he thinks sadly of the past, looks up and sees Silvie by the flickering glow of flambeaux as she looks out of a window, and he cannot hold back his tears. 2

All these various presentations of love do two things: they continue to place the feminine in a central and powerful position, whether as the stimulus to men's emotions or as the site of romantic feeling; and they oppose the view of love and marriage taught by moralists, churchmen and sensible parents. In such teaching, the only acceptable love was Christian caritas and the mild affection of friendship; love in the modern romantic sense was an unsatisfactory basis for marriage. This cycle, on the contrary, describes a constant succession of passionate and beauti-

^{1.} XII.130r-v.

^{2.} IX.106r.

ful young people who are not only obsessed by sexual love, but choose their own partners secretly and consummate their love in gardens and woods long before any official ceremony of marriage has taken place. Any scruples about this behaviour that the female characters are shown as feeling have much more to do with concern for their public image than with an uneasy conscience or care for their immortal souls. There is certainly no thought of the only acceptable Christian justification for sexual intercourse; as the couple embrace in some flowery arbour, there is never any suggestion that procreation is their object.

1. Love as a Pagan Religion

Far from considering sexual behaviour in Christian terms, in the books of the cycle which followed Montalvo's a pagan religion of love is repeatedly evoked instead, changing woman from the occasion of sin to the all-important object of a cult. This is quite often associated with blood, cruelty and suffering, and manifests itself in strange rites and pageants; sometimes these are unpleasant, as when three men are sacrificed to Cupid - the young women to whom they had illegally spoken of love kill them with an arrow through the heart, and the hearts are then removed and solemnly burned with perfumes on the altar. Such scenes can produce an oddly hypnotic and disorientating effect. There are

^{3.} X.60r-v.

Temples of Venus and Cupid and processions or ceremonies acknowledging the power of these gods. Sometimes such spectacles are relatively straightforward, like 'L'Avanture des merueilles d'Amour'. episode Prince Anastarax, approaching the coast in a little boat over rough waves, sees a beautiful lady with whom he falls in love. delightful meadow he then sees a great number of high-born persons suffering from the symptoms of some divine disease not unlike severe influenza. They are lovers. A herald appears on a pedestal and explains to the prince what is before him. The episode proceeds like some court entertainment in the tradition of Petrarch's Trionfi; many well-known pairs of lovers are pointed out to Anastarax; the tableau goes on to show such incidents as Reason being defeated by Love. 'See Suspicion', says the Herald, 'See Disdain, see Grief,...see Chastity and Continence put to flight by Lubricity...'. There is a cast of thousands, animals, birds, all living things are ruled by the God of Love. Venus appears and shows the Prince some of the battles that have been fought for Love (these range from the Trojan War to battles in earlier books of this She then foretells more battles and when Anastarax has vowed himself to her service and that of the lady he has seen, Venus tells him to wait for the shadow to become reality and warns of bloodshed for his family.4

^{4.} IX.83rff.

There are also, however, sequences in which far more sinister and dangerous aspects of the religion of love are brought to the fore; among these is the 'Avanture' which Amadis of Greece and the Amazon Queen Zahara undergo on the island of Rhodes. Here there is an atmosphere of almost drug-induced hallucination and suffering; I shall give a detailed account in order to illustrate one of the cycle's extremes in the treatment of love and the imaginative power with which it is invested. pair, who are fellow-knights travelling together, not lovers, land on an island which is unknown to them. They see a notice which warns them of the cruel vengeance of Love on anyone who blows a trumpet. Death will inevitably follow. The sound of the trumpet brings out a guardian giant and his armed men; the men are duly defeated by the two knights and Zahara kills the giant and is complimented by a delighted Amadis. then proceed until they reach a second notice which warns that they are They continue to advance, passing a third entering the Valley of Love. notice which tells them that love will now be strongly felt. Soon a fourth announces that the lover can reach the glorious object of his desire; finally a fifth tells them that this love will now be forgotten. The heavy enchantment which pervades the whole place ensures that the feelings of the couple exactly follow the course of the notices. the fourth notice (the one promising the attainment of desire) comes a delightful place where a luxurious bed stands by a beautiful spring of water. Under the compulsion of powerful magic, the intensity of their desire makes Amadis and Zahara fumble desperately with the fastenings of their armour as they undress; but after sleeping together they proceed

along the valley and, passing the fifth notice, completely forget what has occurred.

Thus the power of Cupid over both sexes is demonstrated in a way that initially puts the reader in a privileged position, aware of what forgetfulness makes unknown to the lovers themselves. It is as though the barrier between conscious and unconscious has been rendered transparent, to enable us to achieve consciousness of a deep-rooted drive the operation of which is normally repressed by those whose behaviour it influences. This might seem like the end of an episode, but it is actually only the first stage of a particularly strange encounter. From now on the reader's privilege is abrogated, and we share the experience of the characters in being caught up in adventures and enchantments without understanding what is happening or knowing what is going to occur next. These romances proved to be compulsive reading⁵, and it may be suggested that this helpless involvement in mysteries uncontrolled by analysis is one reason why: compulsion is compelling. In this case the mixture of violence and eroticism with the strange and the supernatural intensifies the compulsive quality.

^{5.} In the following century Madame de Sévigné confesses in a letter to her daughter, dated 12 July, 1671, that their successors, the romances of La Calprenède and Mile de Scudéry, held her 'comme à de la glu' (Correspondances, ed. Roger Duchêne, 2 vols [Paris: Gallimard, 1972], I, 294); this cycle seems to have had the same effect on its readers.

The adventure continues with the knights meeting a hermit and the reader has an example not only of the female assertiveness which is such a striking feature of the cycle, but also of the rejection of a passive in favour of an active rôle by a female character. The hermit tells them of a second, even more terrifying adventure, which awaits them if they continue; Amadis suggests that his companion might like to stay safely with the hermit. This would not have been an unreasonable suggestion, even if Zahara had been a man, as they were taking turns to test their prowess and Zahara has just proved her strength by killing a giant. But she now exclaims that she would never have thought he valued her strength so little. She will be able to help him better with her sword in her hand than with prayers on her lips. She will accompany him, '...& auray part à la gloire, ou infortune que vous succedera; étant venu expressément auec vous, non pour faire la femme: mais pour chercher la fin de l'auanture, et jouër des coûteaus, si le cas se presente'. Seeing her anger, Amadis laughingly begs her pardon and assures her that if she is present, he cannot do better than to second her.

There follows the spectacle of a damsel enchanted in her death agony who has been moaning and bleeding for fourteen years, and a grim midnight masque which demonstrates the power Love has to cause intense suffering. Mirabela, the suffering damsel, has already been described in Chapter I.6 Amadis of Greece and Queen Zahara follow the flowing stream full of

^{6.} See pp 103-04 above.

bright crimson blood and golden hair until they reach the final horror of a girl clutching the sword which is piercing her and gasping with endless pain as her blood spurts out onto the marble and down into a crimson pool, while her attendants scream and tear their hair. The destructive power of sexual love, exercised over a girl at the moment of puberty, could scarcely be more graphically evoked.

It is now explained that the magic which the chivalric pair have already experienced was created by an enchanter at the demand of the Giant Monstruofuron, the rejected suitor of Princess Mirabela. The love-sick giant had planned to lead Mirabela through the enchanted valley and let the magic work on her. Pursued by her father and his followers, things had gone horribly wrong for him. Mirabela had been within moments of succeeding in a suicide attempt when the desperate enchanter, himself wounded and dying, just had time to preserve her in her death agony, surrounded by her grief-stricken maidens. They were to remain like that until the arrival of those destined to deliver them. The horror is increased by the giant's behaviour as he awaits this moment. He imprisons all who come, beheading his prisoners each year to mark the anniversary of these events; his hope is that the spilling of so much innocent blood will arouse the pity of the gods who will stop his suffering. Amadis and Zahara have arrived there on the eve of this anniversary.

Cupid is referred to several times; his power is here in keeping with the paganism regularly attributed to giants. Monstruofuron sees Love as a god who can give rewards to whomever he pleases, but who is 'cruel et desagreable'. Every day the giant's entrails are lacerated anew, the reader is told, as he has to defend the entrance of the castle which contains so much anguish for him and is therefore defending it against anyone who might help him.

But the most disturbing experience comes at night, while Amadis and Zahara watch, hidden in the shadows. Howling owls, bats, thunder, lightning, profound darkness and a sulphurous burst of thunder precede the opening of the great doors of an Enchanted Chamber and the whole castle shakes. More than a hundred ladies and damsels come out with torches, lighting the way for the God of Love who is carried in triumph to the bloody pool, followed by a great crowd. Four heralds, two happy and brightly dressed, two dressed in dark, gloomy colours representing sorrow, are followed by many kings, knights and ladies. These are all famous lovers such as Thisbe, Dido and Paris. Those in green are happy, they had granted their love; those in yellowish orange and with their arms crossed are suffering now because they had refused to love and ignored the powerful god. Cupid himself is placed in the centre of the room on a chair covered with cloth of gold while an infinity of instruments play, and unhappy lovers kneel in their misery. A gaily dressed herald then calls for silence and makes a loud proclamation: Cupid decrees that the happiness of those who have suffered for love is to be increased; the pain of those who despised love is to be augmented. There is more music and a second, gloomy, herald proclaims that the

ceremony is to be repeated nightly to increase the rewards and punishments of Love. The sufferers then lament as though they are being burned alive, the birds scream once more, the whole procession moves away and the doors clang violently shut. Zahara comments on the strength of Love; anyone who disdains his laws is senseless.⁷

Thus what in the case of Mirabela was originally rationalised as an unfortunate accident is now revealed as the emblematic outcome of a universal economy of desire. Extreme pleasure and still more extreme pain are the necessary consequences of a drive that racks the psyche even as it directs it towards maturity. From the point of view of morality or of the normality that is made possible by repression, none of this could be considered wholesome and sensible reading. Unlike the similar episode it inspired in Spenser's Faerie Queene, that of the House of Busyrane, it is not placed in a moral context. The character who is central to the whole adventure is a fifteen-year-old girl; it is her denial of love which has caused all the passion and cruelty, and her release which will bring peace and happiness. But that happiness involves only limited personal freedom for a single character, and the impression left on the reader once the spell is broken may be much the same as that left on Catherine Morland from reading The Mysteries of Udolpho, a work with which these romances have more in common than might

^{7.} VIII.109rff. This episode is an example of how the cycle provided a pool of material on which other writers could draw. Spenser's relationship to the presentation of Cupid here is obvious.

be expected: '...the luxury of a raised, restless, and frightened imagination...'.8

In this episode the unfortunate Mirabela has the centrality of a victim and an emblem. In another case the combination of the worship of Venus with knightly worship of a lady results in one of the heroines being placed in an even more important rôle; indeed, she is elevated to the status of goddess. Prince Falanges, who has fallen in love with Alastraxeree from report, has built her a temple, and there is a detailed description of the costly and elaborate rites that are celebrated there. The hearts of innocent beasts are offered up with incense and prayers. Alastraxeree herself, who is in Falanges' kingdom in disguise, watches and listens with considerable satisfaction. In the account of this island the narrator places a female character in a peculiarly central and dominating position. Alastraxeree is present in triplicate, as it were: in the form of a beautiful statue, standing high on an altar above worshipping crowds; in the form of a brave and handsome prince admiring the statue, a prince whom the reader knows to be actually the Amazon princess in disguise; finally, the emphasis on her is further intensified as her beautiful half-brother joins them disguised as Alastraxeree Thus the episode is dominated by three versions of the same The islanders have to worship her; Falanges' whole life is devoted to trying to win her and any passing knight who refuses to help

^{8.} Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, Book I, chapter VII.

him is cast into prison. The reader is further drawn into her story as events are seen more from her point of view than anyone else's, and there is plenty of opportunity to admire her beauty, her prowess and her quick wit. Nor does she dwindle into a wife at this point, but is shown extricating herself and setting off again on her chivalric adventures. 9

2. Renaissance Platonism

Renaissance Platonism is far distant from the blood, passion, cruelty, rich artefacts and elaborate spectacle that characterize the worship of Venus and Cupid. However, like worship of a love god, Renaissance Platonism valorizes the feminine; men are shown as longing for union with the beloved as the greatest good attainable, and women's most important attribute, their beauty, becomes identified with virtue. This longing for union is powerfully felt throughout the cycle, and, as has already been suggested, different concepts of love are inextricably mixed in many of the volumes.

Perhaps one might say of Neoplatonic theory in these romances that, like psychoanalytic theory nowadays, there is a lot of it about. The presentation of Neoplatonic love could be seen as bearing the same relationship to the writings of Bruno and Ficino as twentieth-century conversa-

^{9.} IX.117rff.

tion or popular writing bears to the works of Freud and Jung. The ideas have a general diffusion, but there is frequently no very precise notion of the system of thought of which they form part. The narratorial voice rarely expounds the ideas of Plato, Bruno, or indeed any other philosopher or thinker. (It is generally used to keep events moving briskly forwards, though there are also comments and generalisations from time to time.) Anything approaching philosophising is more often put into the mouth of one of the characters. A number of remarks drawing on Neoplatonic thought are made by heroes and heroines at suitable moments. Onolorie, for instance, when she and her sister are reunited with their lovers in the palace garden, says that they are now so conjoined in perfect love, '...que s'il êt vray les cors auoir été doubles, nous sommes les parties separees, & à présent rejointes, mieus qu'elles ne furent oncques $^{\prime}$ 10. However, it is in the stories dealing with Florisel and Silvie that the Platonic element is most frequently found. Some of this part of the cycle is virtually a pastoral romance, so it is not unexpected that it should be here that there is most discussion of the nature of love. Silvie and Florisel, for example, rest in a cool forest beside the sea for one of their many discussions. They decide that the person who causes love must be more perfect than the lover, the cause more perfect than that which proceeds from it. Love is caused by perfection in the beloved, not necessarily by Cupid. 11 One of the pastoral

^{10.} VIII.4v.

^{11.} IX.48v.

characters, the shepherd Darinel, leaves the grassy river bank and his sheep to follow his beloved Silvie in her subsequent adventures and he re-iterates certain basic ideas at intervals. For instance, when Florisel asks him how Silvie is, he suggests that the Prince's understanding must have been affected by recent fighting; 'qui ne connoissés pas que parlant à moi, vous parlés à Siluie même'. Silvie's soul is transformed into his. 12

The most sustained passage of Neoplatonism is, however, entirely in the narrator's voice. It occurs in Book XI; Cleofile has left a hunting party in order to lie alone in the deepest thicket of the forest and think sadly about Arlanges, who she fears will leave her because honour prevents her from showing her great love for him. He has quietly followed and kneels at her side, trembling and tearful. Seeing him in this condition, she can only weep herself, 'auec vne frequence de pouls comme par accés de fievre': as happens so often in the cycle, a woman's sensations are sympathetically imagined from within. What follows suggests an experience which is both spiritual and sensual. They gaze silently at each other for an hour with occasional kisses, then,

...leurs sens transportés & éperdus, donnerent place aus ames de s'vnir par le moyen du cors, demeurans chacun mort en soi & vif en l'autre, quasi ivres de la liqueur de volupté...quasi fondans de douceur,...quasi rauis en extase, s'embrassans d'vne ardeur gloutte, comme s'ils eussent voulu être tous entiers l'vn en l'autre...

They do not couple like animals, we are told; while their bodily senses are sleeping 'les ames maitresses s'entrecherent & visitent au plus prés que leurs prisons permettent'¹³. The description is a long and striking one, which O'Connor suggests was an influence on John Donne's poem The Extasie. 14

3. Love at First Sight

Neoplatonic love and love as a pagan religion are two different extremes, each of which gives a special rôle to woman, as the link to some source of transcendent value or power. But in the cycle as a whole the predominant, most widely diffused treatment of love places men and women on the same level; indeed it is precisely this that distinguishes it from many earlier romances. Whatever the origin of love, it is virtually always depicted as striking both men and women at first sight, though, as with Cleofile, women are often shown as feeling the need to conceal their emotions from almost everyone, even the object of their love. There is usually no question of the lady being merely a passive object of love, even at the first meeting. The mother of Amadís de Gaula is a good example of this: the young Prince Perión has arrived in her father's country and they are struck as soon as they see each other.

^{13.} XI.110v-111r.

^{14.} Amadis de Gaule and its Influence, pp 150-51.

They are each affected by the beauty of the other, and Helisena is also influenced by what she has heard of the knight's prowess. She, like him, is 'quasi fuera de sentido' and her perturbation makes her drop a ring. The prince picks it up for her and she blushes and looks at him with 'ojos amorosos' as their hands touch. As she follows her mother out of the hall she can hardly see, and she weeps when asking her waiting lady what to do; the latter comments drily that love has left no place in her judgement for reason or counsel. 15

4. Irresistible Passion

Not only does love strike at first sight, but, also in the same romantic tradition, it is quite irresistible. This too applies to female characters quite as much as to male ones. Sardenie is mistress of four castles, but not mistress of herself: '...ceus qui veritablement sont navrés de l'amour, n'ont aucune raison pour resister à ces forces ains la raison demeure sujette à tous les tors, & à toutes les iniustices que peuvent suruenir ce pendant'. Love shows his power by making those who truly love obey him completely abandon their own will and abandon reason, she says. Rich, great and beautiful, she has given up everything to endure the danger and discomfort of travelling the world in search of Rogel. She adds that in her country (Guindaye) those who love are per-

mitted to say and do anything to which love prompts them, for love has its own language there and in Greek and Latin lands, a language which lovers are accustomed to use to understand each other. It is understood that a person is completely subject to love when he or she begins to say and do mad things. The greater the person, the greater the love and the more easily are the follies excused. She can see quite well that it is wrong for a damsel like herself to be engaged in 'la vaine poursuyte d'vn volage iouuenceau', but cannot help herself. 16

This assertion of the irresistible power of love as an adequate explanation is particularly common in the sequels to Montalvo's books. Characters of both sexes and different ages are made to acknowledge the truth of what seems to have the force of a natural law. Princess Niquee elopes from the tower in which she has been locked to prevent the effect of her beauty on men. The same justification is given both to her father, the Sultan of Niquee, and to her father-in-law, the Emperor of Constantinople. The lovers leave letters for the Sultan in which irresistible love is given as sufficient reason for their secret marriage and flight. It is not their fault, Niquee writes to her father, 'Amour êt coutumier se faire obeïr', and he reads, ponders, and acknowledges that this is true.17

^{16.} XII.145r.

^{17.} VIII.107v.

5. The Symptoms of Love

Not only do the authors represent women as being irresistibly struck with love to the same extent and in the same manner as men, they also show a sympathetic readiness to enter into the consequent feelings and sufferings of female characters. Helisena's sensations on meeting Perión have already been mentioned. In Las Sergas de Esplendián Montalvo goes into more precise detail when describing the physical and psychological state of Helisena's grand-daughter-in-law, Leonorina, and her waiting lady. A chest has been carried into Leonorina's room, and she guesses what it may contain. The reader is told of her happiness, anguish, love and fear, which are all so strong that she almost loses her senses, is near the point of death. She embraces her lady-in-waiting, weeping, and tells her that Esplendián may be in the chest; the lady's heart jumps and she trembles with the shock. Emphasis on the women's feelings continues; now that Leonorina is about to see Esplendián for the first time she is shaking like a leaf in the wind and approaches 'con pasos desmayados, como lo estaba el corazon'. As he kisses her hands repeatedly, she falls completely and passionately in love with him. 18 Other heroines of the conventional type are represented as suffering agonies of love and showing conventional symptoms: going pale, losing their appetite, weeping, fainting, dying a hundred times an hour. Despite the fact that, as in medieval romances, it is the male lovers

^{18.} V.493-94.

who are shown as most powerfully affected, the feelings of female lovers differ only in degree, not in kind.

6. Woman as Wooer

If male characters are made to behave in a lovesick way which has been considered appropriate only to females in recent centuries, female characters are also made to behave in a way which has usually been considered inappropriate for women. A great many women are imagined as taking the initiative when it comes to love and sex. The writers of these romances do not usually consider this as reflecting badly on the woman, perhaps because of the basic assumption that love is too powerful to resist. Amadís de Gaula's half-brother Florestán is depicted as being the result of such female initiative. In Perión's wandering, bachelor days he stays in the castle of the Count of Selandia. In the night he wakes to find himself in the embrace of a young and beautiful girl, his host's daughter. Perión honourably objects, but she exclaims that love is too strong for her, '...Dios sabe que no es en mí de ál hazer...', and she forces him to sleep with her by holding his sword to her breast and threatening suicide. There is no criticism of her behaviour, which is recounted without comment. 19

Ladies in subsequent books seduce or attempt to seduce the heroes. dis of Greece successfully repulses a damsel who climbs into bed with him in her shift. He first courteously attempts to get rid of her by claiming to have 'vne maladie secrette', but threats are eventually needed to get her out of his room. The next morning she claims that he had tried to rape her and Amadis has to fight his way out of the castle. He does not betray her, but the lady of the castle considers the evidence, judges the whole unfortunate episode to be her damsel's fault and packs the young woman off back to her relatives. 20 Rogel, Amadis's grandson, reacts very differently to female advances. He is depicted as an amoral hedonist, and his Don Juan lifestyle is treated indulgently by the storyteller. When he has defeated a rich heiress's ten unwanted suitors, he is quite ready to engage in galant conversation with her. As he lies tossing and turning that night, she sends a damsel to him with the message that her lady 'vouloit parler à lui secrettement en tout honneur' without anyone knowing. He finds that for this conversation she has chosen to retire to bed in her best nightdress 'fort mignonnement attissee' and is lying there in the dim but flattering light of two candles. In the days that follow her feelings are too strong for discretion, and when two of her suitors surprise them in bed she crouches there while her lover kills them, then advises throwing their bodies out of the window and keeping quiet. 21

^{20.} XI.51r-v.

^{21.} XI.79v-81r.

Liberna, Queen of Alexandria, has a sense of shame which stops her from making any such physical approach to Amadis of Greece. A dwarf has brought him, disguised as 'Le Cheualier sans Repos', to save her from an unwanted suitor. As she sits near him at supper, she is so powerfully affected by him that if 'honte ne l'eût mieus gardée que sa propre volunté, elle fût certes tombee au point blâmable, non seulement aus femmes, tant soyent elles impudiques, ains aus hommes propres, qui êt la force'. She is, however, quite prepared to declare her love and propose marriage. Such episodes may suggest that male writers enjoy the idea of a virginal female rapist, but, more important, they also help to consolidate the reader's impression of a fantasy world where many women are active and positive beings in the area of love and sex as much as in politics and warfare.

There are many female characters who are represented as showing perfect readiness to make the first moves towards love or marriage, but one character is obsessed with a man who does not care for her and devotes most of her life to pursuing him energetically and unsuccessfully. This case is worth more detailed consideration, as an instance of the attribution to a woman of behaviour more commonly associated with men. Princess Arlande of Thrace has always sacrificed and prayed particularly to Cupid; she describes herself to Falanges as 'celle en qui la fortune a

^{22.} VIII.38v.

mys excessif amour', and is constantly torn between honour and lust, making repeated bids to win Florisel. She sends for him in the first place, arrogantly certain that he will accept a princess of her rank, beauty and wealth. A portrait of him has such a strong effect on her that she faints and when she finally comes round she weeps tenderly and moans like someone suffering the effects of a long illness. refuses to kill for her and then marry her she weeps bitterly. never any doubt that her passion for him is mainly physical; she is made to lament that she has forgotten 'toute vergogne' and 'lâché les rênes de mon apetit sansuel, & fait entendre mon libidineus vouloir'. damsel is equally clear about what her mistress wants and tells her that there are plenty of princes to satisfy her amorous desires; but she sets out to find him, sure that he will fall in love with her 'comme celle qui se gouvernoit plus selon son desir sansuël que par la raison'. Once she has found him she cannot take her eyes off him and soon draws him aside from his companions; squeezing his fingers, she begins to sob and stammer out that she loves him and goes on to offer him her virginity in so many words. A polite refusal causes another bout of shame; she feels she is 'du tout éhontee & abandonee à la lubricité publique' and blames her 'amour desordonnee'. Her desires are too strong for her, however, and she waits for a dark night, puts on the clothes of the girl with whom Florisel is in love and sleeps with him. 23 This is not enough for her, though, and she is reintroduced into the story at intervals contin-

^{23.} IX.29r-34v.

uing to pursue him by fair means and foul. Though she is given a father, he is rarely mentioned, and the impression is certainly that she takes charge of her own life and of his most of the time.

Arlande, then, is the female equivalent of a much more common figure: the knight who is convinced that he is deeply wronged when a lady refuses to return the love and service she had never wanted. In the following book she is finally allowed to grow reasonable at last, and made to decide that her passion for Florisel grows even greater with proximity and that she will find her suffering easier to bear if she never sees him. 24 Her characterisation is more pronounced and more sustained than that of many other personages in the cycle, and in spite of her arrogance and her lust, she is not treated unsympathetically.

7. Female Pleasure and Displeasure

There is no indication that the narrators condemn physical passion in a woman any more than they do in a man. It is accepted as a fact, something that happens to people of both sexes. A number of young women are shown as enjoying transient relationships with men, but these are always minor characters. Heroines show equal enjoyment, but within a relationship that usually has the sanction of a marriage de praesenti, as

^{24.} X.24v-25v.

explained in Chapter II. Montalvo gives his heroines a response to the loss of their virginity which is charmingly lacking in coyness or false modesty, without being unbecomingly brash. Helisena, mother of the first Amadis, tells her damsel that she is longing to hold Perión in her arms; she embraces him immediately when taken to his room, and, later that night, speaks to him of 'esta buena ventura...que en tanto gozo y descanso a mis mortales deseos ha puesto'. 25 Oriana also makes it plain that she wants to sleep with Amadís as much he does with her; the opportunity does eventually occur when they are travelling back to London after he has rescued her from Arcaláus. They rest in a wood during the heat of the day, and Amadís looks at Oriana,

...y quando assí la vio tan fermosa y en su poder, auiéndole ella otorgada su voluntad, fue tan turbado de plazer y de empacho que sólo catarno la osaua; assí que se puede bien dezir que en aquella verde yerua, encima de aquel manto, más por la gracia y comedimiento de Oriana que por la desemboltura ni osadía de Amadís, fue hecha dueña la más hermosa donzella del mundo. 26

The delicacy and charm of this presentation of the event is in striking contrast to the treatment by the French translator, Herberay. In this account Amadis cannot wait to get his armour off: clumsy with excitement, 'ses mains auoyent été lentes en leur office de le desarmer, tout le reste de ses mêmbres ne l'étoit point...'. Oriana pretends to be asleep because she does not want to seem too eager. Her calculatedly

^{25. 15, 19-20.}

^{26. 285.}

negligent posture is described, with the whiteness of her bare breasts, and she is made to complain and resist feebly and insincerely when Amadis 'lâcha la bride à ses desirs'.27

Despite the cycle's general interest in and sympathy with female experience as something capable of being expressed directly with no need for concealment, the narrators do occasionally relapse into attitudes that lend themselves to being understood in terms of traditional male prejudice. Sexual enjoyment is an area in which this is especially liable Thus from Book IX onwards the narrators attribute to their male characters the time-honoured assumption that women's 'no' means Their attitude is summed up by a passing knight and would-be rapist in Book XI; he and a like-minded companion have come upon two beautiful Amazons and some damsels resting by the roadside. When the ladies are unco-operative, he explains that 'c'êt leur stile d'vser de quelque forme de refus ou resistance, pour montrer tou-jours que ce soit force, afin de couurir leur honneur'. His friend then seizes one Amazon, recommending him to 'se pouruoir à son plaisir de celle des autres qui plus lui seroit agreable'28. Rogel, who has the same attitude, would presumably have been a satisfactory fantasy-figure for male readers to identify with. Already established as a Don Juan, he is betrothed to the rich and beautiful Princess Leonide, but feels that

^{27.} I.92v.

^{28.} XI.22v.

other women are so beautiful that it would be madness to ignore them. He tells his comrade that if he is alone with Sarcire 'elle auroit ocasion de m'estimer vn couard & lâche Cheualier, si ne faisois autre cas auec elle, sinon exercer la folie de ma loyauté'. A little later, alone with her in the garden, he assures her that she is his first and last love and he will be loyal till death. She asks that he should preserve her honour, but the reader is told that Rogel knew that women in such situations prefer to be forced by deeds rather than give verbal consent. Rogel then tells Sarcire that if he uses 'vne gracieuse force' she will be guiltless. She pretends to be furiously angry when he does just this, but very quickly comes round and enjoys herself, showing 'vne fort gaillarde disposition' (which must be thought of as natural aptitude rather than practice, for she is a virgin). 29 Such an episode certainly seems to pander to male wish-fulfilment; on the other hand, given the popularity of scenes involving some degree of sexual violence in fiction intended for women, it can also be explained as making an appeal to female fantasies. It can be said, at least, that such scenes make little contribution to any sense of the autonomous value of female experience.

An intrusion of male fantasy may also be adduced to explain the fact that, in spite of presenting heroines who are clearly sexual beings, narrators of the later books seem to feel the need to make them cling to their virginity at the last moment. The imaginary girl may have organ-

ised an assignation in a dark garden at night, she may have been as ready with kisses and embraces as her lover, but there usually comes a moment when she starts to protest, and the heroes are presented as deaf to such protests. Helene's response to her first sight of Florisel had been entirely a response to his physical presence: she was struck by 'la grande beauté, bonne disposition 30 & belle corpulence de lui aussi n'en auoit elle encore veu vn si parfait & acomply en tous ses membres, 31, but she seems to be the first heroine to protest. She begs Florisel to wait for marriage, then there follows an extended metaphor based on warfare, through which the narrator clearly establishes a relationship of active aggressor and helpless victim. After a long resistance, and with no help at hand, Helene is finally able to hold out no longer. Afterwards, she is ashamed and weeps, reproaching Florisel for his violence. She blames herself and tries to commit suicide with his sword. 32 Other heroines resist less strongly, showing no more than 'quelque petit courroux'33. At such moments these romances, for all their general tendency to focus on women, adopt a point of view that sees women, and sees them as seeing themselves, through the eyes of men.

^{30.} In Edmond Huguet, Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle, 7 vols (Paris: Champion, 1925-35, and Didier, 1944-67), none of the meanings given for disposition is concerned with personality: 'bonne santé', 'bon état physique', 'agilité, légèreté' are examples of the definitions given there.

^{31.} IX.63r.

^{32.} IX.133v-134r.

^{33.} XIV.91, for example.

8. Jealousy and Fidelity

Throughout the cycle love is accompanied by jealousy, and this emotion is attributed very much more often to women than to men. (Evidence that jealousy is considered a 'feminine' emotion is that warrior-women, with their masculine strength and skills, are not shown as suffering from it. 34) A recurring element in the plot is the heroine who is misinformed about or misinterprets her lover's behaviour. She then writes a harsh letter in which she forbids him ever to see her again and he goes away for a period of exile and suffering before matters are finally clarified. However, although jealousy is more often felt by women, it is not presented as a feminine weakness. This is perhaps because, in the cycle's fictive reality, women have much better reason than men to be jealous: whereas all female characters of any importance are unswervingly faithful, the same is not true of the male characters, as is made particularly clear in the magic love-tests that punctuate the stories.

Discovering the 'truth' in love seems to have been an important concern in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century romances. This truth is something that cannot be attained through normal human means, but requires some

^{34.} Companions in fighting as well as matrimony, it is significant that Falanges and Alastraxeree choose not to try the love test called the 'Aventure de Don Rozaran'. We are told that each feels so assured of the other's love from 'infinies autres experiences' that there is no need to undergo the test (XII.109r).

special, usually supernatural, agency. When narrative personages are personifications of ideals rather than imitations of everyday life, and action is more often the result of accident than of psychology, resolution has to come from external intervention, or the characters will remain locked in the situation in which the author as 'Providence' has placed them. 35 Throughout the cycle there are special tests, usually supposed to have been devised long ago by some benevolent magician or Typically they use one or more magic statues to demonstrate wise king. which of the characters are truly faithful lovers. Such tests average at least one a book, many of them giving public, ceremonial recognition to fidelity and infidelity, and making particularly evident the fact that the heroines are all faithful, whereas certain heroes are not. Such tests often involve the reappearance of characters from all the previous books. In Book XII the original Amadis and Oriana '...s'embrasserent & baiserent auec telle affection qu'il seroit impossible l'exprimer...' before advancing hand in hand to meet the test. In Book XIII the couple, now to be imagined as centenarians if the reader applies calculation alien to the world of romance, are the first to try another magic test. Surrounded by several generations of descendants waiting to have their turn, Amadis says that if loyal love is what is needed, his Oriana will obtain the glory before all the ladies in the world. replies, '...mon bon Seigneur ne croyez pas que ie soys auiourd'hui

^{35.} That this is not peculiar to the *Amadis* cycle is illustrated by the recurrence of the same problem in two other important works of about the same period: Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana* and *L'Astrée* by Honoré d'Urfé.

moins enflambee du feu ardent de votre beauté que i'estois au temps de mes premieres amours...'.36

In an earlier volume, Silvie and Florisel are represented as coming upon such/test, first announced by a notice on which is written in letters of gold, 'Voicy le Paradis des coronnes & gloire d'Amour pour chacun selon qu'il aymera,...Et durera céte auenture iusques à ce que viendront les deus supellatifs en loyauté...'. They go through a beautiful garden and find a pavilion where statues of a king and queen are enthroned, wearing jewelled crowns with chaplets of the freshest flowers as a sign of their fidelity in love. They each hold another chaplet, ready to crown the winning couple. The thrones are surrounded by crystal pillars and covered by a canopy of green velvet and the atmosphere is made more magical and spring-like by the music of a number of different instruments and the song of birds. Richly dressed people are walking around in twos and threes and it is soon apparent that they are all the heroes and heroines of the cycle and that they have been crowned in recognition of their loyalty in love, or, in the case of some of the male characters, their lack of it. The flowers with which Amadis de Gaule and Oriana have been crowned are as fresh as those of the statues, but their great-grandson, Amadis of Greece, wears no crown at all. He is there with both his wives, Niquee with a chaplet like the others, while the second wife Zahara has her long period of unrequited love recognised by a wreath which



^{36.} XII.130r; XIII.48v.

is 'perse, entremêlee de fleurs iaunes'. Their husband's crownless condition is explained by the fact that his original fiancée Lucelle has pulled it off; the flowers are dry and the petals have faded. Other characters wear other colours to suit their various fates, but it is clearly the females who are wearing purple for grief or scarlet for faithful suffering; none of them have faded chaplets. Like Amadis of Greece, Galaor has no chaplet, it has been snatched off by a crowd of damsels who are following him and angrily tearing the flowers to pieces. 37

'L'aventure du chastellet de Cupidon' in Book XIII is similarly precise in its recognition of degrees of fidelity. Lovers have to go into a 'castle' made of beautiful stones; the loyal hear delightful music and have a chaplet of roses placed on their heads, the quality of both music and flowers depending on the quality of their loyalty. The only two who fail to get any flowers are both men. Galaor feels a great heat burning him and gets a chaplet of thistles and nettles. Rogel, the greatest philanderer of all, only tries the test at his fiancée's insistence and is painfully burned, receiving a chaplet of blackthorns. There is a final coronation, with musician nymphs, in which Cupid crowns Amadis de Gaule and Oriana. The love test in the next book, the last of the volumes translated from Spanish, is still more elaborate. It is in

^{37.} IX.43r-44v.

^{38.} XIII.142vff.

three parts, and emphasizes even more strongly that infidelity is a male quality. Of the three tests, two are fountains with female statues, and these are the ones which recognize fidelity, love and chastity; the third, the Fountain of Disloyalty, has a male statue. At the first fountain, a statue of Dido, pierced through with a sword and with her blood flowing into the basin like water, is an image of the agony that women can endure as a result of male infidelity. Dido flings unfaithful men violently away from her and holds a crown over the heads of loyal ladies. A statue of Penelope tests love and chastity, while providing a female symbol for these qualities. The male statue on the third fountain is 'trop plus noire que la poix' and water as black as ink is flowing from the heart. It holds a scroll naming him as 'Thesée le desloyal, qui laissa Ariadne l'amiable en l'isle deserte & deshabitée'. Another scroll states in letters as black as jet that 'Nul home sinon celuy qui sera excellent en desloyauté, pourra paruenir à la troisiéme Fonteine...'; the assumption is clearly that desloyauté is a specifically male characteristic. 39

B. THE BONDS OF FAMILY

The preceding discussion of jealousy and fidelity brings me to the end of my account of sexual love as a dynamic force in the Amadis cycle and

^{39.} XIV.52v-53r.

of the special prominence given to women as both the objects and the subjects of such love. I now move on to consider love as a stabilising force. In this multi-generational narrative, marriage is not merely the ideal goal of sexual love, beyond which lies only a promise of everlasting happiness; it is also imagined in some detail as the fundamental social bond, involving its own, no less passionate, pleasures and ensuring continuity from one generation to the next. Here too women are of crucial importance, not only because they produce and nurture children, but also for the reason just stated - that fidelity is attributed especially to them.

In tacit contradiction of the discourse of misogyny, the cycle implies, with the occasional minor exception, that although women cannot always trust men, men should feel confident of the fidelity of women. This point is explicitly reinforced by the words both of the narrator and of one of the major characters. Agesilan (disguised as the Amazon maiden Daraïde) is told by Queen Salderne of Galdap that her husband does not let her be in any man's company unless he is there himself. Agesilan replies that she is being treated 'indignement...de vous tenir ainsi sous bride contre le droit de vôtre liberté: & êt cette vsance trop rude & barbare, non receuë es regions policees & ciuiles de faire de l'épouse & conpagne sa serue & esclaue'. The narrator commments that servants who are in effect paid spies are 'vn maigre moyen pour faire ou maintenir vne preude femme par force' and asks, 'quelle amitié parfaite

pouons nous fonder en defiance?'. 40 The cycle elevates a wife from the weak creature of antifeminist tradition to someone who is simultaneously lover and friend of her husband.

1. Love and Marriage

Montaigne, a writer steeped in the culture of past centuries and in the learning of his own⁴¹, and in most respects no spokesman for traditional orthodoxy, can be taken as a useful example of a contemporary point of view very different from that of these romances. He is far from considering women as of any importance, and has the traditional view of them as mentally and physically weak and quite incapable of sexual control. He believes a woman's womb to be '...un animal glouton et avide, auquel si on refuse aliments en sa saison, il forcene, impatient de delai, et, soufflant sa rage en leurs corps, empesche les conduits, arreste la respiration, causant mille sortes de maux...'. Women are '...sans comparaison, plus capables et ardents aux effects de l'amour que nous...' and it follows that 'C'est donc folie d'essayer à brider aux femmes un desir que leur est si cuysant et si naturel'. However, he does not consider this female ardour as enhancing marriage, which he says, speaking

^{40.} XI.100, 102r.

^{41.} Essais III.V ('Sur des vers de Virgile'), ed. Albert Thibaudet (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), pp 938ff. Montaigne was also the father of a marriageable daughter at the time of writing the essay from which these comments are taken.

presumably from the male point of view, can only offer 'un plaisir plat'. Nor does he think that marriage should offer anything else: 'Ung bon mariage, si'il en est, refuse la compaignie et conditions de l'amour. Il tache à representer celles de l'amitié'. As he believes that women are '...confite en soubçon, en vanité et curiosité', his scepticism about the possibility of a good marriage is hardly surprising.

The view of marriage which emerges from reading the romances of the Amadis cycle is diametrically opposed to that of Montaigne. They are a celebration of reciprocally passionate love which continues within marriage. Marriage to the woman he loves is presented as the greatest good a knight can hope for; when Amadis de Gaula hears Lisuarte's public consent to his marriage with Oriana, this means more to him than all the praise of his knightly triumphs that had preceded it. 42 This happy ending to the fourth of Montalvo's books makes it plain that love and marriage go together; it is suggested that the younger knights should also marry, as a number of the older ones are doing, but they reply that they do not wish to marry as they are not in love. 43 Even Galaor, who has married a bride his brother had provided for him, promptly falls in love with her and she with him; they continue to love each other for the rest of the very long cycle, and with '...más amor que se vos no podría dezir'. The love of husbands and wives is frequently the subject of com-

^{42. 1180.}

^{43. 1190-91.}

ment by characters or narrator. A young husband even tries to explain how his love has deepened with marriage. 44 One of the effects of the many love tests is to reaffirm conjugal love and happiness, as couples from earlier books almost always reappear, still loving and still faithful, to have their continuing love recognised and rewarded once more. This further reinforces the crucial importance of women. A long, faithful and happy relationship with a woman is actually given more emphasis than continued success at fighting; the feminine area of love and feeling is privileged over the masculine one of physical prowess and worldly power.

However important this feminine area may be, it is still firmly contained within a patriarchal framework. Young female characters with a wish for personal autonomy are not allowed to resist marriage, which is considered natural and according to God's will. Although there is considerable emphasis on Roman Catholic religious practices, a life of monastic enclosure is not considered an option in normal circumstances. The mother of the original hero had wished for a retired and holy life, but fell instantly in love with a visiting knight. In a later book, the Princess Fortunie is said to wish to be a nun, but her father makes her delay her decision, and she, too, is soon in love and secretly married. The only heroine who does become a nun is the rejected first love of Amadis of Greece, and for her it is obviously a pis-aller. One lady in

^{44.} VIII.94r.

Montalvo's first book shows an interesting desire to remain her own woman. She tries to set her suitor impossible conditions, but is finally tricked into marrying him by Amadís, who is almost always shown to act wisely. Grovenesa explains that she had gone to such lengths to avoid Angriote not because she did not think him worthy 'de señorear mi persona', but because she did not want anyone to do this: '...ser mi propósito en tal guisa que, biuiendo en toda honestidad, deliberé sojeta no me hiziesse...'. The poor woman has no chance. King Lisuarte tells her she should be happy - if she is beautiful and noble, Angriote is young and handsome; if she is rich, he is rich in all the qualities a knight should have - '...me pareçe ser con gran razón conforme vuestro casamiento y el suyo'. Queen Briseña says that Angriote deserves to be lord of great lands and loved by any lady he loves. Amadis says that all sensible people should agree with this marriage. Surrounded by determined well-wishers, she says to Amadís, '...védesme aquí, fazed de mi a vuestra guisa'; she is promptly handed over, taken off to the chapel, and the narrator finally stresses that the marriage was the will of God. 45

2. The Family

Although the ending of each book is to some extent a celebration of military victory and male prowess, it is primarily a celebration of romantic love, marriage 46 and the family. In a modern context, 'romance' is always taken to be about the sexual love of a couple; the term when used about the literary genre in the past, especially in its cyclic form, normally refers to stories that celebrate the family and its ties, particularly the bonds between parents and children. They usually end with a celebration of these ties, a family reunion with the establishing of new ties by the new marriages which bind not just a young couple together, but their families as well. The family is reestablished and strengthened, ready for the future and another generation. The stories are often about lost children, families being broken up, then, after the time it takes for the new generation to grow up, being reassembled and bound together more strongly than ever. The Amadis stories are of this type, and the family occupies a central position, with mothers, daughters and brides in a position of great importance. Not only are they fought for and defended, loved and obeyed, they also move out of their family of origin into another family to contribute to a tight web of relationships between families, countries and empires. Historically, royal marriages must have had a somewhat similar result, but the intens-

^{46.} Book VIII, for example, ends with fifteen couples marrying.

ification and idealisation of relationships in the romances greatly heightens the effect.

The bonds between parents and children are consistently shown to be strong; furthermore, such bonds cover a wide range of relationships. Families are not the nuclear group of parents and children. The parentchild relationship extends to step- and illegitimate children and also includes foster-parent and -child. There are no Edmunds in the Britain of these romances; the illegitimate are welcomed by the whole family and become full members of it, with equal status. This in its turn affects the position of women in this fictional society, giving them greater sexual freedom and higher status. The birth of a child who is technically a bastard (a word I cannot remember encountering in the texts) affects the social position of the mother no more than that of the The virtuous Oriana accepts a hitherto unkown illegitimate grandson into the family immediately when his identity is revealed; she embraces him warmly, worries about his state of health, then scolds him for distressing his mother (also previously unknown to her) by running away secretly.⁴⁷ There is a more surprising family reunion when Queen Iris of Colchos tells an unkown young man that her son Falanges is the illegitimate child of a knight called Gradamarte; the young man then reveals that he is himself the son of Gradamarte. Both are delighted, they embrace lovingly and all the rest of the family are equally pleased

^{47.} VII.56v.

when told. There is no indication that the status of Queen Iris is affected by her revelation. 48

Many of the children whose identity is finally revealed to a joyful family have been lost or stolen in infancy and brought up by foster par-Here, too, the ties are shown as strong, even when, as in the case of Galaor, younger brother of Amadis de Gaula, the foster father is a giant who has kidnapped the child. The young knight continues to call him 'father' after all has been revealed and he is affectionately treated by Galaor's birth family. Amadis himself had been rescued from the sea and lovingly brought up by a Scottish knight and his wife. The relationship of the criado with his foster-parents may also be the one wellrecognised in Europe for many centuries, when a child was placed in another noble family to be brought up there, or a royal child entrusted to a 'governor'. This is the case with Oriana's mother, Queen Briseña of Great Britain. The reader is told of the love with which Grumedán had once leaned over the baby's cradle; Montalvo shows continuing trust and deep affection between the adult Queen and her elderly counsellor. Such kinship extends beyond that of child and adoptive parents: it appears to include any other children in either family and eventually members of both real and surrogate families. As well as this lateral spread of family bonding, such bonding appears to operate vertically up and down the generations. In Book XII Amadis de Gaule and Oriana are

rescued from enchantment by descendants of whose existence they were in total ignorance. When they realise who they are, they kiss them and take them in their arms 'par grand amour'.⁴⁹ The romances offer numerous examples of family love, both in the joy of reunions and in the adversity of imprisonment, when the victims' only comfort may be that they are together.⁵⁰

Popular stereotypes which demean or ridicule women do not apply in these romance relationships; just as there are no wicked folk-tale stepmothers, so there are no unloved mothers-in-law. Agesilan is so delighted and anxious to greet his mother-in-law when her ship sails unexpectedly into the harbour at Constantinople that he rides his horse into the water to reach her sooner. Nor are women presented as the natural rivals and enemies that imaginative works by men so often show them to be. Mothers- and daughters-in-law are consistently shown as having an affectionate relationship. Arlande, for example, the unmarried mother of an only child to whom she has devoted herself, is delighted when her son Florarlan wants to marry Queen Lucene of Thrace. She longs to meet and spend some time with her, to introduce her at the court of Constantinople; she is so happy when the lady arrives that she never wants to be

^{49.} XII.7r.

^{50.} An example of the latter occurs in XI.57 when the Empress Niquee, her son, her brother and sister-in-law and their two children are imprisoned together.

^{51.} XIII.44v.

away from her side. 52 Female relatives are frequently shown as devoted to each other, the mother-daughter bond being particularly strong.

The most fully realised mother-daughter relationship in the cycle is undoubtedly that depicted by Montalvo between Oriana and her mother Briseña. The love between mother and daughter is especially emphasised when the two meet again on the Firm Island for the first time after a great deal of unhappiness and a war between Amadis and Lisuarte. The two parties meet each other in the middle of a plain and Oriana approaches her mother: 'Y como su madre la vio, que era la cosa que más amaua, fue a ella y tomóla entre sus braços, y cayeran ambas a tierra si no por caualleros que las sostouieron; y començóla a besar por los ojos y por el rostro...'. Oriana can only weep with joy and is quite unable to reply when her mother speaks.⁵³

3. The Married Heroine

Marriage remains the most important link of all, and, as has already been indicated, the authors do not dismiss their characters once the ceremony has finally been performed. The writer who shows most interest in the relationship of men and women after the wedding is Montalvo. He

^{52.} XII.52r.

^{53. 1216.}

imagines the early days of the marriage of Oriana and Amadis in amusing and perceptive detail. He undermines the very genre in which he is working by continuing at the point where most such stories come to at least a temporary end. Endless pleasure and endless love are not enough. We are told that Amadís enjoys more leisure and pleasure than any knight ever, we are reminded of his previous sufferings, his passion, Oriana's great beauty which he now sees all the time; then the reader gradually realises that instead of being a celebration of perfect happiness and fulfilment, this evocation of a honeymoon is leading up to the fact that neither of the characters is as happy as they feel they should be. The reader's dawning realisation of this fact develops along with that of the characters, with some authorial interpolation about nothing being perfect in this world. Amadis is worried about his reputation and anxious to be active again, but Oriana cannot bear to let him go; the author enters sympathetically into the feelings of a lonely young wife, '...como se viesse en aquella insola apartada de su padre y madre y de toda su naturaleza, y otra consolación no tuuiesse ni compañía sino a él para satisfazer su soledad...'.54

In his presentation of Oriana's mother, Briseña, Montalvo gives her the wooing and wedding of a heroine, but contracts them into a few brief lines which are just sufficient to make it plain to the reader that the match beween the Norwegian princess and young prince Lisuarte of Great

Britain had been a love match. What we are given at intervals in Montalvo's books is surprising for fiction of the time: the picture of a middle-aged woman of charm and intelligence, ably fulfilling a number of different rôles within a conventional patriarchal framework. Her great love for her elder daughter has already been referred to; it often has to take the form of consolation when it becomes apparent that Oriana is going to be forced into a hated marriage. She receives the griefstricken Oriana 'con mucho amor, pero llorando', and there are tears in her eyes again 'con soledad de su fija' when she receives a letter from her. 55 She is also shown as a fond grandmother, but can turn quickly from adoringly and repeatedly kissing Esplendián to receiving eminent visitors courteously: 'era vna de las cuerdas y bien criadas dueñas del mundo'. 56 However, it is obviously as a wife that she is of most interest to the elderly author. He makes her very anxious to possess a splendid jewelled and embroidered mantle, not for the sake of its appearance, but because she is told that the lady who wears it will always have a good relationship with her husband, 'Y la reyna, que mucho al rey amaua, ouo sabor de auer el manto...'57. There are constant reminders of her love for her husband, indeed she is 'vna de las dueñas del mundo que más a su marido amasse'58; but this love is not shown as

^{55. 895, 1009.}

^{56. 1184.}

^{57. 243.}

^{58. 1008.}

the arrested and romantically idealised love of faithful couples in the later books. It is the kind of relationship described in the novels of later centuries rather than that found in Renaissance romances. She has better judgement than her husband, but, though he asks her opinion before anyone else's and even tells his counsellors what she thinks, he will not always take her advice. She has to make the best of the situation and keep tactfully quiet, no matter what the personal emotional cost, 'ahunque tanta angustia su coraçón sintiesse'⁵⁹.

She is depicted as suffering greatly when her husband disappears in Book IV; at first she sends off messengers and letters, waiting with 'turbac-ión y alteración' for any news, but she cannot rest and does not know what to do with herself. When don Grumedán sets off to search the forests on horseback, she insists on accompanying him, unable to eat and sleeping fully dressed under the trees. She is bitter at being left with the lands and riches which mean nothing to her without her husband. In spite of a satisfactory outcome to this adventure, things are never really right for King Lisuarte again. Briseña has already been described recognizing and coming to terms with the shift of power and influence from her husband to her son-in-law. It is noticeable that the author chooses to focus on this shift through the sensibility of a middle-aged female character. When she and her husband join their

^{59. 910.}

^{60. 1326-28.}

daughter, Amadís, and all their friends and supporters on the Firm Island after a peace treaty, Briseña can see that Amadís is even more powerful and living in even greater luxury than her husband, whom she had thought the greatest of all men. She is sad that it does not all belong to Lisuarte so that Amadís could inherit everything from him; but she can see that, on the contrary, Lisuarte is now gaining status from his relationship to the young man who had once been an unkown knight errant at his court. This makes her unhappy, 'Mas como era muy cuerda, fizo que lo no miraua ni entendía, y con rostro alegre y coraçón turbio fablaua y reýa con todos...'.61 She is evidently the author's idea of an admirable wife, loving but realistic.

Lisuarte, too, comes to realise his faults and his changed position; he does his best to remedy matters, but he is old and tired and recognises that the world is changing, and in his final book Montalvo makes his aging king long for the peace of retirement from all worldly concerns. This fictional marriage, which has never been presented as the relationship of courtly compliments more commonly depicted in later books, enters a new phase as the aging couple (also unlike later couples in that they do age) rest comfortably together in bed one night while the husband explains to his wife that he would like to abdicate in favour of their daughter and her husband. Briseña is very happy at the idea, and her husband's delight at her reception of it makes it clear that he

would only have acted with her consent: '...quedaron entrambos conformes en una voluntad, de que el Rey mucho placer sintió, creyendo que de Dios, mas por su piedad que por sus merecimientos, le venia tan grande buena ventura'.62 As soon as the young people have been crowned, the elderly couple take an affectionate leave of all but Briseña's aged foster parents and set off for the peaceful and beautiful convent of Miraflores. They find two old priests saying mass beneath the trees, surrounded by flowers. A small table awaits Lisuarte and Briseña there, set with earthenware, plain glasses and orchard fruit. The beauty, simplicity and sanctity of their life together is described in a little more detail before the narrative moves back to the active lives of the next generation. 63 In romances it had been traditional for old knights to retire to hermitages and a life of celibate solitude; it is therefore all the more striking that in these romances, where wives and marriage assume such importance, the only major figure to retire from an active life should do so by choosing a life of even greater intimacy with a beloved spouse.64

^{62.} V.466.

^{63.} V.468-69.

^{64.} The Emperor Charles V is known to have been an enthusiastic reader of the Amadís romances. It is interesting to speculate about how much influence the account of the retirement of King Lisuarte to the monastery of Miraflores, which is presented in such attractive terms, may have had on his decision to retire to the monastery of Yuste (in 1556) and abdicate in favour of his son (1558). Another Amadisian character, the Emperor of Rome, also resigns his empire to his daughter and son-in-law Esplendián in order to retire to a beautiful monastery which he has had built (V.555).

4. Mothers and Children

As well as being loving wives, the women characters are represented as affectionate mothers and daughters. A group of queens and princesses care for and breast-feed their own babies because they love them so much⁶⁵. There are repeated references to the pleasures of motherhood; a widowed queen is advised to re-marry not just for the delights of love, but for 'la joye que les enfans donnent à leurs meres en leur enfance par mile petites folatries'⁶⁶; Queen Sidonie's only comfort during the years after Florisel leaves her is her daughter Diane, who is shown doing her best to comfort and distract her mother, without really understanding why she is so upset. The grief of many heroines is described when their adolescent children leave home for marriage or adventure and so is their even greater emotion when their offspring meet with some apparent catastrophe.

Children are treated with tender affection and several little girls are presented by the authors in a manner which was hardly usual in literature at the time. Sympathy for women is extended to female children; one loses her father's ring and weeps bitterly, too frightened to own up; 67 another dances and sings with her doncellitas to entertain her

^{65.} XIV.32r.

^{66.} XII.170.

^{67. 83.}

father and his visitors. The latter, Leonoreta, Oriana's younger sister, is shown amusing the adults in the family by taking it completely seriously when jokingly told to ask Amadís to be her knight. She does so and is lifted in his arms to sit up on the $estrado^{68}$ while he asks her for a token of her favour. She solemnly presents him with her jewelled hair-slide, and everyone laughs at how earnestly she is taking the joke. 69

Perhaps the most touching and the fullest presentation of a small girl is that of Fortunie, daughter of Amadis of Greece and Niquee. She is first described running around the room, then rushing to hide in her mother's lap when frightened. Later, she is frightened again when picked up by the aged enchanter Alquif; she stretches out her arms for her mother, hugs and kisses her when safely in her arms, then looks back again for a moment at the terrifying old man before hiding her face once more. To In the next book she is obviously a little older; she and Silves, the slightly younger half-brother with whom she always plays, 'ne cessoient de sauteler de ioye à l'entour d'elle' when their cousin Leonide, all beautifully dressed up, is mounting her palfrey. The ful-

^{68.} In Spanish houses, the room used as a sitting-room by the ladies had a raised platform or *estrado* at one side; they sat there on cushions.

^{69. 444-45.}

^{70.} XI.82v, 92r.

^{71.} XII.1v.

lest account of her behaviour comes in a subsequent chapter, where it appears to be the author's delight in his young female character that leads him to describe an insignificant episode in considerable detail. Daraïde has arrived at court, and Fortunie takes to the visitor immediately, sitting on her knee and holding on tightly, and screaming when someone tries to pull her away. When Daraïde asks whether she will come home with her to her own country, the child replies, yes, as long as Mother can come too, and can they go now? She later adds that she would also like to take her brother Silves as she likes playing with him. other characters keep laughing affectionately at her, and her beauty is often mentioned. The child is anxious to have supper with Daraïde and during the meal keeps telling her all about the lives of her mother's damsels and her own great favourite, Finistee. She finally insists on staying to sleep with her new friend, then wakes up at about midnight to find that it is very dark and Finistee is not there. She starts to howl and the episode ends with her being carried back to her usual bed in her nightdress.72

Small boys appear occasionally in the stories, but the male writers are obviously more charmed by small girls. Nor do they represent characters as favouring male rather than female infants. Even when the child is to be heir to an empire, the birth of a female produces the same rejoicing as that of a male. In keeping with the general importance of women

^{72.} XII.56vff.

within the cycle, there is never any indication that anyone might wish for male offspring. 73 This is the more striking as the nature of the plots demands that there should be a high proportion of male rulers and property owners who produce female heirs to be threatened by villains and fallen in love with and rescued by heroes. The birth of a child of either sex is clearly shown as cause for great rejoicing and as the natural fulfilment of love. The joy of all four parents is described when Fortunie and Pentasilee give birth to sons, 'leur semblant qu'ils auoyent par ce moyen recueilly le fruict de leur trauail amoureux'. 74

Clearly, then, fecundity, parenthood and all the ties of conjugal and family affection are of central importance in the *Amadis* cycle, with the feminine areas of love and family assuming an even more important rôle than the masculine areas of aggression, violence and power. Above all, while focusing on areas of feeling traditionally considered a feminine preserve, the narrative recurrently shows them as shared by men as well as women.

^{73.} Rogel and Agesilan are overjoyed when an enchantment is finally broken and they join their wives on a magicician's island to find that they are now the fathers of baby sons. They make a great fuss of them, and 'Don Florisel ne monstroit pas moins d'amour à sa belle fille Polixene', who has also been born during the ladies' imprisonment. All the fathers '...portoyent à leurs enfans toute l'amour & tendre affection comme celuy qui a quelque-fois esté pere peut penser' (XIV.50).

^{74.} XIV.92r.

APPENDIX I: PUBLIC LANGUAGE AND PRIVATE BEHAVIOUR

In the section above on 'Female Pleasure and Displeasure' we saw how the narrator chose military language to describe the seduction of Helene - a familiar trope in writings about love from Ovid onwards. On another occasion a different but equally well-established group of metaphors, typified by the allegory of the Roman de la Rose, is used to refer to sexual activity; we are told of the path that leads straight to the rose-bush and the bud and fruit which is the recompense of loyal lovers. The occasions of these descriptions bear little relation to the language being used, and modern readers might often feel a sense of unease, alienation, or indeed of the ridiculous, at the apparent discrepancy of vehicle and tenor when love and sex are being written about in the cycle. Apart from such metaphors, the characters are frequently made to express thoughts and feelings in extraordinarily formal and elaborate language, language which seems to be in a register now thought quite inappropriate for personal relationships. Neither the metaphors nor the formality can be regarded as neutral stylistic embellishments, for each also implies a particular relationship between the sexes; in the former the woman becomes the vanquished and helpless enemy or a beautiful and passive prize, in the latter the language places a great distance between the speakers.

The episode where the narrator uses the imagery of winning the rose shows a particularly clear discrepancy between situation and language. Amadis of Greece and the Princess Lucelle are in a small boat with her parents when the skies darken and a terrible storm suddenly blows up; the princess throws herself into the hero's arms for comfort and protection. The boat is often nearly submerged; there are towering waves, thunder, lightning, wind, rain, darkness. In a situation which could hardly be more uncomfortable, Amadis is depicted as making an elaborately formal speech while simultaneously trying to achieve the most intimate caresses possible.

Ma Dame, je vous supplie humblement croire, que la rigueur de céte mer ne peut être si cruelle ni épouentable en mon endroit, qu'êt l'ardeur qui me consomme en vous aimant de telle affection, qu'autre que moi ne le peut sentir ne comprendre, s'il ne vouloit mesurer la grandeur & excellence de vôtre beauté: & en ce cas toute personne de bon jugement portera pour moi témoignage, qu'ores que je mourois cent fois le jour, si ne seroyent ces morts suffisantes pour meriter la moindre faueur de vos bonnes graces... 75

As he spoke, the reader is told, he sighed at intervals with such an abundance of tears that the front of his hauberk was soaked by them. Petrarch, Wyatt and many other Renaissance writers used the metaphor of a storm at sea to express the suffering of an unhappy lover. Here the storm with which human feelings are being compared is represented as actually taking place at the same time as the suffering, while leaving the lover apparently calm enough for clarity of thought and expression. The conventions of such writing are perhaps not unlike the conventions of opera, in which strong natural feeling is given expression in a form

^{75.} VII.30r-v.

which is obviously intentionally artificial. The lover uses such dispassionate terms as mesurer, bon jugement and témoignage, with a reference to objective observers, as though he is supposed to be addressing a public meeting rather than a terrified and enamoured girl. Furthermore, he talks in hyperbolic terms of his unworthiness to receive the slightest favour from her, while, we are told, he is caressing her breasts. Lucelle prevents any further developments; shame and concern for her honour make her sigh and pretend to recover, thereby attracting her parents' attention, but the narrator comments that she wished she had kept quiet and continued the 'dous entretien'. Even passive heroines are not represented as sexless.

The language shows a similar contrast with what is actually supposed to be going on in a scene where Perion and Lisuart of Greece are in a garden at night and talking to their ladies through the bars of a window. Here the ladies play a more active and positive rôle than Lucelle. Lisuart kneels at Onolorie's feet, but she silently pulls him to her, and

...ioignit sa bouche à la sienne, demeurans leurs levres si colees, que par vne longue espace, ni l'vn ni l'autre n'auoit quasi moyen de respirer; quand Lisuart commença à lui dire: Ma dame la grace que vous me faites êt telle, que si toutes les vertus qui furent oncques aus plus parfaits Cheualiers du monde étoyent en moi seul, encores ne me reputerois ie digne de la moindre faueur que vous me

^{76.} Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century operas have a great deal in common with such romances as those in this cycle; many of them are in fact dramatized episodes from romances. It may well be more helpful to think of these books as prose equivalents of such operas than as works in which the authors attempted but failed to anticipate the modern novel.

montrés: parquoi supliant de vous ce que defaut en moi, il vous plaira croyre, que ie ne fu onques né, que pour vous obeïr seruir & complaire: vous iurant par vous mêmes, que quelque chose qu'on vous ait raporté par le passé, il ne tomba onc en mon esprit la moindre pensee du monde pour vous offenser. 77

Onolorie replies with an elaborate apology for her former harshness and a stylized description of her own sufferings - her eyes had been a whole year without being dry, her heart not the shortest minute of an hour without sighing and lamenting the fault she had committed (in banishing him as a result of unfounded jealousy).... The ladies are on one side of the window bars and the knights on the other, but, 'nonobstant les barreaus, il n'y auoit bouche, teton, ni autre part plus gardee, qui ne se montrât familiere, & non étrange'. Once more the physical details of what is happening are conveyed in the private words of the narrator, while the language of the characters is polite and formal. Ultimately there is extra excitement in the counterpointing of lengthy, public, articulated distance with brief suggestions of private intimacy. It is certainly a counterpointing in which male and female characters are equally involved.

Extremely formal language is also used for love letters and for the laments of unhappy lovers. Here again, language that strikes a modern reader as too grandiose for the expression of private emotion is used in association with great intensity of feeling. A heroine who receives a

^{77.} VI.80v-81r.

letter listing the hero's sensations in grand, impersonal phrases is shown as deeply moved by it. Perion makes points such as '...mes yeus sont demeurés enchaînés aus liens de vôtre heureuse presence, du iour même qu'ils virent la splendeur de vôtre divine face...', and Gricilerie reads, burns with love, changes colour several times and nearly faints. Just as the protagonists are elevated and refined beyond ordinary mortals, so the language they speak and write in moments of emotion is usually high-flown and grandiose.

Other moments of great emotion occur in situations which lead heroines to bewail their lot. The lament already had a long literary tradition by the time these romances were written, and must have been a recognised formal literary representation of thoughts and feelings which in life would be confused, formless and not necessarily given any verbal expression at all. That the lament can be considered a formalisation is clear from the fact that a character is occasionally made to declaim a long and passionate monologue while immediately next to another character who is apparently oblivious. A lament given to Lucelle is a representative example of the formal expression of female grief. She is a nun at the convent of Miraflores when she hears that Amadis of Greece is not dead, as she had supposed when she took the veil, but alive and married to Niquee. We are first told of her tears and weeping, which would have moved the hardest heart to pity. Then her own words take over from

^{78.} VIII.120r-v.

those of the narrator, beginning with the conventional Helas to alert the reader to what will follow. A number of metaphors are used to express the situation in which she finds herself. Most of the speech is concerned with general truths about love and the sufferings it brings. One who puts a foot on the branch of love should draw back quickly, to avoid being caught like a bird in lime ('à jamais pris & englué'); the path of love leads through an unfamiliar and trackless forest from which it is difficult to emerge without feeling lost and full of regrets. Love had imperceptibly blindfolded and mastered her; now that she knows both him and herself, it is too late; a fire which has burned for a long time does not go out quickly. This brings her back to the man who has betrayed her and a wish that he should suffer and understand what she now feels. She revolves 'mille & mille discours en son ame' while she ponders how to effect this, and finally writes a letter to Amadis. letter is much more personal, reproaching him bitterly, comparing him unfavourably with his family, stressing her feelings and situation and hoping she will have a long life so that he can never forget what he has done. She apostrophizes him ('faus & déloyal Amadis'), questions herself and him. (Surely she is only dreaming? Is he really the Knight of the Burning Sword?). She reminds him of the chivalric feats he performed for her sake and of his promises to her, trying to shame him by these and other examples of his behaviour.

The letter follows almost immediately after the complaint, forming as it were an unhappy lover's diptych, one panel presenting events in their

general or universal aspect - what love does to women - the second panel presenting Niquee's more intensely personal feelings about specific aspects of Amadis's behaviour. The language is noticeably different in The language of the complaint reflects the extent to each section. which such pieces of writing were conventionalised, whereas the letter, which one might expect to be more 'literary' in style than a passage representing thought or speech, in fact has rhythms and syntax that sound more spontaneous. Her thoughts and feelings together with the complaint and the letter take up most of four columns. 79 Most of the laments put into the mouths of female characters are somewhat similar to that of Lucelle; however, they can sometimes foreshadow the language of They never attain the effect of artifice so skilful that the speaker sounds passionately natural, but the artificiality can modulate into naturalness. Florelle, Queen of Canabee, falls in love with the philandering Rogel and is then abandoned by him. After he has been excusing his imminent departure she is made to reproach him passionately and at great length:

Quelle occasion vous ay-ie donnée, quel mauvais traitement vous ayie fait, pour vous en fuyr ainsi? Ou allés vous? Quelle êt la raison de vôtre depart? Ou pensés vous trouver creature au monde qui vous porte telle affection que moy? Helàs, ie vous prie par ces larmes, par vos promesses, & par nôtre mariage encommencé, si iamais i'ay merité quelque chose enuers vous, si iamais iay fait chose que vous fût agreable, si iamais vous fûtes flechy par pri-

^{79.} VIII.120r-121r.

eres, prenés pitié de moy, ayés compassion de ma ruine, & abandonnés l'entreprise de vôtre depart. 80

In reply to this and a good deal more, in language which is elegant and elevated as well as touching, the Prince is only given words which make him appear cold, selfish and unattractive - once more the cycle is inducing the reader to sympathise with and admire the female character.

CHAPTER IV

STRONG WOMEN.

A. TRAVELLERS, MESSENGERS AND SQUIRES

1. The Lady as Tourist and Fugitive

The chastity and modesty which had for so long been recommended as the most important attributes of a good woman were obviously best cultivated in retirement, and outings which took a lady any further than the nearest church were often strongly deprecated. By contrast with this emphasis on female retirement in real life, medieval romance has women characters who travel and who act as messengers in a way that cannot have been common in daily life, and in Renaissance romance such characters proliferate to an astonishing extent. Although many of these women are galloping around on specific errands, it is obvious that others are simply tourists, enjoying a holiday and a change of scene. After her parents' death, Darande, Duchess of Dalmatie, travels around from town to town to pass the time; she does not think about marriage, her only purpose is 'mener joyeuse vie'². Three other damsels have a specific destination in view. Prince Florisel is travelling with the supposed shepherdess Silvie and the real shepherd Darinel; as they ride through a

^{1.} Daniel Eisenberg, Romances of Chivalry, pp 70-71, is mistaken in his assertion that '...in the Spanish romances of chivalry....Ladies did not travel for pleasure or amusement; in fact, except for women in search of assistance or carrying out some vow, they did not travel at all unless forced to by evil-doers'.

^{2.} XI.33r.

forest at sunset they come upon a pleasant spring with damsels resting beside it. They tell the Prince that they are on their way to the castle of King Manatiles of Epirus 'sçavoir si par aucun moyen nous y pourrons voir vn cas qui êt fort étrange'. They tell the strange story of Arpilior and Galatee and the prince and his companions decide to join them; after the adventures at the castle have been brought to a happy conclusion the three damsels are married to great lords, so their curiosity and enterprise are rewarded. Many ladies in the cycle change their own lives by deciding to travel for pleasure or by setting out to seek help or even specifically to seek a husband⁴; nor is marriage the only reward, for it is not unusual for a lady to be thanked for her loyalty and help by being given lands and titles in her own right.

In all the books of the cycle women are associated with laughter and teasing, whether among themselves or in the company of men. Flirtatious and sophisticated joking is shown taking place where it might be expected, at court, but it is more frequently associated with the liberating environment of the open road. Women are depicted setting out on journeys with men or meeting strangers en route. Spirited conversation may beguile the way or be enjoyed during a picnic and late into the succeed-

^{3.} XI.35v (for 36v).

^{4.} Queen Cleofile of Lemnos arrives at the siege of Constantinople and sends a damsel to each camp to explain that she has come to judge the deeds, prowess and appearance of such an assembly of knights so that she can bestow her lands and her beauty on him who best deserves them (X.41vff).

ing night before they all settle to sleep (chastely) on the grass or in tents. The knight errant and the reader are amused by the wit and swift repartee of female characters in such situations; the Amadis romances contain a number of minor Beatrices. Wit in a travelling female may also be shown as a means of self-defence: graceful and amusing verbal fencing becomes a protective device, keeping a lady safe both physically and psychologically. What is striking is that there is no criticism from within the cycle of women who behave in these ways; their freedom to travel without restriction about the fictive world is simply taken for granted, and there is no attempt to relate this freedom to the very different condition of women in the world of the cycle's readers.

A tourist-damsel who is very articulate about her objective is another chance-met acquaintance of Florisel's, one who not only speaks for herself but for other women, too. She is travelling to Thrace where there is apparently an adventure called 'The Mirror of Love'. Florisel is surprised and asks why she is going so far for something so uncertain. 'Pourquoy non monsieur', she replies, 'pensés-vous que les femmes soyent moins apetantes & convoyteuses que les hommes?' She is anxious to see such a rare and marvellous sight; her reward will be the pleasure this sight will give her and 'le repos qu'en aura mon esprit que en êt tant desireus'. She insists that the adventure (which actually sounds quite frightening) is open to ladies and damsels as much as to knights. Although the lady's intentions are innocent, the words she is given to

speak suggest that the translator agreed with moralists in suspecting that mere travel was not all that such ladies had in mind. 5

Some women set off on their journeys out of desperate necessity. resourceful girl, daughter of the King of l'Isle Seule, becomes a traveller when a treacherous visiting giant and his accomplices stage a nocturnal coup. She escapes through her bedroom window as soon as she hears the noise of the massacre, and runs to the seashore 'as fast as her legs can carry her', pausing only to collect enough elderly male relatives to make a suitable escort. She then hurries to Constantinople to seek help for her imprisoned father from the Greek princes. 6 We are never told the business of a girl who on another occasion comes running into the palace to find Amadis of Greece, but she had been going along 'venant d'vne affaire mien' when she saw the dwarf Buzando seized by a giant and four masked men. He begged her to ask Amadis for help. If the text is taken literally she has run six miles. 7 Ladies outside the sheltering environment of the castle are obviously necessary to the plot throughout, both as the direct motivation for chivalrous prowess and as a means of giving information to characters or readers. The unidentified 'Damoiselle montée sus vn palefroi' is a recurrent figure, serving such purposes as telling Daraïde and his friends (and us) about the

^{5.} IX.22r-v.

^{6.} XIV.62r-v.

^{7.} VIII.31v.

situation and visitors at the court of Guindaye, to which the action is about to shift. 8

2. Female Messengers

Female messengers frequently serve utilitarian functions within the narrative. A damsel can often lead a knight and the reader from one adventure to another, bring a message which ties in events or characters with whom we are not currently concerned, or just make something clear by giving or asking for an explanation. The 'damsel on a palfrey' who happens to be passing is not the only female to play such a rôle; the cycle contains many efficient young women who serve as anything from the equivalent of Fax or Securicor to full-scale ambassadresses complete with their train of attendants and letters of credit. Most of them seem to cross stormy seas and tracts of wild land speedily and safely, with only the occasional kidnap, rape or shipwreck. The accident-rate is certainly no higher than it is among male characters performing similar tasks, but it is surprisingly common for women to be sent rather than men, a significant aspect of a romance world where female power of vari-

^{8.} XII.13v.

^{9.} One unlucky girl strays from the path and has to be rescued from five armed men and a dwarf who is beating her. She is tortured and imprisoned the following morning and finally has to be saved from the unpleasant Duke of Bristoya who was about to burn her alive (102-07, 144-49).

ous kinds is so important. These messengers are often firmly in control of the most eminent male characters; one of them is very sharp when Amadis questions her: '- No os tiene esso pro - dixo ella, - sino fazed lo que os digo'¹⁰, nor do they hesitate to stop a fight if they decide that they need to do so.¹¹ It is not surprising that a woman should send a female messenger to another woman, but men send them to each other, too. Occasionally this is explicitly presented as a conscious decision: when Zirfée's castle has been won, a female is sent with the news, as bad news brought by a woman would not bring 'si promte vengeance'¹².

There is a special significance in the use of female messengers as linguists. Traditional doctrine required that women should be silent; when they are associated with language at all it is generally only with the mother-tongue, other languages being learnt by and from men. In medieval Europe the international language of learning and to a lesser extent of diplomacy was Latin, almost exclusively the property of men and no-one's mother-tongue; a situation in which women are shown to have mastery of language and the ability to convert one language into another is strikingly unorthodox. One example of the female linguist occurs when Amadís de Gaula wishes to maintain his disguise as 'The Greek Knight', so the daughter of a majordomo, who is 'buena y entendida', is

^{10. 783.}

^{11.} IX.107v-108r.

^{12.} VII.40v.

asked to act as interpreter, translating his Greek into French for the British king. She speaks fluently and proves a very competent organiser. 13 Another girl who is used as a translator, this time in the controlling frame of the romance fiction, is a niece of the enchantress Urganda. Her aunt has decided that after all Montalvo should be allowed to continue with the story of Amadís but cannot be trusted to do so without strict guidance. She produces the enchanted figure of the supposed original historian, maestro Elisabat, who holds a book with the true story in it, and, since Montalvo does not understand Greek, she also provides her niece to do an instant translation into Spanish for him. 14

Some female messengers have to do no more than deliver a simple message, a challenge from 'an Unknown Knight'¹⁵, or Queen Abra's accusation of Lisuarte - she claims that he has murdered her brother and failed to keep his promise to marry her. ¹⁶ They may have to carry objects ranging from rings and letters to more cumbersome loads such as complete armours or giants' heads. ¹⁷ Their instructions are often imprecise ('fallarlo heys en la guerra de Gaula', says Oriana as she sends the Damsel of Den-

^{13. 874-77, 886-87.}

^{14.} V.501. For comment on the role of Urganda in the earlier stages of this episode, see pp 255-61 below.

^{15.} VIII.59v.

^{16.} VIII.40r.

^{17. 41, 724;} VII.53.

mark off alone to find Amadís¹⁸), and delivery of their message may involve considerable physical exertion: Galtazire, who has fetched 'la belle & vaillante Daraïde' to break the spell cast on King Rosafar and Queen Artisire, gallops up to the palace at midnight to report on the fight, having changed horses twice on the way; she is nevertheless capable on arrival of asking for silence and delivering her embassade in clear, formal speech.¹⁹ In the following book she is once more riding 'au grand galop', accompanied by her damsels this time, to take the news of the arrival of the Greek royal family to the court of Guindaye.²⁰

Nor are many of these female messengers mere vehicles to transmit the words of others; they may well have to respond to their reception or make important decisions on behalf of their master or mistress. Carmela, Esplendián's squire, when acting as his special envoy speaks of the 'orden que los mensajeros pueden alcanzar' when recounting events²¹; it is obvious on more than one occasion that she has thought about her rôle. In Book XIII the Amazon queen Calpendre and her daughter Pentasilee obtain a safe-conduct, then give the document to an Amazon 'de gentil esprit à manier negoces', who sets off on her embassy fully armed except for helmet and gauntlets. She is later referred to as 'esuiellee

^{18. 67.}

^{19.} XI.88v-89r.

^{20.} XII.125v.

^{21.} V.464.

au possible & qui n'auoit le bec gelé'. 22 Often such damsels are received in accordance with their rôle rather than their sex, but their reception does sometimes include sexist comment. A messenger damsel of great beauty arrives wearing excellent armour and carrying a yew bow and quiver of arrows; she makes a graceful bow, and without greeting the Christian princes she asks which is the Emperor of Trebizond and which Amadis, then proceeds to address them 'd'vne grande audace', demanding a reply to the letters she brings. Gasquilan is very struck, and tells her she needs no arms, for any knight would be conquered by her perfections. All the men laugh and Amadis tells Gasquilan that she would fight him better naked in bed at the game of love than he would fight any Turk fully armed in the field. The damsel is not amused and replies with quiet dignity: 'Ce n'êt pas, répondit elle, satisfait à mon message'. She politely requests that they should answer the challenges she brings. 23 In a later book, Princess Arlande of Thrace sends a damsel to fetch Prince Florisel - she wants him first to avenge her brother's death by killing Amadis of Greece and then to marry her. The girl charged with this important mission manages to find the Prince, boldly explains that she wants to test his famous courtesy to ladies and delivers a letter from Arlande. Florisel hastily explains that he must finish the adventure on which he is currently engaged and the damsel accepts this excuse, but gets him to come and spend a fortnight at the

^{22.} XIII.99v.

^{23.} VI.32r-33v.

nearest castle while she paints his portrait on vellum for her mistress. She then travels on with him for a further week, hoping that he will be engaged in an adventure which she can report to Arlande. During all this time she maintains a constant hard-sell on her mistress's behalf, praising her great beauty, riches and power. The chance she had been waiting for then occurs: Florisel rescues three sisters who had been kidnapped while hawking and the damsel is able to return to Arlande with a first-hand report of his beauty and his prowess. 24 Girls are also frequently used as intermediaries in a less open way, acting as decoys as already described in Chapter II, or as detectives or spies. The Damsel of Denmark goes to look for Amadís of Gaul, fails to find him in Scotland but does not reveal her true purpose there, then finally discovers him languishing on the Peña Pobre. 25 Queen Abra keeps a damsel at the court of Trebizond to report back on what is being said about her and what is going on. 26

3. Female Squires

A natural progression, but one which is nevertheless surprising in terms of sixteenth-century social reality, is that from female messenger to

^{24.} IX.26vff.

^{25. 402-04, 421-24.}

^{26.} VII.70v-71r.

female squire. As a plot motif, the girl who fell in love with a man, disguised herself as a boy and became his attendant, was popular throughout the period. It had obvious advantages both for the construction of the story and for development of emotional and piquant (or ambiguous and titillating) situations. Girls who become squires sleep rough in the woods with the man they are accompanying, and often with his masculine friends, too. In Book V Carmela, Esplendián and the king of Dacia regularly seem to share a bedroom when lodging in a castle, with no coyness or innuendo from anyone 27 ; it is obviously seen as perfectly natural²⁸. In the same book Carmela with Esplendián and the young knights who are both his friends and hers rides all night through forests in enemy territory, hiding by day. 29 Such relationships often include a good deal of joking, teasing and laughter, and this is not of The male authors and readers may have found their own a sexist kind. kind of interest in the fantasy of strong women and their varied activities and relationships, but it is obvious that the abundance of fictions in the cycle also had a great deal to offer to women.

A relationship such as that of L'Infante Sardinie and don Silves in Book XIV may never have a sexual element. She accompanies him on all the

^{27.} V.486.

^{28.} Indeed, in a short chapter describing Carmela's life and duties as Esplendián's squire, the reader is told that she is always devoted to him, '...durmiendo en su cama, sirviéndole á su mesa, nunca de su presencia se partiendo' (V.426).

^{29.} V.471.

adventures he meets on his journey in the burning boat; she is concerned, helpful and well equipped with magic potions for emergencies. At the end of each adventure she is there to revive and heal him. She is also religious: she prays for him all night while he is in the depths of the earth fighting serpents and phantoms and winning Jason's magic armour, sword and ring. After each adventure she hurries him on to the next - yet another example of a hero guided by a female. They are friendly and enjoy each other's company, we are told, but with no thought of love. Though never faltering in his love and loyalty to Pentasilee, Silves is obviously very fond of Sardinie: after an adventure where she has been snatched away and enchanted, he 'luy fit vne infinité de caresses, l'embrassant plus de mille-fois'³⁰.

Women are thus shown performing successfully in the rôle of squire, but the writers gain additional interest by representing many of the female attendants of male heroes as in the position of Shakespeare's Viola and in love with their masters, though, unlike her, they do not usually disguise themselves as boys. They are also unlike Viola in that they are successful in their wooing of beautiful heroines on their masters' behalf. Carmela looked at Esplendián sleeping and 'era de su amor presa', nor does she ever stop loving him³¹; there are many reminders that her feelings for her master go beyond the fraternal, unlike his for

^{30.} XIV.27v.

^{31.} V.422.

her, but that while serving him loyally and disinterestedly she nevertheless continues to love and to suffer. When she hears of another love which was eventually rewarded she says that she will not give up hope of God's mercy; Esplendián laughs and embraces her, saying that his love for her is truer than that of any such knight.³² When she might well be trying to blight her master's relationship with Leonorina, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, she does all she can to help. On one occasion (mentioned in Chapter II above) Esplendián is horrified by the anger his mistress expresses in a letter to him and Carmela laughs and explains the difference between men's and women's love and the effect of social attitudes on their behaviour. A lady has to hide her feelings. Carmela herself seems free from this constraint, as she is from other constraints on women; she acknowledges her love publicly before the whole court of Constantinople.³³

As squire, Carmela's duties are extremely varied, ranging from dealing with her lord's romantic problems to acting as nurse or ambassador, as well as the more usual job of being on hand with the right piece of armour. At one point she rejoins her lord by wrapping herself in a scarlet cloak borrowed from a pagan admiral and climbing up a rope ladder from his ship and through a high castle window. 34 When Esplendián

^{32.} v.488.

^{33.} V.486, 491.

^{34.} V.463.

sets off on the Adventure of the Enchanted Damsel with his male friends, she refuses to be left behind and climbs with them towards a treasure cave and a lion, sleeping out with them at night, carrying her master's helmet up the steep mountain and joining with them in trying to move the bellowing lion from a crystal tomb.³⁵ Not many chapters later she is sent as ambassador to King Armato to negotiate for the exchange of prisoners. She travels with two damsels and four squires, sending one damsel ahead to ask for a promise of safety; she is certainly made to speak as assertively as any man, threatening to destroy the country and to take the imprisoned Urganda back by force if her offer is refused.³⁶

Carmela is by no means the only female squire to share the life and adventures of her lord. Frandamelle, the attendant of King Alpatricie of Sicily, is another; like Sardinie, she is interesting in that she is represented as doing her job just as a young man would, rather than being motivated by sexual or romantic love for her master. Even damsels of high social status can act as attendants to male heroes: Anaxartes' shield is carried by a beautiful crowned lady wearing cloth of gold; she is the Infante Artymire, daughter of the King of Cyprus, and she has served Anaxartes ever since he saved her life and that of her father. She hides her own love for him and selflessly helps him win the love and the hand of his chosen princess: she takes letters between the two,

^{35.} V.488-89.

^{36.} V.556.

pleading her master's cause and comforting a distraught Anaxartes when things go wrong; she is used to seeing him fall into sincopisies and is efficient at the application of vinegar and water.³⁷ Finistee performs a similar rôle with Amadis of Greece; she is referred to as his écuyère and refuses to remain in a place of safety if he is about to face danger. She also acts as counsellor as Amadis struggles between his love for his original fiancée and his love and duty towards the beautiful princess he has actually married.

These damsels, like the female warriors of the cycle, lead an essentially androgynous existence in the sense that they are free to move in the world of men and in that of women. This makes them particularly useful friends, attendants and confidents of those characters who are tied by their masculinity or femininity to one world or the other. They can eat, sleep and talk confidentially with a hero, then gallop off to the heroine's home and eat, sleep and talk confidentially with her. Their rôles and characteristics also range widely, covering traditionally masculine and feminine areas. They are counsellors and comforters, with an intuitive knowledge of the human heart; they are providers of picnics or of first aid for the sick and wounded. 38 But these female

^{37.} IX.107vff.

^{38.} Other damsels appear to specialise in medical treatment of various kinds; there are numerous examples of this throughout the cycle, usually with the comment that a certain lady is particularly skilful and experienced. Queen Sidonie, who is keeping her daughter out of sight of men until she marries, has 'cirurgiennes & medecines' in her establishment in case her daughter or her maidens should fall ill (XI.61v-62r).

squires, along with the many female messengers and travellers in the romances, gradually help to build up a picture of women who travel freely and often alone, and who are physically capable of running, riding, climbing and sleeping rough or of conducting tough negotiations. It is clearly not just a matter of a few exceptional Clorindas or Britomarts; this double valency is widespread among the female characters. Moreover, the presence of these women and their importance at moments of crisis adds to the impression of female power which pervades all the Amadis stories.

B. ENCHANTRESSES

Nowhere is this female power more apparent than in the enchantresses who play such an important rôle throughout the cycle. However, the word 'enchantress' is perhaps misleading here, as it might suggest a form of seductive, erotic mastery; nor is the term 'witch' any less misleading as most of these figures are nothing like the female hags invented by the fears of men. These enchantresses are usually shown wielding power not through specifically female means, but in the masculine area of scholarship. They have more in common with Nostradamus than with Morgan la Fay. What is more, they often seem to have made the specific choice of a career in the magic arts, with the necessary lengthy apprenticeship

and years of study, as an alternative to private life. 39 They also hope to attain fame and a lasting reputation with creative skill; their works (magic tests or adventures, for example) are often 'signed' - Zirfee includes a statue of herself in one, with an inscription beginning 'Zirfee Roine d'Argenes, Magicienne, amie du sauoir...'.40 Like the female squires, they are androgynous in that they retain their female characteristics while participating in masculine activities, in their case books and study. They range from ladies who appear only briefly in a single adventure to the important and recurring figure of Urganda the Unknown. 41 Paranormal powers are not exclusively attributed to women in the cycle; there are male sorcerers, especially the wicked Arcaláus in the first four books, and in later books the benevolent old Alquif, but overall they are much less important than their female counterparts. Arcaláus is defeated by the forces of good; Alquif is a distant figure usually represented by his daughter⁴² and furthermore he allies himself to female power by marrying Urgande with whom he is thereafter associated. These dominant enchantresses are all seen surrounded by females,

^{39.} Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra includes in his *Espejo de Príncipes y Cavalleros* an enchantress who appears to have chosen a career rather than marriage in order to retain her independence: 'nunca quiso ser casada, por no se someter a la obediencia del marido' (ed. Daniel Eisenberg, 6 vols [Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1975], V, 149).

^{40.} VII.34v.

^{41.} So called because '...si todos los del mundo me demandassen no me hallarían si yo no quisiesse' (30). She is adept at disguises and disappearances.

^{42.} Confusingly, she is called Alquife.

send damsels as messengers and choose to delegate tasks to women. Urganda has two nieces, who perform such relatively unskilled tasks as disenchanting Amadís de Gaula⁴³ or nursing Galaor and Cildadán when they lie desperately wounded on her island; there are also two little girls who read aloud to the young men, and these young men have been taken to the island in the first place by twelve damsels in a mysterious boat.⁴⁴ Numerous other female figures are associated with the theatrical effects which so often accompany magic; gorgeously dressed, they sit by thrones, walk in processions and play a variety of instruments, including those such as trumpets that are still considered essentially masculine.⁴⁵

1. The Enchantress's Feminine Nature

Her special rôle does not seem to affect an enchantress's feminine characteristics. Urganda cannot have children herself, but is represented as being much attached to her nieces and to their sons. The latter rush to greet her on her arrival at a captured Turkish port and she weeps as

^{43. 180.}

^{44. 495, 499-502.}

^{45.} A typical example of one of Urgande's appearances occurs in VI.67r-v. The sea heaves itself up into a huge mountain of water which is burning on top and there is thunder and lightning. When this calms down, there she is in a great boat, surrounded by monkeys holding torches, six damsels playing harps and six playing lutes and violins. Urgande herself sits on a burning throne in a black dress and a white veil. Once she reaches the palace she becomes more like a visiting aunt, embracing the ladies with 'mainte caresse'.

she embraces and kisses them. 46 There is another emotional reunion when she is released from the prison of the pagan king Armato and is received with great honour by the Empress Leonorina and the court ladies; Urganda's own damsels are particularly delighted and hug and kiss her, weeping.⁴⁷ The supportive warmth and sense of sisterhood which is so noticeable an element in the relationships between women in the cycle certainly includes most women with special magical powers. Urganda herself shows this warmth on several occasions while performing the feminine rôle of comforter in affliction. When Oriana is distraught with grief over her father's disappearance, Urganda, whose relationship with the princess often seems rather like that of favourite aunt and niece, is quick with consolation, calling her 'Amada señora fija'48. The evil enchantress Melia also shares the nature of other women, though the supposedly female trait attributed to her is not an attractive one. has been virtually in control of the pagan forces besieging Constantinople when one night her careful plans for the downfall of Christianity go badly wrong. She rushes into the commander's tent in her shift: 'Lors eussiés peu cognoître de quelle inconstance vsent communément les femmes (ie dy les foles) quand il leur auient quelque ennuy qui leur touche vn peu de prês'. She pulls her hair out, tears her shift and even her flesh, screaming as though she has her feet in the fire. 'Qui

^{46.} V.508.

^{47.} V.557.

^{48. 1334.}

vid onques le chat lié par la queuë, & pendu en l'air, se mordre & rendre cruel contre soy-même?' The whole camp thinks that the enemy has come. 49

2. Feminine Intuition and the Enchantress's Art

As enchantresses share the supposed characteristics of other women, it is the less surprising that other women should be depicted as having some of the characteristics of enchantresses, should for example have special powers of knowing the logically unknowable. There are many examples of feminine intuition, with men not infrequently shown as being incredulous when told of a woman's mysterious certainty. Oriana's father tries to protect his wife from the truth about their beloved grandson's danger in war, but fails to reassure her; 'mi triste corazon no sé yo qué adevina', she says⁵⁰, and in a later book her daughter-in-law hears of the exploits of 'Le Cheualier Solitaire' and 'émeuë de ie ne sçay quelle affection' suggests he is her son, remaining unconvinced by her husband's scepticism. ⁵¹ But enchantresses and more 'ordinary' women do not just share extraordinary powers, but also, more surprisingly, share a lack of power over their own lives. Enchantresses in

^{49.} VI.20v.

^{50.} V.529.

^{51.} VI.52r.

general are imagined not as having been born with special gifts, but as having acquired them as a result of making a conscious decision to study 'Arts'. In the case of Gradafilee, the decision is made by her father, who places her with the evil Princess Melia as a sort of apprentice. She proves an unsatisfactory pupil, with too much of a sense of honour and justice and too soft a heart to support her mistress's malicious plans for the downfall of Christianity in general and Lisuarte in par-Other girls acquire a high degree of skill through studying ticular. the books which are so closely associated with magic throughout the cycle that they are rarely mentioned in any other context. 52 In several cases this close application to study and the access to supernatural power which is thereby attained seem to be thought of as an alternative to the power which a woman possesses through her beauty; the reader is sometimes specifically told that the lady is not beautiful. However, the Persian Princess Melia is represented as having been very beautiful and accomplished, but as having chosen study rather than marriage,

nunca le plugo ni consigo pudo acabar de haberse de casar, mas antes se dió á saber todos los lenguajes que alcanzar pudo, y el arte de las estrellas y movimientos de los cielos, y otras muchas y extrañas ciencias, que muy acabadamente por gran discurso de tiempo deprendió... 53

^{52.} Prince Lucendus enters the study of the evil enchantress Dragosine and first notices 'vne grande quantité de liures, fort bien garniz & ornez de diverses garnitures & parures'; only then does he see Dragosine in the middle of the room 'tant laide & maigre qu'elle sembloit mieux vn espoüantail ou fantosme qu'vne femme' (XIV.83v).

^{53.} V.503.

3. The Limitations of Enchantresses

Magical powers certainly do not necessarily enable enchantresses to attain happiness in love, indeed they are presented as especially unfortunate: it seems to be one of the ways in which they are shown as inheritors of a tradition going back to Medea and Circe. Urganda, first seen by Amadís's father as 'una donzella más garnida de atauíos que fermosa'54, loves an extremely handsome young knight who wants to return to his former love. She needs the help of Amadis's foster-father to reestablish her power over him, saying sadly but firmly that '...la cosa que yo más amo sé que más me desama que en el mundo sea,...mas no dexo por esso yo de lo traer a mi voluntad...'.55 Another, less important, 'donzella encantadora' can obtain wealth and gorgeous palaces, but fails to create love where she herself feels it. She is infatuated with a handsome young Cretan who becomes her lover for the sake of what he may gain rather than as a result of her beauty 'de la qual muy poco la natura la hauía ornado'. She is clever and powerful, but her passion makes her vulnerable and a man is shown exploiting sex in the way that women have been traditionally accused of doing; the young Cretan pretends to love her equally in order to gain greater freedom, then murders her and makes off with all he can get. 56

^{54. 28.}

^{55. 29-30.}

^{56. 1288-89.}

It is not only in their personal relationships that enchantresses are shown as having limited powers. Montalvo, the devout Christian, makes his Urganda, in a formal address on the Firm Island after Amadís and Oriana's wedding, explain to the assembled company that the Almighty allows her to know what is going to happen, but does not allow her to alter anything that He has decreed. 57 The reader is therefore to assume, presumably, that if, when his evil cousin kidnaps the infant son of the Roman Emperor, Urganda can do no more than run off with the baby and clasp him in her arms in the middle of a ring of fire which she has created, it is because God wants Garinto de Dacia and Maneli el Mesurado to be the ones to effect a rescue. 58 In Book VII, Zirfee, Queen of Argenes, is even more powerless. She had disdained the court of her father the King of Babylon and retired to her own island to practise the magic arts she had learned from Melie. Although a skilled enchantress, she nevertheless shares the fate of many women in the cycle: she is unable to make good her right to her inheritance. She is her brother's only heir, but on his death the temporary governor of his kingdom seizes power and when she tries to claim kingdom and property he tells her to get out and will let her have no more than her brother's body. 59

^{57. 1234.}

^{58.} V.435-36.

^{59.} VII.36vff.

In spite of such limitations, their magic and their knowledge of what is going on in other places and what will happen in the future give enchantresses very considerable power. Throughout the cycle this is strongly felt at every turn: they are represented as prophesying, imprisoning, freeing, preserving and testing, often in surprising and histrionic ways. Such ladies are almost always benevolent, but also unpredictable. The immediate effect of their magic may be unwelcome, removing a precious baby for the next sixteen years, for example, so they are obviously regarded with somewhat mixed feelings. Thus the influence of the enchantresses is exercised upon the other characters in the romance; at the same time, given their supposed link with Divine Providence, the reader too has no choice but to accept their power and mystery within this fantasy-world. Still more strikingly, there comes a point at which the narrator himself is seen to submit to the very female authority he so much deprecates.

^{60.} Prophecies are particularly likely to cause mixed feelings, as they arouse fear and raise curiosity without satisfying it. This is obviously an effective narratorial device, and prophecy is certainly a traditional feature of romance. Amadis of Greece comments on how unsatisfactory it is from the point of view of someone within the fiction. He reads a letter from Urgande which obscurely predicts that misfortune lies ahead for him. After reading it he is pensif and thinks that all he can understand from the letter is that he will encounter things which are 'grieve à surporter'. He says to himself that of course he is very grateful to Urgande for doing so much for him, but since he cannot resist destiny, he could do without her prophecies (VII.26r-v).

4. Urganda and Authorial Authority

A little more than halfway through Book V, the only one in which he is not re-working earlier material, Montalvo begins Chapter XCVIII by suddenly introducing himself as more than just a narratorial voice. After bringing together the two lovers, Esplendián and Leonorina, as his pretended source related, he tells us, he was feeling exhausted, depressed and inadequate, and put down his pen, wondering whether it was worth finishing the work at all. He had just turned his mind to everyday matters when he suddenly felt new energy and resolve and decided to give up all other occupations in order to recount the terrible battle which ranged almost all the kingdoms of the world against each other by land and sea and brought the lovers' sufferings to an end. Suddenly and mysteriously he seemed to find himself clinging in desperate terror to an immensely high and jagged cliff with the wind howling around and the waves beneath him. After a day of intense misery the appearance of a tiny boat shooting across the sea like an arrow brought little comfort as he could not imagine how anyone could reach him; but he was underestimating the powers of the damsel who was the boat's only occupant. She climbed the precipitous cliff as easily as a smooth staircase, announced that he had to explain himself to 'la sabiduría maestra y enemiga de la simpleza' or be severely punished, and ordered him to bind his eyes with her veil and do as she told him. Not daring to remove his blindfold without her permission, he was somehow transported to a rich ship's cabin where his eyes were unbound and he found himself among

elegant ladies and gentlemen who were strolling about and amusing themselves. At one end of the room there sat on a dais a lady surrounded by richly dressed damsels who were playing their instruments for her.

The author feels awkward and uncertain what to do, but he is not left to take any initiative for himself then or at any other moment in this episode; the lady soon summons him before her. He kneels at her feet as she is obviously powerful and appears to be very angry. She laughs disdainfully at his humble offer of complete obedience and calls him stupid, ignorant and old, abusing him at considerable length for presuming to write an account of such great love. How could he, whose interests and activities had always been those traditionally thought of as masculine ('...el estilo de tu vida desde tu nacimiento fué en...desear y seguir [las armas]') hope to understand or express this violent passion? She herself had engendered and nurtured it, yet she would not dare to recount it, even though she had felt love deeply. Only those less aged, and in love themselves, should dare to undertake such a formidable task. (The implications are interesting. Love, which presents dangers at least as great as those of war, nevertheless owes its origin to the magical powers of a woman. On the other hand, Urganda is a kind of female Merlin: she may be able to make others fall in love, but she cannot escape the pains of love herself.)

The unfortunate Montalvo begs the 'tan autorizada dueña', who later identifies herself as the enchantress Urganda la Desconocida, to allow

him to escape punishment by burning his writings, but she decides that this would be treating him too kindly; he is condemned to publish them, so that he will be shamed in front of everyone, but thereafter to remain silent till he receives her further commands. His further punishment will be revealed when he is again brought into her presence. The vision disappears, and Montalvo regains consciousness in his own chamber. Terrified of such a figura, and fearing what might follow, he decides to obey the sabidora and leave it to others to continue the story. 61

In the following chapter Urganda continues to control not just the fictional characters, but to reach beyond the fiction and intimidate and control its author himself. She had informed him that he was not to continue with the story until she ordered him to do so and he had obeyed her through fear and a sense of the justice of her criticism of him. He had expected Urganda to have more important things to concern herself with, and thinks no more of the business until, one day while out hunting, his hawk and a small whirlwind combine to land him at the bottom of a deep well. His behaviour falls short of the heroism shown by his dauntless knights. When Urganda appears, first in the form of a dragon and then in that of an old lady, she comments on his terror and he is unable to reply 'porque mi ánima por el cuerpo andaba saltando de un cabo á otro, buscando por dó salir'. Throughout his subsequent experience - he is led through subterranean darkness to the Firm Island where

^{61.} V.495-97.

she has enchanted Amadís of Gaul and his friends and family until the time comes for them to return and rule again - there is strong emphasis on the author's sense of inferiority and Urganda's dominance over him and the story, though she gradually comes to admit that she was wrong to treat him quite so contemptuously before. She explains what is going to happen at the end of Book V and why, and finally orders him to continue with the narrative, taking steps to make certain that he will get it right as she does not trust his judgement. Once more the means by which she ensures this are female: the Greek book containing the remainder of the narrative is translated for him by Urganda's niece, without whom he would be unable to understand it. This second vision ends with his waking from sleep to find himself on horseback with his hawk on his hand and his huntsman beside him. He returns home and begins to write what he remembers of his strange experiences and of the Greek book. 62

Precedents exist for an episode in which a writer represents his own humiliation and inspiration by a higher authorial power. One of the earliest known to me is the famous vision recounted by St Jerome in his 'Letter to Eustochium'. In this treatise addressed to a young woman, arguing in favour of virginity and withdrawal from public life, he tells how, when apparently at the point of death, he felt himself 'caught up in spirit and dragged before the tribunal of the Judge'63. He was

^{62.} V.497-501.

^{63.} The Letters of St. Jerome, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, 2 vols (New York: Newman Press, 1963), I, 165-66.

rebuked by God for claiming to be a Christian when he was really devoted to pagan writings - Ciceronianus rather than Christianus - and was violently beaten until he swore to abandon such reading for ever. Contemporaries of Montalvo in the English-speaking world who devised secular visions influenced by this dramatic incident include the Scottish poets Robert Henryson and Gavin Douglas. Henryson is confronted and rebuked by Aesop in a dream that frames the central fable of his collection of Moral Fables; Douglas, having completed his translation of the twelve books of Virgil's Aeneid, then has a dream in which he is abused and beaten by Mapheus Vegius for having failed to add to it a translation of his thirteenth book, which gives the pagan story a Christian conclusion. These Scottish visions come closer than Jerome's letter does to Montalvo's strange experience in Book V of Amadis, in that they show a vernacular writer, while actually engaged in his creative work, confronted and humbled by the source of his literary inspiration, rather than by God; but in both cases the higher power is male, and in neither does he emerge from the fictional narrative itself to seize control of the narrator and indoctrinate him.

These two chapters mark a clear break and a new start to the narrative in the middle of Book V, and the unusual fracturing not just of the sequence but of the narrative hierarchy gives special emphasis to the incidents Montalvo recounts. The lady is reminiscent in some ways of female personifications such as Philosophia in Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophiae or Natura in Alanus's De Planctu Naturae, awe-inspiring

mother-figures who do not hesitate (this is especially true of Philosophia) to assert their superiority over the male author. Like them Urganda is a female figure of authority, but unlike them she does not derive her female status from the grammatical gender of a personified abstraction. She is a literal enchantress who belongs not to the realm of philosophy but to that of romance; and it is as though she has sufficient power to break momentarily out of the fiction, entering the real world of the storyteller and retaining her full authority there. magical female power that governs story is shown to stand above that of the male storyteller, as the autorizada dueña reveals her superiority to the autor. Even the dream landscapes lend themselves to interpretation in terms of the subordination of male to female. In the first, the phallic crag to which the male author desperately clings is scaled without difficulty by the damsel who serves Urganda; in the second, Montalvo overcomes his writing block and gains permission and material to continue his story by being swallowed into a terrifying hole in the ground suggestive of the female genitalia. Once there, he finds that the fiery serpent turns into an old lady who ultimately treats him more kindly than he could have expected.

It would almost certainly be mistaken to claim that these episodes were the expression of a conscious programme of Montalvo's to reverse the traditional subordination of woman to man; it is therefore all the more striking that he feels impelled to insert them, regardless of their relation to other elements in his narrative, and thus to affirm that a female power is as superior to himself as male writer as she is to the male characters within the romance. Moreover, if Urganda personifies anything, it is romance itself, a genre which, as I suggested in my Introduction, can be seen as possessing many of the characteristics traditionally regarded as feminine. This is the point in the Amadis cycle at which the feminine definitively comes into its own.

C. STRONG WOMEN AND FEMALE WARRIORS

Shortly after the chapters in which Urganda's female power over the author is established, just as Montalvo has set going what is to be the first of many sieges of Constantinople in the cycle, he introduces a new element in his story:

Sabed que á la diestra mano de las Indias hubo una isla, llamada California, muy llegada á la parte del Paraíso Terrenal, la cual fué poblada de mujeres negras, sin que algun varon entre ellas hubiese, que casi como las amazonas era su estilo de vivir. Estas eran de valientes cuerpos y esforzados y ardientes corazones y de grandes fuerzas;...tenian navíos muchos, en que salian á otras partes á hacer sus cabalgadas...en sus pensamientos tenian firme de apocar los varones en tan pequeño número, que sin trabajo los pudiesen señorear, con todas sus tierras...⁶⁴

Calafia, the queen of this island, is imagined as very big and beautiful, in the prime of life and longing to achieve great things; 'valiente

en esfuerzo y ardid de su bravo corazon'. She is ignorant of other lands, but hears of the great siege of Constantinople. Anxious to see the world and its peoples, she considers herself and her women so brave that they would gain a large share of any lands conquered. She encourages her soldiers with promises of honour and profit until they are all eager to set out; they are particularly anxious to win fame, and not to remain buried alive on the island like their predecessors, 'pasando sus dias sin fama, sin gloria, como los animales brutos hacian'. Calafia is warmly welcomed by all the pagan lords and is immediately an influential member of their war councils; when the fighting starts in earnest she achieves wonders, slaying many knights and always in the thick of the battle. '...y como lo habia con tan preciados caballeros, nunca se partian de darle muy grandes y fuertes golpes; pero todos los mas recebia en el su muy duro y fuerte escudo.'65 Soon Montalvo makes her fall in love with the enemy prince, Amadís's son Esplendian, but he also chooses to depict her as very much aware of her hard-won reputation and as exercising self-control in her determination to preserve

...aquella gran fama que con tantos peligros y trabajos, como varonil caballero, ganado habia; que quedando en gran menoscabo de deshonra, seria tornada y convertida en aquella natural flaqueza con que la naturaleza á las mujeres ornar ó dotar quiso; y resistiendo con gran pena á que la voluntad á la razon sujeta fuese....⁶⁶

^{65.} V.539-542.

^{66.} V.546.

Once female warriors have been introduced into the cycle, their special characteristics and achievements come to be taken for granted; no author after Montalvo conceives their prowess and chivalric reputation as gained only by suppressing a weakness thought to be natural to women. 67

Montalvo's Californians are the first of several tribes of warrior women and individual female knights who play important parts in the events of the cycle. Some are described as Amazons, others as like them or related to them, but the distinctions are of little significance compared with their similarities, and I refer to them all as 'Amazons'. The most obviously distinctive common feature of these Amadisian Amazons is the attribution to women of many of the qualities traditionally seen as characteristic of men. They are large in size and powerful in physical strength: we are told of the Indian queen Pentasilee, while she is still only a girl, that 'la Princesse estoit pour son aage de fort belle taille & roide de nerfs nonobstant la delicatesse de sa charnure'68. They are bold fighters, and in battle they display an efficiency and individual prowess that match and sometimes outdo those of the male war-

^{67.} On the other hand, there is one later scene (XI.8r-9r) in which fighting women are represented in comic terms. A white-haired widow falls in love with the young knight Florarlan and fights for him with his attractive companion Galace. The combat between the two women, mounted on palfreys, is treated as a parody of a contest between two knights for a lady. The women fight with insults, nails and teeth, much to the amusement of the knightly onlookers, who treat them with discourtesy quite different from their behaviour to each other. In this comic episode the usurpation of male activity by females is seen derisively, but this is not characteristic of the cycle as a whole.

^{68.} XIII.106.

riors in these stories. In Book VIII, for example, Amadis of Greece and Lisuarte are trapped by a lady who asks a boon and they are obliged to promise that for five days no man will follow them. It immediately occurs to Zahara, the giant Amazon Queen of Caucase, that this promise does not prevent women from coming to their rescue. She pursues the two male knights and their captors with ten of her female soldiers, leaving nine hundred more to follow when fully armed; when she overtakes Amadis and Lisuarte, it is to see them being led away by two giants and ten Zahara is shown as strong and skilful when she slays the two knights. giants using first the typically Amazonian bow and arrow, proceeding to a lance, then completing the task with a sword, with which 'd'vn coup lui fendit la tête'. When the one remaining knight is about to take revenge by killing his prisoners, Lisuart's female squire kills him with a single stroke. One hundred knights and eight or nine hundred armed men then arrive to help the giants, but Zahara's lieutenants, the Queens of Sarmate and Yrcanie, lead up the nine hundred Amazons in the nick of time and a fierce battle ensues. The female squire had quick-wittedly seized the arms of a dead giant and also fights valiantly. The battle rages for many hours, and it is moonlight before the enemy is put to flight and Zahara sounds the retreat. 69 Nor is it only in land battles that Zahara displays her skill and courage. Later in the same book there is a great battle at sea between Amadis of Greece (disguised as the Amazon Nereïde) and the fleet of a huge knight who is seen control-

^{69.} VIII.67vff.

ling the tiller of the principal ship. There is a desperate fight between the knight and Amadis, and the former is about to kill the latter when the knight removes his helmet and reveals himself to be Zahara. The figure of a female knight at the tiller of a warship offers a dramatic image of female power. 70

The authors of the cycle imagine their Amazons as forming complete civilizations, in which women perform all the functions that in sixteenth-century reality were normally reserved to men. Besides fighting battles and sailing ships, they fill all the normal offices of a court; Amazon rulers are attended by female squires, vassals, pages, heralds, mistresses of the horse, ambassadors, and surgeons. When Zahara's great fleet arrives at the city of Trebizond, five hundred young women disembark and establish contact with the *écarmoucheurs* who rush aggressively up. Once peaceful relations have been established, twelve of Zahara's 'principales femmes' enter the city, greet the Emperor and formally announce Zahara'a arrival and the reason for it.⁷¹

When Zahara defeats the giants in the battle mentioned above, her Amazon followers observe their custom of each spearing the head of a defeated enemy on her lance. Here the female warriors, having been depicted as

^{70.} VIII.105r-v. This may have been interpreted by contemporary readers as a variant on the common iconographical motif by which Fortune is represented as a lady steering a ship at sea; Zahara, however, is armed and not blindfolded.

^{71.} VIII.117v.

both bold and efficient in warfare, behave like savages in victory. Unlike their followers, Amazon knights are never described as behaving with savagery, and the attribution of male characteristics to them, in scenes like the one I have been recounting, functions in the cycle not as an indication of their unnaturalness, but as a way of elevating them to the same level as male knights. It is true that some of the cycle's authors occasionally criticise them; thus in Book X the narrator comments on the 'presumption & arrogance' and 'vaine pompe' of Zahara's triumphal procession. 72 But in general they are regarded with unquestioning admiration and that this should be so is perhaps the most striking indication of the positive nature of the cycle's representation of women. It is confirmed in an unexpected way by the reproaches directed against Pentasilee's troops in Book XIII by the giants with whom they are allied. The Amazons have proved themselves the most skilled archers ever seen, but the giants drive them away from the front line 'leur reprochans qu'elles y combatoyent comme en tournoy par amourettes'. 73 Giants, as I shall observe later, represent the extreme of maleness, and their unjust criticism only serves to confirm the cycle's emphasis on the value of female achievement. The success of female knights in achieving at least equality with their male counterparts is underlined by the fact that in general their methods of fighting do not differ from those of men. There are occasional exceptions to this rule, as when

^{72.} X.31r-v.

^{73.} XIII.76.

Pentasilee is described as fighting with 'grande legereté & subtilité ...grande dexterité'⁷⁴, qualities that might be regarded as the martial equivalent to the cleverness and cunning elsewhere attributed to women. More commonly, however, female knighthood is praised in exactly the same terms as those applied to men, and, as we shall see later, it includes chivalric courtesy and generosity, revealing qualities of character often alleged to be specifically masculine. We are told of Zahara that, because she has defeated so many men, a man she challenges, far from being dishonoured by fighting her, will gain in reputation.⁷⁵

It must not be supposed though, that the Amazons and other female knights represent no more than an appropriation of male qualities by the female, or a reversal of the orthodox hierarchy of gender. What the cycle emphasizes most strongly and most frequently is rather that they constitute an ideal combination of opposite qualities, and thus offer a way of deconstructing that hierarchy. It is in these terms that they are frequently described: Zahara, for all her martial prowess, is so perfectly beautiful that from head to foot everything causes ardent desire in those who look at her⁷⁶, and Alastraxeree is 'la fleur des

^{74.} XIV.65.

^{75.} VIII.40v.

^{76.} VIII.40r.

Dames, & le miroir des cheualiers'⁷⁷. Correspondingly, female knights errant are sometimes depicted as travelling with two damsels as squires; one carries arms and armour, the other rich female garments, so that the knight can adopt either gender at will. This way of representing Amazons reaches a culmination in the iconography of the procession in which the Amazon queens Pentasilee and her mother Calpendre ride towards the ceremony at which the former is to be dubbed knight. In it, one young attendant queen carries a pennon, one side of which portrays a figure combining Mars and Venus, while the other depicts a mirror with a Turkish bow attached to it (emblems of female beauty and male fierceness) and around it in their language the device 'HERMAPHRODITIQUE VALEUR'⁷⁸.

1. Strength of Mind

Conventional heroines control men with their beauty, enchantresses exercise powers acquired by years of hard study, but some of the female characters in the cycle <u>are</u> in effect men in their ability to govern and to fight. Characteristics that contemporaries considered totally wrong in an ordinary woman were not just permitted, but actually considered

^{77.} X.3v. She has just addressed Amadis with speech of high compliment; he now replies, saying that it is \underline{she} who has such virtues, \underline{he} will certainly not offend the ears of his listeners 'vous blason-nant...'.

^{78.} XIII.102-03. In procession young girls in cloth of gold as pages carry, those on the right arms and armour, those on the left mantles and jewel boxes: female accourrements for peacetime, male for war.

laudable in a female placed by divine providence in the position of ruler. Such ladies were praised for prudence, courage and eloquence and became androgynous figures by virtue of their rôle. At Tilbury, Queen Elizabeth wore a breastplate and carried a truncheon while declaring that she had the heart and stomach of a king. When Princess Onolorie of Trebizond throws herself on her bed in a paroxysm of grief, her friend Griliane admonishes her, 'ainsi que vous étes grande Princesse, vous deués étre plus parfaite, que les simples femmelettes, qui sont communément moins familieres de la constance & magnanimité de courage, que celles qui ont titre de filles Roi'79. In these chivalric romances some of the female characters are born to dominate through the political authority they have inherited; others go even further, gaining additional authority through the exercise of leadership skills and through sheer physical strength and military expertise.

Onolorie herself is not shown as being over-endowed with 'magnanimité de courage', but some relatively humble princesses can show a surprising degree of resolution and sang-froid. Barraxa is not a major character, just an average princess in distress; pale, young and beautiful, at first she seems helpless and pathetic as she looks out through her high prison window, weeping for herself and the young stranger she believes is about to lose his life for her sake. She watches as he knocks out a first giant and tackles a second, then notices that the first is showing

undesirable signs of life; she runs down, seizes his sword and - to the amazement of her would-be rescuer and his opponent - cuts off his head. The second giant turns on her for revenge but the knight gives him such a blow that he falls crashing to the ground, whereupon the beautiful Barraxa treats him as she had treated his cousin. Once the giants are dealt with, she refuses to stay around and talk in such a risky place, lecturing her deliverer on the virtue of prudence and the danger of vainglory as she hurries him away. 80

A young Turkish princess shows equal powers of self-possession. She has been travelling and has slept alfresco by the Adventurous Fountain when she has the unnerving experience of finding that the twenty knights who had been guarding her are all being killed or driven away. She stands quietly on her silken bed, dressing herself in her rich clothes and strange, shining jewels and 'su continente era con tanto esfuerzo, como si nada de lo que vió de sus caballeros no hubiera pasado'. When the Christian knights take her along with them as a semi-prisoner to watch a battle, she is told not to move from a place by the fighting or it will be the worse for her, and she calmly answers that if they are as firm as she is they will soon win. When the town is won they suddenly remember her and return to find her sitting calmly on the grass. She is anxious to accompany them into the still-dangerous town in order to save as many Turkish lives as possible, but sensibly recognizes the need for rest and

^{80.} IX.17r-18v.

lies down in the open air on an improvised bed where she 'durmió muy sosegada'. We are told that her husband loves her more than anything in the world and when he joins her it is clear that she is the dominant partner. He is in a rage and she advises him to calm down and be fair. He listens to her and agrees; discretion should control passion, he says. 81 Traditionally it was supposed to be the woman who was carried away by passion and the man who would behave in a reasonable way, controlling not only himself, but his wife as well. These books show a great many examples of exactly the opposite. 82

2. Relationships to Partners

There are a number of royal Amazon ladies who have important rôles in the stories and some of them are shown as having a relationship with their partners of a strikingly modern nature; they appear to be living as friends and colleagues, with chivalry and warfare as a shared career and neither partner dominating the other. In the hierarchical world of the European Renaissance, some polemicists could argue that women were superior, but they appear still to have thought in terms of related but unequal opposites. As we have seen, scholasticism had adopted this way

^{81.} V.472-73.

^{82.} Parallels are to be found not so much with literal women as with female personifications such as Boethius's Philosophia or Prudentia in the Melibeus story.

of thought from Aristotle and it was reinforced by contemporary medical theory, while popular festivals, stories and pictures revelled in the humorous idea of the inversion of the 'natural' order, the world upside down and the woman dominant. It is surprising that such a widely enjoyed work of fantasy as the Amadis cycle should offer the possibility of equality in marriage. It is true that at the level of conscious doctrine the narrators accept the relationship advocated by Saint Paul and the Christian Church. However, they are soon liberated again by the power of fiction. What we are actually shown is marriages which are chivalric partnerships; it is as though Artegall and Britomart had married and continued to ride through a dangerous world righting wrongs, sometimes separately, sometimes side by side, but never wavering in their devotion to each other.

Alastraxeree, daughter of Amadis of Greece and the Amazon Queen Zahara, is not brought up to be subservient to anybody. She and her twin brother Anaxartes are given the same education: arts, sciences and military training. When they are still babies, their mother is already thinking about who should knight them. They are both knighted at sixteen and go off secretly together with two squires and two damsels. Alastraxeree is frequently given masculine epithets⁸³, and Anaxartes treats her more like a brother than a sister. Her chivalric and mili-

^{83.} She is called *illustre*, *vaillante*, *magnanime*, *vertueuse* (clearly with the sense of 'valiant') and is more than once said to be rushing into the mêlée like a strong boar into the thickest bushes.

tary exploits are particularly impressive, beginning with an adventure where she kicks in a door with her mailed foot in order to kill the huge giant on the other side of it.84 She falls gradually in love with Falanges, having thought about someone else first, her free, wandering life having enabled her to gain a greater variety of emotional experience than the Dianes and Helenes who who are shut up in their towers and gardens. Falanges is eventually accepted on the battlefield during a brief lull between dispatching giants. On one occasion she and her fiancé fight and are very evenly matched. For more than two hours there is no advantage on either side; they eventually start to wrestle, rolling over until their helmets fall off and they recognize each other. 85 Once married, they reappear in the story from time to time and almost always as a couple. We hear them deciding together that they should give military support to Queen Sidonie, then they both lead their army into battle: '...le Roy Don Falanges, & la cheualereuse Roine Alastraxeree suiuis de toute leur armee, se vindrent fourer à bride abatuë la lance baissee, & de toute la roydeur des cheuaus, dans l'escadron des ennemys...'86. The author even depicts his male character at a disadvantage and being saved by his wife. Falanges has set off to find their lost son, leaving his wife at home, but she, who has said that they are not 'nés pour viure toujours en voluptés & délices', soon fol-

^{84.} IX.14vff.

^{85.} X.75-76.

^{86.} XII.98.

lows him. He is fighting alone in the entrance to a passage in some rocks, pierced through in many places with arrows from the attackers in front of him and about to have boulders rolled down onto him by enemies from above. His squire, believing his lord's death imminent and seeking help, sees a knight just coming ashore and recognizing his lady by her shield, urges her to rush to help Falanges, who is 'en-extase' when he sees his beloved wife galloping up.⁸⁷ In later books a similar relationship exists between Prince Silves and the young Amazon Queen Pentasilee. The two of them ('ils s'entre aymoient eperduement') go off secretly so that they can anonymously challenge all the other knights on their journey to Constantinople; they do so with dazzling and equal success.⁸⁸ They go on to share a number of other battles and adventures and are both comrades and lovers.

3. Selection of Partners

Established doctrine is once more in evidence when the final stage of courtship is reached and all these strong women leave themselves at the disposition of a paternal figure; yet this seems to have little more significance than a modern bride being 'given away' by her father. Alastraxeree's true paternity has recently been established when Fal-

^{87.} XI.76r, 81v.

^{88.} XIII.126v.

anges finally asks for her hand. She accordingly replies that she recognizes his 'vertu & grandeur' but 'toute ma volanté est remise es mains monsigneur & pere'. Falanges must ask him. Amadis of Greece duly joins their hands in solemn promise, but the redoubtable slayer of so many giants and monsters still asks for the final ceremony to be delayed 'avecques vne douce honte & rougeur virginale'89. Temporarily, a chivalric career seems to be incompatible with marriage for a lady; Alastraxeree says she will join her brother Florisel in freeing an imprisoned princess as a last exploit in arms 'que mon nouveau signeur & épous me contraint laisser'. As we have seen, this does not in fact happen; she is probably too good a character to be lost from the story. It is sometimes stated that her husband has given permission for a particular adventure 90, but in spite of these occasional concessions to women's supposedly 'natural' rôle, the impression that emerges strongly from the actual fictions in the text is of women who are in control of their own lives, who make their own choices and try to do something about unsatisfactory situations rather than cultivating gentle resignation.

These powerful women seem quite as prepared as their weaker sisters to propose marriage themselves; Queen Sidonie even does so in an elaborate public ceremony. 91 They not only propose to men they favour but are

^{89.} X.83-84.

^{90.} XIV.64.

^{91.} X.60.

capable of rejecting unwelcome suitors, with considerable force if necessary. After accepting Falanges on the battle field, Alastraxeree rides off, telling him to follow her, because she wants to deal personally with the treacherous King Breon who has presumed to declare himself her servant. She finally defeats and beheads him 'to teach him a lesson' and rides triumphantly off to give the head to her fiancé, who is delighted with the gift. 92

In Book XIV, Pentasilee is shown as displaying even greater courage and resourcefulness, while the behaviour of her conventional friend Fortunie serves to throw into relief the extent to which Pentasilee herself goes beyond convention. The Emperor of Tartary and his brother have already caused considerable trouble in their attempts to gain the hands of Pentasilee and Fortunie; they finally manage to kidnap the two girls during a hunting expedition and lock them into the cabin of one of the ships of their waiting fleet. When the Tartar suitors rush into the cabin, Fortunie faints, but 'la chevalereuse' Pentasilee instantly speaks her mind, calling them traitors and cowards to obtain illicitly what they had failed to win by their strength in a tournament. Were she armed she would fight them all single-handed. Rather than let them attain their lubricious desires she will kill Fortunie with her own hands and then kill herself. The Tartar princes insist that they will win the ladies' love, but Pentasilee swiftly counters with indignant accusations and

continues to defend herself verbally with courage and energy. Her suitor finally decides that he has had enough of this and announcing that he is going to rape her he hurls himself forward, while his brother springs towards Fortunie.

Mais la vaillante & genereuse Infante Amazone ne fuit aucunement du Tartare, ains l'embraça par si grand force & vigueur, que la force dont-il vouloit vser ne luy valut, par ce qu'ainsi armé come il estoit, & quelque resistance qu'il sceust faire elle le renuersa tout plat sur le paué de la chambre, & mettant main à vne courte dague que ce Prince portoit pendue à la ceinture, elle luy trencha la teste en un moment.

His horrified brother, the Emperor, instantly threatens vengeance and draws his dagger to kill her, but she is on her guard, parries the stroke with the dagger she still holds, flings herself swiftly on him, pinning his arm to his side so that he cannot strike again, and suddenly attacks his unarmed head so violently that she unseams him from the nave to the chops and throws him to the ground, dead. 'Hée! ma bonne dame & tres-douce soeur', exclaims Fortunie, hardly an adequate comment in the circumstances. 93

4. Concern for Reputation and Princely Virtue

Pentasilee is quite ready to commit murder and suicide if necessary, but the honour so preserved would not have been of the same nature for both

^{93.} XIV.85vff.

characters. Fortunie's honour is indeed almost the same thing as her chastity, but, as a female and a warrior, Pentasilee's honour has a dual nature: she has to display chastity and courage, beauty and prowess; she, like other Amazons, has both masculine and feminine honour. ara, Alastraxeree's mother, cares for her reputation and keeps her word as a knight would. She must be seen to keep a promise she made when fighting Lisuarte and would rather die than fail to do so, saying that she may be only a woman, but she knows that 'la corde ni le clou, ne peuuent tant étraindre ne serrer la chose contre laquelle on les veut aproprier, pour tenir ferme, comme la foy ceint étroitement vn gentil esprit de son indissoluble lieu'94. In the following book, her daughter is glad that Florisel has arrived and can help her to escape, but marrie that this will more than cancel out an occasion on which she helped him; she would prefer to be in the superior position of benefactor. 95 Another female knight behaves with chivalric courtesy, helping her adversary to rise when he is pinned down by his horse. He is less chivalrous and instantly attacks her with his naked sword, but he finally yields when, having overcome him, she nobly offers him the chance to do so instead of giving him the death he has deserved. Unaware of her sex, he praises her as the greatest knight in the world. 96 Warrior women are also frequently shown as motivated by desire for glory, travelling long

^{94.} VIII.61.

^{95.} X.119.

^{96.} XIV.78.

distances to fight in important battles and tournaments.

A woman ruler may or may not also be a warrior; in either case she needs to display the same princely virtues as a king, to add such qualities as eloquence, liberality, prudence, justice and magnificence to her other characteristics. Abra and Axiane are rival claimants to the Sultanate and Empire of Babylon, each very conscious of her regal position and regal image. In Book VII Axiane had behaved impeccably when she lost her magic castle, welcoming the victor (Amadis of Greece) with a formal discourse on how adversity should be faced by the great, sounding like a man as she emphasized that the renown of great deeds was the only true riches. She is soon put in a difficult position when Amadis offers her back the castle which she had secretly despaired of ever regaining. hides her joy and makes a speech in which she carefully and diplomatically preserves her image. She comments on Amadis's liberality but says she feels great confusion because of the way the castle has been won. Her honour cannot be satisfied by the simple present of it back; the death of her men should be avenged 'non pour le regard d'eus, ains pour le respect de ma personne, à qui la principale injure a été commise'. On the other hand, he is honouring her greatly in returning the castle, and this inclines her to forget the past injury, not so much for the value of the gift as for fear that she will be accused of ingratitude, though accepting will put her in a position of owing a debt she can never repay. She changes to the third person to say may the gods forbid that Axiane should ever show any pusillanimity in her state and rank

'veu que tel vice n'entra onque au courage d'elle, ni d'autre issu de sa lignee'. She finally states that she hopes to repay him one day.⁹⁷ At a later stage she is generous in her treatment of prisoners.

Abra also meets the strictest standards of the code of masculine honour. On receiving a threat and a declaration of war from Axiane she is outraged, her face changes, but she is anxious not to diminish the reputation with which she has always desired to live and immediately answers the messenger-damsel in a firm, defiant but courteous manner. Her reply to Axiane is aggressive but icily polite, and she swears 'en foy de Princesse' to observe a truce until the day of battle. Furthermore, when this truce is broken, she first investigates the matter to ascertain the truth, then has a thousand of her men beheaded. The narrator comments that her action was very just and worthy of great praise; bad faith in a Prince damns him (or, presumably, her).98

5. The Power of Words

It was accepted doctrine that nothing became a woman like silence, but these strong women are all mistresses of the spoken word and are admired for their eloquence. Pentasilee uses the power of words to delay the

^{97.} VII.46r.

^{98.} VIII.99v-100v.

attack of lecherous Tartars, Abra and Axiane use the same power to maintain their reputations, and, as has been seen earlier in this chapter, female squires and messengers are often represented as being very flu-A great many female characters in this cycle speak well in private, in the council chamber and even in the camp or on the battlefield as they exhort the assembled troops. There are numerous examples of women who are in control of circumstances because of their control of language. One of the most striking is Queen Sidonie of the Island of Guindaye. Two Eastern kings arrive with a huge army and send ambassadors into the city demanding the hands of Sidonie and her daughter in marriage; refusal would mean that the subsequent devastation of the country would be her fault. The Queen hides her feelings, asks for time to consider the proposal and then keeps summoning her Council for inconclusive discussions to cover the preparations for a siege. No sooner has the enemy ambassador departed with her final refusal than she has a scaffold draped in cloth of gold erected in the main square and seats herself on it, not in her usual mourning, but in superb royal robes; every citizen is 'ravy en la contemplation de sa bonne grace, & hautaine contenance'. She then delivers a skilful, well-calculated and confident harangue of considerable length. She stresses the importance of honour, saying that it has to be defended till death and giving Greek and Roman Right is on her side, they must hate tyranny and wish to preserve the liberty which she has always preserved for them; the war is not merely about her personal freedom, but the freedom of them all. is obvious that she is specifically addressing the men of the city as

she goes on to praise their 'prouesse & vertu' and refers to their wives and children. She then tells them that she and her daughter will kill themselves as soon as the barbarians enter the town, but says she is sure this will not be necessary - the gods are just and their own right arms too strong. They are by now so enthusiastic that they will hardly let her finish. The heading of the next chapter (XLV) is 'Des apres & cruels assauts qui furent donnés à la cité de Guindaye, & comme la magnanimité & hardiesse de la Royne Sidonie empêcha la ville d'être prise des ennemys'. After nine days of fighting, some of the enemy penetrate a breach in the walls and the citizens are terrified, but Sidonie appears confident and unworried. She exhorts and encourages her subjects in the main square, then, richly dressed and with a sword in her hand, she rides towards the din and tumult of the breach, where her own men gain strength and courage as they defend her while the barbarians weaken with fear and wonder. 99

Sidonie has the traditionally masculine skill of public eloquence, as befits a prince, but on other occasions her language reverts to the private register more commonly attributed to women. Warrior queens, on the other hand, while often sharing this ability to address an audience effectively, also use masculine language when among men and in masculine situations. They are made to swear, exclaim or shout commands when the occasion seems to demand it. Zahara is chosen as one of the judges at a

fight. After six hours and with both combatants near death, her fellow judge, Amadis of Gaule, consults with her and she replies as a man might, swearing she never thought to see two knights so evenly matched. The other ladies had found the spectacle unbearable some time before and retreated from the palace windows. 100 Alastraxeree, always shown as an authoritative figure, stops the fighting on board a ship by shouting out 'hola, hola, Chevaliers...', and is immediately obeyed. 101 It is obvious that command of language and the ability to choose the right register at the right moment is a faculty which is noticed and admired within the fiction, and therefore presumably to be noticed and admired by the reader. It is also clear that the authors endow their female characters with this ability at least as much as they do their male ones. Nor is the writer of a romance obliged by the nature of the genre to give his heroines the gift of words, as a playwright would have to; indeed, heroines of earlier romances had often said very little. Pintiquinestre is 'autant bien parlante que femme du monde' 102 and when she has replied firmly to an audacious and insulting challenge delivered by an ugly dwarf, 'Céte réponse prononcée par la Royne sans colere, & auec trégrande modestie, fut louée de tous les signeurs...'103.

^{100.} VIII.63v.

^{101.} X.76.

^{102.} VI.35v.

^{103.} VI.36v.

6. Physical Strength

As noted in the Introduction, the *Amadis* cycle shows women as military leaders, rulers and law-givers. Here my concern is with the physical strength attributed to many of them; and this is one of the most striking ways in which conventional distinctions between the sexes are blurred. The tall and powerful Pentasilee, whose defence of herself and her friend has already been described, is a typical example. The difference in the conception of what is attractive between these Renaissance heroines 104 and those of such nineteenth-century novelists as Dickens strikes one immediately. Dickens not only celebrates the diminutive appearance and fragility of female children, but has a number of adult heroines whose charms are obviously closely associated with their child-like physique and behaviour. 105 Pentasilee's size apparently makes her

^{104.} Heroines of other, less influential chivalric romances of the period are represented with similar characteristics. When he wishes to be incognito, El Caballero del Febo can take off his usual armour and give it to Claridiana's damsel to pack 'en sus fundas', while he himself puts on a spare armour which the damsel carries for her mistress. It fits him very well: '...en altura y estatura eran casi iguales; que si el Cavalero del Febo era muy grande y membrudo, también lo era la valerosa princesa' (Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra, Espejo de Principes y Cavalleros, VI, 38). This knight and his lady are also comrades in arms and are also equally matched when they fight each other.

^{105.} By contrast, there is some evidence that height could be considered attractive in other fictional girls in the Renaissance. In A Midsummer Night's Dream III.2 Hermia bitterly exclaims that, whereas she herself has been rejected as 'dwarfish and low', Helena has 'urg'd her height, And with her personage, her tall personage, Her height forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him'.

more attractive, and we are told that she was to become even bigger and more muscular, stronger than almost any man of her day; the only knight who was her equal (though not her superior) was her husband. Not only the physical appearance but the relationship is quite different from nineteenth-century ideals as reflected in fiction popular with the reading public.

Readers of the Amadis cycle are invited to imagine heroines who are not only physically strong, but at the same time strikingly beautiful. Alastraxeree, who is extraordinarily good-looking, always travels with female attire as well as male arms and armour. At one moment she can seem like an archetypal heroine of romance, sitting by a fountain with her friend Silvie and chatting while they comb out their beautiful hair. But as soon as ten evil knights come galloping up to them she bundles her hair into her helmet and mounts her horse. 107 Within minutes she has put an arrow straight through the first three and killed four more with her sword. It is hardly surprising that the remaining three remove themselves as quickly as possible. 108 Her strength is also apparent when, soon after this, she and Silvie wish to get into a chariot: Alastraxeree gently lifts her friend in, then vaults lightly in herself.

^{106.} XIII.74.

^{107.} The opposite action of the removal of a helmet to reveal an abundance of beautiful female hair is a motif which seems to recur in most stories with female knights, including the ones in this cycle: see The Faerie Queene, III.ix.20.

^{108.} IX.52.

She looks so like her half-brother Florisel that people keep mistaking one for the other; the narrator says that in features and in figure she resembles him exactly, especially when they are dressed in the same manner. 109

7. Strong Women as Friends, Relations and Colleagues

These warrior women, though sometimes the target of sexist comments and teasing, are obviously often accepted within the fictional world as honorary males. They are not only colleagues of their husbands or fiancés, but of other knights as well. Three red cross knights who arrive just in time to save the life of le Chevalier de l'Esphere prove to be Queen Calafie with her husband and brother-in-law. The three seem to have a companionable, teasing relationship, and though Calafie says that a wife must obey her husband, it appears to be a joke. Later, she is manifestly categorized as a male as she is living in camp with the men and goes with them on a visit to the ladies. 110 This camaraderie does not mean that such women do not fall in love like their weaker sisters; they do so, but do not seem overwhelmed by it, nor susceptible to jealousy. Their strength of mind is not confined to the lists or the battlefield. This is seen particularly clearly in the case of Pentasilee, whose

^{109.} IX.55v.

^{110.} VI.7, 34.

friendship with Fortunie means that the two are often seen together; Pentasilee is shown as the stronger in every way. When their Tartar suitors attend mass and pray conspicuously, it is Pentasilee (here characterized as 'prudente & belle') who suspects them and warns her friend. 111 In their relationship with their favoured suitors, it is Pentasilee who is usually the most dominant of the four young people; she takes the initiative for both girls when they hear voices under their window, 'car elle estoit doüee d'vn courage & hardiesse de cheualier'. The two princes are so overpowered by the ladies' beauty that they are speechless when the window is opened, but Pentasilee rallies them and after Silves has made a speech about his feelings for her she kindly prompts Lucendus to address Fortunie, but he can only stammer that his friend has already said it all. It is Pentasilee who gets things moving more briskly. 'Laissons pour le present ceste practique ...& venons au point.' The princes have written them love letters, do they intend to marry them? Promises are duly and correctly exchanged. 112 Later, both women give birth to sons while 'resting' in the country; both feel pain, but especially Fortunie, '...laquell comme plus delicate auoit plus vif le sentiment'113.

^{111.} XIV.75.

^{112.} XIV.69.

^{113.} XIV.92.

In spite of greater mental and physical strength and of sensational displays of courage and prowess, these characters, both powerful queens and formidable Amazons, share conventional attributes which have been discussed with reference to other females in the cycle. They are fond mothers, loving sisters, devoted friends and comforters of the afflicted. As has been seen with Pentasilee and Fortunie, they tend to dominate in a relationship. This is true not only of Amazonian women, but of strong-minded women in general. Abra is the loyalest of sisters, even pursuing vengeance for her brother's death when the man responsible is the man with whom she is passionately in love. 114 Once he has dreamt of Onolorie, her brother is almost constantly in a state of love-sick hopelessness; Abra makes all the decisions, commands and harangues the Babylonian army, comforts and exhorts her brother, even lying and deceiving in an attempt to keep him hopeful. 115 Alastraxeree is not only an admirable working wife, but a loving mother; in Book XII she has just been shown as a strong and victorious warrior when she sees her son, apparently dead, and immediately begins to weep and lament. 116 She is

^{114.} It is interesting to speculate about how far the stories in this cycle are precursors of the plays of Corneille and Racine and of other seventeenth-century works where dramatic tension is produced by a struggle between love and duty, with concern for honour as another important motive. There are certainly many situations in which a major character agonizes over such a choice as Abra has to make. Sometimes even the language seems to adumbrate what is to come: 'que dis-ie? Ou suis-ie? que fais-ie?' exclaims Florelle of Canabee when Rogel abandons her (XII.172v), and a protagonist on the horns of a dilemma frequently soliloquizes.

^{115.} VIII.1ff.

^{116.} XII.101v.

also seen in a gentle and 'feminine' light when there is a family reunion after she has saved her husband's life and they have succeeded in freeing a number of her female relatives. She sees little Fortunie for the first time and is delighted with the child, picking her up and cuddling her. 117 Alastraxeree is the first knight that young Pentasilee ever fights, and as they wait for the tournament to begin, Pentasilee's mother, who is also the general of her daughter's Amazon troops, fusses and worries over her, afraid that her adversary is too strong. 118 She usually seems to be around in the background, helping Pentasilee to remount after she has killed a giant, for example. 119 The greater strength of mind of Amazon women actually enables them to be particularly suitable friends and comforters of other women, as they are not overpowered by circumstances which reduce their weaker sisters to helpless misery. On one occasion all the ladies belonging in any way to the royal family of Constantinople are kidnapped by evil giant-magicians and are in the depths of despair, made worse by the fact that, after one of the mass weddings which the cycle tends to feature at the end of each book, a number of the ladies are pregnant. In this state of affliction, the only comfort for their anguish comes from the five Amazon ladies who are among them 120

^{117.} XI.81vff.

^{118.} XIII.95.

^{119.} XIV.71.

^{120.} XIV.2.

It is clear that the most impressive women in this cycle show none of the passive and privative virtues that were traditionally associated They display eloquence rather than silence, with admirable females. command instead of obedience. Even Freud's 'conventional equation' does not hold: the strong and active is frequently female, and, as I shall show in the next chapter, the weak and passive not infrequently male. Women are brave, trustworthy, clever, reasonable, self-controlled, modest, constant; they keep secrets and are mentally and physically strong. Reasonable modesty does not prevent Amazons, queens or enchantresses from seeking fame and immortality, but these women share the male honour system and such aspirations are presented as admirable. It is ironic that while describing endless fighting for Christianity, the narrators are often implicitly rejecting traditional Christian teaching on women. There is certainly a Divinity that shapes the ends of all the many intertwined plots of these romances but He is clearly shown to do so through women as well as men, giving them an equal rôle with men in fulfilling His plans and thereby challenging the doctrine of most of His spokesmen in the world outside the fiction. The general effect of the depiction of such a variety of the feminine and of so much power in female hands is to blur the conventional polarity of the sexes, a topic which I shall proceed to consider in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

QUESTIONING GENDER.

We saw in Chapter I how gender has traditionally been treated, like its biological counterpart, sex, as a binary opposition in which each term excludes the other. We saw, too, that this opposition was not one of equals; it formed a hierarchy with the masculine as the superior element and the feminine defined as defective or divergent. However, it must now be apparent that in the Amadis cycle the situation is not so clear. Focusing on the presentation of women, we have seen a number of respects in which the traditional opposition and hierarchy are dissolved or even reversed. In this chapter I shall give closer attention to elements and moments in the cycle in which dissolution or reversal of the traditional relationship is thrown into sharper relief, either because the authors offer explicit thought about these matters or because they write in such a way as to provoke readers into thinking about them for themselves.

1. Gender in the Cycle

It has been my argument throughout this thesis that the *Amadis* cycle was not conceived in terms of clear categories or of the logical presentation of an ordered fictional world. Even an examination limited to one author or translator would not elicit consistency. What is apparent, however, is that all the various writers and translators had a special interest in the rôles of women and in the constitutive features of masculinity and femininity. A number of passages treat the subject explicitly and in some detail, as though briefly exploring a particular aspect

or point of view. This is already true in the earliest books.

As might be expected of a man who was already old in the last decade of the fifteenth century, the views Montalvo expresses tend towards the traditional, especially in those books where he is using earlier material. He comments, for example, with strong disapprobation on the peculiarities of some female giants. Gromadaça, a giantess who has sworn that she will die rather than give up four castles, and, furthermore, that she will do all the harm to King Lisuarte that she can, leads the narrator to moralise:

Por donde digo que assí se puede tomar por enxemplo quán rigoroso y quán fuerte es el coraçón ayrado de la muger, queriendo salir de aquellas cosas conuinientes para que engendrada fue, que como su natural no lo alcança, forçado es que el poco conoçimiento poco en lo que cumple pueda proueer; y si alguna al contrario desto se falla, es por gran gracia del muy alto Señor en quien todo el poder es, que sin ningún entreuallo las cosas puede guiar donde más le pluguiere, forçando y contrariando todas las cosas de natura. 1

Here, then, we have a clear statement of traditional Christian dogma, including a caveat which neatly allows both for Montalvo's living queen, Isabella of Castille, and for his fictional queen, Calafia of California. Another of Montalvo's giantesses excels at such unwomanly skills as taming and riding wild horses, shooting with arrows and darts, and hunting bears and lions; she is also a swift runner and a strong swimmer. The reader is made to feel that in having her head ignominiously

^{1. 565.}

cut off by a squire Andandona is receiving her just deserts.² It is not only in her gigantic stature that she is 'forçando y contrariando todas las cosas de natura', but in her behaviour.

Another passage of Montalvo's suggests that there are inappropriate gender characteristics worse for the female personality than to be 'de linaje de gigantes'. He is once more writing about Gromadaça, the giantess who had previously led him to moralise about the nature of women. He now compares Gromadaça unfavourably with her sister Madanfabul, who, just as she was much more beautiful,

...fue muy diferente en todas las otras maneras de bondad; que la otra fue muy braua, corajosa en demasía y ésta muy mansa y sometida a toda virtud y humildad. Y esto deue causar que assí como las mujeres que feas son, tomando más figura de hombre que de muger, les viene por la mayor parte aquella soberuia y desabrimiento varonil que los hombres tienen, que es conforme a su calidad, assí las hermosas, que son dotadas de la propia naturaleza de las mugeres, lo tienen al contrario, conformándose su condición con la boz delicada, con las carnes blandas y lisas, con la gran fermosura de su rostro, que la ponen en todo sosiego y la desuían de gran parte de la braueza. 3

All this is clear enough; we gather that a conservative writer is creating a fiction in which conservative ideas about gender will be embodied. The natural and admirable woman will be sweet-tempered, stupid, timid,

^{2. 683-84; 717-18.}

^{3. 1253-54.}

delicate, soft and beautiful. 4 However, Montalvo's stories also include such diverse creations as the Amazon warriors Calafia and her sister Liota, and the energetic and resourceful squire Carmela. These figures are not only depicted as admirable, but as strong-minded, quick-witted, brave and tough. 5 It is true that, very near the end of his fifth and final book, Montalvo does imply that martial ladies are part of the pagan disorder that Esplendián is conquering and reforming. Calafia is made to ask Esplendián to find husbands for herself and her sister, announcing that she will become a Christian as she has seen 'la orden tan ordenada desta vuestra ley, y la gran desórden de las otras'. She looks at the husband who is offered to her, approves of what she sees and takes his hand, saying that he will be lord of herself and of her kingdom, where they will change the Amazon customs and establish 'natural' relations between the sexes. 6 Nevertheless, the very last incident of the final chapter of Las Sergas de Esplendián recounts how Calafia, who since her marriage had always dressed as a woman 'por la hon-

^{4.} Castiglione had given much the same view to Julian, the defender of women, during the third night's conversation at Urbino: they should be soft and mild, 'con maniera in ogni suo movimento di dolcezza feminile, che nell'andar e stare e dir ciò che si voglia sempre la faccia parer donna, senza similitudine alcuna d'omo' (Il Libro del Cortegiano, ed. Bonora, p 211).

^{5.} Calafia is also shown as capable of the male anger which is necessary in battle and therefore praiseworthy. Amadís will only defend himself when they fight, saying that he has always protected women and cannot bring himself to use his sword against her. The Queen replies, '¿Cómo? ¿En la cuenta de esas me pones? Pues agora lo verás', and she attacks him 'con gran saña', holding her sword in both hands (V.548).

^{6.} V.555.

estidad, así de su persona como de su marido, que pareciese ser cabeza y señor de todo', cannot resist begging to be allowed to take up arms again when one of their territories is threatened. The writer and the fictional husband then permit a martial woman to embark on a successful campaign.

Thus even Montalvo, the earliest of the authors of this series of romances, offered an enlargement of the fictional possibilities for women. This enlargement is developed and amplified in the later books. Not only do they offer little of the traditional didactic comment on what characteristics a woman should possess, but the proliferation of fictional persons within them includes many in whom the traditional masculine and feminine characteristics co-exist and the lines of gender are dissolved. Such inclusiveness and blurring of boundaries have always been anathema to the conservative and are likely to have contributed to the strong distaste with which many commentators viewed these stories. I now turn to a more general discussion of the cycle, in which I shall illustrate the inappropriateness of traditional gender classification to its representations of human reality.

^{7.} V.560-61.

2. Masculine Sins

In the Amadis cycle the idea of the masculine as the norm is given a peculiar twist because it is the vices rather than the virtues that are regarded as distinctively masculine. It has been seen that admirable qualities such as magnanimity, chastity, fidelity, courage, physical strength, martial prowess and eloquence are not specific to one sex. The same is not generally true of vices. Indeed, the fact that the gender-specific vices are those attributed to men is an important element in the elevation of women in these romances.

The two deadly sins most often associated with the male characters are pride and anger. Macrobius, a popular source for writing and teaching about ethics for many centuries, defines four levels of virtue, the first of them being civic or political virtue and consisting of the control of the passions by reason. This type of virtue is considered as proper to the active life, and might therefore be deemed particularly necessary for a good knight. It is here that all bad knights and nearly all giants fail. Their failure to control their passions leads them into pride, selfishness and hatred; and these in their turn lead to violence, cruelty, disorder and destruction. It is noticeable that Montalvo only uses the words saña and sañudo about men, and that when the word 'passion' is used about men it usually means 'anger', whereas

^{8.} Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. W. H. Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p 123.

when used in connection with women it means 'grief'. That both pride and anger are dangerously near at hand for even the virtuous and wellintentioned knight is made clear when the hermit Nasciano prays before the hero and his friends in Amadis's tent near the end of Book IV: God is asked to '...abaxe la gran saña y soberuia' in their hearts. 9 Earlier in the story, King Lisuarte of Great Britain demonstrates his masculine nature by showing pride, self-will and high-handed neglect of those who had served him. In contrast, his wife and daughter show humility and gentleness, honouring and giving everyone their due. Because in them reason is not warped by pride and resentment, their judgment is also shown to be sounder. So great is the ascendency of pride, that Montalvo can use the word as a synonym for 'wrong' - Amadis is travelling around among the Greek islands in order to 'endereçar... soberulas' 10. What is implicit here is not just that pride leads to wrongs that are harmful both to the individual and to society, but that such pride is necessarily masculine.

The names of evil knights, and still more those of giants, convey their sinful and vicious natures even before the reader has become familiar

^{9. 1129.} It must be added that in the primary epics of Christian Europe terms that seem to imply moral disapproval - ofermod in Old English, desmesure in Old French - can be used to name those very qualities of spirit that make heroism possible. The discourses of heroism and of orthodox morality are often divergent, and neither can be simply reduced to the other without distortion. Nasciano's assumptions are not necessarily normative for the romance.

^{10. 789.}

with their evil deeds. The first encounter of the young Amadís with Dardán el Soberbio is followed by a homily on pride¹¹; the giant Iracond le Fier cannot bear to have his will crossed and thinks that he can make mincemeat ('faire vn hachis') of Lucendus with his bare arms¹². The close connection between beauty and virtue has already been discussed in Chapter I. Arrogant villains, whether giants or not, are usually ugly:

Norcas le Difforme, Bracas le Hideux and Marcasee le Contrefaict are all extremely unpleasant.

Their pride and anger are also conveyed through direct speech and descriptions of behaviour. Giants apostrophise their human opponents as 'chétif bestion', and many proud and bad warriors address their heroic adversaries with 'paroles superbes & outrageuses'. A barbarian leader in Book X loses his temper completely: 'Adonc eussiés veu rouiller au Duc Russian les yeus en la tête, tempêter des poings sur la table, laquelle il renuersa furieusement...'; this is a preliminary to ordering his men to tear Amadis of Greece to pieces. 13 An incident in Book IV contrasts two knights who embody the ideals of chivalrous conduct and its opposite: Gasquilán, King of Sueca, meets Amadis in a palace for the first time rather than on the battlefield. Seeing him 'tan hermoso y tan sosegado y con tanta cortesía' the king thinks that he would have

^{11. 108-09.}

^{12.} XIV.98r-v.

^{13.} X.74r.

despised Amadís if he had not known by report and experience of his prowess; he seems better suited 'para entre dueñas y donzellas que entre caualleros y autos de guerra'. 14 Gasquilán himself is proud of showing 'fuerça y coraçon' in all his actions and behaviour; he despises men who do not do so, thinking them cowards, and he considers pride a virtue, not a sin. Here the author clearly associates the personality and behaviour that he endorses with women and the feminine world of interiors.

Love of power is another masculine vice, as can be judged from the frequency with which ladies need a champion to restore castles and territories that have been misappropriated by male relatives or forcibly seized by covetous neighbours. Briolanja has to have Sobradisa preserved for her twice; the first usurper is her uncle, then his son, 'codicioso de señorear', makes a bid to regain the kingdom. It is evident that this longing for more power is seen as another aspect of pride; Trion is moved to make the attempt by 'la soberuia grande que traya'. 15 Another bad knight confesses that 'La codicia de señorear...me desuió de lo que la virtud me obligaua, assí como lo ha fecho a otros muchos que más que yo valían y sabían'. 16 Various women make spirited and determined attempts to retain or repossess their own property or kingdoms, but

^{14. 1166.}

^{15. 1029-30.}

^{16. 1282.}

no female character is ruled by the love of sway or greed for more territory, yet another way in which women are shown as superior.

As has already been shown in Chapter III, ladies are not presented as sexually cool and passive; what the discourse of morality defines as the sin of lust could be attributed to them. However, without the masculine drive for power and the masculine propensity for anger, female lust does not lead to violence as male lust does. Once again, pride and arrogance are implicated. King Alizar l'Outrageous, for example, cannot believe that brute strength and prowess are not enough to win a lady's love. He pursues and torments the Duchess of Mont Liban, who says that no man is prouder or less just than he. He is also typical of the evil-doers of the romances in that he is very ugly: he has hair like a black sheep, front teeth sticking out like those of a boar and he smells terrible. He is finally beheaded by the gentle and beautiful Esplendián. 17 There are, as one would expect, an extremely large number of offences committed by men against women, ranging from the milder forms of sexual harassment to violent rape. In each case it seems clear that we are intended to disapprove of such conduct; yet not infrequently, the arrogance of the male character is represented as being such that he simply cannot see why the woman should object; very often he does not care whether she objects or not.

^{17.} VIII.123v-124r.

3. Giants

The teeming dramatis personae of this cycle of romances include a great many giants. They are imagined as a distinct race, varying in height from very tall to colossally tall, almost invariably ugly and almost invariably evil. Their evil ways include paganism and the worship of idols, their gods consisting of a miscellaneous collection: Apollo, Iupin, Mahon, Tergavant, the traditional pagan deities of romance. 18 Giants are of interest to this study because they are given all the masculine sins in an extreme form. It is not only the male attributes of size and strength that they possess to a monstrous degree, but also pride, anger, covetousness and lust. The nature of giants is explained by Amadís: 'muy pocas vezes son gouernados y sometidos a la razón, porque su gran furia y saña en todas las más cosas los tiene enseñoreados'. 19 They are particularly arrogant and boastful. Mostruofuron is typical of his kind; when Amadis of Greece challenges him to abandon his wicked custom of human sacrifice, he is outraged not just that he should be challenged, but that 'vne tant chetiue creature' should dare to look him in the face. Grievously wounded, fearing death, he still says that

^{18.} In the Amadis romances, non-Christian religions are generally merged into a composite and evil paganism. Palmerin de Olivia (1511) is particularly interesting among the chivalric romances I have read in giving the Christian hero an Arab prince as his best friend and in taking a surprisingly ecumenical and enlightened view of the relationship between Christianity and Islam.

^{19. 1270.}

Amadis is not worthy to kill him and chooses to commit suicide. 20 Giants are often presented in animal terms: they foam at the mouth like mastiffs and roar like bulls; Florisel addresses Bazaran as 'Grand mâtin' and 'Gros animal'21. Their lust is even more marked than that of bad knights and can include incest. The monster known as El Endriago is the incestuously conceived offspring of a fierce and cruel giant, who is told by false idols that the offspring of himself and his beautiful daughter would be the fiercest and strongest of all living creatures. He longs for the power over other lands and peoples that such a son would bring him, but the child, possessed by the devil because of his parents' sin, is born with leathery wings, a hard and hairy body covered in scales, and a number of other attributes ascribed to demons in contemporary art and literature; he soon destroys both his parents. 22 The only giants allowed to live happily ever after are the few who become friends and allies of the heroes and adopt Christianity.

There are far fewer female than male giants introduced into the fiction, and although several of them are distinctly unpleasant, it is interesting that their female nature seems, in most cases, to predominate over their gigantic nature. Even the most violent are usually acting out of love for a near relative or from family loyalty rather than as a

^{20.} VIII.114v-115r.

^{21.} XI.37r.

^{22. 793}ff.

result of the pride, anger and lust that motivate their male counterparts. Batalaze is an ancient and wrinkled mother whose 'natural affection' makes her rush out to attack with teeth and nails the man who has just killed her son. 23 Mataleza carries her brother's challenge to Amadís and is rude and blunt in response to courtesy and hospitality; when her brother and uncle are defeated by Christian knights, she wants her soul to join theirs, runs as fast as she can to the cliff-edge and stabs and flings herself over. 24 Various giantesses attack heroes when their husbands or sons have been killed, but the writers quite often treat them with a certain amount of sympathy. An elderly, white-haired giantess is treated sympathetically when she is senseless with grief at the death of her husband and nephew. Florisel preaches resignation to her, but she faints again, and is then given quite a long lament, almost in the manner of a heroine, before she drowns herself. 25 Some giantesses are shown as the good wives or daughters of bad giants, and, although giants and dwarves are almost always depicted as ugly, there are a number of very beautiful giantesses. 26

^{23.} XI.37.

^{24. 523-24; 539.}

^{25.} IX.26.

^{26.} The cycle also includes a number of dwarves, and these typify certain feminine qualities; they might thus be said to be treated as an inverted transform of giants. In general, male dwarves are presented as worthy, if rather ridiculous, characters, while female dwarves are usually evil. The male dwarves show feminine characteristics; they are attached to their masters or mistresses, and their loyalty approved of, but the charming timidity and physical weakness of the conventional heroine are shown as comic cowardice and incapacity in male creatures. When fighting his way out of the castle of an evil enchanter, Amadís de Gaula recognises the voices of his dwarf and an imprisoned lady over the

In these stories it is not the hermaphrodite²⁷ that is a monster, an unnatural being, but the repulsive giant with his destructive masculinity; the figures elsewhere disparaged as the 'mankind woman' or virago and the 'effeminate' man are here both recoded as heroic ideals. The depiction of extreme maleness as morally and socially destructive intensifies yet further the sympathy and approval with which the reader is led to regard those characters who unite the most admirable qualities of both sexes; this admirable group includes not only all the principal male heroes, but a number of female heroes as well. I shall now consider a number of 'feminine' characteristics that are ascribed to male heroes.

4. 'Feminine' Heroes

If the male authors of these texts present fantasy-women who defy the conventional notion of femininity, their male characters further break

noise of battle because they are more frightened than anyone else and screaming more loudly (742). A dwarf charged with a message to a giant is so frightened that he cannot speak at first; he trembles as though he has the quartain fever (XI.16v). Florisel's dwarf, Buzando, insists on following his master into a hideous rocky fortress, but when the fighting starts he is so terrified that he flees, abandoning his master and the horses, and hides in a hole in the rocks. He stays there, crying, when his master is imprisoned (XI.34v-35r). Like damsels, male dwarves are used as messengers, perhaps because, like women, they do not personally present a threat or challenge to actual or potential enemies.

^{27.} Cf above, p 30, n 2.

down the binary oppositions in terms of which gender had traditionally been conceived. Active/passive; strong/weak; rational/emotional; selfcontrolled/uncontrolled; constant/inconstant: within the cycle most of these antithetical qualities are equally applicable to characters of either sex, and the ideal man or woman familiar from doctrinal writings or from other fictional works gives way to an androgynous ideal. account has already been given of female heroes and women with supposedly masculine characteristics. The cycle also offered its readers plenty of examples of heroes with 'feminine' qualities and several of heroes who live disguised as women. There is no encouragement for the reader to exert moral judgment and feel disapproval of 'inappropriate' behaviour or characteristics when a hero faints, weeps passionately, or even when he looks ravishing in a gown of white satin slashed with cloth of silver, his hair knotted with white silk ribbon and crowned with a chaplet of pearls. 28 Indeed, it is only the 'good' male characters who are endowed with tenderness and sensibility: it is the villains who are given characteristics that in Spanish could properly be called machos.

^{28.} This last example is the more striking as it is the costume Agesilan puts on immediately after the ceremony of assuming the adult masculine rôle of knight. He is disguised as the Amazon maiden Daraïde at the time (XI.60r).

5. Male Weakness

There was already a well-established tradition of love as a sickness which could reduce the hero of a romance to a helpless wraith. 29 In the Amadis cycle a number of male characters are represented as passive and weak, at least temporarily, and usually as a result of love. Sometimes this love-sickness seems to be an integral and steady feature of their characterization. This is certainly so in the case of the Sultan Zaïr of Babylon, and it is the more marked because his twin sister Abra is shown as so much the stronger of the two. The reader is told that they are equally beautiful and gifted, but immediately after their introduction in Book VIII, Zaïr falls sick as the result of a dream about Mars and Cupid in which the latter shows him Princess Onolorie, with whom he promptly falls in love. He falls into a state of passive despair, and it is feared that he will die, but Abra soon persuades him to confide in her and then exhorts him to be more courageous. Though she herself is represented as notably strong, she assumes Onolorie to have the same 'feminine' characteristics with which the text endows her brother. can Zaïr be 'si tôt abatu par l'ombre seul d'vne femme foible & debilé',

^{29.} In Chaucer's Knight's Tale there is a vivid description of Arcite when he is suffering from 'the loveris maladye/ Of Hereos'; unable to sleep, eat or drink, he is thin and hollow-eyed, 'His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde'. Furthermore, his whole disposition is changed and he becomes solitary; 'So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,' that he was unrecognizable (Canterbury Tales I [A] 1355-79). See also Mary Wack, Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: the Viaticum and its Commentaries (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

she asks him. 30 All his hopeless complaints receive positive and optimistic answers from his devoted sister and he is quite convinced by her words and brisk, efficient planning. It is even Abra who must tell the Sultan's vassal kings that they are to set off on what is presented to them as a jihad, an anti-Christian crusade. She duly addresses all the kings and great lords in an imperial manner: they are to show their prowess and she will be a witness; she is only a woman, but would be ill-pleased if such a glorious undertaking took place without her being The weak state of her brother is further emphasized when she there. orders them to do as he would tell them to do if he were well enough. She continues to control her brother and his army when they reach Trebizond, where Onolorie's father rules. At no point is there any adverse judgment on the dominating, positive and thus 'unfeminine' behaviour of Abra or on her meddling in the masculine preserve of military power. Nor is the part she is assigned a matter of straightforward rôlereversal: she is also playing the feminine rôle of comforter in afflic-Zaïr is not condemned for his passive acceptance of suffering; the only comment on his behaviour is the affectionate rallying of his sister. As this is plainly no more than an attempt to alleviate his grief and as there is never any comment from the narrator, the reader is not stimulated to pass moral judgement on the Sultan's conduct.

Once at the imperial court of Trebizond, the greater strength with which Zaïr's sister is endowed becomes even more apparent when she too is made to fall desperately in love with someone who does not reciprocate her passion. She is shown as suffering because of her love, but is made to behave strikingly differently from her brother; she is sensible and pos-She is also quite open with the object of her affection, while continuing to plead her brother's case secretly and holding the army ready to use force if necessary. Her brother is soon made to look even more feeble if the reader's expectations are of traditional male dominance: he is getting the worst of a fight over his lady's beauty when Abra intervenes. She enters the lists herself and makes the opponents stand one on each side of her and listen while she delivers an 'harengue la plus gracieuse qu'elle peut'. 31 Birmartes, struck by her grace and beauty, agrees to stop fighting if she can persuade Zaïr to do the same. She does not even ask her brother, but immediately assures Birmartes that, 'Quant à sa volonté, elle n'êt point autre que la mienne, & fera entierement ce dont je le suplirai'. 32 We are told that, physically wounded now as well as love-sick, Zaïr would have died during his monthlong convalescence if his sister had not comforted him. But she is not just dominant in the traditionally female sphere of comforting; she also dominates her weak brother in the masculine sphere of war and fighting. As Abra continues to manage their lives, actually making a public pro-

^{31.} VIII.10r.

^{32.} VIII.10v.

posal of marriage for both of them, Zaïr continues to admire and acquiesce. The failure of her plans (the prospective fiancés being secretly married to each other) brings the most 'feminine' behaviour yet from the Sultan, who laments passionately, weeps and faints; Abra is represented as controlling her own feelings over the loss of the man she loves in order to hurry to her brother's side. Women with masculine strengths are never represented as lacking in the traditional feminine qualities: she takes his head onto her lap, wipes his eyes, revives and comforts him. Each is given an ultimate fate in keeping with their relative strength and energy: Abra is eventually allowed to become the second wife of the man she loves, while the author soon kills Zaïr off in a disastrous sea battle. 33 However, Zaïr's story is clearly meant to be pitiable rather than pitiful.

The formula of twin brother and sister with the sister showing more 'masculine' firmness and self-control than the brother must have seemed an attractive one, for it occurs again in subsequent books of the cycle. In this case the man, Anaxartes, is at the centre of a group of strong female characters. I have already described his twin sister Alastraxeree; his mother, an Amazon queen, is equally formidable, and he is furthermore attended in all his adventures by a strong and trusty female squire. He suffers from what the text refers to as sincopisies and his female squire Artymire has to be on hand to revive him with vinegar and

^{33.} VIII.34r.

water. His first sight of his lady, the younger Oriane, affects him particularly strongly. The scene is a picturesque one, of a kind that makes it easy to understand one kind of attraction these texts must have had for their original public. Anaxartes is riding through a forest when he hears a beautiful voice singing to the accompaniment of a harp. Advancing a little further, he sees a delightful fountain surrounded by six white marble pillars supporting a green velvet canopy. The scene is lit by torches as it is dusk. Oriane is leaning against a pillar, wearing a gown of crimson satin; her golden hair is pulled back behind her ears and a rich necklace round her long, slim neck glitters in the torchlight. Around her, damsels listen to her singing and playing, leaning their heads on their hands. Anaxartes is so struck that he faints and falls headlong from his horse with such a noise that the damsels seize torches and rush to see what has happened. They revive him with cool water from the fountain, but have to fetch more as his feelings overpower him a second, third and fourth time. Some gentlemen of Oriane's household are finally called to support him into the pleasurepalace and put him to bed. Once there his sufferings are not over as he spends a tormented and sleepless night. Towards morning he falls into a deep and uneasy sleep, weeping and tossing so desperately that Artymire has to wake him up to stop him falling out of bed. 34 Here again there is no suggestion that any fault might be found with emotions and behaviour so far from the rational self-control usually ascribed to men. No

^{34.} IX.122v-123v.

moral judgment is passed or implied; the reader who did not look beyond the text would be enjoying Anaxartes's romantic sufferings, while feeling compassionate amazement at their intensity.

6. Lachrymose and Self-Pitying Heroes

Such scenes, placing knightly heroes in distinctly unmilitary surroundings and endowing them with physical and emotional fragility, help to blur still further the strong/weak polarity with which the sexes had usually been associated. And there are many such scenes. Afflicted by love, heroes may weep, faint, writhe on the ground in agony or go into an open-eyed trance, speechless, senseless and with thundering heart, only revived by having icy hands rubbed and scented water sprinkled on the face. Nor is it only love that can reduce a hero to a lachrymose state: when Esplendian sees an infinite number of kings and their subjects who have come to fight for him, instead of dealing with the practical problems involved or even delivering a rousing speech, his immediate response is to remember the fragility of human life; he tells himself that they will all be dead in a hundred years and 'commença à larmoyer'. Heroes' tears may also be of self-pity; they seem to be imagined as at least as prone to this sensation as heroines, so that the

^{35.} XI.26v, for example.

^{36.} VI.32r.

emotion aroused in the reader by heroes is not very different from that aroused by heroines. Both male and female characters are repeatedly shown in situations where they are pitiable victims, their sorrowful emotions seeming to demand ours. Florisel, for example, weeps and laments by a fountain after a sleepless night. How cruel of love to ignore his royal birth and tender youth, he exclaims. How cruel of Silvie to leave him to die. What a change from gold, jewels and luxury to a sheephook and dry brown bread; and he weeps tendrement. 37

It can be difficult to gauge the narrator's tone in such scenes. The writers are certainly sometimes mocking characteristic features of the genre to which they are contributing; some passages in the later books of the cycle have a distinct air of self-parody. In Book VIII, for instance, Amadis of Greece sees a picture of Niquee and her great beauty '...lui aliena tellement les esprits vitaus, qu'il demeura tout hors de soi'. The picture falls to the ground and Amadis would have followed it if his squire had not held him. The squire thinks it is apoplexy, but Amadis comes round, gives a great sigh and speaks in a weak, low voice with his eyes full of tears. His first words are of self-pity and he makes a passionate speech - Niquee is the sun which is dangerous to look

^{37.} IX.5v-6r. Linda Woodbridge, Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p 239, states that 'Men in Renaissance literature are nearly always ashamed of weeping'; this is certainly untrue in the Amadis cycle. Possibly the English fictional gentleman had already developed a stiffer upper lip than European counterparts.

at - he will henceforth live in a dungeon of desire through her great beauty - he is unworthy of such superhuman loveliness. His squire Ordan puts this in perspective: 'Ouy, dît Ordan, & bien, qu'en auiendra il aprês?'. 38

Such scenes are not, of course, peculiar to the *Amadis* cycle. Nor can they reliably be interpreted as evidence of a growing reaction against romance, for the incorporation of burlesque elements is characteristic of the genre from its very beginnings.³⁹ It would be an error to suppose that the cycle's accounts of sensibility in male characters were in general written in a spirit of unambiguous mockery. On the contrary, adventures, emotions, the expression of noble and touching sentiments, occasional touches of burlesque, are all there to be enjoyed, without any overall doctrinal framework to detract from the reader's immediate response.

^{38.} VIII.44v-45r.

^{39.} An early example is the part played by Dinadan in the second version of the thirteenth-century French prose *Tristan*; see Eugène Vinaver, *Malory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp 66-67, and in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p 344. Don Quixote and Sancho Panza can be seen as a development from rather than a reaction against Amadis of Greece and Ordan.

7. Inconstancy

Amadis of Greece is a hero particularly associated with self-pity, and it is his own fault of inconstancy - a fault traditionally regarded as feminine, though not so represented in the Amadis cycle - that is the cause of his miseries. A small number of other knights are inconstant, but Amadis is the only one whose affections swing to and fro between the same two women. There is certainly no suggestion that Lucelle and Niquee are in any way responsible. As has already been shown in Chapter III, women are virtually always faithful; the femme fatale does not figure in these texts, and very few wives are tempted to find amusement or true love elsewhere, certainly none of the central female characters. Amadis is depicted as quite helpless, a particularly unfortunate victim of love. He knows that Lucelle loves him. He had betrayed her years before, proposing to her and marrying Niquee instead, but in Book XI, while still searching, grief-stricken, for his kidnapped wife, he meets Lucelle again and is desperate to sleep with her. He is described as '...sus l'herbe où il se tourne & roule douloureusement'. He says he is too weak to get up and that he will not lodge anywhere but in the fields and mountains. His hands are covered in cold sweat and when he tries to sit up he cannot do so. He is dying, he says, and after a few more pathetic words he faints in the arms of a sympathetic attendant lady. 40

There are a number of other scenes in which he is shown weeping, suffering and lamenting his unfortunate situation.

The first of the more important male characters to be depicted as both good and inconstant is Galaor, younger brother of Amadís de Gaula. He is shown having a good time when opportunity offers, though always with like-minded partners, then is made to fall in love with his chosen bride and remain faithful thereafter. The only true *libertin* appears in the later books. Rogel de Grèce is endowed with

...vne grace de parler attrayante & persuasiue, qui lui seruit grandement au train de ses amourettes, qu'il demena gayes & variables, battant les vnes, puis les autres du plat de la langue, jugeant indigne de celui qui veut emporter le nom de victorieus, soi laisser vaincre & asseruir son coeur par vne femme.⁴¹

Rogel's inconstancy even extends to rape - a fault which could scarcely be attributed to a woman.

8. Male Tenderness

A hero's tenderness is not always for himself, however. Male characters are not infrequently made to behave in a soft-hearted, supposedly 'feminine' manner or to show the nurturing instinct and skills normally

^{41.} XI.4r.

associated with women. Feeling and the demonstration of feeling between male friends is not just acceptable but admirable. Montalvo depicts a warm relationship between Amadís de Gaula and his friend and eventual brother-in-law Bruneo de Bonamar. Don Bruneo is lying in wild countryside, wounded and near death, when Amadís discovers him by hearing a voice lamenting that he will never see his lady and his friends again. Amadís shows a 'feminine' sensibility as, 'muy fieramente llorando', he kneels and comforts him. Bruneo weakly holds his arms out to Amadís and the two men embrace, weeping. Amadis and his squire make the wounded man as comfortable as possible; then the squire goes off to seek help while Amadis remains with his friend, '...quedando allí con él, teniéndole la cabeça en sus ynojos consolándole'. 42 Amadís is also depicted as deeply moved when his squire Gandalín finally asks to be made a knight; thinking of his own future loneliness, he agrees only reluctantly, '...y lo tuuo abraçado, veniéndole las lágrimas a los ojos con el mucho amor que le tenía'.43 The same tenderness is ascribed to his father and his son: they are holding each other's hands as they await the arrival of the Queen of California at the court of Constantinople.44

A hero may feel deep emotion at the sight of a helpless victim; a princess weeping bitterly moves Florisel to such compassion that tears come

^{42. 833-34.}

^{43. 1086.}

^{44.} V.546.

into his own eyes. 45 Even more strikingly, Amadis of Greece, one of the most important male characters in the cycle, when marooned on a desert island is described as not only tending the mother of his son during and after labour ('la gouuerna & traita fort amiablement en sa gesine'), but playing an apparently equal part in caring for the baby and taking pleasure in it.46 Further evidence that a 'mothering' rôle is not considered incompatible with the portrayal of manly and gentlemanly characteristics occurs near the end of Book IV. Don Grumedán is the model of an admirable older knight: still able to fight bravely, particularly knowledgeable about the chivalric code, and a wise and loyal counsellor. He has brought Queen Briseña up from birth, and when she faints in anguish over her husband's disappearance don Grumedán is tender and 'womanly'; he flings himself off his horse and holds her in his arms, then as she recovers he kneels beside her, holding her hands, '...con palabras muy dulces la consolando...con aquella piedad y amor que en la cuna lo hiziera'.47 This not only shows an elderly knight tenderly comforting a middle-aged queen; the final words invite the reader to imagine the same knight as a much younger man, bending lovingly over the cradle of the infant princess who had been placed in his charge.

^{45.} IX.39r.

^{46.} XI.91r.

^{47. 1327-28.}

9. Modesty and Gentleness

The dauntless heroes of these romances when no longer facing an enemy, sword in hand, are usually as diffident as girls were supposed to be. They are depicted as finding praise particularly embarrassing. Amadis of Greece blushes when he hears the King of Jerusalem praising him48; Florisel, when told that Arlande has sought him out because of the fame of his prowess and beauty replies that she must have heard exaggerated accounts - rumour always exaggerates 49. Lucendus presents his lady with the prizes of his adventure (a hideous beast and equally ugly witch) and when the other princes express praise and admiration, '...il estoit tout honteux de s'oyr si hautement loüer'50. Nor does the ideal prince look or sound fierce. One of the most detailed descriptions is that of Prince Falanges d'Astre, chivalric and matrimonial partner of the redoubtable warrior Alastraxeree. He is described as having laughing green eyes, fair, curly hair and a gentle, kindly expression. Furthermore, he thinks before he speaks, gains more by subtlety than by brute force in battle and spills as little blood as possible. 51 Like earlier heroes of romance, these characters also sing, play and write poetry: Amadis of Greece was one of the best lutenists of his time, the reader

^{48.} VII.11r.

^{49.} IX.33r.

^{50.} XIV.89r.

^{51.} XI.116.

is told; he had a sweet and melodious voice and wrote songs and music too.52

10. Gender and Clothing

The evidence presented so far in this chapter shows the inappropriateness of traditional gender classifications when applied to the cycle. The authors of Amadis, however, go beyond a mere blurring of traditional assumptions, to enter at times upon ambiguities that amount to a transcendence of gender divisions. This subject can be most conveniently introduced through a discussion of their treatment of clothing. Clothing has usually been the most immediate signifier of gender and the failure to wear sufficiently gendered garments or the wearing of garments deemed by contemporaries to pertain to the opposite sex has been condemned from the earliest times. Judaeo-Christian tradition explicitly forbids cross-dressing: 'Non inductur mulier veste virili, nec vir utetur veste feminea: abominabilis enim apud Deum est qui facit haec' (The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God).⁵³

^{52.} VIII.84v.

^{53.} Deuteronomy 22:5 (Vulgate). I quote the Authorized Version as more accurate than Douay.

In A History of Private Life Georges Duby sums up the traditional conviction that men and women should look and behave differently. He was writing about the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, but his words are still valid for the period of the Amadis cycle:

...the body was very carefully attired, the principal aim being to underscore the difference between the sexes. There was, the moralists constantly pointed out, a fundamental obligation to distin guish among 'orders,' to respect the primordial division between masculine and feminine; hence not to hide the traits specific to one or the other. Accordingly, young dandies who dressed effeminately were violently attacked, and the few women who dared to dress as men provoked disgust. 54

That such an attitude still prevailed in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is clear from examples of criticism of man-clothed women quoted by Linda Woodbridge. John Chamberlain's letter, written in 1620, shows concern at the highest level:

Yesterday the bishop of London called together all his Clergie about this towne, and told them he had expresse commaundment from the King to will them to inveigh vehemently and bitterly in theyre sermons, against the insolencie of our women, and theyre wearing of brode brimd hats, pointed dublets, theyre haire cut short or shorne, and some of them stillettaes or poinards, and such other trinckets of like moment; adding withall that yf pulpit admonitions will not reforme them he wold proceed by another course; the truth is the world is very far out of order, but whether this will mend yt God knowes. 55

^{54.} Revelations of the Medieval World, p 526.

^{55.} Women and the English Renaissance, p 143.

In the Amadis cycle, there are numerous examples of the garments of one sex being worn by the other, without any suggestion from the narrator or any of his characters that such cross-dressing is 'very far out of order', or, indeed, anything but convenient and enjoyable.

11. Transvestism

We cannot understand what transvestism means in a particular fiction without taking account of the world imagined before people disguised themselves. In Amadis, women can in any case perform activities normally attributed to men: travelling, riding horses, fighting. When a female warrior wears armour she is not pretending to be a man, she is simply wearing the right gear for the activity in question. (Her identity may be hidden, but this is equally true of male knights in armour.) As was suggested earlier⁵⁶, while women can move freely between the ladies' quarters and the battlefield, men can only enter such quarters in disguise. Alastraxeree and Pentasilee play rôles quite different from that of Viola, whose male disguise ultimately serves only to confirm her traditionally feminine rôle, because even when dressed as a boy and carrying a sword she is not capable of fighting a duel. The crossdressing so popular in the Renaissance theatre generally emphasizes rather than blurs any difference between the sexes. One cannot, there-

^{56.} See pp 46ff.

fore, talk about transvestism in the cycle as a general category; it has two different meanings according to the sex of the wearer, and the difference is not what one might expect it to be. Women dress openly like men when the task in hand requires it, and move freely and openly into a masculine world. Men dress secretly as women in order to gain admittance to a feminine world from which they are normally barred, and thus to enter into social relationships of a kind which are normally closed This difference is repeatedly underlined by the writers' to them. choices of pronoun: women fighting bravely on the field of battle or enduring the rough and dangerous life of a squire are never 'he'; men reclining on cushions in silk and jewels become 'she'. The grammar of the text itself fully endorses female disguise. Moreover, the female name adopted by the male character is invariably used during the period of disguise, even throughout lengthy episodes and even when the narrator is addressing readers who are perfectly aware of the character's true name and sex; two young men become 'sisters' and 'nos pucelles', for example.

Nor is female disguise degrading for men. Usually, in both life and literature, it has been considered that a woman might raise herself by assuming a male rôle, whereas the female rôle was shameful for a man. It is, perhaps, symptomatic of the power of the feminine in these works that this is certainly not the case in the Amadis cycle. Again and again, the response when a prince reveals his true male identity is pleasure and admiration at his disguise. Such princes do not even nec-

essarily revert immediately to masculine costume. Agesilan and Arlanges had abandoned the pursuit of learning in favour of the pursuit of love and adventure; then, after a considerable period during which none of their royal friends and relations had heard anything about them, they returned home having won both royal brides and fame for knightly prow-They had achieved all this while disguised as Amazons, and decided to retain female dress for their triumphal entry into Constantinople. Nor does their costume for the occasion make any gesture towards the practical garments that form a normal part of the Renaissance iconography of the Amazon. The two young princes dress with particular and explicitly feminine magnificence. Their gowns are of white satin cut and pulled into little squares over cloth of gold, each square with pearls and pointed gold buttons enamelled with green leaves. They have very long trains, and sleeves which are narrow at the top and hanging from their hands down to the ground, lined with silk shot in peacock colours. Both have a beautiful jewelled bracelet at each wrist. hair is spread out over their shoulders and divided into twelve sections, each section finished with a true-love knot and a rich ruby jewel. Their crowns are of carbuncles and sapphires with 'piropes flamboyans', all exquisitely carved into the shape of carnations ('giroflees') and attached to their hair at each side by large diamonds. 57 There are a number of such descriptions; indeed, there is perhaps more emphasis on female clothing when worn by boys than when worn by women.

12. Carnival

Transvestism and ritual rôle reversal have been present in many cultures, including that of early modern Europe. Natalie Zemon Davis sums up the general view of anthropologists that such reversals are 'ultimately sources of order and stability in a hierarchical society. can clarify the structure by the process of reversing it.... They do not question the basic order of the society itself.' However, she argues that such subversion 'could undermine as well as reinforce'. referring to the image of the disorderly 'woman on top' which, she suggests, could 'widen behavioral options for women'. 58 As has already been suggested, what occurs in these stories is that many women already have choice, and transvestism widens the behavioural options for men, giving them, in effect, the best of both worlds. They can safely tease, joke and flirt with members of both sexes as their feminine costume prevents females from keeping them at arm's length (or, indeed, considering them as potential husbands), while their real sex means that men are not a threat to them. Such a scene occurs in Book XI, when Garaye (Prince Arlanges) 'qui étoit facetieuse' and to a slightly lesser extent Daraïde (Prince Agesilan) amuse themselves with knights they meet on the last stage of their journey to the court of Queen Sidonie. A knight has the

^{58.} Natalie Zemon Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp 130-31 (Davis's italics).

portrait of Princess Diane on his shield, and they tease and flirt unmercifully, enjoying themselves and amusing the reader in a way that would not be possible without their disguise. The scene has something of the atmosphere of an Elizabethan comedy. Garaye says the knight is ugly and the latter is very indignant - a number of ladies have wished him well, he says. He proceeds to cast doubt on the beauty of the veiled Garaye and she claims that she is very beautiful indeed. is a great deal of laughter from the 'ladies' in the course of these exchanges, but though the knight has to join in at some points, he eventually rides off in a very bad temper after defeat in a fight and more teasing. 59 It is not the two young men in feminine clothes and playing female rôles who are weak or ridiculous; they only gain extra power. It is the man whose appearance is purely masculine who is at a disadvantage. Male characters are beautiful and successful in their trans-sexual rôles while retaining male strength and fighting skills, and this certainly undermines rather than reinforcing the masculine/ feminine categories.

The beauty of the princely 'Amazons' already referred to is greatly admired by various chance-met damsels on their travels, and on other occasions their disguise enables the young men to tease a man in a feminine way while still showing masculine boldness and confidence. Such episodes can appeal to the reader in a number of different ways. Trans-

vestism in the cycle is not infrequently associated with a festive spirit of joking and laughter, and this humour sometimes takes the form of straightforward farce, as in the episode when the amorous old Sultan of Niquee tries to seduce the beautiful Amazon slave girl Nereïde, a slave girl who is actually Amadis of Greece in disguise. At first he tries to persuade her, calling her mignonne, and promising that she will be the happiest maiden in Asia, but his feelings overcome him and he tries 'en la baisant venir & au tetin, & plus bas'. 'Nereïde' has to protect her disguise with a show of virginal modesty and a fine speech about a lady's honour. The Sultan's readiness to put off the great moment prepares the reader for the next encounter, when it is made clear, with a good deal of description of action and lack of action, that the old man cannot follow his passionate desire with physical performance. The young prince gracefully puts up just enough resistance and 'se mordoit la langue iusques au sang à fin de se garder de rire'.60

13. Sexual Titillation and Homoerotic Ambiguity

Sex and eroticism present a particularly problematic area when a post-Freudian reader is thinking about pre-Freudian writing. How far might an account of a character of one sex being kissed and caressed by another character of the same sex be thought to fall within the para-

meters of ordinary friendship? And how much difference does it make if they are only apparently of the same sex but we know that one of them is of the opposite sex and in disguise? Episodes of this kind are not infrequent in the cycle. It is not easy, given historical and national differences in real life, to distinguish whereabouts on a scale of behaviour ranging from asexuality through polymorphous perversity to homoeroticism a particular incident might have been placed by a Renaissance writer or reader. Florisel, imprisoned in the Castle of the Mirror of Love by Arlande, protects himself from her love and her father's vengeance by pretending to be his half-sister Alastraxeree. Alastraxeree herself then arrives there, is mistaken for Florisel and chivalrously takes on the rôle to protect her brother. Arlande has the supposed Florisel imprisoned in a golden cage in a garden and visits 'him' by night. She sits on the bed, lamenting and begging for 'his' love, 'Disant celà se ietta de rechef à son col la baisant amoureusement, dont Alastraxeree ne sçauoit comment se contenir, pour connoître & sentir l'ardeur de son amoureus feu'. Alastraxeree, we are told, continues to play the part of Florisel during 'téls deuis & embrassemens'. 61 Arlande also spends some time in bed with the real Florisel, who, supposed to be Alastraxeree, is dressed as a woman. 62

^{61.} IX.95r.

^{62.} Part of the above paragraph is taken from my article, 'Studying the Amadis Cycle', p 6.

The relationship between two of the principal characters in Book XI is presented even more ambiguously. 63 The disguise of Agesilan and Arlanges as Amazon maidens has already been mentioned. Agesilan's first sight of Diane is when he is so disguised, and various comments are made about a girl falling in love with another girl. The other supposed Amazon is asked whether it is the custom in her country for women to be in love with each other and the reply is affirmative: their use of arms makes them more virile. The narrative continues, as usual, to speak of the male character in disguise as though it were female. The 'Amazon' Daraïde is described being kissed and embraced by Lardenie, the close friend of her mistress Diane, when 'she' finally confesses that she is in love not with a knight, but with another woman. Daraïde's lament stresses the unnatural nature of her passion: 'Fille aimer fille,...Pasiphae ne fut jamais si malheureuse pour auoir aimé vn taureau....Ne Myrrha semblablement en son amour incestueus'. Diane discovers Daraïde, sick and pale from love, lying with her head in Lardenie's lap, and is told the cause; in spite of her 'ardent' love for the Amazon she does not understand 'céte violence d'amour de fille à fille', but comforts her, 'puis la baise doucement, qui ne fut sans retour de Daraïde; en succant le miel de sa bouche pourpree'. Diane promises her a remedy for her love. 64 Another scene puts Daraïde in bed, recovering from the wounds of battle and weeping for love of Diane, who sits at her bedside

^{63.} XI.26rff.

^{64.} XI.41r-v.

holding her hand and asking what more she can possibly want than her company and her love, 'le comble du desir d'vne femme amoureuse de l'autre', while Daraïde keeps speaking of her passion and longing and pressing for more. Kisses and endearments are exchanged and Diane asks, 'Que puis-je faire d'auantage pour assouuir vôtre desir...?'65 There is more innuendo when the second Amazon is kissed by Queen Cleophile and falls in love with her. 66 Even when the disguise has been revealed to Diane and Lardenie, the writer continues to make use of the ambiguous possibilities with those characters who do not know the truth. A lady who has been travelling with Daraïde tells the princess and her friend that 'Sapho la lirique' also fell in love with girls, and describes how Daraïde had told her of glimpses of Diane's ivory limbs revealed by the wind when they were hunting, and of watching her undress to bathe in a fountain. 67 Thus a relationship already distanced by voyeurism (Daraïde watches Diane) is further distanced by being encapsulated as narrative (Daraïde tells the lady about watching Diane) and then simultaneously distanced still further and partially collapsed when the auditor of the narrative re-encapsulates it by repeating it to its original teller and subject, yet without knowing the truth about his/her sex (the lady tells Daraïde how Daraïde told her about watching Diane). In this sequence, each act of telling both distances the original event and functions as a

^{65.} XI.62v-63v.

^{66.} XI.43r

^{67.} XI.99v.

further yet more attenuated erotic provocation; desire, fixated originally at the level of sight, is finally diffused through the whole complex structure of telling and listening, 'Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate'.

The narrator continues to present physical passion in such a way that it could be suggestive to readers of different sexual orientations. In spite of complaints about the problems of unnatural passion put into the mouth of Daraïde, the effect is no more than to add possible relish for some readers. The narrator's attitude to varieties of sexuality is an open one. The emphasis is on pleasure, not morality, and there is little sense of a specifically masculine narratorial persona; the presentation is ungendered. And the frequently complicated layering of tellers and listeners ensures that for most readers the pleasure involved cannot be that of the hallucinatory fantasy at which pornography aims. It is rather an intellectual pleasure derived from a sense of the ingenious variety of possible combinations of three elements - biological sex, its representation in the form of real or apparent gender, and position within the structure of narrative communication (teller, auditor, narrative subject).

14. Beauty and Strength

It is while disguised as an Amazon maiden that Agesilan receives the order of knighthood, referred to as 'she' and by the female name of

'Daraïde' throughout, and wearing first an 'inestimable' armour, then a gown of white satin slashed with cloth of silver. In her person a lady admires two contrary perfections, which seem to characterise the androgynous heroes in these stories: 'delicate beauté et dure force'.68 The mixture of masculine strength and feminine beauty is attractive to both Book XI contains, among other material which Sir Philip Sidney used in his Arcadia, the story of the King and Queen of Galdap who both find Daraïde irresistibly attractive. Seeing her in female clothes, the King exclaims 'O dieus souuerains, quelles deus extremités de beauté & de force vous aués logés ci ensembles'. 69 The same point had been made earlier in the book; the supposed Amazon maiden Daraïde is all the more beautiful because of her masculinity, but presumably also more attractive than a boy would look in masculine attire. She is dressed in a robe of crimson satin, with a rich belt and necklace and a jewelled chaplet on her hair. As a group of persons approach a magic castle, the beauty of the two Queens Sidonie and Cleophile is much admired, 'Mais Daraïde en cete fleur de jeunesse garnie de je ne sçai quelle vigueur plus que feminine, attrayoit des coeurs infinis à son amour'. 70 Androgynous beauty can have a particularly powerful appeal to both sexes, and can excite and disturb by its combination of characteristics.

^{68.} XI.59ff.

^{69.} XI.101.

^{70.} XI.49.

Visual art also suggests that such beauty was particularly admired during the Renaissance. The strong, boyish figure and lovely face of Diana appear again and again in painting, tapestry and sculpture. An infinity of powerful yet beautiful women are represented in every medium from marble pillar to emblem book, often with the added power of deity or allegory, while exquisite young men in silks and satins, ringlets and jewels, with swords at their sides, gaze ambiguously from enamelled miniatures. Many of the heroes and heroines of this cycle offer the reader a similarly ambiguous beauty to admire.

15. The Island of Canabee and the Reversal of Gender

I conclude this chapter with an account of a particular episode that illustrates how radical the cycle's questioning of gender categories can be; indeed, it offers a new perspective so startling as to imply that our whole understanding of what was possible in sixteenth-century thought about the relation of gender to culture may need revision. The episode occurs in Book XII, chapters LXXXIX to XCIIII. Here the basic incident is somewhat similar to the Calafia story in Book V, but the development of it very different. The story-teller is plainly interested in gender and uses rôle-reversal as a way to explore human nature and its possibilities, setting the episode on one of the isolated islands so well suited to exploratory fiction. Some features of this part of the story are so surprising that it is worth recounting it in

some detail. Don Brianges, storm-driven to an unknown island, camps there with the three Persian princesses he is accompanying. As he walks pensively at dusk, 'il aperceut deus veneurs habillés assés étrangement, & tous effeminés de visage & de contenance, tellement qu'ils ressembloyent quelques vieilles matrones ainsi deguisées en hommes'. They tell him that he is on the island of Canabee; when asked whether there are any adventures to be found they reply that the newly-widowed queen has an additional cause for grief with which he might be able to help. effeminate huntsmen explain that the island had previously been inhabited by Amazons; no man had been allowed to bear arms, nor to administer justice, 'ains ne s'entremêloyent d'aucunes affaires, viuans oysifs & parresseus, sans auoir soucy de chose quelconque, sinon de se tisser & mignarder comme plusieurs d'entre nous font encores maintenant'. had lasted until the warrior queen Zahara demanded fifteen thousand 'femmes archères' to fight for Queen Abra of Babylon. So many women went off to the war that the men tried to stage a coup and take over the This led to fighting, the men being determined to 'se metgovernment. tre en plaine liberté' and the women to 'conseruer leur anciènne préeminence'; but peace was restored when the queen and the leader of the men's revolution fell in love and married; it was decided that 'les hommes & les femmes domineroyent également en tout & par tout'.

What is perhaps most surprising so far is that it has been implied that gender is a social construct rather than inborn and God-given. If they are denied any but the most trivial rôle in society, people of either

sex will become trivial, the writer is suggesting. A further surprise is that, unlike the outcome of the marriage of Queen Calafia, the inhabitants do not simply reverse rôles, with the 'natural' relationship of the sexes re-established. Unlike California, the island of Canabee is presumably to have women as soldiers and as lawyers, judges and states-After this conclusion, the expectation is that the narrator will now abandon this aspect of his story, but he is too interested in the possibilities of rôle-reversal to abandon the topic entirely after providing the usual marriage. I will continue with the story, for it is through the narrative itself that the author looks sharply at the relative positions of men and women in society. As the narration proceeds, it is clear that men are not entirely equal - it is as though the centuries of female-dominated culture are imagined as having left a strong hold on attitudes and behaviour, even when equal rights legislation is The author imagines a society where women are no longer allpowerful, but where the structures of power still operate in their fav-Only a woman can be sovereign, for instance, though if she wishes to marry, her husband can be king. Furthermore, an ancient law stating that a man who has sex outside marriage should be burned at the stake has not been abolished. There is no such punishment for women.

The Queen's brother is guilty of such an offence, and the shipwrecked don Brianges is horrified to hear that the prince will die at the stake. His comments make, indirectly, a powerful claim for the sexual emancipation of women: those who established such an unequal law were unjust or

out of their minds, he exclaims, it should be revoked as iniquitous. the same affections 'enflamment en amour les femmes & les hommes', why should what is forbidden to men be permitted to women? 71 Brianges offers to clear the prince's name by fighting as his champion. As the story continues, young men are placed in precisely the fictional space usually occupied by young women; even the words normally used to evoke pity for a helpless girl are now used in connection with a boy. anges is riding through a thick, dark forest when he hears a 'vois fort piteuse' crying for help. 'Le pauvret' (it is virtually always 'la pauvrette') is about to have his head cut off, and 'ne sçauoit que faire autre chose sinon plorer à tendres larmes pour les émouuoir à pitié'. The boy can only protect himself with the weapons that Amadís had ascribed to women: 'como ...nascieron...con flacos ánimos y las más fuertes armas suyas sean lágrimas y sospiros'. 72 His features no longer contorted by the fear of death, Anurge is seen to be 'de bonne grace, & beau en toute perfection'. When he replies to Brianges's enquiry, his words might be those of a rescued damsel: 'Helàs...vous entendrés bien vne des plus barbares cruautés que vous ayés iamais ouye...'.

^{71.} At other points in the cycle, burning seems to be the accepted punishment for an adulterous <u>woman</u> (see XIII.34, for example). So far as men are concerned, the punishment of anything from fornication to rape seems to depend on the chance of a knight errant passing by. In real life, a sixteenth-century Spaniard had the right to kill his wife if she were caught *in flagrante*.

^{72. 907.}

The jouvenceau then embarks on his story, in which innocent boys are the victims of women who are powerful both by virtue of their positions in society and of their physical strength. The boy, Anurge, had been taken into the household of young Prince Bruzanges at ten years old. He could have been very happy there, he says, but he eventually fell in love with the Duchess Polinecque, who only pretended to love him for her own The Duchess soon transferred her attentions to the Prince, and asked Anurge to help her to marriage with him. Desperately anxious to please her, and encouraged by a thousand promises, he had agreed to do so (the word 'obey' is actually used, underlining the unequal nature of the relationship). The Prince, however, was already loved by an even more powerful woman, Arfleure, a Sarmatian as skilful at fighting as she was beautiful 73, elevated by the Queen's favour to be equal to the greatest in the kingdom. She was, furthermore, 'enflamée de lui en tout honneur de mariage' - her intentions were entirely honourable. became obvious that Prince reciprocated Arfleure's love, Anurge failed to comfort the Duchess, whose bitterness made her long for vengeance; she wanted to destroy not just the Prince's honour, but his life as well. As the tale proceeds, it can be seen that if male characters were substituted for female ones, and vice-versa, what would be left would be a typical story of the kind popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both in collections of contes and in such romans à tiroirs as

^{73. &#}x27;Sarmatie' appears to have been considered an Amazon kingdom. Arfleure is thus not just powerful politically as royal favourite, but would be imagined as having male strength and skill with arms.

L'Astrée. In this case, however, young men continue to play the rôle of passive victim, and women to drive the action forward with their determination to attain the love or vengeance they desire and their greater political, social and physical power.

The naïve boy Anurge is easily persuaded by the Duchess to disguise himself as the Prince and climb through her bedroom window. The Duchess Polinecque then tells Arfleure that Prince Bruzanges loved her and slept with her regularly. (In this story, women even do the asking and giving in marriage.) Polinecque added that 'vn de ces iours ie le doi demander à la Roine pour mary'. He had promised her that he would never let himself be given in marriage to anyone else. But the Amazon knight Arfleure has already said that she was extremely angry (normally a male emotion) and called the Duchess a liar; if she were also accustomed to bear arms, she said, 'des maintenant céte épee me donneroit la venge-The complicated plot continues to unfold, with Arfleure supported by her tall, strong warrior sister, with whom she feels safer in the dark and treacherous garden than with ten knights to defend her. The clothes worn by the innocent tool Anurge are described in some detail, though those of female characters are not described: he is wearing a white damask cloak embroidered with diamonds, and, 'sus ma tête vn ruban verd voilé de rets faits de fil d'or & d'argent, auec vn haut panache iaune'. The two men who had been about to behead Anurge in the forest when Brianges arrived had been doing so at the command of Polinecque, who would have had them killed if they had disobeyed her.

say, 'sa seule presence nous étonne'. The fictional world of this story is one where women intimidate men - even potential murderers - by the mere force of their presence. Apart from a judicial battle in which Arfleure fights for the man she loves in spite of his apparent infidelity, and in which her sister is one of the champions on the other side, the tale now quietly reverts to a more conventional fiction, virtually a version of the Dido and Aeneas story, with the queen of Canabee and don Rogel.

There is, however, one last striking incident in this story. Queen Florelle, four months pregnant, dies of grief when the ship carrying her lover sails away. As she lies there dead, surrounded by her attendants, a giant appears. He delivers the foetus by caesarian section, and, wrapping it in soft parchment, places it in his bosom and disappears again. We are told that the child grew to be a fierce warrior. A fourmonth foetus could certainly not survive out of the womb in the sixteenth century. This convoluted tale of rôle-reversal actually ends with one of a group of exaggeratedly male characters performing first the female function of midwife, then the ultimate female function: wrapped in a womb of soft skin, the infant is sheltered by the giant's body: the giant has become a surrogate mother.

APPENDIX II: EARLY EDITIONS OF AMADIS

The following information is derived from Hugues Vaganay, Amadis en français (Geneva: Slatkine, 1970), Henry Thomas, Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), Daniel Eisenberg, Castilian Romances of Chivalry in the Sixteenth Century (London: Grant and Cutler, 1979), and the The British Library Catalogue of Printed Books to 1975 (London: K. G. Saur, 1984). The dates given are those of the first known editions; in some cases earlier editions must have existed. First editions in Spanish and French were in folio; later editions in French were in prayer-book size.

Manuscripts

Fragments of a 15th-century manuscript are edited by Antonio Rodriguez-Moñino, 'El primer manuscrito del Amadís de Gaula. Noticia bibliográfica', Boletín de la Real Academia Española, 36 (1956), 199-216. An alleged 13th- or 14th-century manuscript fragment is referred to by Manuel Rodrigues Lapa, 'A questão do Amadis de Gaula no contexto peninsular', Grial 27 (1970), 14-28.

Spanish Books I-IV, by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo. The first printed edition has disappeared; the first surviving edition is Saragossa, 1508.

French translations:

Book I by Nicolas de Herberay (Paris, 1540)

Book II " (Paris, 1541)

Book III " (Paris, 1542)

Book IV " (Paris, 1543)

Spanish Book V (= Sergas de Esplendián), by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo; first surviving edition Seville, 1510.

French translation by Nicolas de Herberay (Paris, 1544).

Spanish Book VI (= Florisando), by Páez de Ribera (Salamanca, 1510).

No French translation.

Spanish Book VII (= Lisuarte de Grecia y Perión de Gaula), by Feliciano de Silva (Seville, 1514).

French translation (= Book VI), by Nicolas de Herberay (Paris, 1545).

Spanish Book VIII (= Lisuarte de Grecia y Muerte de Amadís), by Juan Díaz (Seville, 1526). Unsuccessful.

No French translation.

Spanish Book IX (= Amadís de Grecia; follows on from Spanish VII in narrative), by Feliciano de Silva (Cuenca, 1530).

French translations (= Books VII and VIII, with sueño at end of Spanish IX.i omitted and five chapters at end of Spanish IX.ii transferred to next book), by Nicolas de Herberay (Paris, 1546 and 1548).

French translations (= Books VII and VIII, with sueño at end of Spanish IX.i omitted and five chapters at end of Spanish IX.ii transferred to next book), by Nicolas de Herberay (Paris, 1546 and 1548).

Spanish Book X (= Florisel de Niquea, Parts I and II), by Feliciano de Silva (Valladolid, 1532).

French translations (= Books IX and X, with last four chapters of Part I transferred to French Book X): IX by Giles Boileau de Buillon (Paris, 1551), revised by Claude Colet (Paris, 1553); X by Jacques Gohory (Paris, 1552).

Spanish Book XI (= Rogel de Grecia = Florisel de Niquea, Parts III and IV), by Feliciano de Silva (Part III Medina del Campo, 1535; Part IV Salamanca, 1551).

French translations of Part III (= Books XI and XII): XI by Jacques Gohory (Paris, 1554); XII by Guillaume Aubert de Poitiers (Paris, 1556).

No French translation of Part IV.

Spanish Book XII (= Silves de la Selva), by Pedro de Luján (Seville, 1546).

French translations (= Books XIII and XIV): XIII by Jacques Gohory (Paris, 1571); XIV by Antoine Tyron (Paris, 1574), 2nd edn revised by Jacques Gohory.

After Spanish XII/French XIV there were Italian and German continuations, which were translated into French. French Books XV-XXI are from

Italian and Books XXII-XXIV are from German. Some books are duplicated by different translators.

Popularity of French Translations

Maximilian Pfeiffer, Amadisstudien (Mainz: J. Falk, 1905), records the following numbers of editions, not counting different issues of the same editions by different publishers. These lists are representative rather than complete.

Book I	14 (1540-77)
Book II	12 (1541-77)
Book III	11 (1542-77)
Book IV	12 (1543-88)
Book V	11 (1544-77)
Book VI	12 (1545-77)
Book VII	10 (1546-77)
Book VIII	9 (1548-77)
Book IX	9 (1551–77)
Book X	10 (1553-77)
Book XI	9 (1554-77)
Book XII	7 (1556-77)
Book XIII	7 (1571-77)
Book XIV	4 (1574-77)

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English Translations

French Book I: The First Book of Amadis of Gaule, translated by Anthony Munday (London: John Wolfe, 1590?).

French Book II: The Second Booke of Amadis de Gaule, translated by Lazarus Pyott (= Anthony Munday) (London: J. Wolfe for C. Burbie, 1595).

French Books I-IV: The Ancient, Famous and Honourable History of Amadis de Gaule, translated by Anthony Munday (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1619); four parts, Books III and IV dated 1618.

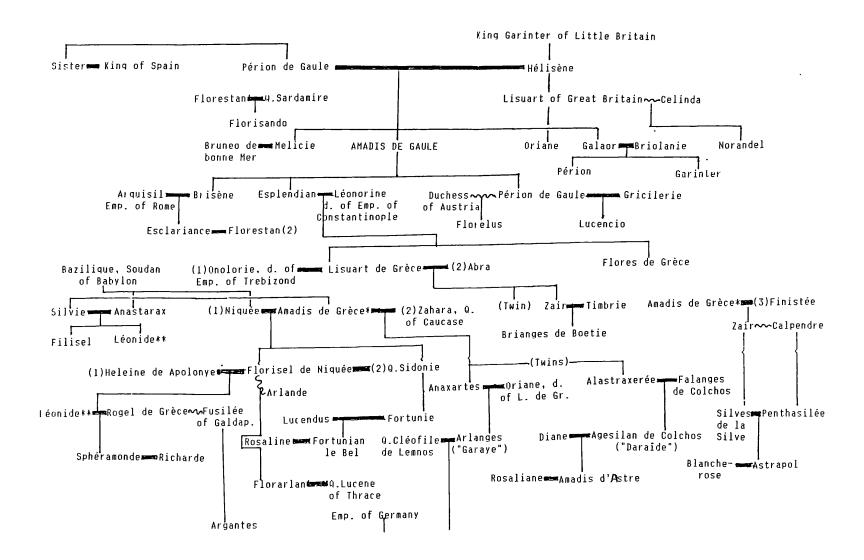
French Book V: The Fift Booke of the Most Pleasant and Delectable Historie of Amadis de Gaule, anonymous translation (London: Adam Islip, sold by Hugh Iackson, 1598).

French Book VI: The Famous and Renowned History of Amadis de Gaule, translated by Francis Kirkman (London: Jane Bell, 1652).

French Book VII: The Most Excellent and Famous History of the Most Renowned Knight, Amadis of Greece, anonymous translation (London: J. Deacon and J. Blare, 1694).

APPENDIX III: GENEALOGY OF AMADIS CHARACTERS

The chart on the following page is included as a reader's aid for the narrative of the books of the Amadis cycle discussed in this thesis. It is enlarged and corrected from the chart provided by John J. O'Connor, Amadis de Gaule and its Influence on Elizabethan Literature (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), but many minor characters still remain unmentioned. Thick horizontal lines indicate legitimate unions; wavy lines indicate illegitimate unions. Amadis de Grèce (marked *) and Léonide (marked **) each appear twice.



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Montalvo, Garci Rodríguez de, Las Sergas de Esplendián (= Amadís de Gaula V), in Libros de Caballerías, ed. Pascual de Gayangos, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles 40 (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1857)

Ribera, Páez de, El sexto libro de Amadís de Gaula (Salamanca: 1510)

Silva, Feliciano de, Lisuarte de Grecia (= Amadís VII) (Lisbon: 1587)

Luján, Pedro de, Silves de la Selva (= Amadís XII) (Seville: 1549)

2. French

Amadis de Gaule

Books I-VIII, trans. Nicolas de Herberay (Antwerp: Jean Waesberghe, 1561)

Book IX, trans. Claude Colet (Antwerp: Jean Waesberghe, 1561)

Books X-XI, trans. Jacques Gohory (Antwerp: Jean Waesberghe, 1561)

Book XII, trans. Guillaume Aubert (Antwerp: Jean Waesberghe, 1561)

Book XIII, trans. Jacques Gohory (Antwerp: Guillaume Silvius, 1572)

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3. English

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